

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AMONG DIFFERENT CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STYLES TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The significance put in refining communication skills among teachers plays a central role in connecting students' various knowledge. With that, classroom management styles with good communication skills become a major focus in achieving fundamental educational aims. Unfortunately, communication skills and management styles for classroom learning are always seen as isolated components. Hence, this study aims to investigate the communication skills used among teachers with different classroom management styles in Malaysia primary schools. This study attempts to achieve four objectives; namely, to examine the teachers' level of communication skills in listening, ability to get message across, emotional management in the communication process, insight to the communication process and assertive communication; to investigate level of communication skills between male teacher and female teacher; to describe the percentages of the teachers with different classroom management styles; and to investigate the level of communication skills between different classroom management styles. This study employed the survey causal comparative research design that focuses on the quantitative

approach. The respondents of this study were 70 primary school teachers who were randomly selected in the area of Perak, Malaysia. A questionnaire was administered in this survey with results showing that the teachers have their personal set of communication skills with different classroom management styles. Nevertheless, the analysis showed that there is no strong evidence that there is a significant difference in the communication skills based on gender. Results also revealed that there is a significant difference in communication skills between the two different categories of classroom management styles.

Keywords: *Communication skills, classroom management styles*

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Classroom management styles are observed based on teachers' actions. Proper management style is essential to create a supportive environment in the teaching and learning process topped up with considerable amount of efforts in effective classroom management to engage students in learning (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). The actions performed by teachers in efforts to engage students in conducive learning environment usually involve organizing the physical environment, establishing rules and procedures to maintain students attention, and importantly; engaging students in the planned activities (Brophy, 2006). It was also emphasized by Evertson and Weinstein (2006), and Brophy (2006) that actions taken by teachers are imperative to facilitate learning among students in classroom management in terms of maintaining not only positive but also productive learning environment that is relatively free of behavioural exertions. It is also fundamental that to be a teaching expert, teachers need to acquire the necessary knowledge and expertise in classroom management (Emmer & Stough, 2001). The teachers' actions are usually demonstrated in their accomplishment with the development of students' social skills and self-regulation. Essentially, classroom management is the variable that gives the largest impact to students' achievement (Marzano & Marzano, 2003).

It needs to be cautioned that ineffective classroom management skills would also at the expense of wasted instructional hours, exhausted time-on-task, and interrupted learning environments (Boynton & Boynton, 2005).

Adding on to the concern, with inappropriate classroom management, disruptive students' behaviour could have negative effects towards teachers' instructions causing the teachers' ability to be questionable (Braden & Smith, 2006; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). A much earlier study has been performed which aimed at identifying specific teachers' behaviour while promoting appropriate behaviour while suggesting strategies to reduce inappropriate behaviour (Anderson, Evertson & Brophy, 1979; Anderson, Evertson & Emmer, 1989). Meanwhile, more extensive studies in classroom management performed would involve observing teachers' behaviour during the teaching and learning activities. On a common ground, most research analyses would identify the influences of teachers' behaviour have towards students' interactions. This calls for further investigations on specific factors which contribute towards classroom management behaviour. Importantly, teachers need to have fitting communication characteristics in creating effective student-teacher interactions. In addition, teachers' concerns of students' management strategies in blended learning environment are needed so that they are more guided (Teoh, Kor & NurShaminah, 2017).

Effective communication skills and strategies hold the essence of quality classroom management and it would virtually pervades through all aspects of school life. However, this does not mean that it would provide the conclusive answers to the problems encountered by the educational administrators. Communication involves the sharing of information, ideas, and attitudes in ways that produce a degree of understanding between two or more people as informed by Lewis (1979, 1983). Communication is a relational process during which messages are transmitted using symbols, signs, and contextual cues to express meanings while having receivers construct similar understanding which subsequently influences behaviour. Essentially, it is undeniable that the success of classroom activities and students' learning are influenced by classroom management and communication skills.

To a large extent, communication skills could be another weighing factor for teachers' personal growth and career success. A survey performed by corporate recruiters revealed that good communication skills and ability to work with others are major influencers for a successful career (Morreale, Osborn, & Pearson, 2000). Teachers with interpersonal skills will not only benefit personal growth or career success but also positively affect students'

learning motivation. Importantly, teachers need to realize the magnitude of good communication skills have on teaching and learning. It believed that teaching is generally considered as only fifty percent knowledge and fifty percent interpersonal or communication skills. Communication skills for teachers are thus as important as their in-depth knowledge of the particular subject which they teach. Therefore, it is essential that teachers recognize that all students have different levels of strengths and weaknesses.

Communication is both receptive and expressive. Teachers need to be concerned with their students' receptive ability by identifying whether students are able to comprehend what they listened to and be able to lucidly articulate and demonstrate their knowledge while teaching through their expressive ability. The clarity of thoughts can be observed in the teachers' ability to transmit complex ideas into simpler parts and smaller steps for the students. This is a valuable skill to make learning more appealing for students topped with effective communication skills which are not isolated from good classroom management practices.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

It is essential for teachers to not only organize their classrooms but also be able to manage students' behaviour to accomplish positive learning outcomes (Emmer & Stough, 2011). It needs to be cautioned though that sound behaviour management is not a guarantee to effective instructions. However, it would establish an environmental context that would possibly lead to good instructions. Another caution that needs to be considered is that highly effective instruction is not a warranty that can eliminate classroom behavioural issues; therefore, it is critical for teachers to establish the environmental context in planning and initiating lessons. Perhaps, teachers may initiate a lesson from active questioning and answering warming up session to get some ideas of students' background knowledge. Nevertheless, teachers will need to continuously develop the skills in probing since it is an essential attribute to get initial measures of students' background knowledge and comprehension level.

Prior researches have illuminated that organized teaching methods have been an important element in the educational goals. However, it is essential for teachers to be able to communicate the intent of teaching

goals with effective skills and strategies to facilitate learning (Mortimer & Scottt, 2002). The ability to communicate is not the only factor or attribute that is necessary for an instructor to meet success in delivering knowledge but it could be argued that it is a critical factor or attribute in classroom management. Therefore, if teachers can communicate effectively, the likelihood of being a successful teacher in classroom management is high.

Caution needs to be considered that lack of or impaired interaction between teachers and students may lead to misbehaviour in the classroom. Sufficient planning, clear communication, and adequate guidance are necessary for student' success to occur. Moreno (2009) stated that teachers with good communication skills manage to deliver lesson in an attractive way. This way, teachers can manage the class to the level best indicating that communication skills can be properly discussed and connected to management styles in order to have a positive impact on students' behaviour. However, little is known regarding how outcomes of communication might differ with teachers' classroom management style. Essentially, this needs to be properly addressed since communication skills and management styles for classroom learning are always seen as isolated components.

Hence, this study aimed to investigate the practices of communication and management styles based on the following research objectives (RO):

RO1: To examine the teachers' level of communication skills (listening, ability to get message across, emotional management in the communication process, insight to the communication process and assertive communication).

RO2: To investigate level of communication skills between male teachers and female teachers.

RO3: To describe the percentages of the teachers with different categories of classroom management styles.

RO4: To investigate level of communication skills between/among different categories of classroom management styles.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the survey causal comparative research design with a total of 70 teachers randomly selected from all the primary schools in the state of Perak, Malaysia. Hence, findings of this study may be generalized to the population of teachers in Perak and perhaps may give some overall overview for teachers in Malaysia schools. The instruments used were questionnaires adopted and adapted from the survey done by Martin and Sass (2010), and Loy (2006). A total of 55 items on management styles and communication skills were included in the questionnaire. For the questionnaire in management styles, Martin and Sass (2010) have categorized management styles into ‘noninterventionist’, ‘interactionalist’, and ‘interventionist’ based on their justification of ranges in the mean score from the six Likert Scales. A five Likert Scale was used in this study for the justification of ‘noninterventionist’, ‘interactionalist’, and ‘interventionist’ based on the schema from Brannon (2010). The ranges were adjusted in accordance to the following ranges within the five scales namely; scores between 1.0 and 2.3 were coded as ‘noninterventionist’; scores between 2.4 and 3.7 were coded as ‘interactionalist’; and scores between 3.8 and 5.00 were coded as ‘interventionist’.

For the questionnaire in communication category, Loy (2006) used a five point Likert scale measurement for all items in the questionnaire namely; almost never, rarely, sometimes, quite often and most of the times. The skills of communication consist of ‘ability to get the message across’, ‘emotional management in the communication process’, ‘insight to the communication process’ and ‘assertive communication’. Since the scale ranges from ‘1’ to ‘5’, the mean score of 2.5 indicates the middle score of the indicator to differentiate of showing positive sign (if the mean score > 2.5) in the specific communication skills; and showing as negative sign (if the mean score < 2.5). However, justification of the mean indicator of communication skills was determined based on the five point Likert Scale ranges. The indicators are ‘Low Communication skill’, ‘Medium Communication skill’, and ‘High Communication skill’. For achieving the interpretation in communication skills, items which carry negative value were converted to a particular value. For example, in item ‘I find it hard to express my feeling’, the score ‘5’ was converted to ‘1’ and for the rest. A reliability test had been conducted for the instrument. The results showed

that the reliability for classroom management styles is 0.840 while the reliability for communication skills is 0.891.

FINDINGS

The following analyses were presented as required to fulfil the research questions. RQ1 attempts to identify the teachers' level of communication skills (listening, ability to get the message across, emotional management in the communication process, insight to the communication process and assertive communication). Table 1 illustrates the level of communication skills in terms of overall mean score (M=3.41, SD=0.32). The mean scores for each skill in the communication scales demonstrated that the values do not fall far from each other. The mean scores ranged from 3.15 to 3.67. Comparatively, 'ability to get message across' has shown relatively high among the teachers. The result obtained have indicated that the 'ability to get messages across' among the respondents is relatively high and does not fall far from the other sub-skills analysed.

Table 1: The Teacher's Communication Skills

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall Communication Skills	3.41	.32
listening	3.40	.69
ability to get message across	3.67	.76
emotional management in the communication process	3.38	.71
insight to the communication process	3.44	.84
assertive communication	3.15	.81

The next analysis aimed to investigate the level of communication skills between male teachers and female teachers. Results for RQ2 is set to light for any differences in communication skills between the two genders. Results in Table 2 disclosed that male teachers' and female teachers' overall communication skills are at the mean value of 3.51 (with standard deviation 0.24) and 3.35 (with standard deviation 0.35) respectively illustrating that the male and female teachers projected positive sign in communication. Based

on these indicators, the teachers are good in communication. Nevertheless, the descriptive results show that the male teachers obtained a comparatively higher score of mean than the female teachers in the statistics test, but it is noteworthy to mention that the t-test analysis for comparing the two means shows that the p-value is 0.05 which is close to the significant level of 0.05. Nevertheless, there is no strong evidence to conclude that there is a difference in the mean scores between male teachers and female teachers with $t = 1.999$ at 0.05 level.

Table 2: Independent Sample t-test between Male Teachers and Female Teachers

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	P
Communication	Male	25	3.51	.24	1.999	68	.050
	Female	45	3.35	.35			

In the next analysis, results were presented for answering RO3 which is to describe the percentages of the teachers with different categories of classroom management styles between male and female teachers. Table 3 aimed to describe the frequencies and percentages of respondents towards the styles of classroom management. In this study, the teachers were found to have two types of management styles, namely ‘interactionalist’ (with 42.9% or 30 teachers) and ‘interventionist’ (with 57.1% or 40 students).

Table 3: Classroom Management Styles Score

	Frequency	Percent
Interactionalist	30	42.9
Interventionist	40	57.1
Total	70	100.0

The following analysis aimed to investigate the communication skills between or among different classroom management styles teachers. The research question is referred as below: In the next analysis, results obtained will respond to RQ4 in which it seeks to identify for differences in communication skills involved between the different classroom management styles practised.

An independent sample t-test was used to analyse the differences in the communication skills between different classroom management styles since there are only two categories of management styles even though the interpretation of classroom management styles includes three different categories. Table 4 shows that the mean score of communication skill for interactionalist style is 3.33 (SD=0.33). While for interventionist style, the mean score of communication skill is 3.49 (SD=0.29). The descriptive results show that the interventionist style comparatively obtained a higher score of mean in communication skill than the interactionalist style. Besides that, the t-test analysis shows the p-value is 0.01 which is less than the significant level of 0.05. Hence, there is enough evidence to conclude that there is a significant difference in means scores in the communication skills (with $t = -2.637$, $p = 0.010$) between interactionalist style and interventionist style.

Table 4: Independent Sample t-test to Test on Communication Skills between Different Classroom Management Styles

	N	Mean (communication skills)	Std. Deviation	t	df	P
Interactionalist	30	3.33	.33	- 2.637	68	.010
Interventionist	40	3.49	.29			

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The overall results gathered for this study have illustrated that the teachers practised good communication skills with positive sign (with overall mean=3.41, standard deviation=0.32) in communicating their intentions and meanings. The findings indicated that teachers perceived that they are showing high indicator for the dimensions of communication skills. Their average mean scores in communication are higher than the middle score (middle score = 2.5) which is in high category of communication rating. However, the results indicated that the male teachers (with mean=3.51, standard deviation=0.24) obtained relatively higher mean score than the female teachers (with mean=3.35, standard deviation=0.35) when engaged with their preferred types of communication skills. This in line with the study by Andrews (2013) who discussed that one of area of distinction between

men and women is the way they talk in the workplace. The men are more inclined to pick up verbal cues, while the women are better at picking up non-verbal cues. In another early research, Merchant (2012) also found that gender differences in communication between men and women at the workplace was significant.

The results also revealed that characteristics of teachers fall in categories of ‘interventionists’ and ‘interactionalist’. Teachers who are interventionalists become proactive in providing consequences for students’ behaviour in studying as well as any other actions in school (Rahimi & Asadollahi, 2012). Hence, teachers who are ‘interventionalist’ practise more of face to face communication. Nevertheless, teachers who are ‘interactionalists’ always believe that students learn from interacting with peers (Ritter & Hancock, 2007; Glasser, 1997) suggesting that students communicate with their peers and not only with their teachers. This way, teachers could focus on guiding the students to act among their peers. Although it is essential for teachers to communicate within the teaching-learning environment, allowance and opportunities for students to communicate with their peers are still significantly important. It is also worthy to highlight that the findings of this study have also brought to light that male teachers have a higher mean of communication skills compared to the female teachers. The comparison reflected that male teachers are proactive enough in guiding students on how to act in school. The signs of proactive in communication is made visible from the statistics obtained among teachers who are ‘interventionalists’.

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