

Instructional and Organizational Skills of the Teacher for Effective Teaching and Learning in Primary and Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This paper examined instructional and organizational skills of the teacher for effective teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools. A teacher's instructional and organizational skills refer to their ability to effectively deliver content and maintain structured learning environments. The successful implementation of any curriculum necessitates the strategic application of these skills to facilitate the attainment of educational objective. This paper explores key dimensions of pedagogical proficiency, including classroom management, instructional skills for effective teaching, questioning techniques, disciplinary strategies, classroom communication (and its various forms), and reinforcement practices such as rewards and sanctions. These elements represent essential tools that professional educators must deploy to promote effective teaching and learning. The paper also examined barriers to effective communication in the classroom, and motivation.

Keywords: pedagogical proficiency, classroom management, instructional skills, disciplinary strategies, motivation

Introduction

Teachers across elementary and secondary levels, in both public and private school settings, are increasingly confronted with students who exhibit challenging behavioural issues. Currently, there is no universally adopted behavioural intervention framework guiding student conduct across schools. As a result, school administrators often resort to individualized disciplinary strategies, leading to significant inconsistencies in behavioural management. This lack of uniformity contributes to classroom instability and disrupts effective teaching and learning. Compounding the

issue, many parents express resistance to disciplinary measures they perceive as overly stringent. Consequently, some choose to withdraw their children from schools with strict policies, seeking institutions with more lenient approaches. This parental response has exacerbated student mobility and created continuity challenges within the educational system.

The concept of skill denotes a level of expertise or competence. In the context of education, a teacher's instructional and organizational skills refer to their ability to effectively deliver content and maintain structured learning environments. The successful implementation of any curriculum necessitates the strategic application of these skills to facilitate the attainment of educational objectives. This chapter explores key dimensions of pedagogical proficiency, including classroom management, questioning techniques, disciplinary strategies, classroom communication (and its various forms), and reinforcement practices such as rewards and sanctions. These elements represent essential tools that professional educators must deploy to promote effective teaching and learning.

What is Classroom Management

Classroom management encompasses a diverse array of skills and strategies that teachers employ to maintain order, ensure student engagement, foster attentiveness, and sustain academic productivity during instructional time. According to Mbakwem (2014), classroom management involves the methods and techniques an educator utilizes to create and sustain a conducive learning environment. Effective teachers are often distinguished by their strong classroom management capabilities, whereas less effective or inexperienced educators typically struggle with classroom disorder, where students may exhibit off-task behaviours or disengagement.

Traditionally, classroom management has been associated with ensuring student compliance such as following instructions, sitting quietly, or maintaining attention. However, contemporary understandings extend beyond behavioural compliance to encompass a broader spectrum of teacher actions that facilitate learning. These include fostering a positive classroom climate, encouraging respectful interactions, using affirming language, and demonstrating fairness and emotional support. Menenu (2018) opines that classroom management remains an overlooked aspect of secondary education, despite its critical role in the success or failure of instructional delivery. Ineffective classroom management can adversely affect the overall academic performance of a school. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to cultivate and apply robust classroom management techniques to enhance student outcomes and institutional effectiveness.

Classroom Management Activities

According to Mbakwem (2014), classroom management involves a range of deliberate and structured activities, including planning, organizing, coordinating, directing, and controlling various classroom elements to achieve specific instructional objectives. These activities are essential in creating a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning.

- **Planning:** The teacher engages in pre-instructional planning by identifying educational goals, selecting appropriate teaching strategies, and determining the resources necessary for instructional delivery. This involves aligning lesson plans with curriculum objectives, identifying suitable instructional materials, and devising strategies to encourage active student participation prior to classroom interaction.
- **Organising:** Effective classroom management requires the teacher to structure both the physical and instructional components of the classroom. This includes arranging the seating

plan to foster engagement, preparing teaching materials in a logical sequence, and embedding discipline-related expectations that support the learning process.

- **Coordinating and Controlling:** Teachers are responsible for harmonising classroom activities and maintaining order by supervising student behaviour. This entails ensuring adherence to classroom rules, guiding student actions, and intervening when necessary to maintain discipline and productive engagement.
- **Directing:** Teachers play a pivotal role in motivating and guiding students. This involves giving clear instructions, encouraging participation in academic tasks such as group discussions, creative writing, and problem-solving activities, and fostering an environment that promotes constructive behaviour. Classroom management, in this regard, is not merely about reacting to misbehaviour but proactively creating systems to prevent disruptions and promote positive conduct.

Techniques of Classroom Management

The National Education Association (2007) outlines several practical techniques that educators can adopt to maintain order and maximise classroom productivity:

- **Assertive Classroom Presence:** Teachers should establish authority by securing the attention of all students before initiating lessons. This means refraining from beginning instruction until all students are seated and attentive. Instead of using loud verbal commands, nonverbal cues such as sustained eye contact or strategic silence can effectively command attention and establish control.
- **Address Disruptions Strategically:** When students display disruptive behaviour or are disengaged, teachers can use subtle, nonverbal cues such as pausing the lesson, moving closer to the disruptive students, or making eye contact to redirect their attention. Alternatively, engaging such students directly by posing questions or involving them in the discussion can reorient their focus without escalating the situation.
- **Allow Seat Choice Initially:** At the start of the academic year, students may be permitted to choose their own seats for the first few days. This promotes a sense of ownership and comfort. Thereafter, students should be informed that the seat they choose will be their permanent seat for the term or academic year. This approach can foster accountability, as students tend to behave better in self-selected environments to avoid being reassigned.
- **Maintain Constant Visual Supervision:** Teachers should ensure maximum visibility of the classroom by positioning themselves where they can see most if not all students. Avoiding a fixed movement pattern and unpredictably shifting positions within the room can deter misbehaviour, as students remain uncertain about when they might come under direct observation.
- **Set Clear Consequences for Misconduct:** Effective classroom management begins on the first day of school. Establishing firm but fair behavioural expectations from the outset helps create a structured environment. Students must understand that misbehaviour has consequences. Implementing a consistent and transparent disciplinary system reinforces expectations and supports a respectful classroom culture.

Establishing Effective Classroom Consequences

To ensure a well-managed classroom, teachers should first determine which consequences are likely to be effective for their specific group of students. This involves identifying actions that students are keen to avoid. For instance, adolescents typically dislike remaining in class after

lessons have ended or being relocated from their self-selected seats. Leveraging these preferences can aid in reinforcing discipline.

Teachers should also investigate what students value and introduce desirable incentives as motivators for positive behaviour. This approach ensures that classroom management is not exclusively punitive but includes affirmative strategies that reinforce appropriate conduct and engagement. It is crucial to note that classroom management does not need to rely solely on negative reinforcement. When well-implemented, it can be balanced with motivational techniques that enhance student cooperation and create a productive learning environment.

Instructional Skills for Effective Teaching

Instructional skills refer to the specific techniques and behaviours employed by teachers to facilitate learning. These include questioning, discussion, direction-giving, demonstration, planning, structuring content, maintaining focus, and managing classroom dynamics. Each of these skills contributes to achieving the intended instructional objectives and enhancing student outcomes.

Planning Skills

Planning is the foundation of effective instruction. It begins with thoughtful reflection on how to enhance learning outcomes and meet educational goals. Whether a teacher is introducing a new subject or revising an existing one, careful planning ensures a positive impact on student learning and achievement.

Key elements of planning include:

- **Formulation of Instructional Objectives:** Teachers must articulate the intended learning outcomes in clear, specific, and measurable terms. These objectives serve as benchmarks for assessing student progress.
- **Selection of Instructional Materials:** Resources should be chosen to support the lesson and make learning tangible and engaging. When materials are not readily available, teachers may need to create or adapt resources to suit their instructional needs.
- **Development of Teaching Strategies:** A teacher must identify appropriate methods for delivering content and engaging learners. Teaching strategies are the structured techniques used to transmit knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. These strategies should be suited to the students' age, classroom context, and time constraints.
- **Content Determination and Time Management:** Teachers should allocate time efficiently to cover content within the allotted period without encroaching on other lessons. Proper time management enhances the coherence of the lesson and respects the academic schedule.
- **Assessment Planning:** Teachers should identify suitable assessment methods to evaluate student learning. As Awotua-Efebo (1999) explains, assessment is a systematic process through which teachers gauge the extent of student achievement following instructional delivery. It helps determine whether the set objectives have been met.

Questioning as an Instructional Strategy

Questioning is a fundamental instructional technique used to achieve defined learning outcomes. It involves asking interrogative statements that either test students' understanding or stimulate cognitive engagement. Effective questioning requires advance preparation, as poorly structured or randomly posed questions may lack coherence and fail to activate the desired thinking processes. Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) emphasise that one key function of questioning is to help

learners retrieve and connect prior knowledge with new content. By tapping into what students already know, teachers lay the groundwork for deeper and more meaningful learning.

The **Key Stage Three National Strategy for Foundation Subjects** (2002) also highlights questioning as a vital tool for assessing student knowledge, stimulating critical thinking, encouraging active participation, and managing classroom interactions. Effective questioning, therefore, plays a dual role facilitating learning while simultaneously monitoring comprehension. However, the effectiveness of questioning largely depends on who poses the questions and how they are asked. If teachers dominate the discussion with excessive questioning, students may become passive participants. Therefore, teachers must be intentional about the purpose and nature of the questions they pose (Wilson & Smetana, 2011).

Purpose of Questioning

The instructional value of questioning has been recognized since antiquity. Socrates used questioning in the fifth century B.C. to challenge assumptions and stimulate philosophical inquiry. In contemporary education, questioning serves a variety of purposes. According to Schurr (2000), questions are used to provoke curiosity, stimulate critical thought, initiate discussions, review content, challenge assumptions, encourage risk-taking, motivate learners, and evaluate understanding.

Harrop and Swinson (2003) argue that questioning remains a crucial indicator of teaching quality and should be prioritized as a core instructional skill. The development of high-quality questioning techniques is essential to enhance the learning process.

Levels and Types of Questions

Effective questioning must align with well-defined educational objectives. Teachers should formulate questions that require students to apply specific cognitive skills. **Bloom's Taxonomy** (1956) provides a useful framework, categorizing thinking skills into a hierarchy from lower to higher-order functions. This taxonomy assists instructors in designing questions that match their learning goals and foster cognitive development.

Questions are broadly classified into two types:

- **Low-Level Questions:** Also known as recall or knowledge-based questions, these require students to retrieve specific facts from memory. Though frequently used, they often limit deeper intellectual engagement. Research suggests that these questions constitute 50% to 80% of classroom questioning (Black, 2001).
- **High-Level Questions:** These include interpretive, inferential, and evaluative questions. They encourage learners to go beyond simple recall by analysing, synthesising, or evaluating information. According to Sahin and Kulm (2006), only about 20% of classroom questions fall into this category, despite their significant value in promoting critical thinking.

Prompting and Probing Questions

Probing questions are open-ended and challenge students to think beyond surface-level responses. Although long recognised for their educational benefits, such questions are not widely used by many teachers. Probing questions encourage learners to elaborate on their reasoning, apply prior knowledge, and explore new concepts or perspectives.

When used consistently, these questions cultivate a deeper level of understanding and transform the classroom into a dynamic environment for intellectual exploration. Teachers who employ probing techniques promote active learning and empower students to construct their own understanding.

Guiding Questions

Although the literature appears to be limited on the subject of guiding questions, a few studies have addressed the concept either directly or indirectly. Kawanaka and Stigler (1999) explore guiding questions, defining them as questions that steer students to engage in discourse, analyze problems, and formulate mathematical concepts and procedures. Similarly, Ortenzi (2002) refers to what he terms "leading" or "helping" questions, which can equally be interpreted as guiding questions. In instances where a student appears uncertain about the next step in problem-solving, the teacher may intervene with a prompt such as, "Which method do you need to use now?". Ortenzi (2002), however, cautions that while such questions are helpful, they may inadvertently encourage convergent thinking, subtly directing students to align with the teacher's preferred line of reasoning.

Questioning Skills

Regardless of the type of question employed in teaching, educators must acquire specific questioning skills to ensure their effectiveness. These skills include the following:

- **Clarity and Coherence:** Questions posed to students must be precise and free from ambiguity. An unclear or convoluted question is often described as a "barreled" question. To maintain clarity, such questions should be carefully structured and thoughtfully planned.
- **Pausing and Pacing:** After posing a question, teachers should pause momentarily and scan the classroom for non-verbal cues that may indicate a student's readiness to respond. These cues might include a raised hand, a slightly open mouth, a forward lean, or widened eyes. The duration of the pause also serves as an implicit signal, encouraging students to reflect and engage.
- **Directing and Distributing Questions:** This involves strategically addressing questions to less active or disengaged students. By explicitly calling a student by name, the teacher not only commands attention but also fosters a sense of recognition and confidence in the learner. Teachers should avoid accepting chorus answers and instead redirect questions when necessary, offering nods or encouraging remarks to sustain engagement. Moreover, equitable distribution of questions across the front, middle, and back rows ensures inclusivity and a sense of belonging for all students.

Discipline

The term "discipline" is interpreted in various ways across different fields, yet within the realm of teacher education, it is viewed as a cornerstone for institutional functionality and the attainment of educational goals. In higher education, it may refer to a field of study; however, in the classroom, it is often associated with self-control, adherence to established rules, and appropriate behavioural standards. According to Ali, Dada, Isiaka, and Salmon (2014), a disciplined student is one whose actions align with the rules and expectations of the academic institution.

True discipline goes beyond mere compliance; it also involves the learner's moral awareness discerning right from wrong. It is widely recognized as fundamental to a positive school climate that supports effective learning. Indiscipline by contrast, manifests in various forms such as disobedience, and destruction of school property. Other forms include: negative attitudes towards

learning, immoral conduct, drug abuse, theft, lateness, truancy, lack of personal hygiene, use of foul language, rudeness, and involvement in cult activities (Omote, Thinguri, & Moenga, 2015). Discipline should be holistic, exemplified not only by students but also by teachers and school administrators to support the mission of teacher education. Unfortunately, many students today exhibit habitual truancy, often influencing their peers negatively. Some leave school premises without permission or arrive at school unprepared, lacking essential learning materials such as books and writing tools. Others refuse to complete homework or participate in class assessments clear indicators of indiscipline.

Teachers, too, may fall short by becoming overly familiar with students of the opposite sex, exhibiting laissez-faire attitudes, delivering poorly prepared lessons, or lacking professional ethics. It is crucial for school administrators' principals, head teachers, department heads to adopt effective leadership styles such as autocratic, democratic, or laissez-faire to support teachers in managing classroom discipline. Ultimately, enforcing discipline is not optional but a professional imperative for sustaining the integrity of the educational process.

Classroom Communication

Effective communication is at the heart of successful teaching techniques. Communication, defined as the process of transmitting information into long-term memory, involves attention, organisation, and repetition. It is essential for both teachers and students, as it enhances teaching effectiveness by sparking interest, simplifying content, and ensuring comprehension. Thus, effective communication is the ability to convey ideas clearly and at an appropriate level of complexity.

Teaching and learning inherently rely on communication. In the classroom, both verbal and non-verbal communication must be employed to ensure that instruction is understood. Lecturers should modulate their voice in terms of volume, tone, and inflection to capture students' attention. Non-verbal communication such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and body posture also plays a critical role. Lang et al. highlight that such cues convey meaning and can help an educator control and engage the class more effectively.

The Communication Circuit

For communication to be effective, it must involve the following components: the sender, the message, the medium (vehicle), and the receiver.

- **The Sender:** Also known as the encoder, the sender originates the message. According to Awotua-Efebo (1999), the credibility of the sender enhances the weight and acceptance of the message.
- **The Message:** This is the content be it facts, emotions, or instructions—that is communicated. The meaning of a message is crucial, yet it is susceptible to distortion by context or careless reinterpretation. Semantics highlights the risk of conflating facts with assumptions, value judgments, or personal biases.
- **The Vehicle (Medium):** This refers to the channel through which the message is transmitted. In classroom settings, instructional media serve as this channel, whether visual, audio, or audio-visual. Teachers may either deliver the message directly or use educational media to enhance understanding.
- **The Receiver:** Also referred to as the decoder, the receiver is the intended audience of the message. In educational contexts, the student is the ultimate target of communication efforts.

Purpose of Communication

Beyond the transfer of knowledge, communication in education serves to motivate students, identify their aspirations, and address any challenges they face. While both verbal and non-verbal communication is vital, effective verbal communication is particularly crucial for nurturing teacher-student relationships, which are foundational to students' cognitive growth. It allows teachers insight into students' thoughts and concerns, while students gain clarity on the teacher's expectations and subject knowledge.

This open, respectful atmosphere fosters a healthy classroom climate grounded in mutual trust. Communication occurs through multiple channels and underpins classroom management, pedagogy, and interpersonal interactions. Moreover, communication skills should be explicitly taught in teacher training. Teaching is best seen as a dynamic exchange, where both educators and learners contribute. This exchange thrives on several communication-driven principles: (a) passion and expressiveness, (b) fairness and empathy, (c) critical thinking through varied instructional approaches, and (d) humour and approachability. These elements help students connect academic concepts to real-life situations, facilitating deeper understanding and practical application (Weheba & Kedar, 2007).

Types of Communication

Communication encompasses various methods through which individuals exchange information. For instance, verbal communication may be utilised during presentations, while written communication is often employed when applying for jobs or sending emails. Broadly, communication can be categorised into four primary types: verbal, non-verbal, written, and visual.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication refers to the use of language—either spoken or sign language to transmit information. It remains one of the most prevalent forms of communication, widely used in contexts such as presentations, video conferencing, telephone conversations, meetings, and face-to-face interactions. Its efficiency makes it a critical mode of conveying messages in educational and professional settings.

Non-verbal Communication

This form of communication involves conveying information through body language, gestures, and facial expressions. Non-verbal communication may be intentional or unintentional. For example, an individual may smile unconsciously upon receiving pleasing information. Such cues provide valuable insight into a person's thoughts and emotions. Closed body postures—like crossed arms, legs, or hunched shoulders may signify anxiety, anger, or nervousness. Conversely, open body language, such as having both feet on the ground and arms relaxed by the side or placed on a surface, typically indicates positivity and receptiveness.

Written Communication

Written communication involves the representation of information using written symbols such as letters and numbers. This method is especially valuable for creating a permanent record of messages. It is employed extensively through mediums like books, brochures, blogs, letters, memos, and more recently, emails and chat platforms in formal workplace contexts. The reliability and clarity of written communication make it indispensable in both academic and administrative domains.

Visual Communication

Visual communication entails conveying information through images, artwork, diagrams, sketches, charts, and graphs. Often integrated into presentations, visuals support verbal and written communication by adding context and enhancing comprehension. Considering that individuals possess varied learning styles, visual aids can be particularly effective for those who assimilate information more readily through visual input.

Barriers to Effective Communication in the Classroom

While communication ideally represents a seamless exchange of information, certain factors may hinder this process. These hindrances, known as communication barriers, refer to any element that disrupts, distorts, or impedes the transmission of messages (Mshiu & Nyangwine, 2001). In the classroom, the clarity and repetition of instructional messages can be obstructed by several barriers, including daydreaming, poor listening, physical discomfort, confusion over referents, and excessive verbalisation.

Daydreaming

Daydreaming occurs when an individual's attention drifts away from the immediate task, whether mental or physical, to a personal, imaginative space. These mental diversions often involve replaying past events or envisioning future scenarios. A student may appear attentive looking directly at the teacher while in reality, their thoughts are disengaged and unrelated to the lesson.

Listening

The development of effective listening skills is vital for successful communication. Comprehension and retention are contingent upon active listening. All aforementioned communication barriers directly impact students' ability to listen effectively, thereby reducing their academic engagement and understanding.

Physical Discomfort

Physical discomfort defined as persistent but non-severe irritation or pain can distract students and impair their ability to focus. Factors such as uncomfortable seating arrangements or inadequate classroom ventilation may significantly undermine students' attention and concentration during lessons.

Confusion over Referent

A referent denotes a real or imagined entity, concept, place, or experience to which a word or phrase refers. When students draw on past experiences to make sense of new material, this is considered a positive transfer of learning. However, if previously learned concepts interfere with the understanding of new information, this results in referent confusion, obstructing comprehension.

Excessive Verbalisation

The teaching-learning process should be interactive, encouraging active student participation rather than passive reception. Excessive verbalisation occurs when a teacher monopolises classroom discourse. While verbal explanation is necessary, overuse can lead to cognitive fatigue and diminishing engagement. Therefore, educators should be conscious of the potential for diminishing returns when over-relying on extended monologues, as it may hinder rather than facilitate learning.

Motivation

Motivation represents one of the most critical elements that educators must cultivate to enhance learning outcomes. Williams and Williams (2011) identify five pivotal components influencing student motivation: the student, teacher, content, instructional methods, and the learning environment. Motivation is defined as the act or process of stimulating interest and effort, the

condition of being motivated, and the internal or external force that compels action and sustains effort toward achieving specific goals. Gregory (2009) underscores student motivation as a fundamental determinant of educational quality. Observable indicators of motivated learners include attentiveness, prompt engagement with tasks, proactive questioning, willingness to respond, and evident enthusiasm.

Two significant elements environment and motivation are central to teaching. Student motivation may be categorised as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsically motivated learners are driven by an internal desire to understand and engage with content, independent of external rewards. Conversely, extrinsically motivated students are dependent on outcomes such as grades or other rewards. Lei (in Eskja, 2017) notes that extrinsically motivated individuals are at a higher risk of lower academic performance compared to their intrinsically motivated counterparts. Interestingly, research suggests that non-traditional students often exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation than traditional students.

Factors to Consider When Motivating Students to Learn

Use of Teaching Aids

Teaching aids are essential tools that capture students' interest and enhance the concreteness of learning content. These aids foster engagement and stimulate meaningful interaction between educators and learners, making abstract concepts more tangible and comprehensible.

Reinforcement (Reward and Punishment)

Reinforcement, a key pedagogical strategy, serves to shape and modify behaviour. It may take the form of positive reinforcement, which rewards desired behaviour, or negative reinforcement, which discourages undesired actions. While punishment can temporarily suppress inappropriate behaviour, it is generally ineffective in producing long-term behavioural change. Its primary role is to create a temporary pause during which corrective instruction may be delivered. Upon the emergence of desired behaviour, appropriate rewards should be administered by figures of authority, including teachers, school officials, religious leaders, or community figures.

Praise is a particularly effective form of reinforcement. Verbal praise can include expressions such as "correct," "splendid," "excellent," "fantastic," and "brilliant." Non-verbal praise might involve gestures like eye contact, smiling, or nodding in approval. Extra-verbal praise may consist of expressive sounds such as "mmm" or "ahh," or a combination of the three modes. However, it is crucial that verbal praise is used judiciously, as excessive repetition may reduce its motivational value.

Conclusion

Instructional and organisational competencies are indispensable attributes for any professional teacher tasked with effective curriculum implementation across subject areas. A teacher should not perceive themselves as a completed product upon earning a certification or degree. Rather, the teaching profession demands continuous growth and improvement, which necessitates ongoing professional development through participation in in-service training programmes and related capacity-building initiatives.

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