

THE SUBJECTIVE VIEW OF SLOVAK TEACHERS ON DISCIPLINE IN CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT: *Disruptive behaviour and lack of (self)discipline can cause significant time losses during lessons. Through the questionnaire intended for Slovak teachers of primary education we have investigated the need and relevance to solve the issue of discipline from the teacher point of view. The research is carried out within the project “Discipline management in the classroom at the primary school”. The basic project objective is to create, apply and evaluate an optimal model of discipline management in primary classroom.*

KEY WORDS: *primary education, pupil behaviour, discipline management, teachers subjective view on discipline*

School environment in Slovakia has a problem which is connected with strategic management of education and discipline in the classroom. There is a lack of long-term and purposely leadership to the discipline, to the responsibility for myself and others, improving student's personal and social skills and last, but not least, the education to the self-discipline. Freiberg defines discipline as "the ability of individuals – students – working in academic environment without interference to the rights, freedom and responsibility of other pupils and adults" (Freiberg, 2006, p. 738) and also the teacher's ability to manage education without time losses, requires the teacher's focus on the prevention of inappropriate behaviour and on the intervention in already existing manifestation of the pupil's inappropriate behaviour. (Self) discipline can be seen as the working ability for effective performance and accountability in education without interfering into the rights, freedoms and responsibilities of their peers and the class manager. It is the ability to bear the personal and social responsibility in the classroom and learning environment that guarantees the sense of security for all participants in the educational process (teachers and pupils). The primary task of the teacher is to support and reward the appropriate behaviour of pupils. At the same time teacher has to look for a proactive solving of inappropriate behaviour. Lewis within the previous twenty-five years summarizing of his experiences relating to behaviour management of pupils is aware of the immediate needs of many teachers for systematic management that ensure order in their classroom rights by supporting appropriate behaviour of pupils and sets expectations of this kind of behaviour (Lewis, 2009). All pupils should have the opportunity to learn in the classroom as much as possible and all decisions concerning the classroom management should be addressed through short classroom meetings and should not restrict the time of educational process, which should be devoted to instructional process. In our conditions Doušková and Cangelosi highlight the importance of the business climate in teaching, they talk about instructional process "where pupils and teachers behave as if the achievement of educational objectives was more important than everything else" (Cangelosi, 1994, p. 97; Doušková, 2012).

If the teacher wants to effectively manage the discipline and teaching activities of pupils, they need to know exactly what kind of pupil's behaviour during the education process is appropriate and what is inappropriate. They need to focus on supporting the appropriate behaviour instead of highlight

the inappropriate behaviour. Doušková identifies manifestations of behaviour of pupils in a school classroom in Slovakia:

- Manifestations of *appropriate behaviour* of pupils: they raise the hand, do not interrupt conversation of others, are courteous, satisfied, willing to help, honest, diligent, friendly, kind, reliable, tidy, able to risk, able to share, good listeners, enthusiastic, brave, well concentrated, helpful, happy, raise hand etc.
- Manifestations of *inappropriate behaviour* of pupils: they are constantly moving or fidgeting / cannot control the urge to constantly move or fidget, looking out of the window, play with something, read aloud, chat with classmates, rattle the chair, jump from their place, shout, make faces, are angry, refuse to respect instructions, do the opposite of what is claimed, rude, impolite, selfish, violent, dishonest in the classroom, moody, not respecting, mock others, distracted, hurt other, interrupt the conversation of others, interrupt the lecture, clown and so on (Doušková, 2012).

Are teachers aware of the problems with discipline and classroom management?

Searching, finding and using appropriate prevention and intervention programs can help many teachers to manage their lessons more effectively. Therefore, a research team led by Professor Alena Doušková address intensively the issue of discipline in primary education in Slovakia during the last year. The dominant aim of the project VEGA 1/0223/16 titled *Discipline management in the classroom at the primary school*, based on the comparison of the Slovak and European approaches to coping strategies of negative situations at school is to create, verify and evaluate optimal model of discipline management that targets the reduction of frequency of inappropriate behaviour of pupils during the instruction. The research team consists of five members of the Department of Elementary and Pre-school Education at the Faculty of Education of Matej Bel University. Team members have extensive experience in dealing with scientific grants. They have already cooperated with different faculties of education abroad. For the needs of the projects they will continue in the cooperation with Windesheim University of Applied Sciences in Zwolle. The research objective

is to find an optimal model of discipline management, especially for the needs of school practice and more effective teaching at the primary school level in Slovakia.

In the first phase we were interested in how the Slovak teachers of primary education perceive discipline in their classrooms. We analysed and described the current state of discipline management in the Slovak primary classroom. In this phase it was necessary to determine the timeliness and importance of addressing the discipline management in the classrooms. Through a questionnaire we investigated opinions of teachers of primary education about provision of discipline management in the classrooms at the primary school. The research sample consists of 30 Slovak teachers of primary education. Respondents reflected the nine statements in the questionnaire: 1. *I am satisfied with the discipline in my class.* 2. *I consider inappropriate behaviour of pupils, and thus a lack of discipline, as the current problem that creates difficulties for primary education teachers.* 3. *Desirable behaviour of pupils in a class is a prerequisite for effective teaching.* 4. *Disruptive behaviour of pupils in a class is an obstacle to effective teaching.* 5. *Implementation of optimal preventive measures and behaviour improves education and streamlines the learning process.* 6. *Every teacher has adequate procedures for dealing with inappropriate behaviour of students (i.e. their own concept of managing discipline in the classroom).* 7. *Each graduate of faculty of education for primary education acquires the skills needed for the management of discipline in the classroom during studies.* 8. *At schools, the management issues of discipline in the classroom are given enough attention in the form of regular training activities.* 9. *Teachers regularly engage parents in cooperation regarding the behaviour of pupils during the learning process and beyond.* Teachers reflected the level of agreement with statements on a 5-point ordinal scale (from “- -” completely disagree to “++” completely agree).

The research data show that the majority of the Slovak teachers are not satisfied (46.7%) or not satisfied at all (33.3%) with discipline in their classroom (Tab. 1).

Table 1 Intensity of agreement with the statements of Slovak (SR) samples.

Statements		SR				
		- -	-	- +	+	++
1. I am satisfied with the discipline in my class.	N	10	14	1	5	0

Statements	SR					
		- -	-	- +	+	+ +
	%	33.3	46.7	3.3	16.7	0
2. I consider inappropriate behaviour of pupils, and thus a lack of discipline, as the current problem that creates difficulties for primary education teachers.	N	2	4	2	13	9
	%	6.7	13.3	6.7	43.3	30
3. Desirable behaviour of pupils in a class is a prerequisite for effective teaching.	N	0	0	0	6	24
	%	0	0	0	20	80
4. Disruptive behaviour of pupils in a class is an obstacle to effective teaching.	N	1	0	1	11	17
	%	3.3	0	3.3	36.7	56.7
5. Implementation of optimal preventive measures and behaviour improves education and streamlines the learning process.	N	0	0	4	10	16
	%	0	0	13.3	33.3	53.3
6. Every teacher has adequate procedures for dealing with inappropriate behaviour of students (i.e. their own concept of managing discipline in the classroom).	N	1	5	3	12	9
	%	3.3	16.7	10	40	30
7. Each graduate of faculty of education for primary education acquires the skills needed for the management of discipline in the classroom during studies.	N	4	13	4	3	6
	%	13.3	43.3	13.3	10	20
8. At schools, the management issues of discipline in the classroom are given enough attention in the form of regular training activities.	N	6	14	5	1	4
	%	20	46.7	16.7	3.3	13.3
9. Teachers regularly engage parents in cooperation regarding the behaviour of pupils during the learning process and beyond.	N	4	5	1	12	8
	%	13.3	16.7	3.3	40	26.7

Majority (73.3%) of respondents completely agree or agree with the statement that the *inappropriate behaviour of pupils and therefore lack of discipline is the current problem*, which creates difficulties for teachers of primary education at high level. Slovak teachers consider discipline management in the classroom as a current problem. We were interested in the opinions of the research sample – whether implementation of optimal preventive measures and education to discipline improves and streamlines the instruction process. The majority of teachers agree (53.3% completely agree, 33.3% agree) with this statement.

Majority of respondents (70%) believes that teachers in Slovakia have adequate procedures for dealing with manifestations of inappropriate behaviour

of pupils. In the field of teacher training on the discipline management in the classroom during their studies at Pedagogical Faculty – respondents agree, that each teacher graduate acquires competencies necessary for management of discipline in the classroom.

Is discipline in the classroom one of the basic prerequisites of effective instruction process? All of respondents (100%) agree with this statement. Almost all of them (93.4%) agreed with the statement that the disruptive behaviour of pupils in the classroom is a barrier to effective instruction process. Do teachers in Slovakia devote sufficient time to education towards discipline, or self-discipline of pupils? 46.7% and 20% of respondents disagree and completely disagree, respectively, with the statement that there is enough attention devoted to management issues of discipline in the classroom in the form of educational activities. From these premises it can be concluded that simultaneously 66.7% of respondents agree, or completely agree with the statement that the teachers regularly involve parents in cooperation regarding the behaviour of pupils during the instruction process.

Conclusion

The research implies that the discipline in the Slovak school classrooms is a current problem. We found out how Slovak teachers of primary education perceive discipline in the classroom, the interesting fact is that the teachers do not consider appropriate behaviour as an implication for effective teaching, but on the other hand the teacher considers inappropriate behaviour as the reason that does not lead to effective teaching. We can say that serious discovery is that Slovak teachers make a statement that they have the adequate tools for handling inappropriate behaviour of pupils. We have to stress the fact that the organization and regulation of the class teaching, as well as creating proper conditions for teaching and learning, are fully in teacher's competence. The teacher is in charge of all of this. The selection of the teaching strategies, learning, supporting pupil's learning and management of the class teaching depends on teachers and their professional competencies. A successful teacher - class manager is able to reflect the need for changes in the discipline management in the classroom. This teacher has thought out questions in the field of classroom management and discipline, based on the knowledge of the individual needs of pupils and he is continuously

working to prevent inappropriate behaviour and carry out intervention in cases of existing manifestations of this behaviour.

Education to self-discipline requires from the teachers to significantly and deliberately strengthen appropriate behaviour of pupils, carry out correction and prevention of inappropriate behaviour through preventive programs, and education towards discipline and self-discipline. Project *Discipline management in the classroom at the primary school*, intends to satisfy the needs of teachers and help to find solutions of problems in this field. In the context of searching for the optimal model of classroom management at this stage, it is important to discover and describe most frequent manifestations of inappropriate behaviour of pupils and intervention of inappropriate behaviour by teachers in individual systems.

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