Classroom Management: Do Teacher Efficacy and Experience Matter?

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INTRODUCTION

Today's teachers are charged with educating and managing classrooms filled with children who have growing and diverging needs, all while navigating the context of dwindling resources and increased expectations (Woolfolk, 2010). Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that one in ten teachers do not return to the profession for a second year, and nearly half leave within five years (Kaiser, 2011). Among the major concerns cited by teachers who have left the profession is the difficulty associated with classroom management (Sprick, Knight, Reinke, Skyles, & Barnes, 2010). Research has indicated that novice teachers are significantly less confident than experienced teachers in their ability to manage disruptive and non-compliant students in the classroom (Moran & Mayall, 2010). This study examines the efficacy perceptions of teachers, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) found that the reversal can also be true in that teachers who have low self-efficacy will not put the required effort to succeed. The evidence-based classroom management strategies that are at the heart of this study are embodied in the acronym "STOIC" as developed by Sprick et al., (1998). The STOIC model represents what Sprick and colleagues have deemed to be five essential components of a successful classroom management plan: Structure (for success), Teach expectations, Observe and monitor, Interact positively, Correct fluently. The strategies of STOIC tend to be proactive and preventative rather than reactive or punitive. While STOIC may not be a widely known acronym across the field of education, the strategies are not unique ideas nor a pre-packaged intervention to which teachers must subscribe (Sprick et al., 2010).

OBJECTIVES

1. Determine if teachers differ with respect to their use of STOIC classroom management strategies based upon their years of teaching experience and/or their level of classroom management self-efficacy.
2. Gain an understanding of the behavior challenges that teachers face in today's classrooms as well as the sources and helpful on-the-job support of their classroom management strategy development.

METHODS

Survey components: Classroom management items from the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) created by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) (c = .896) - Items from the STOIC Checklist created by Sprick et al., (2010) which were transformed into a Likert scale format (c = .854) - Questions seeking demographic and qualitative information - The survey was distributed to approximately 1100 teachers in one large NH school district. At the completion of the survey, participants were automatically provided with several online resources regarding STOIC classroom management strategies.

RESULTS

1. ANOVA was used to determine if teachers differed with respect to their use of STOIC classroom management strategies based upon their years of teaching experience and/or their level of classroom management self-efficacy.
2. Tertiary splits of independent variables: Years of Teaching: 1-12, 13-20, 21-40 and Self-Efficacy: High, Medium, and Low
3. The MANOVA results for years of teaching experience were not significant, F(10, 312) = .34, p = .97, n = .01
4. The MANOVA results for level of classroom management self-efficacy were not significant, F(10, 366) = 6.67, p = .00, n = .18

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

1. Teachers' self-efficacy in their ability to manage the behavior in their classroom, rather than their years of teaching experience, predicts the likelihood that they frequently use research-based, proactive classroom management strategies as outlined above in STOIC. School psychologists should not rely on the amount of experience a teacher has to estimate his/her ability to manage a classroom using research based techniques. If they must estimate a teacher's use of research based techniques, school psychologists can assess a teacher's self-efficacy to manage the behavior in their classroom.
2. Teachers demonstrated a greater sense of confidence in their classroom management abilities particularly related to the physical structure of their room, establishing expectations and routines, and setting behavioral management practices that are highly acceptable and respectful. Teachers may benefit from continued support with explicitly teaching and re-teaching expectations, circulating and monitoring the classroom frequently, and interacting positively with students more often than negatively.
3. Responses to qualitative questions have several implications:
   - Teachers find disruptive, aggressive, and disengaged behaviors to be the most significant challenges they have encountered in their classrooms and might benefit from additional training and support in interventions and classroom management techniques specifically targeting these behaviors.
   - Teachers reported learning the most from on-the-job and trial-and-error experience, from professional development opportunities and through mentoring and support from teaching and administrative colleagues. These categories were also the top three indicated as the most helpful on-the-job support of classroom management development. Schools should continue providing professional development and training in the area of classroom management, and should encourage mentorship and training between staff members.

LIMITATIONS

1. It was originally hoped that the “Years of Teaching” independent variable would be divided into two groups: novice (1-13 years) and experienced (14+ years) to reflect the practice of granting tenure after 3 years of teaching. However, there were not enough participants at the novice level for this to be appropriate. Because this variable was split into three groups and the first group represented teachers with 1-12 years of experience, this variable was dropped.
2. This may have factored into the MANOVA results for this variable having no significance, and future research might examine this variable again with an acceptable number of participants at the truly “novice” level.

REFERENCES