

# Classroom Management in Action

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## **Abstract**

Very often student-teachers have difficulty in transferring declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge. When they are taking a practical course like EDUC 4120 Classroom Management, they find it difficult to apply the theories that they have learned in the course directly to their teaching practice because real-world classroom management problems are far more complicated. To bridge the gap between theory and practice, a videotape recording entitled "Classroom Management in Action" was produced. The recording has six cases of classroom management problems. Each case is a typical pupil discipline problem found in Hong Kong secondary schools. Through viewing the six cases and the professional advice given by experienced frontline teachers from the Hong Kong Association for School Discipline and Counselling Teachers and going through in-depth class discussions, student-teachers could have a better understanding of the kind of pupils' misbehaviour that they have to deal with in their teaching practice. At the same time they could think of some effective methods or techniques used to tackle pupils' discipline problems and to facilitate positive classroom behaviour.

## **Key words**

Classroom management, teacher education

## **Introduction**

The course EDUC 4120 Classroom Management is a core elective of the teacher education courses offered by the Department of Education Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University. It introduces student-teachers to theoretical foundations, intervention strategies and techniques for creating a conducive learning environment in Hong Kong classrooms. One of the objectives of this course is to train student-

teachers to monitor classroom discipline based on current approaches to classroom management. To facilitate this, student-teachers should be exposed to real situations found in Hong Kong classrooms. A videotape recording demonstrating the high incidence in the school environment of discipline problems like attention seeking behaviour (Dreikurs, 1968) might be the best tool to compensate for the limitations of classroom simulations conducted during

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tutorials. Through viewing different cases in the videotape recording, student-teachers were able to share their ideas of classroom management among themselves more easily and discuss in depth the effective methods or techniques used to tackle pupils' discipline problems and to facilitate positive classroom behaviour. Six cases (three typical and three atypical) were produced in this project. Questions to consider, classroom discipline methods and theoretical background are introduced after the presentation of individual case. Professional advice given by experienced frontline teachers from the Hong Kong Association for School Discipline and Counselling Teachers is also included in the recording. With the help of the videotape recording, student-teachers could develop a repertoire of effective strategies for classroom management and understand how to apply the knowledge gained in the course *EDUC 4120* appropriately to their teaching practice.

### Aims and Objectives

The project aimed at evaluating the use of a specially produced videotape recording with six cases of classroom discipline problems found in Hong Kong. Each case was followed by a discussion session and some evaluation activities. Student-teachers could examine the cases from different points of view, consolidate their knowledge of effective classroom management and practise their methods of monitoring pupils' classroom behaviour. Through the learning activities, student-teachers could obtain useful information

about the real classroom environment in which they would work in future. Student-teachers would also have a better idea of the future challenges in the classroom be better prepared to join the teaching profession. The videotape recording would help student-teachers monitor pupils' behaviour in the classroom environment more easily.

The objectives of the project were to let the student teachers:

1. be familiar with the contemporary classroom environment
2. know the role(s) of a teacher when dealing with pupils' classroom behaviour
3. be familiar with the conception of effective classroom management
4. be familiar with the ways of tackling pupils' discipline problems in the classroom

### Methodology

The main theme of the videotape recording is to capture the classroom management issues found in Hong Kong classrooms. There are six different cases of pupil discipline problems in the recording:

1. breaking classroom rules
2. failing to hand in assignments
3. peer conflict
4. teacher-student conflict
5. pupil emotional problem
6. peer revenge

The first three cases are typical classroom management problems encountered by most Hong Kong teachers in their daily practice. The other three cases are atypical cases which require more sophisticated classroom management techniques of the teacher.

Each case is followed by an in-depth discussion section conducted by the co-investigator of this project, Mr Yeung Siu Wing, and three guest speakers from the Hong Kong Association for School Discipline and Counselling Teachers. All three of them are experienced discipline and counselling teachers. During the discussion, the guest speakers analyse each individual case in detail by identifying the cause(s) of the pupils' discipline problem(s). Then they give some suggestions on dealing with those classroom management problems. From the information given by the guest speakers, student-teachers would have a better picture of how frontline discipline and counselling teachers handle pupils' discipline problems. Special emphasis is given to the discussion of teachers' responsibilities, their authority in school and the conflicts they face.

The six cases were used in six different tutorial sessions. In each session students viewed the case at the beginning of the session, students were then divided into groups of five and discussed the case among themselves to identify the problem(s) found in the case and the possible cause(s) of the problem(s). After that, each group had to suggest some

possible solutions to the problem(s). The instructor gave feedback to the suggested solutions given by each of the groups. After discussion, students viewed the in-depth discussion section in the recording as consolidation of the tutorial session.

### Results/Findings

A questionnaire about the usefulness and convenience of the videotape recording (see Appendix I) was administered to a total of 96 students on the two teacher education courses offered by the Department of Education Studies, HKBU in the last tutorial session held in November 2004. There were 68 respondents on the Diploma in Education Course, who were pre-service student-teachers; the remaining 28 respondents were in-service teachers who were taking the two-year part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Education Course. The feedback collected from the questionnaire survey was generally positive, and provided useful information for future revisions of the videotape recording.

The results collected in the questionnaire survey are presented in Table I.

**Table I:**  
*Means and standard deviations of the "2+2" Dip in Ed. group and the Part-time PgD in Ed. group in responding to the 14 items of the questionnaire*

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Item No.	"2+2" Group (N <sub>1</sub> =68) Mean	SD	PT PGDE Group (N <sub>2</sub> =28) Mean	SD
Q.1	1.8	.56	1.5	.51
Q.2	1.8	.65	1.5	.64
Q.3	2.2	.73	1.8	.74
Q.4	1.9	.69	1.8	.65
Q.5	2.3	.72	1.9	.65
Q.6	2.1	.67	1.8	.74
Q.7	2.1	.70	1.9	.72
Q.8	2.0	.73	1.8	.65
Q.9	2.1	.71	1.8	.63
Q.10	2.0	.70	1.9	.71
Q.11	2.2	.67	1.9	.72
Q.12	2.1	.77	1.8	.80
Q.13	2.0	.67	1.7	.76
Q.14	2.1	.63	1.7	.53

The videotape recording turned out to be a useful teaching aid for both pre-service student-teachers and in-service teachers who were taking the course *EDUC 4120 Classroom Management*.

From the data presented in Table 1, it is concluded that the respondents found the videotape recording useful in the learning and teaching of the course *EDUC 4120 Classroom Management*.

### Discussion

It seems that most of the existing supporting teaching materials for the course *EDUC 4120 Classroom Management* are contrived (e.g. textbook materials) to allow student-teachers to study a particular theory or a particular classroom management problem more easily. These materials may not be able to

give the student-teachers a true picture of classroom discipline issues. Because of this, there was a need for the Department of Education Studies to develop a unique, specific and purposeful teaching aid for delivering the subject matter of classroom management in order to enhance the quality of learning and teaching.

There is no doubt that student-teachers will benefit most if they can expose themselves to real classroom situations. However, according to our experience, there are too many issues happening in the classroom at the same time, such as different pupils' discipline problems, pupils' learning difficulties and various arrangements of resources, etc. This complicates matters and leaves student-teachers unable to handle so many things at a time. As a result, the learning pace and the learning outcome of student-teachers

could be greatly affected. The complicated classroom situations also give student-teachers the belief that applying theories to practice is almost impossible. In the end the confidence of student-teachers in handling classroom discipline problems will be damaged as well.

With the help of the videotape recording, student-teachers could identify the discipline problem more easily and they could single out the incident for comments more efficiently. By doing so, they could acquire declarative knowledge of classroom management more effectively and transfer the declarative knowledge to the procedural knowledge when dealing with pupils' misbehaviour in the classroom more easily; at the same time they can build up their confidence in combating challenges in their teaching practice.

According to in-class observation conducted by the principal investigator in the tutorial sessions, students found the six selected cases relevant to their needs. Some of the students' responses to the six cases during in-class discussion are as follows:

### **Case 1:**

#### ***Breaking Classroom Rules***

Student A:

"This case is very useful. Now I know how to deal with pupils who are eating, drinking, reading comics and using mobile phones during the lesson."

### **Case 2:**

#### ***Failing to Hand in Assignments***

Student B:

"The case helps us learn the pupils' excuses for not submitting their assignments. I did have this problem when I was doing my teaching practice during STP I. I didn't know what to do at that time. I just reported the case to the class teacher. But now I will take the advice given by the three guest speakers from the Hong Kong Association for School Discipline and Counselling Teachers. I think I can manage to handle this kind of problems now."

### **Case 3:**

#### ***Peer Conflict***

Student C:

"At first I thought peer conflict was quite common among secondary pupils and it didn't matter at all. But now I understand that if the teacher doesn't handle the problem properly, it may affect the teacher's teaching in the classroom."

### **Case 4:**

#### ***Teacher-student Conflict***

Student D:

"After viewing the case, I know that if the teacher fails to build up a positive relationship with the pupils, the pupils can be very hostile. This will get the teacher into trouble. Fortunately, the advice given by the guest speakers is very useful and now I know that there

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are a number of ways to tackle the problem.”

**Case 5:*****Pupil Emotion Problem***

Student E:

“From the case, I notice that teenage pupils can get upset very easily. Now, I know that a teacher should not scold pupils in the first place. A lot of patience on the part of the teacher is needed when dealing with this kind of case.”

**Case 6:*****Peer Revenge***

Student F:

“Bullying has become very common in Hong Kong schools recently and I have learned a lot from the case. I think employing some effective intervention strategies is very important in this case; otherwise the situation will become even worse.”

From the students' responses, we may notice that not only did the students have a better understanding of individual cases, but also they could learn different classroom management strategies from viewing the videotape recording. More importantly they had more confidence in themselves when dealing with pupil discipline problems after viewing the videotape recording.

**Limitations/Difficulties**

The six cases in the videotape recording were not contrived for classroom

delivery but real cases of pupil discipline problems in schools. To collect those cases, the investigators collaborated with a Drama teacher in a Secondary School. He introduced four of the members of the School Drama Club, who were all secondary three students, to the principal investigator. The principal investigator interviewed the four Drama Club members to collect their views on pupil discipline problems according to their own experience. To make the cases as real as they were, the principal investigator encouraged the Drama Club members to write up the outline of the cases based on their real experience in school. After five meetings, the investigators with the project assistant finalized the six cases and the project assistant took charge of script-writing.

To make all the pupils act naturally and simulate the actual incidences experienced by them, special training was given to all pupils before the actual shooting of the recording. To facilitate appealing in-depth discussion sections, the investigators invited guest speakers from the Hong Kong Association for School Discipline and Counselling Teachers to share their experience in dealing with classroom management issues.

The production team found the process of production time-consuming because it involved quite a number of steps such as data collection, script writing and shooting. As considerable time was needed to carry out each of the steps, it took months

before the recording was ready for classroom use.

### Conclusion

It is believed that the videotape recording “*Classroom Management in Action*” has enhanced the learning and teaching of the course *EDUC 4120 Classroom Management*. According to the feedback from the students on the Diploma in Education Course and part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Education Course, they benefited a lot from viewing and discussing the six cases of the videotape recording. They found all six cases very realistic and they realized that these cases match the classroom management problems that they faced or were about to face in Hong Kong schools. Students also found the follow-up discussions conducted by experienced discipline and counselling teachers very helpful. Not only did the students understand the causes of pupils’ discipline problem(s) in each of the six cases, but also they had a better understanding of the teacher’s responsibility and authority when handling pupils’ misbehaviour. They gained much confidence in dealing with problem cases in the area of classroom management. They also looked forward to having another videotape recording of the same kind including more cases in the future.

The EDUC staff members who had used the materials in their lectures found the recording useful in facilitating in-class discussions. Student-teachers were willing to share their views on dealing with the six

cases according to their own experience in school. As the cases are real cases found in local schools, student-teachers could learn to cope with classroom crisis with the help of the recording. Student-teachers also found the advice given by the guest speakers from the Hong Kong Association for School Discipline and Counselling Teachers helpful in learning to manage complex situations in the classroom.

### References

Dreikurs, R. (1968). *Psychology in the classroom: A manual for teachers* (2nd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

### Acknowledgements

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(Former Vice-principal, YCH Wong Wha San Secondary School)

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### Appendix I: Teaching Materials Evaluation Form

As you may probably know, we are developing a DVD, entitled “Classroom Management in Action”, for learning and teaching *EDUC 4120 Classroom Management*. We request your completion of this questionnaire to help us evaluate the mentioned DVD. The information you and others provide will assist us in our continuing effort to provide better learning and teaching of the course.

Your answers will be handled in the strictest confidence. Your answers will be tabulated with those of others to determine information needs, usage patterns, content requirements, format preferences, and overall quality.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

For each of the items below, please select your choice by filling the circle with a pen/pencil.

- Key:      1. Strongly agree                      2. Agree                      3. Neutral  
              4. Disagree                                5. Strongly disagree

1	2	3	4	5	Items
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1. The DVD has helped me to comprehend the subject matter more effectively.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2. The DVD has increased my understanding of this academic discipline.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3. The DVD has been effective in developing my analytical power and critical thinking.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	4. The use of the DVD has been helpful in my learning of the course <i>EDUC 4120</i> .
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	5. The DVD gives opportunity for me to apply and develop the ideas, concepts and theories learned in this course.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	6. The content of the DVD has been clearly related to the overall objectives of the course <i>EDUC 4120 Classroom Management</i> .
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	7. The content of the DVD has been effective in relating theory to practice.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	8. The content of DVD is current and relevant to my daily practice.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	9. The content of the DVD is current or consistent with the contemporary knowledge of classroom management.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	10. The content of the DVD is well-organized.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	11. The cases shown on the DVD are challenging for me.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	12. The cases shown on the DVD relate to my everyday experiences.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	13. The cases shown on the DVD have been useful to my daily practice.
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	14. The discussions shown on the DVD have been helpful in clarifying the subject matter.