



GROUP THERAPY: AN INTEGRATED CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE

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Abstract:

Teaching students in the 21st century has become more challenging than the earlier times. This is due to the influence and impact of search engine optimization of various e-networks like Google, Yahoo and Bing. Students have developed a feeling that learning need not be from the four walls of the classroom, as it can be from anywhere and anytime. As such, managing and teaching students inside the classroom is a challenging task for any teacher. Hence, this paper discusses how the classrooms can be managed effectively by providing a comfortable learning experience to the learners.

Introduction:

"You never know what 'enough' is until you know what 'more than enough'" says William Blake in his popular work *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Each teacher uses this word at places, where it doesn't have any meaning. A classroom is a place where 'enough' doesn't have any meaning at all. Every class hour is an innovation. Experience a new place in a different way and create a day that can nurture teachers forbidden passion. Teachers can do anything innovatively by merging their teaching styles and learning situations and allowing themselves to explore 'something' closure to success. No dreams can be realized without mentors. Teachers are the mentor. So teachers have to follow their passion by riding over the bumps but never give up.

Defining classroom management is not the aim of this article, but to share a remarkable experience protecting academic integrity from unexpected managerial failures. This is also not about how to manage learners' learning ability but to share 'the strong moments, collective aspirations and cooperative energy to achieve intellectual health and growth' which are free from external interferences and to commit ourselves to individual excellence. It is a matter of creating a culture of consultation and participation and utilising all the statutory structures that are available for decision making. It provides reflective spaces and demand critical pedagogy. The aspects that are going to be discussed here were not taken to the classroom but emerged out of the classroom. Growth as human beings involves growing out of the instrumental and growing into the intrinsic.

Classroom Management Integrated Teaching Technique – Significance:

This discussion doesn't require a special occasion. Motivating a child to taking medicine promising her a chocolate may not be morally reprehensible. But using the same trick to motivate a student to read his/her book may look silly. Instead it is required to need to encourage the critical spirit. The life and aspirations are now being charted across timelines that are different from those in the past. This is very much applicable modern classrooms too. This takes to the question: Isn't it time for the educational institutions adopted an open loop system instead of serving as conventional end-points? This article is not intended for a revolution but to suggest ways to enhance the learning experience with a particular reference to 'classroom management integrated teaching techniques'.

It is also not the aim to insist that the 'classroom management is an isolated teacher-decided matter of fact, but as a tool in the hands of a teacher to integrate teaching and managing. This technique helps an intention-an intention of what to happen in the classroom, how, when and also how much, which is best taken care of in a 'Group therapy integrated classroom management'. This is emphasized by Jim Burke as: "Classroom management is about not only creating an effective classroom environment but reducing teachers' stress, increasing productivity - for both teachers and students - and ensuring a safe, equitable environment committed to the proposition that all kids can learn and succeed".

Mindfulness:

Many educational institutions ranging from primary schools to universities across India, rarely it is observed that teachers who neither asked open ended questions nor actually allowed their students to ask such questions, which means teachers seldom make the learners think. In most classes teachers transfer information from textbook as this is what they have been trained to do in their training institutions and more importantly as students when they were in schools and colleges they experienced the same from their teachers. Sincere to the core as soon as the information transfer exercise is over they promptly ask some close-ended questions to make sure that their students are listening and they are getting correct answers. Human beings have the most advanced survival instincts, mindfulness being the most important. Being mindful makes every act focused. Human beings breathe in and breathe out paying scant attention to what they are doing. Perhaps breathing is focused, while in yoga classes or with the swimming instructor at the swimming pool.

Methodology:

The East India Company preacher-teacher believed in a 'whole class' concept, where all behavioural problems came into force. He never believed in sharing experiences and energies. The success of learning rests in working together rather than working individually in the whole class situation, when teachers and learners and learners among themselves work together proactively, the classroom management takes care of itself. A big advantage of working together is that it makes everyone sociable and empathetic. This is actually the other side of the classroom management. Students begin to develop a sense of 'community' in the group therapy classes. When one grows in a classroom like this where all life skills are in constant use he will have no friction with the society. A preacher-teacher's whole class treatment doesn't make any impact on a student's critical and analytical skills.

A Reality Check:

This comes to the fore in teacher training workshops, which usually start with the following questions:

- Do you read lessons from the textbook to your students?
- Do you explain the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases that appear in the lessons?
- Do you translate the meanings into the local language (the mother tongue of the learners)?
- Do you help them find the answers to the exercises given at the end of the lessons?
- Do you dictate or write the answers on the blackboard?
- Do you think you don't do anything said above but something different?

In most of the classes, the responses of the participating teachers were 'yes' to the first five and 'no' to the sixth. Of course for them classroom management is a separate exercise to discipline their students to gain control over them and over the class. Perhaps these kinds of teachers have an illusion that this is what the students, parents and the management wants. Well meaning and hard working teachers across the country spend all their time covering portions of the topics in the syllabus in time and preparing the students for the examination to make them score well.

Whereas those who said 'yes' to the sixth question are flexi-teachers, with an eye on giving the students the freedom of what, how, when and how much they want. In other words this teacher takes with him a 'flexi-plan' to give the learners a leading role to decide the process in the class. These teachers never bother about the behavioural problems in the class and hence never deal with the classroom management as a separate entity. They strongly believe that the class gets automatically managed through the involved participation of the learners in various types of group and pair activities. The teacher remains happy and inspiring co-participant. Teachers who succeed do not blame students for their difficulties, as they continue to search for successful techniques says Burke.

How this kind of a teacher integrated classroom management into a group therapy and how he can make his class a happening place is going to form the rest of this article. In other words, an attempt is made to recreate his class, the classroom design, the materials and how the learners worked together with the teacher and among themselves.

But there is always one particular disturbing phenomenon: Church like seating arrangement in a classroom. In churches it is seen two feet high and six feet long (sometimes longer also) sitting benches and equally long but three feet high hand rest benches at the front. They replicated the same kind of seating arrangements in their schools because they thought preachers and teachers do the same thing to their audience. The new educational institutions started in line followed the same 'model' which have been more sincerely followed by the educational institutions of today in every aspect starting from the classroom design to teaching techniques not keeping an eye on the social requirements.

Design A: Round Table Format

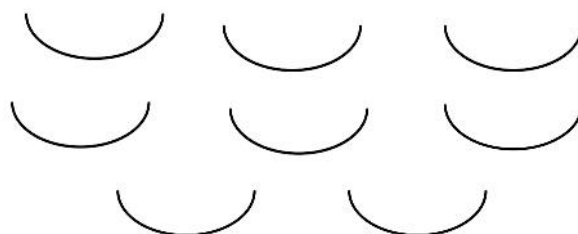


Even today classroom seating arrangements remain the same. The system has come a long way from micro level schools to macro level complexes. Classrooms have been replaced blackboards with smart boards but 'straight row seating arrangements' which have been designed during East India Company haven't been changed yet. Most educational managers talk about 'Child centered teaching' Activity based teaching 'but without creating a conducive performing atmosphere. It requires preparing the ground first before talking about

the minutiae of the game. This aspect is emphasized by Jim Burke, "Classroom management is about not only creating an effective classroom environment but reducing teachers' stress, increasing productivity - for both teachers and students - and ensuring a safe, equitable environment committed to the proposition that all kids can learn and succeed. The following are a few designs which can be tried in classes:

This format requires three or five chairs around. The number of round tables depends on the strength of the class. A group has three or five members so three or five chairs around. Enough space should be provided for the teacher as well as students to move around.

Design B: Semi Circle Format



In this format, a centre table is not required. Arrange the chairs, three or five, as close as possible in a semi circle format (students sit knees touching).

Group Structure:

With the above seating arrangement, students with heterogeneous quality can be placed in the following manner, either as a three member group or as a five member group. Though students are classified as fast, medium and slow learners, while grouping the students, the teacher has to group them without openly tagging their quality of learning to avoid approaching them with bias and prejudice.

(i) Three Member Group: The constitution of a three member group may be as follows:

- One above average student (fast learner)
- One average student (medium learner)
- One below average student (slow learner)

(ii) Five Member Group: The constitution of a three member group may be as follows:

- One above average student (fast learner)
- Two average students (medium learner)
- Two below average students (slow learner)

The number of groups and the number of chairs can be decided based on the strength of the class. But five is the maximum number of a group.

(iii) Implementing Process:

- *Preparing a sample lesson:* A sample lesson is prepared by the teacher who believes in Group Therapy.
- *Choosing an appropriate classroom design:* The teacher chooses an appropriate design that suits well the purpose. For example, the teacher used the 'Round Table' format in a class of 38 students, and it is divided into 7 groups comprising 5 students per group, and 1 group with 3 students, so that all the students are accommodated in a group without omitting none (7 groups \times 5 students and 1 group \times 3 students)
- *Model Source Material:* A newspaper clip can be taken and like jumbled sentences, the news story can be given in pieces and student groups can be given the task of arranging the story in the proper order.
 - A man who spent the night in a cold storage after being locked in accidentally ran on the spot for eight hours to stay alive.
 - Jaffer aged 30 was locked in a cold storage in Chennai for 12 hours with a temperature around freezing point.
 - Staff arriving for work at the office found him next morning, his teeth chattering and his face purple with cold.
 - They immediately brought him out and covered him with blankets. They gave him a cup of tea. All of them looked at him surprisingly.

(iv) Method: A sample lesson by the teacher who believes in Group Therapy

(v) Teaching Technique: The teacher starts the class with elaborate instructions about what he is going to do and what the students would need to do.

- He reads the news item in four parts pausing for ten seconds after each part.
- The students are asked to write words that they remember after listening to each part during the ten second pauses that the teacher made.
- At the end of the reading the students are asked to compare the list of words they have with the others in the group.
- Then the students are asked to prepare a consolidated list of the story.

- Each group presents the assembled news story to the class.
- When one group is presenting, the other groups closely follow and added words which others have missed.
- After a discussion, each group presents the news item orally.
- When this act is completed, then the students write the news item.
- They present their versions of the news item to the class.(The teacher do not attempt any corrections but appreciate each group generously).
- Finally the teacher read the news item once again allowing his students to make corrections if required.
- The pre task session was done successfully.
- Classroom management is deliciously simple if you remain sincere to your teaching outcome.
- And this is the most important matter of fact.
- In the model teaching task, the teacher becomes so successful because of the nature and conduct of the activity.

This boosts the morale of the teacher and the taught. Encouraged by the success, the teacher chooses a lesson from the 'Reader', which is prescribed for the class. The process is discussed below: (The teacher does not change the classroom design)

Source Material from the 'Reader':

The teacher divides the lesson into 12 parts and each part on a single page. All the 12 pages have a lot of blanks. A sample page is given below:

- I have always enjoyed flying. I wasn't afraid when I and mother boarded Lands Airlines flight 508. Some people ahead given up flying Lansia because of a recent crash. But my father in our jungle hut. Daddy..... where he carried out research.
- I was sitting in the third row of seats from the rear.....
- This is how all the twelve pages look like. Multiple copies are kept ready. Pages are numbered and paragraphs are numbered.

Teaching Technique:

As we see the proceedings during the earlier task, now also the teacher is meticulous in his instructions. He repeatedly makes them feel encouraged through his words that make them actively participate in the process. This motivation makes them feel confident with necessary competence to deal with uncertainties.

- The pages are distributed - one page for one group.
- They are asked to read all 12 pages by exchanging the pages among themselves after reading and guessing the missing parts also. It is set as a ten to twenty minute activity.
- After completing reading, the teacher asks the students to discuss the summary of what they have read and understood.
- When the groups are ready they are asked to present their summaries to the class. (Anybody who observes this class would wonder how the presenters become almost clear with the text, as if they have read the lesson already completely.)
- Finally the teacher invites the group which have made it almost error free, to repeat. The teacher then appreciates all the groups for their astounding and successful participation. The first part of the lesson is completed successfully. It looks like that an integrated approach paves the way for a compassionate classroom and better relationship dynamics between teacher and the learners. Thus, with the group therapy approach the proper learning stage is set inside the classroom for next part of the classroom proceedings.

Modus Operandi:

In this kind of work atmosphere reorganizing the class becomes so easy. Students quickly react to teacher's instructions. In pair work or group work exchange of energies readily happens with less effort. When working in groups students become automatically humble setting aside their pride and fear of rejection. In a 'whole class' situation students suffer silently for fear of damaging their self image which may result in strained relationship with other fellow students. In a small group asking one another for assistance becomes easier. Combined energies result in shared experiences. When they interact with their peers freely a lot of positive things happen to polish sociability, which is the most important aim of education.

Conclusion:

Nervousness is an important aspect that hinders student's active participation in the classroom. The learners have different and new ideas but fail to put forth their views as they fear the after effect of their participation, especially in terms of peer mockery. This study explicates the importance of group therapy which enables the students to work as a team providing all individual inputs without haste and fear. Individual therapy in most cases may develop certain sense of complex within a student arising indifference within mates. Group therapy however bridges the differences among learners, unfolding their hidden skills, embracing confidence.

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