

Creating A Supportive Learning Environment: Classroom Management Issues

Daw Zar Chi Yu Aung

Department of Language, University of Computer Studies, Loikaw, zarchiyuauang.zarchi@gmail.com

Abstract— In accomplishing educational objectives and creating a supportive learning environment, classroom management plays an important role. Classroom management refers to the strategies that the teacher manage to control the classroom effectively and to stimulate students' motivation on their learning and to support the students' learning needs. This study aims at classroom management issues that create a supportive learning environment to support the learning needs of students and assess the factors that help build a supportive learning environment in order to achieve the students' academic success. This paper describes about classroom management strategies and characteristics, how to create a supportive learning environment and how to motivate the students in the classroom. In this paper, moreover, teaching and learning activities that were performed in real classroom are also mentioned. As a teacher, it is important to focus on effective classroom management strategies to support the learning needs of students as classroom management paves the way for creating an environment supportive to learning and for achieving students' academic success.

Keywords— Classroom management, learning environment, learning needs, strategies, academic success

I. INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a fundamental role in shaping to achieve effective education through establishing a supportive learning environment, helping all students achieve academic success and supporting students' learning needs.

Teachers face many difficulties and challenges in creating a supportive learning environment because there are so many personalities and different levels in one classroom. The various contexts, locations and cultures in which students learn is defined as the learning environment (Rasheedah Jibrin, 2017). Effective teachers use appropriate teaching strategies to meet specific learning needs of students by allocating students to work together on specific tasks and engage in peer discussions and team work as well as peer-assess through classroom activities (Sonia Hankova, 2015).

So, managing a classroom might seem a daunting task, but it is achievable. Effective classroom management (ECM) means implementing strategies that create a safe, fair and supportive learning environment for students to flourish in. Without effective classroom management, classrooms are disorganized and chaotic, and very little academic learning can happen (Elias & Schwab, 2006).

Thus, in accomplishing educational objectives and creating a supportive learning environment, classroom management is an essential part and a key component.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. What is classroom management?

Classroom management refers to the actions teachers take to create a positive and supportive learning environment for the academic and social emotional learning of students and classroom management is an ongoing interaction between teachers and students (Evertson and Weinstein, 2006). Brophy (2006) also

presented a similar definition: "classroom management refers to actions taken to create and maintain a conducive learning environment to successful instruction such as arranging the physical environment, establishing rules and procedures, maintaining students' attention to lessons and engagement in activities."

Both definitions emphasize the importance of actions taken by the teacher to facilitate learning for the students.

It can also be said that classroom management is the strategies, techniques and the abilities how a teacher manages to control the classroom and how to motivate and stimulate students' enthusiasm and interesting on their learning and how to support the student's learning needs. By using these effective classroom management strategies and techniques, teachers can create the ways how to get students' academic achievement and academic success.

According to Evertson and Weinstein (2006), in order to attain a high quality of classroom management, teachers must take five types of actions. They are:

- ❖ To develop caring, supportive relationships with and among students
- ❖ To organize and implement instruction in ways that optimize students' access to learning
- ❖ To encourage students' engagement in academic tasks, which can be done by using group management methods
- ❖ To promote the development of students' social skills and self-regulation
- ❖ To use appropriate interventions to assist students with behaviour problems

B. Classroom management strategies

Classroom management strategies are tools that the teachers can use to help create inviting and appealing environments for students' learning process. Keeping students focused can be a daunting task. Many things contribute to inattentions ranging from an inadequate breakfast to a restless night's sleep. Regardless of the cause, teachers must be able to use strategies that engage their students' focus and help them remain on task. Effective strategies use techniques that encourage students to participate and stay attentive throughout the school day.

According to Natalie Schwartz (2018), there are top 10 secrets of successful classroom management strategies. These strategies are:

- ❖ Effective classroom management is based on a learnable set of skills.
- ❖ Establish a positive relationship with the class.
- ❖ Praise is a powerful tool.
- ❖ Welcome feedback from students.
- ❖ Create a safe and supportive learning environment.
- ❖ Variety is the key to engaging students.
- ❖ Establish the expectation that everyone must participate in class every day.
- ❖ Assessments should look forward, not back.
- ❖ Parents have the expectation of teachers.
- ❖ Indicate to parents the potential for growth in their child.

Apart from classroom management strategies, there are various characteristics that describes a well-managed and efficient classroom. It is essential to have well-managed classroom that help improve classroom efficiency and create an environment conducive to learning. These characteristics are:

- ❖ Student Engagement
- ❖ Clear Expectations
- ❖ Effective Time Management
- ❖ Positive and Supportive Learning Environment
- ❖ Firm Discipline

C. Creating a supportive learning environment

Learning environment can refer to an educational approach, various cultural contexts, or physical setting in which teaching and learning occur. Classroom environment is one of the most important factors affecting students learning. Students learn better when they view the learning environment as positive and supportive (Joan Young, 2014). Supportive learning environment is to meet the learning needs of students and to achieve students' learning success. Saying that, positive and supportive learning environments don't just happen on their own_ they must be created. So, teachers need to create a supportive learning environment that help provide the learning needs of students and improve the learning process.

The learning environment can be created to be supportive and productive by building positive relationships between students and student-teacher relationships, promoting a culture of respect through collaborative and cooperative work in a student-centered learning environment, utilizing strategies that promote students' self-confidence and motivation.

Supporting to develop deep levels of students thinking is also an important issue for a supportive learning environment. This can be created by promoting substantive classroom discussions, allowing students to work collaboratively during investigations and problem solving tasks, sharing ideas and promoting questioning (Sonia Hankova, 2015).

Using various style of learning activities is also a key component in creating a supportive learning environment. Teachers should vary the style of learning activities to allow students to explore the ways in which they learn best. This also enables all students to develop skills to actively participate in a variety of learning situations. Activities that promote and encourage the development of group trust, build communication skills and enhance cooperation should be created.

Maintaining negative attitudes and behaviour is another important factor. Teachers should maintain a learning environment free from bullying, exclusion, harassment and negative behaviour to promote respect and provide a safe learning space.

Creating a supportive learning environment is one of the key component in classroom management issues. Thus, teachers should create a positive and supportive learning environment by using effective classroom management strategies.

D. How to motivate the students in the classroom

In creating a supportive learning environment, stimulating students' motivation is a key component of learning process. One of the major challenges in the classroom is stimulating students' motivation. The two types of motivation for learning process are intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic learning occurs when the student already

has an interest in learning the subject and is inspired internally. However, extrinsic motivation occurs when other factors, such as a reward or recognition driving them to participate in class. It is the teacher's responsibility to engage students in learning by tapping into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. To stimulate students' motivation, it is crucial to focus on the following methods.

- ❖ Foster a positive learning environment
- ❖ Build rapport with students
- ❖ Prepare engaging lessons
- ❖ Give students options
- ❖ Start a reward and recognition program

III. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

This survey aims at classroom management issues that create a supportive learning environment to support the learning needs of students and to assess the factors that help build a supportive learning environment in order to achieve the students' academic success. This study was conducted at the University of Computer Studies, Loikaw. The study period was from August 2018 to October 2018. Survey design was adopted for this study. The study population was all students of first year to fourth year students from the University of Computer Studies, Loikaw. There are total of 417 students in 2017-2018 academic year and the sample population was 247 students. The students readily available at the time of data collection were chosen to get the nearly half of total students from the University. Therefore, convenient sampling method was used for this study. The required data were collected by self-administered structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were computed for perception of the students.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Two hundred and forty-seven students were collected for this survey about the learning environment they want. In this survey, there are 9 items for students' perception concerning with creating a supportive learning environment through the effective classroom management.

Table (1) Students' perception for student-centered approach and teacher-centered approach

Item	Frequency	(%)
Students' perception for		
(1) Student-centered approach	163	66.0
(2) Teacher-centered approach	84	34.0
Total	247	100.0

Regarding with the students' perception for student-centered approach and teacher-centered approach, most of the students (66.0%) agree with that student-centered approach can help more improve students' academic performance and achievement than teacher-centered approach. The rest of students (34.0%) disagree with that. According to the result, most of the students can accept to change student-centered approach whereas about one third of students cannot still accept.

Nowadays, education system is changing from teacher-centered approach to student-centered approach. Jones, Leo (2007) stated that student-centered learning, also known as learner-centered education, broadly encompasses methods of teaching that shift the focus of instruction from the teacher to the students and put responsibility for the learning path in the hands of students by imparting them with skills.

Johnson, Eli (2013) stated that teacher-centered approach situates the teacher as the primarily “active” role while students take a more “passive”, receptive role. To be effective education, student-centered approach is more effective one.

According to the result, it is necessary to get full percentage of acceptance in the process of changing the student-centered approach. Thus, teachers should effort to assess the barriers in the process of changing student-centered approach.

Table (2) Students’ perception for supportive learning environment

The supportive learning environment is an essential learning space for students.	Frequency	(%)
❖ Agree	243	98.4
❖ Disagree	4	1.6

As shown in table (2), it can be seen that almost all students (98.4%) agree with that supportive learning environment is an essential learning space for students. A positive and supportive learning environment provides relevant content, clear learning goals and feedback, opportunities to build social skills, and strategies to help students succeed (Joan Young, 2014). According to the result, almost all students desire a supportive learning environment for their learning process. Thus, it is important to create a welcoming atmosphere that the students need.

Table (3) Students’ perception for the ECM strategies and strict discipline

For managing the classroom effectively, using ECM strategies is more effective way for students than using strict discipline.	Frequency	(%)
❖ Agree	128	51.8
❖ Disagree	119	48.2

It can be seen that a number of students (51.8%) agree with that using ECM strategies is more effective way to manage the classroom effectively whereas the number of students (48.2%) agree with that using strict discipline is more effective one as shown in table (3). To create a supportive learning environment, the most effective way is using effective classroom management strategies in classroom. According to the result, however, nearly half of the students don’t seem to realize the effective classroom management strategies. Thus, it is necessary to explain the students about classroom management strategies and use these strategies in the classroom effectively.

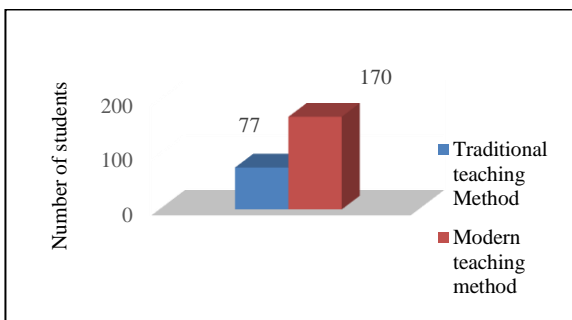


Figure (1) Students’ perception for traditional teaching method and modern teaching method

As shown in figure (1), most of the students (68.8%) agree with modern teaching methods can help more

progress students’ academic performance and achieve their academic success than traditional teaching methods whereas a number of students (31.2%) disagree with that.

Teaching styles have changed significantly over the years. The back-to-basics traditional educational method, also known as conventional education, is still widely used in schools. The old-fashioned way of teaching was all about recitation and memorization techniques. The modern way of teaching is more activity based, using questioning, explaining, demonstration and collaboration technique and interactive methods.

According to the result, two-third of the students can accept using modern teaching methods whereas about one-third of students still accept using traditional teaching methods.

Education reforms mean that learning is taught from a completely different angle. Progressive educational practices focus more on the individual students’ needs rather than assuming all students are at the same level of understanding.

Saying that traditional and modern teaching methods are both effective and useful in today’s education. Thus, teachers need to understand when a traditional method works best and when it’s right to try new and innovative approaches and teachers should assess which teaching method is appropriate or not for students.

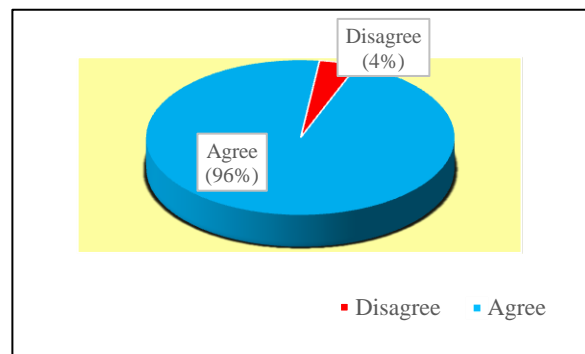


Figure (2) Students’ perception for stimulating students’ motivation that is a key component of learning process

It can be seen that in creating a supportive learning environment, stimulating students’ motivation is a key component of learning process. In this survey, 96% of students agree with it as shown in Figure (2). Motivation is essential to learning since it is the driving force for students to complete tasks that build knowledge (Chi Nguyen, 2008). Without students’ motivation, teachers can’t run the classroom effectively. According to the result, almost all students agree with the fact that students’ motivation is a key component of learning process. Thus, it is important to stimulate students’ motivation.

Table (4) Students’ perception for the continuous flow of activities at four skills

Students’ perception for the continuous flow of activities at four skills	Agree	
	Frequency	(%)
❖ Reading activity	192	77.7
❖ writing activity	176	71.3
❖ Listening activity	211	85.4
❖ Speaking activity	195	78.9

In Question No 6-9, students’ perception about reading, writing, listening and speaking activities were assessed.

In creating a supportive learning environment for reading activity, students more admire discussing with each other and participating various group activities to achieve critical thinking skills than explaining and translating a passage only by a teacher. For this concept, majority of students (77.7%) agree this.

Reading is a process of the brain and it takes time to develop. Students' mind should attach meaning to the words, phrases and expressions represented by symbols, and get to understand the grammar and structure of the language used in the passage to read. It is also important to get students' interest in reading activity (Mary Milne, 2017). Thus, it is necessary to focus on the following methods and give guidelines for the students.

- ❖ Creating a supportive pleasant classroom climate where students are free from embarrassment with the aim of concentrating on their reading activity.
- ❖ Raising critical thinking skills while they are reading
- ❖ Discussing with each other
- ❖ Creating various reading activities

The teaching method that is explaining and translating only by a teacher can create a passive learning environment for students. For the continuous flow of reading activity, teachers should create active learning environment.

For writing activity, most of students (71.3%) agree with that brainstorming and eliciting own ideas, cultivating writing habits and presenting own logical writing style are more effective than taking by heart for improving their writing skill. For this concept, although nearly two third of students agree this, some students use recitation and memorization method until now. Teachers should reform this system. For the continuous flow of writing activity, it is important to focus on the following methods.

- ❖ Giving guidelines how to write and develop the right writing habits
- ❖ Giving guidelines to pay attention to sentence structures, word choices, using grammar, vocabulary and spelling correctly
- ❖ Cultivating to present clear and logical writing style, reasonable opinions and coherence and cohesion

Even though it may be intimidating to a lot of people, anyone can get used to writing with a little discipline and a willingness to learn (Mary Milne, 2017).

Listening plays a very important part in learning any language (Mary Milne, 2017). For listening activity, according to the result, most of students (85.4%) agree with that systematic practising with the help of language teacher in the language lab is a more effective way for them. Thus, it is necessary to give the following guidelines for the students.

- ❖ Facing the speaker and maintaining eye contact
- ❖ Being attentive, but relaxed
- ❖ Keeping on open mind
- ❖ Listening to the songs
- ❖ Listening to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying
- ❖ Systematic practising with audiovisual aids in language lab

Although systematic practising with the help of language teacher in the language lab is more effective, it is inconvenient way in all times. So, students should also practise by themselves with tape, CD, phone and so on. Effective listening ensures understanding and it helps improve accuracy when speaking, among other things.

Thus, students should pay attention not only on what is said, but also how it is said (Mary Milne, 2017).

For speaking activity, most of students (78.9%) are willing to participate and speak foreign language than their native language for the sake of being fluent and proficient in the language class. So, teachers should train to improve students' speaking skills and to be confidence in speaking foreign language. Moreover, it is necessary to give the following guidelines for students.

- ❖ Trying to imitate the speakers admired
- ❖ Picking a topic to talk about
- ❖ Studying reductions, linking words, native speech, connect words and squeeze words
- ❖ Doing interesting activities in English
- ❖ Having a debate

Speaking is often the hardest of the four language skills, but as soon as students can speak a little English, there are lots of ways to improve quickly.

Reading, writing, listening and speaking are the four language skills that need to develop for complete communication. Listening and reading are receptive: the exposure that have to authentic language in use. Speaking and writing are productive: the action of producing language as part of the process of second language learning.

To achieve these four basic language skills, students need to surround themselves with English and teachers should make them practise systematically (Mary Milne, 2017).

V. CREATING TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN REAL CLASSROOM

In 2017-2018 academic year, the author had the responsibility to teach the fourth year students from the University of Computer Studies, Loikaw. A number of fourth year computer science students were twenty seven and a number of fourth year computer technology students were ten. So, there were total of thirty seven students in the combined class for English subject. It was suitable number of students for a teacher as there can be many difficulties and challenges for a teacher due to large class. Students could be trained and practised with various activities by using classroom management strategies because there were few students in the class.

For reading activity, firstly, students were divided into groups. Secondly, each paragraph was allocated to each group in order to read, explain and discuss with each other within the time limit. Then, students from each group were invited to explain and discuss with the class. The various question types were also asked. To answer these questions, every student from each group participated and competed with other groups. Moreover, students were given instructions to change the original sentences into another sentence structures that must be similar to the meaning of original sentences from the passage. Finally, the won group was rewarded. These strategies and activities are more effective than explaining and translating a passage only by a teacher. By using these strategies, a supportive pleasant classroom climate could be created to concentrate on reading activity and to achieve students' learnable set of skills.

For writing activity, students were given instruction to present a topic with the aim of brainstorming and eliciting their writing abilities within the time limit. Before presenting their ideas, students were given guidelines to write in an appropriate and logical writing style, present a

solution to the problem, justify their opinions, compare and contrast evidence and opinions and be coherence and cohesion. Then, each student was invited to come out in front of the class and present the ideas concerning with the topic on the whiteboard. Each student was assigned to present introduction, main idea and conclusion respectively. Their ideas and arguments presented on the whiteboard were discussed with the class and listened to the views of others. By using these strategies, students' real writing styles could be elicited and inappropriate their writing habits and grammar mistakes could be corrected at once.

For the listening activity, the fully equipped language lab could create a supportive learning environment for all students to improve their listening skills. In the language lab, teaching equipment including large projector, audio-visual aids were prepared for the students to practise and stimulate students' interest in listening activity. Bluetooth-enabled device was ready to be used when the electricity had gone out. These teaching aids created a supportive learning environment for students.

For speaking activity, students were separated into two groups and let them discuss one topic from positive and negative sides and assess to weigh up the pros and cons of argument. Sometimes, students were practised to talk about the speaking topic card by drawing lots. Students were also supported to be creative the best presentation by using effective teaching and learning strategies. Moreover, students were trained to be fluency and coherence, be rich in lexical resource, be able to use grammatical range and accuracy and focus on the pronunciation.

By using these above strategies, students' initial motivation and interest in their learning process could be evoked. On top of that, a supportive learning environment for students could be created.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings and results of this study.

- ❖ It is necessary to use classroom management strategies effectively.
- ❖ It is important to create a supportive learning environment for students.
- ❖ It is essential to create the various style of teaching and learning activities.
- ❖ It is crucial to focus on student-centered approach.
- ❖ It is essential to stimulate the students' motivation.
- ❖ It is vital to support the learning needs of students and facilitate to improve students' learning process.

VII. CONCLUSION

Classroom management is the key component for a supportive appealing environment for students' learning process. Classroom management strategies are tools that the teachers can use to help create a supportive and effective learning environment, ranging from activities to improve teacher-student relationships, stimulate students' motivation and accomplish students' academic achievement to rules to regulate student behaviour.

As a teacher, using effective classroom management strategies and creating a supportive learning environment are the most important factors in enhancing learning opportunities and academic achievement for the students.

Effective classroom management paves the ways for creating a supportive learning environment and achieving

students' academic success. So, classroom management never ends and it is an ongoing process for education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my very great appreciation to Dr Kay Thi Lwin, Rector, Technological University (Hmawbi) for her marvellous effort. I would like to express my grateful thanks to Daw Thwe Thwe Oo, Associated Professor and Head, Department of English, Technological University (Hmawbi), who gave me opportunity and encourage to do this paper. I would like to express my deep thanks to Daw Khine Mi Mi Htun, Assistant Lecturer, Department of English, Technological University (Hmawbi) for her patient guidance, suggestions and encouragement to do this paper. I would like to offer my special thanks to my colleagues, Department of Language, University of Computer Studies, Loikaw for their valuable suggestions and their help. My grateful thanks are also extended to the students from the University of Computer Studies, Loikaw who answered the questionnaire for this survey. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the help provided by each and every one during the planning and doing this paper.

REFERENCES

- [1] J. Leo. *The Student-Centered Classroom*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- [2] M. J. Elias, & Y. Schwab, From compliance to responsibility: Social and Emotional Learning and classroom management. In: C. M. Evertson & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management. Research, practice, and contemporary issues*, New York / London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006
- [3] J. Brophy, History of Research on Classroom Management. In C. M. Evertson & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management. Research, practice, and contemporary issues*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006
- [4] J. Eli. "The Student Centered Classroom," *Social Studies and History*, vol. 1, p. 19, 2013.
- [5] C. M. Evertson and C. S. Weinstein, *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues*. Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2006
- [6] (2015) The EHOW website. Available: <http://www.ehow.com/>
- [7] (2017) The CCSS website. Available: <http://www.ccss.co.uk/news/traditional-vs-modern-teaching>
- [8] (2018) Teacher certification website. Available: <http://www.teachercertification.org/a/maintaining-a-positive-classroom-environment.html>
- [9] (2018) Education Corner website. Available: <https://www.educationcorner.com/building-a-positive-learning-environment.html>
- [10] (2018) edublog website. Available: <http://www.learning.schools.nsw.edu.au/crossroads/support-materials/creating-a-supportive-learning-environment>
- [11] (2018) Wikipedia Website. Available: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/learning-environment>
- [12] M. Milne. (2017) Wall Street English website. Available: <https://www.wallstreetenglish.com/blog/10-ways-improve-english-language-skills/>
- [13] N. Schwartz. (2018) Monster.com Available: <http://teaching.monster.com/benefits/articles/10033-top-10-secrets-of-successful-classroom-management>
- [14] R. Jibrin. (2017) The SAFSMS website. Available: <https://safsms.com/blog/5-ways-create-positive-learning-environment/>
- [15] S. Hankova. (2015) Creating a supportive and productive classroom environment conducive to learning. Available: <http://sonhank.com/creating-a-supportive-and-productive-classroom-environment-conducive-to-learning/>
- [16] J. Young. (2014) ASCD website. Available: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/sf114049/chapters/The-Importance-of-a-Positive-Classroom.aspx>
- [17] C. Nguyen. Student Motivation and Learning. Post Graduate Thesis, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York. 2008.