

Analysis of a Teaching Event

Introduction

Despite good preparation, a factually correct lesson plan and an otherwise quiet, cooperative class, a number of factors can be at play that ultimately lead to issues of behaviour management. There are a multitude of interrelated and compounding factors behind the dynamic in the classroom. Hence all of these factors must be comprehended and acted upon in order to create a constructive classroom environment.

Through my teaching experiences at Dalby State High School, it has been possible to determine there are both factors that are within my control, and also certain inherent or predetermined conditions that can all contribute to behaviour problems within the classroom. This reflective and analytical paper will show those links between class make-up, pedagogical considerations and other factors, and the classroom/behaviour management issues that arose. It will show that both my choices, the material being taught, and the situation specific to that experienced by a student teacher are all relevant considerations. Although many 'improvements' could be made regarding 'interpersonal relations' and individual presentation, this paper is supposed to focus on the links between lesson planning and behaviour. As such, this relationship will be reviewed extensively.

In the interests of brevity and to aid this discussion, the majority of information will be presented in a table. This format will help juxtapose the reality of the teaching experience against the relevant pedagogical and other changes that need to be made. It will also better highlight the causative relationships between lesson planning and behaviour and the subsequent relationship between 'current best practice thinking' and the changes to the lesson plan selected. As such, a useful reflective tool will be created (a 'ready reckoner') whereby lesson plans can be review on the basis of behaviour management implications and subsequently, the sorts of changes that should be made. This study will primarily utilise modern practical teaching advice/commentary rather than abstract and antiquated academic discussions from non-teachers.

Table 1: Behaviour Analysis

Problem	Relationship to Lesson Plan	Critical Analysis	Changes
Venue: The classroom was very small, effecting both my ability to circulate and monitor students. This especially hampered my ability to monitor problem students. Personal attention to such students could not be given and reprimands had to be given in front of the whole class. The setting also hampered the proper interaction of groups of students working on their open inquiry.	The lesson required students to work in groups to determine the format and content of an open inquiry into friction. Students were grappling with this concept for the first time. Considerable freedom had to be given in the plan for students to determine what would be investigated and how. This required considerable one-on-one and group attention being given.	The old adage that teachers have eyes in the back of their heads may not be true, but it would certainly have helped. Seriously, teachers need to be able to “scan” and “observe” their class, and need the freedom to move around the room to achieve this (MLEA 2003). This would allow me to observe the whole class; prevent rather than reprimand misbehaviour; “understand the dynamics of the classroom”; maintain eye contact; keep children focussed; and decide on the amount of attention needed (MLEA 2003)	The inquiry could be made individual rather than group (better utilising limited class space). The inquiry could be removed altogether, and replaced with further demonstrations in front of the class, however, the value of the task outweighs the behaviour issues created.
Slow to Work: There were three students very slow to commence group work on designing the open inquiry. They did not actively participate with the groups to which they belonged and achieved very little. This was reflected in their final inquiry submission	With the topic of ‘friction’ students were dealing with abstract and intangible concepts of force and energy, as such, significant components of ‘lecturing’ had to be combined with limited but intensive practical exercises. For expediency these exercises were done in groups.	It has been determined (MLEA 2003) that students who are slow to work may be so for a variety of reasons. Issues are raised of capability and avoidance of failure. As a result of my temporary position, there was no opportunity to determine which students were naturally slow. The organisation of groups according to gender may point to issues of peer pressure, where the slow students were grandstanding or showing off. There was also the issue of authority, with those slower students appearing more prepared to ignore my requests. It appears students had difficulty comprehending the concept of an open inquiry and similarly had difficulty with the topic on force.	In addition to a better preliminary assessment of the capabilities of the students in the class that I was teaching, and a physical rearrangement of the students into other groups, I feel the unit itself was not a contributory factor (except for the issues of story telling discussed in the next row).
General Class Distraction: The class did not appear to be generally engaged by the group inquiry task that they had been assigned. Generally their was significant interruptions, chatting and other behaviour not related to the task at hand.	Again, with the topic of ‘friction’ students were dealing with abstract and intangible concepts of force and energy, as such, significant components of ‘lecturing’ had to be combined with limited but intensive practical exercises.	The lecture then exercise format of this sequence of lessons failed to achieve a positive learning environment. Students had difficulty relating the abstract concepts of force and friction to their experiences of the world around them. Egan (1997, in Groundwater-Smith, p.116) suggests telling a story is one way to overcome this problem. In my lesson the open inquiry was not contextualised. Students were merely trying to test friction between two objects, rather than trying to solve some supposed real world problem. In other words it was not “purposeful nor was it “relevant. Also the extent of the inquiry was too broad; students could determine both the question and the approach to answer it.	A story could be created that sets up a real world scenario. For example, student’s may have been trying to find some way for the builders of the pyramids to better move the large stones required for its construction. The inquiry should be more directed and purposeful.

A number of non-lesson plan related issues also need to be addressed, however their solutions relate more to classroom management techniques, and more experience, confidence and time. They were also issue peculiar to the experience of being a student teacher, and therein lies the solution. These issues can be listed as:

- It was the last lesson of the day, and students were impatient and tired.
- The classroom was small, which created issues not related to the lesson plan, such as noise amplification and inability to provide individual attention.
- There were students in the group who I had not observed as being properly involved in the class or behaving, during the entire period of my experience.
- I was not fully aware of the school guidelines for the management of student behaviour, and was restricted in the application of any novel practices by the presence of a mentor teacher with very limited capacity for innovative approaches.
- Students recognised my inexperience and responded to that.
- I was unable to set down and discuss my expectation of behaviour; an essential component in behaviour management (Feldman 2003).
- Due to the presence of two teachers, the 'flow' of the unit and the individual lessons was compromised.

Overall some changes to the lesson plan could aid in addressing these other behaviour concerns. Generally, an improvement of the relevancy, and an improvement in the enjoyment potential of the subject matter and the way it was being delivered, would engage the students more and hence reduce the resulting behaviour problems.

Ultimately the aim should be to implement the 12 'Glasseresque' strategies proposed by Backes and Ellis (2003, p.23-5). They are:

- Have clear expectations for your student
- Deal with today's problems today
- Treat all students with respect
- Provide sound instruction
- Fill each period with activity
- Monitor your students
- Deal with problems at the lowest possible level
- Don't be a target
- Pick your battles carefully
- Think like a kid but act like an adult
- Keep the lines clear between the instructor and the student
- Care about the students

Timing, location, my role in the classroom as a student teacher, together with the lesson plan all contributed to behaviour management issues. Improvements were needed.

Lesson planning can achieve some, but not all. If the guidelines and recommendations of those discussed are followed, an holistic approach to classroom and behaviour management can be implemented. This will be enhanced through improved confidence, and the greater freedom from becoming a 'fully-fledged' teacher.

References

Backes, C. & Ellis, I. (2003) 'The secret of classroom management', *Techniques*; May 2003; Vol. 78, No. 5, pp. 22-5.

Feldman, S. 2003, 'Classroom Management All Year Long', *Teaching Pre K – 8*, Vol. 34, Iss. 1, p. 8.

Groundwater-Smith, S., Brennan, M., McFadden, M. & Mitchell, J. (1999), *Secondary Schooling in a Changing World*, Harcourt, Sydney.

MLEA 2003 *Behaviour Management* (online) available: [http://www.schoolweb.middlesbrough.gov.uk/staffroom/ianmawson/im_class_man_\[01-13\].html](http://www.schoolweb.middlesbrough.gov.uk/staffroom/ianmawson/im_class_man_[01-13].html) (accessed 31 October 2003).

Original Lesson Plan

Friction – Open Inquiry Introductory Lesson

Anticipatory Set

What did we do last lesson? – briefly discuss the experiment about how different surfaces affect friction, then relate that to today's task.

Discussion of the open inquiry task utilising the Cows Moo Softly approach – 10 minutes

- What will I **C**hange
- What will I **M**easure
- What will I keep the **S**ame

Objective

Students will become more familiar with the principle of friction, and utilise and develop their understanding of force. They will do so through the development of an open inquiry into the effects of friction on force.

Rationale

Friction is an important factor in the movement of objects. The principle must be understood in order to account for the movement of an object.

Your Job Will Be:

To design an open inquiry into the effect of friction on the of force required to move an object.

Input

Open Inquiry

- Determine the question to be asked and answered.
- What will I change
- What will I measure
- What will I keep the same
- How will I record my results
- What will I need

Modelling

Students are to follow instructions for conducting an open inquiry form the text

Possible suggestions for students to think about:

- The surface
- The mass
- The surface of the block, for example, putting marbles or powder under the block.

Checking for Understanding

Ask students to repeat the main steps in the process.

Get together into your groups and discuss the inquiry.

Put up your hands if there is anything you do not understand.

Guided Practice

None

Independent Practice

Students to commence determining the nature of their open inquiry.

New Lesson Plan (*changes in bold italics*)

Friction – Open Inquiry Introductory Lesson

Anticipatory Set

What did we do last lesson? – briefly discuss the experiment about how different surfaces affect friction, then relate that to today's task.

Discussion of the open inquiry task utilising the Cows Moo Softly approach – 10 minutes

- What will I **C**hange
- What will I **M**easure
- What will I keep the **S**ame

Objective

Students will become more familiar with the principle of friction, and utilise and develop their understanding of force. They will do so through the development of an open inquiry into the effects of friction on force.

Rationale

Friction is an important factor in the movement of objects. *Many of the processes that we take for granted in our world rely on the forces of friction, from the breaking of a car at the traffic lights to running for the school bus.* The principle must be understood in order to account for the movement of any object.

Your Job Will Be:

To imagine the builders of the pyramids have gone on strike and you have been called in help finish their construction. The only problem is, the large blocks needed to build the pyramid are over a kilometre away. You will have to determine how these heavy blocks can be moved more easily to the base of the pyramids. As you are a scientist, you have decided to test a method for reducing the force required to move these blocks, using a wooden block in your possession.

So you will design an open inquiry into the effect of friction on the of force required to move an object.

This will be done in groups (*Option of individual work if space is too restrictive and resources permit*).

Input

What is an open inquiry?

Open Inquiry *should involve the answering of the following questions*

- What will I change
- What will I measure
- What will I keep the same
- How will I record my results
- What will I need

Instruct students as to the names given to the builders of the pyramids so they can address each other in a way , contemporary to the period.

Modelling

Students are to follow instructions for conducting an open inquiry from the text

Possible suggestions for students to think about:

- The surface
- The mass
- The surface of the block, for example, putting marbles or powder under the block.

Checking for Understanding

Ask students to repeat the main steps in the process.

Get together into your groups and discuss the inquiry. (*Option of individual work if space is too restrictive and resources permit*)

Put up your hands if there is anything you do not understand.

Ensure materials to be used for the inquiry are available at this planning stage so students are engaged through interacting with and discussing the use of the materials.

Guided Practice

Provide students an example of the sort of factors that may be tested in an open inquiry.

Instead of using the block of wood that they are to use, utilise a different object and move it on a different surface.

Independent Practice

Students to commence determining the nature of their open inquiry.