ENHANCING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION: ROADMAP TO ACHIEVING LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the need to enhance classroom management in vocational and technical education in order to achieve learning objectives. The paper entails discussion covering vocational and technical education and its objectives in Nigeria, learning objectives, classroom management, planning, classroom management strategies, enhancing classroom management in vocational and technical education and the appropriate strategies in that regard. The paper concluded that the success of any teaching hinges on effective management of classroom and that for classroom management to be enhanced, strategies such as classroom routines and procedure, dealing with disruptive and off-task student behaviour, lesson strategies and lesson delivery and teacher behaviour should be employed by teachers of vocational and technical education. It was therefore amongst others recommended that Vocational and Technical Education stakeholders should disseminate information through enlightenment programmes to the teachers in charge on ways of enhancing classroom management to aid achievement of the stated goals.

Keywords: Classroom management, Vocational and technical education, Learning objectives

Introduction

Effective education refers to the degree to which schools are successful in accomplishing their educational objectives (Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, Van Kuijk & Doolaard, 2014). Education is a veritable instrument with which a nation can remain perpetually viable, economically and socially. The availability of an educational system that supports and promotes development of human talents and encourages self-enthusiasm is an ample platform on which citizens of such nation could exhibit their inbuilt dexterities in order to promote the economy and well-being of the society they belong. For that reason, education in Nigeria focuses on technology and vocational education.

Vocational education which is synonymous to vocational and technical education (VTE) or Vocational Education and Training is an education that is provided and imparted in individuals in an organized school system. Thus, it is an education that is centered on training of minds to be economically useful and to boost the nation's image at both national and international realms. Okoro (1991) viewed vocational education as any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations. Okoro (1991) further explicated that vocational education provides the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for effective employment in specific occupations. Goel (2011) affirmed that Vocational and Technical Education plays a vital role in human resource development of the country by creating skilled manpower, enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life. Oleabhiele, Ugbebor and Erhirhie (2012) referred to vocational and technical education as education process which involves in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Vocational education is defined as training for a specific vocation in industry or agriculture or trade (Aikhionbare, 2016).

For a nation to achieve the goal of vocational and technical education, all the components of the training must have been passed and imparted to the trainees at appropriate time and to the understanding of the trainees. To corroborate this assertion, Obi (2013) posited that for a nation to progress and witness development she must give the right value and education that is capable of developing the youths into a sound and effective citizens and fully integrate the individuals into the community. There could be no understanding of concept in learning environment that is inhibited by varying degree of distractions. That is why any teacher or instructor in charge of educational training has to carefully ensure that the classroom is adequately managed with relevant class management strategy that promotes understanding of students in the area of instruction to aid achievement of learning objectives of the course in question.

Learning objectives are brief statements that describe what students will be expected to learn by the end of school year, course, unit, lesson, project, or class period. In many cases, learning objectives are the interim academic goals that teachers establish for students who are working toward meeting more comprehensive learning standards (Glossary, 2014). Teacher and Educational Development (2005) opined that learning objective is an outcome statement that captures specifically what knowledge, skills, attitudes learners should be able to exhibit following instruction. Learning outcomes are defined as statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence (Thessaloniki, 2016). Learning objectives therefore are a statement of expectations initially written by a teacher with respect to what students should be able to know, understand and demonstrate after the completion of a lesson. Achievement or realization of the objectives is dependent upon the teacher's ability to manage the classroom.

This paper therefore draws attention of education stakeholders to see as onus on them the need to enhance classroom management in order to achieve the objectives for which a particular course is organized. With emphasis on palatable learning atmosphere there is chance for students who are under the training to be fully integrated and thereby help them comprehend whatever the would-be teacher is passing across. This will make attainment of goals and objectives of vocational education realizable.

Objectives of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria
Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) identified the following as the goals of Technical and Vocational Education:
  i. provision of trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advance craft and technical levels;
  ii. provision of technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; and
  iii. giving training and impart the necessary skills to individual for self-reliance economically.

Classroom Management
Classroom management is one of the most important roles played by teachers because it determines teaching success. Classroom management refers to the wide variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive during a class (Glossary, 2014). When classroom management strategies are executed effectively, teachers minimize the behaviours that impede learning for both individual students and groups of students, while maximizing the behaviours that facilitate or enhance learning. Generally speaking, effective teachers tend to display strong classroom-management skills, while the hallmark of the inexperienced or less effective teacher is a disorderly classroom filled with students who are not working or paying attention. Classroom management is the actions teachers take to create a supportive environment for the academic and social emotional learning of students (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Korpershoek et al. (2014) asserted that classroom management is an ongoing interaction between teachers and their students. An effective teacher is the one who is able to effectively manage his or her class to the attainment of learning objectives.

Effective teachers appear to be effective with students of all achievement levels regardless of the levels of heterogeneity in their classes.

Planning for VTE Teachers to Effectively Manage a Classroom

Managing student's behaviour is clearly a complex process. Teachers must be multi skilled, talented and able to deal with range of behaviour. However, Bobbijokenyon (2001) suggested six planning tools for teachers to effectively manage a classroom:

a. **Reflecting students' development needs**: Students' characteristic. As a process of appropriate teaching, classroom management needs to consider a student's development level. The goal of classroom management must reflect the ever-changing needs of students of different level.

b. **Creating a learning environment**. Creating and implementing a learning environment means careful planning for the start of the school year. The learning environment must be envisioned in both a physical space and a cognitive space. Creating an environment conducive to concentration, study, and learning is more than having attractive, stimulating sights, relaxing sounds, and good ventilation.

c. **Creating a physical environment**. Arranging desks and furnishing is often a compromise between what teacher would like and what is possible. The physical space of a classroom is managed as the teacher prepares the classroom for the students.

d. **Creating, teaching and maintaining rules and procedures**. All teachers, regardless of years of experience, will encounter numerous disciplinary problems throughout the school year. One of the first applications of effective classroom management begins with the establishment of classroom rules on the first day of school. In planning procedures and rules for the classroom, teachers have to consider the students' characteristics and the physical environment.

e. **Effectively managing classroom activities**. Effective teachers are the persons who can conduct students using the four methods of teaching. The methods are to show how they are "with it", cope effectively with overlapping situation, maintain smoothness and continuity in lessons and lastly, engage students in a variety of challenging activities.

f. **Getting students to cooperate**. There are three main strategies to get students to cooperate. The strategies are: develop a positive relationship with students, get students to share and assume responsibility and reward appropriate behaviour.

Classroom Management Strategies

Classroom management strategies are tools that the teachers can use to help create such an environment, ranging from activities to improve teacher-student relationships to rules to regulate student behaviour (Korpershoek et al., 2014). Glossary (2014) identified eight strategies to be adopted by teachers for effective classroom management and they are discussed as follows:

i. **Entry Routine** is a technique in which teachers establish a consistent, daily routine that begins as soon as students enter the classroom-preparing learning materials, making seat assignments, passing in homework, or doing a brief physical "warm-up" activity would all be examples of entry routines. This technique can avoid the disorder and squandered time that can characterize the beginning of a class period.

ii. **Do Now** is a brief written activity that students are given as soon as they arrive in the classroom. This technique is intended to get students settled, focused, productive, and prepared for instruction as quickly as possible.

iii. **Tight Transitions** is a technique in which teachers establish transition routines that students learn and can execute quickly and repeatedly without much direction from a teacher. For example, a teacher might say "reading time," and students will know that they are expected to stop what they are working on, put away their materials, get their books, and begin reading silently on their own. This technique helps to maximize instructional time by reducing the disarray and delay that might accompany transitions between activities.

iv. **Seat Signals** is a technique in which students use nonverbal signals while seated to indicate that they need something, such as a new pencil, a restroom break, or help with a problem. This technique

establishes expectations for appropriate communication and helps to minimize disruptions during class.

v. **Props** is the act of publicly recognizing and praising students who have done something good, such as answering a difficult question or helping a peer. Props is done by the entire class and is typically a short movement or spoken phrase. The technique is intended to establish a group culture in which learning accomplishments and positive actions are socially valued and rewarded.

vi. **Nonverbal Intervention** is when teachers establish eye contact or make gestures that let students know they are off-task, not paying attention, or misbehaving. The technique helps teachers efficiently and silently manages student behaviour without disrupting a lesson.

vii. **Positive Group Correction** is a quick, affirming verbal reminder that lets a group of students know what they should be doing. Related techniques are Anonymous Individual Correction, a verbal reminder that is directed at an anonymous student; Private Individual Correction, a reminder given to an individual student as discretely as possible; and Lightning-Quick Public Correction, a quick, positive reminder that tells an individual student what to do instead of what not to do.

viii. **Do It Again** is used when students do not perform a basic task correctly, and the teacher asks them to do it again the correct way. This technique establishes and reinforces consistent expectations for quality work.

Enhancing Classroom Management in Vocational and Technical Education
Enhancing classroom management means that a teacher is constantly working to create a learning environment in which all students feel safe and appropriately challenged. It means the learning opportunities a teacher provides to students are organized and delivered in ways that gives room for all students to succeed eventually. Effective classroom management is a crucial component of ensuring that all students achieve at the end of the lesson. Classroom management is a pivot element in the teaching and learning process. Excellent performance of students in a particular subject could be linked with the teacher's ability in managing the class. There is therefore need to enhance classroom management in order to attain achievement of the objectives of vocational and technical education. To achieve this, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) (2004) developed the four strategies through which classroom management can be enhanced namely; classroom routines and procedure, dealing with disruptive and off-task student behaviour, lesson strategies and lesson delivery and teacher behaviour. Such enhancing strategies are accordingly discussed below:

A. **Classroom Routines and Procedures**: This is broken down into the following:
Physical Organization of the Classroom:
* create an arrangement of the room that is conducive to good classroom management and appropriate for the grade level(s) in the classroom.
* organize the physical space differently for group work and for individual work.
* ensure that there is a traffic area clear of congestion.
* create a small space for quiet work with few distractions.
* keep a "professional" workspace for the teacher's use.
* have materials and resources needed for the day's lesson well organized and placed conveniently close at hand.
* bulletin boards may reflect how the subject is linked to society, further education, and work opportunities. These displays help to foster enthusiasm for the subject and motivation to learn. Also, examples of student work at appropriate levels should be visible and frequently changed.
* create and maintain a safe physical environment.

Establishing Classroom Expectations and Routines:
* establish, maintain and manage a set of effective and appropriate classroom routines, procedures and expectations that are developed with the students and are appropriate for their age and grade. Ensure

your expectations are the same for all of your students while recognizing the needs of your exceptional students.

- keep a positive focus by referring to "rules" as expectations. Classroom expectations are most effective when teachers, parents and students are equally committed to upholding them. Ensure that expectations are shared with parents and explore the use of "contracts" with students.
- use classroom expectations that describe the positive behaviours you want instead of the negative behaviours you do not want (for example, instead of "no fighting", use "settle conflicts appropriately").
- tie classroom routines and procedures to the school's Code of Behaviour. Assign consequences that are not merely punishment.
- keep the list of expectations short.
- uncertainty increases the level of excitement in the classroom. Create an atmosphere of certainty by ensuring students know classroom routines and expectations.

Keeping Students Engaged:
- have work or a routine ready so that students can readily begin to focus on a task as soon as they enter the classroom.
- use a variety of instructional tools (for example, technology, visual materials, books, and articles) to engage students.
- apply lessons to further education, work opportunities, current events, and students' daily lives to evoke interest.
- bring experts in the field into the class or use technology, where available, to schedule online chats with subject specialists.
- ensure the involvement of others while students are making presentations by involving them in the assessment of the presentation or give them some role other than passive listening.
- place copies of assignments in folders for absent students. At the end of the day, label each folder with the absent students' names and missed work is ready for the students' return (use this strategy also for students who come to class late to provide them with missed material quickly without disrupting the flow of work in the room).
B. **Dealing with Disruptive and Off-Task Student Behaviour**: this strategy is further divided and discussed hereunder.

Taking Preventative Measures:
- prevent small problems from escalating into big ones. Greet students at the classroom door and make personal connections with the students. A warm personal welcome sets the tone for the day and gives the teacher a chance to assess each student's mood and head off problems before they start. Use the opportunity to establish rapport and to deal with minor problems (such as boisterous behaviour, bad moods or unwanted materials) quietly and discretely – before they can erupt into public confrontations that threaten control and disrupt the class.
- take attendance with the class seating plan while students are working rather than calling out names.
- to keep students actively engaged, plan a variety of activities, break major activities into smaller chunks and include activities that vary in length.
- whenever possible, use reminders and not reprimands. Take the opportunity to remind students early enough so that the situation does not progress beyond a point where a simple reminder is no longer effective.

Provide Positive Reinforcement:
- provide positive reinforcement. Make ample use of praise. Acknowledge good behaviour in words or actions (with a nod, a smile or a "thumbs up").

- carry around "post-it notes" and jot down "good work" "excellent question" "remember to raise your hand" and quietly stick the notes on students' desks.

Demonstrate Your Awareness:
- demonstrate to students by your behaviour an awareness of what is going on in the classroom.
- move around the room. Make the rounds while students are working. Check on their progress. Stand near students who are restless or off-task. Establish eye contact.
- keep scanning the whole class to pick up on potential problems.

Intervene With Misbehaving Students:
- deal with disruptive students individually, privately and in a timely manner. Never engage in a disciplinary conversation across the room. Move in close to the student and let him or her know what is expected. Deal with the problem behaviour and not the personality of the student.
- ensure that a student is not rewarded for mis-behaviour by becoming the focus of attention. Anticipate problems before they occur. Be inconspicuous when dealing with a misbehaving student and ensure that others in the class are not distracted.
- address a student who is misbehaving by focusing the student's attention on the behaviour wanted, not on the misbehaviour.
- react immediately and effectively with students who use sarcasm and put downs in their interactions. Ensure that an atmosphere of mutual respect is part of the classroom expectations and work with the students about the appropriate consequence for such mis-behaviour.
- de-escalate difficult situations and diffuse conflicts between/among students using appropriate strategies (for example, use gentle humour, move physically close to the participants, use time-out strategies, speak to key students involved in the situation privately in class and follow-up after class).
- employ effective intervention techniques with students, such as use of the quiet corner for individual work, consultation with school support staff, consultation outside of the classroom with the student and/or parents.

C. **Lesson Strategies and Lesson Delivery**: The branches of this strategy are considered below:

Lesson Preparation:
- plan lessons that are well organized and fully developed, showing all the components of the teaching-learning cycle using a variety of strategies and activities that reflect multiple learning styles and multiple intelligences.
- build planning around the developmental needs and interests of the students and tie lessons to further education, work opportunities, current events, and students' daily experiences · plan to use diverse instructional strategies and resources, including the use of appropriate technology, to stimulate interest and to meet learning needs.
- plan assessment activities related to stated learning outcomes and the activities planned for the lesson.
- plan to maximize the potential learning of all students in a classroom by planning activities that appeal to both sides of the brain (for example, creative, visual activities as well as those relying on use of language).
- anticipate potential learning challenges. Design strategies to address those challenges (for example, have focused activities to reinforce concepts, introduce the section of the lesson where you have anticipated potential problems with a concrete strategy to lessen the problems, and give students tips on how to resolve difficult concepts).
- plan to teach subject-specific language so that instructions and resource materials are understood.

Lesson Structure:

- relate content to prior and future learning. Begin instruction with material related to prior lessons to provide students with a basis for understanding the new lesson.
- combine textbook knowledge with practical life experiences when presenting concepts.
- provide opportunities for students to experience the processes of discovery and creativity. Give students ample opportunity to demonstrate inquiry and mastery.
- demonstrate a commitment to interdisciplinary approaches · provide opportunities for students to interact with one another while reinforcing good student behaviour and respect.
- integrate all subject matter with an infusion of varied skills that promote literacy (for example, reading, writing, analysis, synthesis, problem solving, application, and oral language).
- clarify skills and concepts being taught when necessary and re-teach skills and concepts when required.

Lesson Delivery:
- begin at the very beginning of each class period and end at the very end; learning should be happening all of the time. Start and end the class on time.
- begin the class with an agenda of what the students and the teacher will be doing for the period.
- give students an overview of what they are learning and break the content into manageable chunks. Don't teach isolated segments of content without showing how they link into the whole. Make connections between the lesson content and other parts of the curriculum, further education, work opportunities, and students' daily lives.
- have a number of seating plans that reflect various classroom activities and expect students to adhere to the appropriate plan.
- have all materials and resources required for the lesson on hand and ready for use.
- pre-plan questions that require students to use higher thinking skills.
- maintain student records (e.g. portfolios, assessment records, anecdotal records, student folders etc.) in a professional, organized manner.

Delivery Strategies:
- closely monitor student work and understanding and adjust teaching methods when needed.
- speak clearly in a voice that can be heard by all students without yelling.
- model active listening skills.
- provide sufficient time for students to process acquired information.
- employ strategies to gain attention and maintain focus on the lesson (for examples, see earlier section "Keeping Students Engaged").
- eliminate classroom interruptions as much as possible and maximize time-on-task.
- maintain an appropriate pace for instruction and make smooth transitions between activities.

D. **Teacher Behaviours**: This is another strategy that revolves round the teacher and as explained below:

Effective Teacher Behaviours:
- have a positive attitude and high but achievable expectations for all students. Hold and communicate high expectations for student learning and behaviour with a firm belief in their abilities.
- be motivated, enthusiastic, interested and well informed about what is being taught.
- use humour appropriately to stimulate student interest or reduce classroom tensions.
- let students know that you like them. Express personal warmth and encouragement to students. Understand that students like you to know a little about them but maintain the professional "line" when disclosing personal information · exhibit a poised, confident manner. Model respect, kindness, and support.
- work to instill a sense of self-discipline and spend time teaching self-monitoring skills.
- monitor classroom activities and provide feedback and reinforcement regarding behaviour.

- use a variety of strategies to develop positive social skills among students (for example, have students work as team members in group situations, assist each other when one encounters difficulty in an assignment or task, and volunteer to be peer coaches).

Benefits of Classroom Management

A well managed classroom is bound to induce certain benefits. De Leon (2014) observed that effective classroom management is important in the following ways:

i.   **To optimize students learning and achievement**: Managing the classroom includes the various intricacies of student learning that take account of expectations, interactions, motivation, and behaviour. It means that learning activities that are provided to students should be organized and delivered in an understandable manner to aid students' success.

ii. **To successfully engage students**: Classroom management is important for ensuring that students learn the material rather than committing it to short-term memory for tests. Engaging students in lectures by moving around the room, asking questions, and employing both verbal and nonverbal teaching methods ensures that students are paying attention and taking more from the learning experience than simple facts.

iii. **To manage classroom time effectively**: the efficient use of time is an important variable in helping students achieve learning goals and making the classroom a pleasant place for trainers and students. Instructional strategies must be planned to fit into fixed time frame.

iv. **To maintain a positive classroom atmosphere**: developing and maintaining a positive learning environment is a foundation for effective teaching. Trainers should try to offer their students a rich and inviting classroom environment because the richness of students' experiences are enhanced or diminished by their surroundings.

v.   **Sound behaviour management to avoid classroom indiscipline**: Classroom discipline management is a skill that is not only learned but practiced daily. Sound behaviour management establishes the environmental context that makes good instruction possible.

vi. **To manage classroom resources effectively**: Effective classroom managers maximize the classroom's physical space to facilitate easy teacher movement and proximity, as well as student movement and transitions.

Conclusion

It is noteworthy that the success of any teaching hinges on effective management of classroom.   The teachers in vocational and technical education are saddled with the responsibility of taking care of the classroom such that the objectives of the course would be achieved. To this end, it is concluded that for classroom management to be enhanced, strategies such as classroom routines and procedure, dealing with disruptive and off-task Student behaviour, lesson strategies and lesson delivery and teacher behaviour should be employed by teachers of vocational and technical education.

Recommendations

Based on the review in this paper, it is therefore recommended that:

i.   Vocational and Technical Education stakeholders should disseminate information through enlightenment programmes to the teachers in charge on ways of enhancing classroom management to aid achievement of the stated goals.

ii. Government should float programmes to build and enhance the capacity of lecturers in the use of classroom management strategies.

iii. Vocational and Technical Education teachers and instructors should at all material times understand the need to study their teaching environment and apply appropriate strategies for tackling situational problem in order to foster students understanding of the subject matter.

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