

ENHANCING CLASSROOM CLIMATE

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ABSTRACT

Enhancing classroom climate is an imperative aspect with regards to the field of education; it has been stated that the main goal of an educational institution is to impart learning, training and education to the students for their overall development; but this objective can be achieved when there will be effective, amiable classroom climate within an educational institution. This research paper highlights the significance of classroom climate. This is a broad area and the major aspects that have been covered include importance of classroom climate, promoting positive classroom climate, learning environment, advantages of using technology into the classrooms, transforming educational institution into a culture, role of a school psychologist and characteristics of effective classrooms.

Keywords: Classroom Climate, Learning, Environment, Technology, Culture, Institution

INTRODUCTION

Classroom climate is referred to as the learning environment; terms such as atmosphere, ambience, ecology and milieu are the areas that have to be taken into account when analyzing the classroom climate. The manner in which classroom climate is put into operation can prove to be a barrier to learning or it can prove to be beneficial to the students and the staff members. Classroom climate is the perceived quality of the setting. It emerges in a flowing state of the multifaceted transaction of many environmental factors such as physical, material, social, organizational and operational variables. The climate of the classroom reflects the school's culture, which is a stable quality emerging from fundamental, institutionalized values and beliefs systems, ideologies, rituals and traditions (Classroom Climate, n.d.).

There have been identification of various key concepts that are related to understanding classroom climate and these are social system organization, social attitudes, staff and student morale, power, control, guidance, support, and evaluation structures, curricular and instructional practices, communicated expectations, efficacy, accountability demands, cohesion, competition, the fit between key learner and classroom variables, system maintenance, growth, and change, orderliness, and safety (Classroom Climate, n.d.).

IMPORTANCE OF CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Classroom climate has been viewed as the major determiner of classroom behavior and learning, understanding how to establish and maintain an appropriate classroom climate has been viewed as an essential component in leading to school's progress. Research suggests significant relationships between classroom climate and areas such as student engagement, behavior, self-effectiveness, achievement, social and emotional development, principal leadership style, stages of educational reform, teacher conduct, and overall quality of school life. Research also suggests that the impact of classroom climate may be greater on students from low income homes and groups that are often discriminated against. Given the nature of classroom climate research, cause and effect interpretations remain exploratory. The broader body of research on organizational climate does suggest that increasing demands for higher achievement test scores and reliance on social and tangible rewards to control behavior and motivate performance contribute to a classroom climate that is immediate and over-controlling (Classroom Climate, n.d.).

PROMOTING A POSITIVE CLASSROOM CLIMATE

A practical approach to developing a positive classroom climate requires alert awareness to enhancing the quality of life within the classroom for students and staff, practicing a curriculum that promotes not only academic, but also social, and emotional learning, enabling teachers to be valuable with a wide range of students, fostering inherent stimulus for classroom learning and teaching, and the teachers and the staff members should possess essential leadership skills to guide the learners towards the right direction. With respect to all these points, the positive classroom environment is promoted through: (Classroom Climate, n.d.).

1. A hospitable, thoughtful, and encouraged atmosphere,
2. Social support methods for students and staff,
3. An arrangement of alternatives for pursuing objectives,
4. Consequential contribution by students and staff in decision making,
5. Transforming a huge, classroom into a set of smaller units that capitalize on fundamental incentive for learning and are not based on aptitude or problem oriented grouping,
6. Providing training and reacting to problems and facing difficulties in a personalized manner.
7. Usage of a multiplicity of approaches for preventing and dealing with problems as soon as they occur.
8. A vigorous and pleasing physical environment that is advantageous to learning and teaching (Classroom Climate, n.d.).

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

There are a number of elements that create an impact upon the effective learning of the

learners. The environmental conditions in which the learning takes place are extremely significant. Underprivileged conditions within the environment disheartens the learners and reduces their brain functioning. As facilitators of learning, it is imperative to integrate the following five elements within the learning environment (Rural Health, 2009).

The Social Environment - It is vital for the human beings to be social and just remaining confined to themselves could prove to be disadvantageous. Socializing with others within the classroom can enhance the learning of the students of all age groups.

The Physical Environment – The physical environmental conditions of the learners do affect their learning needs such as the room temperature, noise, light, ventilation, equipment, room size, layout and appearance.

The Emotional Environment – Within the learning environment, it is important to maintain and recognize the self-respect of oneself and the others. Politeness, effective communication and being amiable are the factors that can help in maintaining cordial terms with the fellow students and the facilitators.

The Cognitive Environment –Learners need to develop this viewpoint that what they are learning will be beneficial to them in their future; it will help them in decision making, problem solving, dispute settlement and in handling other predicaments which they would face in life.

The Holistic Environment – This environment assists in the recognition of the needs and preferences of the learners. It detects how the individuals are different from each other with respect to personality, language and culture and how relevant examples and cases should be provided to facilitate their learning (Rural Health, 2009).

ADVANTAGES OF USING TECHNOLOGY WITHIN THE CLASSROOM SETTINGS

Active Role – The roles of the students change as they use technology within the classroom settings, they become more active in learning; the students are provided with this opportunity to work with reliable, meaningful and challenging problems when technology is used within the classrooms. It promotes student-directed learning and builds up knowledge.

Increased Motivation and Self Esteem – Students become motivated to learn when they get involved with technology; they develop enthusiasm and willingness to acquire more awareness about retrieving information from online sources and communicating with experts.

Students who depict less curiosity with academic assignments develop their interest while using technology.

More Collaboration with Peers – The usage of technology has enabled the students to work in interaction with their peers and fellow students; they have developed more interactive capabilities and communication skills through the use of technology; it is challenging, but it provides many different methods to learn. There are many things which can be learned by group interaction and discussion.

Increased Use of Outside Sources – In this case, every 10 out of 17 classrooms found an increase in the use of outside sources. Sources such as telecommunications, satellite broadcasts, fax machines and the telephones were also brought into utilization.

Improved Design Skills/Attention to Audience – When students learn all different kinds of technologies such as computers, calculators, projectors, they acquire this understanding that how will they be able to communicate with the audience and how improvements can be made, such as making presentations on the computer, using slideshows and so forth. Students pay attention to this fact that how the ideas are going to be represented to the audience through text, animation or video (Motamedi, n.d.).

ASSESSMENT OF TECHNOLOGY WITHIN THE CLASSROOMS

In order to assess how the teachers are making use of technology in imparting instruction to the students, there has been recognition of the following areas: (Gray, 2010).

1. Number of computers within the classroom each working day.
2. Internet connection for the computers available in the classroom.
3. Availability and frequency of usage for computers and other technology devices such as slides, projectors etc during instructions.
4. Availability and frequency that teachers apply systems and technological means in schools or classrooms for various activities.
5. Making use of technology at home by the teachers for establishing materials to be instructed to the students within the classroom.
6. Types of software and internet sites used by teachers for classroom preparation, instruction, and administrative functions.
7. Students' use of educational technology during classes, their understanding and improving performance.
8. Modes of technology used by teachers to communicate with parents and students such as email, typed or printed letters etc.

9. Teacher training and preparation to use educational technology for instruction, making use of technology to solve mathematical problems, learning and gaining knowledge.
10. Amount of time spent in professional development of students for educational technology during the past one year, and teachers' opinions about statements related to their professional development and ability to make use of technology (Gray, 2010).

TRANSFORMING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION INTO A CULTURE

Culture means values, norms, policies, and rules of an institution. In order to create an organized, disciplined, systematic and well regulated institution, it is essential to establish organized cultural traits. Cultural traits are internal to an institution; they are a way of understanding when different sub coalitions, subgroups and occupational groups work in harmony to achieve a purpose. The authority regarding modernization, learning and management of change is vested in the hands of the academic managers. The main motive behind understanding cultural traits is that an environment of the institution should be created in such a manner that it should support modernization, erudition, scholarship opportunities, improvement and modifications. It is believed that cultural traits are developed by the academic managers, the principals, directors, heads of the departments and the educators come under the category of academic managers. The academic managers are able to analyze, create, develop, manage and even wipe out a cultural trait if they find it unsuitable (Dembowski, 2004).

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

Known the significance and meaning of classroom climate, the organization and safeguarding of a positive climate in every classroom must be a vital focal point of all school staff. School psychologists can play an escalating responsibility by taking every accessible prospect to work with teachers in their classrooms to increase teacher aptitude and provide community support. This means going beyond traditional conference about classroom management strategies and how to work with individuals noticeable regarding behavior, learning, and emotional problems. School psychologists can be requested to spend greater than ever time in classrooms grouping with teachers to enhance classroom climate. In addition, school psychologists can work with other student support staff to advance classroom climate by determining and preserving a positive school climate that endorses well being and addresses hindrances to teaching and learning. A major center of this should be on developing school-wide programs that support students and families as they discuss many school related conversions, increase home contribution with schools, answer to, and where practicable, prevent crises situations, enlarge community participation and sustenance and smooth the progress of students and family access to specific services when compulsory (Classroom Climate, n.d.).

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE CLASSROOMS

The following are the characteristics of effective classrooms: (UCLA, 2011).

1. Positive classroom social climate that personalizes contacts and supports in manners that builds reliance over the period of time and meets learners where they are recommended adjustment so that students have an equal opportunity to learn, adjusts class size and groupings to optimize learning, engages students through dialogue and decision making and, incorporates parents in manifold ways to deal with social emotional development.

2. Scheming and implementing superiority in instructional practices and experiences that involve students in decision making, contextualize and make learning authentic, including the usage of real life situations, mentors are appropriately and cognitively multifaceted and challenging, enhance language and literacy skills, cultivate joint student products, enlarge the time students get themselves involved in learning through devising motivated practice, ensure students know how to learn and are prepared for lifelong learning, ensure usage of pre referral involvement approaches, use a combination of methods and progressive technology to enhance learning.

3. Instruction is adapted to meet students' requirements based on continuing measurements using amount of multiple dimensions of contact, genuine assessment tools, students' participation based on their self-evaluations.

4. Teachers work in partnership and are supported with personalized in examination; conference, mentoring, grouping, special resources that are accessible to visit the classroom to guarantee that students with special needs are accommodated appropriately.

DISCUSSION

When understanding the field of education, the performance of the teachers, students and other staff members, it is important to analyze the classroom climate of the institution as well. Classroom climate refers mainly to the environmental conditions of the class, the kinds of curriculum and instructional methodologies and techniques that are utilized by the teachers to impart appropriate knowledge to the students, behavioral conduct, safety measures and effective communication strategies. On the part of the students it is required that they perform to the best of their abilities, maintain the class decorum, and render effective communication with all the individuals within an institution. Technology is advancing to a phenomenal phase and within the schools and other institutions the usage of technology has become imperative, therefore the teachers and the students are required to establish appropriate terms and conditions and relationships so that they can develop effective skills and abilities.

The classroom climate, if it is appropriately developed and formed generates values, norms, rules and regulations within the schools. There has been an imperative role of a school psychologist to render appropriate training and learning so that it may prove to be advantageous

to the students. Social, cognitive, physical, emotional and holistic are the environmental conditions that are required to be created in order to enhance the climate of the classrooms. Effective training and teaching methods are imperative in order to enhance the classroom climate, teamwork is also encouraged with the institutions; students should become acquainted with the usage of different kinds of technologies used within the classrooms such as computers, projectors, notebooks, calculators and so forth. Students with special needs are required to be given personalized attention and for them it is required to create amiable and approachable classroom climate; if a student faces learning disability and is not able to understand the concepts easily then it is required for the teachers to communicate with him in a civilized manner to make him understand the concepts. Making use of all the above stated aspects that contribute in enhancing the classroom climate would certainly improve the working of the classrooms and the entire institution.

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