



**THE ROLE OF DISCIPLINE IN THE CLASSROOM**

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<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>KEYWORDS</b>
<p><i>Keeping discipline is as important as teaching. Teachers who punish students to keep discipline are not often favourable. One of the main issues for every teacher, especially those just starting their careers is being able to keep discipline in class. We all have heard of well meaning new teachers who wanted to be very friendly with their students but encountered chaos when students paid no attention to them. When this problem occurs, we all know that there is no single ideal way to address the issue, so I decided to collect and summarise information for improving a bad situation in class.</i></p>	<p><i>Discipline, behavior, reciprocal, misbehaving, dimension, corporal punishment, discrepancy, tolerance, methodologists, classroom, pedagogy.</i></p>

**Defining Discipline**

The word *discipline* means today a way training someone so that they learn to control their behavior and obey the rules, orders and demands of the community or an institution. Even its derivation is inseparably connected with education; it comes from the Latin word *discipulus*, which means student. Latin *disciplina* refers to the way of treating students.

For the needs of pedagogy, Oko speaks of “conscious discipline”, that is, obedience to rules and values that are un-questionably recognised by an individual or by society: At school, conscious discipline occurs where there aren’t any big discrepancies between the systems of norms created by teachers and students”<sup>1</sup>. He goes on to say that the basis for introducing conscious discipline at school in teaching process is treating children and youth as partners who are shown respect by others but also are given appropriate responsibilities. Many of the assumptions accepted by teachers, including those about discipline, have not been confirmed in the actual classroom. It is still the common belief among most teachers that students learn only when they are quiet, silence being regarded as a sign of intensive learning. This is connected to another belief that the only one who can and should teach is the teacher. Problems with discipline in the classroom usually start from this type of belief by the teacher. Teachers usually begin to have problems with discipline when they can’t motivate students or keep their concentration and attention, or when they don’t understand students’ reasons for misbehaving. For me, discipline in the classroom is based on mutual respect of rights and duties of the teacher and students

<sup>1</sup> Okoń W. Słownik pedagogiczny [Dictionary of pedagogy]. -Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1975. –P. 296–297.

so that the aims of the lesson can be attained. Discipline includes creating and keeping rules based on reciprocal understanding and tolerance and requires establishing limits that must not be transgressed. Where is the line between good and bad behavior? Probably there is no certain definition to all. According to McManus, sometimes we hope that when we give a thing a name, we will get some power over it. It is impossible to create a definition of discipline that would be both useful and acceptable to all teachers, not to mention useful and acceptable to parents and others outside the classroom<sup>2</sup>. McManus goes on to say that school behavior is too complicated to put it into a single definition. Most teachers and methodologists today avoid definitions of the word *discipline* because of its frequent associations with corporal punishment. In spite of the difficulty of finding a suitable definition, I think I have outlined enough of the topic to allow us to take a closer look at what students believe about keeping order in the classroom.

## **Students' attitude towards discipline**

Even young children going to school for the first time have their own expectations of the institution of school and of the people working there. These expectations reflect the specific culture of the country. Also, teachers, even those with little classroom experience, have expectations of students and of themselves. Expectations and perceptions influence classroom interaction from the beginning. Research done by Nash amongst 12-year old children led to the conclusion that they see the teacher in six dimensions, based on their expectations and perceptions at school.<sup>3</sup> The dimensions are:

### **1. Keeps order vs. Can't keep order**

Children has the belief that keeping discipline is a teacher's basic duty, even more important than teaching. A teacher who is too soft arouses dislike, contempt, and disdain.

### **2. Teaches vs. Doesn't teach**

To teach is to educate and give assignments, not to amuse with stories and jokes. According to young students, teaching consists of giving facts and other concrete data, not simply expressing opinions.

### **3. Explains difficult concepts vs. Doesn't explain well**

For most students, it is the teacher who should make new and difficult material easier to understand. Incentives to do independent work can be perceived as not fulfilling a teacher's duty.

### **4. Interesting lessons vs. Boring lessons**

This is a very important dimension for children, although they can't always articulate what interesting teaching is. Generally speaking, an interesting and engaging lesson provides learners with new knowledge and has a consistent plan without any unnecessary interruptions.

### **5. Fair vs. Unfair**

For some students, a fair teacher is one who isn't too strict. For others, however, fairness is more complex. For example, punishment may be considered fair only under certain conditions, such as after

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<sup>2</sup> Look: McManus M. Troublesome behaviour in the classroom: Meeting individual needs. -London: Routledge, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Look: Janowski A. A student in the theatre of school life. -Warsaw: WSiP, 1995.

the teacher's warnings and threats have been disregarded. Blaming students who are not responsible for the problem is clearly unfair. Teachers can and should be strict and determined in punishing, but the punishment has to be viable; for example, the teacher can't demand complete silence during an entire lesson.

## **6. Friendly vs. Unfriendly**

Inexperienced teachers may consider this dimension more important than students actually do. For some students, friendliness of the teacher is optional, and other dimensions, such as fairness, are more important. Whether it is due to students' expectations or a generation gap between students and teachers, students usually give themselves a rather passive role. They leave all the work of maintaining discipline to their teacher. For this reason, in the beginning, it is important for the teacher to be able to control the situation in class. Children expect the teacher to set the limits of behavior and then consistently enforce the rules, while allowing the students to make their own decisions. This can make it difficult to introduce a democratic teaching style. From my observations, it seems that often students themselves try to prevent a teacher from keeping order. Sometimes, in more or less conscious ways, students try to take over the lesson. It depends on the character, knowledge, and experience of the teacher whether the teacher will control the class or the class will control the teacher.

## **Some reasons for students' getting out the discipline**

Students are likely to try to take the control over the teacher and the lesson for different reasons, some of which they themselves might not understand. They use a variety of strategies aiming for getting the good marks not learning to survive, or stay unnoticed as long as possible. Strategies like these therefore, are not connected to learning. Students misbehave for different purposes, one of which is to find out how much a teacher will allow or to test the teacher's limits. This tends to occur during the first few classes and leads bigger discipline problem later. This misbehaving often consists of showing off in front of other students and include joking, making comments against the teacher or to contradict the teacher's orders, asking unnecessarily for the teacher's help, and forming alliances with likeminded classmates. Other examples are asking silly questions, misleading the teacher, asking for information that requires complicated explanations, pretending that the teacher isn't present, talking back, displaying insolence openly, laughing or making loud noises, and making rude or mocking gestures. Most experienced teachers realize that this type of disruptive behavior is usually temporary.

## ***Long-term strategies***

There are other kinds of misbehavior that are not temporary, and these can be called strategies. I will consider these strategies as methods to achieve some reaction in the teacher and/or classmates, especially over a long period of time. A particular strategy may not be used on purpose or for a specific aim. Also, these strategies are not chosen to control behavior or break the order consistently. Komorowska counts a combination of strategies with possible causes and responses, three of which are summarized in the chart on the next page. The first one, achieving learning goals, cannot often be a discipline problem unless the teacher's response is mistaken. The strategy that is most important for us is the strategy of rebellion because this one causes the biggest problems<sup>4</sup>. It is used by students who

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<sup>4</sup> Look: Komorowska H. Methods of foreign language teaching. -Warsaw: Fraszka Edukacyjna, 2002.

want to disturb the teacher in an ostentatious way. The only solution for rebellion is to first find the cause, which can be a difficult living situation at home, emotional problems, or the desire to be the center of attention. It is usually easier to draw someone's attention (classmates or the teacher) by behaving badly than by behaving properly, which can take more time and effort. Teachers are more likely to confuse rebellious students with good students who show their academic talents over their weaker classmates with a disposition for kinesthetic in an equally ostentatious way so, the first step is to find out which student has real discipline problems. To avoid conflicts with rebellious students, teachers should avoid praising them for their small successes, emphasizing their best qualities.<sup>5</sup> This could mean giving them authority and meaning in the eyes of their classmates, but not in competition with the teacher.

## **Methods of keeping discipline**

Three methods that I find most effective to maintain discipline: Keeping students' attention, establishing clear rules, and, when necessary, explicitly addressing discipline problems.

### ***Keeping students' attention***

Keeping students engaged in the lesson is the basis for keeping order in the class. Here are several ways to do it:

#### **1. Preparing for the lesson.**

I have a habit of preparing for the upcoming lesson at least one hour. Because it seems boring to me to share knowledge that I already know, so I try to find some new information related to the topic. It can also be easy for students to feel the high knowledge of the teacher, which brings students' respect towards the teacher. Not only should the teacher master his/her subject, but also they should know other fields at least at intermediate level. This helps to bridge the discipline gap between the teacher and the students. These steps can help focus learners' attention on the lesson.

According to our President Sh. Mirziyoyev: In this sense, today's teacher must be a universal specialist, both a teacher and a learner, that is, he must work tirelessly on himself, constantly searching. Most importantly, the teacher must be a true patriot. Only a teacher who has a strong love and devotion to his profession and homeland in his heart can bring up a true patriot. All our efforts are aimed at implementing the idea that "the most prestigious person in Uzbekistan should be a teacher."<sup>6</sup>

#### **2. Do many short activities instead of a few long ones.**

Short exercises that change the task and work required of the students can help their concentration, prevent them bored.

#### ***3. Make the most of classroom space***

Using classroom space effectively will help you to develop your presence as a teacher and to manage student behavior. Thinking about where you can gain the most presence in the room at different points

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<sup>5</sup> The same page.

<sup>6</sup>Mirziyoyev Sh.M. Holiday congratulations to teachers and coaches of Uzbekistan. <https://uza.uz/uz/posts/zbekiston-ituvchi-va-murabbiylariga-bayram-tabrigi-28-09-2019>

during the lesson will help it to go smoothly, says Stanley<sup>7</sup>. To grab students’ attention at the start of a class he warns against turning your back on them. “Don’t do ‘chalk and talk’ when you begin a class. Instead, plan an activity that will immediately engage them,” he explains. Although it may be tempting to stand behind a desk to create authority in the classroom, this can create an us-and-them atmosphere, suggests Wood “You need to share your knowledge with students, which isn’t always possible if you are constantly leading from the front,” she says.

Desks could be arranged in a horseshoe shape so that you can move easily around the class. This approach allows you to sometimes teach students from the back of the class and also to monitor their behavior, including those who are not on task. Effective use of space in the classroom also involves distributing your attention fairly between students. While it is tempting to ignore disruptive pupils and give your attention to those who are engaged with the lesson, you need to make time for all those in your class. Students must feel their autonomy and take part in creating rules so that they feel responsible for obeying them. To avoid future conflicts, it is necessary to create strict rules together at the beginning of the course, even in the first lesson.

**These rules should contain basic responsibilities such as<sup>8</sup>:**

Strategy	Students Who Use It	Mistaken Teacher Reaction	Suggestions for Improving Situation
Achieving learning Goals	Good students who are motivated, interested in the subject, and predisposed to learning can become bored if the assignments are too easy, and then they become disruptive or inattentive	Trying to show that the student doesn’t deserve good marks, arrogance, or other responses that kill the student’s potential and arouse feelings of injustice	Establish a special programme with individual tasks. Separate evaluation of language skills and evaluation of effort put into completing assignments
Seeking approval	Students who lack motivation but want to deserve/receive praise seek the approval of a significant person (the teacher). Two possible causes for this strategy are a desire for a feeling of safety and bad relations with peers.	Showing favouritism and treating these students as allies in disagreements with other students or the rest of the class.	Apply the same evaluation criteria for all students. Do not make unpedagogical alliances with some students against other students
Withdrawal or hiding	Students with low motivation often aim to simply get through school without any difficulties, which requires resigned patience and obedience. These students seem passive and uninvolved in their learning, but, paradoxically, they make efforts to hide themselves and their opinions. Achieving learning goals Seeking approval Withdrawal or hiding ⇔	Asking only for volunteers and leaving weak or quiet students to themselves	Involve the whole class, and use pair and small group work. Require measurable results of class work and homework so that copying is easy to discover.

<sup>7</sup> Agzamova D.B. English teaching methodology. Manual. - Tashkent: Barkamol fayz mediya, 2016. –P. 20.

<sup>8</sup>Sulich Madgalena. Keeping Discipline in the Classroom...// English teaching forum. July 2004. –P. 35.

1. Grading scales and criteria.
2. Consequences of absences and missed assignments.
3. Rewards for extra work.
4. Consequences for disruptive behavior.

Teachers must apply the rules to everyone without showing favouritism. Rules should be concise and clear, and everyone should receive a copy (or the teacher can hang them in the classroom in a visible place).

### ***Addressing discipline problems***

Keeping order during the lesson usually requires avoiding unnecessary interruptions which can be arguing with students, commenting on their behaviour, and any shouting. These action are taken mostly by the teachers who have first started their careers and often give chance troublemaking students to succeed and lose the goals of the lesson. If the situation gets worse, students' aggression is likely to increase, and they receive the attention they desire.

Three effective ways of addressing discipline problems, in the order in which they should be used, are:

#### **1. Nonverbal approach**

When a student does something to disturb the class, the teacher should continue with the lesson while reacting calmly and nonverbally. This can be making eye contact with the disruptive student, standing near the student, making calming gestures, or all of these things simultaneously.

#### **2. Verbal approach**

Without interrupting the lesson, the teacher can try another set of techniques to stop or minimize disruptive behaviour. These include lowering his or her voice, inserting the student's name in a statement, and calling on the student to answer a question or to repeat the answer of another student. The teacher might also change the task and quickly organize a common activity. It is very important to remember that the teacher should not attempt to prove that the offending student doesn't know something but should terminate the disruption without giving a public scolding. When these first two approaches fail, it is time to react verbally to the offensive behaviour. Unfortunately, too many teachers use this approach first.

#### **3. Reacting to the disruptive behaviour**

The teacher can make a short statement identifying the incorrect behaviour, a short expression of the wish for good behavior, or an announcement of a reward for good behaviour. It is worth remembering that a teacher who can't calm students in a skillful way can make the situation worse. Any comments the teacher makes should be short because they will also be considered interruptions by the students who are not misbehaving. Finally, in using these techniques, we must remember two things: we can criticise a student's behaviour, but we should not criticise the student; and our criticism should be constructive and polite.

### **Conclusion**

On some occasions, all teachers have problems with keeping discipline. Some teachers have a natural gift for getting respect from students, while others must work very hard to get it. With or without this



natural talent, a teacher has to learn a lot about sociology, psychology, and pedagogy and also learn a lot from his or her experience with students, to say the least. The problem of keeping discipline in the classroom is too widespread and complex to provide an ideal solution for all circumstances in an article of this length. In my opinion, too little is said and written about this critical aspect of teaching. I hope that these ideas and suggestions will help teachers find practical solutions to discipline problems they face in their classrooms.

## References

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