



The Art and the Science of Classroom Management

Trevor Mepham

Classroom management—is there really any more to it than knowing where the scissors are kept? Or, how a teacher might get a class of children to line up, with chairs, and file into a hall in an orderly fashion? Apparently so, if the library shelves of teacher training programs are anything to go by. On a recent visit to the library at a nearby university, a glimpse at the *fiche* revealed a grand tally of 835 titles referring to classroom management. One of these tomes describes classroom management as:

The orchestration of classroom life: planning curriculum, organizing procedures and resources, arranging the environment to maximize efficiency, monitoring student progress, anticipating potential problems.¹

Set against such a haul of titles it is interesting to note that in his lectures and discussions with the teachers of the Waldorf School, Rudolf Steiner makes few specific references to classroom management. Instead, he has much to say about the invisible and intangible elements of classroom life and the relations between pupils and teachers. For example, in a lecture in 1920, Steiner highlights the importance of working with the children in an artistic way.

We must as teachers become artists. Just as it is quite impossible for the artist to take a book on aesthetics in hand, and then to paint or carve according to the principles laid down there, so should it be quite impossible for the teacher to

use one of those instructor's manuals in order to teach. What the teacher needs is true insight into what the human being is in reality, what he or she becomes as he or she develops through the stages of childhood.²

Rather than taking the view that these two rather different perspectives are simply contrasting, it is more helpful to regard them as complementary *and* contrasting. Certainly, painting by numbers is not what Picasso was up to. On the other hand, many of the world's great artists—from Leonardo to Van Gogh—applied many, many hours of study to observation and the perfecting of technique, as a means of creating channels and vessels for their artistic expression.

Placing the 835 titles and the “art or instruction manual” discussion to one side, let us consider what might be called a “Zen” approach to this subject.

One day the Zen Master Bankei was preparing to give a talk. His teachings were highly valued by listeners from far and wide. Bankei's words were simple, clear, and spoken from the heart. A priest from a nearby temple was very angry that Bankei managed to attract such large audiences. The neighbouring priest barged into the hall where Bankei was about to begin speaking and glowered at the monk from the back of the room. What happened next was this:

“Hey, Zen teacher!” he bellowed. “People who respect you will obey you. Now, I don't respect you, so I won't obey you. How are you going to

make me do what you say?”

“Well,” Bankei grinned, “If you would like to come up here, I’ll show you.”

The priest puffed himself up and swept towards the front of the meditation hall. Bankei gave him a friendly look and said encouragingly,

“Move over here to my side.”

The priest glided into position.

“In fact,” murmured Bankei, “I think we can probably talk better if you go on the other side, just here.”

The guest proudly paced over to the other side.

“Yes, that’s great,” said Bankei, softly. “You see, you are very obedient and you might even be my friend. Now you can sit down and listen.”³

The pedagogical equivalent to this tale of enlightenment would run somewhat as follows: The essence of effective classroom management is being able to do the right thing in the right way in the right place at the right time. Nothing more or less is required. Techniques and instruments will count for naught in the absence of know-how and pedagogical instinct.

When problem-free, classroom management is simple and clear, like a tree standing in the forest. At its best, classroom management is a non-event; it is unnoticeable, like health and well-being. From another perspective, classroom management is a complex and technical subject. At its worst, classroom management is a place of discomfort and strife, like tooth-ache. A break-down in classroom management is apparent where nerves are frayed and time is frittered.

Classroom management is surrounded by a certain mystique. Done well, it is largely invisible—the processes intangible, the outcomes self-evident; when done poorly, the processes seem impenetrable, while the results are deafening and unsightly. Yet management *per se* is a human activity that seems to be more transparent and comprehensible. The practice of management is well-researched and much written about. Certain key features and characteristics stand out.

To Manage

Managing is a skill. It is also an attitude. It is not leadership exactly, but it includes it. Neither is it simply concerned with power and position; responsibilities and service are just as much features of management. Taking charge, having control, being accountable, and acting with certainty are dimensions of management, but so too are sensitivity, flexibility, an ability to communicate and get on with people, and a facility to enthuse, motivate, and engender trust in those whom one meets and works with.

Four Dimensions of Classroom Management

Four aspects of classroom management can be outlined metaphorically as dimensions:

1. *The point and the line.* Another way of describing this aspect would be *center and periphery*. The teacher needs to combine an awareness of the *center* of the class—the prevailing mood, the essential qualities and dynamics—with an alertness to what is happening on the margins, or the *periphery* of the class at any given moment.
2. *The plane or the surface.* The landscape of classroom management consists of the daily, down-to-earth planning, organizing, deciding, and implementing of decisions and actions. This is the pragmatic underpinning of classroom life, the concern for quality, which provides safety, certainty, regularity, continuity, and a general sense of well-being in the pupils and the teachers.
3. In geometrical terms, the third dimension is concerned with *volume*. In this context, the third dimension of classroom management is concerned with the substance and breadth of preparation and meditative study and the heights and depths of the sleeping hours. The *volume* of classroom management is the linking of the days inwardly and the intention to provide educational continuity by allowing the power of sleep and the helping hours of the night to work. Urieli describes sleep as a “holy realm.”⁴ In medicine and science, the

state and activity of sleep is a subject of keen research and enquiry. In the Waldorf pedagogy, the “night shift” is regarded as the place where pupils and teachers can meet beyond the day-awake concerns and tribulations, to complete and deepen the activities of the day. For the preparing teacher, the hours beyond the classroom are for reflection, consideration, and inspiration. Ironical though it may seem, forces of renewal and transformation that are active and vital during slumber, aid all of these.

4. *The fourth dimension* is hard to pin down, although it is a pivotal factor. To describe it, one must go into the intangible realms of pedagogical instinct, human fallibility, authority, and teacher-ness. In this dimension of classroom management, the teacher is moving, *in the task*, towards self-direction, self-recognition, self-disclosure, and self-transformation. It is the application to the task that is key. In the *fourth dimension* it is possible to talk of the teacher actively modeling a framework of learning for the pupils. The teacher’s learning and development is not a linear progression, from A to B to C, any more than it is for the children. The teacher’s learning path is complex, and differentiated, like a living kaleidoscope with its own form and lawfulness. Just as there is an archetypal three-stage learning process—from perception to consideration to understanding—for the pupils, so is there also for the teacher. The ideal is that the teaching activity wells from the “feeling cognition” and is channeled into the “feeling will” and courses from there into the “willing cognition.” Put very simply, this is the journey from “thinking heart” to “heart-felt doing” to “conscious reflection.” This is a basis from which the teacher can work creatively.

The Four Rules

If the four dimensions of classroom management can be sketched on a single page, there are some other models or schemes that are briefer still. A

“four rule” framework outlined by Smith and Laslett is sparing enough to fit on the back of an envelope.⁵ The directness and practical forthrightness of this model may lack sophistication and elegance, yet as a bullet-point formula, it has a certain pragmatic conviction to it. Four rules of effective classroom management are identified. The “rules” relate to timing and pace, activities, transitions, and human dynamics. They are:

1. get them (the pupils) in;
2. get on with it (the lesson);
3. get on with them (the pupils);
4. get them (the pupils) out.

While these rules may not constitute an integrated blue-print for classroom practice, it is probably true to say that many of the complex and seemingly intractable problems of classroom management can be traced to difficulties which occur in the application of one of these four rules.

The Three Prongs

If this “back of an envelope” format is too ponderous, then the following three-pronged cue could fit on the back of a postage stamp with room to spare. *Content, technique, and contact* are major themes of classroom practice. When a teacher faces a difficulty or a doubt, which, in concrete terms, is difficult to describe, or pinpoint, the chances are that the problem is located in one of these three broad areas. One can imagine many examples of the sort of problem or difficulty referred to here: losing the thread in the telling of a story, addressing the low self-esteem of many of the children in mathematics, or the fact that the teacher often seems to have to resort to threats to maintain order.

Some difficulties and problems are multi-factored and complex, yet readily diagnosed and understood. The sort of scenario where such complexity is clearly perceived and understood would be the following:

There is a “combined class” of children covering a two-and-a-half year age range, from ten-and-a-half to thirteen. The size of the class is a dozen. Nine of the pupils are boys, while five of the chil-

dren have “special learning needs.” The three girls have an awkward social dynamic amongst them. Some of the older class-members want to leave. The older pupils are often self-conscious, and in some activities, such as singing, drama, and games, the pupils are difficult to engage and enthuse. The struggle of this group to find a cohesive social and educational identity and to see themselves not only as individuals, but also as members of a group, is clearly perceived and understood. Such knowledge can be helpful, but does not necessarily lead to working solutions. In a situation like this, pre-existing approaches and techniques cannot be guaranteed to work. Custom-built solutions, or unknown, “extraordinary” approaches may have to be sought, which might include radical alterations to the status quo and existing assumptions.

It is also the case that some difficulties and problems are straightforward enough, yet seemingly intractable. This intractability derives from a failure to diagnose the problem in the first place. For example:

A new teacher, in the first term of class one, reaches the end of November with concerns as to whether the curriculum material for the year will be covered. In terms of material and content, the class has progressed through an introduction to half a dozen letters of the alphabet, while from the great book of number, the children are learning about the qualities of the numbers and have reached the number eight. At this rate, the class will need until Easter to complete the letter stories and pictures (since the teacher is intending to cover the whole alphabet in this way) and to have heard about the four mathematical processes for the first time.

After a couple of days of observation, it is evident that the teacher has employed a mistaken understanding of the stages of learning, as indicated by Steiner in numerous lectures.⁶ Instead of weaving together the three learning stages of *conclusion*, *judgment*, and *concept* in a continuous “latticing” manner, the approach taken has been a deliberate, step-by-step process for each piece of new learning. In other words, the “quality” of number five has been given an exclusive three-day treatment, con-

sisting of presentation, a recall, and the forming of a conceptual element, before moving on to the quality of the next number in a new three-day sandwich. By way of contrast, a more lively and fluid approach can be devised, where the presentation of new material, recall of the previous day’s content, and the development, where appropriate, of a new conceptual element, rule, or law are contained within a single day’s lesson. The differences between these two approaches, and the merits – in terms of economy, linkage, and interest—of the latter, are relatively straightforward to point out, and the relieved teacher is able to adjust the lesson-planning over a few days. The “outcomes” are positive for all concerned—in terms of learning, classroom “mood,” and simply moving on!

Unlike the first case, which is riven with social angst, in the second scenario the difficulty experienced exceeds the size and nature of the actual problem. A misunderstanding of principle leads to a method which becomes increasingly difficult to implement. Once realized, it is possible to remedy the problem without too much strife.

Technical Problems

In terms of the scientific method of classroom management, J. S. Kounin carried out some research in the 1960s and ‘70s, looking at specific matters of classroom technique. Some of his findings are rather amusing, others are a bit obvious. However, despite being self-evident, problems in the classroom often surface when one or other of these techniques is absent. By way of illustration, one or two scenarios are set out below. The terms used are Kounin’s; the author witnessed the actual instances.⁷

Flip-flop, Dangles, and Thrusts

A *flip-flop* is a situation in which a teacher skips from one topic to another and then zig-zags back and forth between them in a confusing and ambiguous manner. With a *dangle*, an instruction or comment would be left incomplete and therefore likely to cause some confusion. In a *thrust*, a combination of forcefulness, poor timing, and going off on a tangent are featured. The teacher attempts to deal with a disturbance clearly and robustly, yet ends up utter-

ing sentences that verge on the surreal.

At times the results of these contributions are merely amusing, or bemusing, while at others, the outcomes may be chaotic or divisive. See if you can spot which is which:

At the end of a number lesson, a teacher was heard to say: *“So, will. . . John!. . . everyone collect their counters and your neighbour will put them all in. . . Peter . . . Martin!”* On another occasion, another teacher gave the following instruction: *“I have put some writing on the board which I want you to. . . Hang on, just wait. . . put in. . . All desks should be shut. . . your red books!”*

Or, take the hard-pressed class teacher whose patience dwindled to the point where she exclaimed: *“Class Five! Class Five!! Right. That’s it. I’m not talking to this class anymore!”* Or, again, the class teacher who, in attempting to escort his eleven year-olds through the intricacies of dictating a poem, managed to contrive the following: *“No, not like that! When I say a new line, I don’t mean a new line, I mean a new sentence!”* And finally, the class teacher who, having worked with his class reciting a piece of poetry, was heard to utter: *“Come in when I call you. OK . . . No, no, no! I didn’t mean come in then, I just meant OK.”*

Most of us are likely to stumble into these sort of verbal thickets periodically. At some point in the 1990s, the British Home Secretary, Michael Howard, was interviewed on the radio about prison reform. He was asked to comment on various matters, including the situation regarding the absconding of prisoners from British jails. In answer to one question, Howard was heard to tell a somewhat baffled program presenter: “During (the last two years) a great deal of progress has been made, particularly in terms of escapes.”

This is a classic example of a statement where there is a gap between the intended meaning and the literal meaning. In teaching, in fact in almost any situation where speaking and listening occur, the clarity of sense and meaning can falter. This means that in giving and receiving instructions and in the flow of messages and information between people, there is an ever-present potential for ambiguity, confusion,

and misunderstanding.

Kounin also focuses on techniques dealing with general attitudes to discipline. Attention is drawn to the “*ripple effect*” of a teacher’s manner and the difference between *clarity*, *firmness*, and *roughness*. Researchers concluded that when a child is cautioned or reprimanded, the behavior of the whole class is affected. It was found that when a teacher is clear, there is a reduction in non-conforming behavior in the class; when a teacher is firm, the non-conforming behavior sometimes declines; while in response to a rough or sharp approach, children rarely change their behavior and demeanor in a positive direction.

Learning Needs

The work of humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow offers another perspective that is helpful with regard to the health and running of a class and a classroom. In the 1960s, Maslow proposed a “hierarchical theory of human needs.”⁸ The theory describes an incremental framework of essential human needs, and it applies equally to learning and educational needs. According to Maslow, the progressive fulfillment of these needs enhances a person’s quality of life and enables a person to fulfill his or her human potential.

There are six broad levels to Maslow’s “pyramid” of human needs. At the base of the pyramid are the physiological needs of life, such as food and warmth and shelter. In order to learn one has to be physically alive and cared for. A child who is a victim of famine has a learning horizon that is severely circumscribed. On a more subtle level, within a classroom, factors such as a cold or stuffy room temperature, a poorly-lit blackboard, or children who are hungry or sugar-saturated may serve to restrict the children’s capacity to pay attention and be active in their learning.

The next stage in the pyramid is the need for safety. To feel secure is as fundamental, although less tangible, as the need for warmth. In a conflict zone, children suffering from the traumas of war are likely to be preoccupied with anxiety and grief. In such a setting, a child’s enthusiasm for meaningful learning is apt to be dimmed and displaced by more imme-

diate and concrete existential fears. In a classroom, if, for whatever reason, a child does not feel safe and perceives that life in the classroom is not “all right,” then this disposition will mitigate the child’s learning experience.

The third level of need—a sense of belonging—is connected to the criterion of safety, although it is a refinement of it and more concerned with the person’s inner state. To feel part of a class, or a group of colleagues, or a school community is a potent and qualitatively significant experience for most people. To sense that one has a place, that one can speak and be listened to and accepted by peers is an important social threshold that can be strengthening and enabling. On the other side, to feel isolated or marginalized within one’s social group can be a depressing and distressing experience that can sap a person’s confidence and dull the appetite for learning and development. In a classroom, or staff room, there is a world of difference between a child or teacher who is intentionally self-contained and out of the social mainstream and a person who is lonely as a result of being sidelined or alienated.

Feelings of insecurity and not belonging are often major contributors to a process which is referred to generally as bullying. With bullying, or not belonging, a merger of physiological and psychological features form an undifferentiated experience for a person subjected to them, and, in accordance with Maslow’s theory, one would anticipate that learning and the power to learn are adversely affected as a direct result.

The fourth layer in Maslow’s pyramid has to do with aspects of “esteem.” Esteem is concerned with more than simply having a certain station in life, or role within a group, or carrying out agreed tasks and functions. A “teacher’s pet” or a “class rebel” both “belong” in a class, but the sense of belonging has an indefinite, or negative quality. The need for esteem includes a degree of recognition and respect that is conferred by peers and guides. Esteem implies a position in the social organism that is offered by group members and accepted by the individual in a positive way that accords with the person’s self-perception and dignity.

The need for esteem constitutes a further movement inwards for the human being and the dynam-

ics involved become more subtle and less concrete for the class-managing teacher. It is a far more complex process to cater to each child’s need for esteem than it is to prepare a painting lesson. Nurturing esteem is a process that is always ongoing and imperfect. It involves differentiation rather than uniformity, formative forms of assessment rather than testable outcomes, and human interaction and relationship rather than prescribed curriculums and compartmentalized subject delivery. The quest for esteem in communities of learners is inevitably fraught and uncertain, but also deep-rooted and intrinsically meaningful.

The fifth and sixth layers of Maslow’s pyramid are focused on learning. To begin with, attention is on the realization of achievement in learning and individual progression and development. Then, the focus moves towards the realization of learning and the development of understanding in such a way that one’s own particular interests are transcended and the learning acquired is garnered for the good of all and for the love of learning itself.

If learning is understood to be a creative process and activity, then the first phase of this creativity may be seen as the time during which a person learns as a means and expression of self-development and where the learning takes place and has its effects in the place where a person belongs. Initially, the field of learning has boundaries, or edges. Beyond this phase, learning becomes less dependent on a sense of achievement, or development. Learning becomes a pure creative facility that is not related to a particular time, place, or self-image. In this ideal condition of learning, the learner is both servant and master of the need and undertakes artistic processes, acts, and events for others, as much as for him or herself.

The ideas behind Maslow’s theoretical framework can be applied to all learners and are relevant to pupils and teachers of all ages. They are relevant to the early years setting, the “combined classroom,” and the staff room. As such, Maslow’s work feeds into a discussion of classroom management implicitly, and a teacher can utilise the pyramid of learning needs as a series of checks, or deep criteria, by which the health and the hygiene and harmony of classroom practice can be evaluated and reflected upon.

By Implication

As mentioned at the beginning, Steiner referred somewhat obliquely to classroom management. However, the substance that underlies this theme is addressed, in detail, in many of his lectures.

Returning to the indication that teaching, and by association classroom management, is an artistic activity and discipline, let us probe what is intended by the term “artistic.” Steiner describes art as an aspect of truth, “where man tries to give expression to profound inner experiences, imitating with his human powers a divine creativity.” He points to the serious rift that exists in our times between art and scientific knowledge and maintains that science can provide immense knowledge of nature, but cannot penetrate fully the mystery of life. To understand the riddle of the human being and the mystery of life, it is necessary to move into the realm of art.⁹ The truth of a matter can often be approached more effectively through picture, narrative, and metaphor, than via literality and bare fact. On having his work criticized for being untruthful, Van Gogh replied by saying, “All right, call them lies, if you will, but they are more exact than literal truth.” For the teacher, one of the inner aspects of classroom management is the intention and the aim that the learning work—the creative expression—contains a moral quality and does not issue from either an arbitrary void or a straitjacket.

A working framework for classroom management consists of a series of complementary couplets. Activity and stillness, initiative and responsiveness, planning and improvisation, breadth and detail, flexibility and certainty are integral features of this framework. Fundamentally, teaching is an active business that can and should be prepared beforehand and pondered and reviewed afterwards, but which, first and foremost, exists and unfolds in the present. The polarity in classroom management is “Bohemian broad brush” set against “Herculean micro-management.”¹⁰ The task for the teacher is to find the balance between the uncertainty and chaos that accompanies creativity and the restrictive, curtailing nature of form and structure.

Having established a foundation for classroom management, a fascinating paradox arises concerning the teacher’s expertise and professionalism. It might

seem inept for a teacher to meet a question, or a problem, with an attitude which can be summarized as, “I don’t know.” Furthermore, it might seem foolhardy for a teacher to adopt such an attitude as a professional stance. In terms of classroom management, this appears to be tantamount to acting irresponsibly and throwing in the towel.

There is another perspective on the “I don’t know” phenomenon. The more one knows about something and the more experience one has, the more one is equipped to say, “I don’t know what to do here; I don’t know how to help. So, I’d better find out. I’d better explore and probe and ask questions and try to find a solution or an answer to what is standing in front of me.” Such an attitude is essentially scientific; it is real and has life. The uncertainty and the “not-knowing” become powerful dynamics in inspiring and activating the experience and the expertise of the teacher.¹¹ The conditions for learning are provided, in part, by the admission of “not-knowing.” Before acting and getting involved, a teacher can turn to theory, formula, advice, and good practice, which, in themselves, are all well and good. The key aspect of the “I don’t know” approach is that it is constructed on a platform that consists of uncertainty and professional innocence, combined with interest, care, and competence. Clearly, to respond to problems of classroom management with a standard “I don’t know,” is insufficient and empty. However, behind the “I don’t know” position lie two other questions which authenticate the integrity of the teacher’s stance:

Do I have a sense and an idea of what it is I don’t know?

Do I have an appetite to learn what I don’t know?

These questions are integral to the science of classroom management and the process, which they imply, is essentially an artistic process.

From a basis of interest, care, and “not knowing,” which dwell together in the teacher’s consciousness, the teacher can be very active in an unfolding process. In many aspects of pedagogy, including classroom management, a path of development can be traced, which leads from the teacher’s initial motives of care, interest, and “not knowing”

toward help, transformation, and “the right thing.” In a sequence that is not linear, the path proceeds from the starting point described above, through stages of observing, noticing, knowing, and understanding, which leads toward truthful perception, or insight, that manifests in practical activity and helpful guidance.

In a lecture given to teachers, Steiner referred to the learning community in which pupils *and* teachers participate and he also pointed to the fact that *imponderables* are among the most important things in the teaching and learning process.

We are teaching to begin with, let us say, the six- or seven-year-old children in a first class. Now our teaching will be bad every time, will never have fulfilled its purpose, if after working for a year with this first class we do say to ourselves—who is it now that has really learned the most? It is I, the teacher! We would most certainly have taught the best of all if we had entered the classroom each morning in great trepidation, without very much assurance in our own capacity, and then at the end of the year could say, it is really I myself who have learned the most If we had really been capable, at the beginning of the year, of everything we were able to do at the year’s end, then our teaching would have been bad. We have given good lessons because we have had to work at them as we went along. I must put this in the form of a paradox. Your teaching has been good if you did not know to start with what you have learned by the end of the year; your teaching would have been harmful, had you known at the beginning what you have learned at the end. A remarkable paradox!¹²

From Principle to Technique and Back

In the business of classroom management, general principles have to be applied to unique, differentiated educational situations. Hence, the need for art and science in this domain. Elkind (1998) makes this general point in a book on adolescence and adolescents:

One problem with techniques is that they are just that, techniques. They are not founded on the basis of established psychological research and

theory nor upon moral or ethical principles. Sometimes they work, sometimes they don’t.¹³

In managing a classroom, general principles and expectations provide the groundwork in which specific situations are handled. This happens in such a way that an environment of general well-being and preparedness for learning is established, in which pupils and teachers share recognition, acceptance, and respect.

In terms of expectations of, and rules for, behavior and conduct, it is crucial that there is a tangible connection between the agreements and shared principles of a group of colleagues and the situation of the individual teacher working with a particular class. Where colleagues have worked to clear an area of “common ground” concerning behavior, transitions, rules, habits, and so forth, this can be a hugely concrete, economical, and supportive feature of the working day. The establishment of a *taken for granted zone* of do’s, don’ts, and working habits can make life simpler, more efficient, less repetitive, and generally more interesting, for children and teachers alike. However, on its own, this area of “common ground” is not a sufficient condition for classroom health and harmony.

Beyond the staff room and the in-service training day, and after drawing up the agreed policies and guidelines, it is for individual teachers, working with children and students in lessons and classrooms, to carry out the implementation of these agreements. This points to the need for a teacher to be both an artist and a scientist in pursuit of classroom management. Yet, for these two qualities and gestures to provide a valid working proposition, the teacher must add an element of individual or autonomous authority.¹⁴ Acting as a bridge between the kingdoms of art and science, the teacher’s authority works to provide credibility, integrity to each, and integration to both. Kounin described this quality of authority as a state of “with-it-ness.”¹⁵ In popular terms, this is the teacher who is thought to have eyes in the back of the head, ears in every wall and general omniscience.

Where this authority, or “with-it-ness,” does not hold sway, the outer semblance of classroom reality is apt to reflect the inner state of pedagogical health in what can be a graphic and transparent manner.

A group of about ten 15-year olds swung into the room with a staccato clatter of bags, filling the space with slouching limbs and garbled snatches of a tongue that did not closely resemble that of their mothers. Over the next 40 minutes, with patience, enthusiasm and little self-evident authority, the teacher attempted to bring a varied and interesting experience of the German language and culture to the unlikely linguists. Most of the words fell on deaf ears; most of the assignments fell on barren soil. Nearly half the students devoted most of their activity to chewing gum and designing weary, stereotypical templates on their exercise books. Through a fragrant haze of spearmint and amidst the strangely rhythmical clonking and clanking of molars at work, the teacher managed to identify one of the unauthorized masticators and advanced with bin in hand. With cheerful resignation, the chewing student relinquished the cud by dropping a small, wet lump of gum into the grime-coated bin. The lesson continued and business as usual was soon restored. Within a couple of minutes, a pristine strip of gum was popped into the vacant mouth, while the other chewers continued their labors flagrantly and unimpeded for the duration. At the end of the lesson, the observer approached a couple of the chewing quartet and the following exchange took place:

Q. Excuse me, can I ask you a couple of questions?

A. Yea, alright.

Q. Is there any rule about the eating of sweets and gum during lesson time?

A. Er, yeah.

Q. Do you know what the rule is?

A. (grinning pause) Er, yeah.

Q. So, what is the rule? Can you tell me?

A. (strange, low-pitched droning sound) Er, well, you're not meant to do it.

Q. Ok. Thanks. Why are you doing it then?

A. Er, umm, well, it doesn't really matter. The teacher doesn't really notice, doesn't really do anything.

Q. Do people chew gum in all of the lessons?

A. Er, no, I suppose not. It depends . . .

The discourse went on a bit longer, during which the students elaborated on what "it depends" actually meant, in the students' understanding. In summary, "it depends," firstly, on the awareness of the teacher and, secondly, on the degree of certainty to effect change and the accompanying will to act. In other words, "it depends" on the nature of each teacher's taken-for-granted-zone and the students' understanding and acceptance of it. In this case, "it depends" had several underlying qualifications:

With teacher V you can always get away with it. If you get caught, it doesn't lead to anything and you only get caught once in a lesson.

With teacher W you can sometimes get away with it, once in a lesson, but not more, or else there's a lot of hassle.

Teacher X always notices and you always have to put it in the bin; there is no other consequence.

With teacher Y you don't do it, because if you get caught it means automatic detention, that day or the next.

With teacher Z you don't even think of doing it, because, well, it just wouldn't be a very sensible thing to do.

Conclusion

Essentially, the effectiveness of classroom management resides in the person and the practice. There are books galore on techniques, strategies, things to do, things to avoid, "top tips," and examples of good practice. However, manuals, checklists, theories, and strategies will not serve as replacements for teacher presence and pedagogical awareness. These elusive and indefinable qualities can perhaps be described in the following terms: In order to manage a learning environment well, the teacher needs to have a sense for place, a sense for time, and a sense of timing. Married to these senses, a real care and interest in the children and their learning will offer a positive foundation for a healthy classroom dynamic and ethos. Finally, an ability to express this interest and care with clarity and a sense of purpose will strengthen the teacher's educational foundations.

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In broad terms, the key to understanding the riddles of classroom management—the *imponderable*—lies in the nature of art, while the knowledge of classroom management—the *nuts and bolts*—is suited to a scientific treatment and method. The quality of classroom management is served when one-sidedness and extremes are avoided. In other terms, classroom management is enhanced when both fixation and dispersion are avoided. In their places, when the qualities of rhythm, vitality, and human presence are able to flow through the lessons, then classroom management is not only present, but also unnoticeable!

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Trevor Mepham lives with his family in the southwest of England, in the county of Devon, on the edge of Dartmoor National Park. He worked as a class teacher at the South Devon Rudolf Steiner School in Dartington and then went into classroom advisory and mentoring work. He is a member of the Executive Group of the UK Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship—SWSF—and works in the Faculty of Education at the University of Plymouth.

