

## Classroom Management Styles of Primary School Teachers in Rivers State: A Concern for Effective Pupils' Control and Learning

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper examined the classroom management styles of teachers in the primary schools in Rivers state, Nigeria, with the aim of effectively handling pupils' behavioural problems. A sample size of one thousand (1000) primary school teachers were administered with the Teachers Classroom Management Questionnaire (TCMQ), which was developed by the researchers to obtain data from them. One research question and two hypotheses were raised and tested with descriptive statistics and the chi-square. Results indicated that majority of the teachers were predisposed to the reactive management style as against the proactive style of management. The implication is that the latter breeds behavioural problems and misdemeanour among pupils. Some recommendations such as training in proactive management and a more comprehensive teacher education programme were therefore made.*

**Keywords:** Education, classroom, management, pupils, primary school teachers

### INTRODUCTION

Control and management of pupils in the classroom is sine qua non to effective learning. A typical classroom is usually composed of pupils of various home backgrounds. Consequently, this issue of individual indifference also manifests in the kind of behavioural problems each child brings to the classroom. It is the duty of the teacher to ensure that behavioural differences that militate against a child's learning potentials are properly controlled to pave way for positive school achievement.

In Rivers State, the issue of control of pupils for effective learning in the primary schools has become a source of concern to many teachers, parents and stakeholders. Parents believe that many of their children and wards learn very slowly in the public schools because of the inability of the teachers to properly organise these pupils for adequate and effective learning. This informs the recent trend where parents withdrew their children or wards from the public schools and sent them to the private ones. Some members of the public have indeed called for appropriate measures to handle this trend in the schools.

Okrika (2002) and Gbolahan (2004) have observed that teachers in the primary schools have enormous task in bringing their pupils to learn effectively because of lack of planned behavioural control techniques. This is crucial because most of the behavioural problems of children at this level stem out of developmental factors which the professional teacher should be able to tackle successfully.

For an effective learning to be achieved in the primary schools, good management skills are essential. Management in the classroom setting is not largely different from what is obtainable in corporate bodies. But human management is a bit more complex than other

aspects of management. The classroom is seen as a micro-society similar to any business organization, with the pupils as workers and the teacher as the director.

Classroom management strategies (CMS) allow the classroom teachers to manage the affairs of the pupils in the classroom for effective learning. Elliot, Kratochwill, Cook and Travers (2000) define classroom management as the use of rules and procedures to maintain order so that learning may occur.

Management in the classroom is either proactive or reactive (Elliot, Kratochwill, Cook and Travers (2000). Proactive management is when a teacher takes precautions to forestall problems in the future, reactive management is where the teacher takes action only when the problem has occurred or is being detected in the classroom.

According to Minuchin and Shapiro (1983), the elementary school classroom is a social unit with intense interactions between teachers and students and among peers. In the classroom setting, such numerous interactional behaviours need direction and orientation. They should be co-ordinated for the achievement of set objectives. This is the essence of classroom management. It is what makes the teacher, a manager, at least in the classroom.

So, in every classroom, it is the responsibility of the teacher to instil discipline in the learners. However, Elliot et al (2000) have opined that classroom management goes beyond inculcation of discipline. It is more or less an issue of control. Control of pupils' behavioural problems for result-oriented learning involves discipline, coordination, identification of factors and counselling, effective teaching and motivation in the classroom.

Behavioural problems of pupils have been delineated by psychologists into problems of conduct, attention problems, motor over activity, socialized aggression, anxious-depressed withdrawal and schizoid unresponsive problems. Each of these categories has chains of problems associated with them. Below is a table that clearly shows the various categorizations specifying some of these problems.

**Table 1. Dimensions of behaviour problems among children**

Conduct	Fighting, hitting, disobedience, defiance, temper tantrum, destructiveness, impertinence, impudence, uncooperativeness, resistance
Attention Problems	Poor concentration, short attention span, day-dreaming, clumsiness, poor co-ordination, pre-occupation, staring into space, failing to finish, lack of perseverance, impulsiveness.
Motor Overactivity	Restlessness, overactivity, excitability, impulsiveness, squirmy, jittery movements, overtalkativeness, humming and other odd noises.
Socialized Aggression	Bad' companions, truancy from home, truancy from school, stealing in company of others, loyalty to delinquent friends, membership in a gang.
Anxious-Depressed Withdrawal	Anxious, fearful, tense behaviour, shyness, timidity, bashfulness, withdrawn seclusive behaviour, depression, sadness-disturbance, hypersensitivity, being easily hurt, and feeling of inferiority and/or worthlessness.
Schizoid-Unresponsive	Refusal to talk, withdrawn behaviour, sadness, staring blankly and confusion.

Source: Contemporary directions in Psycho-pathology edited by T. Milton and G. Klerman (1986).

Most of the problems highlighted above occur in the classroom which calls for teachers to be more vigilant to identify them as Milton and Klerman (1986) specified, they occur sixty-five (65) different behaviour problems in the classroom. A good classroom management skill can easily prevent most of them from occurring.

Management is said to involve three main elements, viz, planning, communication and control (Elliot et al, 2000). Planning is necessary for selection of goals and procedures; communication ensures transfer of needed information while control brings about the process of matching performance with plans or set objectives. This implies that the teacher has to explore all these three stages effectively to manage problems in the classroom.

Nevertheless, Miller (2004) suggests twelve steps for effective classroom management. One major step is by engaging the pupils actively into functional activities in the classroom. Education World (2001) posits five major or general techniques of effective classroom organization or management. These are teacher's organizational skills in the classroom, creating rules and regulations, creating parent/student/teacher compact, effective utilization of rewards and minute by minute monitoring. But on the other hand, Tassel (2004) believes that classroom management involves much of management theories such as theories X and Y, control theory, behaviourism, transactional analysis, Ginoff model, Kary model and Jones model. He later recommended a non-behaviouristic discipline technique of class control. Yet, Sprinthall, Sprinthall and Oja (1994) strongly suggest pro-social skills as part of classroom management.

In Rivers State, most teachers in the Primary (elementary) schools are inclined to flogging or merely exposing the cane to the pupils over pupils' disciplinary matters and their untoward behaviours. Yet, much success has not been recorded in class management and control. This paper therefore examines the classroom management styles as it is being practiced by teachers in the primary schools in Rivers state. It takes a specific look at the two major styles, which is the proactive and reactive perspectives of classroom management that are being utilised by teachers in the schools, in order to see if there is need for improvement.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were posited for the purpose of this study:

1. What is the classroom management pattern of primary school teachers in Rivers state?
2. Does gender influence the classroom management styles of primary school teachers in Rivers state?
3. How does the location of the schools influence the classroom management styles of primary school teachers in Rivers state of Nigeria?

## **STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES**

1. Gender does not significantly influence the classroom management styles of primary school teachers in Rivers state.
2. The location of the schools does not significantly influence classroom management styles of primary school teachers in Rivers state.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Rivers state is made up of twenty-three Local Government Council Areas, divided into six education zones. These are Ahoada, Bonny, Degema, Khana, Ikwerre and Port Harcourt educational zones. Each of the education zones is constituted with not more than three Local Government Areas (LGAs). A total sample size of 1000 primary school teachers was drawn through simple random sampling from twenty-three Local Government Areas of the state.

The breakdown was 44 teachers from each Local Government Area. Out of this number, four hundred were male teachers, while the remaining six hundred were female teachers.

Teachers Classroom Management Questionnaire (TCMQ), developed by the researchers was used in this study to obtain data from respondents. It was a five point scale designed according to the Likert-type. It had two sections. Section 1 elicited personal information from respondent, while section 2 contained twenty-five items describing various management strategies, which was broadly categorised as proactive and reactive management styles. The scale had a reliability coefficient of 0.76. On administration, the researchers travelled from one school to the other across the twenty-three Local Government Areas (LGAs) to administer the scale on respondents. They were required to fill the questionnaire which was collected back immediately after completion. Scoring technique was 4,3,2,1,0, for positive items and 0,1,2,3,4, for negative items respectively. Descriptive statistics and the independent t-test were used to analyse the data obtained in the study.

**RESULT**

What is the classroom management pattern of primary school teachers in Rivers State?

**Table 1. Primary school teachers’ classroom management patterns in rivers state as shown in percentages**

<i>S.No</i>	<i>Educational Zones</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Reactive %</i>	<i>Proactive %</i>
1.	Ahoda	160	7.13	3.57
2.	Bonny	130	6.10	4.10
3.	Degema	130	5.18	5.50
4.	Ikwerre	160	16.15	4.03
5.	Khana	180	13.88	4.22
6.	Port Harcourt	240	22.14	8.00
Total		1000	70.58	29.42

Table 1 shows that reactive management style is predominant among the primary school teachers in Rivers State, while the proactive management style is the least adopted by the primary school teachers in all the education zones in the state.

HYPOTHESIS 1: Gender does not significantly influence the classroom management styles of primary school teachers in Rivers State.

**Table 2. Chi-square (x2) analysis of the influence of gender on teachers’ classroom management style**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>X<sup>2</sup> Cal</i>	<i>X<sup>2</sup> Crit</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Male	400	0.16	3.84	1	NS
Female	600				

$\cdot X^2 = 0.16/ CV = 3.84 P/ 0.05$

NS = Not significant.

Table 2 shows that gender (sex) of the teachers does not significantly influence their classroom management style in these primary school as  $X^2$  calculated value was 0.16 and the critical  $X^2$  value is 3.84, with 1 df at 0.05 significant level.

HYPOTHESIS 2: Location of the schools does not significantly influence the classroom management styles of primary school teachers in Rivers State.

**Table 3. Chi-square ( $x^2$ ) analysis of the influence of the location of school on teachers' classroom management style**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>X<sup>2</sup> Cal</i>	<i>X<sup>2</sup> Crit</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Urban	88	1.66	3.84	1	NS
Rural	912				

$$X^2 = 1.66; CV = 3.84; P = 0.05$$

Table 3 shows that the calculated  $X^2$  value is 1.66 and the critical  $X^2$  value is 3.84 with  $df = 1$  at 0.05 significant level. The calculated  $X^2$  value is (1.66) is less than the critical  $X^2$  value (3.84). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This means that the classroom management styles of primary school teachers in both rural and urban area of Rivers State are not significantly different.

## DISCUSSION

The study revealed that teachers in the primary schools in Rivers State are predisposed to reactive classroom management style. This means that they adopt management strategies or effect discipline only when the undesirable behaviours had occurred among pupils in the classroom. Such a development is a disservice to classroom management effectiveness especially as it is concerned with controlling disruptive behaviours in the class.

Some of the indices of teacher effectiveness are flexibility and sensitivity to the conditions of pupils, which is highly required in classroom management. Such a teacher is proactive. Proactive management style ensures conditions that prevents, beforehand, pupils' misbehaviour and therefore prepares them for effective school or class participation and learning. One way of doing this is making rules and regulations to forestall future pupils' behaviour problems. Some proactive management style focuses on futuristic state of the child's learning, it is easier to execute and often more apt in checking children's behaviour problems.

As earlier shown in table 1, the primary school teachers in Rivers state adopted more of a reactive classroom management style than the proactive. This trend is predominant among teachers in all the six education zones except in Degema education zone where the proactive-reactive proportion is about equal. On the whole, the reactive occupies 70.53% of the management strategies of the teachers and rendering 27.42% only to proactive management strategies. This is in contrast with the works of Education World (2001), Tassel (2004) and Sprinthall, Sprinthall and Oja (1994) who stated that proactive management style rather than the reactive were commonly found among teachers. The reason for this observation may be as a result of environmental difference.

In table 2, it was revealed that there was no significant difference in the management styles between male and female teachers in the primary schools. The contingency chi-square ( $X^2$ ) showed that at 0.05 significant level with  $df = 1$ , the calculated  $X^2$  value of 0.16 was less than

the critical  $X^2$  value of 3.84. Therefore sex differences did not significantly affect the classroom management styles of the teachers in the primary schools.

Table 3 also indicated that the location of the schools in the state did not in any way affect the classroom management styles of teachers. The calculated  $X^2$  value of 1.66 was less than 3.84 at 0.05 significant level with  $df= 1$ , and  $N = 1000$ . Therefore, findings revealed that urban and rural teachers under study did not show any significant differences in their classroom management styles. Their strategies were generally reactive in nature. Rules and regulations stipulated in these schools were mostly in response to an already existing disciplinary action. The nature of training acquired by these teachers might have been responsible for the bias in management style.

## **CONCLUSION**

One of the factors that promote classroom learning is teachers' effective classroom management. Pupils' behavioural problems can be largely controlled through the teacher's classroom management style. Management styles are either proactive or reactive. This was manifested in the management style of the primary school teachers in Rivers State. In this study of the six education zones of the entire state, it was discovered that teachers adopt more of reactive management style than proactive. These teachers are bound to encounter more of pupils' behavioural problems in their classroom as behaviours will negligibly be allowed to manifest before solutions are sought.

It was discovered that this trend never changed or differed significantly as compared along with sex differences or geographical peculiarities such as being an urban or rural school. The high degree of reactive management tendencies of these primary school teachers demands for a re-orientation of teachers in this aspect of their profession.

In the light of this observation, the following recommendations were made.

1. Seminars and workshops should be organised for the primary school teachers in the State to be aware of the implications of such lopsided classroom management patterns. Classroom management should be holistic enough to check the growing trend of pupils' misdemeanours in school.
2. Classroom management skills should be well-taught and demonstrated during the primary education training programme. This will enable primary school teachers to handle classroom behaviour problems with expertise.
3. Proactive management style should be focused with a lower degree of reactive measures necessary to correct already existing problems.
4. In the area of unqualified teachers, they should be properly trained if they are to be engaged in teaching in the primary schools.

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