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THE IMPACT OF TEACHERS' GENDER DIFFERENCES ON CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Teachers perceive classroom management as one of the most crucial and enduring aspects in education. This study aims to explore impacts of female and male teachers on classroom management at European University of Lefke. The study also intends to investigate the differences between the classroom management strategies of an experienced female EFL teacher and an experienced male EFL teacher. Qualitative method was used for data collection and data analysis. Reflected reports were required from a male and a female teacher. Also, semi-structured interviews were conducted to the same male and female teachers. Results indicate that there is no significant difference on the classroom management according to the genders of the teachers.

Key words: Gender, classroom management, male teachers, female teachers

1.Introduction

Gender is the matter of characteristics referring to, and differentiating between masculinity and femininity. According to the context, these characteristics can involve biological sex, sex-based social structures or gender identity. It is stated that "Gender is determined socially; it is the societal meaning assigned to male and female. Each society emphasizes particular roles that each sex should play, although there is wide latitude in acceptable behaviours for each gender" (H. Biber, S. and Carger, G. L., 2000).

This is why, the gender roles of teachers may also influence their way of education including their roles in society. The impact of gender is very obvious, especially in developing countries. Allana, A., Asad N. and Sherali, Y. (2010) explained this as "In the developing world's context such as Pakistan where women are marginalized, gender concerns are very relevant and extremely significant. Social norms, believes, values, behaviours, mindsets, policies, processes etc. all disclose gross discrimination against women". However, recently, there are some efforts in order to decrease this inequality especially for the education system. As teacher's role is very important for students, they try to stop this discrimination between male and female teachers in the society. UNESCO (2009) stated that "Teachers and educators influence the gender roles of their students thus impacting their educational outcomes. When considering Education for All (EFA) goal 5, which aimed to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and now aims to achieve gender equality by 2015, it should be realized that teachers are a critical force for meeting the goal". As we can see, there is a great improvement in developed countries. However, unfortunately, this situation is not the same in developing countries, as it was mentioned before.

Therefore, this study aims to research the impact of teachers' gender on classroom management. Classroom management is the first and basic step of the training management.

Class is a place where students and teachers can be face to face. Behaviours of the students can change according to this classroom environment. Therefore, all the primary sources of the education such as student, teacher, programs and sources are in the classroom. Consequently, the quality of training education is largely depended on the quality of the classroom management. Classroom management is a challenge that many teachers regularly face. Hence, teachers must be ready to respond the demanding requirement of whether they are perfectly able to address classroom training. As classroom management is one of the most crucial areas in education, many experienced researchers have examined the classroom management. However, many research studies show that there are various aspects of classroom management. According to many researchers such as Weinstein and MacNaughton, organization, physical arrangement, behavioural considerations, instructional strategies and social climate are the main classroom management procedures.

1.1. Important Classroom Management Procedures

As it is mentioned before, organization is one of the most crucial parts of classroom management. Classroom organization focuses on the materials and activities for an effective teaching. Effective teachers must be able to organize a safe classroom environment for their students. They strategically provide directions for clear strategies, clear assignments, clearly posted assignments, indicated homework assignments written on the board, pre-prepared materials, efficiently distributed materials, plan for interruptions and unexpected events, and well planned time.

In addition, students spend much of their time in classrooms. Rooms that increase students' motivation make students' happier to be there. Therefore, for an effective classroom management, only walls and books are not enough. Teacher must be able to present an inviting environment that provides a positive interaction. Generally, physical arrangement is related with the temperature of the classroom, comfortable lighting, students' physically comfortable atmosphere, interest of classroom, use of bulletin board and wall space, visible presentation of instruction, placement of desks and furniture, minimum distractions, being free from high traffic areas, to be able to access frequently used materials in the classroom (Quinn et al., 2000; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995).

Behavioural issues are another important part of teaching. In a classroom there can be many types of students such as disruptive students, students without books or homework, without pencil, without notebook, students who need to make up work or even students with special need etc. Managing all these behavioural issues is related with classroom management. For this reason, teacher must think about routines, procedures, interactions and the discipline in the classroom. Also, according to Kyle, P (2004) "the more teachers share with students the discipline strategies and their purpose and rationale, the more effectively the students will learn responsible behaviours". That is why, all the behaviours are related to classroom management. To sum up, behaviours of both teachers and students are part of the classroom management. As another important aspect of classroom management, instructional strategies are the methods teachers use during their teaching process. Instructional strategies help to activate students' curiosity and engage students' learning. Through instructional strategies teachers enable learning effectively, increase motivation and help successful classroom management.

Building a fruitful social climate is also one of the most critical classroom management strategies. Teachers need to be good at it if they wish to build a classroom with a highly valued learning capacity. If teacher's social climate is to be successful, that environment has to be positive and vibrant. Successful learning can not show up in a negative social climate in a classroom.

1.2. The Impact of Teachers' Gender on Classroom Management

Even though several studies have been carried out in order to investigate the link between teachers' sexual category and classroom management, there are only few studies about the impact of teachers' gender on classroom management. For this reason, it remains ambiguous that in which ways classroom management methods of female teachers are stronger, and in which ones male teachers are superior. As a result, contrasting most studies, this study seeks the link between gender and classroom management methods of EFL teachers. In addition, as it was stated above, existing studies on the subject of the relationship between teachers' gender and classroom management are controversial: Some of the studies state that there isn't any link between teachers' gender and their classroom management methods, and some of them suppose that there is a relationship. For example, Robert V. Bullough Jr. (2015) claimed that there are some differences between male and female teachers on classroom management. However, similarities between two genders are more. Although this study focused on young learners, not to university students; it still gives some clues about this research question. The same study also shows that gender doesn't have an impact on classroom management because teaching is not about gender; it is more about teachers' motivation and the power of context. Similarly, Rahimi, M. Asadollahi, F. (2012) believe that gender doesn't have any relation to classroom management. In this study, Iranian female and male teachers were examined and it was found that there isn't any difference between male and female teachers. Even, these researchers went further and explained that their study has disapproved studies of Martin & Yin (1997) and Martin Yin (2003) about male teachers' behaviours which are supposed to be more controlled, authoritarian, rigid, impersonal, assertive and aggressive than female teachers. On the other hand, Nejati, Hassani and Sahrapour (2014) found out that female teachers are better at instructional strategies while males are better at student engagement. They explained their findings as "it was revealed males and females did not differ as far as classroom management was considered. However, they differed in terms of student engagement and instructional strategies; male teachers were better at student engagement, while female teachers were better at instructional strategies".

In conclusion, as it is mentioned above, there isn't much study on this topic. This is why, this study aimed to answer the subsequent issue: Is there an important relationship between gender and classroom management of Cypriot EFL teachers at the European University of Lefke?

2. Methodology

2.1. Context and Participants

This study aimed to find out experienced male and female teachers' use of classroom management strategies for the EFL classes. By using qualitative research, the study intended to answer the question; "what are the differences between experienced male and female teachers classroom management strategies and truths in this field?". As it is mentioned before, qualitative research is preferred for this study. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) described that "Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self".

To elaborate, this study focused on how two experienced male and female teachers are reflected their classroom management strategies to the EFL classrooms in relation to organization, physical arrangement, behavioural considerations, instructional strategies and social climate in classrooms. The participants Jane and John were chosen for a purpose. Both

of the teachers are experienced and working as English instructors at Preparatory School of European University of Lefke. The two teachers, Jane and John, are described as effective and experienced both by their students and colleagues.

2.1. Jane's Personal Information

Jane, a 26 year-old married, was born into a traditional Turkish Cypriot family. When she was born in London and grew up in London as a native English speaker. When she was 17 Years old, she moved back to Cyprus and studied English teaching at European University of Lefke. She has directly started to work at the same university as an English Instructor at Preparatory School. Now, it has been nearly 6 years that she is working at the same university as an English Language Instructor. She holds a BA and a MA Diploma from the field English Language Teaching

2.2. John's Personal Information

John was born on the 19th of January, 1977 from a Turkish Cypriot mother and a Turkish Cypriot father, born and bred in North Cyprus. He is married and has a daughter and a son. He was graduated from the University of Lefke in 1998 from the department of English Language Teaching, and he has been working for the same University since 2004. He has mainly taught English as a Specific Purpose (ESP) and he has recently been teaching Academic English at EUL. He holds a BA and a MA Diploma from the field English Language Teaching, and currently his PHD studies are in progress.

2.3. Data Collection Methods

Because of teachers' work, school and personal schedules, data was collected within 5 hours teaching period in the spring semester of Preparatory School of European University of Lefke. For both participants, it was the end of their second semesters. Jane normally has 5 hours teaching everyday while John has 6 hours.

Reflective reports were used in this study. It was quite important because "reflective writing provides an opportunity for you to gain further insights from your work through deeper reflection on your experiences, and through further consideration of other perspectives from people and theory. Through reflection we can we can deepen the learning from work" (Watton, P., Collings, J., and Moon, J., 2001). For this reason, the participants were also asked to keep diaries and write a reflective report during this 5 hours teaching period. These diaries should be about their use of classroom management strategies during their 5 hours teaching period. After the completion of these diaries, they wrote reflective reports about their reflections in this field.

In addition, interviews were included in this study. Interviews were used as a secondary data collection method after the reflective reports. It is because of triangulation. Researchers need to use multiple research method techniques in order to increase the validity of that study. That is why semi-structured interviews were used which described as "a kind of interview collects detailed information in a style that is somewhat conversational. Semi-structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided" (Harrell, M. C. and Bradley, M. A. , 2009) . One interview was conducted with each participant. Semi-structured interview questions were asked to each participant. Many sub-questions were also asked according to participants' responses. Therefore, multiple qualitative methods were used in order to get richer data about participants' true beliefs and experiences on classroom management strategies.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis section of this study has determined teachers' perspectives about classroom management and their personal strategies while managing their EFL classrooms. This part was constructed in relation to the classroom management checklist guiding this study. This checklist refers to the "procedures, actions and strategies teachers use to establish in the classroom" (Burden, 1995). In the checklist, there are 5 crucial aspects. These are organization, physical arrangement, behavioural considerations, instructional strategies and social climate. In this study, all the data analysis was done according to these criteria on the checklist.

Reflective report shows that Jane has both intuitive knowledge and theoretical about the importance of classroom management. In few ways Jane and John have some differences in their classroom management strategies. However, it seems that there isn't a very big difference between two genders according to the results of the reflective reports. Important aspects of classroom management analyzed under separate headings in order to analyze them according to the checklist provided in the appendix.

3. Findings and Discussion

Findings and discussion section is presented according to the aspects of the classroom management as it is mentioned before. Therefore, Jane's and John's classroom management strategies and the impact of their role of gender on classroom management are examined and analyzed below. These findings are the result of both reflective writings and interviews.

3.1. Organization

Being organized is one of the most important aspects of being a successful teacher. Teacher needs to use a wide variety of materials during a teaching process. According to classroom management checklist used in this study, concept of organization is highly related to the directions of activities and assignments, effective use of board for the homework assignments, use of materials in the classroom, to be planned for interruptions and unexpected events and using time in an organized way. However, reflective reports show that both of the teachers don't mention anything about organizational aspects of classroom management neither in the reflective reports nor in the interviews.

3.2. Physical Arrangement

A safe, comfortable, attractive classroom can increase the effectiveness of learning in a classroom and can help to build a communicative atmosphere between teacher and students. For many teachers, physical arrangement of classrooms can be very discouraging because of aged buildings, busy classrooms or school rules. However, it seems that despite all the barriers, John attaches importance to physical arrangement. In his reflective report, he mentioned that he loves using horse shape (U shape) as a sitting arrangement. He claimed that position of a teacher is very important both for watching students and establishing eye contact with them. By this way, he can see the students and students can see him. He also changed lightening according to the atmosphere and activities which is again related to physical arrangement. John mentions his love for U shape during the interview as well. He emphasized that eye-contact and being communicative are very important to him.

On the other hand, Jane seems to pay less attention to physical arrangement. It is because she doesn't mention anything about physical arrangement such as lightening, comfort or other aspects of physical arrangement.

3.3. Behavioural Considerations

Behavioural considerations such as being visible all the time by the students, applying rules in the classroom, getting acceptable behaviours, using reinforcement to the students etc. are crucial aspects which are needed to be done for a successful classroom management. It seems that both teachers, Jane and John, are really good at behavioural considerations. For example, Jane often used positive reinforcement by standing the students up and walking around the class. She told them to stand up and ask questions to each other. She said that all of the students were very negative at the beginning but after her positive reinforcement they were quite positive again. She also used games in order to reduce their stress just before the final exams. She gave them chocolates and provided reinforcement to make them focus on the lesson. She also claimed that she let the students to speak and explain their problems. She explained that specific moment as “I stopped and listen to them for the first time. I left them speak. This really helped them; they felt as if someone was by their side”. It means that listening to students’ problems is a kind of classroom management strategy for Jane. She did this for the reinforcement. After that, they studied hard and became more motivated. She supported her ideas about positive reinforcement in the interview. She said that although she is not a mother yet, she feels like a mother when students have problems. She wants to listen to their problems and find solutions.

Correspondingly, John cares about behavioural considerations as well. He used positive reinforcement as well but in a little bit different way. He explained his strategy like this; “I cared a lot to provide positive enforcements, like rewards when my students demonstrated appropriate behaviour”. Besides, he provided “peer praise” during his lessons; he lets other students to applause for a successful student. In addition, John emphasized that being visible by all the students was also very important for him. By this way, he could establish eye contact and was able to monitor their behaviours. Also, he paid attention to give praise to his students by calling their names and saying “Ayşe that is a perfect answer” when they gave right answers to his questions. John also mentioned that he likes correcting his students with a positive language. In addition, John cared about the rules of the classroom by reminding them that they can’t enter the class if they come 30 minutes late after lesson starts. Therefore, positive reinforcement, visibility and applying rules are the three important considerations for John while Jane focuses more only on positive reinforcement. During his interview, John mentioned many times that being visible by the students is very necessary for him. He said that he feels more authoritarian. He believes that it is the biggest difference between male and female teachers.

3.4. Instructional Strategies

Through these reflective reports, we can see that both Jane and John really like using whole group, small group and independent work. It means that, they prefer students to be active, responsible and risk takers. For example, Jane asked her students to do activity all together rather than doing individually. She said that “the aim was to get students to communicate among one another”. She also used communicative group works and pair works in order to make them speak in English all the time. Accordingly, John used pair work on his 5th day. He said that his aim was to provide peer correction and peer learning. Unlike Jane, it seems that John used “U shape” sitting arrangement more for making them to communicate each other. But he still used pair work in some situations. In addition, Jane used strategies that capture and maintain students’ interest. For example, John asked students to stand up and speak to each other. She believes that it helped students to focus on the specific activity. On the other hand, John claimed that he employed effective feedback with positive effect and it helped to get the desired behaviour. Jane very often gave feedback during these five days

teaching process. However, Jane didn't mention anything about giving feedback to the students. Both of the participants didn't mention anything related to their instructional strategies during their interviews.

3.5. Social Climate

Creating a fruitful social climate with a supportive environment is one of the most critical classroom management strategies. It includes teacher's positive and friendly attitude, listening to students' problems and needs, inviting students to be risk-takers, providing opportunities for success to students, creating effective communication skills, providing safe and non-threatening environment etc. According to reflective report results, Jane met most of these needs about classroom management. She invited her students to be risk-takers by forcing them to speak in English all the time. She also portrayed friendly and positive attitude by stopping and listening to them. It means that she also listened to what students have and need to say. In addition, she forced them to speak for effective communication skills. John did the same thing by providing students opportunity to success. He applied group works and pair works with a positive teaching atmosphere and somehow gave them opportunity and responsibility to survive and to be successful. Besides, he portrayed safe and non-threatening environment by turning some of the lights off and creating a safe atmosphere for the activity. Both of the teachers said the similar sentences about social climate during their interviews.

4. Conclusion

The goal of the present paper was examining the impact of teachers' gender on classroom management among Cypriot EFL teachers. The findings demonstrated that gender was not very related to classroom management strategies of the teachers. It means that although Cyprus isn't a developed country, it doesn't have gender discrimination in this field as well. Therefore, this result approves what most of the literature have claimed about the similarity between male and female teachers' classroom management. On the other hand, John's saying about being more authoritarian during his interview somehow approves few studies that males are more controlling and authoritarian in developing country (Martin, N. & Yin, Z, 2003). However, it is not possible to prove that as there aren't any other supportive proofs. For example, we don't have proves that show Jane's more passive in any field. Also, there is nothing written in both reflective reports. In conclusion, it is possible to say that as many studies mentioned before, there aren't any very big differences between male and female teachers on classroom management. Both of the interviewers also explained that may be it is more about the personality of the teacher not the gender.

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