

Investigating the Role of the Teacher's Professionalism in Preventing and Handling the Learners' Classroom Disruptive Behaviors

The Case of Akbou El-Djadida High school Learners and teachers
And

Hafsa,Debbih and Technicome High School Teachers

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Abstract

Regrettably, the present enterprise of education witnesses some challenging hurdles that, as commonly said, hamstring the wheel of both teaching and learning mechanism. This is why, nowadays, the attrition rate for educators is higher than of any other professional occupation. Thus, one of the biggest stumbling blocks is, undeniably, the discipline problems that are being noticed with some learners during the class. Because our research is the action research, our aim is to put forward some helping and applied strategies to approach skillfully and with care the impediment of high school classroom disruptive behaviors chiefly El-Djadida high school. Indeed, this is what we need as educators. To trace an objective route for the aforementioned aim, some related and leading questions are to be set including the following: 1-what are the common encountered troublesome classroom behaviors? 2- Why disruptive behaviors occur in high school settings? 3- Have teachers, really, taken initiatives to think classroom learning atmosphere over before thinking about teaching as a profession? 4- How does teacher's professionalism affect positively the occurrence of problem behaviors? Of course, without the driving tools this research can neither be objective nor reliable. So, this is a qualitative study using questionnaires along with structured interview in order to be nearer to the facts.

Introduction and Context:

The world of education has been witnessing a hard talk on a vulnerable policy where the teacher is thrust to hunt for ways to work in a kind of classroom tranquility. Particularly, Algerian national education is one of the most concerned with classroom disruptive behaviors which slow down the effective running of both teaching and learning process (Ridnouer, K.2006). Hence, the need for answers to the present hinder that Algerian high school classes, mainly, is facing is the aim of the present research. Thus, this research strives to explore to which extent a good relationship between the teacher and the learners is growing within the context of teacher's professionalism. In particular, this research focuses on the strategies, with relation to

teaching profession, that can affect positively the management of classroom problem behaviors. In fact, the ability to prevent and handle skillfully and rigorously these matters is the fundamental bedrock of classroom life with far reaching consequences (Balli,2009). So, this study comes as an action one to make on hands some experienced approaches to some challenges lived through in relationship with adolescents. Working with this latter, there seems to be a rewarding job for the energy, fun and idealism that can be found in them (Porter, 2009). But no one can deny that adolescence is a dramatic stage of life with the adolescences' intense feelings, thoughts and relationships. This is what makes high school classes , chiefly 1st year classes, full of noise, disruptive learners, bad behaviors like imitating animals' sounds, destroying classroom properties, eating ,drinking, setting fire, quarreling,talking to each other, disrespectful language...ect.

Literature Review

To give weight to this study, it is inevitable that there exist miscellaneous researches around this issue performed and introduced throughout the world. These studies reckoned to be the part and the ground of the present work, though the majority of them are foreign studies.i.e. undertaken within the context of foreign high school settings (*Europe(UK), USA, ...*). From this, we can permit to ourselves to raise the role of some factors where other researchers' implications about preventing and handling school disruptive behaviors cannot help us, as Algerian researchers or educators , to apply them in the Algerian school context. These factors may differ from one country to another such as customs, culture, language position (e.g. English as a second language and as a native language this may play a role in mastering the learners' behaviors), educational system...etc. This study draws on diverse approaches to the educators in the world of education and adolescents. So, we can bring into sight the work of the reading specialist, English teacher and journalism teacher *Katy Ridnour (2006)* in her book at 100 about dealing with adolescent learners "*Managing your Classroom with Heart*". Whereas for *Jeremy Harmer ()* it was just a small corner about problem behaviors in his third edition book "*The Practice of English Language Teaching*" where he gave importance to the didactic side. *Susan Eva PORTER*, educational and clinical consultant to schools in San Francisco, conducted a research the dynamic that occurs between teenagers and adults in schools in her eye-catching book "*Relating to Adolescents*" in which she included the psychological factors and issues which can be related to the life and the stage of adolescence. In fact, the aforementioned factors can help educators approach the inner self of the adolescent learner without taking a risk to so. In addition to this,

we can go around the work of an associate professor of education *Sandra J. Balli* who poured down her research on teaching and the life, energy, substance, hope, and determination that excellent teachers bring to the rhythm of classrooms every day and year in her book “*Making a Difference in the Classroom*” (2009). Other works like that of *Kronowidz, E.L* (2008) “*The Teacher’s Guide to Success*”, *Henly, M.* (2006) “*Classroom Management*”, *Daniels, D and Meece, J.* (2007) “*Child and Adolescent Development for Educators*”, *Nakkula, M and Toshalis, E.* (2006) “*Understanding Youth*” and many other studies. We know that the subject of classroom management, chiefly when managing learners’ disruptive behaviors, remains an action and field study. In this case, it is a field practice which guides a theory but not the vice versa. This is why the above mentioned studies and researches are still limited in terms of the factors formerly mentioned (culture, customs,...), the growing and the complexity of the present phenomenon in our country and most importantly the willing of divulging the brave initiatives and strategies some Algerian teachers have proved to be successful towards classroom management (discipline).

Empirical Research Methodology

While the general approach of this research is to focus on particular variables and factors and whilst it’s non-intrusive and communicates accurately and factually an occurring phenomenon, we can say that it’s descriptive in nature. Narrowly, the present research is qualitative that uses procedures that make use of non-numerical data. These can be described as using a **semi-structured individual interview**, the main relied tools for the wealth of our findings, to energize the discussion and manipulate the reception of the desired facts. A **recorder** is used to document the contents of the interaction with the respondents which we need later on in the data analysis stage. However, the interview conducted with teachers much more with the experienced ones inside and outside (Debbih, Hafsa and Technicome high Schools- Akbou) Akbou El-Djadida high school. This is because Akbou El-Djadida high school embraces, this year, almost teachers of making their first year of teaching. This was a sample of 20 teachers depending on their availability. All this along with a **check list** of questions (in language methodology, a form for questionnaires ‘rarely used instrument in collecting data here in Algeria’) the use of which is dictated by the complexity of using a questionnaire compared with the time restriction and the need for additional, specific and conforming data from a sample not exceeding 108 first year Akbou-El-Djadida high school learners. Their age varies between 14 to 18 years old.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Interview: The semi-structured interview conducted in transparency and in all confidence in terms of the teachers' responses. It was so motivating for the teachers that it took two days and a half to complete the interviewing (respecting the teachers' free hours to be ready for the interview). The interview comprises open-ended questions and the questions as a whole grouped into subjects under the form of 3 sections: general questions, discipline questions and psycho-pedagogical questions. This is in order to work with a systematic data analysis.

Analysis of the Interview Findings

Since the present paper is an article, we will try to adopt *data patterning analysis* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:333 quoted in Erlandson et al.1993:116) which is considered the crux of qualitative analysis.

General Questions (see appendix one):

Along with the first section (I. General questions), the majority of the teachers' age goes between 45-55 and only 3 of them (20 teachers) who classified themselves between 25-35. Of course, the years of experience vary between 10 -26 (17 teachers) and only three (3) teachers who come out from the group with the experience of 2 to 3 years. As the interview shows, all of the interviewees have previously taught 1st year high school learners. The following table comes to sum up the statistics of the 1st section which is considered as a contributing part to the nature of the answers in the coming sections II and III).

Table 01: *Statistical Presentation of the Teachers' General Information*

<i>Variables</i>		<i>The number of the teachers</i>	<i>Number in Percentage</i>
<i>Age</i>	<i>Under 25</i>	00	00%
	<i>25-35</i>	03	15%
	<i>35-45</i>	00	00%
	<i>45-55</i>	17	85%
	<i>55-65</i>	00	00%
	<i>Over 65</i>	00	00%
<i>Teaching experience</i>	<i>2-3 years</i>	03	15%
	<i>10-26 years</i>	17	85%
<i>The teaching of the first year classes</i>		20	100%

Questions about discipline (see appendix two):

Since the interview questions are assembled by themes and sub-themes, this sections answers the two first already formulated related questions. This latter, speaks about the existence of problem behaviors and the general factors of their occurrence. So, from their answers to questions 1,2 and 3 (see appendix 01) , we can say that

problem behaviors exist (the 20 teachers answered “yes”) in Akbou high schools (Hafsa, Debbih, Technocom and Akbou-El-djadida) under the form of poor attendance, talking to each other, forgetting school items (such as books, copybooks...), disrespectful language, producing or imitating animals’ sounds, drinking, eating and sometimes go to using ball papers, for example, to attack either the classmates and or even the teacher especially when he/ she is writing on the board...ect. According to the teachers interviewed the most common challenging, bothering and delaying to both teaching and learning processes is classroom chatter and noise. The contributing factors for this school phenomenon, as we can conclude from the teachers discussion, are those related to the crowded classes but rather “*over crowed classes*” said one of the interviewees and sometimes arrives to 50 pupils per class. Add to this, the redeemed learners in case of their failure and most of the disruptive behaviors occur with this category of learners. All the interviewees noticed “*it is illogical for learners aged 18 and 19 to be amalgamated with 14 and 15 years old learners*” “*it is nearly a difference of a generation*” wondered some interviewees. The problem, as a whole, is not with the teacher’s gender as some folks think; but the problem with the bad management outside the classroom. Others think that the casualness that comes from the teacher can also be one of the grounds which lead to the advent of classroom discipline problems. About this, one teacher said “*coordination shouldn’t exist only between teachers of a common subject about didactic issues but between teachers of a common class about how to teach first self-respect in each learner*”. “*A teacher should be professional, in all related issues, in his profession*” he added. On this exactly that we are going to cast a light in the coming stage of analysis.

Psycho-pedagogical Questions:

In this last section of the interview we are likely going to be nearer to our aim about the present research. Focusing o the two last related questions about whether there are initiatives from the concerned teachers to take discipline problems in the hub of their profession and how this professionalism can affect and lead to trouble-free teaching and classrooms.

At first all the teachers attested, from their experience, that first year classes are most challenging in terms of problem behaviors. From the second (2) leading question’s answers (see appendix one), we conclude that the respondents insist on or call educators for the need of extensive training about to the world of psychology in terms of studying the learner’s mind and behaviors which they later on use in his teaching (*didactic knowledge*) . “*psychology about problem*

behaviors should be taken alone since it's critical" said one of the interviewees *"once solutions are found, it's easy to integrate them with the teaching which occurs every day"* he added.

With the rest of questions (see appendix one) we are going to approach some strategies to make of the world of teaching and learning a correct setting to teach and learn. To make the world **professionalism** clearer, with the interviewed teachers it is *"the time you devote and spend to go around the issues that come in the way of the teaching profession"*, *"a conscious and skillful thinking to make of the classroom atmosphere a tranquil place to learn"*, *"Professionalism is the teacher's competence about what he/ she is doing in his profession"* this supports the view of *Jeremy Harmer* in his book *"The Practice of English language Teaching"*. So, we can deduce that teacher's professionalism is the strategies towards making the leaning and the teaching atmosphere satisfying and as far as our study is concerned this professionalism is oriented towards a particular issue which classroom problem behaviors. According to our respondents' answers (questions 4 and 5), learners generally respect teachers who show a great knowledge mastery of the subject taught. "This competence it is not necessary to be complete but he can manage to do so" said an interviewee. We can include here **"strategic competence"** (*J.Richards and R,scmidt,2002*) in case of the teacher's lacks during his / her lecturers. Hence, teachers should find ways that compensate for weakness in some areas .A teacher, for example, may use a deliberately low or soft manner of speaking to create a particular effect on the learner in order to kill or hide the weakness. This can be described as tricks in teaching just to keep a kind of teacher' credibility. This latter, can be gained also through the decisive instructions that the teacher sets to keep discipline in the classroom. for example, if a teacher insists on doing home assignments he should have his learners solve them but not using fantasy threats *"if you make this one again, I will....."*.It's the same thing with arriving late, not bringing books,...etc.

From the respondents' teaching experience and interaction with the learners, we have got many practical strategies that can help facing the common bothering classroom behaviors. The sixth question (6) shows us the weight and the importance the "mark of the ongoing evaluation" has on the disruptive classroom noise mainly when it's well controlled. On the words of one interviewee we had the following:

"Because marks are like money in the eyes of the learners, I used my own splitting up of the ongoing evaluation mark; 10 pts for

classroom behaviors, 5pts participation and 5pts for the organization of the copybook”.

It has been noticed that this strategy proved success at 90% towards controlling classroom noise during the lesson presentation. Even if some learners persist in talking during the lesson, but once he sees his evaluation mark on his report card (sheet) they are going to realize that the teacher’s promise had been applied. This manner, they are going to take it (the mark) for granted through respecting the marking scheme. ***“For the first term it has given more than half a result but in the second and the third term worked like a charm when my promise was seen decisive”*** she added. With this, we can link this thought to the importance of making firm and decisive instructions ***“no going back with our instructions”*** that question 5 calls for (see appendix one).

Can we imagine that simple ideas can be positive for the issue of problem behaviors. ***“I’m used to utter the title “monsieur” for boy learners”***, this is, for example, a strategy to gain the learner’s confidence and self- importance and especially prevent disrespectful language when trying to correct some behaviors. Taking a mark book and a pencil in the teacher’s hands in the course of the session and marking “minus” for every learner who tries to disrupt the lecture. For the produced animals’ sounds, each teacher should avoid writing a long time on the board. He/she can appoints a learner (it would be better to be the one who blabs) to write on the board and the teachers in his turn tries to appear in each learner’s side. Like this he is going to prevent that behaviors and control the learner’s seriousness. The ill-discipline report can also make a contribution in making limits to grave discipline problems. ***“But here except if a great support from the school administration is received”*** declared one of the interviewees.

Some interviewee teachers noticed that in order to keep respect, never use kabyle with the learners “even outside the classroom”. Speaking academic language especially ***French*** seems to create a kind of integrity that the learners notice. ***“Never use kabyle with Algerian learners. Using a language that everyone is pride of can make a learners think of his teacher as a knowledgeable one and respectful”*** said an interviewee confidently. The last admired and funny in the same time is that of one interviewee (English teacher) who said ***“believe me! One day I insulted a learner in French language but I didn’t receive an undesirable reaction as that insult done in kabyle. This language, I mean French even English, in some cases serves well”***.

Learners' Checklist Questions: as previously said this means of collecting used just to see from the side of the learner if there is something to add to help the wheel of teaching runs well. This is why; some guiding and descriptive questions have been designed. The ancillary checklist is comprised of 6 open ended translated questions to the language which can be appreciated by the learner. Since all the questions have one aim, we are going to adopt a general interpretation for the findings.

Analysis of the learners' answers

According to the learners questioned, a teacher who is motivated and tries to motivate the learners is said to be admired and attract the learners' attention during the class. The teacher, also, is welcome by the learners if he teaches with his heart and tries to approach the learners' psychological problems that can stand in the way of his/ her learning. *“Even if I'm not good at English and I don't understand anything said but I like my English teacher for her kindness and endeavor to help us learn”* spoke out one learner. Being a psychologist, at a very least; learners can respect their teacher even if they don't his/her lecture.

One learner admitted that he didn't like an arrogant teacher and like a teacher who treats the class in an even handed manner. Others said that a cultivated teacher attracts their desire to interact with him/her. Some others they like a teacher as they like his/her subject. Most importantly and the answers which make us realize that the learner's age and chiefly gender play a role in the issue of problem behaviors. When surfing in their answers we've ran out with learners saying that the regard a teacher who can set control in the classroom especially those learners who bother the class and don't let them to learners. Something that is worthy to notice is that like this thought received only from girls and only one boy in an early age in comparison with others. Girls are more interested in the classroom atmosphere than boys which lead us to think that **boys are more disruptive than girls**.

Concluding Remarks

The present article explored the debatable issue of classroom discipline problems in Algeria (Akbou high schools teachers and El-Djadida high school learners) and what to do about it. From the study and the findings we see that there are still some teachers who care about their classes and devote much of their time to serve well the world of education. With the taken initiatives to apply strategies that can help the handling and the prevention of problem behaviors, that the existence of which was proved, the interviewed teachers have given us all what they had as ideas, techniques and astuteness to help both teaching and learning go as it should be. The findings also

indicate that the teacher's professionalism, not only his knowledge of the subject he teaches but forming a clear picture of what the job is all about. As a result, this is proved to have a positive influence on taking hold of classroom disruptive behaviors. For example, manipulating the ongoing evaluation mark is a skillful strategy to attract the learner's attention especially when discipline part gains lot of points. So, he/she is required to keep an appropriate behavior during the class. As mentioned, learners tend to respect a teacher who keeps him / herself credibility (Harmer, J.2001) . To meet this need, teachers, from different Akbou high schools, call for the necessity of using a respectful language when talking with their learners, inside and outside the classroom, and even when insulting or giving the learners moral lessons. In addition to this, a teacher who owes strategic competence has more chance to break the lacks occurring in his competence. As far as learners' answers are concerned, we found that using kindness and being in the position of the learners can also diminish from classroom inappropriate behaviors and help gain the learners' confidence and likability. As said by *Jennifer, L*, an American high school teacher, "***Competent teaching combined with genuine passion is powerful***" and along with the wisdom of the *U.S. Educator and cultural anthropologist Johnetta Betsch Cole* "***To teach well is to be a lifelong student***".

Based on the findings, mainly the last question in the interview (see appendix one), about the message and the possible additional suggestions that can serve fruitfully the controversial issue of classroom problem behaviors. These are they:

- The setback of **crowded classrooms** should be looked over by the concerned groups. This has been insisted on and by many educators and declare that the more the number is less the more the lesson is successful.
- Creating **particular classes** for aged repetitive learners .As proved by the teachers been in contact with, the majority of time disruptive behaviors come from aged and careless learners and they do so to interrupt the class as well as the teacher. So, being in a special class can stand against their intention.
- **Respecting the different school regulations** and being **decisive** in applying them can make of Algerian schools desirable contexts to work. For example, avoiding the adjustment of the pass mark (under 10/20).with this, a learner will try prudently to stay away from those marks under 10. As

a result, he will avoid any thing that can affect negatively his/her school general result such unwanted behaviors.

- Organizing national training seminars on the psychology of the adolescent at school. This may help teachers to find more effective and useful strategies to deal with his/her adolescent learners.
- Less attention given to the integration of ICT (Information Communication Technology) in high schools. We should bear in our mind that using visual materials in teaching will inevitably attract the appeal and let the non-sense stupidities aside.
- The role of parents is of a great importance. According to some teachers, Students' Parents Association exists only for defending the interests of the learners but not helping teachers with raising the awareness of their children about "school codes of conduct".

"The goodness of the family is the goodness of the society".

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APPENDIX ONE

Interview Questions for Teachers

Date:21/10/2012 and 23/102012

Duration: 20 to 30 minutes/

Female: 08

Male: 12

I/General Questions:

- 1) Where do you classify your age, please? Under 25, between 25-35, 35-45, 45-55, 55-65 or over 65.
- 2) How many years have you been teaching?
- 3) Have you already taught 1st year learners?

II/Discipline Questions:

- 1) Do discipline problems occur in your classes? If yes, say what are the common ones?
- 2) What do you think the most bothering problem behavior(s)?
- 3) From which category of learners do teachers, generally, receive classroom disruptive behaviors? I mean which age category?
- 4) Do you think teacher's gender (male or female) has an influence on problem behaviors?
- 5) What are, then, the common factors that you realize they influence the manifestation of the classroom disruptive behaviors.
- 6) What are the problem behaviors that can be or should be prevented? Why?

III/Psycho-pedagogical questions:

- 1) If you have already taught the three levels, what is the level most challenging in terms of classroom discipline problems?
- 2) What do you think about prioritizing teacher's psychological knowledge rather than teacher's didactic one in the world of teaching?
- 3) What does teacher's professionalism mean to you?
- 4) What influence does a competent and knowledgeable teacher have on preventing and handling problem behaviors?
- 5) How can decisive classroom instructions stand against some problem behaviors?
- 6) Have you succeeded, during all the period of teaching, in managing the problem behaviors that you encountered? If yes, tell us the kind of problem and how you did it?
- 7) What is the message that you can convey to the Algerian educators, in general, and secondary educators, in particular, about the healing of the hindrance of the classroom discipline problems?

Thank you for your due contribution.

APPENDIX TWO

Learners'

Check

List

Learner's age:.....

Learner's gender:

1. Can you learn from a teacher who doesn't attract you? Why or why not?
2. How does a teacher who doesn't attract you make you feel about yourself in the classroom?
3. Describe a teacher who doesn't attract your likability (no names, please)
4. Can you learn from a teacher you care about? Why /why not.
5. How does a teacher you care about make you feel about yourself in the classroom?
6. Describe a teacher you care about?