

An Observation on One of the Schools in Morioka

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When a teacher enters a classroom, he/she always think that the students are ready to learn, ready to do the Instruction given. However the reality is that the atmosphere in a classroom always changes. When students start learning after having physical education class in the gym for example, the situation will not be the same as the atmosphere in the fresh morning class.

A classroom that a troublemaker is in will be different with the classroom whose members are those who are very well motivated students. Teaching students of different competence will also be a problem, Just Imagine 20 percent of the student in the classroom are those classified as fast learners, while maybe 50 percent are those classified as not so fast learners, and the rest are those classified as slow or very slow learners.

That kind of situation needs such techniques that the teacher can teach, communicate, and transfer their knowledge to their students. Communicating and transferring ideas and knowledge are not easy jobs for the teachers. They have to know what to do when students suddenly lose their motivation. They also have to know what to do when students are getting bored with the subjects they learn. They have to be always by their students' side whenever they have problem, especially in the classroom.

Teachers should always keep in their mind that managing classroom is a critical element in gaining success in classroom instruction. And Managing classroom always requires good organizational ability and consistency (Miller,1999).

It is also important to be remembered that understanding materials may be easy for the teacher, but then they have also to think how to make the students understand. They have also the job to teach the student to learn not only to study. They have to guide the student to learn how to learn.

Communication in the classroom is also an important thing. A teacher should be able to communicate well in order for the students to be able to understand him/her. That is way it is one of the factor that determines the success of a teaching learning process.

In short, A teacher should be able to control the classroom, because lack of classroom control can contribute a lot to teacher stress ((Iownstein, 1999) in leung and Lam, 2003), or in other words classroom management should be something that is well considered by teachers.

What is meant by classroom management here is (referring to the definition by department for education and skills of United Kingdom) the management of student behavior and learning activities by teachers by, for example, designing learning activities in ways that structure relationships to support learning, the use of rewards and sanctions and negotiating classroom 'rules' or codes of conduct.

Being the most leading country in Asia Japan must have a very unique system of education. They must have developed such a culture that leads to a great nation like today's Japan. And my assumption is that all are begun from the school.

Due to those kinds of assumption I would like to know how they manage the classrooms since classroom is one of the most important places of education at school, as far as educational institution is concerned to hold education and since class environment give the most important educational effect (Oord and Rosen, 2002). But, due to the limited time, I can only do an observation case study in one of the Junior High Schools in Morioka City in The North Part of Japan.

This is with the intention that what I write here would also be good information to teachers and schools in my place of origin.

A. General View of Kuroishino Junior High School

1. About The School

Kuroishino Junior High School is located in the northern part of the Morioka City, in Iwate Prefecture. They educate 530 students living in the school's neighboring area. There is one interesting thing about students' distribution that I noticed so far here in Japan. The students of a certain school should come from the neighboring area, especially for the students of elementary and junior high schools.

Kuroishino was established about 57 years ago with the goals of educating students to think deeply and always be brave in achieving their live goals, to practice their knowledge and always be sufficient with whatever they possess. At that time there were only 18 students attended the school which was located in tama yama village area at that time but then in 1969 the school campus was build in Kuroishino area.

2. About the Teachers and staff.

As mentioned above there are 27 teachers in this school, they are supposed to be present at school by 8.10 every morning since at that time they have regular meeting which is done

every morning. In that meeting they usually discuss about the day's general plan and or problem occurs in the school. After about 10 minutes general meeting they start the group meeting. There are three groups' namely first year teachers, second year teachers, and third year teachers group.

In this group meeting usually they talk about students' personal performance and other plans for the group.

Teachers seem to work very hard in this school because sometimes they work until as late as 8 o'clock or sometimes 12 o'clock. Home room teachers seem to have a lot of work to do from checking students' personal diary until evaluating their daily performances at school.

Other personnel that play important roles in running this school are Principle (Mr. Kayaba Masao), Vice Principle, 1 School Nurse, 1 Secretary, 2 Counselors, 2 Custodian, 1 PTA staff.

3. About the Students

As mentioned above students who study in this school are those living in the neighboring area, they are not allowed to use bicycle to go to school except those for certain reasons have to live far from school. They are also not allowed to be taken to school by their parents' car.

There are 530 students in this school that are distributed as shown on the table below.

The Distribution of Students

	I	II	III
Ages	12-13	13-14	14-15
Classes	5	5	5
Male	90	90	19
Female	87	86	87
Total	177	176	177

The students wear uniforms, which they can buy, from the appointed stores. However, Textbooks are free from the government.

They are also required to join one of the clubs as extracurricular activities. For this activities in case they need to provide certain kind of equipments, their parents are supposed to provide for them. These extracurricular activities seem to be an energizer for the students since they can have both recreation and lesson at the same time.

One unique thing compared to the students in Indonesia is that the students in the school are not allowed to eat snack before the allocated time for lunch. They also drink water directly from the water tap, which is available in almost every floor.

Some Policies by the school rules them not only at school but also while they live outside the school. For example, they are not allowed to go to Game centers, read books while walking, go home later than 17.00, to stay overnight in their friend house without parents etc.

Students are supposed to bring lunch from home. They should also prepare equipment for the extracurricular activities. Therefore, most of the time students' school bags are very heavy. And It is also a usual view that students bring not only school bags but also other bags for extracurricular needs.

4. Daily Activities

In the morning we can see a very beautiful scene 2 or 4 students stands in front of the gate warmly welcoming and greeting their friends and teachers entering the school. No matter what kind of respond they get they keep on smiling and warmly welcoming anyone enter the schools. It is a good habit that students should know. This kind of students' activity raises their awareness of the need of close relationship between them and other people.

As soon as the first bell rings, they started to open any book for preparation to read any kind of books that worth reading. This kind of activity they call it compulsory reading activity. This lasts for about 10 minutes. After 10 minutes reading they started another activity that is called short homeroom under the guidance of the Home Room Teachers. In this activity, which last for 10 minutes, the group in charge on that day starts doing routines such as checking the students' health condition, their uniform, and their prep aration for the class on that day.

This short homeroom is actually intended to build good communication between the Home Room Teachers and the students. In this activity they are supposed to feel that they are in one family so that they can share feeling and empathy.

After the above-mentioned routines are done, they start to have the class that is arranged in such away that each subject last for 45 or 50 minutes. Break times is scheduled for ten minutes after each classes. It continues until the time for lunch. Lunch is done in the homeroom classrooms.

In the afternoon they do the cleaning in their classroom and in other parts of school.

5. About Extracurricular activities.

Extracurricular activities are conducted everyday in the after noon. During these extracurricular activities at least one teacher should be a couch for them. A couch should not be an expert but at least he/she has to know what to do in the activity that he/she guides.

There are about 15 extracurricular activities that we can find in this school they are:

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Basket Ball | 6. Judo | 11. Hand Ball |
| 2. Soccer | 7. Badminton | 12. Soft Tennis |
| 3. Soft Ball | 8. Table Tennis | 13. Brass Band |
| 4. Track Field | 9. Baseball | 14. Art |
| 5. Kendo | 10. Volley Ball | 15. Science |

6. About School facilities

School Facilities are undoubtedly enough for the teaching learning process. It seems that they have everything so that they can conduct the teaching learning process effectively and efficiently. The following facilities are available in this school:

<i>Genkan</i>	Music room	Computer Room
Gymnasium	Industrial Art Room	Art room
Drinking Taps.	Cooking Room	Printing Room
School Ground	Sewing Room	Meeting Room
Science Room	Music room	Exhibition Board
Health Service	Library	Swimming Pool

The uses of those facilities are also effective. They really make use of those facilities. Activities in relation with those facilities seem to be well scheduled.

B. Observation Method

The reason why Kuroishino Junior High School was happened to be chosen to be observed is simply because it is the only chance to know the daily routines and classroom routines of a Japanese School. Routines, Discipline and Management may vary across schools in Japan. However, since Monbukagakusho has great authority upon schools in Japan, The Schools share a lot of similarities such teaching materials, facilities, rules etc.

In order to be focused, this observation is done on the basis of three distinct phases of classroom management and discipline: (1) planning before school begins, (2) implementing plans, and (3) maintenance (Emmer, 1987).

That Observation Base is also suggested in Book written by Dr. Miller with the support of United States OERI (Office of Educational research and Improvement). The Content of The Books was also presented and revised during a conference held in Ashland, Oregon in 1989 attended by multigrade teachers who were recommended by educational leaders from throughout the Northwest and Pacific Island regions.

Three phase mentioned above can be subcategorized as follows:

1. Planning Before School Begins.

1.1. Arranging the classroom.

Arranging the classroom focuses on the arrangement of the classroom materials and furnitures. Students seating should be easily monitored, Classroom area and materials and equipment should be easily accessed by teachers and students.

1.2 Identifying expectations for behavior and Setting Up norm or rules.

A teacher should plan rules and expectation that students should do. Then the rules and expectation set are discussed with the students.

1.3 Planning Consequences.

Consequences can have two meanings. Those are reward and punishment . Punishment here means anything that should be done by those who violate the rules set. This should be understood because rules have been discussed and agreed by every classroom members. And Rewards are given for those who can fulfill the expectations set. Those who can have good achievement or those who help others deserve rewards. Rewards can be in a form of stickers, stamp, awards etc.

1.4 Student participation.

Students' participation in creating classroom environment is important. Therefore, teachers should be able to listen to their ideas and implement them.

2. Implementing Plans.

2.1 Teach students to behave.

Make sure that the students take the rules and expectation which teacher explains to them as academic content. For example, if a teacher uses cooperative workgroups, he /she should be sure that the students know what it looks like to cooperate and He/She should give them the opportunity to practice. Students should know from the teacher exactly what is expected for the different types of classroom activities.

2.2 Consider Students' concern.

Students may be worried about whether they can be successful or not, or whether they can get along with their classmates or not and still other things that they may have concern about. In This case teacher should consider their concern. This is usually happen during the beginning of new academic year in which students have to face new environment in a new classroom.

2.3 Lead the class.

Researches have proved that successful teachers are those who can play central role in the classroom, those who can control the classroom. However, They are not Authoritarian tyrants and they do not leave the class up to the students.

2.4 Teacher as role model

It is clear that teachers should be a model for the students. They should give example how to interact with others and to learn how to learn.

3. Maintaining Good Discipline.

3.1 Monitoring and handling inappropriate behavior.

A teacher should be able to handle inappropriate behavior. He/She should be able to stop and then redirect inappropriate behavior at proper time and proper manner.

3.2 focusing

It is Important to remember that teachers should not start the lesson without having attention of every students in the classroom. This is Important to focus and direct the students.

3.3 Direct Instruction.

Here means teachers should tell the students clearly what will be happening in the classroom. So they know what to do and what not to do.

3.4 Monitoring

Teachers should know what the students are doing. Get up, walk around and check the students while working. Knowing their progress is an important thing. Approaching the students and giving individualized instruction could be a very good and valuable things for the students.

3.5 Modeling

Students need examples. They need someone to be imitated.

3.6 Non Verbal Cueing

Non verbal cueing can be given by ringing the bell, knocking the table, or by using gestures or facial expression. Non verbal cueing should be explained to the students, so that the students can understand clearly what teachers want when they use the nonverbal cues.

3.7 Environmental control

Make sure the place to study for students is conducive enough. Students enjoy the environment, make sure there are things that will make them feel enthusiastic with the subject being taught.

3.8 Low-profile intervention

This is important to be used by teachers. Instead of using a very strong words, teachers can softly draw students attention by mentioning his/her name and connecting the name with the topic being discussed. And there are still other techniques that convey humanistic message in order to draw students attention. In short, making students to be discipline should be done in humanistic ways.

3.9 Positive discipline

It is described in Miller (1999)

Use classroom rules that describe the behaviors you want instead of listing things the students cannot do. Instead of “no running in the room,” use “move through the building in an orderly manner.” Instead of “no fighting,” use “settle conflicts appropriately.” Instead of “no gum chewing,” use “leave gum at home.” Refer to your rules as expectations. Let your students know this is how you expect them to behave in your classroom. Praise students frequently. When you see good behavior, acknowledge it. This can be done verbally, of course, but it doesn’t have to be. A nod, a smile, or a “thumbs up” will reinforce the behavior.

3.10 Organizing and Conducting learning Activities.

Effective teachers organize the environment and always try to minimize the influences towards the teaching learning process. They have activities that are well planned, clearly

sequenced and presented. Their orientation is always students success in learning and not only formality.

C. Discussion

The observation was done by visiting some classrooms in Kurosishino Junior High School every Friday since April 2003 until November 2003. Based on the above mentioned guidelines the following can be described related the Kuroishino Junior High School Classroom management situation. However, the observation done here can also be perceived from different point of view

1. Daily Activities,

In The Morning

- Home room teachers meet the students.
- Group in Charge checking their classmates' health condition, uniforms, textbooks, and delivering information about current news and schedule on that day.
- Information from Home room Teacher. 10 minutes are allocated for all those activities. At noon
- Lunch
- Cleaning the school especially classroom.
- Some extracurricular activities.

2. Furniture and Seat Arrangement.

There are about 36 students in each classroom. Students are arranged to sit together girls and boys. Some other things that can be found in every classroom are: Book Rack, Cupboard for storing brooms and other cleaning equipments, Rack for storing the students Bag, CD/Tape player, heater, Pencil Sharpener, Keyboard, Wall Clock, Time Table, Class members profile, blackboard and other information boards, towel rack, slide screen and of course table and chairs. There are collection of books that they call classroom's library.

The students can make use of all facilities available in the classroom or school easily.

Other rooms are computer room, music room, and Industrial art room, which are not quite different in the seat and other furniture arrangement with the classroom.

In short facilities are well provided for the students' comfort in learning process.

Referring to the description in the Miller's Book, we can say that the furniture and seat arrangement are good. This is because everyone can access the equipment needed easily.

Teacher can control and monitor students easily. The rooms are also always kept clean.

3. Rules

At the beginning of academic year teachers and students set up new groups and new rules. Teachers let the students to decide how they can make their own group. Teachers then explain some regulation that the students should obey. Rewards and punishment are also explained during this session. Students are free to give their opinion; teachers invite them to give solution and suggestion also.

That is very good atmosphere that will accommodate students to express their idea. Students will know what to do and not to do. And they will be able to estimate what they will experience in the classroom later.

4. Teaching Students to Behave.

So many formalities that students should do from the beginning of the classroom activities. Students bow to teacher before the class begin, they have to stand while answering questions, they have to proceed in very formal manner while entering and leaving teachers room. However, In some classes some students sat not in proper manner, they seemed to put their legs on the chair. However, Teachers always control the students' behavior here by always correcting students' manner in every classroom session.

5. Teacher as role model.

I noticed that in some classroom teachers play very good role. They can give good control toward the students. However, In Some classrooms I found that students tend to be loose control. Therefore, the teachers have to shout many times to remind the students to keep quite. It seems teachers' personality plays important role in this matter. Teachers also use demonstration in some classroom such as in Math, English, Music, Physics, and English.

6. Lead The Class.

I found that teachers always be with the students, teachers always direct the class. They often come close to the students also to give individualized instruction. Most of them are very patient

7. Maintaining Good Discipline and Classroom Management.

Students in this school are very much cooperative. And it seems teachers have no problem

in controlling them. However, there are also some students who do not want to attend regular classes. For these students school arranges special class separated from other classes.

During the lesson teachers I found almost having no problem in focusing the students' attention. I think this might be because in the beginning of classroom activities they always make formal greeting which makes the class keep quiet and pay attention to the teacher. Although sometimes students are not quite serious with this greeting, teacher can easily remind them during this routine.

Another technique that they use to focus students' attention on the lesson is by calling their names and then assigning task to them. Teachers here know almost every students name. By calling students' name teacher can have more affection upon the student.

One thing that seems very helpful for the students is that teachers like walking around and checking students' work progress. Very often teachers give individualized instruction as I have mentioned previously. Students seem very save with this action by the teacher. Those who are not comfortable asking in a loud voice can discuss with the teacher while they are being approached by the teacher.

In some interviews with the students, most of the students prefer asking question individually instead of raising their hands and ask in front of others with loud voice since in this way they may feel more satisfied.

Teacher always praise the students in order to motivate them. Giving reinforcement either by giving stamp or by praising the students whenever they succeed in doing or answering the questions. Even when they make mistakes teacher still give them reinforcement for their hard effort to answer or do the assignment,

Non-verbal cueing that I found often during the classroom activities is stopwatch alerting, reckoning, nodding and also crossing finger over the lips. And the most favorite one is stamp.

Classroom environment control is also highly considered by teachers in this school. For example, during the science class they go to science room, during the woodwork class they go to the industrial art room that is full with wooden handy craft and tools that invite their imagination. During the art class they also go to the art room that is full with pictures and art works that also elicit students' creativities. During cooking class and computer class they go to the respective room. In English class teachers also sometimes decorate the classroom with English-related materials. That happens also in some classes.

The way teachers direct the students in this school is very impressive. They often just mention the students' name just to draw back their attention. There has never been physical punishment in any class I attended.

Also I found that teachers here seems to be well prepared, they are always ready with materials and teaching aids whenever they need in the classroom. Moving from one topic to the other seems to work very smoothly

D. After Observation

How good the teachers are or how good the students are if it is not bridged with good communication then it could be a problem in classroom activities. However, making good communication is not something easy. Teacher should be able to make personal and academic relationships between themselves and their students since it might be the most influential relationship. Jane (1999) describes it as “the core relationship” of learning.

Teachers’ personality and interpersonal relationships with students plays significant roles in their teaching (Sensenbaugh,1995). This factor I found interestingly in this school. I noticed that Students can express their feeling easily. This is due to their good relationship with the teacher. Teachers can create good relationship and communication with their students Although I found some teachers who are not quite familiar with the students, in the classroom they still try their best to be close to the students by communicating and coming closer to the students.

If we refer to the direction of classroom management written by Miller as mentioned previously, we can see that this school generally good enough in their classroom management. Almost all point suggested in Miller’s book can be seen in this school. They have good preparation and plan before the school was started in a new academic year.

In general Knowing Schools in Japan is a good reference. Good Aspects hopefully can be adapted in Indonesia. The way Materials and School Hour Arranged are worth considering to be adapted, And Scheduled Parents Consultation is also a good advice to be passed to schools in indonesia.

E. Suggestion

Being good is something that should be maintained. Therefore, There are some suggestion that I would like to express here that hopefully could be usefull for the betterment of the good status that has been achieved. Those are

1. During the language class (English) students should be exposed to more ex amples by the teacher. Since modelling will strengthening students’ understanding and also it also reflects the teachers understanding towards the subject they teach (Klopfer and Colella,

2000). Sometimes nonverbal language such as gestures will also help the students understand better (Laura et al, 2003)

2. Reviewing is very important to refresh what the students have learned before. It is also important to check whether students really understand what have been taught or not. And it will also help students understanding to the materials that are going to be taught.
3. For the English classroom activities. I would like to say that sometimes it is a good idea to give games as variation in the classroom activities. Games will change the students' image towards learning English. And it is also good to free teachers and students from formalities that make learning boring. The use of CD as listening tools sometimes might be more interesting if it can be replaced by life demonstration by teachers or students.
4. The use of cooperative learning (CL) will be useful for the students since researches have found that CL has positive effect on academic achievement and the development of social skills and CL also give more motivation to the students and also teachers. Moreover, CL can help students develop their interpersonal skills (Veenman et al. 2002).
5. Teaching is one kind of persuasion (Alexander et al, 2002). The more evidence we can give to the students, the more persuasive the teaching and the more convincing to the students. Samples from factual daily life are very good to be presented as evidence as mentioned above, since it would be more meaningful to the students.
6. It is also important to give the students the opportunity to evaluate their friends work. For example by exchanging the answer sheets or the work sheets among them and ask them to evaluate their friends work. In this way they will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and also share their knowledge with others. This will also be self understanding tool for the students. (Bukowski,2001).

At last, Visiting and Knowing Schools in Japan is really good experience for me. Hopefully, it would be a good media for the study of teaching learning process development for me my self and for the schools in my country of origin

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