

Humorous Approach for Preventing Classroom Incivilities with Episodes

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Abstract

The classroom management techniques is an art while handling with disruptive or incivility students. The classroom incivility can be defined as a student's behavior which includes talking in class, packing up early, arriving late, making sarcastic remarks or gestures, showing disrespect, etc. Humor is an important technique to inspire the students in schools as well as colleges. It is an integral part of man and it is a mixture of both pleasures and pains. Humor is like the two sides of a coin. The student expresses the pleasures with different kinds of humor and shares his pains through sorrows. Life without humor becomes passive and hopeless/crestfallen. It is an important modern tool to inspire the students of not only language study class but also in all the fields of study. It is the fuelling power for the students to learn more. A good sense of humor responds to the flow of conversation in ways that are creative and entertaining. In fact, humor is a personality trait that gives someone the ability to say funny things and see the funny side of things. This paper gives advice on how to deal with the incivilities by and describing in interesting episodes, the great real-time examples given by a Professor while taking a class to the final year engineering students. These episodes insist on the concept of classroom management techniques with the professor's sense of humor and handling the situation wisely to bring harmony among the students.

Keywords: Disruptive class, Humor, Sense of Humor, Engineering efficiency, Economic efficiency, Episodes.

1. Introduction

The disruptive class or classroom incivility include: students talking with other students during class, students arriving late, leaving early, or even just packing up early; students showing disrespect toward the instructor, students eating in class, acting bored, sleeping in class, working on an assignment for a different course, asking for change of internal tests, asking for extensions on assignment, sending text messages on a cell phone, students making disapproving sounds, sarcastic remarks, gestures, comments etc. Even only one trouble-some student is more than sufficient to change the atmosphere of the whole class. Boice (1) describes the history of classroom incivility in a

higher education setting and follows it with a description of the study he performed over a span of ten years. Boice points out that disruptions are increasing frequently in the classroom but at the same time, they are rarely discussed. Both preventing and responding to classroom incivility is discussed by Nilson (2). A whole chapter is devoted to practical tips for reducing the classroom disruptions. Braxton and Bayer concentrate on the theory of classroom incivility with some practical advice that is based more on institutional fixes than on changes in faculty behavior (3). This section contains advice for faculty dealing with existing classroom incivilities. If preventive measures do not succeed and classroom incivility still happens, the instructor must react to it constructively. When facing classroom incivility, Nilson advises to stay calm and in control to keep credibility [2]. At the same time, it is imperative to respond to the disruption immediately.

1.1 Students talking in class:

Approach the talkers while still teaching or use long dramatic pauses and stare at the offending students. Address these students with a comment on how they should be paying attention since this topic is going to be on the test, or that they should stop talking because they are annoying other students [2]. The Professors can try humorous comments for the first couple of times. If the students keep talking, try a serious comment about other students trying to learn.

It helps to bring an effective environment in the classroom and it should not go beyond limits. Inappropriate humor increases the distance and loses its value and effect. It is true that inspiring the process of students, especially Mechanical engineering students is the most tedious task. A teacher should overcome already-held impressions and attitudes about the students. The aim of the teacher is to create a harmonious community in their classroom and to make the students feel involved and valued by telling about some related stories, facts and happenings in between

subjects. This is the way for students to help each other learn how to use each other's ideas to create bigger things, regardless of how different these ideas may be. The goal of classroom management is to not only maintain order but to optimize student learning. A sense of humor is the ability to react quickly by saying funny things and keep cool. The sense of humor, reduces stress and creates empathy in difficult situations.

The use of humor in the college classroom has been researched extensively and has been shown to have many benefits for students such as an increase in learning, self-motivation, class attendance, test performance, divergent thinking, interest in learning, etc. Also, it reduces the anxiety and stress in dealing with difficult material and it creates a positive social and emotional learning environment. The humor in the classroom is the creation of a common psychological bond between students and faculty (4-7).

McKeachie and Svinicki (8) summed up that the positive consequences of humor can produce and sustain interest and deep learning in students. It is known to all that teaching is a serious business, but the teachers do not have to be serious to be effective which means the teaching is important and the teachers should be humorous. In fact, Buskist, Sikorski, Buckley & Saville (9) from Auburn University — who have studied and identified the characteristics of excellent teachers for the past 20 years, have indicated that possessing and exhibiting a good sense of humor is one of best characteristics. Buskist et al. also found that students enjoyed much by the process of learning from the humorous teachers.

The greatness of humor is that even in sorrow, a smiling utterance would give great relief. The great writers present real-life situations in their writings to make them perpetual. There are plenty of humorous instances even in tragic kinds of literatures. Many literary works like Shakespearean dramas and Hardy's novels illustrate this. Humour indeed is like salt and pepper in delicious food.

The main goal of every teacher is to achieve the target by imparting full knowledge in the subject by using humor as the propelling fuel. Pamela Matway, a teacher in West Harward says, 'Humor must be used in the classroom'. It helps them to motivate and remember the ideas.

1.2 Teaching is a Noble Profession

Teaching is a noble profession that necessitates dedication, commitment, and self-sacrifice. Teaching is the art of taking classes in colleges and schools. When a professor does a job for the income or wage that he earns, it is an occupation. When the same professor goes the extra mile and does the same job with dedication, it becomes a

passion. The Professor does not see his students as mere students. Rather, they are seen and taken care of as the Professor's own children.

In colleges, some professors have a wide knowledge. They know so many things. But they don't know how to teach the same to the students. They confuse the students as well as themselves. The students are frightened by this type of professor.

In some cases, in the name of teaching, they bore the students with their vague teaching. But at the end of the class, they appreciate themselves as "Nobody can take a class like me". The students only know their sufferings from 9.00 a.m to 5.00 p.m. It's really a pathetic situation for the students. According to William Arthur Ward: "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." Some teachers are professional and teach in a routine and mechanical way. Some teachers are memorable throughout life. They teach with inspiration.

This section presents strategies and tips on how to prevent classroom incivilities. Note that these tips may not stop disruptive incidents from re-occurring in the same semester/quarter. Many of these techniques work best if they are implemented at the beginning of the semester/quarter since they set the stage for the atmosphere of the class. Techniques for dealing with existing classroom incivilities are listed in the next section.

2. Episode 1- Family Efficiency

Professors are passionate about teaching and they have the very important responsibility of shaping the lives of young college students. They should have a positive attitude, dedication, and patience. One of the characteristics of a Professor/teacher is that he/she should be a very good communicator to impart knowledge to the students. Another characteristic of a good Professor/teacher is that he/she should be calm. Though students make mistakes sometimes, a good Professor/teacher should avoid shouting at them. He/she should calmly correct the students when they make mistakes. A good teacher is also capable of using sense of humor while teaching because this will help to maintain the attention of the learners and will lead to efficient learning. A good teacher ensures good management skills that help him/her to manage time and resources well while at school. This is important because it ensures efficient learning.

In this regard, while taking the classes Professors speak about some related stories, facts and happening in between the subjects. They also explain the concepts with imaginary ideas to the students, so that the students are able to understand the concepts easily. For example, if students are talking instead of paying attention to the

lecture, the simple act of walking toward them or pausing the lecture and staring at the talkers will usually work. Here is one interesting example of their way of teaching.

It is a classroom for final year 8th-semester B.E.Mechanical Engineering. One of the interesting subjects is Engineering Economics. The class is about Efficiency. The Professor explained to the students about Engineering Efficiency and Economic Efficiency and explained the concept in the following ways:

$\text{Efficiency} = (\text{Output} / \text{Input}) \times 100$

will give the efficiency in terms of percentage.

2.1 Engineering Efficiency

Engineering Efficiency (12-14) is always less than 100%. It is impossible to get even 100% efficiency because of losses, friction losses, transmission losses, etc. which involves men, machines, and material.

2.2 Economic Efficiency:

In Economic Efficiency (12-14), money is involved. If a person invests Rs. 1000/ for a business, the income may be less than Rs.1000 or exactly Rs.1000 or more than Rs. 1000/- Therefore the efficiency may be less than 100% or exactly 100% or more than 100%. Here the efficiency involved is in terms of money.

Then, the Professor asked the students to clarify their doubts. One student stood up and told that he had no doubt in the 2nd part, but he was not satisfied with the first part, Engineering Efficiency. Also, he told that in Engineering Efficiency too, it was possible to get more than 100% efficiency and he was ready to prove the same.

The Professor was shocked and he knew that it was not possible to get more than 100% otherwise it would violate the entire 2nd law of Thermodynamics (10, 11). He was ready to listen to the student and asked him to prove.

The student simply replied that he was the 5th child to his parent. If his parents gave birth to 5 children, the efficiency was 250%. i.e. if 2 children make 100%, 5 children will result in 250%.

All the students laughed in the class. The whole class appreciated the students as if he cornered the Professor.

The Professor understood that the student cornered him with his same words. He didn't scold the student for his brilliant answer. He handled the situation wisely without harassing the student.

Then the Professor told that this was known as Family efficiency. In this efficiency, nobody can beat our Indians. But this condition was not applicable for Engineering Efficiency.

3. Episode 2- On hearing the story of “Lol! Lol!!”

The problematic behaviors of the students are rising not only in classrooms, but in society at large. The teachers should use a number of techniques to ensure the smooth running of the class. Some techniques are required for retaining control in the classroom. The presence of mind, sense of humor, and communication skills are the best qualities for the teachers. “Presence of mind” means the ability to react quickly and keep cool in an emergency. The teacher's sense of humor would help in many ways to disarm a bad situation in the classroom. One of the experienced teacher's experiences is explained here with a real-time example.

That's the first day, when the teacher entered the classroom and began teaching his subject for Final year Mechanical Engineering students. Suddenly, there was a sound Meow! Meow!! from a corner of the classroom, with a little distracting behavior from a student. Then after some time came the sound Lol! Lol!! The sound came from the same side with a low pitch. This time the teacher noticed the student who shouted. The student's shouting distracted other students and the teacher in the class. The teacher understood that this distracting voice had a chance to raise his voice in the class. But he didn't get angry and he stayed calm and cool. The teacher knew that the students could engage in problematic behaviors because of their immaturity.

The teacher came near the student and asked calmly “Are you 21 years old?” The student replied, “Yes Sir”. Immediately the teacher started to narrate a story.

In our village, there was a school. While the teachers were taking class, a man would come in front of the classroom and make sounds “Meow! Meow!!” and “Lol! Lol!!” in a double high pitch voice.

One day all the teachers caught the man together and asked him why he was shouting. When they began to beat him up, an old man stopped the crowd from beating him and told that this man was a Lunatic.

Immediately the teachers stopped beating him saying that the Lunatic Man was 42 years old. Our student was 21 years old. Also, our student's voice was half compared to that of the Lunatic as the student was only half the age of the Lunatic person. On hearing the story, everyone in the classroom laughed loudly. The shouted student thought that all the students in the class would call him “Crazy”. He felt ashamed for his shouting. After hearing the story, the students stopped shouting. Thus, the Professor told awesome witty jokes while teaching in his class by using his presence of mind.

4. Conclusion

This article gives advice on how to deal with the incivilities or disruptive students. The prevention of student incivilities from occurring is an art by humor and sense of humor which is discussed in this paper by creating a warm and inviting environment that is conducive to learning, practicing good public speaking, showing enthusiasm and caring that the students learn. The author stresses that it is important to stay calm and respond immediately to any disruptive occurrence by using his sense of humor. If such methods fail to prevent incivilities from happening, the author presents techniques to deal with disruptive students. It is imperative to always react to incivilities. Humour brings subject awareness in any classroom. It works as an effective bond between teachers and students. It maximizes learning and strengthens memories. It transforms the class atmosphere by sharing playful strategies with others. It allows the students to express themselves without fear of ridicule and criticism. Along with encouragement, subjective criticism and praise, it is used by the teachers to make their classrooms more inviting and conducive to learning. Ultimately, humor and sense of humor should be used to laugh with the students but not to laugh at them. Such humour and sense of humor help the students to learn the subject with laughter!

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