Dealing with Unexpected Problems

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words : 650

The middle and high school I attended, had a lot of rules. If we were late for class, we had to run over three laps on the ground. We were spanked when we had a perm or dyed our hairs. There were many other rules and punishment. It was over 20 years ago and at that time, physical punishment was allowed, which was simple and powerful. However, it is banned strictly now, because people believe it is wrong. Instead of physical punishment, classrooms need some rules to encourage students good behavior and effective learning. I am going to mention some examples about classroom management.

I took a class in ELS language center in the US. It had a strict “English Only” policy, “if a staff person catch students speaking a language other than English, they have to pay $5, which we donate to charity.” There were many Korean, Chinese, and Mexican students. They easily mingled with the same ethnic groups and wanted to use their language. The center needed to prevent the students use their language and make them improve English as well as help them make many foreign friends. At first, I was caught by a staff person when I spoke in Korean. But I got accustomed to the rule after I paid penalty twice. I think it was effective to make the students use only English and help them improve English a lot. Even though it is negative punishment by Skinner’s theory, which “students might feel bad if a teacher takes money away from them.” The students in this ELS center did not feel bad, since all the money they paid went to charity. I think this kind of rule is good for not children but adults, because it is related to money. I would borrow this rule, if I teach adults.

I also took an English conversation class in a private academy. There was a rule about tardiness and absences. The students who had no absence and less than three times of tardiness, received a Starbucks coupon from the academy. In my class, one of the students had a perfect attendance and got this coupon. She said it was not expected and she was happy. I think students feel good when they receive something as a prize, but it is not true that adult students attend every class in order to get a prize. A small prize does not motivate adults to come to class, because they are self-directed and autonomous. On the other hand, children could be motivated by a small prize like candy or stickers. They are not goal-oriented yet and they feel happier with a little gift than adults. My daughter was very excited of receiving a lollipop from her teacher in kindergarten. I would give something good to children when they have perfect attendance, if I teach children. I believe it can motivate them to come to class every day.

I had many presentation assignments, when I took an English speech class in college. Sometimes, the professor let the students do the work in groups, and in other times, she assigned the students to do the work individually. I think we shared our ideas and research information more, when we worked in a group, which helped us to prepare for better presentation. I felt responsibility to our group, so I made more efforts than when I worked alone. It is helpful for students to prepare for their presentation when a teacher assigns it as a group work.

There might be better methods for classroom management besides what I mentioned above. Also, there will be a lot of unexpected problems in class. Teachers have to deal with them by the prepared policy and impromptu response. From time to time, it could be more difficult than teaching a language. Therefore, I will think about how to deal with the problems which would happen in class.