

Promoting "Quality" Feedback: First-Year Teachers' Self-Reports on their Development as Classroom Managers

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Abstract

Through a program wide survey (n=87) and qualitative data of five case participants, this mixed methods study explores how teachers develop as urban classroom managers throughout their first year. Results indicate teachers learned from programmatic training and personnel, school personnel, and classroom experience. Specifically, personnel who frequently observed teachers as well as provided specific feedback and alternative methods of classroom management were most helpful. Relatedly, opportunities to learn through "trial and error" were also helpful. These findings suggest methods for teacher educators to prepare and support beginning teachers in classroom management.

Keywords: quality feedback, pre-service teachers, urban classroom

Introduction

Classroom management consistently ranks as one of the top struggles for beginning teachers (Headden, 2014; Langdon & Vesper, 2000), despite research that has indicated evidence-based practices that teachers can implement (e.g., Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008). Classroom management, or teacher actions used to establish an orderly environment for engagement and social growth (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006), is particularly pressing for beginning teachers in urban settings because compared to teachers in non-urban settings, they may have to rely more on classroom management skills to succeed (Milner & Tenore, 2010; Milner, 2006). As a result, preparation programs, induction programs, and districts collectively provide upwards to ten different support personnel to support beginning teachers (Hasiotis, 2015). Despite access to these personnel, teacher growth, let alone development in classroom management, is not guaranteed (Grossman, Ronfeldt, & Cohen, 2012).

Therefore, the following research questions guide this study:

1. What factors do first year teachers' report influencing their classroom management beliefs and actions?
2. How do the influences that teachers report change over the course of the year?

Conceptual Framework

Existing literature on factors that influence classroom management beliefs and actions can be separated into two categories: teacher preparation and in-service supports. Two themes were prevalent across both bodies of literature about how teachers can effectively develop in classroom management: 1) supports that offered practical knowledge and skills and 2) opportunities to practice classroom management. Below, I explore each theme and conclude by identifying areas where additional research is needed.

Teacher Preparation

The literature suggests that teacher education can impact teachers' classroom management beliefs depending on the type of program they are prepared in. Teachers from alternative routes believe they are less responsible for controlling student behavior over time compared to traditional route teachers (Sokal, Smith, & Mowat, 2003; Humphrey, Wechsler, & Hough, 2008).

Within each type of teacher preparation program, two structures have consistently been identified as supporting teachers in classroom management. One structure is coursework that emphasizes both practical information and theoretical knowledge or blends both types of learning together (e.g., Akar & Yildirim, 2009). The other influential structure is clinical experience, which often helps pre-service teachers gain a deeper understanding of authentic classroom management and promote an increased desire to focus on student relationships for learning (Jones & Vesilind, 1995; Atici, 2007). For instance, Yilmaz and Cavas (2008) surveyed 185 Turkish pre-service science teachers using a pre-/post-survey design throughout clinical experience and found that experiences during student teaching changed pre-service teachers' attitudes about how they would want to manage their classroom.

In-Service Support

Existing literature also suggests three in-service factors that influence teachers' classroom management development. First, classroom management programs often provide professional development or certain behavioral guidelines to improve teacher actions and student achievement. Everson & Harris (1995), for example, studied one classroom management program (COMP) that provided a two-day inquiry-based professional development workshop for teachers. These teachers were associated with using effective classroom management practices more often, increasing student achievement scores, and improving students' time on-task.

Second, frequent mentorship from school faculty or district liaisons can offer practical and relevant classroom management advice specific to the context that teachers work in (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008; Humphrey et al., 2008). For instance, Humphrey and colleagues (2008) found that teachers who frequently met with mentors to work and practice lesson plans were more efficacious in their ability to manage a classroom. Additionally, they reported improvement in classroom management and feeling confident handling a range of disciplinary issues, in part, because they had school mentors who provided consistent feedback from observations and gave them practical directions on how to improve.

Third, experienced teachers tend to have beliefs characteristic of effective classroom managers (Emmer & Stough, 2001), suggesting that certain classroom experiences could be important. For instance, Martin and Baldwin (1993) collected multiple surveys from 158 teachers and found that novice teachers consistently held more interventionist beliefs compared to experienced teachers. That is, beginning teachers cared more about classroom management control whereas experienced teachers tended to have a range of beliefs incorporating behavior, instruction, and student interactions.

Learning More About Influences

While there are various factors throughout preparation and in-service teaching that impact positive teacher and student outcomes, the availability and quality of these influences may be limited for beginning teachers. These teachers can develop as classroom managers if they happen to be enrolled in one of the few programs that emphasizes classroom management and teaches it in an applicable manner (Hammerness, 2011). Similarly, the availability and the quality of classroom management programs and mentoring for beginning teachers varies (Humphrey et al., 2008). For instance, Humphrey and colleagues (2008) noted how all seven alternative certification programs they studied incorporated mentoring, but the frequency and quality drastically differed, leading teachers within each program to have an uneven impact in classroom management. Furthermore, teacher education literature suggests that there can be risks to learning from classroom experience, as beginning teachers may have “miseducative” experiences (e.g., Dewey, 1938) in regards to incorrectly learning classroom management. And while clinical experience, mentioned earlier, is shown to impact classroom management development, there is no such literature regarding in-service experience. Therefore, more needs to be learned about whether these factors indeed support beginning teachers’ classroom management development and if so, what features best support their development.

Method

Sample

This study took place in the 2013-2014 academic year and included teachers from CERT, a two-year teacher preparation program within a large public university in the Midwest. The analytic sample included 87 first year CERT teachers who completed the required program surveys (described

below). The analytic sample was almost evenly split between elementary and secondary teachers, whereas 76 percent of first year teachers taught in charter schools, 18 percent in state-operated public schools, and six percent in public schools.

Teachers were concurrently enrolled in an alternative certification program (ACP) and were required to work full-time in an urban K-12 school contingent on making satisfactory progress in a certification program. These schools had high percentages of students who qualified for free and reduced-price lunches, and historically low-achieving students of color. Five volunteer CERT teachers from within this overall analytic sample were selected as case participants for more in-depth qualitative research for beginning teachers to describe and expand on their thoughts, as suggested by Bullough and Richardson (2014). Recruitment emails were sent to CERT teachers who had indicated on their survey a willingness to be contacted for research opportunities. Of the ten volunteers who conveyed interest, five teachers agreed to additional classroom observations and interviewing throughout the year. All case participants were Caucasian American and all but one were recent college graduates. Brief descriptions of each case participant and their school context are presented below.

Ms. Babkin. Ms. Babkin studied Global Development and Social Justice with minors in Russian and Soviet Studies, and Environmental Science. She taught 20 first grade students in a charter elementary school that was awarded a “[State Recognized] Achievement Award.” This prestigious award was given by the state to schools with high performing student achievement with at least 40 percent of their student demographic as racial minorities. Most teachers had taught at the school for several years; Ms. Babkin was one of a handful of new teachers.

Ms. Chatman. Ms. Chatman studied Political Science and minored in Psychology. Ms. Chatman worked in a 90/90/90 charter school in its first year of inception. To qualify as a 90/90/90 school, 90 percent of the school’s students must qualify for free and reduced-priced lunch, 90 percent of the students must be high-risk minorities, and the school must aim for 90 percent of the students to meet the high academic standards. Nearly all the teachers were first year teachers.

Mr. Sand. Mr. Sand studied English Literature and minored in Psychology. He taught 8th and 9th grade math at a K-9 charter school. The 2013-2014 academic year was the first year of 9th grade classes for the expanding high school. This school had a student and faculty demographic that was primarily Arabic-American, which was different than the other case participants’ schools. However, the economic demographics were similar with over 80 percent of the students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch.

Mr. Vante. Mr. Vante just completed his first year in law school before deciding to switch careers and apply to ACP. He taught 8th grade math in a religious-affiliated charter school, where students were exclusively African American and over 80 percent of the students qualified for free or reduced-priced lunch. This was the smallest of the case participant schools with 250

students, which allowed teachers to know most of the students in the middle school setting.

Mr. Frank. Mr. Frank studied Political Science with a minor in Legal Studies. He taught integrated science and one math elective class at the same charter school as Mr. Vante, where they were in the same grade level teaching team. Mr. Frank and Mr. Vante conversed daily with one another but rarely for planning or academic purposes.

Data Collection and Analysis

The Survey of Demographics and Teacher Practices was electronically administered to study the change in CERT teachers' pedagogical beliefs at the beginning and end of the school year. This half hour long survey was initially piloted the semester prior to this first year of implementation and was used to gather information on teachers' beliefs in four primary areas: classroom management, urban teaching, teacher stress, and content area literacy. The surveys included pre-existing multiple-choice questions from three sources: classroom management dispositions (Martin, Yin, & Baldwin, 1998), urban education beliefs (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012), and beliefs about the importance of content area literacy (Moje, Overbay, Tysvaer, & Morris, 2008). Three original, open response questions about classroom management were created for this survey, with one specifically about teachers' classroom management influences: "From where/whom did you learn your most effective classroom management strategies?" Out of a total of 124 first year teachers that completed the certification program, 87 teachers completed both programmatic surveys for a 70 percent response rate.

Two types of data were collected from each case participant. One semi-structured interview was conducted at the beginning and end of the year to learn more about from where and how teachers learned about classroom management. Two whole day classroom observations, with corresponding informal interviews throughout the day, were also conducted to learn more about case participants' classroom management experience in their specific context.

Data were categorized into classroom management influence units for analysis. A first-level summary code was created for each unit, which was then used to inform second-level thematic codes (Charmaz, 2014). Three themes emerged from the data regarding influences on classroom management development: programmatic training and support, personnel from the teachers' schools, and learning from their classroom experiences. These themes were used to create a coding rubric to code all data units.

The coded data were further analyzed using three methods. One method was to calculate various proportions throughout the data. In particular, to explore influences across CERT, the proportion of responses for each code relative to all other codes of the same type were calculated. To explore the influences within case participants, the frequency of school personnel codes relative to all influence codes were calculated to identify how often teachers talked about school personnel when talking about influences. The

second method was conducting a series of McNemar's chi-square tests to determine if the distributions of codes changed throughout the year. This test measured if the mean proportion of one code (e.g., school personnel) at either the program or case participant level statistically changed from the beginning to the end of the year. The third method of analysis was performed through analytic memos, which were used to explore the data by code to gather a qualitative understanding of patterns that were found throughout the quantitative calculations (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results

My analysis of program-wide survey data across teachers' first year of teaching revealed three main types of influences on classroom management categorized by where the source of information came from: programmatic training and support, personnel from the teachers' schools, and learning from their classroom experiences. Programmatic training and support consisted of a summer training prior to the beginning of the school year as well as personnel from the two programs that teachers were enrolled in: the Alternative Certification Program (ACP) and the interim certification program (CERT). According to participants, the three most influential types of school personnel were administrators, instructional coaches, and colleagues. Aside from school and programmatic influences, teachers reported learning from their classroom experiences by adjusting their classroom management according to trial and error. Below, I provide an overview of the influences reported by teachers across the CERT program, described in the quantitative analyses, and then share descriptions of these influences from the case participants in the qualitative analyses.

Quantitative Analyses

Seventy-eight percent of survey responders attributed learning from program influences, while 43 percent listed a school influence and 17 percent listed classroom experiences.¹ Thirty-six of the 87 survey responders listed influences in at least two of the categories. Specifically, 25 teachers listed program and school personnel, five teachers listed program personnel and classroom experience, three teachers had school personnel and classroom experience, and three teachers listed all three influences. Within program influences, ACP summer training and personnel was most often referenced, but there were several responses about learning from CERT personnel as well.

McNemar's chi-square tests indicated a statistically significant decrease in reports of program influences over time ($\chi^2=6.55$, $p < 0.011$). On the other hand, teachers mentioned school personnel ($\chi^2=-1.47$, $p < 0.225$) and classroom experiences ($\chi^2=-6.40$, $p < 0.011$) as influences significantly more at the end of the year, but only the latter was statistically significant. In regards to experience, teachers often wrote that they learned from "trial and

¹Proportions sum greater than 1.00 because several teachers shared multiple influences per answer.

error,” which infers that teachers would try a strategy and adjust according to the results.

While the survey data suggested the importance of programmatic supports, the case participant data indicated that when teachers had the opportunity to describe their influences throughout the first year in more detail, they talked most often about their school personnel. Calculating proportions of units from the interview data, 48 percent of comments about influences focused on school personnel, 34 percent were about programmatic support, and 22 percent were about their classroom experience.

Over time, case participant data indicated a similar trend in decreasing programmatic influences, increasing impact of classroom experience, and relatively consistent discussion of school personnel. Results comparing the proportion of each type of influence that case participants reported at the beginning and end of the year indicate that the frequency of programmatic support influences decreased from 29 percent to 21 percent, school personnel slightly increased from 41 percent to 43 percent, and classroom experience increased from 20 percent to 24 percent over time. That is, when case participants discussed classroom management influences, they talked less often about their programs and more about school personnel and classroom experience.

Quantitative analyses indicate the prevalence of three types of influences and the changing proportions across and within teachers. Qualitative analyses, described next, provide further detail on how these influences may have impacted teachers and insight on why these influences may have changed over time.

Qualitative Analyses

My analysis of case participant data revealed similar trends in the change of classroom management influences over time: programmatic support seemed to become less influential, school personnel remained a consistent influence, and classroom experiences were more influential. Below, I provide examples from the case participants to illustrate these three findings.

Decreased programmatic training and support influence. Teachers reported often learning from the ACP summer training and field instructors, though the extent to which they learned generally depended upon the quality of the feedback provided. Although several teachers shared how certain aspects of ACP were unhelpful, they tended to find it more valuable than the CERT program, which they felt offered narrow knowledge about only a couple of classroom management strategies.

Mr. Vante exemplified the decreasing role of ACP influences as he explained how summer training helped him to initially teach and supported his implementation of the “behavioral management cycle” (BMC), which was a system revolving around positively narrating student behavior and administering consequences. He also explained how frequent field instructor (ACP-FI) visits early in the school year helped him to consistently enforce this system.

Over time, Mr. Vante felt like he only heard this one method of classroom management throughout the year instead of alternative methods to manage

his classroom: “My [ACP-FI] tries to come in with that blanket foundation [but] every school is different” (Personal Interview, June 16, 2014). Mr. Vante felt that alternative methods were likely needed to effectively manage each unique classroom, and he did not think his ACP-FI’s feedback was responsive to his particular classroom or management style.

Mr. Sand similarly felt that he had learned much from ACP’s early training experiences but, over time, the program guidance became repetitive and unhelpful. He described how he initially learned about classroom management from his summer training seminar leader, who modeled effective management practices:

[He was] teaching us while he was teaching us about teaching. . . he would use the strategies on us. . . . He would use these techniques and we kind of see how they worked even among us, as people who are kind of above it and knew what was happening but also we really wanted to impress him and get those points. So it kind of got into our head as it was being used on us that we could use it on our students as well. (Personal Interview, December 4, 2013)

The ACP summer training thus provided Mr. Sand learning opportunities to observe and experience the impact of classroom management actions from a student’s perspective, which helped him to later apply similar actions in his own classroom. Separate from the summer training, Mr. Sand described how his ACP-FI fostered growth in his classroom management skills, sharing how she “is like a mentor. . . and she gives me a lot of feedback” (Personal Interview, December 4, 2013). Initially, he felt that his ACP-FI also provided practical feedback that helped him to improve, such as how to work with individual students, give clear directions, and establish direct expectations for students to work towards.

Near the end of the year, Mr. Sand felt that ACP personnel offered less frequent support. He commented, “[ACP personnel] have taken a step back. They’re at that point where they’re like, ‘I’m done coming to your classroom’” (Field Note, April 29, 2014). He felt a noticeable absence from programmatic personnel after receiving frequent support early in the year and was discouraged, possibly anxious, about having to manage the classroom without additional help.

Consistent school personnel influence. Case participants indicated that school personnel provided specific feedback on how to practically improve classroom management after observations. On average, teachers described how certain school personnel were consistently helpful throughout the year. However, there were also some unhelpful personnel that were consistently unhelpful throughout the year, such as administrators who consistently gave delayed, abstract feedback.

An example of a positive school influence was Ms. Chatman’s instructional coach, Ms. Kim, and her timely cycle of specific feedback. Ms. Chatman explained, “She’s in my classroom almost every day. There’s such a solid feedback cycle from her that I’ve learned so much from her” (Personal Interview, November 21, 2013). Frequent visits throughout the year allowed Ms. Kim to see what was happening in the classroom, and these

visits were paired with in person or online debriefs shortly after each visit to communicate feedback. These debriefs allowed Ms. Chatman to clearly remember what she did and consider immediate changes for the following day. Ms. Kim also tended to focus on specific, practical feedback, or what she called “quick hits,” which Ms. Chatman was supposed to prioritize. Rather than overwhelm a teacher with a multitude of items to change or theoretical information, Ms. Kim highlighted a handful of actions for Ms. Chatman to focus her efforts on, such as how to deal with an individual, what consequence should be administered for specific student behavior, or how to improve a particular activity.

School colleagues were another important influence on case participants’ classroom management development. Specifically, veteran teachers modeled and shared advice about how to deal with populations of students similar to those that case participants taught. Mr. Vante, for example, frequently spoke with and observed veteran teachers with the intent of improving his own classroom management. Mr. Vante learned from veteran teachers because they “had been here for five years [and] know the kids, dealt with kids like this before, [are] more hands on, [are] more in the line of fire, know how to handle them...I see veteran teachers here be more helpful in dealing with individual kids” (Personal Interview, December 5, 2013). He referred to one veteran teacher, Ms. Gaines, as contributing most to his growth:

When things were pretty rowdy, she would come in and lend a hand. If I were having trouble with a certain student, I would call her and say, “I’m sending the student down to you. Could you come and talk to this person?”... She was someone I knew [who could] come in here and handle individual situations. (Personal Interview, June 16, 2014)

He trusted her skills in how to manage his classroom and called for her assistance during times when his classroom was difficult to manage. She provided support and, over time, Mr. Vante explained how he even tried to emulate some of Ms. Gaines’ actions, such as using a specific attention-getter and having a discussion-based classroom.

While there were many school personnel that aided classroom management development, there were several personnel that were consistently unhelpful. Ms. Babkin, for example, was eager to improve in classroom management but felt that her principal’s debrief sessions after an observation did not offer information that was relevant to her growth. Referring to one interaction, she explained, “And then my principal came and she had told me that my management had gone down at a certain point and I need to hone it. I needed to get back to where it was beforehand. But she didn’t tell me how or even what specifically she was talking about” (Field Note, May 7, 2014). She continued to say how this was a typical interaction with her principal and came to accept that her principal would not be a source of development, even though it was a relationship was potentially beneficial.

Increasing classroom experience influence. Teachers also frequently described learning through a process of trial and error during classroom teaching experiences. Teachers reflected on their clinical and in-service

experiences, particularly on times when they incorporated ineffective classroom management strategies, and, based upon their reflections, made intentional changes.

For instance, Ms. Chatman encountered management challenges with two particularly disruptive students, Chaz and Hope. In response to perceived failures with her current system, she tried new actions to manage them. Specifically, she recognized that her current actions “are not very effective for either of them. Both of them respond fairly well to proximity [so she] went by to stand by one of their desks” (Personal Interview, June 19, 2014). Ms. Chatman continued her implementation of her behavioral systems for others in the class but made adjustments for individuals who were not responding to class-wide consequences. Rather than try to force the particularly disruptive students to adhere to a system that she identified as not meeting their needs, she reflected on the classroom management actions that did work for the two students until she found ones that were effective.

Similarly, Mr. Sand reported how his misbehaving first-hour class (out of five total classes that he taught) was a consistent influence on his classroom management throughout the year. His experience with this mismanaged class of students prompted him to try new strategies and, though most of them seemed to be inevitably ineffective, Mr. Sand appeared to continue learning. In describing some of the issues he had with this class, he said, “[this] class has a lot of problems [and] has a culture that is very screwed up. They’ll just yell at each other and it’s just not one person.... It’s a lot of networks of dysfunction” (Field Note, June 23, 2014). Mr. Sand initially tried to build relationships to manage these students by informally talking with students during class. Though this strategy appeared promising, he felt it was only momentarily effective.

By the end of the year, Mr. Sand continued to try different strategies to manage this one classroom of students:

Group work, different systems to motivate for group work because they do talk a lot...I had a stamp... And they would be like, they don’t care.... I work a lot on one-on-one relationships with students but it falls apart as soon as peer pressure [happens]. I’m trying to think of other stuff. I’ve tried a lot. None of it stuck. (Field Note, April 29, 2014)

He described how he incorporated different learning activities, systems, and ways to create positive interactions to get students to behave appropriately and engage with content. He had run through what he felt like was the gamut of classroom management ideas to maintain order, and, despite continued experiences of failure, this class consistently challenged him to develop in classroom management.

Discussion and Implications

This mixed-methods study explored how beginning urban teachers learned about classroom management throughout their first year. Using surveys and interviews, data indicate that programmatic support, school personnel, and

classroom experience most influenced classroom management development. However, while teachers consistently interacted with different school and programmatic personnel and had various classroom experiences, not all interactions appeared to promote teacher growth, which is consistent with literature on teacher learning (Grossman et al., 2012). Teachers often emphasized that they learned from the quality of the feedback that they received and the mistakes they made in the classroom. I begin by describing the quality feedback they received from program and school personnel and end by discussing the impact of classroom experience.

Learning from Quality Feedback

My analyses indicate that the content of the feedback that teachers received was most relevant towards classroom management development. Specific feedback about what actions teachers should implement or adjust was reported as helpful, which corresponds with the previous literature on providing practical knowledge to facilitate classroom management development (Humphrey et al., 2008). More specifically, these teachers often wanted to be told exactly what they *should* do to manage their classroom instead of being told of a strategy that they *could* use. This type of feedback is similar to literature for practitioners on how to provide student praise. Mueller and Dweck (1998) advocate for the praise of student effort instead of ability, while Lemov (2015) promotes teachers to use “precise praise” to provide positive feedback. However, this type of feedback has yet to be applied specifically towards classroom management development, though, it does complement Martin and associates’ (2016) description of supporting various approaches to classroom management.

In addition to specific feedback, my results extend the limited literature about presenting alternative methods of classroom management to teachers. This characteristic of feedback is consistent with Achinstein and Barrett (2004), which observed mentoring in this fashion. The authors collected qualitative data from 15 mentor/novice teacher pairs and found that mentors often “reframed” the novices’ perspective by focusing on classroom management issues in a cultural and relational manner, which would force beginners to think of alternative solutions. Perhaps, CERT teachers wanted alternative strategies because they were at a point in their development where they needed to try new strategies. This could explain why CERT teachers also shared that they were tired of hearing the same information and wanted to try something different (though still “specific”).

Aside from the content of the feedback, results indicate teacher-reported evidence for the importance of frequent visits and immediate debriefs following an observation in regards to classroom management development. Case participants often shared how various personnel either frequently or infrequently observed their classrooms, impacting their opportunity to influence. These results support Humphrey and associates (2008), which indicates frequent mentorship meetings being positively associated with teacher classroom management development.

One limitation to this finding is the context of the study sample. Each CERT teacher received support from at least one CERT, ACP, and school

personnel and these personnel rarely, if ever, coordinated information. So, while teachers could have numerous interactions with multiple people, there may be limited opportunities for in-depth discussion of practice. Replication studies could identify whether these findings are specific to teachers who are enrolled in alternative certification programs, first year teachers, or teachers working in high poverty schools.

These findings have two important implications for teacher educators. First, they should emphasize specific, and potentially novel, strategies that teachers can implement in their classrooms. In so doing, teacher educators could guide others towards the action in need of correction, propose how it could be improved, and work with the teacher to implement the change. Second, teacher educators should regularly observe beginning teachers to get an idea of how they manage their individual classroom and should be quick to turnaround recommendations. In this way, teachers would be able to connect their recent actions to the feedback and, thus, make immediate improvements.

Learning from Experiential Mistakes

Teachers also reported developing in classroom management by learning from their classroom experience. Results from this study suggest that clinical experience, specifically, helped teachers to learn how to adjust classroom management actions in order to be effective. CERT teachers described how they learned from their “mistakes” throughout their clinical experience, presumably by trying strategies and being supported by programmatic personnel or getting (informal) feedback from students. This process of experiential learning seems to contrast somewhat with the existing literature that suggests successful enactments, rather than mistakes, helped teachers to develop in classroom management (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). Albeit, one likely reason for the difference in findings could be that teachers in Rozelle and Wilson (2012) were encouraged to follow their mentor teacher’s lesson plan compared with CERT teachers, who created their own lessons.

Additionally, teachers learned from their mistakes throughout in-service classroom experience. CERT teachers described learning through “trial and error,” where they experimented with classroom management strategies to determine what worked. Learning from mistakes is consistent with the teacher education literature that suggests teachers learn on the job throughout the first year in the profession (Feiman-Nemser, 1983). However, this is the first study, to my knowledge, that indicates development in classroom management, specifically, from in-service experience. Future studies could further investigate how novice teachers learn from experience and reflect on their practice through expansive surveys and interviews. More could be learned about what they notice in their classroom management and how they believe they could improve.

One implication from these findings is that teacher preparation should focus on creating generative experiences where teachers can learn from their mistakes. Teacher educators should support teachers during moments when the strategies that they implement may not have the desired result by providing them with feedback to ensure they use these “mistakes” to further

development. This guidance could, in effect, promote teacher educators to focus on the process of developing skills instead of only reflecting on the skill after the teacher already successfully implemented it.

Conclusion

This study explored how beginning teachers reported developing in classroom management. While programmatic support, school personnel, and classroom experiences were identified as main types of influences, teachers primarily learned from personnel who observed and debriefed frequently as well as provided specific and alternative methods of managing the classroom. Additionally, teachers explained how they learned from their mistakes through a process of trial and error. Through these modes of development, beginning teachers can improve as classroom managers early in the profession. ■

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