Exploring Beginning Teachers’ Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Management

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Abstract

Background: Studies show that beginning teachers’ beliefs on classroom management is correlated to their classroom management competence. To empower them when faced with potential classroom management challenges, researchers suggest that by assessing teachers’ own classroom management with the Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control Inventory and helping them to build up appropriate beliefs thereafter was a viable means. Despite much research in the West, little research, however, has been conducted in the Asian context. This study is the first study conducted in exploring Singaporean secondary school beginning teachers’ beliefs on classroom management.

Aims: This study aims to explore beginning teachers’ beliefs on classroom management jointly through their own and mentors’ self-reports.

Sample: The participants consisted of 41 beginning teachers and 13 of their mentors.

Method: The ABCC-R survey was administered to beginning teachers and their mentors. Responses were analyzed using a qualitative approach. Moreover, beginning teachers’ interview data on their classroom management beliefs and practices was also analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results: Singaporean beginning teachers seemed to be control-oriented on all three dimensions (people, instruction, and behavior management). They reported that their secondary students need supervision in the classroom learning. They believed that teachers’ use of intervention instead of interactionist strategies is the key to effective classroom management. It was also found that these teachers and mentors report slightly differing views on beginning teachers’ classroom management beliefs.

Conclusion: By exploring teachers’ perception of classroom management beliefs from various data sources simultaneously, this study provides more insights into the characteristics of Singapore beginning teachers’ classroom management approaches. Such findings offer valuable feedback for teacher training programs on how to improve their curriculum to assist beginning teachers building up appropriate beliefs. Mentors’ perceptions provide a worthwhile reference for our understanding of beginning teachers’ classroom management beliefs.

Keywords: Singapore Secondary Schools, Beginning Teachers and Their Mentors, Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Management

探索新入職教師班級經營的態度及信念

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摘要

背景：研究表明新入職教師的班級經營風格與其班級經營能力是緊密關聯的。為培訓新入職教師應對班級經營挑戰，研究者指出使用班級控制態度及信念量表來促使教師評估和反思自身班級經營風格，並在此基礎上協助他們習得所欠缺的有效班級經營策略是一種切實可行的手段。儘管西方已有大量的此類研究，然而，在亞洲背景下比如新加坡，此類研究極少。鑑於此，本研究擬將首次探究新加坡中學新入職教師的班級經營風格及特點。

目的：通過同時參照新入職教師及其導師對新入職教師班級經營風格的自陳式報告和評估，本研究旨在探究新加坡新入職教師的班級經營風格。

調查對象：四十一名新入職教師和十三名他們的導師。

調查方法：四十一名新入職教師和十三名他們的導師回答了同一份班級控制態度與信念量表（修改版）。所有老師及導師的回答問卷均有效並用於其後的定性分析。此外，為進一步探究新入職教師的班級經營信念，他們的關於個人班級經營信念和實踐的訪談記錄也被用於主題分析。

調查結果：調查發現，在班級經營態度與信念量表（修改版）的三個向度（教學經營，人的經營，行為經營）新加坡新入職教師都趨向於介入型的師生互動方式，他們認為老師需監督和管理學生的課堂學習。他們相信有效課堂經營的關鍵是教師採用介入性而非互動性的課堂管理策略。此外，新入職老師和其導師在評估新入職教師班級經營風格的自陳式報告和評估之間呈現了微小差異。

結論：通過同時參照新入職教師及其導師對新入職老師班級經營風格的評估及新入職教師關於個人班級經營信念和實踐的訪談記錄，本項研究就新加坡中學教師的班級經營風格及特點提供了有用的見解。這些發現為進一步優化教師培訓及其課程設置從而協助新入職教師建立適當的信念提供了有用的反饋。在理解新入職教師的班級經營信念和風格方面，導師的評估具有珍貴的參考價值。

關鍵詞：新加坡中學、新入職教師及其導師、班級經營的態度及信念
Introduction

Classroom management refers to teachers’ planned strategies to oversee classroom activities and foster students’ academic, social and emotional learning in learning environments (Burden, 2005; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Good & Brophy, 2006). It encompasses classroom discipline that involves the application of established discipline models such as Morrish (2000) and Kohn (2001) to manage students’ behavior in classrooms (Charles, 2008; Wong & Wong, 2005). Previous studies consistently highlight that teachers’ knowledge and skills in managing and teaching are pre-requisites to achieving effective teaching and student learning (e.g., Brophy, 1988, 2006; Doyle, 1990; Emmer, Evertson, & Worsham, 2000; Jones, 1996; Levin & Nolan, 2007; Marsh, 2004). However, beginning teachers’ (with less than three years of teaching experience) ‘struggle’ with classroom management poses challenges to their teaching as evidenced from literature (e.g., Doyle, 1986; Evans & Tribble, 1986; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Jones & Jones, 1998; LePage et al., 2005; Veenman, 1984; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). This could be due to most beginning teachers’ lack of contextual knowledge and decision-making skills in dealing with the dynamic and unpredictable nature of classrooms (Doyle, 1986). Other contributing factors including the novice status and inadequacy of management skills of beginning teachers were also highlighted in the literature (e.g., Britt, 1997; Jacques, 2000; Jones, 2006; Ladd, 2000; Savage & Savage, 2009; Veenman, 1984; Williams, 1976).

In most countries such as Britain, America and Singapore, the implementation of mentoring programs for beginning teachers had already been adopted. In these programmes, beginning teachers were assigned to work with a mentor, or a group of senior teachers, who were responsible for bridging the gap between beginning teachers’ theoretical knowledge and practical skills on classroom management, helping the novices grow and learn necessary classroom management skills and knowledge ‘on the job’. It was found to be one of those good practices in various education systems (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Beutel & Spooner-Lane, 2009). School mentors play a critical role in the nurturing process of beginning teachers.

Teachers’ preconceived attitudes and beliefs towards classroom management were reported to be closely related to their practices (e.g., Martin & Baldwin, 1992; Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986). One of the suggested ways to help beginning teachers’ classroom management is to use a reliable and simple instrument to do a self-evaluation and reflect on their classroom management practices periodically and make informed efforts to improve their management practices (Djigic & Stojiljkovic, 2011; Martin & Baldwin, 1992). Thus, the Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control Inventory (ABCC) is one such instrument that has been used to evaluate teachers’ perception of their beliefs in managing classrooms. Thus far, much research has been conducted on ABCC and its potential for assisting beginning teachers’ acquisition of effective classroom management approaches in the Western context (e.g., Martin & Baldwin, 1992, 1998a, 1998b; Martin & Mayall, 2006; Martin & Sass, 2010; Savran & Cakiroglu, 2003; Ünal & Ünal, 2009, 2012), few studies, however, have been conducted in the Asian context. Consequently, how applicable are those findings obtained from the western context of beginning teachers to Singaporean beginning teachers is still unknown. It is therefore worthwhile to investigate the Singaporean teachers’ attitude...
and belief orientation on classroom management. Moreover, although numerous studies have been conducted to depict secondary school teachers’ classroom management in western classrooms, most of these were quantitative findings from ABCC survey. Few studies have tried to incorporate other sources of data to triangulate the results obtained from ABCC survey. In response, this study reports 41 Singaporean secondary beginning teachers’ beliefs on classroom management (classroom control in particular) by jointly drawing on their own, mentor’s self-report in modified ABCC-R survey and semi-structured interview responses solicited from these beginning teachers. The findings of this study aim to gain insights into the millennium generation beginning teachers’ classroom management approaches, inform teacher institutions in designing more relevant and innovative teacher education programs in line with the global education landscape and inform schools’ mentors for mentoring beginning teachers in their classroom management practices.

**Control in Classroom Management**

Researchers theorized on the teachers’ beliefs on classroom management approaches (Glickman & Tamashiro, 1980; Wolfgang, 1995). Specifically, they categorized teachers’ beliefs and their classroom management approaches into a control continuum. Three approaches (non-interventionist, interventionist and interactionist) that range from low teacher control (student-centred) to high teacher control (teacher-centred) are differentiated. To elaborate, the non-interventionist approach to classroom management posits that students have the inner capacity to control own behaviors and make decision for personal growth. Teachers who support non-interventionist approach to classroom management tend to believe that students should be encouraged to take responsibility for learning and behavior in the classroom. Teachers tend to be minimally involved in regulating them. The ultimate purpose of discipline under this approach is only to guide student in developing appropriate mindset and skills to act on their values. Some examples of non-interventionist approaches to classroom management include Ginott’s model (Ginott, 1972), Group Management (Redl, 1972; Redl & Wattenberg, 1951) and Transactional Analysis (Berne, 1964; Harris, 1967). On the contrary, teachers who adopt interventionist approach to classroom management believe that students’ growth and development are the results of external regulations. Thus, teachers should make clear to students the desired behaviors, reinforce students’ appropriate behaviors and stop their inappropriate behaviors. Students’ thoughts, feelings and preferences should be given little attention since teachers are more experienced in instruction and are capable of choosing the best approach for student development and behavior control.

The use of control (teacher-centered) and the use of caring approach (student-centered) are two extreme orientations to classroom management (Bower & Flinders, 1990; Jones, 1996; Mclauglin, 1991). Deeply rooted in the behaviorist theory, the use of control refers to teachers’ attempt to stop, reduce and correct students’ misbehavior and maintain desirable behaviors and orderly classroom environment through strict rule-/expectation-setting (Brophy, 1999; Nie & Lau, 2008, 2009). Seemingly contradictory to control approach, the use of caring approach which is heavily influenced by the social cognitive theory refers to teachers’ attempts to be sensitive to students’ needs for relatedness through showing understanding, care, support and respect towards their students (Nie & Lau, 2008, 2009; Rogers & Webb, 1991).
Despite the fact that similar importance has been increasingly allocated to caring and control approaches in the recent classroom management literature, nevertheless, for a long history, even in the current teaching practice, control approach tend to be evident in teachers’ class management beliefs and practices. For example, Brophy (1988) found that many teachers tend to believe that the key to effective classroom management was creating an atmosphere of control through exerting maximum teacher power and teacher-instituted classroom procedures. As observed by McCaslin and Good (1992), Morse (1994) and Taylor and Ntoumanis (2007), teachers and schools alike continuously prefer the use of control to the use of caring approaches in classroom management so much so that teachers’ exhibited control in classroom is often seen by the administration as a measurement of teachers’ professional quality. They firmly assumed that high teacher control could not only reduce students’ misbehavior but also increase students’ desirable behaviors.

Inspired by teachers’ overwhelming preference towards control approach in classroom management, many studies have therefore been conducted to verify the role of control approach in effective classroom management. Some studies found that control approach is effective to classroom management (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Jang & Jeon, 2008; Nicholls & Houghton, 1995). For example, Nicholls and Houghton (1995) found that the use of control in classroom management from teachers may help reduce misbehaviors and promote good behaviors. Similarly, Barber, Olsen, and Shagle (1994) found that behavior control from teachers led to deceased student misbehavior. Jang and Jeon (2008) also suggested that teachers’ control approach enhanced students’ classroom engagement. According to a Singaporean study conducted by Nie and Lau (2009), it was reported that teachers’ control behavior is a negative predicator of students’ classroom misbehavior. Despite the above supportive evidence to the contributing role of control approach to effective classroom management, some other studies, however, suggested the opposite. For example, Deci, Koestner and Ryan (1999) and Lewis, Romi, Katz and Qui (2008) argued that teachers’ controlling approach may undermine students’ intrinsic learning motivation, produced passivity and stifled learning. Given such inconsistent findings generated from different empirical studies, thus no definite conclusion can be drawn at this point in time (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999; Jang & Jeon, 2008; Lewis, Romi, Katz, & Qui, 2008; McCaslin & Good, 1992; Nicholls & Houghton, 1995; Nie & Lau, 2009). Thus, further research into the role of teachers’ control approach to effective classroom management is warranted. According to Shin and Koh (2007), given the acknowledged cultural differences between the Western and Asian classroom contexts, teachers’ perceptions of classroom control and practices, how Singaporean secondary teachers perceive the effects of control approach to effective classroom management is therefore worthwhile to investigate. Specifically, this study is guided by two research questions:

1. What are the beginning teachers’ perceptions of attitudes and beliefs on classroom management?
2. What are mentors’ perceptions of beginning teachers’ attitudes and beliefs on classroom management?
3. To what extent do these perceptions triangulate with beginning teachers’ reported classroom management practices?
Methods

Participants

To explore the beginning teachers’ attitude and beliefs of control in their classroom management, 41 Singaporean teachers (17 males, 24 females) from twenty-three secondary schools attended a workshop on classroom management and completed a survey about their attitudes and beliefs on classroom management. These teachers had less than three years of teaching experience. They aged between 21 to 30 years old (85.4%). Most of these teachers were Chinese (36 Chinese, 3 Malay, 1 Indian, 1 Arab). All these 41 teachers were tertiary graduates (38 bachelor degree holders, 3 master degree holders). In terms of roles and responsibilities, 32 teachers (78%) were subject teachers (without assuming form teacher responsibility), 7 form teachers (17.1%) and 2 co-form teachers (4.9%) in schools.

To further explore the beginning teachers’ attitude and beliefs of control in their classroom management, their mentors were also invited to complete a survey about mentors’ perceptions of their beginning teachers’ (those under their care) beliefs and practices on classroom management online (ABCC mentor’s version). A total of 13 mentors from 12 secondary schools (2 males, 11 females) responded in the online survey. These mentors have 84 to 456 months of teaching experience (M=317.4, SD=109.05). They aged between 36 to 60 years old, while 53.8% of them aged between 51 to 55 years old. The majority mentors are Singaporean (12 Singaporean, 1 permanent resident), and most of them are Chinese (12 Chinese, 1 Malay). There were 4 mentors (30.8%) who possessed a master degree, 8 mentors (61.5%) were degree holder, and only 1 mentor (7.7%) was an A-level holder. Among these mentors, 3 of them (23.1%) were vice principal of the school, 1 (7.7%) was head of department, 2 (15.4%) were school staff developer, 1 (7.7%) was school coordinating mentor, 5 (38.5%) were senior teacher, and 1 (7.7%) was teacher in school.

Instrument: The Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control Inventory-Revised (ABCC-R)

The original survey of 50 items of ABCC-R (Martin et al., 2008) was simplified for use in this study. It measures the teachers’ attitudes and beliefs towards classroom management based on three dimensions namely, behavior management, people management and instruction management.

- **Behavior management** refers to any teachers’ pre-planned efforts that aimed to prevent misbehaviors. It includes facets such as teachers’ beliefs about whether they should intervene in students’ inappropriate behaviors, whether students’ opinions should be considered in setting rules, and how to structure a rewarding system to prevent misbehaviors.

- **People management** refers to teachers’ beliefs about the nature of students as persons, and teachers’ roles in nurturing students through teacher-student and student-student interactions.

- **Instruction management** refers to teachers’ actions that are intended for learning to take place in the classroom learning environment. It includes communicating and establishing classroom procedures, managing seating arrangement, allocating learning topics and materials, and monitoring student in-class work and homework submission.
A modified 15 item ABCC-R survey with three point-likert scale (Agree, Neutral, Disagree) was used for this exploratory study. In the original 5-point likert scale (Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree), the anchors were transformed by treating the anchors (1 and 2, 4 and 5) in the 5-point likert scale to be equal. I merely change the scores (1→1; 2→1; 3→2; 4→3; 5→3) in three point-likert scale. We also selected the items based on ease of reading the items and relevance to Singaporean context. There were 5 items for behavior management, people management and instruction management respectively. Some items were adapted by phrasing some of the sentences to suit the Singaporean context without changing the meaning of the items (See Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Original statement</th>
<th>Adapted statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I believe the teacher should decide what topics the students study and the tasks used to study them.</td>
<td>I believe the teacher should decide what topics the students study and the tasks involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>While teaching a lesson on library skills, a student begins to talk about the research she is doing for her book report. I would remind the student that the class has to finish the lesson before the end of the class period.</td>
<td>While teaching a lesson, a student begins to talk about her own work. I would remind the student that the class has to finish the lesson before the end of the class period.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection and Analysis**

This is a mixed methods design (or explanatory sequential design) using a survey and an interview. Both survey data (collected first from beginning teachers and mentors separately) and interview data (collected as a follow up with beginning teachers) were collected and analyzed to investigate these beginning teachers’ belief of control in classroom management. For the survey data, the frequency of teachers’ and mentors’ responses to each question in ABCC-R was examined at three dimensions (people management, instruction management and behavior management) to understand teachers’ beliefs and practices on classroom management and their mentor’s perception of their beliefs and practices. These teachers’ and mentors’ responses to each statement were examined in terms of whether they agree, disagree, or hold a neutral position on how classes should be managed. However, it is not the intent of this study to compare beginning teachers and mentors’ perceptions, rather this study focused more on gaining an insight into these beginning teachers’ beliefs on control in their classroom management. Since these mentors worked closely with their beginning teachers in terms of these teacher’s teaching and classroom management, we argue that mentors’ responses on their observation of beginning teachers’ attitudes and beliefs on classroom control should be worthy to be examined together with teachers’ perception of their attitudes and beliefs on classroom management.
To triangulate the quantitative result, beginning teachers’ interview data (26 transcripts) on their classroom management incidents (collected in the larger project investigating Singaporean beginning teachers’ classroom management using teacher-generated cases) was further analyzed to identify their beliefs on classroom control. The researcher did a one hour one-to one interview with each beginning teacher. They were asked to recall a critical classroom management encounter experienced. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher did the members checking by having the teachers verified the transcripts. Each transcript was carefully read through to search for relevant meaning units (a meaning unit is a discrete sentence or long row of sentences which conveys one idea or one related set of perception (Mostyn, 1985) based on Martin et al’s (2008) three-dimension framework of classroom management. Altogether 134 relevant meaning units were sorted out of 603 meaning units. A more refined coding scheme (see Table 2) was then developed based on our synthesis of Martin et al’s (2008), Savran & Cakiroglu’s (2003) and Ünal & Ünal’s (2009, 2012) categorizing the frameworks of classroom management and the nature of our interview data. Drawing upon the above coding scheme, two coders independently coded the 134 meaning units. Each meaning unit was further coded under more specific subcategories (i.e., behavior management-interventionist; behavior management-interactionist; behavior management-non-interventionist; people management-interventionist; people management-interactionist; people management-noninterventionist; instruction management-interventionist; instruction management-interactionist; instruction management non-interventionist).

Altogether, 25, 13, 4 meaning units were categorized under behavior management-interventionist, behavior management-interactionist and behavior management-non-interventionist subcategories respectively. Altogether, 15, 43, 9 meaning units were classified under people management-interventionist, people management-interactionist and people management-noninterventionist subcategories respectively. Altogether, 15, 10 and 0 meaning unit were coded under instruction management-interventionist, instruction management-interactionist and instruction management-non-interventionist subcategories respectively.

To check the reliability of the analysis, the same data was recoded using the same coding scheme. As a result, 25, 13, 4 meaning units were categorized under behavior management-interventionist/-interactionist/-non-interventionist subcategories respectively. Altogether, 19, 43, 4 meaning units were classified under people management-interventionist/-interactionist/-noninterventionist subcategories respectively. Altogether, 19, 10 and 0 meaning units were coded under instruction management-interventionist/-interactionist/-non-interventionist subcategories respectively. Intercoder agreements for each subcategory (behavior management-interventionist; behavior management-interactionist; behavior management-non-interventionist; people management-interventionist; people management-interactionist; people management-noninterventionist; instruction management-interventionist; instruction management-interactionist; instruction management non-interventionist) were 100% (25/25), 100% (13/13) and 100% (4/4), 79% (15/19), 100% (43/43) and 44% (4/9), 79% (15/19), 91% (10/11) and 100% (0/0) respectively, which were acceptable,
thus enhancing the reliability of the analysis. Discrepancies occurred between two coding results was resolved through further discussion. This led to a minor revision on the definitions of some subcategories.

Finally, 25, 13, 4 meaning units were categorized under behavior management-interventionist, behavior management-interactionist and behavior management-non-interventionist subcategories respectively. Altogether, 16, 43, 4 meaning units were classified under people management-interventionist, people management-interactionist and people management-noninterventionist subcategories respectively. Examples of these meaning units would be presented in the results and discussion section.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Level of Category</th>
<th>Second Level of Category</th>
<th>Working Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Behavior management (BM)</td>
<td>1.1.BM-Interventionist</td>
<td>Teachers’ actions that aimed to prevent students’ misbehavior. For example, teachers’ use of threat, isolation, physical restraint or reinforcements.</td>
<td>“Punishment is more helpful than reminders in preventing students’ misbehavior.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.2.BM-Interactionist</td>
<td>Teachers’ use of both student- and teacher-orientated strategies to prevent students’ misbehavior. For example, teachers’ use of directive and non-directive statements.</td>
<td>“Besides being firm in dealing with students’ disruptive behavior, I also implement point system to encourage their good behavior.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3.BM-Non-Interventionist</td>
<td>Preplanned actions negotiated by both the teacher and students to provide opportunities for students to self-correct misbehaviors and learn to manage their own behaviors. For example, teachers’ use of glances, reflective forms of questions and non-verbal approach.</td>
<td>“Usually I would use non-verbal approach (just keep quiet and wait) to get students’ cooperation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. People management (PM)</td>
<td>2.1.PM-Interventionist</td>
<td>Teachers’ efforts in establishing teacher-student relationship through using maximum teacher power. For example, teachers’ use of authority to require total compliance and respect from students.</td>
<td>“I manage my students based on fear.”</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2.2.PM-Interactionist</td>
<td>Teachers’ use of both interventionist and non-interventionist strategies to manage students’ behaviors and to build quality student-teacher relationship. For example, teachers’ use of hard and soft approaches.</td>
<td>“Aside from putting on a fierce tone with them inside the class, I also try to talk with students outside the class to build a bond with them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3.PM-Non-interventionist</td>
<td>Teachers’ use of student-centered approach in establishing student-teacher relationship by using minimal teacher power. For example, teacher treats students as an adult and allows them freedom in interacting with peers.</td>
<td>“I've tried to treat my students as responsible thinking individuals. I give them choices and reward them for doing right. I don’t like to shout or use punishments to force them to get things down.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Instruction management (IM)</td>
<td>3.1.IM-Interventionist</td>
<td>Teachers’ use of power in managing classroom happenings. For example, establishing classroom routine, monitoring students’ seatwork, deciding the topic and materials.</td>
<td>“I think it is important to make clear to students the classroom routines and penalties for disregarding the routines at the first week of new semester.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2.IM-Interactionist</td>
<td>Teachers’ use of both teacher-centered and student-centered strategies in managing classroom settings. For example, teacher and students together work out a seating plan or classroom rules.</td>
<td>“I assigned a fixed seating to students, but I told them that if they want to change seats, they can ask me before the lesson, I will see whether it is a valid reason, if it’s valid, then they may change the seat.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3.IM-Non-interventionist</td>
<td>Teachers’ use of minimal power in managing classroom happenings such as showing emphasis to students and suggesting compromise that can provide students opportunities to take responsibility in own learning. For example, teachers ask students to judge the quality of their homework rather than rely on what the teachers tells them.</td>
<td>“Ya I give them more self-responsibility and self-discipline to do their work and pay attention in class.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Results and Discussion

Teachers’ and mentors’ perceptions would be reported in terms of people management, instruction management and behavior management. The results based on teachers’ and mentors’ responses to each statement of ABCC-R survey would be presented and summarized in tables. The results of teachers’ interview data would be presented with excerpts. Discussion will be crafted within the results.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Statement (From my observation, this teacher/I would think that…)</th>
<th>Teachers’ Response Frequency and Percentage (%) (Nt=41)</th>
<th>Mentors’ Response Frequency and Percentage (%) (Nm=13)</th>
<th>Percentage Differences Between Teachers’ and Mentors’ Responses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>student interaction in the classroom should be kept to a minimum because it can easily lead to disruption.</td>
<td>14.60</td>
<td>24.40</td>
<td>60.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>the teacher should keep in mind that student’s emotions and decision-making processes are not yet fully developed.</td>
<td>92.70</td>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>friendliness, courtesy, and respect for fellow students are something that teachers should demand.</td>
<td>78.00</td>
<td>14.60</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>students will be successful in school if they listen to adults who know what’s best for them.</td>
<td>34.10</td>
<td>36.60</td>
<td>26.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>students need direction in how to work together.</td>
<td>90.20</td>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M=mentor; T=teacher; A=agree; N=neutral; D=disagree; Nt=the total number of teachers; Nm=the total number of mentors.

In particular, most beginning teachers (90.20%) and mentors (100.00%) believed that students need direction in working with peers. 92.70% of beginning teachers and 76.50% of mentors regarded students to be immature in handling emotional issues and making decision. 78.00% of beginning teachers and 94.20% of mentors held that demanding students to develop “friendliness, courtesy, and respect for fellow students” is what teacher should do. 14.60% of beginning teachers and 11.80% of mentors agreed that student interaction in the classroom should be minimized in order to keep the classroom in order.
Put differently, more than half of the beginning teachers (60.90%) and mentors (76.50%) seemed to be quite open to students’ classroom interaction. One major difference between mentors’ observation and teachers’ self-report was found on the statement “students will be successful in school if they listen to adults who know what’s best for them”. While only 34.10% of beginning teachers tended to believe that students required adult’s guidance in order to be successful in school but 70.60% of mentors perceived that these beginning teachers tend to agree that students would be successful if they listen to adults who know what’s best for them. This observed difference is probably due to several factors. One possible factor is that mentors might have observed beginning teachers’ classroom behavior tend to require students to listen to them but the teachers themselves might not conceptually believe that “students would be successful in school if they listen to adults who know what’s best for them”. Another factor is that the mentors may be influenced by their own preconception in rating beginning teachers’ people management orientation.

Teachers’ interview with the researcher further revealed their tendency towards interventionist and interactionist in people management respectively in excerpts 28 and 4. The beginning teachers tend to believe that having full teacher control and setting strict tone are effective in managing students inside the classroom.

**PM-Interventionist**

R1: Quite alright huh. You don’t have the butterflies in your stomach?
T16: Because I set the tone, cause uh, cause I’m quite strict with them lah
R1: Strict uh…
T16: So they know my style. They won’t try anything funny
R1: So you realize being strict is important in your class ah
T1: Ya. To be firm and to not give in to them when they commit a little mistake or what. You make them understand what they do, what they’ve done wrong and then um you have to face the consequence ah. That’s all.
R1: Mm…..then what about you? Or what are your…
T16: Being strict and firm with them actually make things easier for me. Ya to get things done

(Excerpt 28 S22 Theme 31)

Beginning teachers’ classroom management practices was reported to incorporate interactionist approach that was found to be helpful for building quality teacher-student relationship. As illustrated in the following Excerpt 14, the beginning teacher, besides adopting fierce outlooks, she also took initiative in interacting with misbehaved students and reaching out to students.
Exploring Beginning Teachers’ Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Management

PM-Interactionist

R1: What are the ways you’ve tried?
T23: Okay I’ve tried um I entered as a very fierce teacher cause I know that they would test water and I have to campaign a battle with them on the patience level. I want to see how long I can remain very fierce to them. Okay, that’s the very first thing I’ve tried. And uh secondly, I will try to talk outside classroom. Because most of the very high profile, open uh public defiant students, give me face. They cannot stand a single scolding in front of everyone else so I have to move them out of the class, use some other time like morning assembly or before after lesson just to talk with them
R1: Mm….
(Excerpt 4 S2 Theme 14)

In summary, both beginning teachers’ self-report and their mentors’ observation of their beliefs suggest that they tend to believe interventionist and interactionist in their people management. They preferred a mixed of approaches (both interventionist and interactionist) in people management strategies inside the classroom. In other words, while holding an open attitude towards’ students’ classroom interaction, these beginning teachers, tend to believe that teachers should not provide a classroom environment where students have full control, or are provided with choices and encouraged to interact with peers and express their feelings freely.

Instruction Management

Beginning teachers’ self-reports and mentors’ report on the beginning were consistent in most statements under the instruction management dimension (refers to teachers’ management of classroom happenings such as establishing daily routine, allocating materials and monitoring students’ work). Both sources of results indicated that majority beginning teachers tended to adopt high control approach to manage students’ learning inside classrooms most of the time (See Table 4), and beginning teachers would also interact with students whenever necessary to provide students with time to control their own behavior. They preferred to make classroom routines themselves and be fully in control while allocating teaching materials. They would also show empathy to students and suggest compromise to encourage students’ self-discipline. To illustrate, majority of the beginning teachers (97.6%) and the mentors (94.20%) believed that beginning teachers should direct the students’ transition from one learning activity to another. More than half of the beginning teachers (56.10%) and mentors (88.30%) agreed that beginning teachers should be the one to decide the topics and tasks for students’ learning. Moreover, 63.4% of beginning teachers and 76.50% of mentor regarded that beginning teachers would remind the randomly talking student that lesson has to be finished in designated time. Furthermore, most of the beginning teachers (87.8%) and mentors (88.20%) believed that the beginning teacher would set time for learning activities and stick closely to the lesson plan. While 29.20% of beginning teachers reported that they would deduct point from the students’ grades if they did not finish the assignment, only 11.80% of mentors believed that the beginning teachers would
do so. More than half of the mentors disbelieved that the beginning students would do so. Two major differences were observed between beginning teachers’ self-report and mentors’ observation. While only 56.1% beginning teachers agreed that teachers should decide the topics and works for student learning, most of mentors (88.3%) perceived that the teachers had this belief. Such difference may be due to the fact that although some teachers were neutral on whether teacher should be the person who decided the topics and materials for students, most of them would still teach according to the syllabus and leave little freedom for students to select their learning topics and works involved. Examination pressure would be an important factor on why teachers chose to exert higher control over students’ learning. Another difference between mentors’ and teachers’ responses was found on the statement that asked whether teacher would deduct points from student’s grade if a student did not complete an assignment. 29.2% of beginning teachers reported that they would deduct points from students’ grade. However, more than half of the mentors (58.8%) thought that the teachers would not deduct points from students’ grade. This would imply that in the mentors’ eyes, some teachers were rather lenient in dealing with homework submission problem, or seem to be adopting a more humanistic approach (and not punishment) in handling this issue.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Statement (From my observation, this teacher/I would think that...)</th>
<th>Teachers’ Response Frequency and Percentage (%) (Nt=41)</th>
<th>Mentors’ Response Frequency and Percentage (%) (Nm=13)</th>
<th>Percentage Differences Between Teachers’ and Mentors’ Responses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>the teacher should direct the students’ transition from one learning activity to another.</td>
<td>97.60 2.40 0.00</td>
<td>94.20 5.90 0.00</td>
<td>3.40 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>the teacher should decide what topics the students study and the tasks involved.</td>
<td>56.10 34.10 9.80</td>
<td>88.30 11.80 0.00</td>
<td>-32.20 9.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>while teaching a lesson, a student begins to talk about her work. This teacher would remind him that the class has to finish the lesson before the end of the class period.</td>
<td>63.40 22.00 12.20</td>
<td>76.50 5.90 17.60</td>
<td>-13.10 -5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>this teacher would specify a set time for each activity and try to stay within plans.</td>
<td>87.80 7.30 2.40</td>
<td>88.20 11.80 0.00</td>
<td>-0.40 2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>when a student does not complete an assignment on time, this teacher/I will deduct points from their grade.</td>
<td>29.20 36.60 31.70</td>
<td>11.80 29.40 58.80</td>
<td>17.40 -27.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. M=mentor; T=teacher; A=agree; N=neutral; D=disagree; Nt=the total number of teachers; Nm=the total number of mentors.
To probe teachers’ interventionist and interactionist tendencies on instruction management, results obtained from teachers’ own interview were also presented. The results obtained from teachers’ interview indicated that beginning teachers tended to alternate between interventionist and interactionist approaches when managing the classroom setting. These teachers not only highlighted the effectiveness of having full teacher control in matters of establishing daily routine, allocating materials and monitoring students’ seatwork but also suggested that interact with students about the underlying rationale or encourage students’ self-responsibility are beneficial. As shown in the following Excerpt 114, Excerpt 73, teachers seemed to concur that mixed use of interventionist and interactionist strategies are helpful for teachers’ effective instruction management.

IM-Interventionist

T12: This year I, I have stricter rules like when they come to class I will give them a certain seating arrangement that they have to follow because they have to come from their classes to my class so I give them a strict a seating arrangement and a routine like copying notes.
R1: Mmm
T12: for them to copy their notes so that to keep them at focus
R1: Mmm
T12: And at least they have something to do and because once they have free time, they will tend to talk to their friends

(Excerpt 114 S12 Theme 15)

IM-Interactionist

R1: So you don’t like forcing students to during classroom teaching?
T10: Yes. So if you keep forcing it down, the students will just hate the lesson or just not learn a thing. So that’s why I picked this strategy up and I’ve tried it and it has worked for all these lessons so basically if they find that they are not learning, I try to get feedback from them, I’ve explained to them how the whole feedback should work if you find that it’s boring just tell me, I’m fine with that. But also, when you, if you find it boring don’t disrupt the learning of another person’s work. I’ve done that to that extent ah.

(Excerpt 73 S9 Theme 16)

To sum up, both beginning teachers’ self-report and their mentors’ observation of their beliefs suggest that beginning teachers alternated between the tendencies of interventionist and interactionist approach when dealing with instruction management. They preferred a mixed of controls (both teacher-oriented and student-oriented) in their deployment of instruction management strategies in their classrooms.
Behavior Management

Most teachers appeared to have placed importance on rules and the execution of rules (See Table 5). 95.1% teachers would announce class rules in the first week of a semester, and all students would be clear of the penalties for violating those rules. In addition, 87.8% teachers believed that class rules could shape student behavior and development, and 75.6% teachers agreed that compliance and respect for law and order is what teachers should demand. Some teachers would not change classroom rules because of students’ feedbacks on the rules as 39% of them expressed that they would explain to students about the class rules if students didn’t think the rules to be fair, but they would not change the rules. The same percentage of teachers would or would not change the rules upon students’ feedback, and 22% teachers would possibly change the rules that students think are unfair.

Most teachers would intervene if students did not behave appropriately in class. For example, more than half (61%) teachers would ask a student who bothers other students to stop doing so during lesson. Only 9.8% teachers would not intervene and 26.8% teachers chose to be neutral on this issue, where they may or may not ask the disturber to be quiet and stop bothering others. Most teachers (73.1%) would punish students (require detention or remove privilege) if they were repeatedly off-task. Only 9.8% teachers would not do so, and 17.1% teachers would or would not require detention or remove privilege if students were repeatedly off-task. At the same time, 56.1% teachers would reward students when they behave appropriately. 4.9% teachers would not do so, and 36.6% would adopt a neutral position on whether or not they would reward students if students behave well. Although different teachers would manage student behaviors differently, most teachers (78.1%) believed that rewarding students is a good strategy to prevent misbehavior. Only 2.4% teachers do not agree that positive reinforcement is useful in preventing misbehavior, and 17.1% teachers held a neutral standing about this strategy.

Mentors’ observation of attitudes and beliefs of beginning teachers was generally consistent with teachers’ self-report of their attitudes and beliefs. Small discrepancies were found on some statements. 64.7% mentors as compared to 39% teachers reported that teachers would not change classroom rules if students disagree with the rules, while 11.8% mentors versus 39% teachers held a neutral position. This would probably be due to mentors’ report that was mainly based on their observation of teachers’ behavior, and possibly the teachers who indicated neutral on changing classroom rules mostly chose to explain to students about the rules but refused to change their rules.
Table 5

**Teachers’ and Mentors’ Responses to Behavior Management in ABCC-R Inventory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Teachers’ Response Frequency and Percentage (%)(Nt=41)</th>
<th>Mentors’ Response Frequency and Percentage (%)(Nm=13)</th>
<th>Percentage Differences Between Teachers’ and Mentors’ Responses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>if students believe that a classroom rule is unfair, this teacher may explain the underlying rationale for the rule but would not change it.</td>
<td>39.00 39.00</td>
<td>64.70 11.80</td>
<td>-25.70 -1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>when a student is repeatedly off-task, this teacher will most likely remove a privilege or require detention.</td>
<td>73.10 17.10</td>
<td>82.40 11.80</td>
<td>-9.30 3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>the first week of class, this teacher will announce the classroom rules and inform students of the penalties for disregarding rules.</td>
<td>95.10 4.90</td>
<td>94.10 5.90</td>
<td>0.00 0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>when a student bothers other students, this teacher/I will immediately tell the student to be quiet and stop it.</td>
<td>61.00 26.80</td>
<td>76.40 5.90</td>
<td>-15.40 -7.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>rewarding students who behave appropriately is a good strategy for preventing misbehavior.</td>
<td>78.10 17.10</td>
<td>82.30 17.60</td>
<td>-4.20 2.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same reason may apply on whether teachers would immediately intervene when a student disturbs other students in class. 17.6% mentors versus 9.8% teachers thought that teachers would not intervene when there is a disturber in classroom, while 5.9% mentors versus 26.8% teachers adopt a neutral standing. It’s possible that the proportion of teachers who held neutral standing actually did nothing when a student disturbs others in class, which led their mentors to believe that they would not stop the disturber from affecting his/her classmate. Meanwhile, 76.5% mentors versus 56.1% teachers believed that teachers would reward students when students behave appropriately, and 23.5% mentors versus 36.6% teachers held a neutral standing. Those teachers who were neutral on this statement would have rewarded students in some way which caused their mentors to believe so. Last but not least, the same reason may apply for the discrepancy where all mentors versus 75.6% teachers believed that teachers would endorse the statement that teachers should demand students to abide by rules, but 22% teachers held a neutral position.

These teachers’ interventionist attitudes and beliefs on behavior management, results obtained from teachers’ own interview were also presented. As illustrated by the following Excerpt 13, the beginning teachers believed that teachers’ using of punitive strategies are more effective in stopping students’ misbehavior and forcing out students’ good behaviors.
BM-Interventionist

R1: Okay then b How about behavior wise you know?
T22: Mm
R1: Uhm, how do you emphasize with them that you know now it's time for work….You should be working and not be talking
R1: Uh did your reminders help them to change?
T22: (clears throat) Umm reminders
T22: Don't really help
R1: Ah
T22: It's more of the punishment (laughs) that help

(Excerpt 13 S12 Theme 21)

Moreover, these teachers also indicated that non-verbal strategy and eclectic and caring strategy are effective in getting attention and motivating students’ self-discipline which was illustrated in the Excerpt 23 and Excerpt 31.

BM-Interactionist

T19: And he knows when you’re angry, when you’re not
R1: Mm-mm. Do you continue to have any struggles with this class? In terms of managing them, you know getting them to cooperate with you besides using your strategies of staring at them, what other strategies did you use?
T19: I think uh I always give them very specific instructions so it’s either they follow my instructions or they go out of the class. So, like for example when we go to the lab, because this class is quite active, so I know if I let them do the practical themselves, they are going to be running around then talking to each other, leaving their group
T19: So I told them specifically, before we even start, I would tell them the lab rules; no eating no drinking etc. And if you don’t want to follow instructions because this is a lab, you can cause harm to other people or to yourself, I will have to ask you to leave the lab. So basically they like to go to the lab, they like to do things, they like to do experiments so if I do not allow them inside, they’ll be very upset
R1: Oh….
T19: Ya so they will try to follow my instructions then I even tell them, you’re not supposed to leave your group. You’re supposed to stay within your bench so if I see people leave their group, immediately I will just make announcement, remember you’re supposed to stay within your bench. So they will stay within their bench. The last time I bring them to the lab, it was actually their first time so they sort of forgotten or didn’t know my standard then I will, just repeat again
R1: Hmm…
T19: I didn’t throw anyone out because after I repeat, straightaway they go back to their seats, and continue with the class
R1: Mm-mm

(Excerpt 23 S20 Theme 6)

BM-Non-interactionist

R1: So you use the strategy of non-verbal approach
T21: Non-verbal, so usually I would just keep quiet. So after a while they realize, eh, how come. How come teacher never say anything

(Excerpt 31 S2 Theme 7)

Conclusion

This mixed-methods study explored the beliefs and attitudes of beginning teachers and their mentors’ perception (of these teachers’ beliefs and practices) towards classroom management by administering a revised Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control Inventory (ABCC-R) and interviews. The findings showed that these Singaporean beginning teachers seemed to adopt an interventionist orientation (also high control) in people management, instruction management and behavior management. These teachers’ tendency to exert high control was not unique to Singapore context because past research had reported that teachers also perceive the use of control to be an effective way to enhance students’ classroom engagement, behavior and classroom management ((Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Jang & Jeon, 2008; Nicholls & Houghton, 1995). This tendency could imply that these teachers feared losing control in their classrooms given due to their limited classroom management experiences and large class sizes (about 40 students per class) that cause them to use their authority in their classes. Other reasons could be that these teachers experienced mainly high control classrooms and the schools that they teach also emphasize high control could have contributed to their interventionist orientation (also high control) in classroom management. These teachers’ tendency to exert high control also implies that more could be done at school level to help these teachers develop more effective and balanced approaches to classroom management. Beginning teachers should attend compulsory in-service professional development courses on classroom management conducted by the experienced school practitioners (also specialists) and experts from ministry of education and institute of education respectively.

The findings reported both the teachers’ self-reports and mentors’ perceptions provide more insights into the beginning teachers’ preferred orientation in classroom management practices. The implication is that the school mentors could tap on such information to develop the beginning teachers’ competence in classroom management. Given the mentors’ rich classroom experiences, they should play key role in nurturing the professional lives
of beginning teachers. Mentors could be involved in designing more authentic learning resources to engage these teachers in school-based professional development sessions covering more reflective, multi-perspective learning and problem-solving of real-life classroom cases. Indeed the findings from this study suggest that mentors' perception of beginning teachers' attitudes and beliefs is a worthwhile reference for mentoring beginning teachers in schools. Therefore, they should also level up their professional knowledge and skills in order to work in close partnership with the beginning teachers under their charge.

The findings, in agreement with many previous studies, highlight that the modified ABCC-R survey is easy and useful for beginning teachers to use and reflect on their classroom management approaches. Thus far, it is used as a tool that only provides an insight to the beginning teachers' classroom management but not to compare which management approach is better.

References


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