

Priming Pre-Service Teachers for Managing Students' Behaviour in the Classroom: An Indian Study

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ABSTRACT

Priming pre-service teachers in identifying behavioural issues in students and their management in the classroom is important, especially prior to be on-job. Mock classrooms, if created optimally, would assist them to practice the solutions using required skills of a 21st century's teacher. Such practices, with time, motivate and make them confident in handling issues that may arise in the classroom. This paper describes how from a mock classroom, various issues have been identified and their corresponding solutions knitted. The study concludes that interpersonal communication through *rapport building* facilitates a seamless connection between the teacher and a student. Rapport Building is pivotal in handling most of the behavioral issues in a classroom for all the levels of study, such as the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Diploma Programme (DP).

Keywords: Classroom management; Students' behaviour pattern; Mock classroom; Strategies; Pre-service teachers; Rapport building

Classroom Management has always been a challenging task for the teachers. It's a skill that essentially falls under teachers' pedagogic expertise (Blau *et al.*, 2016). More than just being a specialist in their respective fields or subjects, the teachers have to be effective communicators and efficient managers for their learners (Aslan, 2015). Put together, it is the critical competence of a teacher that is required, to manage the classroom

effectively in order to achieve the desired learning-outcome of the students. Wong *et al.* (2012) suggests that 'classroom management' refers to the broad aspects that a teacher initiates to organize the students, space, time and materials for a better learning for the students in the classroom environment.

Teachers pose to be a role model for the students. Students tend to appreciate and respect them based on how skilled they are in managing the classroom. The teacher's *instructions* and the classroom *environment* that he/she is able to maintain in a class are the two main key factors for managing the class. In the book, namely "Getting the Buggers to Behave", Cowley (2001) speaks about certain ways the teachers have to follow while dealing with students in and outside the class. The essence of her message is to maintain a *cordial relation*

| Access this article online | |
|---|---|
| Publisher | Website: http://www.ndpublisher.in |
|  | DOI: 10.5958/2230-7311.2016.00038.6 |

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with the students so that they thrive and flourish in their tasks. However, to achieve the best practices of classroom management, foremost it is important to understand the problems that hinder the good behaviour of the students. Erdogan et al. (2010) states that (i) lack of motivation and interaction by the learners, (ii) violation of rules, (iii) ineffective time management, and, (iv) poor classroom environment might be the issues, which lead to ineffective classroom management in schools. These undesirable consequences could again be due to the following reasons, such as (a) the way the curriculum is laid (Skiba et al., 2016), (b) classroom environment and ambience (Crook & Mitchell, 2012), (c) class size, that is, the number of students in the class (McDonald, 2013), (d) lack of constructive rules practiced in the class (Cox, 2015), or in other words, the ground rules that a student has to follow (e) home environment (Hartas, 2012), (f) parents' attitudes towards the overall learning of their children (Madjar et al., 2016), (g) teachers' classroom management skills (Ducharme & Shecter, 2011), and (h) students' attitudes towards learning (Metsarrine & Kallio, 2016). Put together, all these factors directly or indirectly affect the behaviour of the students in the learning environment.

The *aim* of the paper is to showcase how certain behaviour by the students can be addressed using effective classroom management techniques, practised by the pre-service teachers during their training period. Mock classrooms were created and each of the issues and related solutions have been debated among them under the supervision of a mentor, who is an expert teacher educator. The *objective* of this study is to extract and expose the methods of handling behavioural issues in the classroom of Primary (PYP – grade I to V), Middle (MYP – grade VI to X) and Diploma (DP – grade XI and XII) level programs to the pre-service teachers who are under training in a unique environment of a teacher training institute, which is co-located in an IB school campus in India.

State of the art research

Akin et al. (2016) describe the practices that teachers need to employ to deal with the issues in relation to (A) *physical environment* that is, the (i) seating arrangement, (ii) weather conditions (iii) furniture; (B) *planning* such

as (i) developing effective lesson plans, (ii) slot for differentiated instruction and so on; (C) *time management*, (D) *relationship management* by encouraging team spirit of the class, as well as (E) *behaviour management*. Usually, the students may express their discomfort with regard to (A) but may not easily identify the problem otherwise.

Cimen and Cepik-Kiris (2015) suggests that the issues faced with regard to the behaviour management could be divided into four categories depending on how intense the misbehaviour could be. These are as follows:

- ❑ The first one is *no issue*: which usually exist for a short duration/initial phase that do not prolong for long period usually interfere with learning or direction. The examples of these may include distraction and daydreaming by the students/ learners.
- ❑ Second, *minor issue*: these are practices that could interfere with class principles or methods that teachers (especially new) would experience. For example, passing notes among students, eating during class, walking off the class, dozing off (sleeping), etc.
- ❑ Third, *significant issue yet restricted in degree and impacts*: for example, a student might seldom finish an errand, may hit other students thereby distracting and disturbing other students, asking unwanted or irrelevant questions to gain attention of the class, arguing with teachers, etc.
- ❑ Finally, the fourth is *a raising or spreading issue*: this is where a minor issue becomes a major issue and may hinder learning to a great extent. For example, students meandering around classroom and so forth.

The stakeholders those could contribute to a particular student's behaviour are - Teachers, Society, Peers and the Students themselves. The teacher's classroom management skills, the family's influence are the two major reasons that impacts on the child's behaviour and the student's learning difficulties and/or whether they are attention seekers could be among the few reasons for a learner's overall behaviour.

VanHousen (2013) speaks about classroom management in student-centric classrooms in her study. In the thesis,

she has focused on a variety of classroom management approaches, with special emphasis on *teacher-centric* (the traditional approach) and *student-centric* (evolving novel approach) classroom management techniques. She argues that *inclusivity* in the whole education, capability of individual learning, and learners' heterogeneous cultural background have pushed the so called teacher-centric approach to student-centric in the International schools with time as an evolving process. The thesis supports the view of Pereira & Smith-Adcock (2011) that, through a student-centric process, while rendering more freedom to the students to learn in their way, teachers can still effectively manage a classroom that has wide range of learning abilities and styles. Moreover, a lot of emphasis has been put on the opinions and ideas of students in the learning environment according to McCombs et al., (2008). An empirical study has been conducted among a variety of teachers in a suburban school at New York, USA. Each of the teachers participated through an anonymous electronic survey tool that collected the data about the teacher's classroom management approach and how it affected the overall students' behaviour. The study concludes that a student-centred approach in managing classroom shows a better learning outcome due to the free flow of ideas and opinions of the students along with subtle monitoring by the teachers.

Garrett (2008) defines student-centric learning communities as having "shared leadership, community building, and a balance between the needs of the teachers and students"

Nowadays, students of different learning abilities are becoming active participants in all classroom decision-making processes. Students' opinions and ideas are valued and they are found to enrich the learning environment. Classroom teachers and other school professionals' working together with students can manage a successful learning community. An effective teacher is one who is fruitful in her approach – one who is able to collaborate and communicate effectively for the students' wellbeing, arranges the classroom to maximize learning and minimise disruptions, provides a safe environment for learning and creates sense of trust among them.

In this paper, few of the many issues have been brought forward to expose the pre-service teachers. Such an exposure is found to be important and necessary as they manage the classrooms during their internships or pre-service training in PYP, MYP and DP levels respectively according to IB standards.

In addition to these issues, some the other behaviours that an intern may observe during the days of internship are:

- ❑ Students may '**ramble**' around and off the subject. The teacher should then refocus to the main point so that the students may not go off track and direct questions back into the subject. Students may often ask the application level questions of what they are learning and whether it would be relevant or applicable for them in future for which the teacher should always be prepared for.
- ❑ Students may have '**side conversations**' among them. Though it may or may not be subject related, it would distract the class and the teacher thus spoiling the class environment. The teacher should make class policies or ground rules which very clear states to the students that they would have to raise their hand if they have questions and the matter of their side talks would have to be revealed in class. An example of such is where a teacher had made such a class policy where any side talks are class property and if anyone or teacher finds that the students involved in such should share it to the class.
- ❑ **Talkativeness** – The learners may comment on their peer's answers, trying to prove that they are superior over others. The teacher must in this case be witty to handle the situation, should acknowledge the comments and give that person individual attention at times.
- ❑ In the present times, very few students would have '**shyness**' as one of the common behaviours. Yet, there would be a handful of learners who would be silent in class and there would be a lack of participation vocally. It may not be true that they wouldn't be mentally

alert at all times, but the problem arises when they don't explain in case they have any issues with regard to the topic. Some of the possible solutions of involving him/her by direct questioning or by making him/her a group leader or a lead member whereby the student would be forced to expose the hidden talents.

The focus is to empathise them with the solutions and encourage them to become smart creative with time. A Smart Creative is one who has a Deep Subject Knowledge in his or her field or Mastery of the subject, is a Business Savvy – a risk taker and Critically Competent in the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Chaotic and Ambiguous) world. A Smart Creative and a Good Classroom Manager makes the learning environment a platform that promotes a student's holistic growth and well-being.

Methodology

Design

This study adopts a qualitative inquiry-based approach. The term 'qualitative' implies an emphasis on the meanings and processes that are not investigated through experiments or measured in terms of quantity, amount, or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 1990). Mock classroom-based exposure is a useful way to train the teachers (Popp, 1991; Erikson et al., 2014).

In this research work, mock classrooms of different levels of PYP, MYP and DP have been designed and the students' behavioural issues have duly been mimicked through role plays as a real classroom atmosphere and finally accepted unanimously through series of debates. Thus, this study was designed based on mock class, structured discussion followed by interview-based data collection and analysis.

Participants

The participants for the study are of maximum variation sampling. This created a platform to include a wide range of variation such as subject, grade levels and experiences in participating teachers (Patton, 1990). There were 20 pre-service teachers who participated in this qualitative study.

Procedure

The study took three months to complete. During this time, mock classroom environments (Rohn & Lee, 2001) of PYP, MYP and DP according to IB have been created. The reason behind such mock classroom based approach was to expose them to the issues in real life experience and its corresponding solutions to handle class independently when they would be on-job. The pre-service teachers are asked to provide written responses to different issues/questions by grouping them by their grade levels as per the IB standards (PYP, MYP & DP). Later group discussions were conducted on a smaller scale discussions by involving the participants of same grades and large scale discussions by involving the participants of all grades to compile all the data.

Data Analysis

In this study the data was collected by written format from these pre-service teachers. The data was analysed using the content analysis technique (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 1990). The results of the analysis were categorised accordingly into three levels such as PYP, MYP & DP according to IB standard.

Results and discussions

The study has brought major issues/problems faced by teachers in classroom management and solutions for the same through the mock class, discussions and interviews. The solutions for the issues are shown as figures 1, 2 and 3 for PYP, MYP and DP levels, respectively.

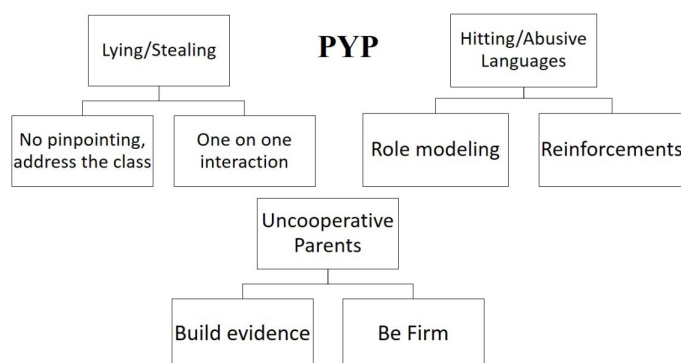


Fig. 1: Problems faced by teachers in PYP level and possible solutions for the same

In this figure, there are three issues such as (A) Lying/Stealing, (B) Hitting/Using abusive languages and (C) Uncooperative parents have been identified. Each of these issues proposed to be addressed separately. For 'A', (a) addressing the whole class without pinpointing the offender and (b) Out of the class face-to-face interaction with the offender worked out well. In case of 'B', (a) role modelling by the teacher and (b) reinforcement strategies

worked well. Interestingly, for 'C', (a) evidence-based approach and (b) teacher being firm with the feedback are found to be effective.

Similarly, for MYP and DP the respective issues faced in the class have been handled with their corresponding solutions shown in Fig-2 and 3. Table 1 summarises the issues and their corresponding solutions.

MYP

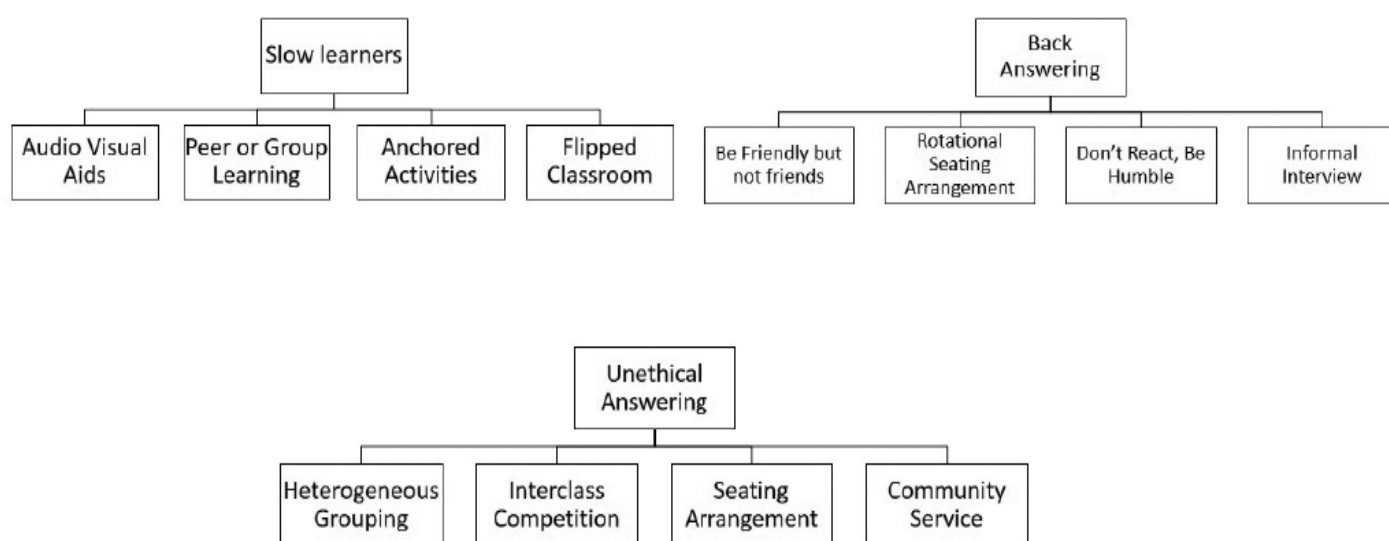


Fig. 2: Problems faced by teachers in MYP level and possible solutions for the same

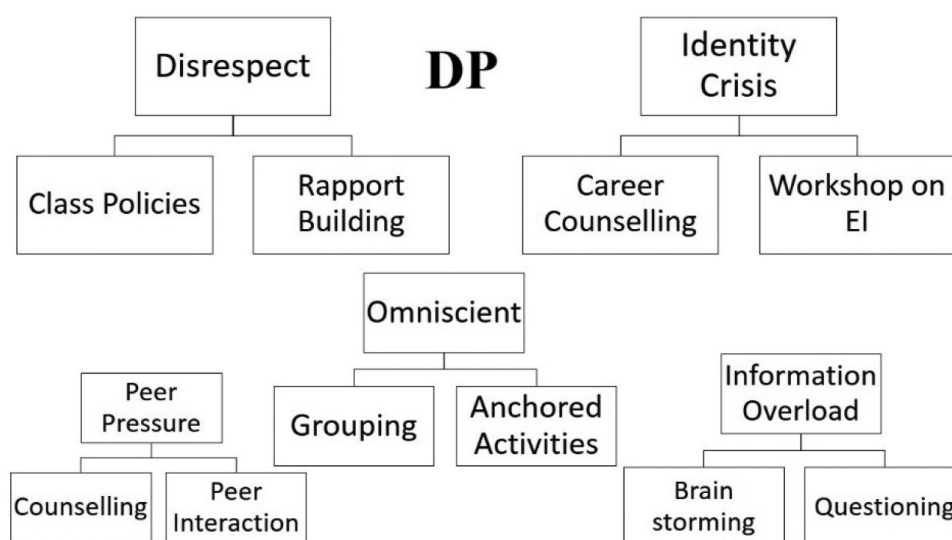


Fig. 3: Problems faced by teachers in DP level and possible solutions for the same

Table 1: Behavioural issues (in bold letters) and corresponding solutions (italicised) of classroom management in all the three levels – PYP, MYP and DP

| PYP | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Issues | <i>Corresponding solutions</i> |
| Lying/Stealing | <i>No pinpointing; One-to-one interaction outside the class.</i> |
| Hitting/Abusive language | <i>Role modelling; Reinforcement.</i> |
| MYP | |
| Slow learner | <i>Use of audio-visual aid; Learning from peer/group; Anchored activities; Flipped classroom.</i> |
| Back answering | <i>Be friendly but not the friend; Rotational seating arrangement; Avoid reacting; Informal interview.</i> |
| Unethical answering | <i>Heterogeneous grouping; Interclass competitions; Change seating arrangement; Community service.</i> |
| DP | |
| Showing disrespect | <i>Class policies; Rapport building.</i> |
| Loss of identity | <i>Career counselling; workshops on emotional intelligence.</i> |
| Being omniscient in the class | <i>Grouping; Anchored activities.</i> |
| Information overloading | <i>Brain storming; Questioning.</i> |
| Peer pressure | <i>Counselling; Peer interactions.</i> |

Thus the discussions and interview has shown the connection between the issues faced and the solutions for the same with teacher values and dispositions (refer to Fig-4) that plays a major role in tackling the problems thus effectively managing the classroom, which is the key to all the problems/issues. The observations are discussed in detail according to the different levels of classes as per IB, as follows:

In the **PYP** classroom, it is interesting to note that *rapport building* with the students with time helps correcting the behavioural issues. The common issues that were observed during the sessions are uncooperative students, lying/stealing stuffs and using abusing language or

even hitting the fellow mates. To effectively solve these issues in the IB environment, the research proposes that the teacher has to be a *deep thinker* to empathize the class more meaningfully and bring the concepts such as being their role model and one-to-one interaction with the offenders outside the class to mine the root causes. Parental illusions about their children are handled by being evidence-based and firm on teacher's decision. It is also important to convince them that firmness thus showed would directly benefit to their collective future.

In the **MYP** classroom, as the children have now been grown (compared to the PYP stage), they tend to polarize, which is sometimes unethical, for e.g., 'polarization' based on the fathers' professional positions in the society and often based on the provinces in Indian context. It can be effectively handled by grouping them heterogeneously based on their interests and invite interclass competitions for offering a chance of better collaboration and mixing. 'Back answering' is another annoying behavioural issue among the students which can be solved by interacting informally and building rapport. Rotational seating arrangement is one approach that can handle both the issues of polarization and back answering. Another important issue that has been identified is that slow learning process amongst them due to varied reasons. This particular issue can be better dealt with judicious usage of audio-visual aids and peer-based learning which is a method for differentiated learning that could be based on their issue that the learner is facing. Teacher need to show high quality *pedagogic expertise* and *dispositions* which will bring down majority of problems that the teachers currently face in the IB schools.

Finally, in the **DP** level (where children reach their adolescence to adulthood), 'disrespect' to the teacher, 'self-identity issues', and 'peer pressure' come into play. The students are in a transition phase of their life where their behaviours and responses are governed by hormones. The major issue that they face is the peer pressure that leads to other problems like self-identity crisis and other addictive issues. In this level, it is important that the teacher to understand students and their developmental stage of life. Thus that can help in developing good rapport with the students without

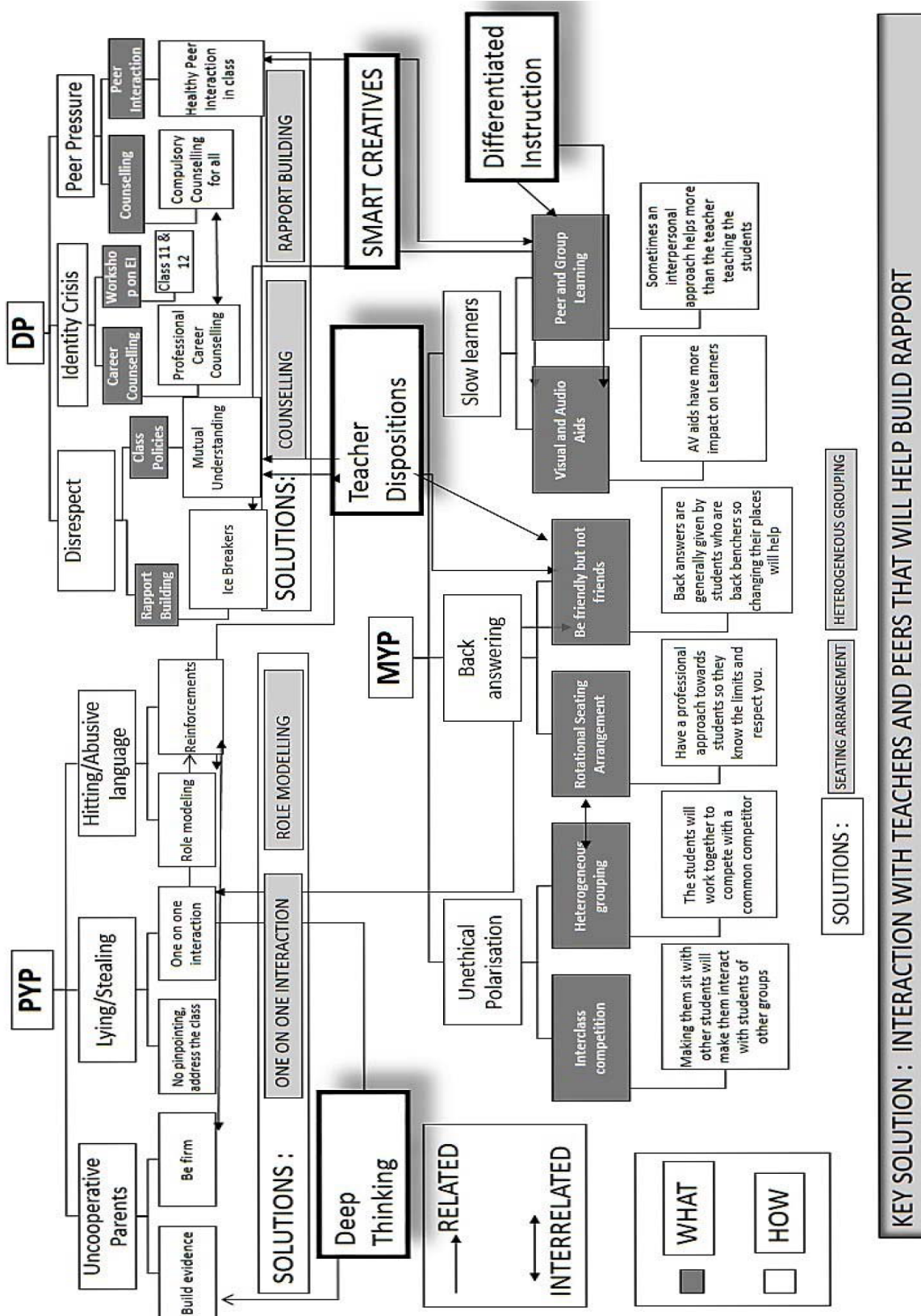


Fig. 4: Relationship between issues and the respective solutions with teachers'

encroaching into their personal space as a *smart creative* with highest level of teacher dispositions. Informal meeting outside the class and one-to-one counselling can be much useful in this regard as they are in need of some compassion and care. However, despite of every possible ways to correct the behavioural issues, the paper proposes effective rapport building with the students in all level facilitates seamless interactions, which, in turn, expedites the character building in the students. The students are in the stage of moulding where teachers can be a mould in the process to build their lives as a better individuals and a world citizen for the better world which the IB statement states. They are prone to get inducted by the teachers' dispositions and start seeing them as their role models.

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the paper proposes that a 21st century's teacher must have the following qualities (Fig. 5):

- A. Deep subject knowledge
- B. Pedagogic expertise
- C. Dispositions
- D. Smart Creative

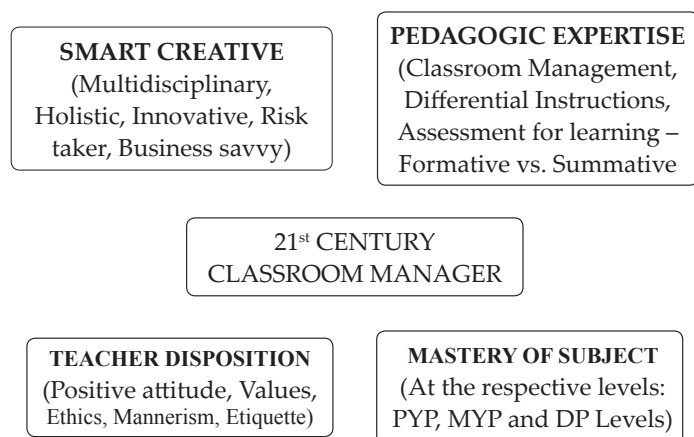


Fig. 5: Key competences of the 21st century's teacher

By having all these qualities, a classroom manager would enable them to build rapport with the students, effectively and seamlessly.

Conclusion

The study concludes that pre-service teachers must be exposed to various behavioural issues, which are evident from time to time in the class of all the PYP,

MYP and DP levels. It proposes that they can learn the issues and relevant solutions from the mock classroom as if they are practically taking classes. It empathises with students and in turn, elevates the confidence to address those issues in the class, real-time. Addressing each issue mandates 21st century's qualities of teachers, that is, deep subject knowledge, good dispositions, high quality pedagogy and being a smart creative in the class. The essence of the study is that, good *rapport building* with individual students (that is being friendly but not a friend) establishes and then facilitates seamless connection between the teacher and the learner. This seamless connectivity has got three effects – a) student see teacher as the role model, b) does not want to disturb the teacher in view of a friend, and c) effective learning happens in the class as a result to it. Therefore, this paper revisits the fundamental of rapport building with the students as proposed by Cowley, (2001).

Future work

These pre-service teachers are currently on-job. Authors are now tracking the issues faced by these teacher-trainees and how well they manage the classroom are being monitored by their mentors. Authors are also tracking the methods the trainee teachers are used to handle these issues.

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