



# Analysis of Selected Class Control Events by Beginning and Experienced Physical Education Teachers

*Marc Cloes, Axel Vandersmissen & Maurice Piéron, University of Liège, Belgium*

---

## Introduction

The management of a PE class and of pupils misbehaviours were among the strongest concerns of pre-service and in-service teachers (Behets, 1990; Telama, Lahde & Kurki, 1980; Wendt & Bain, 1989). Controlling pupils behaviours is one of the main factors of anxiety in PE teachers (Capel, 1993).

Despite the initial work of Kounin (1970) in classroom teaching, few studies were devoted to discipline in PE field. They focused initially on the description of off-task and deviant behaviours and on teachers' apparent reaction to the incidents (Brunelle, Brunelle, Martel, Goyette & Gaadan, 1995; Hardy, 1992-1993; Kennedy, 1982; Piéron & Brito, 1990; Piéron & Emonts, 1988). Researchers' focus moves now to the perception of the origin of the incidents and to the identification of the possible actions of the teacher (Fernandez-Balboa, 1991; Hardy, 1992-1993; Marzouk, Spallanzani, Brunelle & Gagnon, 1993). They used efficiently the stimulated recall technique.

As teaching experience influences analysis of the teaching process (Barrett, Allison & Bell, 1987; Bell, Barrett & Allison, 1985; Nelson, 1988), comparison of experienced and beginning teachers' perceptions of misbehaviours should allow an improvement of the understanding of the thinking processes involved in class control management. It could also present some interesting implications for teacher training.

The analysis of video-taped discipline incidents would be an interesting way to compare interindividual variability of their perception by the teachers. That technique was proposed to analyse the inter-individual variability of feedback (Cloes, Denève & Piéron, 1995).

The present study had a dual purpose: (1) to compare the analysis of class control events by experienced and beginning teachers, and (2) to prepare the development of video-taped episodes for teacher preparation.

## Methods

Eight video-taped events illustrating class control episodes were selected by two observers from a video data bank comprising 35 PE lessons. Various teaching levels and subject matter were available. Events' selection was based on the agreement of two observers upon the identification of the discipline incidents occurrence. Video-taped events are listed in table 1. They lasted from 13 seconds to 1 minute 26.

**Table 1: List of the class control events**

1. Modifying the task	- Teacher does not identify the incident
2. Disturbing the activity	- Teacher minimises the incident
3. Noisy during instruction	- Teacher ignores the incident
4. Talking during instruction	- Teacher threatens
5. Being noisy during instruction	- Teacher does not identify the incident
6. Grumbling during activity	- Teacher asks to stop
7. Disobedience during information	- Teacher states rules
8. Fighting during activity	- Teacher states rules

Twelve beginning and twelve experienced teachers were involved in the study. Beginning teachers had at most one year of teaching experience. Experienced teachers had at least ten years of teaching experience and were regularly involved in teacher training as co-operating teachers or supervisors.

Subjects watched separately the videotape showing the class control events. Three questions were systematically asked after the presentation of each event (table 2). The questions concerned the description of the most important thing that the subject remembered from the episode; her/his assessment of the situation - positive or negative -, and the origin of the class control event.

During the interview, answers were audio-taped for further analysis. A reliability higher than .85% was obtained. A biostatistical software was used for data processing (Glantz, 1988).

**Table 2: Questions raised to the subjects**

1. What was going on during the teaching episode?
2. Was the situation positive or negative?
3. What was (were) the origin(s) of that positive/negative situation?

## Results

Findings will be presented in two steps. Firstly, we shall focus on the description of the events by the subjects. Secondly, we shall analyse the answers of the subjects concerning only those in which a discipline incident has been identified.

### **Description of the events**

According to the subject, 2 to 7 discipline incidents were identified out of 8 which were proposed. According to the event, discipline represented 8.3 to 100% of the descriptions with an average of 57.3%. As subjects' attention was not orientated towards discipline, some class control events could not have been evident enough to be considered as such by some subjects. The latter would have analysed the events without pre-conception and would have been focused on the teaching process as a whole.

Contrary to what is stated in the existing literature, findings show that beginning teachers did not focus more often their attention on teaching aspects related to discipline than experienced teachers (61.5 Vs 53.1%;  $t=.672$ ,  $p>.20$ ). The presentation of selected discipline episodes and a large range of variation in experienced teachers could explain the non-significance of the difference observed between groups. However, findings underline that even from the same events, different teachers focus their attention on different aspects of the teaching process. As in task analysis, there could be as much perceptions of an event as there are observers (Piasenta, 1994).

Events showed to subjects occurred equally in activity or information periods. Excepted experienced teachers for events occurring during activity, the situation did not influence the identification of discipline incidents. Experienced teachers tended to describe less class control events when analysing events occurring during activity periods than during information periods (43.7 vs. 62.5%;  $z=1.641$ ;  $p=.101$ ). They identified less class control events in activity situations than beginning teachers in the same situation (43.7 vs. 64.6%;  $z=1.850$ ,  $p=.064$ ).

During activity situations, experienced teachers were more focused on teaching behaviours like feedback, instruction, task selection and management than on discipline incidents. That finding indicates that when pupils are involved in the activity, experienced teachers would be less sensitive to class control events than beginning teachers. When the incidents occur during instruction, their importance increases because the teacher would be directly concerned.

### **Analysis of the events identified as discipline incidents**

This part of the results is focused on 110 answers out of 192. Assessment of the character of the events and their origins will be envisaged.

- **Assessment of the class control events' character**

Although the episodes were selected equally in positive and negative situations by the researchers, class control events were assessed as negative in 66.4% of cases. No difference was observed between experienced and beginning teachers. Researchers' assessment was based on a fine analysis of all behaviours, allowed by slow motion and video replay techniques. It is hypothesized that watching video-tapes at normal speed could have lead the subjects to loose some details.

Another hypothesis is that, independently of their teaching experience, teachers tended to be rather critical when analysing teaching episodes. This would find support in research on feedback where physical educators were identified as focused on errors rather on positive aspects of the pupils performances (Cloes, Lenzen & Piéron, 1995).

Experimented teachers' agreement exceeded 80% in seven out of eight events while beginning teachers reached that reliability level only in four out of eight events. It must be noted that experimented teachers were six times out of eight in agreement with the researchers. In beginning teachers, that agreement was identified only three times. Four events were assessed in the same way by more than 80% of the subjects. Three of them were assessed as negative. That finding gives some support to the hypothesis proposed above. Subjects seemed easily unanimous when observing an event open to criticism.

- Origin of the class control events

After identification of the main categories of origin in both groups of subjects, a comparison according to the assessment of the events' character and to the situation of occurrence will be envisaged.

### Global view

Subjects proposed an average of 16 possible origins per 10 discipline incidents. Any significant difference was shown between experienced and beginning teachers who gave 17 and 15 items per 10 events ( $W = -16$ ;  $p > .05$ ).

As pointed out in table 3, most events were teacher-related: 91.2 and 95.4% respectively in beginning and experienced subjects. Beginning teachers tended to implicate more the pupils and the context than experienced teachers. No significant difference was observed between groups. Predominance of teacher-related aspects could be explained by the importance that teachers give to their actions in preventing and controlling discipline events.

**Table 3: Main origins of discipline incidents**

	Beginning	Experienced
Teacher	91.2	95.4
Pupils	7.7	4.6
Context	1.1	0.0

Class control behaviour and management represented almost two thirds of the causes of the teacher-related problems (table 4). This finding would show that teachers consider their specific behaviour as the most important factor contributing to the occurrence and control of discipline events. No difference was observed between both groups. The attribution of responsibility by the teachers seemed to be independent of the amount of teaching experience.

**Table 4: Teachers' responsibilities in class control events**

	Beginning	Experienced
Class control	45.8	44.6
Intervention	27.0	25.3
Management	19.3	18.1
Personal characteristics	3.6	8.4
Task characteristics	2.4	2.4
Climate	1.2	1.2

**Comparison according to the events' assessment**

When the event was considered as positive, the teacher was always associated to the success. If the event was negatively assessed, the teacher stayed the main responsible of the incident but beginning teachers tended to propose more other origins (91.7 vs. 85.5%;  $z=.672$ ;  $p>.20$ ).

The categories of teachers responsibilities identified as origins of class control incident differed according to the assessment of the event (table 5). If class control behaviours kept the same importance in both conditions, the role of the interventions was significantly higher when the events were positively assessed. Behaviours dealing with "management" and "personal characteristics" presented opposite trends.

**Table 5: Teachers' responsibilities in class control events according to the assessment of the situation**

	Positive assessment	Negative assessment	
Class control	46.7	44.0	ns
Intervention	37.3	17.6	$z=2.568$ ; $p=.007$
Management	10.7	56.3	$z=2.201$ ; $p=.028$
Personal characteristics	1.3	9.9	$z=1.951$ ; $p=.046$
Task characteristics	2.7	2.2	n.s.
Climate	1.3	1.1	n.s.

If both groups showed the same evolution for «intervention» and «management», they differed in «class control» and «personal characteristics»:

1. Experienced teachers tended to give more importance to «class control» in positively assessed events than beginning teachers (56.4 vs 36.1%),  $z=1.529$ ;  $p=.126$ ) while it was the opposite in negative events (34.1 vs 53.2%,  $z=1.623$ ;  $p=.105$ ).
2. In negatively assessed events, experienced teachers proposed more the «personal characteristics» category than beginning teachers (15.9 vs 4.3 %;  $z=1.5$ ;  $p=.134$ ). When the event was positively assessed, both groups proposed rarely this category (0.0 and 2.8 %, respectively in experienced and beginning subjects).

Differences pointed out that teaching experience could influence the importance that teachers give to some aspects of their behaviours according to the assessment of a situation. Experienced teachers seemed more preinteractive than beginning teachers.

They would identify more easily the factors preventing the occurrence of discipline incidents while beginning teachers would be more reactive.

### **Influence of the situation in which the class control event occurs**

Whatever subjects' teaching experience, the teacher was less responsible of the class control event in activity situation than in information situation (84.7 vs. 99.0%;  $z=3.128$ ;  $p=.002$ ). Subjects would consider that during activity the pupils are more free to display towards misbehaviours. In class control events occurring during activity or information periods, the distribution of the categories of teachers' responsibilities identified as origin of class control events did not differ according to the teaching level.

### **Conclusions**

Findings showed that:

1. From the same events, different teachers focused their attention on different aspects of the teaching process. Some discipline incidents passed unnoticed because the teachers had multiple centres of interest.
2. The teacher was seen as mainly responsible for discipline incidents. The teacher's actions in preventing or reacting to class control events were considered as the most important causes of discipline problems.
3. Beginning teachers did not focus their attention on discipline anymore than experienced teachers. The attention they gave to the class control events did not differ from those of experienced teachers. Nevertheless, their assessment of the situations was less uniform than that of the experienced teachers.
4. Experienced teachers tended to pay less attention to discipline problems during activity periods than during information periods.
5. Teachers were perceived as less responsible of the class control incidents when they occur during activity periods than during information periods.

The perception of teaching events is highly variable. It can reflect the multifaceted meaning given to teaching situations. This underlines the importance of systematic observation of teaching.

The use of video-tapes of specific discipline problems during teacher training underscores the variability of views of particular situations. It is important for the trainees to reflect on different solutions which may be equally acceptable. To analyse whether this approach is successful, further studies of modification of teacher behaviour should be undertaken.

## References

- Barrett, K., Allison, P. & Bell, R. (1987) What preservice physical education teachers see in a unguided field experience: A follow-up study. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 7 (1), 12-21.
- Behets, D. (1990) Concerns of preservice physical education teachers. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 10, 66-75.
- Bell, R., Barrett, K. & Allison, P. (1985) What preservice physical education teachers see in an unguided, early field experience. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 4 (2), 81-90.
- Brunelle, J., Brunelle, J.-P., Martel, D., Goyette, R. & Gaadan, M. (1995) Incidents disciplinaires qui interpellent le plus des stagiaires en éducation physique. In C. Paré (Ed.) *Mieux enseigner l'éducation physique? Pensez-y!* Actes du séminaire international sur la formation des enseignants à une pratique réflexive. Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Trois-Rivières, 301-313.
- Capel, S. (1993) Anxieties of beginning physical education teachers. *Educational Research*, 35 (3), 281-289.
- Cloes, M., Deneve, A. & Piéron, M. (1995) Interindividual variability of teacher's feedback. Study in simulated teaching conditions. *European Physical Education Review*, 1, 83-93.
- Cloes, M., Lenzen, B. & Piéron, M. (1995) Modification of coaches' feedback. Effectiveness of a video program combining task analysis and feedback emission training. Book of abstracts of the 1995 AIESEP World Congress. Windows to the future. *Bridging the gaps between disciplines, curriculum and instruction*. Zinman College of Physical Education, Wingate, 226.
- Fernandez-Balboa, J.M. (1991) Beliefs, interactive thoughts, and actions of physical education student teachers regarding pupil misbehaviors. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 11 (1), 59-78.
- Glantz, (1988) *Primer of biostatistic*. The program. McGraw-Hill.
- Hardy, C. (1992-93) Pupil misbehaviour during physical education lessons. *Bulletin of physical education* (in press).
- Kennedy, E. (1982) Discipline in the physical education setting. *The Physical Educator*, 39, 91-94.
- Kounin, J. (1970) *Discipline and group management in classrooms*. Holt, New York.
- Marzuouk, A., Spallanzani, C., Brunelle, J.-P. & Gagnon, J. (1993) *Etude des causes invoquées par des stagiaires pour expliquer l'apparition des comportements perturbateurs qui les interpellent le plus dans la phase de prise en charge de l'enseignement de l'éducation physique au secondaire*. Poster presented at the AIESEP International Seminar «The Training of Teachers in Reflective Practice of Physical Education» held in Trois-Rivières, Québec, CDN, July.
- Nelson, K. (1988) *Thinking processes, management routines and student perceptions of experts and novice physical education teachers*. Doct. diss., Louisiana State University.

- Piasenta, J. (1994) *Apprendre à observer. Plaidoyer pour une formation à l'observation du comportement sportif*. INSEP Publications, Paris.
- Piéron, M. & Brito, M. (1990) Analyse d'incidents d'indiscipline survenant dans des classes de l'enseignement préparatoire (10-12 ans). In J. Duran, J.L. Hernandez & L.M. Ruiz (Eds.) *Humanismo y Nuevas Tecnologías en la Educación Física y el Deporte*. Instituto Nacional de Educación Física, Madrid, 113-117.
- Piéron, M. & Emonts, M. (1988) Analyse des problèmes de discipline dans des classes d'éducation physique. *Revue de l'Éducation physique*, 28 (1), 33-40.
- Telama, R., Lahde, S. & Kurki, H. (1980) Critical incidents and problem situations in teaching physical education. In G.Schilling & W. Bayers (Eds.) *Audiovisuelle Medien im Sport. Moyens audiovisuels dans le sport. Audiovisual Means in Sport*. Birkhauser Verlag, Basel, 237-254.
- Wendt, J. & Bain, L. (1989) Concerns of preservice and inservice physical educators. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 8, 177-180.