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## TIME-OUT ROOM IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

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**Summary:** *This article focuses on discipline and offers an insight into methods to encourage and maintain student discipline which would result in improved teaching and learning. It advocates the methods of positive discipline and the time out room as process which can be implemented to help teachers combat discipline problems among students. It describes the implementation of the time-out room in an Australian school where the author was employed. The author then advocates adopting the implementation of a time-out room in Croatian schools and expands on its benefits for teachers/students. Positive discipline goes hand in hand with the time-out room. Examples of how positive discipline can be achieved at no extra financial cost are given. Time-out and positive discipline can be implemented with aim of assisting teachers and students to carry out their jobs of teaching and learning in the formal compulsory educational system. It also focuses on these methods as a means of liberating teacher assessment from the shackles of being a disciplinary measure. By using the disciplinary measures suggested in this article, teachers would be given encouragement to revert their focus more onto implementing teacher assessment of students for assessment's true purpose. This is that teacher assessment of students describes student competence in achieving certain tasks rather than being a disciplinary measure.*

**Keywords:** *time-out, time-out room, student discipline, positive discipline, teacher assessment of students.*

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### 1. Introduction

Student discipline within schools is a perennial issue which needs addressing. Discipline is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as "Training which produces obedience or self-control, often in the form of rules, and punishments if these are broken, or obedience or self-control produced by this training" (Cambridge Advanced learners' Dictionary, 2013).

The elements of obedience and self-control also constitute student discipline. Without student discipline there is chaos in the classroom. With

chaos, the teaching and learning process is severely handicapped (Canter & Canter, 2001; Glasser, 1998). A form of discipline involving the implementation of a time-out room is suggested as a means of helping teachers to maintain discipline and maximising teaching and learning within the school, which most people will agree is the *sine quo non* of formal education.

## 2. Theoretical Aspects

Here the two concepts of classroom discipline purported in this article - the time out room and positive discipline will be elaborated on and defined.

The first concept discussed is that of positive discipline. Positive discipline rests on the foundation that there are no bad children, just bad behaviours. According to this theory, it is the behaviour that needs to be described, and then sanctioned if required. The desirable behaviours need to be praised in order for this behaviour to be sustained (Jones, 2007).

Positive discipline arose primarily from Dreikurs's logical approach to discipline. In this theory Dreikurs focus primarily on behaviour through a series of models. This model is Dreikurs' Logical Consequences Model. According to this model, behaviours are focussed on and logical consequences for these behaviours are applied (Dreikurs, 1990).

Canter's (2001) approach to discipline follows on from logical consequences to discipline where it is solely the child's behaviour that is focussed on. If undesirable it is punished by time out, detention, parent conferences or removal of privileges. If positive the behaviour is reinforced and always positively described.

Glasser (1998) supports the positive approach to discipline. In Glasser's opinion, harsh punishments are negative and only result in negative outcomes. He believes students can make choices and indeed make good choices to behave positively without coercion.

Often associated with the positive discipline approach is the second concept referred to in this article which is the inclusion of a time out room in schools (Wolf & McLaughlin & Williams, 2006). This is a widely accepted and implemented disciplinary measure where I was personally teaching for several years in Western Australia. It involves temporarily separating the child with disruptive behaviour from the classroom. The child is removed from the classroom and put into another room which is under teacher supervision. This is done with the aim of allowing the classroom teacher to continue teaching without the disruption, drawing attention away from the disruptive behaviour and allowing the removed child to calm down away from the classroom where the negative behaviour was activated.

### 3. Situation in Schools

What is the situation concerning discipline within Croatian schools? In the media we are bombarded with ever increasing violence and disrespectful behaviour towards teachers with teachers imploring for the State Ministry of Education to allow them more effective means of disciplining and controlling students. There are constant cries from students that teaching and learning within the classroom is deteriorated by some disruptive students who lack discipline and do not care that their lack of discipline impedes other students from learning and impedes teachers' work.

More disturbing is the effect and influence of poor student behaviour on grades. Grades increasingly become a reflection of the teacher's perception of student behaviour. Grades, which should be the indication of a student's achievement in a particular task, all too often, become punitive measures. Grades are used, among other negative purposes, to discipline and control students. Grading and assessment begin to lose their true aim of fairly describing student achievement in tasks that demonstrate certain desired skills and knowledge. Testing loses its validity and reliability when it is used to discipline and make a statement about anything other than student knowledge of the set task (Strahinić, 2011).

Temporarily removing disruptive students from the classroom to allow others including both teachers and students to 'get on' with teaching/learning is to me as a teacher in the classroom a feasible method of discipline. However, the possibility for removing a disruptive student from the class in Croatia is limited. There is usually no adequate supervision for this student for say the entire class. Teachers are responsible for students in their classes and cannot allow students be unsupervised and hence potentially be a danger to themselves and others.

Consequently, the situation is all too often that this disruptive student remains in the class, the other students are distracted and even negatively influenced by this poor students' behaviour which all too often spreads to other students, and teachers are humiliated, or impeded from doing their job, or even forced to give negative assessments for poor behaviour, all of which are educationally unsound and unacceptable. Thus, this situation is not an optimal learning situation.

A time-out room is hence advocated here where students can be removed, can still do schoolwork or work from the class they are missing, not disrupt others, are seen to be punished, hopefully feel like they are being punished and where these students relegated to the time-out room can reflect on their behaviour and the consequences for them and others. Most importantly, the student told to go to the time-out room is under some form of supervision so the legal aspect of duty of care is covered.

However, exclusion from the class where the student is misbehaving, even though under more optimal conditions, is not a solution within itself. The time-out room is a method which achieved success and is applied in Australian schools where I taught for several years. Hence it is being advocated here as a means for increasing teaching/learning and promoting assessment as purely an indicator of student achievement of educational tasks and discouraging using grades as a means of disciplining poorly behaved students.

#### **4. Application of Time-out Room and Positive Discipline**

If educators and students agree that there should be student discipline to maximise the teaching/learning process, then multiple discipline measures should be in place. Thus, this article advocates the introduction of a time-out room to maximise discipline (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007). However, a general commitment and striving by all involved parties to achieving classroom discipline is necessary.

Therefore, before a disciplinary measure such as the time –out room was considered for implementation in the school I worked in Australia, adopting a positive discipline policy was developed, taught and accepted by teachers in my Australian school. Positive discipline is a way to improve student behaviour by focussing on the positive rather than on the negative (Canter & Canter, 2001; Charles and Senter, 2005). Punishment without positive discipline can often reduce the effectiveness of the student changing behaviour for the better.

Hence the following was implemented:

1. Training and explanation of positive discipline and the time out room for teachers.
2. Teachers explain the time out room to students, its consequences and how it is to be implemented.
3. Students are warned by teachers with a system of first warning name on board, then second warning cross and are told the next step will be removal to the time-out room, and then next step two crosses and sent to time-out room.
4. Discipline is traditionally seen as punitive or negative. Being positive can also achieve desired results perhaps even better achieve them. Positive discipline by the teacher is implemented as much as possible e.g.

Before: Negative=harsh punitive approach Teacher output focussed on negatives	Now: Positive discipline approach Rewording into positives. Positives encourage others to perform the desired action
Teacher: <i>Ivan and Duje, you have not taken out your books.</i>	Teacher: Well done, Mare and Luce, you have taken out your books.

5. Focus is always on the student's behaviour, never on the student him/herself e.g.:

Focus on student personally Before:	Focus on behaviour Now:
Teacher to student: You are nasty. You are a pain in the neck.	Teacher to student: You are behaving in a nasty way and it is painful to others.

If the teacher keeps telling the student s/he is nasty, then the self-fulfilling prophecy comes into place (Bramfeld, 1972). That is, the students think the teacher hates him/her causing anger and rebellion in the students which might in fact exacerbate the poor student behaviour.

Furthermore, the student hears something negative about him/her for example that s/he is nasty over and over again, this child or student can really develop nasty personal traits which may spread more widely to other school subjects and to the student's behaviour in society (Bramfeld, 1972). If the focus is on the behaviour the student is more likely to believe the teacher is just upset with his/her behaviour and not with him/her and is more likely to feel s/he can change for the better.

6. The teacher can inform students of their feelings e.g.

Before	Now
Teacher to student: Stop shouting!	Teacher to student: When you shout it makes me feel sad.

This again places the focus on the behaviour, not the student.

These strategies with emphasis on the behaviour and focussing on positives can make the classroom a happier, more positive environment for all to be.

## 5. Implications

A school's commitment to introducing and successfully implementing a time-out room means the fulfilment of certain conditions as follows:

1. All members of the teaching staff are obliged to devote a teaching class or two to supervising the time-out room. The time-out room cannot be unattended.
2. The school must dedicate a room within the school which is to be solely used as the time-out room. Having multiple use of a room would deteriorate the punitive function of the time-out room. If there were any other activities occurring simultaneous in the room, again the time-out room could become a positive rather than a punitive action for pupils.
3. A schedule of time-out room duty must be drawn up and accepted by all teachers as without teacher supervision the time-out room cannot function. Students being sent to a room without supervision would be seen by pupils as a reward, especially if two or more are sent there simultaneously. Alternatively, a teacher could be employed purely to man the time-out room. However in times of the impossibility of employing new staff, commitment from the teaching staff would be the most effective way. Teaching staff does not exclude the principals, vice-principals, school psychologists or counsellors.
4. What the pupil relegated to the time-out room is allowed to do must be decided on. From my teaching experience students were allowed to do school work from the subject they were banished from. Alternatively, relegated students were allowed to sit quietly and do nothing if they so wished. No talking or communication was allowed. This was to increase the punitive function of the time-out room. A situation where students planned to be excluded from class in order to socialise within the time-out room was not allowed. However, allowing insolent students to sit and do nothing avoided potential issue of conflict and perhaps provided an opportunity for student contemplation where they did not have the opportunity to distract others. Distracting others can be an aim for some students either to gain attention, peer-approval or entertainment. This opportunity is never allowed. Students are to focus on what they have done and try to improve.

## 6. Potential problems

As with any system, there is room for problems. One is that the student, after going through all the accepted motions and being told by the teacher to go to the time-out room, refuses. Teachers do not force the issue. This was avoided by calling the principal, deputy principals or school psychologist who would remove them.

As with all methods, time out may not work with some students who followed other disciplinary methods such as suspension, exclusion or changing schools. These processes are lengthy, not taken likely, but they are methods that await potentially disruptive students. Positive discipline and time out are methods in place to hopefully eradicate the needs for this measure or at least reduce them to a minimum.

## 7. Conclusion

This article advocates the inclusion of a time-out room in Croatian schools together with the application of positive discipline. This would aim in focus on improving negative or disruptive student behaviour while reinforcing the positive student behaviours. Behaviours would be separated from other discipline techniques such as teacher assessment of students in order to discipline students (Strahinić, 2011).

The more student discipline measures that are in place in schools, the better armed teachers are to combat disruption and of course to identify and offer disruptive students further help, counselling and guidance which we teachers were not adequately trained for at university. It seems that more and more roles are being placed upon teachers. It seems often that we teachers play the roles from being parent to psychiatrist and all the other roles in between for which we teachers are not trained or equipped. Therefore, this articles some possibilities and alternatives to help. If a time-out room requires much sought after, but never received financial funding, adopting positive discipline measures does not. It requires a change in attitude and approach. The more processes and approaches in place that aid in maximising teaching/learning the better.

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## **TIME-OUT UČIONICA U ŠKOLAMA**

**Sažetak:** Fokus je članka na disciplini u školama, s posebnim osvrtom na metode za učenike koje potiču disciplinu u školama i rezultiraju poboljšanjem nastavničkoga procesa učenja. Autorica predlaže metodu pozitivne discipline i metodu time-out učionica kao procese koji se mogu primijeniti da bi pomogli nastavnicima rješavati probleme s disciplinom učenika. Opisuje se primjena time-out učionice u školi u Australiji u kojoj je radila autorica ovoga rada. Autorica pritom potiče primjenu time-out učionica i u hrvatskim školama i razmatra njihove prednosti za nastavnike i učenike. Pozitivna disciplina podrazumijeva time-out učionicu. Ponuđeni su primjeri u kojima se pozitivna disciplina može postići bez dodatnoga novčanog troška. Time-out učionica i pozitivna disciplina mogu se izvesti tako da pomognu nastavnicima i učenicima obavljati dužnosti u obveznom obrazovanju. Ove već spomenute metode mogu osloboditi nastavničko ocjenjivanje učenika koje se često upotrebljava kao metoda discipline za učenike. Upotreba spomenutih metoda potiče nastavnike da se, kao na pravi cilj, fokusiraju samo na ocjenjivanje učeničkih postignuća u obrazovnom procesu. Drugim riječima, nastavničko ocjenjivanje isključivo opisuje učeničko usvajanje kompetencija, a ne bi trebalo biti metoda discipline u razredu.

**Ključne riječi:** time-out, time-out učionica, disciplina učenika, pozitivna disciplina, nastavničko ocjenjivanje učenika.

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