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Teacher in the face of difficult student behaviour

To a man who has only a hammer every problem looks like a nail.

ROBERT COOPER

Introduction

Coping with student behaviour which breaches classroom discipline is an everyday experience of all practicing teachers – at least the ones who work with more numerous student cohorts. Furthermore, many teachers describe similar educational situations as very difficult. Virtually all conceptions of teacher's treat consideration student misbehaviour as one of the most significant stressors (Center i Steventon, 2001; Chang, 2009; Pyżalski i Plichta, 2007). This pattern emerges everywhere – irrespective of the country where research was carried out. Moreover, teachers indicate that pre-service education does not provide relevant knowledge, which is required in order to cope in such situations in a pedagogically competent fashion (Pr□cha, 2006; Pyżalski, 2007). Coping, here, is not thought of in a narrow sense of wielding influence over students' behaviour, but rather in a broader sense of identifying such measures undertaken by the teacher in educationally difficult situations that will be beneficial for students in pro-developmental aspects and in the teacher-student relation. It is not always the case that measures changing or stopping inappropriate behaviour entail the above-mentioned values. In particular, the narrow approach will be successful if the student misbehaviour is a result of his/her serious problems related to, for instance, a pathological family context.

Analysing the problem from the students' perspective, it needs to be pointed out that teachers deal with a broad spectrum of student behaviours which can including those students who can be considered hard-to-reach – from insignificant everyday issues, disturbing classwork to

a small extent, to those threatening the safety of other students or the teacher herself/himself (e.g. structured peer violence, the so-called bullying) (Pyżalski, 2012).

Teachers should devote their time and attention to the issues of discipline for a number of reasons. However, as it has already been pointed out, it rarely is the subject of reflection during pre-service university education.

One of the major aims of education is to prepare students to take on – both at present and in the future (during the subsequent educational stages, in their adult lives) – various life roles. Nevertheless, it is difficult to talk about preparation for the future as certain life roles are taken up right in the course of education, when students attend school. In order to perform these roles well, it is necessary to assume the responsibility for one's own decisions and behaviour as well as reflexive approach to how our own behaviour projects onto the feelings and functioning of other people. In a natural way, student in-class behaviour becomes an area where students can learn attitudes facilitating their own development, care for the needs and rights of others, influencing the emergence of conditions conductive to becoming successful, committing mistakes and learning from them, correcting them, experiencing the positive and negative consequences of their behaviour. They can, but do not have to – disciplining solutions employed by teachers can translate into stimulating sensible student socialisation to a varying extent. Some solutions, e.g. score-based evaluation of behaviour, have the "original sin" inscribed in them. This results in the absence of reflexivity over their ethical choices and internalising of values, and is substituted with subordination to non-reflexive external rules.

At least a minimal level of disciplining in-class student behaviour is a prerequisite in order to execute the teaching-learning process. A high level of in-class student discipline allows to devote more time to teaching, it creates an environment which facilitates the efficient use of lessons. Moreover, it turns out that what happens at the level of an individual class, and not school, is of crucial importance. At this micro level most important everyday student concerns are played out. It needs to be noticed that some teachers, leaving aside what happens at the level of the institution as a whole, employ original solutions in the area of reacting to inappropriate student behaviour. In some cases this might even entail contesting the rules already present at a given school. For instance, a teacher does not confiscate a student's mobile phone, despite the school principles, but indicates with a gesture that he/she should put it in his/her bag (Bulach et. al., 1995; Hill and Rowe, 1996).

The issue with in-class discipline is a serious one. In the United States as much as the third of the teacher population states that improper student behaviour to a significant extent disturbs the process of teaching-learning in their practice (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). As a consequence, this problem is treated as a serious one, issues of the so-called school discipline return to the mainstream of social studies (Blank and Shavit, 2013; Van de Werfhorst et. al., 2012).

Devoting time to the work concerning discipline is also a good way of ensuring student safety at school, something which has come to be regarded as a major issue, one through which parents, educational authorities, and the media perceive the functioning of schools. The impact of sensibly carried out solutions aimed at maintaining discipline at school has been empirically verified (cf. Gregory et al., 2010). Finally, the aspect of teacher health and well-being is of importance. The difficulties that inappropriate student behaviour poses are related to incurring significant emotional costs – the feeling of helplessness and related negative emotions result in serious mental strain. Lowering the number of stressful situations resulting from the difficulties in maintaining classroom discipline can be the reason of deriving more work-related satisfaction and – by the same token – contribute to the improvement in the teacher-student relation. At the same time, it is important to highlight that a contrary situation induces the emergence of the vicious circle. The teacher, who experiences student misbehaviour, including aggression, is starting to feel burned out. Due to this, his/her motivation and working efficiency in the area of dealing with such behaviour decreases. Teachers' behaviour is influenced by his/her emotional arousal and starts to exhibit authoritarian tendencies which can be observed when the teacher reacts with withdrawal and aggression alternately. This, in turn, gets noticed by students and as a consequence results in an increase in the number of and/or the quality of unruly student behaviour, which usually is a derivative of loosening the bond between students and the teacher (Alvarez, 2007). Therefore the cause drives the effect which, in turn, drives the cause making the teacher's situation more and more difficult and leads to severely difficult situations, e.g. when the teacher unable to cope with such behaviour goes beyond ethical boundaries by using violence against students or vice versa.

Also critical voices have been expressed in the literature with regard to the very idea of discipline at school. Alfie Kohn (2006) in his book *Beyond discipline. From compliance to community* harshly criticises planning and implementing any measures aimed at maintaining discipline by teachers.

He contends that irrespective of what solution is used, the main overt or covert aim is the subordination of students to the teacher. Such subordination cannot be, according to Kohn, treated as a significant educational value. He emphasises that most measures taken by teachers, for whom discipline is crucial, do not result in students acquiring social skills and becoming better people. Teacher's disciplining strategies, especially behavioural ones, i.e. relying on punishment and reward, are seen – within this critical evaluation – as manipulative. Such classification is motivated by what the teacher's aim is, i.e. a narrow understanding of the pragmatic influence over students' behaviour.

Kohn (2006), on the basis of empirical research, points to the fact that none of the teachers whom he met, and whose classes were orderly, deliberately introduced solutions with the aim of maintaining discipline. The order was a result of other measures, e.g. superb teaching.
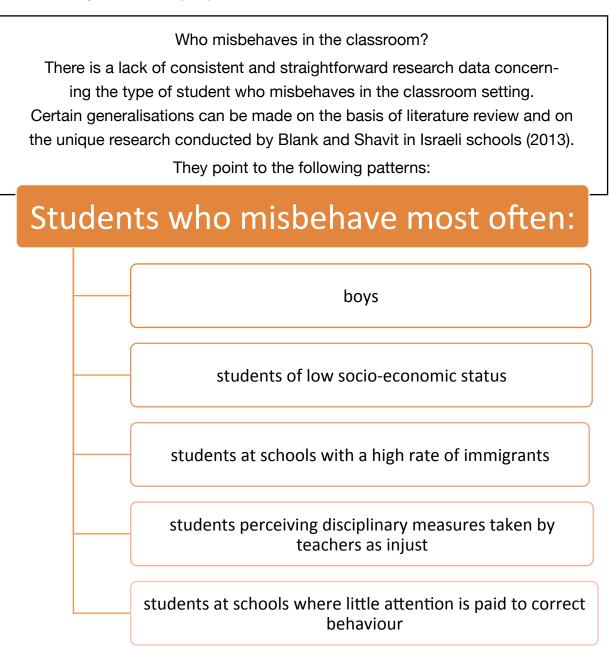
Kohn's critique is a valuable voice in the pedagogical literature. Even if we do not wish to accept it *in toto*, it should trigger reflections in every person who, in their pedagogical praxis, introduces solutions related to discipline at school. It is always worth thinking about why we decided to introduce certain measures and what is their ethical and educational value. However, it is often the case that a number of solutions introduced in this area are completely unreflective and persons introducing them are guided only by achieving 'immediate relief'.

What kind of behaviour breaches discipline?

It seems that everybody can intuitively say what kind of behaviour breaches discipline. The most frequent definition – among teachers – is that this is "behaviour which goes against the assumed norms". Such a definition can be seen as deficient in many respects, however it suffices for our needs as we will be concerned mostly with issues regarding its practical application. Apart from aggressive behaviour, which is unacceptable for the teacher due to causing harm to others, evaluation of other behaviours and considering them as breaching discipline depends on the situational context. A straightforward example might be the "we do not talk during lessons" rule. A teacher giving a lecture will most certainly consider students violating this rule as an instance of breaching discipline; in turn, a conversation between students – when doing exercises requiring exchanging ideas – will be desired behaviour. A similar observation can be made when we analyse requirements of different schools, or even individual teachers, regarding permissible student appearance on school premises (attire, make-up, jewellery). Differences between individual institutions are significant in this respect and range from a complete absence of relevant regulations to detailed rules which are strictly enforced. Since "engraved in stone", straightforward and objective rules concerning many aspects of school discipline are absent, more importance should be attributed to the question of how such rules should be constructed, enforced, and how to act so that they are implemented and, finally, what to do if they are violated.

It is worth specifying the definition of behaviour breaching discipline in order to make it useful not only for research purposes but also for practicing teachers. Student misbehaviour needs to satisfy at least one of the following conditions: (1) make teacher's work impossible or significantly disturb it; (2) violate other students' right to studying in class; (3) be physically or mentally threatening to somebody and/or (4) consist in damaging somebody's posession (Levin and Nolan, 2000). Another useful categorisation has been put forward by Shechtman and Leichtentritt (2004). The authors suggest assuming two types of difficult behaviours as a criterion of breaching discipline: *misbehaviour* (disturbing teaching, aggression towards the teacher or other students, etc.) and *off-task behaviour* (lack of participation in classwork).

The Slovenian researcher, Mateja Pšunder (2005), recognises the categorisation based on the aspect of intensity (gravity) of inappropriate behaviour. This author, by referring to the official rules in the Slovenian school, utilises a scale encompassing behaviours which are not enumerated in the official student's rights and responsibilities which are defined as violations (cheating, reading newspapers during classes), behaviours which are included in the official documentation and defined as less serious offences (e.g. rude behaviour towards the teacher or other students) as well as behaviours which are considered to be serious violations of laws even in the general legislation (e.g. theft, physical aggression towards others, vandalism).

These typologies are based on the criterion of "gravity" of behaviour, and more precisely on the degree to which a given behaviour disturbs the social climate at a given school and interferes with the rights of other people.

Who misbehaves in the classroom?

There is a lack of consistent and straightforward research data concerning the type of student who misbehaves in the classroom setting.
Certain generalisations can be made on the basis of literature review and on the unique research conducted by Blank and Shavit in Israeli schools (2013).
They point to the following patterns:

Students who misbehave most often:

boys

students of low socio-economic status

students at schools with a high rate of immigrants

students perceiving disciplinary measures taken by teachers as injust

students at schools where little attention is paid to correct behaviour

How frequent is student misbehaviour in the Polish school?

Student misbehaviour and its frequency is an issue receiving vast media attention, often containing scandalous overtones, and arousing strong emotions. Representatives of older generations reminisce about past times when "nobody could allow themselves to behave inappropriately", and at the same time point to the fact that at present inappropriate behaviour can be noticed more and more often. It is also frequently the case that an individual instance of an inappropriate student behaviour at school is publicised and exploited by the media for a long time. Consequently the audience of such messages can be under the impression that such situations occur at schools on a regular basis.

It is worth looking at statistics on the frequency of student misbehaviour, as reported by teachers (table 1).

Table 1
Inappropriate student behaviour that occurred during lessons led by teachers who took part in the research (N=1214) during 14 days prior to data gathering [%]

Type of behaviour	Not once [%]	1-2 times [%]	3-4 times [%]	5 or more times [%]
Student was loud (talked, laughed, was noisy, produced different sounds, knocked, tapped)	15	35	21	29
Student was late for classes	25	44	19	12
Student was completely passive, was not involved in in-class activities	30	43	17	10
Student poked other students	35	44	14	7
Student ate or chew gum during classes despite you banned it	48	36	10	5
Student cheated during exam	50	36	9	5
Student used vulgar language or gestures	53	31	10	6
Student ignored your instructions and refused to carry them out	55	32	8	4
Student used his/her mobile phone, e.g. texted somebody	56	29	10	5
Student was involved in off-task behaviour (read newspapers, played cards, etc.)	60	29	7	4
Student commented on what you said, your slips of the tongue	74	21	4	2
Student threatened his/her classmates	76	18	4	2

Type of behaviour	Not once [%]	1-2 times [%]	3-4 times [%]	5 or more times [%]
Student damaged other students' posessions	78	20	2	0
Student threw objects	80	16	2	1
Student damaged school property (e.g. furniture, walls)	81	16	2	1
Student left the classroom without your permission	87	10	2	1
Student beat up another student	88	10	2	1
Student behaved during the lesson as if he/she was intoxicated or under the influence of other psychoactive substances	91	6	2	1
Student fell asleep during lesson	95	5	0	0
Student filmed or audio-recorded your lesson despite the fact you did not want this	96	3	1	0
Student threatened you	97	3	0	0
Student destroyed your possessions	97	3	0	0

Source: This research was carried out within the 1.R.06 project entitled "Positive and negative elements of psychosocial working environment at school vis-à-vis teacher-student relationship" (P. Pozytywne i negatywne elementy psychospołecznego środowiska pracy w szkole a przemoc w relacji nauczyciel – uczeń) by National Centre for Workplace Health Promotion at Nofer institute of Occupational Medicine in Łódź (P. Krajowe Centrum Promocji Zdrowia w Miejscu Pracy Instytutu Medycyny Pracy w Łodzi) with Dr Jacek Pyżalski as the Principal Investigator. The project was funded within the "Improvement of safety and working conditions" (P. "Poprawa bezpieczeństwa i warunków pracy") long-term scheme coordinated by Central Institute for Labour Protection - National Research Institute (P. Centralny Instytut Ochrony Pracy – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy). The representative sample consisted of 1214 teachers who participated in Paper and Pencil Interviews.

The research has shown that respondents most frequently experience minor instances of behaviours which breach classroom discipline, such as off-topic conversations or being noisy. They rarely come across serious misbehaviour, e.g. throwing objects. These patterns are corroborated by other studies conducted on Polish teachers (Pyżalski, 2007, 2010). It is worth drawing attention to the fact that these results stand in stark contrast to the already analysed image of schools constructed by the media which publicise particularly drastic cases of misbehaviour and present them as the norm.

Preventing misbehaviour

Another pattern connected with the frequency of the occurrence of behaviour breaching classroom discipline is their intensity in first grades of subsequent stages of education (the first and

the fourth grades of primary school, the first grade of middle school, and secondary school). The common feature of these situations is that new students meet a new teacher whom they have not "learned" yet. "Learning of a teacher" is getting to know – by the students – the teacher's expectations regarding behaviour in various routine situations such as taking seats in the classroom, checking homework, volunteering to answer questions, answering questions "at the blackboard", pair work, group work, doing a certain kind of exercise, etc. and becoming fluent in satisfying these expectations. There is no unified expectation for all teachers regarding student behaviour in these situations. Naturally, students by means of trial and error, after some time discover teacher's expectations and will adopt to them to a greater or lesser extent. However, this process can be speeded up by devoting more attention, at the beginning of the school year, to the questions of communicating (at least the most important) expectations regarding student behaviour in various classroom situations and by doing so create an opportunity to drill them. In this sense the process of learning disciplined behaviour resembles the process of studying a kind of a subject – it is learning the procedures and then gaining fluency in applying them.

Student behaviour is also influenced by factors related to the teacher personality and the philosophy of teaching that he/she assumes. Sometimes two types of teachers are distinguished: the answering type and the questioning type. This simple distinction entails numerous consequences. It is not only the dominant style of conducting lessons but also the teacher expectations with regard to student behaviour as well as the behaviour which can be a reaction to his/her methods of teaching (e.g. talking caused by monotonous half-an-hour lecture, little involvement on the part of students and dealing with other matters when the teacher poses questions that are addressed by one student only). The awareness of the causal relationship between the didactic solutions and student behaviour can help to prevent and more successfully address behaviours breaching classroom discipline. Didactics and classroom discipline constitute a self-regulating system.

Naturally, of key importance are the solutions employed in order to strive to maintain classroom discipline. Their selection is crucial as any mistakes committed at this stage can be a cause of serious issues. We present this problem below by referring to a selection of examples helpful in didactic work.

A jar of pasta or a board for evaluating student behaviour?

In practice, there are many solutions regarding the maintenance of classroom discipline. Not all of them are educationally sensible, though – unfortunately some of the less sensible ones or even the harmful ones are gaining on popularity. It is worth evaluating their didactic potential on the basis of two seemingly similar methods of discipline maintenance.

1ˢᵗ solution – behaviour-evaluation board

The teacher hangs a board with students' names on the wall and attaches a label appropriate to each student's behaviour (e.g. a white or black sticker). The board needs to be placed in a spot that ensures visibility. Theoretically, its purpose is to provide students with the feedback regarding their behaviour and at the same time – when a student receives negative evaluation – motivate her/him to improve her/his behaviour.

What is the "hidden programme" of this method?

Athough this solution assumes that the teacher evaluates students' behaviour on a daily basis, many students see it as a global evaluation. This mechanism is particularly visible in the case of younger children whose evaluations of themselves are shaped by an adult authority. Secondly, the publicly displayed board is read by all children. Students are quickly compartmentalised into "good" and "bad". Younger children are quick to assume opinions of audults regarding these peers who misbehave which translates into their attitude towards these peers – for instance, they might not want to talk to them or play with them. Thus, we are dealing with divisions within the class which are not constructive in nature. Frequently, the overall effect is that the method under discussion, instead of motivating students to positive behaviour, stigmatises those who misbehave and solidifies their behaviour and self-perception. The authors of the chapter heard about cases of negatively evaluated students destroying the evaluation board during a break due to the fact that he/she could not cope with frustration.

2ⁿᵈ solution – a jar of pasta

The "jar of pasta" method constitutes an alternative to the above-discussed board method. Despite it might seem similar for some – as it is also based on behavioural mechanisms – it significantly differs from the first method. The teacher brings a transparent glass vessel to the classroom, on which he/she draws a line, places a sticker or a colourful ribbon at the edge of the vessel. He/she places it in a visible spot so that every student sees it all the time and then informs the class that if good things will be happening in the classroom, pasta will be gathered in the jar. The teacher puts pasta in the vessel if a single student or a group of students or all students do something positive. If the level of pasta goes over the level indicated by the teacher, the class together with the teacher celebrates the joint achievement. For example, the teacher can play the favourite game with the students or conduct the class outdoors.

Benefits of employing the "jar with pasta" method

– The presented method is a collective solution. This means that the class is not divided into the good and bad students and thus stigmatisation of the latter group is avoided. Even individual positive behaviour is a contribution to the well being of the whole group. Thanks to this method the class becomes a cooperative group wanting to achieve a common goal.

– It is based only on positive reinforecement – thus it is a motivation for good deeds. Therefore, both individual students and the whole class collective – with the use of this method – is oriented towards behaving positively and not to refrain from misbehaving. At the same time the reward, which we set ourselves, should not be particularly valuable but rather of a symbolic value. This method, thus, is not an attempt at "bribing" students.

– This method gives the teaher certain flexibility with respect to the activities that he/she wants to support. These could be related to maintaining clean classroom: we can, for example, notice that everybody in the class remembered about throwing away litter, leaving classroom furniture in order, or bringing workbooks and textbooks to lesson. In the same way student behaviour directly related to studying can be rewarded. We can praise individual or collective effrots during an in-class exercise or that an individual student memorised a given word. Finally, we can reinforce certain social behaviours, e.g. when a student helps their peer.

– This method helps reinforcing students who rarely make an attempt at positive baheviour and experience problems with adaptation in a peer group. It is up to the teacher to notice such behaviour and reinforce it in a given student even for a seemingly insignificant behaviour, e.g. a well-cleaned blackboard, correctly performed exercise. This type of reinforcement is conductive to achieving success by the student and gives the feeling of being a fully-fledged member of the class collective. Other students in the class start to have more positive perceptions of the given student who was able to contribute to the success of the whole group.

– The children learn positive behaviour while performing everyday activities. Reacting to proper behaviour by putting pasta in the jar (especially when accompanied by positive commentary), attributes positive meaning to the rewarded behaviour.

– Using this method "forces" the teacher to concentrate on positive student behaviour. It is beneficial for the teacher's mental well being whose way of perceiving certain in-class situations undergoes changes.

These two examples of concrete methods regulating discipline clearly point to the fact that the selection of measures done by the teacher has tremendous consequences. It is easy to undertake such activities which seem to be successful but – in reality – are more harmful than beneficial. Reflexivity is always important in teacher's work – in the case of measures related to discipline it takes on special importance.

Teacher activity at the beginning of the school year aimed at instilling correct behaviour in the student in various classroom situations, motivating to good behaviour and building the collective sense of the class functioning gives hope for significant limiting of behaviour breaching classroom discipline. However, these do not guarantee that undesired behaviour is completely eliminated. If they are noticed, the quality of teacher's reaction (intervention) is of crucial importance as it can lead to solving a problematic situation or to its escalation.

Intervening in case misbehaviour occurs

There is not a single disciplining method which can be universal, i.e. could be drawn on in all situations where discipline is breached, and at the same ensures a positive effect. What is successful in the case of one teacher, does not work out for the other teacher; sometimes the same teacher notices that in the case of one student or group of students a given method yields expected results, but does not in other cases. For this reason teacher's drawing on different disciplining methods and adjusting them to his/her own personality, reasons of misbehaviour and to the social context is of paramount importance (Pyżalski, 2010). With such a complex structure of factors influencing student behaviour, finding an adequate method of intervention can be a serious challenge which is further complicated by the expectation (be it on the part of teacher of others) that the intervention be completely efficient. A more rational attitude would be to assume that the teacher aims at maximising the likelihood of correcting student misbehaviour.

This attitude allows avoiding the cure-for-all solution (which is non-existent), and points to the need of including the above-mentioned factors which bear influence on the efficiency of disciplining measures. The following rule for implementing disciplining measures might be helpful: "use minimum force to correct improper behaviour". This rule assumes that the teacher, due to his/her role within the classroom setting, has the authority and can use it. It entails that he/she decides about the selection and implementing this and not any other disciplining measure. It also means that, in order to draw on a given method that is at the teacher's disposal, he/she needs significant authority (Kołodziejczyk, 2010). It is worth assuming that virtually the only behaviour that the teacher can control is her/his behaviour.

Among the plethora of disciplining measures, we can find those that use the minimum of teacher's authority and, at the same time, leave it in the hands of the student. A relevant example includes using a method of nonverbal communication, e.g. maintaining eye contact with the misbehaving student, standing close to the student, or indicating – by means of gesture – "put it in your bag", "silence". This method suffices to stop the undesired behaviour in many cases. However, in order to ensure their efficiency, the teacher needs to be convinced that the student is able to decipher the message, find the solution and use it.

In situations where the student's misbehaviour is motivated by the internal "turbulences", e.g. due to anger, frustration or uncertainty, drawing on other methods might be more successful, for instance, verbal methods of intervention which also draw on insignificant level of teacher's authority. Their aim is to make the student aware of his/her behaviour and its effect on others as well as make him/her talk about the problem. Usually "talking oneself out" leads to the improvement in the student's behaviour and provides the teacher with important hints as to the further work with the student. An example of a method which is efficient in such situations is the use of messages of the "I" type – as suggested by Tomas Gordon (1999) – and the method of active listening. As regards the "I" message, the teacher indicates the student behaviour and its effece as well as his/her feelings regarding this behaviour.

More teacher authority is needed when the teacher decides to confront the student but – at the same time – aims to make a deal with the student which will ensure order and allow to "save face" both by the student and the teacher. Here, making a deal means a sensible agreement and not one's victory. The role of the teacher is narrowed down to the role of an "advisor" who – by talking to the student – does not tell him/her what should be done but rather asks adequate questions thus triggering critical thinking in the student about his/her behaviour, its negative effects and future consequences. In order to finish the confrontation, the teacher asks for an acceptable compromise which will allow the student to cope with the reality and – at the same time – respect the rules of classroom behaviour. The confrontation and making the deal refer to the student using cognitive and rational skills for decision-making and controlling one's own behaviour. The teacher does not put forward the solution, but expects that the student is able to find it himself/herself (it contributes to his/her skills in this area in the future).

QUESTIONS: WHAT?, HOW?

The teacher creates the opportunity, for the misbehaving student, to reflect on this behaviour, the rules, and consequences as well as how to change his/her behaviour. He poses the following questions:

What have you done?

What are the rules?

What are the consequences if you continue behaving like this?

What will you do in order to change your behaviour? Or: What will you do to avoid the consequences?

The approaches which we have discussed should be efficient in most cases of student misbehaviour. However, in some situations, e.g. when the student is overemotional, unable to control his/her own behaviour or assumes defensive attitude, they can be insufficient and more decisive measures might be needed. They require a firmer stance on the part of the teacher (which should not be conflated with hostility or aggression) and spelling out the characteristics of the appropriate behaviour along with imposing obedience. Such measures assume the form of orders and defines the desired behaviour and the consequences in case the student does not adhere to it.

ORDER – IMPOSED CHOICE

It is used by the teacher in order to convey what behaviour is expected of students and provide a choice between adhering to these expectaions or bearing consequences. This technique consists of two elements:
1. Order to behave in a certain way
2. Consequence, tha follows, should a student not adhere

The two intervention techniques presented above ("Questions: what?, how?" and "Imposed choice") are disciplining measures which refer to consequences. Here, consequences are understood as the result of inappropriate student behaviour and are divided into natural and logical (Kołodziejczyk, 2005; McKenzie, 2008). The former is a direct outcome of inappropriate behaviour, and the role of the teacher is to make the student understand the connection between his/her behaviour and the negative consequences (e.g. the result of running through the corridor is the pain of a bruised knee). The latterare imposed by the teacher, logically related to misbehaviour (e.g. the consequence of disturbing group work is working individually or compensate for the harm done). The presented types of consequences are juxtaposed against punishment. The latter is characterised by one out of the two: it is not logically connected with misbehaviour (e.g. as a consequence of in-class misbehaviour, the student receives the punishment of not being allowed to participate in a class tour) or too severe when compared to the inappropriate behaviour (e.g. cleaning all desks in a classroom as a consequence of damaging a school desk by writing on it).

It is better to look for disciplining measures among logical and natural consequences rather than punishments. Adequately selected consequences are connected to a concrete instance of misbehaviour which constitutes an active learning element which enhances the understanding of the rules of social life.

Most frequent mistakes committed by teachers during interventions

The analysis of studies concerning the issue of teachers coping with discipline maintenance helped us to determine the following educational mistakes related to teacher's reactions:

Too severe measures – most student behaviours which breach classroom discipline are minor incidents. Measures undertaken by the teacher which to a great extent are related to his/her authority very often contribute to "fuelling" confrontation and escalating the issue.

Ambiguous messages – these are messages which do not say how the student should behave but show what is not expected of him/her. The following is a relevant example: a student left his/her desk and walks around the classroom, as a result he/she hears the following message: *Do not walk around the classroom*. The ambiguity of this message consists in the fact that in order to proceed in accordance with it, the student can behave in a number of ways: stop walking and stand still or start jumping, etc. All these behaviours will adhere to the teacher's order (stop walking), however their realisation is not the teacher's intention. A straightforward message communicates what the student should do, e.g. in a similar situation it could be worded in the following way: *Take your seat.*

An order without an alternative – frequently, when requesting a specific classroom behaviour, teachers indicate how they wish the students behave in a specific moment. Psychologists talk about such orders as "requests" for defiance, especially when such orders are made in front of the whole class. This means that the student can choose between two alternatives: adherence or opposition to the request. For students who are striving to gain their peer's respect, choosing the former entails loss of prestige, hence they often opt for the latter. Therefore, the more effective method is to give the student an alternative, e.g. if a student is playing a game that is distracting others (i.e. it should not be there), he/she can be faced with the following message using the language of "choice": *Put the game in your bag or on my desk.*

Conclusions

The solutions that we have discussed refer to several dimensions of the issue of breaching discipline at school; both theoretical and very practical in nature connected with everyday pedagogic practice. The binding core of these themes, we contend, is their axiological dimension connected with teacher's attitude towards the student – the one who engages in misbehaviour. Here, of crucial importance is teacher's reflexivity regarding how to take measures in the area under discussion in order to correct student's behaviour, and – at the same time – maintain good relations with this student and positively impact his/her development.

Problem questions:

Which student in-class behaviours should be considered to be breaching discipline? Why?

How do I prepare myself to teach disciplined behaviour to my class?

What can I do in order to make my class a learning collective?

Which of the approaches to intervention do I consider most effective? What can I gain and what can I lose employing other approaches?

In my practice, do I resort to consequences or punishment most often?

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