Australian Journal of Teacher Education

Volume 39 | Issue 6 Article 4

2014

Punish Them or Engage Them? Teachers' Views of Unproductive Student Behaviours in the Classroom

Anna M. Sullivan
University of South Australia, anna.sullivan@unisa.edu.au

Bruce Johnson
University of South Australia

Larry Owens
Flinders University

Robert Conway
Flinders University

Recommended Citation
Sullivan, A. M., Johnson, B., Owens, L., & Conway, R. (2014). Punish Them or Engage Them? Teachers' Views of Unproductive Student Behaviours in the Classroom. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 39*(6).
http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2014v39n6.6

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.
http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol39/iss6/4

Punish Them or Engage Them? Teachers' Views of Unproductive Student Behaviours in the Classroom

Anna M. Sullivan
Bruce Johnson
University of South Australia
Larry Owens
Robert Conway
Flinders University

Abstract: This paper reports on a study that investigated the extent to which student behaviour is a concern for school teachers. A questionnaire was used to investigate teachers' views about student behaviour in their classes. The results suggest that low-level disruptive and disengaged student behaviours occur frequently and teachers find them difficult to manage. Aggressive and anti-social behaviours occur infrequently. Teachers employ strategies to manage unproductive behaviours that locate the problem with the student. This paper argues that teachers could benefit from understanding how the classroom ecology influences engagement and therefore student behaviour, rather than focusing on 'fixing' unproductive behaviour.

Issues related to student behaviour increasingly are becoming a shared concern especially as 'behaviour is one of the dominant discourses of schooling' (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012, p. 98). In many countries like Australia, there is a growing sense of 'social anxiety' (Critcher, 2003, p. 147) about students' behaviour in schools (Ball et al., 2012). The media illustrate society's unease by consistently reporting widespread public and political concern over allegedly negative and deteriorating student behaviour in the nation's public schools (e.g. Barr, 2009; Cameron, 2010; Donnelly, 2009; Watson, 2012). Politicians, education systems and schools are producing a plethora of policies, strategies and practices that promote a sense of 'control' and order in schools. Earlier international research (Wubbels, 2007) suggests that the 'problem' has been somewhat overplayed. Yet what do we know about the nature and extent of problems related to student behaviour in today's schools?

This paper reports a study that investigated the extent to which student behaviour is a concern for teachers in schools. More specifically, the aims of this study were (a) to investigate the nature and extent of unproductive student behaviour in classrooms; and (b) how teachers manage this behaviour.

An overview of research on student behaviour reveals several recurring themes that indicate the significance of this research:

- Maintaining orderly learning environments is important because they are associated with high student engagement and achievement (Angus et al., 2009; Creemers, 1994; Hattie, 2003; Lewis, Romi, Qui, & Katz, 2005; Overton & Sullivan, 2008; Sullivan, 2009).
- Ineffective classroom management leads to detrimental effects including student resistance and disengagement, general misbehaviour and, in some cases, school violence (Angus et al., 2009; Lewis et al., 2005).

- Teachers report classroom management to be one of the greatest concerns in their teaching, often leading to burnout, job dissatisfaction and early exit from the profession (Australian Education Union, 2008; Blase, 1986; Friedman, 1995; Ingersoll, 2001).
- Student misbehaviour can impact negatively on the professional resilience of beginning teachers (Day et al., 2006; Department of Education Science and Training, 2002; Johnson et al., 2012; Johnson, Sullivan, & Williams, 2009; Jones, 2006).
- Troublesome student behaviour and disengagement from school is linked with alienation and truancy (Soodak, 2003; Zyngier, 2007).

Background

In the UK, in response to media reports and professional association concerns throughout the 1980s that levels of violence towards teachers and lack of discipline had increased in schools, the British government established the Elton Enquiry into discipline in schools (Department of Education and Science, 1989). This enquiry found that most behaviours of concern to teachers were relatively trivial, but persistent. 'Talking out of turn', 'hindering other pupils', 'calculated idleness or work avoidance' and 'verbal abuse towards other pupils' were among the behaviours most frequently mentioned. Following similar public debate about discipline in Australian schools, a team of South Australian researchers (Adey, Oswald, & Johnson, 1991) conducted a series of surveys on teachers' views of discipline in schools. They employed a modified version of the questionnaire used in the Elton Enquiry to investigate the views of over 5,000 teachers in metropolitan and country, public, private and Catholic schools across the state of South Australia. In general terms, the findings were similar to those of the Elton Enquiry; that is, a consistent pattern of minor discipline problems was found from Reception to Year 12. The most common misbehaviours included idleness and work avoidance, hindering others and talking out of turn. Serious behaviours such as physical destructiveness and aggression were relatively uncommon. In essence, the findings did not support the widespread concern about students being 'out of control' in the school system. However, it was clear that many teachers did experience minor but persistent discipline problems on a regular basis. The authors concluded that, although the actual behaviours seemed somewhat minor, they impeded learning and their repetitive nature was a major source of teacher stress (Johnson, Oswald, & Adey, 1993).

In a review of the literature on teacher perceptions of troublesome classroom behaviour, Beaman and Wheldall (1997) concluded that media reports of violence in schools were sensationalist. Their review showed that, consistent with the earlier reports (Department of Education and Science, 1989; Johnson et al., 1993), most of the misbehaviour in schools was innocuous. For instance, talking out of turn was found to be the behaviour reported the most by almost half of the teachers in all samples that they reviewed. This was followed by hindering other students, and idleness and slowness. Although relatively trivial, the authors agreed that the high frequency of these behaviours make them 'irritating and time-wasting and, over time, ultimately exhausting and stressful' (1997, p. 53).

Beaman, Wheldall and Kemp (2007) returned to the issue of troublesome classroom behaviours ten years later in order to update their literature review. Their review once again confirmed the earlier findings that, while classroom behaviour is of great concern to teachers, the main classroom disruptions are relatively trivial. Once again talking out of turn topped the frequency list and again these behaviours happened so often that they ultimately caused considerable stress for teachers. As in previous research, boys were consistently identified to cause more difficulty for teachers than girls.

In summary, over a period of twenty years, research focused on student behaviour difficulties has consistently found that, generally, schools are functioning effectively and that most of the behaviours that teachers find difficult are relatively minor, but high in frequency. It is these repetitive behaviours that teachers find challenging and which lead to stress and burnout. Thus, the research suggests that the 'behaviour problem' portrayed by the media and perceived by politicians and the public has been overplayed.

Managing Unproductive Behaviours

While most teachers spend considerable time and energy trying to prevent students from disrupting the learning environment, the strategies they use frequently involve 'controlling' students to ensure their compliance (Slee, 1995). Rewards are used to promote compliant behaviour and sanctions are used to deter students from disrupting orderly learning environments (Kohn, 2006; Maguire, Ball, & Braun, 2010; Slee, 1995). Discipline strategies include authoritarian sanctions of increasing severity in response to repeated rule infringements. Such 'escalating consequences' (Raby, 2010, p. 44) are often referred to as 'step systems'. Steps typically involve an escalation of punitive responses such as giving a warning/reminder, in-class time-out, out-of-class time-out, referral to a school leader, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and permanent exclusion from school.

Educators use step systems in an attempt to be logical and fair, or to support students to make good choices (Raby, 2010). Policies often encourage educators to focus on approaches, such as step systems, to help them gain "effective classroom control" (Maguire et al., 2010, p. 155). Additionally polices suggest that by "fixing behaviour [they] will 'fix' learning" (Maguire et al., 2010, p. 155), that is by gaining control, learning can occur. However, some scholars argue that approaches that focus on gaining control of students, in fact exercise power and promote obedience (Raby, 2010; Slee, 1995) and do not necessarily engage students in their learning. Research shows that "little evidence supports punitive and exclusionary approaches" (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010, p. 48).

A concern raised about mainstream policies and practices related to student behaviour is that they invariably locate 'the problem' within individual students, rather than in the context of classrooms. This promotes a 'discourse of concealment' in which considerations of other factors that influence student behaviour are systematically omitted from public debate (Barthes, 1972 cited in Maguire et al., 2010, p. 166). By ignoring contextual factors and focussing on the 'misbehaving student' or 'naughty child', the attributional orientation of these policies and practices is conveniently limited. Such deficit views of students seem to prevail in schooling systems (McInerney, 2009). This means that when a student exhibits behaviours that are deemed inappropriate, teachers tend to locate responsibility for the behaviour with the student rather than consider other factors that might contribute to the behaviour (Kohn, 2006; Maguire et al., 2010). Therefore, teachers often use ways to help or coerce students to gain self-control of their behaviour. That is, they 'blame' the student for inappropriate behaviour.

Theoretical framework

A central theoretical premise guiding the study reported here is that engagement in learning directly influences student behaviour. We know that there is a well-established link between student engagement, student behaviour and academic achievement (Angus et al., 2009; Hattie, 2003; Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Therefore in this study, we use the terms

'productive' and 'unproductive' behaviours (Angus et al., 2009) rather than the more commonly used terms in the literature of 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' behaviours to reflect this link between behaviour, and teaching and learning.

Recently, a significant Australian longitudinal study investigated the relationship between classroom behaviour and academic performance (Angus et al., 2009). In the study, teachers were asked to rate their students on a checklist of ten 'unproductive behaviours', defined as actions that impeded a student's academic progress. These unproductive behaviours included the following: aggression, non-compliance, disruption, inattention, erratic behaviour, being impulsive, lack of motivation, being unresponsive, being unprepared, and irregular attendance. The authors found that in any year, 60 per cent of students were considered to behave productively, 20 per cent were disengaged, 12 per cent were low–level disruptive and 8 per cent were uncooperative. Over the four-year period of the study, 40 per cent of students were consistently productive, 20 per cent were consistently unproductive and the others fluctuated from year to year. In relation to academic performance, the uncooperative group, typified by aggression, non-compliance and disruption, performed worst but the disengaged group who were compliant and not aggressive, performed only marginally better. Students in the disengaged group were generally cooperative but found their school work uninteresting, gave up on tasks, were easily distracted, did not prepare for lessons and opted out of class activities. The students who exhibited low-level disruptive behaviours, sought attention, interrupted and provoked others, but were not typically disengaged. As the authors noted, the group which received the greatest time and resources in relation to behaviour was the uncooperative group, while the quiet, disengaged group was often left un-noticed. In their recommendations, the authors highlighted the importance of increasing levels of student engagement through changes to policy, pedagogy and resources.

We recognise the importance of creating classroom conditions that promote academic engagement because these are crucial in establishing schools and classrooms where behaviours are more productive. We draw on an ecological approach to explaining and managing both productive and unproductive student behaviour (Conway, 2012). In the ecological model we use (see Figure 1), the classroom is thought of as an ecosystem involving interactions between the physical environment, teacher characteristics, curriculum including pedagogy and resources, and a multitude of student variables in examining specific productive and unproductive behaviours and teacher responses.

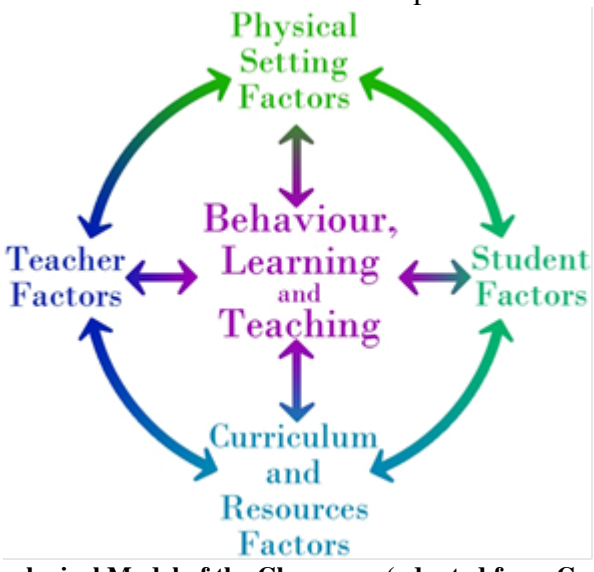


Figure 1: Ecological Model of the Classroom (adapted from Conway, 2012)

Explanations of both productive and unproductive behaviours must therefore consider the interaction of all four components of the specific learning ecosystem. Hence the key principle is that student behaviour does not exist in isolation but within the interaction between all elements of the ecosystem. At the whole-school level, as well as internal factors, the influences of outside factors (home, socioeconomic, political, cultural/racial/religious) impact on the ecology of the school. This model leads us to understand that various factors influence student behaviour and that responsibility for behaviour should not be fully located with students.

Methods

We used the Behaviour at School Study Teacher Survey (BaSS Teacher Survey) to investigate the views of teachers about student behaviour in South Australian schools. We adapted the survey from the Discipline in Schools Questionnaire (DiSQ), (Adey et al., 1991). In the web-based questionnaire, teachers and school leaders were asked to identify a range of student behaviours that they observed or encountered in their classrooms and around the school during the week prior to completing the survey. The student behaviours listed in the survey ranged from relatively minor misdemeanours to more serious acts of verbal abuse, bullying and physical violence. We added a number of extra student behaviours to those in the DiSQ to capture the unproductive behaviours associated with passive disengagement reported by Angus et al. (2009) and indirect forms of aggression and cyberbullying (Owens, 1996; Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000; Spears, Slee, Owens, & Johnson, 2009). As well as identifying the range and frequency of student behaviours in classes and around the school, teachers were asked how they responded to these behaviours, how difficult they found these behaviours to manage, and how stressed they were as a result. Finally, respondents were asked to identify the reasons they thought their students behaved in the ways identified in their classes and around the school. This paper, however, specifically reports on teachers' perceptions of unproductive classroom behaviours and how they manage these behaviours.

The web-based survey was open for 5 months from 12 June - 6 November 2011. A total of 1750 Reception – Year 12 teachers in South Australia, who had classroom teaching responsibilities for 50% or more of their working week, began the survey and 1380 (or 79%) completed all questions. The trimmed mean time for completing the survey was 30 minutes.

The pool of respondents comprised teachers who taught in primary (49%) and secondary (51%) schools. Most respondents were female (68%). The majority of teachers were employed fulltime (80%) and on a permanent basis (79%). Most respondents were employed as teachers (71%) and the remainder were employed at management levels: senior teacher (22%); principal or deputy principal (7%); and one per cent did not indicate their employment status.

The teachers were employed in schools across all sectors in South Australia, which included metropolitan (66%), rural (24%) and remote (5%) locations. The size of the schools varied from small enrolments of less than 100 students (5%) to very large enrolments of greater than 1000 students (18%).

We organised the 23 items related to unproductive behaviours in classrooms conceptually into three groups and we applied rigorous psychometric criteria to help confirm construct validity. We followed internal consistency reliability and convergent and discriminant validity guidelines. Specifically, we examined the Cronbach alpha and applied the following guidelines (George, 2003): >0.9 Excellent; >0.8 Good; >0.7 Acceptable; >0.6 Questionable; >0.5 Poor; <0.5 Unacceptable.

Additionally, in all but two instances, we only retained items that demonstrated a corrected item-total correlation (CITC) >0.3. The two items that initially demonstrated CITC <0.3 were unproductive behaviours related to the use of technology, namely, using a mobile phone inappropriately (CITC .27), and using a laptop or iPad inappropriately (CITC .29). We decided to examine whether the two items were influenced by the school level, that is, primary or secondary. Further analyses confirmed that the two items demonstrated acceptable CITC when investigations were conducted with the secondary sub-sample, and we subsequently retained the items. As such, we identified three theoretical constructs, namely:

a) low-level disruptive behaviours (Cronbach alpha .90)
b) disengaged behaviours (Cronbach alpha .84)
c) aggressive and anti-social behaviours (Cronbach alpha .88)

We performed a series of analyses to investigate teachers' perspectives related to student behaviour in schools.

It is important to note that the overwhelming majority of respondents in this study (97%) indicated that the pattern of student classroom behaviour they reported was 'fairly typical' when compared with other school weeks.

Results

Table 1 shows the frequency of unproductive student behaviour in classrooms reported by teachers. Data analysis showed that teachers reported that many of the disengaged and low-level disruptive behaviours occurred very frequently. However, aggressive and antisocial behaviours occurred less frequently.

	% of all teachers (n = 1380)			
Unproductive Behaviours	Not at all	1 or 2 days per week	Almost daily/daily	Several times daily
Disengaged Behaviours				
Being late for class	10	24	43	24
Avoiding doing schoolwork	4	21	32	43
Disengaging from classroom activities	5	21	33	41
Low-Level Disruptive Behaviours				
Disrupting the flow of a lesson	14	21	32	33
Talking out of turn	4	18	29	50
Making distracting noises intentionally	26	23	26	24
Interfering with property	29	32	24	15
Moving around the room unnecessarily	20	27	26	27
Using a mobile phone inappropriately	56	19	11	13
Using a laptop or iPad inappropriately	67	20	8	6
Making impertinent remarks	27	33	21	19
Mucking around, being rowdy	18	34	28	21
Aggressive & Anti-social Behaviours				
Spreading rumours	38	41	18	3
Excluding peers	33	44	19	4
Verbally abusing other students	43	30	18	9
Verbally abusing teachers	74	18	6	2
Sexually harassing other students	72	21	6	1
Sexually harassing teachers	94	5	1	0
Physically aggressive towards other students	46	35	14	6
Physically aggressive towards teachers	93	6	1	0
Extremely violent to students or teachers	94	5	1	0
Physically destructive	78	18	3	0
Displaying uncharacteristically erratic behaviours	46	36	12	6

Table 1. Frequency of unproductive student behaviour in classrooms.

Note: In some instances the percentages do not add up to 100 because they have been rounded.

Inspection of the data in Table 1 shows that teachers encountered low-level disruptive behaviours and disengaged behaviours on an 'almost daily/daily' basis. The most prevalent unproductive student behaviours were talking out of turn, avoiding doing schoolwork and disengaging from classroom activities. Over two thirds of teachers reported disengaged behaviours on at least an 'almost daily/daily' basis. On the other hand, high percentages of

teachers reported that aggressive/anti-social behaviours either did not occur at all during the school week or occurred only on one or two days per week.

We examined the unproductive classroom behaviours most frequently addressed by teachers several times throughout the school day. Table 2 lists the ten most frequently reported unproductive behaviours and the associated percentages of teachers. The results indicated that the most reported unproductive student behaviours to occur in the previous week were low-level disruptive and disengaged behaviours.

Unproductive behaviours	**Type of behaviour**	**% of all teachers (n = 1380)**
Talking out of turn	Low-level disruptive	50
Avoiding doing schoolwork	Disengaged	43
Disengaging from classroom activities	Disengaged	41
Disrupting the flow of a lesson	Low-level disruptive	33
Moving around the room unnecessarily	Low-level disruptive	27
Being late for class	Disengaged	24
Making distracting noises intentionally	Low-level disruptive	24
Mucking around, being rowdy	Low-level disruptive	21
Making impertinent remarks	Low-level disruptive	19
Interfering with other students' or teachers' property	Low-level disruptive	15

Table 2. 10 Most Frequently Reported Unproductive Classroom Behaviours in the 'Several Times Daily' Category by Total Sample

We also examined the least reported unproductive behaviours that occurred in the last week. Table 3 presents the major ten behaviours that teachers did not address at all in their most recent teaching week and the associated percentages. These behaviours were all aggressive/anti-social in nature.

Unproductive behaviours	**Type of behaviour**	**% of all teachers (n = 1380)**
Being extremely violent towards other students or teachers	Aggressive/Anti-social	94
Sexually harassing teachers	Aggressive/Anti-social	94
Being physically aggressive towards teachers	Aggressive/Anti-social	93
Being physically destructive	Aggressive/Anti-social	78
Verbally abusing teachers	Aggressive/Anti-social	74
Sexually harassing other students	Aggressive/Anti-social	72
Displaying uncharacteristically erratic behaviours	Aggressive/Anti-social	46
Being physically aggressive towards other students	Aggressive/Anti-social	46

Verbally abusing other students	Aggressive/Anti-social	43
Spreading rumours	Aggressive/Anti-social	38

Table 3. 10 Least Reported Unproductive Classroom Behaviours by Total Sample

When asked to rank which of the unproductive student behaviours in the classroom were the most difficult to manage, teachers reported that the disengaged and low-level disruptive behaviours were the most challenging. Table 4 shows the six most difficult student behaviours teachers found to manage in classrooms.

Most Difficult Behaviours	**Type of behaviour**	**% of all teachers (n = 1380)**
Avoiding doing schoolwork	Disengaged	18.0
Disrupting the flow of a lesson	Low-level disruptive	16.7
Disengaging from classroom activities	Disengaged	13.9
Talking out of turn	Low-level disruptive	9.7
Being late for class	Disengaged	6.3
Using a mobile phone inappropriately	Low-level disruptive	4.6

Table 4. Most difficult unproductive student behaviours in classrooms to manage.

We investigated the behaviour management strategies the teachers used in classroom settings and the perceived effectiveness of the strategies (Table 5).

	% of all teachers (n = 1380)				% of teachers (n = 1353)
	Not at all	Once or twice	Some-times	Often/very often	Most effective
Using a 'step' system involving an escalation of actions if behaviour does not change	15	24	19	42	33.3
Reasoning with a student in the classroom setting	3	21	17	60	18.9
Reasoning with a student outside the classroom setting	12	22	26	40	12.3
Discussing issues and problems with the whole class	13	27	27	33	4
Issuing a strong verbal reprimand	16	27	28	30	3.1
Deliberately ignoring minor disruptions or infringements	9	23	27	41	6.2
Requiring students to do extra work	49	22	23	6	0.6
Asking students to withdraw from the class or room (e.g. timeout)	31	29	25	15	3.2
Removing privileges (e.g. miss out on free time)	36	27	23	13	2.5
Keeping students 'in' (e.g. detention, or making students stay in to complete work)	33	35	21	12	3.1
Referring students to another teacher (e.g. in a 'buddy' room)	57	20	15	8	0.6
Sending the student to the deputy principal, principal, counsellor or other senior teacher	60	22	11	8	2.9
Seeking parental or caregiver involvement	38	31	17	14	3.2
Initiating a conference involving the student, caregivers and senior staff to discuss the student's behaviour	63	20	11	7	2.1
Requesting a short period of in-school suspension	73	16	8	4	0.7
Requesting a short period of out-of-school suspension	89	7	4	8	0.7

Table 5. Behaviour Management Strategies by Total Sample

Note: 2% of the sample did not provide a response for this survey item.

The data show that the most common behaviour management strategy used by teachers was reasoning with a student in the classroom setting. The next most commonly used strategies were using a 'step' system involving an escalation of actions if behaviour does not change, reasoning with a student in the classroom setting and deliberately ignoring minor disruptions or infringements. The least used behaviour management strategies were in- or out-of-school suspension, initiating a conference involving the student, caregivers and senior staff to discuss the student's behaviour, sending the student to a senior staff member and referring students to another teacher. 63% of teachers indicated that they never initiate a conference involving the student, caregivers and senior staff to discuss a student's behaviour. 33.3% of teachers reported using a 'step' system as the most effective behaviour management strategy.

Discussion

Teachers indicated that all categories of unproductive behaviours exist in classrooms, but teachers most frequently encountered disengaged behaviours and low-level disruptive behaviours. While aggressive/anti-social behaviours do occur in schools, most teachers encountered them infrequently. Hence, the findings of this study do not support popular perceptions that schools are 'out of control' and that violent behaviours are common. Rather, the findings confirm earlier studies that showed that teachers frequently encounter relatively minor student behaviours (Adey et al., 1991; Beaman & Wheldall, 1997; Beaman et al., 2007).

Importantly, this research reveals that of all unproductive behaviours that occur in classrooms, disengaged behaviours are extremely prevalent and teachers consider them difficult to manage. This finding builds on the recent research by Angus et al. (2009) that found 20 per cent of students in any year were described by teachers as disengaged and that these students do not 'catch up' academically. The theoretical framework underpinning this study suggests that disengaged student behaviours have more to do with factors within a teacher's control than with those located within the student. We argue that this view of behaviour offers a sense of hope. Teachers can consider aspects related to the physical environments, the curriculum and resources, and their teaching to engage students in learning activities.

The findings also suggest that teachers utilise approaches to responding to unproductive student behaviour that may not address the underlying causes of that behaviour. Teachers particularly identified the use of a stepped approach or reasoning with the student either inside or outside the classroom to address unproductive behaviours. If students are disengaged, these approaches may not facilitate engagement. Maguire et al. (2010) argued that "In-school disruption may be as much, if not more, to do with aspects related to the inadequacies of the curriculum on offer, inappropriate pedagogy or the marginalisation of (some) young people rather than 'poor' or ineffective discipline policies. Approaches that take a behaviourist … approach do little to tackle these matters" (p. 166). Moving the focus from controlling discipline policies to ways of engaging students (Maguire et al., 2010) offers opportunities for teachers to prevent unproductive student behaviours and reduce a reliance on intervention strategies.

By focusing on engaging students, there is a need to unsettle notions of what constitutes unproductive behaviour. This requires educators to rethink what is normal or acceptable classroom behaviour by considering what behaviours support engagement in learning and schooling more generally. Redirecting policy and practice to account for ecological factors that can be influenced by teachers seems to be the key here.

In summary, broad concerns about negative and deteriorating student behaviour are largely unfounded. The results suggest that the prevalence of low-level disruptive and disengaged student behaviours is very concerning in classrooms. These behaviours occur frequently and teachers find them difficult to manage. Furthermore, teachers use strategies to manage the behaviours that are not necessarily effective. Policies and practices aimed at controlling student behaviour are likely to be misdirected. Given that many students are disengaged from learning and demonstrate disengaged behaviours, educators should consider other aspects of schooling that foster student engagement.

It might be tempting to take the results of this study and call for more controlling ways of managing unproductive student behaviours. However, we argue that if teachers gained a greater understanding of how the broader ecology of the classroom can influence engagement and therefore behaviour, we might see a shift in related perceptions. That is, a focus on engagement rather than punishment is likely to lead to better learning and behaviour.

References

Adey, K., Oswald, M., & Johnson, B. (1991). Discipline in South Australian schools: A Survey of teachers-Survey no 1: Teachers in metropolitan schools (Education Department of South Australia, Trans.). Adelaide: University of South Australia.
Angus, M., McDonald, T., Ormond, C., Rybarcyk, R., Taylor, A., & Winterton, A. (2009). Trajectories of classroom behaviour and academic progress: A study of student engagement with learning. Mount Lawley. Western Australia: Edith Cowan University.
Australian Education Union. (2008). New Educators Survey 2008. Results and Report.
Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., & Braun, A. (2012). How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools. Oxon, London: Routledge.
Barr, A. (2009). Support for the government's policy on suspensions Speech to the Legislative Assembly for the ACT,15th October (pp. 4575): Hansard. <http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/hansard/2009/week12/4575.htm>.
Beaman, R., & Wheldall, K. (1997). Teacher perceptions of troublesome classroom behaviour: A review of recent research. Special Education Perspectives, 6(2), 49-55.
Beaman, R., Wheldall, K., & Kemp, C. (2007). Recent research on classroom behaviour: A review. Australasian Journal of Special Education, 31(1), 45-60. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10300110701189014
Blase, J. J. (1986). A qualitative analysis of sources of teacher stress: consequences for performance. American Educational Research Journal, 23, 23-40. http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/00028312023001013
Cameron, R. (2010, 8th February). Something's rotten in the state of NSW - comprehensive public schools, Sydney Morning Herald.
Conway, R. N. F. (2012). Behaviour support and management. In A. Ashman & J. Elkins (Eds.), Education for inclusion and diversity. Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education Australia.
Creemers, B. P. M. (1994). The effective classroom. London: Cassell.
Critcher, C. (2003). Moral panics and the media. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
Day, C., Stobart, G., Sammons, P., Kington, A., Gu, Q., Smees, R., & Mujtaba, T. (2006). Variations in teachers' work, lives and effectiveness. Nottingham, UK: Department for Education and Skills.
Department of Education and Science. (1989). The Elton Report. Enquiry into discipline in schools (England and Wales). London.
Department of Education Science and Training. (2002). An ethic of care: Effective programmes for beginning teachers. Canberra: Department of Education Science and Training.
Donnelly, K. (2009, 18th November). Violence disrupts the class, Courier-Mail.
Friedman, I. A. (1995). Student behavior patterns contributing to teacher burnout. The Journal of Educational Research, 88, 281-289. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1995.9941312
George, P. D. M. (2003). SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference 11.0 update. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
Hattie, J. (2003). Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence? Paper presented at the Australian Council for Educational Research Annual Conference on Building Teacher Quality, Melbourne, Australia.
Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: an organizational analysis. American Educational Research Journal, 38, 499-534. http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/00028312038003499

Johnson, B., Down, B., Le Cornu, R., Peters, J., Sullivan, A. M., Pearce, J., & Hunter, J. (2012). Early career teachers: Stories of resilience. Adelaide, South Australia: University of South Australia.
Johnson, B., Oswald, M., & Adey, K. (1993). Discipline in South Australian primary schools. Educational Studies, 19(3), 289-305. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0305569930190305
Johnson, B., Sullivan, A. M., & Williams, D. (2009). A one-eyed look at classroom life: Using new technologies to enrich classroom-based research. Issues in Educational Research, 19(1), 34-47.
Jones, V. (2006). How do teachers learn to be effective classroom managers? In C. M. Evertson & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues (pp. 887-908). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
Kohn, A. (2006). Beyond discipline: From compliance to community. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
Lewis, R., Romi, S., Qui, X., & Katz, J. (2005). Teachers' classroom discipline and student misbehaviour in Australia, China and Israel. Teaching and Teacher Education, 21, 729-741. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.05.008
Maguire, M., Ball, S., & Braun, A. (2010). Behaviour, classroom management and student ÔcontrolÕ: enacting policy in the English secondary school. International Studies in Sociology of Education, 20(2), 153 - 170. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2010.503066
Marzano, R., & Marzano, J. S. (2003). The key to classroom management. Educational Leadership, 61(1), 6-13.
McInerney, P. (2009). Toward a critical pedagogy of engagement for alienated youth: Insights from Freire and school-based research. Critical Studies in Education, 50(1), 23-35. doi: 10.1080/17508480802526637 http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17508480802526637
Osher, D., Bear, G. G., Sprague, J. R., & Doyle, W. (2010). How can we improve school discipline? Educational Researcher, 39(1), 48-58. doi: 10.3102/0013189x09357618 http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189X09357618
Overton, L. Y., & Sullivan, A. M. (2008). Non-compliance in a democratic classroom: Is it prevalent? Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education International Education Research Conference, Brisbane, Qld.
Owens, L. D. (1996). Sticks and stones and sugar and spice: Girls' and boys' aggression in schools. Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 6, 45-56.
Owens, L. D., Shute, R., & Slee, P. (2000). “Guess what I just heard!": Indirect aggression among teenage girls in Australia. Aggressive Behavior, 26(1), 67-83. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1098-2337(2000)26:1<67::AID-AB6>3.0.CO;2-C
Raby, R. (2010). The intricacies of power relations in discourses of secondary school discipline strategies. In Z. Millei, T. G. Griffiths & R. J. Parkes (Eds.), Re-theorizing discipline in education: Problems, politics & possibilities (pp. 43-58). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.
Slee, R. (1995). Changing theories and practices. London: The Falmer Press.
Soodak, L. C. (2003). Classroom Management in Inclusive Settings. Theory into Practice, 42(4), 327-333. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4204_10
Spears, B., Slee, P., Owens, L. D., & Johnson, B. (2009). Behind the scenes and screens: Insights into the human dimension of covert and cyberbullying. Zeitschrift fŸr Psychologie / Journal of Psychology, 217, 189-196. http://dx.doi.org/10.1027/0044-3409.217.4.189
Sullivan, A. M. (2009). How can teachers enable students to become empowered? Curriculum Perspectives, 29(1), 53-63.
Watson, C. (2012, 16/7/2012). Five teachers a day assaulted by students, AdelaideNow.

Wubbels, T. (2007). Classroom management around the world. In M. Hayden, J. Levy & J. Thompson (Eds.), Handbook of Research in International Education. London: Sage. http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781848607866.n24

Zyngier, D. (2007). Listening to teachers-listening to students: Substantive conversations about resistance, empowerment and engagement. Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 13(4), 327-347. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13540600701391903

Acknowledgements

This paper is an outcome of the Behaviour at School Study funded by the Australian Research Council (LP110100317). The following organisations contributed funds and/or in-kind support to this Project:

- Department for Education and Child Development (DECD)
- Catholic Education South Australia (CESA)
- Association of Independent Schools South Australia (AISSA)
- South Australian Secondary Principals Association (SASPA)
- Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools, South Australia (APCSS)
- South Australian Primary Principals Association (SAPPA)
- South Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association (SACPPA)

We would like to acknowledge Dr Carmel Taddeo who conducted statistical analysis for this research.