

**UMSAEP UM-UWC Academic Exchange Program Report
2022-2023 Project**

**Evaluation of a Large-Scale Training Format to Train Teachers from South Africa on how
to Perform Evidence-Based Strategies in the Classroom**

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ABSTRACT

Ineffective classroom management is a common barrier for educators working in special and general education classrooms. According to Sugai et al. (2002), poor classroom management can result in challenging behavior which can greatly compromise students' educational experience and the ability of educators to promote an environment that is conducive to learning. School Wide – Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS) is a framework of intervention that involves evidence-based assessments and strategies for classroom management. SWPBS focuses on the application of behavioral science to promote prosocial behaviors and increase the quality of life of students and all other individuals involved. Research shows that interventions based on the principles of behavior analysis and positive behavior support are effective in decreasing the levels of interfering behaviors in the classroom and promoting an environment that is conducive to learning. The aim of this project was to evaluate a South African educators' perception and knowledge of antecedent and consequence-based strategies for classroom behavior management. Thirty-four educators participated in this 2-day group training in Vredenburg, South African. Participants completed a perception and knowledge questionnaire before and after the training. During training, participants completed individual and small-group activities related to the training content.

Study Objectives

- To assess the feasibility and acceptability of a group-format training procedure to teach educators from schools in South Africa;
- To train educators how to implement best-practices in the assessment and selection of interventions to address challenging behavior in the classroom;
- To use the outcomes of this study to design an online, asynchronous training program for educators in South Africa.

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Dr. De Souza was granted the UMSAEP award in 2022. In February of 2024, Dr. De Souza and Dr. Pizzella traveled to Cape Town to conduct the research with the assistance of Dr. Roman.

Preparatory Activities

Dr. De Souza and Dr. Pizzella engaged in several activities to prepare the necessary material for the study. The following materials were prepared before the training in Vredenburg:

1. **Instruction Material.** The first part of the training procedure consisted of short instructional lectures about the different modules of the training. PowerPoint presentations containing information about the training module along with examples and practice activities were developed.

2. **Teacher Knowledge and Skills Survey for Positive Behavior Supports (TKSS).** Participants were asked to complete a survey before and after the training. The TKSS (Cheney et al., 2004) was comprised of 33 Likert-scale questions.

3. **Training Skills Sheets.** During the presentation of each module, participants had the opportunity to practice the skills taught in the module. Participants were taught to develop preventative strategies for classroom behavior management.

4. **Participants Demographic Survey.** A demographic survey was conducted before the study to collect information about the characteristics of a study's participants. It included questions about age, gender, education level, income, occupation, ethnicity, and information about the participant professional background.

5. **Social Validity Questionnaire.** A Social Validity Questionnaire was conducted with participants to assess their perceived relevance, acceptability, and effectiveness of the training from the educators' perspective.

Meanwhile, Dr. Roman submitted and gained approval from the research board to conduct the research, recruited participants, and secured an appropriate venue outside of UWC for experimental sessions.

Activities During Dr. De Souza and Dr. Pizzella Travel to the Western Cape

Project Dates

Dr. De Souza was in Cape Town for this project from January 30th, 2024 – February 21st, 2024, and Dr. Pizzella from February 4th, 2024 – February 16th, 2024. The training took place in Vredenburg on February 12 and 13, 2024.

Research Activities

Dr. De Souza and Dr. Pizzella delivered training to 42 participants in the gymnasium of a local school in Vredenburg, Karitas Special School. Training was held across 2 days from 2:30 to 5 pm each day. All participants received and signed a consent form before the beginning of the study. Participants were from South Africa and worked in the field of child education.

The training titled "*What Do I Do? Strategies for Classroom Behavior Management*," provided educators with strategies to manage student behavior in classroom settings. The focus was on equipping teachers with tools to effectively teach and reinforce positive behaviors while addressing problematic ones using evidence-based practices rooted in behavior analysis.

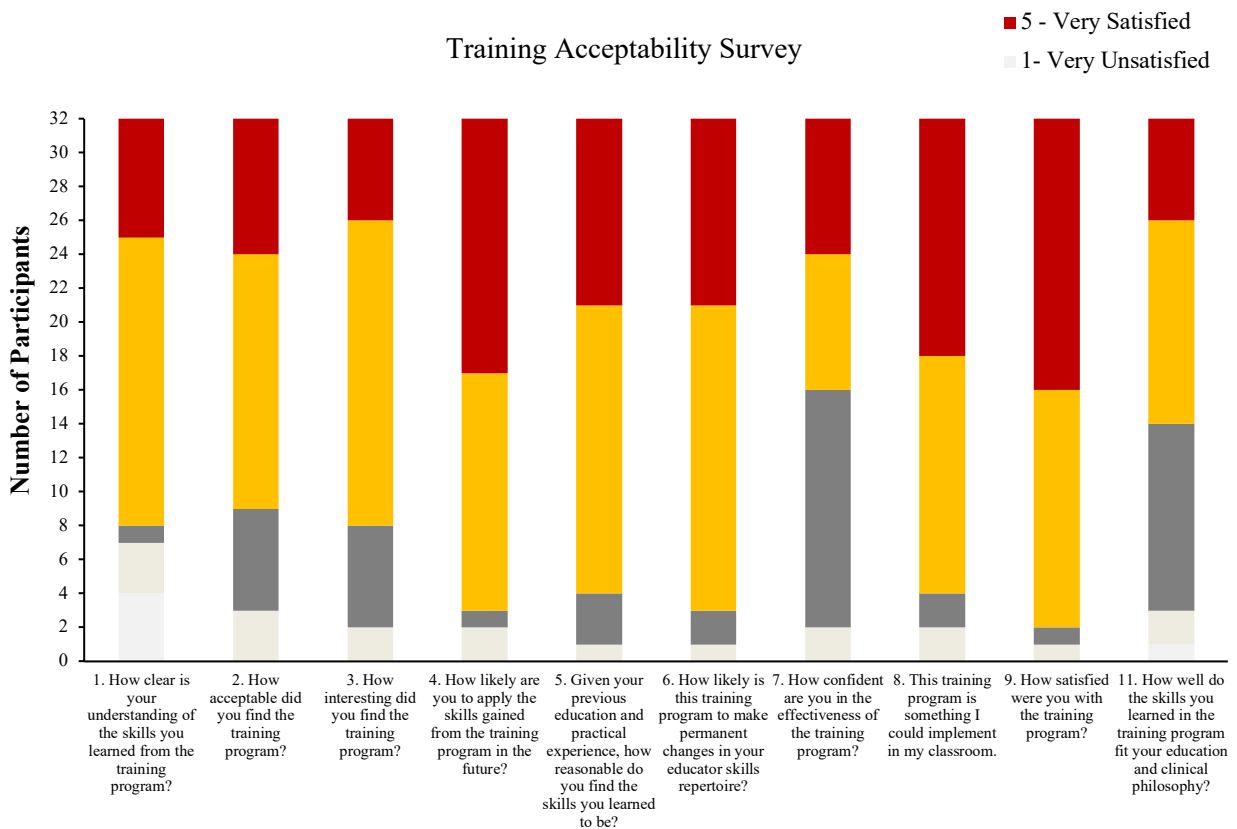
The training emphasized the importance of understanding the functions of behavior—why students engage in certain behaviors—and using this knowledge to implement individualized and class-wide interventions. Teachers were encouraged to think of classroom behavior in the same way as academic skills: just as students learn to read through structured teaching, feedback, and practice, they can also learn appropriate behaviors. Key components of the training included:

1. **Positive Behavior Interventions:** Teachers were encouraged to focus on identifying, teaching, and reinforcing positive behaviors, using praise and other reinforcements to motivate students. This included strategies like maintaining a 5:1 ratio of praise to corrections.
2. **Antecedent Strategies:** These are preventative approaches that focus on modifying what happens before a problematic behavior occurs. Teachers were taught how to adjust the classroom environment to make positive behaviors more likely, for instance, by establishing clear routines, seating arrangements, and ensuring predictability throughout the school day.

3. **Consequence Strategies:** The training also addressed what happens after a behavior occurs. Teachers learned how to use consequences (both positive and negative) to shape student behavior, focusing on reinforcing desirable behaviors and reducing attention to inappropriate ones.
4. **Culturally Responsive Practices:** An important aspect of the training was recognizing and incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into classroom management. Teachers were encouraged to be mindful of how cultural differences might influence behavior and to adapt their interventions accordingly.
5. **Individualized Behavior Interventions:** For students who needed more support, the training covered how to create individualized plans based on the function of the behavior. Teachers learned how to assess and define problematic behaviors and develop tailored interventions that include replacement behaviors, antecedent modifications, and appropriate consequences.

Through interactive activities, discussions, and real-life examples, the training aimed to provide practical tools that teachers could immediately apply in their classrooms. Participants were encouraged to implement strategies like the *Good Behavior Game* (Joslyn & Groves, 2023) a group contingency approach that rewards teams of students for demonstrating positive behaviors. The overarching goal was to foster a positive classroom environment where students feel supported, and learning is maximized.

At the end of the training, participants were asked to complete a Training Acceptability Survey to assess the extent to which they considered the training beneficial and easy to follow, and how satisfied they were with the training program. The form contained 12 Likert-scale question and one open question. The scale ranged from 1 to 5 where 1 denoted very unsatisfied and 5 very satisfied. Results showed that most participants were “satisfied” with the training (Figure 1).

Figure 1*Participants Scores to the Training Acceptability Survey*

Below are some of the participants responses to the question “*How did this training change the way you perceive students' challenging behavior?*”

“Be more aware of the cause & effect of behavior and how to manage it.”

“I have a much better idea of how to engage with behavioral learners.”

“Helped me get a bigger picture to attend to challenging behaviors and what strategies to use.”

“Well, I've learned that every behavior has an antecedent and should have a consequence. As a teacher, you should be able to be consistent.”

“It made me realize that challenges can be overcome with steps mentioned!”

“The fact that behavior can be changed and that there are no bad children.”

“I actually perceived learners as people who act, so now that changed.”

“To reinforce positive behavior, to provide praises on a daily basis using positive statements.”

“This training made me realize that there is always an option or opportunity to help and assist learners.”

“Thank you for the training; it was quite informative and educational.”

“Thank you so much for enlightening us on how to get back our power in class through this.”

“Thank you, well-prepared.”

Additionally, some participants provided feedback to inform future projects and training initiatives.

“With high school students, it's more challenging than to work with small learners.”

“With classes of more than 45-40 learners, it's difficult to incorporate everything learned in these sessions.”

“Very interesting, focus here on inclusive/overcrowded and low-income classrooms/schools.”

“Arranging training for the future during the course of the day, and not after school, as it is quite difficult to concentrate.”

**UMSL AND UWC
INVITE YOU TO**



**STRATEGIES FOR
CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR
MANAGEMENT**

JOIN US FOR A TWO DAY AFTER-SCHOOL
TRAINING PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE ON
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT.

**14:30-
17:00**

*REFRESHMENTS WILL BE PROVIDED

12 & 13 FEBRUARY 2024

**KARITAS SPECIAL SCHOOL,
VREDENBURG, SA**

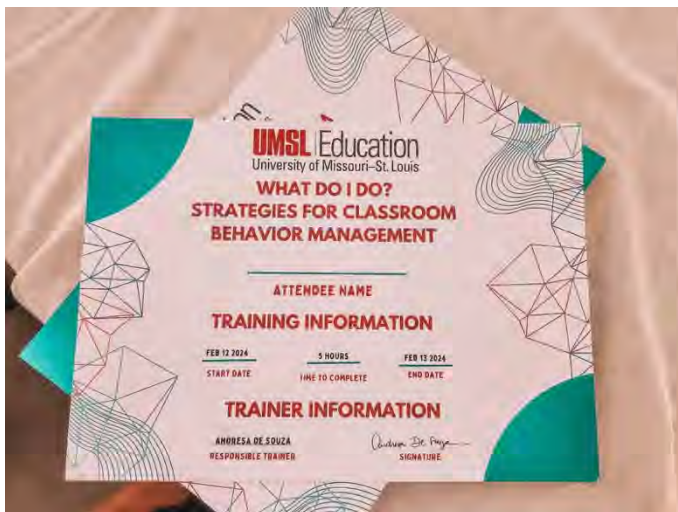
PARTICIPANTS WILL ALSO BE ASKED TO PARTICIPATE IN
A RESEARCH STUDY ASSOCIATED WITH THE TRAINING

Flyer used to invite participants to the 2-day training program.



Training in Vredenburg on February 12 and 13, 2024.

All participants were awarded a certificate of participation upon completing the 2-day training.



Research Project Outcomes

Dr. De Souza, Dr. Pizzella, and Dr. Roman are currently working on a manuscript to be submitted to the *South African Journal of Education* or another international high-impact journal. In addition, we plan to present the study outcomes in international conferences in the field of behavior analysis and education.

Continuing Activities

1. Dr. De Souza and Dr. Roman has discussed the possibility of expanding the project in South Africa as a large-scale training. To accomplish this goal, we plan to take the next steps in the next few months:
 - a. Conduct a needs assessment including an online survey and interview to identify educators' barriers and training needs as it relates to classroom management.
 - b. Develop training material and strategies based on the results of the classroom-format training study to be delivered online with the goal of increasing accessibility and dissemination of evidence-based strategies.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our appreciation to UMSAE program for the initial support in getting started with this research project as well as Dr. Rodney Uphoff for his guidance and logistics assistance throughout our trip to Cape Town. Finally, we want to recognize the generosity of participants who dedicated their time to attend training session without whom we will not be able to accomplish our research goals.

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