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EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY & COUNSELLING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Back on track: Approaches to managing highly disruptive school classes

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Abstract: Teaching and learning are at stake when classrooms become highly disruptive and pupils ignore the teacher's instructions and leadership. Re-establishing teacher authority in a highly disruptive school class is an understudied area. This instrumental multiple case study aimed to reveal concepts and conceptual frameworks that are suitable for describing, analysing and discussing interventions in highly disruptive school classrooms. The tentative conceptual framework for turnarounds in highly disruptive classrooms revealed two main strategies: (1) a cognitive strategy appealing to pupils' rationality and responsibility, which involves creating an awareness among students about preferred learning environments and training them to obtain the skills needed to behave in accordance with the chosen standards; (2) a systems strategy addressing the class as a social system in which the teacher's loss of authority has become beneficial to some pupils. Re-establishing teacher authority implies a power takeover by teachers, and success depends on leadership by use of social dynamics. The data cover seven cases, each based on an experienced practitioner's model for helping highly disruptive classes get back on track. The seven informants had worked as external experts in schools that had given up on coping with classes in which teachers had lost control.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Grete S. Vaaland is an associate professor at the Norwegian Centre for Learning Environment and Behavioural Research in Education, University of Stavanger. Together with teams of researchers and scholars at the centre, she is engaged in issues concerning bullying, discipline problems and other types of behavioural problems in schools. She and her colleagues are also involved in classroom management, teacher authority, school leadership and school development. In addition to research activities, Vaaland and her colleagues are teaching and supervising master students in education. Furthermore, they give courses and supervise schools across the country in school development associated with the prevention and handling of behaviour problems and improvement of classroom management and school leadership. The present paper concerns an understudied area: collective discipline problems in classrooms where teachers have lost control.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

It is challenging to be a teacher when the class is highly disruptive and pupils ignore your standards and instructions. Moreover, pupils' learning and well-being are negatively influenced when teachers suffer from poor credibility and chaos rules the classroom. Knowledge and skills about approaching classrooms characterized by chaos and indiscipline are an understudied area within educational research. This article compares seven approaches for changing highly disruptive classes into well-functioning learning environments. The analyses revealed two different strategies: one, a cognitive strategy with a focus on increasing pupil awareness and teaching them how to behave; two, addressing the social dynamics in the classroom because the pupils know the rules and standards but do not follow them. When teachers have lost their authority, some pupils take control and rule the classroom. Consequently, social power must be re-distributed to establish teacher authority.

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Subjects: Social Psychology; Educational Psychology; Teachers & Teacher Education; Classroom Practice

Keywords: disruptive school classes; classroom management; teacher authority; multiple case study

1. Introduction

Some disruptions are quite common in classrooms; however, a class can occasionally erupt into disruptive chaos, which makes learning nearly impossible (Rogers, 2000; Vaaland & Ertesvåg, 2013). This article concerns highly disruptive school classes and discusses approaches to managing such classes based on some experienced practitioners' models for helping these classes get back on track.

By "highly disruptive class", we mean a class in which teaching is hindered on a regular basis. According to Rogers (2000), a class is considered "hard" when the *frequency* and *intensity* of disruptive behaviour by a number of its pupils significantly affect the teacher's well-being and productive teaching and learning, and this condition lasts for some time. Disruptive classes are more difficult to manage than the average class. Rogers' specifications of "hard classes" are useful for *highly disruptive classes,* which is the term used in our study. Examples of disruptive behaviours are talking out of turn, walking around when expected to sit down, irritating peers, bullying, violence, refusing to follow the teacher's instructions, and ignoring the teacher.

A study conducted among primary and secondary school teachers in Norway indicated that approximately 5% of the teachers perceived that they had little or no authority in their classrooms. Another 25% reported some lack of authority (Vaaland & Ertesvåg, 2013). It is reasonable to assume that this lack of authority relates to pupil misbehaviour, ignorance or disrespect. The following theoretical rationale supports this assumption.

Pupils. Pupil aggressiveness constitutes a substantial amount of the variation in pupils' disruptive behaviours. A study by Vaaland and colleagues (2011) investigated relationships between proactive and reactive aggressiveness and disruptive behaviour in terms of disobedience, i.e. behaviour that the pupil knows conflicts with the standards and instructions set by the teacher. Proactive aggressiveness refers to the tendency to act aggressively as a means of achieving social rewards, such as affiliation with peers, status and social power (Berkowitz, 1993; Dodge, 1991; Dodge & Coie, 1987; Roland & Idsøe, 2001). Reactive aggressiveness refers to the tendency to behave aggressively based on frustration and anger (Berkowitz, 1993; Dodge, 1991; Roland & Idsøe, 2001). Both proactive and reactive aggressiveness predict disobedient pupil behaviours (Vaaland et al., 2011). Consequently, pupil aggressiveness potentially threatens teachers' authority. Proactive aggressiveness relates to a perceptual orientation towards weakness in new teachers, which means that some pupils search for signs of vulnerability when they meet teachers who are new to them (Vaaland & Roland, 2013). Consequently, some pupils who are highly motivated to gain social power at the cost of others' powerlessness are also interested in how they can humiliate or threaten the teacher and the teacher's authority. Pupils who score highly on proactive aggressiveness may often possess enough power to influence other pupils' behaviours and attitudes (Card & Little, 2007; Dodge, 1991; Vitaro & Brendgen, 2005), which suggests that negativity and problem behaviours might spread throughout the classroom, threatening the teacher's authority even more (Vaaland & Roland, 2013). Obviously, these connections may compromise the teacher's role as a classroom manager.

Teachers. Poor classroom leadership is another reason that a teacher's authority may decrease (Emmer & Evertson, 2013; Vaaland & Roland, 2013). An authoritative classroom management style is recommended when creating a healthy learning environment that promotes effective learning and prevents problem behaviours (Baker, Clark, Crowl, & Carlson, 2009; Ertesvåg & Vaaland, 2007; Hughes, 2002; Walker, 2009; Wentzel, 2002). Authoritative teaching reflects control and nurturance assessed on two different axes, and the recommended practice combines high expectations and consistent

demands that are adapted to the pupil's developmental level (control axis) with democratic communication and sensitivity to the pupil's emotional and physiological needs (nurturance axis) (Baumrind, 1991; Walker, 2009; Wentzel, 2002). Practicing high levels in both these dimensions constitutes an authoritative teaching style, which has a positive effect on academic achievement and pupil behaviour (Walker, 2009; Wentzel, 2002). Close teacher–pupil relationships build confidence, which helps establish and maintain the teacher's authority. Teachers with authority have the validity to influence pupils and to work successfully with motivation and support. They also have the legitimacy to make demands, regulate pupil behaviour and practice control (Emmer & Evertson, 2013). With this background, we now identify our research questions and our approach to answering them.

If learning is inhibited or restricted in a classroom, something has to change; for example, the school might replace the teacher(s). However, this approach does not necessarily change pupils' classroom behaviours. Re-establishing classroom management by assisting the teacher(s) might help get a highly disruptive class back on track, as the cases studied in this article attempt to do. This research project sought to increase the knowledge surrounding practical approaches that aim to re-establish a healthy learning environment in highly disruptive classes in which the teacher(s) have lost control.

The literature is rich on disruptive behaviour by a single pupil and how teachers should act to prevent as well as intervene in such challenges (Brophy, 2006; Emmer & Evertson, 2013; Freiberg & Lapointe, 2006; Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Roland, 1998; Vaaland et al., 2011). Yet, highly disruptive school classes in which classroom leadership becomes nearly impossible are an understudied area. Many teachers and schools find themselves alone in handling such challenges. Nevertheless, with the serious challenges faced by schools, some practitioners have attempted to help schools re-establish good learning environments in highly disruptive classes. Exploring these approaches provides a starting point for developing research-based strategies to confront highly disruptive school classes. We need to develop concepts to describe and strategies to turn around those classes. Accordingly, this study aims to explore the issue using practical experiences represented by seven cases to reveal concepts and investigate similarities and differences in how interventions in highly disruptive classes are carried out by some experts.

1.1. Research issues

A qualitative research design was set up: based on seven experienced practitioners' descriptions of their approaches to achieving turnarounds in highly disruptive school classes, we aimed to answer three research questions (RQs). Each case represents an approach to help highly disruptive classes get back on track. Based on within-case analyses, the following research question was explored:

RQ1: What are the main issues in such interventions?

Cross-case analyses are recommended to investigate whether new cases replicate previous cases or represent something diverse (Yin, 2009). Based on that framework, it is possible to investigate whether the intervention approaches are mainly similar or vary with respect to their core elements. Therefore, the following research question was investigated:

RQ2: Do systematic variations exist between the cases regarding how they approach the core issues?

Supplementary cross-case analyses are suggested by Eisenhardt (1989) to outline possible conceptual frameworks from data. Thus, we wanted to continue the analyses across cases to determine if the approaches varied systematically and, if so, whether links between approaches or strategies appear. With this background, a final research question was formulated:

RQ3: Can we reveal systematic connections between elements within and across the cases that can make suggesting a conceptual framework possible?

Given these research questions, this study aims to derive concepts and frameworks from these cases in an attempt to develop a rationale for describing, discussing and analysing interventions in highly disruptive classes.

2. Method

2.1. Approaching the Research Questions

In new topic areas or when little research exists, inductive case studies are recommended (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Postholm, 2010). Because presentations and evaluations of approaches to managing highly disruptive classes are seemingly rare, we must discover potentially useful concepts and frameworks to describe and compare these complex interventions. Therefore, we begin by open-mindedly investigating real-life experiences and actions. The literature and theoretical knowledge complement our data in the discussion.

The purpose of the study makes an instrumental case study relevant because each case is of secondary interest; each case's role is to support and facilitate knowledge about the question of interest (Stake, 2005). Our approach to these cases is not descriptive; it is instead primarily interpretative (Postholm, 2010). Therefore, numerous cases were investigated to determine whether models that intend to transform highly disruptive classes into good learning environments tend to follow more or less the same path. An intrinsic study of a single case would not provide us with that knowledge (Postholm, 2010; Stake, 2005). Therefore, we chose an instrumental multiple case study (Stake, 2005). We collected cases without knowing in advance whether they would manifest common core characteristics. Our collection of cases was purposive, and the selection criterion was cases that seemed to offer a reasonable opportunity to learn. Flyvbjerg (2011) describes information-orientated selection as a strategy that maximizes the utility of information based on small samples by choosing cases based on the expected content of information. This multi-case design corresponds with replication logic, as described by Yin (2009), implying that each case serves to confirm or refute suggestions and conclusions from previous cases. Eisenhardt (1989) has developed a roadmap for inducing theory from case-study research. She states that the final products can be concepts, conceptual frameworks, propositions or middle-range theory. She also notes a downside; the results might show that no clear patterns emerge within the data.

A research team at the Norwegian Centre for Learning Environment and Behavioural Research in Education (NCLBR) in Norway conducted the study. The team members possessed expertise in research and practical approaches to classroom management and problem behaviours.

2.2. Case – units

Each case presents the modelled practice or procedures for turnaround operations in highly disruptive classes that an experienced practitioner has developed based on his or her accumulated experience with such interventions. Consequently, the units that we analyse here are models, which are relevant for case studies (Woodside & Wilson, 2003; Yin, 2009). We did not require models that included thorough theoretical arguments; instead, we required a more or less tentative guide or programme to show how each expert managed turnarounds in highly disruptive classes. We focused on what these practitioners chose to highlight when they presented their approaches.

One of the criteria used to identify the cases in our study was that a professional had developed and practised an approach to guide schools that requested help to manage highly disruptive classes. Other criteria were related to the experience and reputation of the informants as noted below. Unable to cope with classroom challenges, a school had applied for external assistance because pupils' behaviours were beyond the limits of what a teacher could handle and teacher–pupil interactions were ineffective for teaching and learning. Consequently, instead of using an exact or objective criterion, we used the teacher's or the school's subjective experience (Galloway, 1983, 1987; Vaaland et al., 2011) to label the class as "highly disruptive" and to identify the need for external assistance. Each case was an approach described as a model for assisting schools in achieving such turnarounds.

The approaches were developed within the context of Norwegian public schools, which educate approximately 95% of pupils in grades 1–10. The Norwegian society is considered egalitarian, with generally small differences between schools (Veland, Midthassel, & Idsoe, 2009). In Norway, school classes are organized as stable units across subjects and grades. Usually, pupils are in the same class for three to seven years. In the lowest grades, the teacher usually teaches all or almost all of the subjects in his or her class.

The Norwegian schools are supported by the Educational-Psychological Service. However, competence in approaches to managing highly disruptive classes is limited, implying that access to professionals for help in such cases is not always available.

2.3. Informants

We invited six professional practitioners to a workshop. In line with the selection criteria, all informants had recently been supporting schools as external experts via projects that attempted to get highly disruptive classes back on track. We also knew that each expert had a good professional reputation in the regions in which they worked.

All invited informants, five men and one woman, accepted and participated in the workshop. They came from different parts of the country. All were in their forties, and had worked in the field for several years, which implied that they were considered experienced amongst their colleagues. Their educational backgrounds were in education, special needs education and psychology. They were employed in educational-psychological services, schools for special needs education, and special education resource centres and were charged with supporting schools with their expertise. All had experience from working with children in both primary and secondary schools.

Another practitioner (male) presented a case in a seminar that the research team arranged after the workshop, and this case has been included in our study. This informant had ample experience and a good reputation in relation to turnarounds in hard classes. According to the principle of replication logic (Yin, 2009), we had reason to believe that including this case would supplement the information that had already been gathered.

In summary, the sources of information were seven experienced professionals who shared their experiences through more or less generalized models that reflected their approaches as external experts in schools struggling with highly disruptive classes.

2.4. Workshop for collecting information

A two-day workshop was organized for two purposes: to collect information for the study and to create an arena for collegial learning among the participants. Three researchers from our centre (including the author) participated in the workshop with the invited practitioners. Each day was divided into three parts, one for each of the cases. One after the other, the professionals presented their approaches, followed by a session in which all participants could ask questions, provide comments and discuss the case. In addition, some time was scheduled for cross-case discussions. The order of the presentations was randomly assigned in advance.

The article's author and a colleague initiated and organized the workshop. One took the lead in the workshop activities, while the other was responsible for writing the minutes. A third colleague from the centre participated because of his interest and expertise in the subject matter. He assisted in writing the minutes, and whenever necessary, provided support during the two-day workshop. The researchers from the centre focused on creating an atmosphere of interest, respect and inclusion. Ensuring the participants that every presentation was genuinely interesting and making them feel confident were important. We considered the climate and atmosphere during the workshop to be positive, respectful, inclusive and genuinely engaging. The participants readily welcomed meeting in this way, as it offered them the opportunity to share and discuss the complex issues that they had encountered in their work.

Information on the additional case was gathered at a seminar that the NCLBR researchers had arranged for a broader audience. The practitioner was responsible for a workshop session similar to the one previously arranged, and the same researchers were present for this additional presentation.

2.5. Collecting information

To answer the research questions, information was gathered during the practitioners' presentations, and handouts and other aids were collected. All participants then had the opportunity to ask questions about and comment on the presentation. During these sessions, thorough notes were taken to enable us to write the minutes as accurately as possible. The text was completed shortly after the workshop and was sent to all participants for their review. Analyses or discussions were not included in the report. The informants' meaning can become somewhat condensed (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) if someone other than the informant reproduces it. Therefore, each informant checked and confirmed the content of the data report. We considered all of their responses and made corrections as needed. This procedure was conducted to ensure the validity of the information collected (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

2.6. Analyses

We performed our analyses in accordance with the guidelines recommended by Eisenhardt (1989) when using case studies to induce core concepts and conceptual frameworks. These guidelines provided a structure for the analyses and ensured that they were made systematic and replicable. The first step involved within-case analyses that aimed to identify the main issues in the practitioners' interventions in highly disruptive classes. The following steps involved cross-case analyses. (A) Randomly paired cases were investigated to identify similarities and differences. The pairwise comparisons helped the researchers learn more from the cases using different lenses to observe each case. (B) We summarized and investigated the concepts emerging from within-case and paired-case analyses to reveal whether clusters of concepts formed patterns that could reflect a particular framework. (C) We compared the emerging framework(s) with each individual case. This procedure attempted to sharpen our understanding of the concepts and to verify the relationships between concepts and the evidence from each case. Finally, we compared the emerging conceptual framework with the external literature.

2.7. Ethical considerations

The study was based on voluntary participation. Data were collected during a workshop that was arranged for dual purposes. We invited the informants to participate in presentations and discussions on a defined topic, and they all gave a presentation. Each participant retained the right to publish his or her models and stories. The right to conduct research based on the sum of cases was reserved for the research centre. This arrangement was agreed upon by all participants.

Anonymity was ensured for all informants as well as third parties included in the examples referred to in the presentations. Accordingly, no descriptions are included that can identify any schools, experts or others.

The above procedures ensured informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality.

3. Results

The purpose of the study was to increase knowledge underpinning practical strategies aimed at re-establishing productive learning environments in highly disruptive school classrooms. This section presents the results, starting with common issues revealed from within case analyses to answer RQ1. Next, RQ2 is addressed based on cross-case analyses that highlight diversities and similarities between the approaches. Finally, we present the results of further cross-case analyses related to RQ3, which leads to the framework of two main strategies for turnarounds.

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3.1. Core issues in turnaround operations in highly disruptive classes

A central aim of this study was to identify the core issues emerging from these cases. Interestingly, the practitioners showed considerable consistency when identifying the key issues during turnaround operations in highly disruptive classes. Table 1 presents these issues, related sub-issues, and examples. Nevertheless, the agreement on these core issues did not result in full agreement regarding how such issues should be handled, a topic that we will return to. Our investigation of these seven cases drew our attention to nine core issues and a set of related sub-issues that answer RQ1. These are presented in Table 1 and further elaborated in the text.

3.1.1. Individual vs. systems approach

All of the cases highlighted group dynamics as a premise for initiating changes in dysfunctional school classes. Those who recommended testing or mapping individuals still focused on the group as a basis for understanding individual and collective behaviour in the class. The informants claimed that social contexts influenced group members' attitudes and behaviours, they also underscored that individuals contributed to their contexts. Therefore, the interactions between each pupil and the group and between the teacher and the class were important in all cases. Some cases were

Table 1. Core issues and sub-issues regarding the approaches to managing highly disruptive classes		
Core issues	**Sub-issues**	**Examples or explanations**
Individual vs. systems approach	Individual pupil behaviour influences the classroom context	Pupil possessing social status influences the common attitude towards the teacher/subject/school
	The classroom context impacts individual pupil behaviour	Easy not to do the homework because no one else does
Administrative/procedural elements of the intervention	Stakeholder generating request for external assistance	Principal requests external assistance when the school has failed to re-establish a productive learning environment in the class
	Anchoring	Meetings with school leadership to clarify expectations and conditions
		Establishing a project group
Information	Purpose	Getting to know the situation
		Evolving trust
	Informants	e.g. teachers, test materials, observations
	Gathering information	e.g. observations, performance tests, interviews, surveys
Roles: Actors/participants, co-operators, and those passively affected	School leadership, teachers	Always included
	Pupils, parents	Active vs. passive
	Experts	Highly visible vs. hardly visible
Complexity	Persons	In-group and between-group agreements and disagreements
	Dimensions of trouble	Several types of problems to be solved, e.g. related to individuals, systems, learning, behaviour, trust, cooperation, competence
	Focus of change	Pupil behaviour, classroom rules
		Teacher management style
Time focus	Past – present – future	Agree upon the future and no discussions about the past
Training	Courses	Course(s) for all staff
		Courses for teachers involved in the highly disruptive class
	Mentoring	Providing competence to the class teacher through mentoring
Evaluation	Formal – informal	Surveys, observations, dialogues

especially interested in identifying those pupils who had the strongest impact on the classroom culture, while others mostly focused on how to release the pupils from the negative social expectations constituted by the social context in the class. Consequently, understanding the highly disruptive classes demanded an understanding of the ever-ongoing interactions between individuals and systems. Moreover, the approaches targeted individuals as well as relationships and other aspects of social dynamics, and they all discussed the challenge of balancing these perspectives.

3.1.2. Concerning the administrative/procedural elements of the intervention

3.1.2.1. Stakeholder generating request for external assistance: A common interest concerned *who* brought these challenging classes to the attention of external experts. Usually, principals took action when a teacher, unable to cope with the challenges in his or her classroom, asked for outside assistance. Moreover, parents were occasionally the ones who requested external help because teachers and principals did not want external parties involved.

3.1.2.2. Anchoring the process: Anchoring refers to establishing common agreements, clear expectations, mandates, etc. When engaged by schools to help solve complex problems, all practitioners underscored the necessity for clear agreements. More or less explicitly, the anchoring process resulted in a co-operation agreement that reflected the expectations and responsibilities of the school and external parties, respectively. Together they planned the intervention project (e.g. scheduled meetings) to ensure that the turnaround project would be properly prioritized. All informants underscored the necessity of school leadership involvement to achieve success in the type of projects described. One argued that a school class that is highly disordered and extremely difficult to lead will affect the entire school, and therefore the principal's general responsibility demanded participation. Some argued more pragmatically that leadership involvement was necessary because the process could reveal demands for some reorganization and re-prioritization of time, personnel and tasks. Such actions required a mandate, determination, insight and thus leadership involvement during the entire process to ensure its effectiveness. Several practitioners stated that they refused to start turnaround operations in a class if the leadership was not *involved, participated and took responsibility*, or if they believed that the school leadership lacked the capacity required to implement the necessary changes.

3.1.3. Information

3.1.3.1. Purpose: Gathering information was certainly a key cross-case issue. This activity covered several questions regarding what, how, who and occasionally why. In some cases, the information provided a platform for analysing the problem and suggesting particular actions. In other cases, the experts collected and presented information to the class to raise awareness. Finally, some also used information gathering as a means of achieving trusting relationships with all parties involved, carefully focusing on how the power balance or imbalance was affected when, for example, the expert asked some people for information while neglecting others.

3.1.3.2. Informants: When the experts decided to whom they listened, they implicitly communicated something about their perspective regarding the situation. The expert's opinion about the causes of highly disruptive classes may be implicitly apparent in the questions that he or she asked and did not ask. All cases presented included dialogues with involved teachers and the school leadership. Some only shared information with parents, whereas others asked for parents' perspectives and opinions. Finally, the pupils were important informants in some cases, whereas they were not questioned in other cases.

3.1.3.3. Gathering information: In summary, several types of information and approaches to gathering information were actualized, including performance tests (on selected topics), individual dialogues with each pupil, individual questionnaires, dialogues with the entire class, dialogues with the parents, dialogues with representatives of the pupils and/or parents, classroom observations,

schoolyard observations, and dialogues with the teacher(s). Several cases included individual tests in basic subjects, as highly disruptive classrooms easily make special needs invisible; to get pupils and classes back on track, schools should address the needs that demand special facilitation to help pupils learn. Classroom observations included the mapping of pupil behaviour and teacher behaviour. Some cases did not prioritize information on pupil behaviour; instead, they focused on pupils' opinions and experiences.

One case described semi-structured interviews with each pupil in an attempt to reveal individual norms and collective norms and illusions. Another case emphasized the close relationship between gathering information and gathering trust and ensured that all parties had the opportunity to present their experiences and opinions regarding the classroom situation. As a commonly trusted external party, this expert positioned him/herself as the bridge builder between conflicting parties.

The examples above show different approaches to selecting informants and information, and the cases do not necessarily fit into a single category. Instead, they use different approaches to serve more than one purpose. Finally, the cases had a unified message: although information about individual pupils was useful, the most vital information related to other factors, such as teacher-to-pupil interactions, pupil-to-pupil interactions, social codes and roles.

3.1.4. Roles in the turnarounds: Actors, participants, co-operators and those passively affected

The main roles in the classroom turnarounds were played by experts, teachers, school leadership, parents and pupils. Suggestions regarding who possesses the "key" to turn around a disruptive learning climate surfaced when the roles in the intervention were described.

3.1.4.1. School leadership: As already mentioned, all experts assumed that school leadership was involved, at the very least, in the anchoring of the project. The role of school leadership was twofold: it symbolized collective responsibility and acted as a leader of the teachers involved.

3.1.4.2. Teachers: Teachers in highly disruptive classes were responsible for managing their classes, but they experienced ignorance or even harassment when they attempted to set standards and provide instructions. All cases indicated that professional identity and pride were vulnerable when a teacher failed to manage the classroom and pupil behaviour. Thus, empowerment of teachers was important. All of the external experts worked directly with the teacher(s) who struggled. Improving teachers' behaviours was generally one way of changing pupils' behaviours. In some cases, teachers obtained instructions about how to organize their classrooms, teach and behave. Others were less instructive and instead guided reflections to help the teachers uncover their own ideas about how to promote change. Regardless of the strategy that the experts used to identify preferred teacher behaviours, the teacher gained support in implementing new management skills. Consequently, teachers were targeted for competence, supervision and support. However, in the most intense part of the turnaround, whether and to what extent the teachers stood out as active participants as opposed to bystanders in the process varied. Some cases gave the teachers a barely visible role with their pupils during this phase, while the experts took over by replacing the teacher for some lessons or for a period. Others cases made the teachers play the most active and visible role, while the experts were quite invisible to the pupils.

3.1.4.3. Pupils: The different approaches to teachers' roles in these cases showed the diverse ways in which they addressed pupils. Some experts built relationships with the pupils and, to some extent, took over the class for a short period. During their replacement of the ordinary teacher, they often had pleasant classroom dialogues, and invited the pupils to discuss the class' situation and future. In these cases, the pupils were active agents who made choices and took action to provide a better learning milieu for themselves. In other cases, the experts hardly met the pupils and never acted as teachers in the classroom. The purpose was to empower the teacher(s). With these approaches, the

pupils had a less active role and became more like passively affected parties. Some experts occupied a position somewhere between these two marginal strategies.

3.1.4.4. Parents: All experts described parents' importance to classroom life due to their interactions with their children, one another and the teacher(s). However, their roles varied – from being merely recipients of information to being very active participants in several stages of the process. Extensive involvement of parents was obvious in cases in which they had applied for assistance. Parents were then an important source for information, and they were included in discussing the direction of development in the class. Moreover, their voices were important for evaluating the intervention. In these cases, involvement of the parents was part of the expert's effort to rebuild trust between the parents and the school.

Occasionally, psychological services, childcare, health care and other external systems were also already involved in the classroom. Thus, turnarounds in the classroom had to consider these cooperative relationships:

3.1.5. Complexity
These cases were characterized by complexity, particularly regarding questions in the following areas: the persons involved, the dimensions of the trouble and the focus of the change.

3.1.5.1. Complexity 1: Persons: A special condition in turnaround projects was obviously the wide range of people involved as actors and participants. Each group often viewed the situation differently. Additionally, different views existed within each group due to varying experiences, attitudes, motivations, disillusionments, hopes, alliances, and the like. Consequently, between-group differences and within-group differences contributed to this complexity. In addition to persons and groups, the experts also described the *relationships* between groups and between individuals within and across groups as potentially even more complex. Into this complexity, the experts added their ambition to motivate and help everyone – or at least as many as possible of those connected to the class – move towards a better shared future and leave behind disillusionment, distrust, guilt, and the like.

3.1.5.2. Complexity 2: Dimensions of the trouble: The experts shared a common concern: one can never consider one hard class to be an exact copy of another hard class. Numerous elements constitute the complex situation, and no two projects are ever homogeneous. The experts described the following problems: poor learning outcomes, pupils with severe learning difficulties, behavioural problems (e.g. bullying, indiscipline, violence), negative social norms, poor communication, poor classroom management practices, inadequate competence in managing disruptive pupils, poor school leadership and support for teachers, poor collegial cooperation. Teachers suffered from stress, lacked authority and felt unable to cope. School leadership was under pressure from teachers, on the one hand, and parents (and pupils), on the other hand. Several types of conflicts were described, such as between parents, between parents and the school, and between teachers.

3.1.5.3. Complexity 3: The focus of the change: Obviously, pupil behaviour had to change in the highly disruptive school classes, and some cases emphasized implementing new behavioural standards. Nevertheless, occasionally the focus was on changing the teacher's management style and thereby affecting the pupils' behaviours. Furthermore, a focus was a redistribution of social power, which allowed teachers to secure the authority needed to stand out as leaders. Although the cases may have included more than one of the mentioned foci for change, how they were weighted varied.

3.1.6. Time focus
Explicitly or implicitly, the time focus was restricted to *the present* and *the future*. As shown in all cases, a future with a healthy learning environment and good classroom leadership did not seem to be a controversial concept when working with schools. More tension surrounded how to describe the present situation; different parties often presented conflicting or competing pictures of the situation. To achieve radical change, cooperation and consistency among these actors were important;

therefore, conflicting views received less attention because agreement and fellowship regarding the future were prioritized. In the cases studied, the real trouble occurred when the past was discussed because this focus drew attention to guilt and responsibility associated with the class's destructive development. Across the cases, dwelling on the past seemed to be avoided, which suggests that, as long as the parties agreed about the future, problems could be solved without knowing exactly why they had occurred.

3.1.7. Training
Competence building for teachers was a common issue in these cases.

3.1.7.1. Courses: Several experts held courses for the entire school staff or for those involved in highly disruptive classes. Often the teachers who worked in the highly disruptive class participated in a number of courses, while a short version was offered to all school staff. Generally, high collective competence was regarded as important to facilitate collective responsibility and support among colleagues as well as to achieve sustainable change.

3.1.7.2. Mentoring: Individual mentoring was a strategy that all cases used to develop teachers' professional competence. In this way, the expert combined specific challenges related to the class to train more general principles and skills in classroom and behavioural management.

3.1.8. Evaluation
A general topic across most of the cases was evaluation, including informal evaluations integrated into the working process and formalized steps for assessing the process and its effects. Evaluation during the intervention process enabled adjustments and actions to gather more information, conduct performance tests to serve special needs, reorganize the actors, etc. The cases showed that the evaluation served different purposes. One purpose was to define whether and to what extent the intervention had succeeded. Another was to pay attention to the opinions of different parties as a means of facilitating trusting relationships for the future. Furthermore, the experts wanted to learn whether the approaches they had developed worked or required adjustment.

3.2. Outline for a conceptual framework
The results above from the within-case analysis present common core issues and concepts across the cases. Cross-case analyses revealed that, to some degree, the experts took different positions or recommended different solutions to the questions arising from these common issues. Building on the common core issues, we will now present our answer to RQ2 concerning variance that surfaced when we compared randomly paired cases to explore the similarities and differences between the two. Some elements in the approaches seemed to spread along four axes that constitute the spans across which these cases can be drawn. The suggested axes and their spans are presented in Table 2 and are further described and elaborated below.

Table 2. Axes and related spans representing core issues in turnarounds in highly disruptive classes	
Name on axis	**Span**
Working location	back stage ---------------------------------- front stage
Tempo for introducing changes	slowly ------------------------------------ quickly
Targets for change	pupils ------------------------------------ teachers
Perspective	cognition and skills (learning) -------------- social dynamics (distribution of power)

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3.2.1. Working location

When using back stage–front stage phraseology, a pupil-filled classroom is the front stage, and all information gathering, analyses, planning and preparation performed without pupils present are the back-stage activities. Using the stage metaphor, what defines and constitutes success happens on the front stage. Often, the audience only comprises those watching a stage performance; however, in some cases, the audience and the performers interact. The classroom is definitely an interactive space. Regardless of the level of interaction, front-stage success depends on the quality of the back-stage work.

As presented in Table 1, several core issues in the cases concerned the questions that had to be asked and answered, the analyses that had to be performed, the actions that had to be taken, and other tasks that had to be completed before the turnaround operation started in the classroom. Consequently, back-stage and front-stage work were included in the turnaround operations.

3.2.2. Tempo for introducing changes

In this study, we refer to "turnarounds", which the experts also called "developmental processes", "innovations" and "interventions"; all of these terms described changes. However, how radical the changes were varied. One approach searched for the class's competence, i.e. their strengths. While reinforcing these strengths, a new step, or competence, was introduced to enhance the learning climate; then, an additional competence was introduced, and so on. This step-by-step approach should make the class feel as though it is taking minor steps to improve the classroom climate. The tempo in this approach is serene to moderate. A contrasting approach involved introducing several coordinated changes simultaneously. At a high tempo, implementing changes that were more or less completely reconstructing the class, the moment to introduce these changes had to be very well prepared in advance. No dwelling, doubting or uncertainty could be shown when adult control was thus re-established.

3.2.3. Targets for change

The experts described models that implied communication and cooperation between themselves and several parties – school leadership, teacher(s), parents and pupils. Across the cases, all of these parties were addressed, except for the pupils. With respect to the pupils, considerable variety appeared regarding whether and how much time the experts spend with them – from not meeting with the pupils at all to spending a substantial amount of time with them.

Those who chose not to work directly with pupils emphasized the need to ensure the empowerment of the teacher(s) who would continue working with the class after the intervention period. A temporary expert-teacher – who was just playing an intermezzo in the class, listening to pupils' frustrations, motivating them and giving them inspiring future perspectives – could have easily become a favourite at the cost of the ordinary teacher(s) who had been unsuccessful in managing the class. To avoid a situation that could undermine the ordinary teacher's authority, the experts in some of the cases strongly emphasized that all changes should be performed by the teachers to help them regain authority. Additionally, the changes implemented by an external expert who was working temporarily in the class would hardly be sustainable when the teacher – whom pupils had dethroned – returned.

The experts who preferred to cooperate directly with the class were also concerned with the empowerment of the ordinary teachers. This approach was favoured because it raised pupils' awareness about how their behaviours contributed to poor learning conditions and about how their choices could make the learning environment more like what they wanted it to be. During individual and/or group conversations, the experts helped the class establish common aims, expectations and standards, which were set to guide their behaviour. Thus, pupils *chose* the intervention and the direction of the changes. By arranging this choice, the experts made the pupils feel as though they were volunteering to be part of this new direction, although changes in classroom behaviour should not be solely dependent on pupils' decisions to change. In the commonly established picture of new classroom life, the teacher's role would certainly be an important one. By stressing this point, the experts addressed the ordinary teachers' status. In addition to his/her work with the pupils, the expert was

also training the teacher(s) to improve their classroom management skills. The framework for teacher–pupil interactions changed because of the development of pupils' awareness and desire, the teaching and training of pupils regarding purposeful learning behaviours, and the teaching and training teachers regarding classroom management. The new circumstances provided the teacher with a new opportunity to practice classroom management.

3.2.4. Perspective

This axis is not an either/or question; instead, it should be considered a continuum from which all initiatives during the intervention could be marked off. Finally, the centred points reflected how strongly the case emphasized the development of cognition in terms of learning to behave well vs making changes via social dynamics to re-distribute social power.

Some approaches strongly focused on improving pupils' skills and competence to behave in accordance with the expectations set for the classroom context. A class that had long-practised disruptive behaviour had to re-learn relevant expectations and appropriate behaviours. Therefore, the path to classroom change involved developing pupils' mental knowledge and behavioural skills.

At the opposite end of the continuum, some cases highlighted the social context as having an important effect on pupil behaviour. Therefore, behavioural changes should be related to contextual changes. In models built on this basis, teaching pupils to think the right thoughts, develop the right viewpoints, and master appropriate behaviour was considered insufficient because their actual behaviour would be somewhat influenced by the social norms in class, the relationships that were associated with status, and those with whom they wanted to be affiliated, among other things. The experts considered these factors important in the distribution of status and social power in class. When teachers had lost control as classroom managers, some pupils had usurped the leadership role. To ensure their protection in such classrooms, the pupils would try to affiliate themselves with the mightiest among their peers. This affiliation often implied taking a stand against the teacher in an attempt to please the pupils in charge. The social climate, relationships, "likes" and "dislikes", and social status and influence became important determinants of pupils' behaviours. Therefore, instead of knowing intellectually the right course of action, pupils' behaviours depended on that which provided access to social acceptance and rewards. Therefore, the turnaround intervention was successful in disturbing the power base of the informal leaders, taking back adult control and re-establishing teachers' authority. On this foundation, the teacher should introduce rules and procedures and establish school-friendly social norms.

3.3. Revealing the two main strategies

The last element in the cross-case analyses involved investigating whether we could suggest a framework based on clusters of concepts or approaches and comparing each case with the emerging framework. This procedure answered RQ3 and revealed that these cases were not randomly placed on the axes described above. Instead, when a case was identified with a cross-mark on one of the axes, it tended to fit in a particular place on other axes. A pattern emerged that showed two main tendencies for how the cases were positioned on the different axes. Based on this pattern, we suggest a conceptual framework for the two main strategies for approaching highly disruptive classes.

One is the *cognitive strategy*, described as a project of learning. Cognitive strategies were used to raise pupils' awareness about their goals, motives and behaviour to help them realize that their behaviour in class was counterproductive in light of what they really wanted to achieve and what they wanted their working conditions to be. Class discussions then led to a common understanding or agreement regarding what they wanted their working conditions to be. Finally, the pupils had to train to be able to adjust their behaviour in accordance with their established agreement. The expert often led the entire process, recognizing the actual norms in a class, identifying the desired norms, rules and procedures and initiating the implementation of the new behaviour. The experts led this process because when the pupils had more or less ignored teachers' standards and instructions, these teachers would hardly be able to lead the class through such a process. Therefore, in such

cases, the expert often replaced the teacher or at least liberally assisted him or her during this phase of the turnaround process.

In addition to working with the pupils, the expert also helped prepare the teacher(s) to take over the renewed class. Additionally, parents were often involved in discussions, and they received information and were encouraged to support their child's participation in the new regime.

This strategy often implied that the part of the process spent in the classroom with the pupils took some time. Of course, these front-stage activities had to be thoroughly prepared in advance, but the back-stage phase was not very time-consuming. Most of the process happened on the front-stage. To change an extremely disruptive class into a healthy learning environment, it had to develop gradually through increased consciousness and learning; small changes were implemented one after another.

The second main strategy was a *systems approach*, which was a project that redistributed social power to re-establish the teacher's authority. As formal leaders in the classroom, the teachers should possess authority. However, in highly disruptive classes, the teachers' instructions and standards were systematically ignored. Usually, some pupils acquired social power at the cost of the teacher. Other pupils realized that the formal leader had been dethroned. Consequently, those who connected with the teacher risked losing their status in the class; the teacher was also unable to protect them, and they were actually better off joining the informal leaders. Unruly classes then became battlefields for social power, influence and status. As such, the redistribution of power would benefit the teacher and, in the long term, the class as well. However, someone had to lose their power and influence. Therefore, some pupils would attempt to maintain the status quo because it was beneficial to those who possessed the greatest social power. These conditions made rational, cognitive strategies inadequate for addressing these problems. Socially adept pupils would easily use raising awareness and negotiating norms in an effort to avoid giving up something that they did not want to share. If the formal leader had to discuss his or her right to lead and had to negotiate with informal leaders, the leader sent the wrong message. Therefore, according to this strategy, a teacher preferred to re-establish his or her leadership and authority based on his or her right and duty to do so; they did not ask for permission.

Taking back adult authority in the classroom demands clear communication of who is in charge. Structure, behaviour and words were the means of communicating this authority. Immediately after returning to power, teachers should consistently show their leadership role by doing the things that teachers are expected to do and demanding pupil behaviour in accordance with normal expectations. Numerous actions were taken within a short time.

To succeed in the power takeover, all actors involved had to be very well prepared. Unclear or ambiguous leadership behaviour from the teachers in this phase allowed pupils the opportunity to possess informal leadership and to consolidate their positions, a situation that underlined the need for good preparation. In other words, front-stage events were highly intensive; much was at stake in a very short time; and success depended on thoroughly executing back-stage work. In this strategy for classroom turnarounds, the most time-consuming period was dedicated to back-stage work.

During the cross-case analysis, the framework that emerged with these two strategies did not introduce two mutually exclusive categories such that each case fitted only one of them. In fact, the cases generally implemented elements from both strategies. Nevertheless, two main paths, both of which may lead to turnarounds in classes, seemingly arised from this analysis. Within one such strategy, using actions from the other strategy as a supplement seemed possible. In addition, core actions that were seemingly necessary in one strategy could be more peripheral in the other one. Cases related to each of the strategies underlined the importance of teachers' empowerment. However, some experts argued that when working with pupils in a disruptive class, they always focused intently on ensuring the empowerment of the ordinary teacher(s). Others argued that the

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Table 3. Framework for the two main strategies for approaching highly disruptive classes			
	Tentative framework for a *cognitive strategy*: learning to behave; re-establishing rules and procedures	**Tentative framework for a *systems approach*:** redistributing social power; re- establishing teacher authority	**Remarks**
Back stage vs front stage	Front stage primarily	Back stage primarily	Both arenas are important in both strategies, but they are emphasized differently
Pupils vs teachers	Both are central participants in preparing the interventions; both are recipients of competence training; and, to a certain extent, both are co- operators when the intervention begins in the class	Teachers are the main focus when preparing the interventions, and they are the main actors in the front-stage intervention	Teachers are always addressed; however, the content and amount of cooperation vary. The extent to which pupils are directly addressed varies more, from no contact to consider-able contact
Tempo and intervention intensity	Calm; medium intensity	Fast; high intensity	Tempo and intensity reflect the number of actions taken per time unit when the intervention starts with pupils, i.e. the front-stage work

empowerment of teachers was the primary goal when working with turnarounds in highly disruptive classes. Therefore, the experts should avoid discussions or relationship building with pupils in the operative phase of the project because such contact would likely elevate the experts' status at the cost of teachers.

The tentative framework for the two strategies derived from the cross-case analyses are presented in Table 3.

The two middle columns in Table 3 do not exclusively apply to their respective cases among the seven cases included in the study. The tentative framework that we have outlined above accentuates the cross-case diversity and presents two diverse strategies that more or less seem to work as a reference or framework in the cases. Comparing each individual case with this framework showed that several cases were somewhat eclectic. Nevertheless, the distinction between these two strategies seems meaningful and apparent when investigating underlying arguments rather than concrete actions in the cases.

4. Discussion and conclusion

We will start the discussion by comparing the emerging framework with the external literature covering two perspectives on classroom management, both within the paradigm of authoritative teaching.

Based on thorough observations in classroom settings, Pianta and his colleagues model classroom management as teacher–pupil interactions in three domains: emotional support, classroom organization and instructional support (Allan et al., 2013; Hamre & Pianta, 2010).

Emotional support covers the classroom climate, including relationships and social interactions. High quality implies a friendly, inclusive, supportive and safe atmosphere. The second domain, classroom organization, comprises clear expectations for behaviour. High quality means that teachers consistently and proactively monitor pupil behaviour, effectively redirect misbehaviour and manage instructional time effectively so that pupils always know what to do. The third domain, instructional support, covers how the teacher facilitates learning by communicating clear learning targets, using various modalities and material and promoting involvement and engagement (Hamre & Pianta, 2010). Teacher management practices involve a continually dynamic integration of interactions in all three domains. Although the model considers the importance of relationships between pupils, it focuses on teacher–pupil interactions and does not provide a model for classroom fellowship. An

evaluation of Pianta and colleagues' teacher training programme shows that teachers who, based on classroom observations, are supervised in developing their practices to include high-quality interactions have more effective classrooms and better learning outcomes (Allen, Pianta, Gregory, Mikami, & Lun, 2011).

Pianta and colleagues' work seeks to establish effective teachers in effective classrooms – the polar opposite of ineffective teachers who have lost control of their classrooms. Our study about approaches to managing highly disruptive classes revealed a cognitive strategy and an alternative strategy that addresses social mechanisms and the redistribution of social power within the group. Both strategies acknowledge the importance of establishing and implementing rules and procedures and make teaching and learning the basic activities in the classroom. Pianta and colleagues' interaction model for classroom management seems quite congruent with a strategy that highlights cognitive strategies, training, moderate intensity and front-stage work with pupils. The model does not provide sufficient support for a strategy that stresses resetting the power balance in the classroom to the teacher's advantage. Because the social systems in hard classes are ruled by informal leaders, the teachers will not possess the necessary credibility to improve their interactions with pupils.

An alternative model for classroom management proposed by Roland and Galloway (2002; Roland, 1998, 2014) conceptualizes the class as a social system. This model provides concepts and frameworks for analysing and managing the social system that develops in every class. It shows how group dynamics influence the role of the classroom manager, and vice versa. These powerful dynamics can be utilized for the purposeful development of the class. Classroom managers should consider teacher–pupil relationships, pupil–pupil relationships, collective skills and collective consciousness, parental cooperation and the effective correction of disruptive behaviour. High-quality classroom management demands that teachers possess the knowledge and skills to mould the group into a fellowship that promotes learning, pro-social behaviour and a good climate. For every pupil, teachers must build relationships that are characterized by warmth and compassion and clear standard-related demands, and they must exert their control when standards are broken. Teachers must also know how to promote good relationships among pupils. In this model, routines and procedures are examples of collective skills. Social norms, standards and classroom culture are examples of collective consciousness. Classroom management through the lens of a social system must also include cooperation with parents, who obviously influence the classroom climate for better or worse. Additionally, this classroom management perspective includes principles and practical advice for how to handle disruptive behaviour. The overall message in Roland and Galloway's concept of classroom management is the importance of the interplay between the different elements in the social system (Roland, 1998, 2014; Roland & Galloway, 2002). For example, relationships influence pupils' social norms; the distribution of social status and power influence behaviour; collective skills contribute to fellowship and loyalty; and relationships and collective identity in class affect the teacher's authority. The tools that regulate behaviour function differently for teachers who possess authority compared with teachers with little authority and poor relationships. High-quality classroom management comes from teachers who are trained to understand and lead each pupil and who comprehend the complex dynamics of the group and the social system that it represents (Roland, 1998; Roland & Galloway, 2002). This classroom management perspective strongly emphasizes the interaction between the classroom context and pupil behaviour, the effect that social expectations have on pupils' social behaviours, engagement in learning activities, and pupils' respect for teachers' instructions, among other things. When a class is new, its social system is highly malleable. It develops through episodes in the classroom, no matter what the teacher intends. Consequently, a social system develops in school classes either randomly or through purposeful leadership (Geetzels & Thelen, 1971; Vaaland, 2011). When established, this system is quite sustainable, although not completely resistant to change. It will make an invisible structure in the classroom that can have a powerful impact on pupil behaviour (Geetzels & Thelen, 1971; Roland & Galloway, 2002).

Based on this conceptualization of the class as a social system and the subsequent model for classroom management, Roland and colleagues have developed a programme for teacher and school development called Respect that is effective in preventing and controlling disruptive behaviour (Ertesvåg, Roland, Vaaland, Størksen, & Veland, 2010; Ertesvåg & Vaaland, 2007).

Observed through the lens of the social systems management model, the cognitive strategy for managing highly disruptive classes does not satisfactorily answer the question of how to re-establish teacher authority or how to address power imbalances and negative social norms. The other strategy, which involves the redistribution of power to take back adult control and to re-establish teacher authority, fits very well with the classroom management model described by Roland and colleagues. Pupils do not always follow the teacher's standards and instructions, although they know exactly what is expected of them. A dysfunctional social system in class may lead pupils to behave in ways they believe will provide social rewards through their affiliation with the pupils who possess the highest social status (Geetzels & Thelen, 1971). Therefore, teaching and training rules and routines will not be sufficient to re-establish good learning conditions. The social systems model for classroom management explicitly addresses the dynamics required to regain teacher authority.

Above, we have described two well-established perspectives of classroom management and have used them as references to discuss the two strategies for turnarounds in highly disruptive classes. Viewed as the management of a social system, classroom management does not necessarily contradict the management interaction model. The two perspectives may actually complement one another, each describing some sides of the theme and leaving other sides undescribed rather than labelling them unimportant. Two main strategies for approaching disruptive classes have emerged from the cases studied. However, they are not mutually exclusive; they are instead diverse main roads that can easily accommodate elements from other approaches. We must also underscore that cognitive learning-based actions that are taken to establish good learning conditions in classrooms are welcome, though not sufficient, from a perspective on classroom management that highlights dynamics in a social system, and vice versa. However, in line with our findings regarding the approaches to managing highly disruptive classes, the classroom management literature also seems to reflect different positions concerning this issue.

Interestingly, the classroom management literature also highlights issues that are relevant to the management of disruptive classes, such as teacher authority, rules, organizing, relationships, and social norms. However, hard classes seem to need extremely intense, precise and systematic classroom management to change their unhealthy conditions. However, these findings do not contradict the established knowledge in the classroom management field; they instead act as a supplement.

Although we argue that the classroom management literature is a relevant reference for turnarounds in highly disruptive classes, important distinctions exist between the two. Classroom management is an ongoing process. Turnarounds, regardless of which strategy is used, have time limits and involve an external expert. We can view the external expert as a consultant who interacts directly with pupils in class for a short period or who interacts indirectly with pupils through a teacher in line with the triadic model developed by Tharp and Wetzel (1969; Tharp, 2012). In both models, the consultant's position depends on his possession of knowledge. The triadic model introduces a mediator between the consultant and the target person. Consequently, to improve the pupils' classroom behaviours, the consultant supervises the teacher(s), explaining how he or she can influence behaviours through direct interaction with pupils. Our social systems strategy reflects a triadic consultation model. The external party does not work directly with pupils; instead, he or she teaches teachers how to implement changes and supervises the process. The process stresses the backstage work to prepare teachers for a major change within a short time period on the front stage. Conversely, in the cognitive strategy for turnarounds, the expert spends time with pupils in the classroom to improve their behaviour, with a direct consultation between the consultant and the target.

The cognitive strategy prioritizes front-stage work, which the external party manages. The two strategies seems to depend on two different but well-established approaches to consultation, which implies that the literature on consultation may provide useful references for a deeper understanding of the differences between the two strategies.

Our data revealed a framework with two different strategies for approaching hard classes: a cognitive strategy appealing to pupils' rationality and responsibility and a systems strategy implying a power takeover on the part of the teacher. We consider this framework to be our main finding. However, both approaches seem to be successful, based on our informants' reputations. We will try to explain the possible success across these approaches.

Considering proactive aggressiveness on the part of some pupils the main reason that classes become highly disruptive, the power takeover strategy seems the most logical approach because having power over the teacher, being affiliated with co-aggressors and improving one's status are considered rewards for proactive aggressiveness (Vaaland et al., 2011; Vaaland & Roland, 2013). According to previous research, reactive aggressiveness and disruption are also strongly related (Vaaland et al., 2011). However, proactively aggressive pupils likely influence pupils with high levels of reactive aggressiveness (Card & Little, 2007). Consequently, the power takeover method should be effective because it seizes the informal leaders' power. Moreover, in general, proactively aggressive and socially adept pupils can possibly generate a classroom culture that is quite resistant to leadership by demanding that most pupils take part in this disruptive behaviour. In such cases, regaining teacher power may inspire positive behaviour in mainstream pupils (Card & Little, 2007; Geetzels & Thelen, 1971; Stormshak et al., 1999; Vaaland & Roland, 2013).

The cognitive strategy addresses pupils' rationality, implying that pupils, who know what teachers expect, will comply if they possess the skills to follow the instructions. Pupils are assumed to relate to expected classroom behaviours when they recognize that such behaviours are beneficial for their learning. Different versions of social cognitive training seem to have limited effects in reducing proactive aggression in trainees (Coie, Underwood, & Lochman, 1991). Because these highly aggressive pupils are an important source of disruptive behaviours, the positive effect of the cognitive strategy on disruptive classes may indirectly influence proactively aggressive pupils because social cognitive training seems to be effective in reducing reactive aggression and in positively influencing mainstream children (Beelmann, Pfingsten, & Lösel, 1994; Feindler & Gerber, 2008; Gundersen & Svartdal, 2006).

We described the *cognitive* and *the social systems strategies* as the two main thoroughfares, with some cases with eclectic strategies positioned between them. Success could depend on the expert's ability to approach every single turnaround with careful awareness, choosing tools that fit each class perfectly. This assumption implies that classes develop towards disruptiveness for different reasons and thus need different solutions, which the experts will choose from their repertoire. However, by considering proactive aggressiveness the main driver of the collapse in teacher authority, a combination of the two approaches seems interesting. A main element of the systems strategy is the direct takeover of power, which all pupils in the class observe. This takeover could weaken the rulers' grip on the class and release positive energy from mainstream pupils. The cognitive approach could give this process momentum. In addition, studying the timing of the two approaches more closely – and possibly the elements within each of them – is important.

If a turnaround succeeds, we still need long-term evaluations to investigate how sustainable these positive changes are. Introducing external experts for a classroom turnaround signals the seriousness of the problem. This external jolt may trigger an awakening that contributes to behavioural changes, which implies that many different approaches could be effective in changing the class. However, as time passes, changes will not necessarily be sustainable. More research and knowledge on the approaches to managing highly disruptive classes are needed. We must know

more about the differences between classes and approaches and about how to structure the most promising approach for each hard class.

4.1. Methodological considerations

Our study used experts' presentations as sources of information, which was gathered during a workshop. Researchers commonly recommend that case study designs include different sources of information and that the study occur in the natural setting of the case (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). We sought to investigate the models or guidelines for turnaround operations, which are appropriate research objects in case studies (Woodside & Wilson, 2003; Yin, 2009). A mental model cannot be observed in any natural field. In our situation, the models were strongly person-related, and the information could hardly be collected through other sources. Alternatively, the field data from several turnaround operations performed by each expert could have been studied in natural settings with multiple data sources and informants. Such an approach would have been very time consuming, and it would not have guaranteed us a true picture of that expert's opinion concerning the model that guided his or her work. Consequently, as long as our purpose was to capture the informants' aggregated experience and practices and their decisions regarding purposeful actions and core issues, the most relevant sources were the experts' presentations and reflections.

Cases and informants were strategically chosen for this purpose and were not considered representative of all cases; thus, in terms of generalizability, one should proceed with caution when interpreting these findings. Because the results build on several cases, we believe the insights achieved serve as stepping stones for future studies, which should include a broader foundation and other research designs to further knowledge development.

The procedures for data collection were described, and the analyses were systematically performed in accordance with the described procedures. Two researchers cooperated during the analyses, and the third researcher who participated in the workshop has thoroughly revised the results to ensure their validity. In sum, we consider the methodological questions solved, leading to empirical data that substantiate the concepts and theoretical framework that are the outcomes of the study.

Our long-term purpose is to provide schools with well-described, evidence-based approaches for turnaround operations; obviously, this purpose requires additional work. However, we believe that our results are meaningful, as they describe, discuss, compare and analyse some important aspects of the approaches to managing highly disruptive classes. Good theory is stringent, testable and logically coherent (Eisenhardt, 1989). In terms of coherence, the suggested framework shows the relationships between concepts, and a tentative coherent picture emerges. These results are testable, although they are not final in terms of a stringent and logically coherent theory. More work is required to test, revise and further develop the framework that we suggest as a useful starting point.

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