

## **"The Teacher Who Became a Student"**

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Over the years, I have encountered many different students in my classroom, but some of them leave a lasting story in my mind—one that I will never forget.

Javad was one of those students. He always sat at the back of the class, showed little interest in the lessons, and made just enough mischief to distract others. Not enough to cause major disruptions, but just enough to be noticeable.

For weeks, I tried various approaches to engage him, but nothing seemed to work. The conventional methods suggested sending him to the principal's office, having him sign a commitment letter, or even applying disciplinary measures. But I have always believed that if a student has a problem in my class, it is my responsibility to find a solution.

One day, after class, when all the students had gone to the playground, I asked Javad to stay behind. In a calm and friendly tone, I asked:

– Why don't you pay attention during the lesson, and why do you keep disrupting the class?

He hesitated for a moment, then asked:

– Sir, if I tell you the truth, will you get mad at me?

I smiled and replied:

– I promise I won't. Just tell me why.

He looked at me and said:

– Because I already know everything you’re teaching. I get bored!

His answer took me by surprise. I decided to test him. I asked a few questions from the next lesson—one I had not yet taught. To my astonishment, he answered all of them correctly, and not only that, but his explanations were clear and thorough.

At that moment, I understood why he was disengaged. But a more important question formed in my mind: How can I channel this hidden potential?

I looked at Javad and asked:

– Would you like to be my teaching assistant? You can help answer your classmates’ questions and assist them with exercises.

For the first time, I saw excitement in his eyes—an enthusiasm that had been missing before. He eagerly agreed.

When the students returned from recess, I made an announcement:

– From this moment on, Javad is my assistant in this class.

The students looked at him in surprise. But soon, the atmosphere of the class changed. Javad was no longer bored. Every time a student raised their hand, he eagerly stepped in, explained concepts, and helped them with exercises. And most surprisingly, the students listened to him attentively—because he spoke their language better than I did.

That day, I did not teach a lesson; I learned one. I realized that sometimes, a student’s problem is not a lack of knowledge but a lack of challenge. And sometimes, a simple shift in perspective—a small opportunity—can change the course of a student’s learning forever.

Sometimes, a teacher must become a student...

Psychological and Educational Analysis of the Story "The Teacher Who Became a Student"

## Introduction

Challenging student behaviors are a common issue in classrooms, often stemming from a variety of factors, including learning difficulties, lack of motivation, and cognitive challenges. Traditional classroom management approaches typically focus on punishment and behavior suppression. However, psychological and educational research suggests that identifying the root causes of these behaviors and offering alternative solutions can be more effective.

This paper examines a teacher's experience with a student named Javad, who, due to boredom and a lack of cognitive challenge, engaged in disruptive behavior. Instead of resorting to punitive measures, the teacher adopted an approach based on increased responsibility and peer-assisted learning, leading to a transformation in the student's behavior and an improvement in the classroom learning environment. This case will be analyzed through the lenses of learning theories, motivation, and classroom management.

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## Discussion

### 1. Cognitive Challenge and Learning Theories

One of the main reasons for Javad's inattentiveness was the absence of cognitive challenge. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, effective learning occurs when a learner experiences cognitive equilibrium. However, if the content is too simple or

repetitive, the learner may experience cognitive boredom, leading to disengagement. In Javad's case, since he already knew the material being taught, he found the class uninteresting and resorted to disruptive behavior as a means of entertainment.

## 2. Motivation and Self-Determination Theory

According to Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), three fundamental psychological needs drive intrinsic motivation:

**Autonomy:** The feeling of having control over one's learning process.

**Competence:** The feeling of being capable and skilled.

**Relatedness:** The feeling of belonging and being valued in a social context.

Initially, Javad lacked motivation because these needs were unmet. However, when the teacher assigned him the role of a teaching assistant, all three needs were fulfilled:

He gained autonomy by being actively involved in the class rather than passively listening.

He developed competence by demonstrating his ability to answer his peers' questions.

He experienced relatedness by being recognized and valued as an integral part of the classroom.

This shift led to a transition from amotivation to intrinsic motivation, which is associated with more sustained and effective learning.

### 3. Peer-Assisted Learning and Role Theory

In this case, rather than eliminating the disruptive behavior, the teacher transformed Javad's role within the classroom, increasing his motivation. This approach aligns with Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL), which suggests that students often learn more effectively from peers due to shared language and perspectives.

Moreover, according to Social Role Theory, individuals adjust their behaviors based on the expectations associated with a given role. When Javad was introduced as the "assistant teacher," his sense of responsibility increased, leading to a natural shift toward more positive behavior.

### 4. Classroom Management: From Punishment to Motivational Strategies

In traditional classroom management, disruptive students are often removed from the learning environment, sent to the principal, or subjected to punitive measures. However, research indicates that such approaches tend to increase student resistance and reduce engagement.

The approach taken in this case exemplifies Positive Classroom Management, which focuses on addressing the root causes of behavioral issues by fostering intrinsic motivation and increasing student participation in the learning process.

The benefits of this approach include:

- ✓ Increased active engagement in learning.
- ✓ Improved teacher-student relationships.

- ✔ A supportive learning environment where all students can contribute meaningfully.

## Conclusion

This case study demonstrates that many disruptive student behaviors are not necessarily due to a lack of learning ability but rather a lack of challenge and motivation. In such situations, punitive strategies are often ineffective, whereas creating opportunities for active participation can lead to positive behavioral changes.

Key takeaways for educators include:

- ✔ Identifying the underlying causes of student misbehavior rather than addressing it superficially.
- ✔ Providing opportunities for active learning rather than forcing passive engagement.
- ✔ Recognizing the role of intrinsic motivation in academic performance.
- ✔ Utilizing positive classroom management strategies instead of punishment and exclusion.

Ultimately, this experience underscores the idea that sometimes, a teacher must become a student—not to teach, but to better understand students' learning needs and discover innovative educational strategies that foster meaningful growth.