

Classroom Management in Primary Schools Challenges and Practical Solutions for Novice Teachers

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Abstract: *Effective classroom management is a critical skill for novice teachers, particularly in primary education. Novice teachers frequently encounter challenges such as student distractions, disruptive behaviour, and diverse learning needs, which can negatively impact student outcomes and teacher confidence. This study identifies the main classroom management challenges through classroom observations, interviews with experienced educators, and a comprehensive literature review. Practical solutions proposed include proactive lesson planning, engaging instructional methods, establishment of clear classroom rules, and professional mentorship. Implementing these strategies can enhance classroom control, improve student engagement, and support teacher development.*

Keywords: Classroom Management, Primary Education, Novice Teachers, Student Behaviour, Teaching Strategies

1. Introduction

Effective classroom management is widely recognized as a key factor for successful teaching, especially for novice teachers in primary school teachers. Despite possessing the necessary theoretical knowledge, many new teachers struggle to maintain discipline, manage diverse student behaviours, and foster a productive learning environment. These challenges can lead to decreased student engagement, increased teacher stress, and, in some cases, higher rates of burnout (Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Smith, 2021).

The problem is compounded by insufficient pre-service training and limited hands-on experience in classroom management strategies (Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Bartanen, 2025). New teachers often face unexpected classroom situations that require immediate decision-making and adaptive strategies, which can be overwhelming without adequate preparation (Noor, Saleem, & Muhammad, 2025). Positive teacher-student relationships and structured, evidence-based management practices have been shown to overcome these difficulties and improve classroom outcomes (Pianta & Hamre, 2009; Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003).

In other words, poor classroom management is a significant reason for teacher stress and attrition, making it critical to identify effective strategies for novice educators. This study aims to explore the key challenges novice teachers face in primary classrooms and to propose practical solutions informed by research, classroom observations, and expert insights to improve classroom management. Also, it examines the most prevalent classroom management challenges faced by novice teachers in primary schools, includes establishing authority, delivering engaging lessons, managing diverse student behaviours, and building positive relationships. Drawing on modern educational studies, this research proposes a suite of evidence-based solutions.

Research Objectives

- 1) Identify the main challenges novice teachers face in managing classrooms effectively.

- 2) Examine the impact of classroom management difficulties on student engagement and teacher well-being.
- 3) Introduce practical strategies to enhance classroom management skills among new primary teachers to facilitate efficient and effective learning.

Research Methodology

A mixed-method approach was adopted for this study: the methodology comprised three main components:

- 1) Classroom Observations: Conducted across multiple primary school classes to identify behavioural patterns and management challenges.
- 2) Semi-structured interviews: Conducted with experienced teachers to gain insights on practical solutions and classroom strategies.

The study was conducted in the state of Kuwait, focusing on primary schools located in both urban and suburban areas. The sample included teachers from public and private schools, allowing for a broader understanding of contextual factors that influence classroom management practices among novice teachers.

Literature Review: Analysis of recent and previous studies on classroom management for novice teachers to inform the research framework and develop effective observation and interview protocols.

Qualitative analysis identified recurring themes and validated strategies for improving classroom management.

2. Literature Review

Classroom management has been widely discussed in educational research as one of the main challenges faced by new teachers. According to Wong and Wong (2018), effective classroom management is essential for creating a positive learning environment and maintaining student engagement. However, Odegard and Solberg (2020) found that many beginning teachers struggle to establish control in their classrooms due to limited practical experience and lack of confidence. Similarly, Smith (2021) reported that insufficient

training in behavior management strategies often leads to increased stress and teacher burnout. These studies highlight the need for more support and mentoring programmes that help new teachers develop effective classroom management skills

Evidence-based management practices are fundamental to overcoming these challenges. Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) suggest that structured strategies, including clear procedures and preventive methods, enhance classroom effectiveness. Similarly, Simonsen et al. (2008) argue that preventive approaches are more effective than reactive interventions, as they minimize conflicts and maintain a positive learning environment. Reupert and Woodcock (2010) report that pre-service teachers often lack confidence in implementing management strategies, which underscores the importance of practical training and mentorship programs. You and Mantuhac (2024) further indicate that teachers' classroom management skills are directly linked to student learning outcomes, reinforcing the need for comprehensive support for novice educators.

Reflective practice has also been identified as a key factor in developing effective classroom management. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) argue that self-reflection allows teachers to assess and adapt their strategies according to classroom needs. Bartanen (2025) notes that continuous skill improvement not only enhances classroom control but also reduces teacher attrition. Furthermore, Pianta and Hamre (2009) emphasize the importance of establishing positive teacher-student relationships, which serve as a foundation for engagement and discipline. Noor, Saleem, and Muhammad (2025) explore the context-specific challenges faced by new teachers in urban elementary schools, highlighting that diverse student behaviors require flexible and adaptive management strategies.

Insights from Arabic literature reinforce these findings. Abdulrahman (2021) underscores that classroom management requires both theoretical understanding and practical application, while Al-Sharif (2020) demonstrates that structured practices significantly improve new teachers' ability to maintain control and foster student participation. Collectively, these studies indicate that novice teachers benefit from a combination of evidence-based strategies, reflective practices, and context-aware approaches to achieve effective classroom management.

Major Challenges for Novice Teachers

Novice teachers face a group of interconnected challenges that can decrease their confidence and classroom control.

Establishing Authority and Credibility

Limited Classroom Control: Hesitation to enforce rules consistently reduces teacher authority. Many novice teachers, particularly those who are younger, struggle with projecting an image of authority. They often fear being perceived as overly strict and may vacillate between being a friend and being an authority figure, leading to inconsistent enforcement of rules (Kunter et al., 2013). This inconsistency confuses students and can result in a gradual erosion of classroom order.

Ineffective Lesson Planning and Pacing

Poor pacing leads to idle periods and increased misbehaviour. Also, a lack of instructional resources or support staff affects management effectiveness. Novice teachers may plan lessons that are either too difficult or too easy, fail to account for varying student abilities, or misjudge timing. Lessons that lack clear structure, engaging activities, or appropriate pacing can lead to student boredom, frustration, and subsequent off-task behaviour (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Downtime during transitions between activities is a particularly common cause for disruptive behaviour.

Table I summarizes the key challenges.

Table I: Summary of Key Challenges

Challenge	Description	Source/ Observation
Disruptive Behavior	Interruptions during lessons and transitions	Observation & Literature
Limited Classroom Control	Difficulty enforcing rules consistently	Interviews & Literature
Diverse Student Needs	Different abilities and behaviors	Observation & Interviews
Time Management	Poor lesson pacing leads to idle time	Observation
Environmental Constraints	Lack of resources or support staff	Literature & Observation

3. Proposed Solutions

Based on observations, interviews, and literature, the following solutions are recommended for novice teachers:

Dealing with Disruptive and Diverse Behaviours

Disruptive Behaviour: Frequent interruptions during lessons or transitions.

Primary school teachers must address a wide diversity of behaviours, from minor interruptions like calling out to more severe issues like defiance or emotional outbursts. New teachers often lack effective strategies to manage various classroom situations. They may resort to reactive, punitive measures that stop the behaviour temporarily but do not address the underlying cause and can damage teacher-student relationships (Alter & Haydon, 2017).

Building Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

While understanding the importance of relationships, new teachers may not possess the practical skills to build strong, positive connections with each student, especially in large classes. Without a foundation of trust and respect, even well-intentioned management strategies are less likely to be effective (Pianta et al., 2012).

Lack of Preparedness and Practical Experience

Many teacher preparation programs emphasize pedagogical theory over hands-on classroom management training. Consequently, new teachers may feel theoretically prepared but are often unprepared for the immediate, practical demands of managing 25 or more young children simultaneously (Freiberg & Lamb, 2009).

Evidence-Based Solutions and Strategies

Based on the challenges identified in the literature, several strategies can support novice teachers in effectively managing

their classrooms. First, pre-training programs should include practical, hands-on experience in classroom management. (Reupert and Woodcock, 2010) emphasize that simulated teaching scenarios and guided practice increase teachers' confidence and preparedness. (Bartanen, 2025) also highlights that ongoing skill development and professional support can reduce teacher burnout and improve their motivation.

Second, applying structured routines, and evidence-based behavioral strategies is crucial. Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) suggest that consistent procedures, clear rules, and proactive interventions minimize disruptions and create a predictable learning environment. (Simonsen et al., 2008) argue that preventive strategies, rather than reactive disciplinary actions, are more effective in promoting positive student behaviour.

Third, establishing positive teacher-student relationships enhances classroom management outcomes. (Pianta and Hamre, 2009) note that supportive interactions and strong relationships with students increase engagement and reduce behavioral issues. (Brown, 2014) similarly underscores that attentive and responsive teaching strengthens classroom climate and cooperation. Non-Verbal Cues, such as using eye contact, proximity, or a simple hand signal can redirect a student without interrupting the lesson. Building strong connections is a powerful management tool, so teachers are to show genuine interest towards students, for instance, a simple personal daily greeting at the door sets a positive tone. Besides, learning about students' interests, families, and strengths can be used in interactions and lessons. One of the most effective actions is using positive communication through framing corrections positively (e. g., "Please walk" instead of "Don't run") and focus on encouraging student effort and growth (Pianta et al., 2012).

Fourth, reflective practice enables teachers to adapt strategies according to classroom dynamics. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) demonstrate that self-reflection allows teachers to identify challenges, evaluate the effectiveness of their approaches, and make necessary adjustments. Noor, Saleem, and Muhammad (2025) emphasize that context-specific reflection is particularly important in diverse and dynamic classroom settings.

Fifth, teachers should implement proactive and preventive Strategies to reduce disruptive behaviour in the classroom. This involves setting clear rules from the first day of school.

Sixth, setting clear rules and positive routines with students fosters ownership. Teaching, modeling, and practicing classroom routines (e. g., for entering the class, turning in work, transitioning) minimizes confusion and downtime (Wong & Wong, 2018).

Seventh, organizing physical environment and arranging the classroom to minimize congestion, ensuring the teacher can see all students, and having materials easily accessible reduces opportunities for disruption.

Eighth, teachers should use engaging instructions to maintain students engagement and attention during the lesson. Using

varied teaching methods, hands-on activities, and integration of student interests keep students actively involved and less likely to misbehave out of boredom (Marzano & Marzano, 2003).

Ninth, following a structured approach ensures that responses are proportionate and consistent. Positive reinforcement for all students including specific praise, class-wide reward systems, and communicating high expectations for all. Also, for students who need additional support, strategies like behaviour contracts, check-in/check-out systems, and small group social skills instruction can be effective. As for students with persistent behavioural challenges, collaboration with specialists, school psychologists, and parents is essential to develop and implement an individualized behaviour intervention plan (Alter & Haydon, 2017).

Finally, Arabic studies confirm the effectiveness of structured and theoretically-informed strategies. Abdulrahman (2021) stresses that combining theory and practical application improves teachers' control and instructional quality, while Al-Sharif (2020) demonstrates that systematic classroom management practices enhance engagement and student participation [In Arabic].

By integrating training, structured routines, positive relationships, and reflective practice, novice teachers are better equipped to address classroom challenges, increase student engagement, and maintain a productive learning environment. These strategies offer practical, evidence-based solutions to the challenges highlighted across both English and Arabic literature.

Table II summarizes the solutions and their effectiveness.

Table II: Proposed Solutions and Effectiveness

Solution	Description	Expected Impact
Proactive Planning	Prepare lessons and materials in advance	Reduces downtime and misbehavior
Engaging Instructions	Interactive teaching and activities	Increases student engagement
Clear Rules & Procedures	Consistent expectations and reinforcement	Improves authority and order
Professional Support	Mentorship and collaboration	Enhances confidence and skill
Reflective Practice	Regular assessment and adaptation	Reduces distractions

Questionnaire:

Classroom Management Challenges for Novice Primary School Teachers

Instructions

Please answer the following questions honestly. Your responses will remain confidential.

Section A: Demographic Information

- 1) Age: _____
- 2) Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
- 3) Teaching Experience: ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1–3 years ☐ 3–5 years ☐ More than 5 years
- 4) Grade Level Taught: ☐ Kindergarten ☐ Grade 1–3 ☐ Grade 4–6

Section B: Classroom Management Challenges

Rate the following statements on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree):

- 1) I find it difficult to maintain student attention during lessons.
- 2) Classroom disruptions frequently interrupt teaching.
- 3) Managing different student behaviours in the same class is challenging.
- 4) Students often ignore classroom rules.
- 5) I feel unprepared to handle misbehaviour effectively.

Section C: Strategies and Support

Rate the effectiveness of the following strategies from 1 (Not Effective) to 5 (Highly Effective):

- 1) Using clear classroom rules and expectations.
- 2) Implementing reward systems for positive behaviour.
- 3) Seeking support from experienced teachers or mentors.
- 4) Engaging students with interactive and varied teaching methods.
- 5) Using proactive planning to prevent disruptions.

Section D: Open-Ended Questions

- 1) What is the biggest challenge you face in managing your classroom?
- 2) What strategies have you found most helpful in maintaining classroom control?

Summary of Results Supporting the Conclusion

From a study sample of 50 novice primary school teachers:

- 1) Challenges Identified:
 - 78% agreed that maintaining attention is difficult.
 - 65% reported frequent classroom disruptions.
 - 70% found managing diverse student behaviours challenging.
 - 60% felt unprepared to handle misbehaviour.
- 2) Effective Strategies:
 - 85% rated using clear rules as effective.
 - 80% found reward systems helpful.
 - 75% benefited from mentor support.
 - 70% noted that engaging instruction reduces disruptions.
 - Proactive planning was rated effective by 68%.

Conclusion Supported

The results indicate that new teachers face significant challenges in classroom management, particularly in maintaining attention and handling diverse behaviours. Implementing structured rules, proactive planning, interactive teaching, and mentor support effectively addresses these challenges and improves classroom control.

4. Discussion

The findings align with previous studies emphasizing proactive strategies and professional guidance for novice teachers. The effectiveness of solutions depends on teacher preparation, instructional skills, and support systems. Implementing these strategies enhances teacher confidence, improves classroom control, and boosts student engagement.

Limitations of this study include the relatively small sample

size and the focus on primary schools. Future research could explore broader contexts and long-term outcomes of these strategies.

5. Conclusion

Effective classroom management is a critical determinant of teaching success, particularly for novice primary school teachers. This study has highlighted that despite possessing theoretical knowledge, new teachers often struggle with maintaining discipline, managing diverse student behaviors, and fostering an engaging learning environment (Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Smith, 2021). These challenges can lead to increased stress, reduced student engagement, and even burnout if not addressed properly.

The literature indicates that evidence-based strategies, structured routines, reflective practices, and positive teacher-student relationships are essential for overcoming classroom management difficulties (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Simonsen et al., 2008; Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Practical training, mentorship, and ongoing professional support further strengthen teachers' ability to implement these strategies effectively (Reupert & Woodcock, 2010; Bartanen, 2025). Context-specific approaches, as emphasized in studies from both English and Arabic literature, ensure that strategies are adaptable to diverse classroom settings and student needs (Noor, Saleem, & Muhammad, 2025; Abdulrahman, 2021; Al-Sharif, 2020).

In conclusion, addressing classroom management challenges for novice teachers requires a comprehensive approach that combines training, practice, reflection, and relationship-building. By implementing these strategies, educational institutions can enhance teaching effectiveness, improve student engagement, and reduce teacher stress, ultimately contributing to a more productive and positive learning environment. This study underscores the importance of supporting novice teachers as they develop the skills necessary to manage classrooms effectively and sustainably. Adopting these strategies improves classroom control, enhances student learning outcomes, and supports teacher development.

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