

*Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Classroom Management and  
Learner Discipline During Teaching Practice*

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**Abstract**

Teaching practice is a type of work-integrated learning as a period during which students work in the relevant industry to acquire specific in-service training to put theory into practice. It is an exercise aimed to expose student-teachers to the practical aspects of the teaching profession and to allow them to put their theoretical knowledge gained through classroom exchanges with their lecturers into practice. Undergraduate teaching practice is often separated into two six-week sessions that require students to participate in all elements of school life, including teaching, evaluation, and co-curricular activities. The study aims were to investigate the pre-service teachers regarding their classroom management and learner discipline during their teaching practice, so that they can be able to develop and maintain an environment conducive to teaching and learning. The study sought to determine the perceptions of the pre-service teachers regarding their classroom management and learner discipline during teaching practice. The study used qualitative methodology. The participants were teacher education students enrolled at a University of Technology. The study interviewed (10) 3<sup>rd</sup> year and (10) 4<sup>th</sup> year. Purposive sampling was used to collect qualitative data for third- and fourth-years students respectively. Thematic data analysis was employed. The results revealed a need for the pre-service teachers to be supported and inducted during their teaching practice, particularly on how to manage their classrooms and maintain discipline. The ability of pre-service teachers to manage classroom behaviour needs to be enhanced as it not only impacts on whether students can learn, but also establishes the environment and conditions under which students must learn. Classroom management is concerned with teachers' capacity to establish a functional learning environment.

Keywords: Pre-Service Teachers, Classroom Management, Teaching Practice

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## **1. Introduction**

It is normally a great moment for schools to receive pre-service teachers to serve during teaching practice. Teaching is all about engaging students in learning; consequently, teaching is getting students involved in the active building of knowledge. A teacher must understand not only the subject content, but also how learners learn and how to transform them into active learners. Thus, good teaching necessitates a commitment to a systematic knowledge of learning. A teacher must also have basic teaching qualities to help with his or her performance, such as controlling the class, planning the lesson, grouping ability, starting, and closing a session, and recognising pupils' actions in the classroom. Busayanon (2018) emphasises that it is an important procedure for increasing learners' discipline and engagement during teaching and learning. Minami, Sanetti, and Collier (2019) investigate the complicated dynamics of classroom management, which involve enforcing proper discipline, which even experienced teachers struggle to implement consistently without the cooperation of other teachers. According to Atici (2007), classroom management is a collaborative endeavour and one of the most difficult duties for both pre-service and expert teachers. As a result, one of the most significant teacher education curriculums is pre-service teacher training. This criterion should be met by pre-service teachers since it prepares student-teachers to become effective and certified English teachers (Ulla, 2016).

Teaching Practice (TP) is at the heart of teacher training programs' preparation of aspiring and in-service teachers. Teaching, like other professions, requires specialized competencies for quality assurance and efficacy in classroom routines. This is because, in the twenty-first century classroom, effective teaching is vital since educational goals alter in parallel with the changing world. Classroom management is a critical component of every teacher's day-to-day professional experience (Korkut, 2007). Classroom management is defined by Atici (2007) as "deliberate actions taken to create and maintain a learning environment conducive to successful instruction. Teachers are the curriculum's primary drivers and direct implementers in the classroom. They provide guidance and direction to the students. Teachers, according to Mathew, Mathew, & Peechattu (2017), are the most valuable assets in any educational institution. Pre-service teachers are beginning to explore their teaching potential. As a result, teaching practice is a good place to start and the first step in implementing the principles they've acquired in academia over the past four years. Moradkhani, Raygan, & Moein (2017) claimed that teachers should be able to reflect on their own philosophy of teaching and learning. They can plan and organise learning as well as implement learning strategies (Ma'rufi, Buduyasa, & Juniati, 2017).

Pre-service teachers need to be guided and mentored during their TP. Having a mentor teacher simply means that you will be supervised, supported in your profession, coached in terms of curriculum, and assisted in improving your teaching skills. A mentor teacher is necessary to give more effective school-based help for pre-service teachers; they must understand the needs and obstacles that these pre-service teachers will face in their classrooms during their TP. Korkko, Ammala, & Turunen, (2016) argue that student teachers' learning should be promoted to the point of critical reflection, and that this should be included in the teaching practicum or in specific courses in the teacher education programme.

## **2. Aim of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate pre-service teachers' perspectives of classroom management and learner discipline in the classroom.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

Objectives of the study are as follows:

- 3.1. To determine how the pre-service teachers manage their classroom and learner behaviour.
- 3.2. To establish the strategies, they use for classroom management and learner behaviour.
- 3.3. To determine the effectiveness of the strategies.
- 3.4. To determine the impact that these strategies have on their self-efficacy as teachers.

### **4. Research Questions**

- 4.1. How do pre-service teachers manage their classroom and learner behaviour?
- 4.2. Which strategies do the pre-service teachers use for classroom management and learner behaviour?
- 4.3. How effectiveness are those strategies they use for classroom management?
- 4.4. What impact does this have on their self-efficacy as teachers?

### **5. Review of Related Literature**

Effective classroom management is a major concern for new teachers (Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2015), as well as for teachers' wellbeing (Sutton, Mudrey-Camino, & Knight, 2009) and their students' academic success (Evertson & Weinstein, 2013). Classroom management has been defined as a sequence of activities aimed at creating an environment in which students engage in learning activities designated by the teacher and disruptive behaviours are kept to a minimum (Emmer, 1984). Sahin (2015) defined classroom management as the process by which teachers develop the necessary organisation to create and sustain an environment conducive to learning. Wong and Wong (2014) define classroom management as "all that an educator does to organise the learners, space, time, and materials so that student learning can occur. According to Kellough & Kellough (2011), effective classroom management is the act of creating and running a classroom to maximise student learning. A poorly managed classroom is incompatible with the craft of teaching and learning. According to Sahin (2015), all teachers share the goal of promoting task-oriented instruction that fosters constant improvement of classroom management. Classroom management, according to Christofferson and Sullivan (2015), must include strategies that emphasise classroom norms, support efficient transitions, supervise student activities, and explain appropriate classroom behaviour. The function of classroom management tactics must be considered alongside the strategies used to deliver each lesson (Eisenman, Edwards, and Cushman ,2015).

Many teachers are unprepared for student behaviours in the classroom, which makes teaching and learning difficult (Flower, McKenna, & Haring, 2017). When their universal approaches fail, they should revert to them. Self-efficacy and the teacher's personality are also important elements in classroom management (Saleem and Muhammad 2020a). Classroom management self-efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs about their ability to execute classroom management tasks such as engaging with individuals and groups, setting classroom guidelines, expectations, and rules, and managing disruptive behaviour (Pfitzner-Eden, Thiel, & Horsley, 2015). Student behaviour is one of the most difficult challenges in the classroom; professional approaches are required to aid prospective instructors in developing strategies that encourage responsible attitudes and the use of analytical abilities in students (Hani, Muhammad, & Mahmood\_2022).

### **5.1. Pre-service Teachers Regarding Classroom Management and Learner Behaviour During Teaching Practice**

Classroom management is a significant contribution to the effective teaching and learning process in the classroom. Poor classroom management is usually associated to misbehaviors that interfere with teaching and learning and cause great stress (Rosas & West, 2009). The primary goal of classroom management is to guarantee that conduct is minimized rather than to minimize interruptions during the teaching and learning process (Sivri & Balci, 2015). Exposure to a real-world classroom environment equips the pre-service teachers with the necessary abilities to deal with crises that disrupt the teaching and learning process. However, this does not imply that the abilities they gained as teacher trainees are sufficient for them to supervise courses. However, exposure to fundamental classroom management skills implies that some may be well-prepared, but others may be unfamiliar with controlling classes as they present their lectures (Sethusa, 2020).

As a result, classroom management is frequently discussed alongside behaviour management, including positive and negative reinforcement. Challenging behaviour is a regular problem for special education teachers. If teachers do not deal with the challenging behaviour, it might disrupt the learning session and lead to fatigue (Yunus & Mohammed, 2019). Teachers who are skilled in classroom management, on the other hand, can effectively control students' behaviour difficulties. Many studies have shown that teachers who have a solid knowledge and comprehension of behaviour management may handle this issue confidently and positively (Butler and Monda-Amaya, 2016; Ahmad and Haifah, 2015). In essence, preservice teachers are expected to have learned how to govern and maintain order in the classroom during the teaching and learning process. Thus, if preservice teachers can effectively manage classrooms, there is a good chance that they will be able to assure effective teaching and learning to achieve learning outcomes.

### **5.2. Pre-service Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Professional Development in the Journey of Becoming Teachers**

Self-efficacy beliefs are self-evaluations of one's ability to do an action successfully in a specific setting (Bandura, 1997). As a result, teachers' beliefs about their abilities to impact students' learning are self-assessments. Self-efficacy views (referred to hereafter as self-efficacy) are influenced by four sources that give individuals with knowledge about their own capacities, according to Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory: (1) mastery encounters, (2) vicarious encounters, (3) social encounters, and (4) physiological and affective states. Influence their teaching behaviours (Bandura, 1997), pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs at the start and end of practicum teaching experience would be helpful because these perceptions may have significant implications when they practice their profession. Pre-service teachers must therefore examine and analyse the effect of their self-efficacy beliefs on their ability to teach as well as their actual abilities during teaching practice. Even though teacher self-efficacy is important in assessing student involvement and implementing instructional strategies, teacher efficacy in classroom management has been a struggle for teachers (Carr, 2013). Dicke, Parker, Philip & Marsh, Herb & Kunter, Mareike & Schmeck, Annett & Leutner, Detlev (2014) studied 1227 German preservice teachers to see how teacher efficacy and student misbehavior influence teacher attrition. The findings revealed that emotional disturbance, as well as emotional exhaustion, was a stronger predictor of low self-efficacy in classroom management. Yin (2019) conducted an empirical study to assess a methodological course meant to increase the readiness of Chinese pre-service EFL teachers

to teach in a 4-week practicum in secondary schools. 15 pre-service teachers kept reflective notebooks during the practicum time. The results showed that the semester teacher training methodology course improved pre-service teachers' topic understanding by bridging the gap between theory and practice; however, the programme did not improve teachers' self-confidence in their communication skills.

### **5.3. Strategies Used by Pre-service Teachers for Classroom Management and Learner Behaviour and Its Effectiveness**

According to a study conducted in Australia, preservice teachers regard classroom management as a significant issue (Peters, 2012). This view may imply that, despite having classroom management skills, preservice teachers have some difficulties. Some solutions to this problem include, but are not limited to, organising the physical layout of the classroom, organising teaching learning support material (LTSM), engaging instruction, matching learners' ability levels, routinizing procedures, applying positive behaviour supports and behavioural interventions, teacher monitoring, and delivering highly prepared lessons (Brophy, 2006). Christofferson and Sullivan (2015) argued that preservice teachers should set classroom rules, promote smooth transitions between teaching and learning activities, monitor learner performance, and communicate classroom behaviour awareness. These are the strategies that preservice teachers should be familiar with before beginning their teaching practice. If preservice teachers do not initiate and apply the above strategies for successful classroom management, they may find it difficult to control their classes during teaching practice.

## **6. Method**

The study followed a qualitative approach. The interviews through focus group discussions were used to collect data as it enabled the researchers to interact with the participants in a way that allows them to openly express their feelings. Participation was solely voluntary. The conversations were guided by a focus group timetable. All participants were advised that the collected information would be kept confidential and that their names would not be used. The participants were referred as ST 1 to ST 10.

## **7. Findings**

The pre-service teachers shared their views regarding their perceptions on classroom management and learner discipline during teaching practice. The participants indicated that they need support from their mentor teachers and assistance on how they should manage their classrooms as new teachers in the field. They also alluded that, during teaching practice they need to be informed of the things that they need to do, rather than being passive in some classrooms. Two research questions guided this study, and themes emerged from the data analysis. Student teachers' adequate preparation/ability to transfer theory into practice. In the study of Marais and Meier's (2000) where participants found a difference between theory and reality of teaching, and where respondents indicated that they could not reconcile the teaching methods as explained during their lectures with those used in schools by teachers, respondents in this study indicated that they were prepared and able to translate theory into practice, as well as that they were able to apply them.

The data revealed that, current practices that the pre-service teachers they can use in their classrooms, are with using positive reinforcement, they need to praise the learners on their

achievement they received on their tasks. The findings indicated that effective classroom management, on the other hand, entails more than just maintaining a sense of order or control; it also entails the development of healthy teacher-student connections as well as a grasp of instructional practices and environmental modifications. Classroom management and instructional management are intertwined since both processes include activities made by teachers to establish safe and effective learning environments that optimize instructional time (Alter and Haydon 2017; Cooper, Gage, Alter, LaPolla, MacSuga-Gage, & Scott 2018).

### ***7.1. Research Question 1: What Are The Current Practices Around Classroom Management for Third- And Fourth-Year Students in Teaching Practice?***

#### ***How Do Pre-service Teachers Manage Their Classroom and Learner Behaviour?***

The findings revealed that the students' teachers need guidance regarding classroom management. The data also shows that the students teachers need the support of the mentor teachers, so that they can assist them in managing the behaviour of the learners in their classrooms. According to (Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, & Leutner 2015) strong classroom management can help to alleviate novice teachers stress and the "shock" of a new teacher's first classroom experience. As a result, it is not unexpected that new teachers across the country, particularly new special education instructors, seek mentorship, support, and further classroom management training (Fowler, Coleman, & Bogdan, 2019). Mentorship is an essential component of teacher induction, and new teachers who do not receive mentorship leave the field far sooner (Grey & Taie, 2015). According to Bistari (2017), effective teaching indicators include success in classroom management, success in the communicative process, good quality of students' responses, success in the learning process, and success in the lesson's objectives.

#### ***Which Strategies Do the Pre-service Teachers Use for Classroom Management and Learner Behaviour?***

The findings indicated that pre-service teachers prefer to design activities that stimulate involvement and draw the learners' attention. These enjoyable exercises drew learners' attention to the lesson. Other techniques included having a good loud voice, being active in class by moving from one student table to the next, and the need to be severe. Merç and Subaşı (2015) stated that pre-service teachers' pay attention to them through making eye contact, reminding them, showing interest in them, rearranging students' seat rows, and having individual conversations after class.

#### ***How Effectiveness Are Those Strategies They Use for Classroom Management?***

The findings revealed that the strategies that the pre-service teachers use in their classroom are more effective and they can draw the attention of the learners. The ultimate purpose of education is to enhance learners' competencies, and the message is conveyed to learners through words and gestures (Daskan & Yildiz, 2020). Body language is the component of teaching that draws the most attention from students. It is not essential what you say, but how you express it.

### ***What Impact Does This Have on Their Self-Efficacy as Teachers?***

The findings indicate that a teacher with a low self-efficacy might lead to failure and teaching and learning won't be successful. As a result, self-efficacy can impact task selection as well as task persistence. Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) is referred to as instructors' beliefs in their abilities to organise, plan, and carry out actions necessary to affect students' valued educational objectives and results (Klassen, Tze, Betts, S & Gordon, 2011). To increase instruction quality, it is necessary to recognise instructors' strengths and limitations in terms of their actual teaching practices.

Classroom management is the process through which teachers ensure that their pupils' disruptive behaviour does not interfere with the delivery of education. It encompasses both the proactive avoidance of disruptive behaviour and the appropriate response to it when it occurs.

Themes identified from the content analysis of student teachers' perspectives on classroom management include instruction management, behaviour management, teacher communication skills, and classroom physical Organisation. Pre-service teachers defined classroom management as all tactics and behaviour used by teachers to deliver content and conduct lessons effectively. One pre-service teacher stated:

### **8. Classroom Management and Communication Skills**

*It is difficult these days to reprimand the learners in the classroom, these learners are so misbehaving, I find it difficult to manage my classroom during teaching practice and it seems as if I am not doing my work. (ST 1)*

*I discovered that learners became enthusiastic, and they actively participated in activities when they were praised and rewarded for their efforts and that's when you will be able to manage your classroom. (ST 2)*

*Learners were unable to communicate in English, while I was unable to communicate in Sotho, resulting in pandemonium in my classroom. (ST 3)*

*Another thing is the issue to teaching the learners, jooooooooooooo, eish I struggle because what we are taught here is not what we experience in schools, if we can be given some opportunities on how to deliver or teach the learners during micro-teaching. (ST 4)*

This was supported by (ST 5, ST 6 and ST 7) the pre-service students indicated that, if the module of SBX and Micro-teaching to be incorporated with the guidance on how to manage classrooms, deliver the subject content, they alluded that, they need strategies that they can employ in their teaching practice. Teachers who are confident in themselves and their teaching abilities have a greater impact on pupils and may easily influence them. They can recover from stress and maintain solid control over their teaching approach, all of which lead to pupils becoming extremely self-reliant (Hoy and Bandura, 2003).

*Teaching practice is not difficult, I enjoy it but eish, when it comes to the issue of ill-discipline learners, it becomes difficult for you to teach them, how can you teach in a class full of noise. (ST 10)*

It is evident that the pre-service teachers need guidance during their teaching practice, they need to be assisted on how to deliver the subject content, manage the classroom. This had an impact on the student teachers' performance during teaching practice as well as their opinion of the teaching profession in general. This was also illustrated by Samu (2020), who stated that one of the major challenges faced by preservice teachers is the lack of physical connection with students, as well as the potential complexities associated with handling the emotional component of these meetings (Samu, 2020). Similarly, Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison (2020) revealed that preservice teachers reported feeling very uncomfortable and having less passion to teach due to a lack of direct connection with pupils. Teachers should acquire classroom management strategies to establish a learning environment that improves both academic skills and social-emotional development of children to promote students' performance in school (Milliken, 2019). Unfortunately, data shows that most teacher training programmes devote little time to classroom management teaching. It has also been demonstrated that well-managed classrooms result in students who participate while achieving high levels of success (Milliken, 2019).

### **Learner Discipline**

Similarly, to Marais and Meier's (2004) results, where respondents reported a decline in moral standards in schools and a lack of discipline, most respondents in the current research said that discipline was virtually non-existent in most institutions. One responder stated:

*Learners were very unruly because there were no effective disciplinary measures in place. Cell phones were permitted in class, which I found quite distracting. (ST 9)*

*Learners had the notion that we were their age peers, thus they did not respect us. There is absolutely no discipline. Learners are impolite. It is difficult to keep the class under control. Even when the teacher is there, students are playing cards and eating in class. (ST 6)*

Contrary to the negative responses above, respondents (ST 5 and ST 4) from one school stated that students were well behaved and actively participated in class activities.

*Learners respect us as teachers, though some believe that because we are student teachers, we don't have the power/authority to punish them.*

Therefore, the manner student teachers were accepted and treated differed from school to school. Most student teachers in this study stated that they struggle with classroom management, learner discipline and subject content at their placement schools, which resulted in other teachers and learners not appreciating them. This had a considerable impact on student teachers' performance during classroom practice and a negative impact on their overall view of the teaching profession. Student teachers were severely constrained by learner discipline. The instructional atmosphere did not allow student teachers to put their academic education into practice. It's possible that student teachers weren't sufficiently prepared for the real-world situation in which they were intended to teach.



## **8.1. Strategies That Pre-service Teachers Can Use for Classroom Management and Learner Behaviour**

**Improving self-confidence:** When beginning to teach for the first time, pre-service teachers are frequently frightened. Their nervousness is frequently caused by offering incorrect explanations throughout the session, which leads to pupil misunderstanding. However, no matter how frightened they are, they must be able to manage their anxiety. One solution is to provide clear, calm, and brief instructions as well as a strong visual assistance. It allows pupils to focus on what the pre-service teachers are saying and easily grasp the teaching. Merç and Subaş (2015) also stated that asking students to repeat the teaching is one technique to verify student comprehension. Therefore, pre-service teachers need to enhance their self-efficacy so that they may be able to deal with classroom challenges during their teaching practice.

**Planning the lessons.** When pre-service teachers lead a group discussion or activity, students may choose to do whatever they wish. Some kids may converse extensively with their peers, while others may keep mute in the group. This issue has the potential to disrupt class activities. In such a case, pre-service teachers should thoroughly prepare the lesson prior to their class lessons.

The results of this study revealed the pre-service teachers need guidance to improve on their teaching performance. They need to be empowered with strategies to improve on how their classroom management skills as well as dealing with ill-discipline learners. Teaching practice is an important tool that can enhance the pre-service teachers' teaching performance. The results also indicate that pre-service teachers require assistance from both their mentors and their principals to be able to improve on their self-confidence, how to deliver content effectively and efficiently and on how to plan their lessons thoroughly. Without their support and induction, students may develop poor self-esteem. Feedback is critical in assisting them to correct any flaws made throughout their teaching practice.

## **9. Conclusion**

Teachers do require expertise to teach well in a variety of areas, such as criticism and praise, handling mistakes, student inquiries, and properly designed sessions. Also, to regions lowering anxiety and motivation. When praise is genuine and genuine, it is most effective. They must complement them with suitable gestures and behaviors. Teachers should aim to inspire kids so that they would be more inclined to pay attention. Respect is also essential while dealing with youngsters. Responding favourably to incorrect responses is a constructive method to teach. The classroom setting is crucial. Creating a healthy classroom atmosphere is one of the key reasons that children enjoy going to school, and children also enjoy learning. Teaching practice is an important part of personal development since it allows student teachers to achieve their objectives, such as improving their teaching performance and self-efficacy, as well as classroom management.

To successfully train future teachers, every educational institution should embrace micro-teaching. As a result, teacher educators in teacher education programmes, particularly those at higher learning institutions, should plan and conduct micro-teaching in pedagogical courses to improve student teachers' teaching competences and performance. Furthermore, professional instructors should supervise first-year student teachers in both the primary and

secondary levels of micro-teaching and observation activities so that the student may be able to enhance their teaching performance.

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