

ECIE3006 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

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In this essay the writer will critically discuss whether current Classroom Management strategies are inclusive for all learners. According to the research (Debnath, 2023) classroom management is “the methods and techniques that teachers use in the classroom to create an environment conducive to student learning and success”. The central argument is that inclusive classroom management must strike a balance between maintaining discipline, cultivating strong relationships, and adapting to individual needs, “In inclusive education students expect an ideal functioning classroom according to their characteristics” (Debnath, 2023). This is supported by Drexel University School of Education (2024) by illustrating that;

“all children, no matter their racial, religious, or ethnic background, gender, learning style, or ability have equal access to educational opportunities in a learning environment where all students are equally safe, valued, and respected”

Ultimately, this challenges the notion that classroom management is solely about teaching, rather, it encompasses a holistic approach that nurtures every aspect of the student's experience. Theoretical frameworks in psychology provide essential insights into human behavior and learning processes such as behaviourism, constructivism and humanistic theory. Understanding these key theoretical frameworks are crucial for effective classroom management as they provide educators with comprehensive insights into learning processes and student engagement, enabling them to create more inclusive and adaptive learning environments. By integrating principles from these theories, teachers can develop strategies that address diverse learning needs, promote individual student growth, and foster a supportive classroom culture that empowers every learner to reach their full potential. The synergy between these theoretical approaches allows educators to design responsive instructional methods that recognize and celebrate the unique cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of student learning.

Modern classroom management approaches have shifted from authoritarian, teacher-centred models toward more learner-centred and restorative frameworks. Classroom management extends far beyond mere discipline and rules, it encompasses a comprehensive framework that includes organization, established routines, the cultivation of relationships, and the facilitation of learning. It is fundamentally about creating an environment where students feel secure and supported through the interactions between students and teaching staff. Unquestionable, classroom management is merely about teaching reveals a deeper truth, it involves significant elements of social-emotional support, guidance, and community-building and building a rapport. Educators must foster a sense of belonging and connection among students, which in turn enhances their engagement and motivation to learn. By prioritizing these aspects, teachers can create a nurturing atmosphere that not only promotes academic success but also supports the overall well-being of each student, thereby reinforcing the idea that effective classroom management is integral to the educational experience as a whole. This is supported by Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (1943) theory that individuals are driven by a series of needs, from basic physiological requirements to self-actualization, emphasizing the importance of personal growth and fulfillment in the learning experience (Bates, 2019 p.66). The only way anyone can progress to higher levels of needs such as esteem and self-fulfilment is if the lower levels of needs such as physical and psychological needs are met as “students can't thrive in their learning unless their basic needs are met” (Capes, 2024). For instance, in

school A, each classroom teacher greets every child at the entrance into class every morning, where the pupil can determine how they would like to be greeted such as a hug, handshake, highfive, say “bore da” etc.

Creating an effective classroom environment becomes increasingly challenging when faced with disruptive behaviors, chaos, and a lack of direction. In such scenarios, it is essential to establish a structure that promotes positive interactions and learning. This can be achieved by implementing clear behavioral expectations and consistent routines that guide students in understanding what is acceptable and what is not, it could also be beneficial to co-construct the classroom rules at the beginning of the year between the pupils and classroom teacher. Additionally, fostering a sense of community within the classroom can help mitigate chaos, this can be achieved by encouraging collaboration among students and building strong relationships based on mutual respect.

Misbehavior can often be interpreted as a form of communication, signaling that an individual's emotional, social, or cognitive needs are not being met (Michigan Alliances for Families, 2025). This perspective aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, when foundational needs are unmet, individuals may resort to disruptive behaviors as a means of expressing their distress or seeking attention. Additionally, a lack of belonging can exacerbate feelings of isolation, leading individuals to act out in an attempt to forge connections or assert their presence within a social group. Learning difficulties can further complicate this dynamic, as individuals who struggle academically may feel frustrated or inadequate, prompting them to engage in misbehavior as a coping mechanism. Furthermore, inconsistent expectations from authority figures can create confusion and anxiety, leaving individuals unsure of how to behave appropriately. In this context, misbehavior serves not only as a cry for help but also as a complex interplay of unmet needs that requires careful consideration and understanding. The evaluation of punitive systems, such as detentions and exclusions, reveals a concerning tendency to marginalize vulnerable students, often exacerbating their challenges rather than addressing the underlying issues of their behavior. These punitive measures can create a cycle of exclusion that disproportionately affects those already facing socio-economic disadvantages, mental health issues, or learning difficulties. In contrast, behaviorist reinforcement models such as Skinner's operant conditioning model, which focus on rewards and punishments to shape behavior, may fail to foster a supportive environment conducive to learning and personal growth. Instead, restorative responses, “emphasized dialogue, repairing harms, fostering respectful relationships, and promoting reflection and accountability” as highlighted by Macready (2009). This shift from a punitive to a restorative framework not only promotes accountability but also nurtures a sense of belonging and community, ultimately leading to more positive outcomes for all students, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Teachers can also employ various classroom management strategies, such as rewards and conflict resolution techniques conflict resolution techniques, to address disruptive behaviors promptly and constructively. By cultivating an atmosphere of support and accountability, educators can transform a chaotic classroom into a productive learning space where students feel safe, engaged, and motivated to learn. One prominent framework that developed this claim is Behaviorism, primarily associated with B.F. Skinner. It was developed through Skinner's operant conditioning theory that behavior is a result of “learning based on the type of consequence or reinforcement that follows an initial behaviour” (Tassoni, 2008,

p.131). Skinner identified two primary types of consequences that influence behavior, positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement, alongside punishment (Tassoni, 2008, p.131). Positive reinforcement can be applied in an education centre through praise and awarding, for example stickers, reward charts and classroom dojo or even by expressions like “well done” and a smile. In comparison, a negative reinforcement would include the removal of an undesired task such as homework or even an undesired expression from the teacher. Similarly, negative reinforcement through punishment can be applied through removal of a desirable event that a pupil enjoys such as playtime or phone call home. However, Skinner argued that “not only did positive reinforcement have a longer lasting effect on behaviour than negative reinforcement but that negative reinforcement could actually be counter - productive” (Bates, 2019, p.34) but also that “rewards and punishment will only act as reinforcements if something an individual desires or fears” (Bates, 2019, p.35). This perspective focuses on observable behaviors rather than internal mental states, leading to practical applications in education and behavior modification. By employing techniques such as operant conditioning, educators can effectively influence student behavior and learning outcomes, highlighting the importance of external factors in the learning process. The Curriculum for Wales addresses classroom relationships and behavior primarily through its holistic, learner-centered approach that emphasizes the four purposes of education: creating ambitious, capable learners; ethical, informed individuals; healthy, confident individuals; and enterprising, creative contributors (Welsh Government, 2020). The curriculum promotes building positive, respectful, and safe relationships as foundational to learning and well-being.

Behaviourist strategies can provide structure and predictability, which particularly benefit learners with Autism Spectrum Conditions or ADHD (DfE, 2021). They help maintain order and consistency in the classroom. However, critics argue that such systems can overlook intrinsic motivation and fail to address the underlying causes of behavioural issues. Moreover, culturally diverse students may interpret authority and reward systems differently, which can result in miscommunication or bias (Gay, 2018). When behaviourist principles are applied rigidly, they can reinforce labelling and exclusion, particularly for pupils with special educational needs or from minority backgrounds (DfE, 2021). Therefore, while behaviourism supports classroom order, it can only be inclusive when paired with empathy and contextual understanding.

The dynamics of relationships between teachers and students are fundamental to fostering an inclusive educational environment. Central to this concept is Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory, which “focuses on the idea that people have an innate desire for personal growth and self-actualization” (McLeod, 2025). Rogers (1983) “believed that people have an inherent tendency to realize their full potential when supported by an environment that provides unconditional positive regard” (McLeod, 2025). This theory accents the importance of unconditional positive regard and empathy in the teacher-student relationship through “promoting a client-centred approach” (McLeod, 2025). When educators demonstrate genuine care and acceptance, students are more likely to feel a sense of belonging within the classroom. This feeling of belonging is crucial for enhancing self-esteem, as students who perceive themselves as valued members of the learning community are more inclined to engage actively in their education. Furthermore, the emotional support provided by teachers can significantly influence students' overall well-being, creating a safe space where they can express themselves without fear of judgment. This nurturing environment not only bolsters

self-esteem but also lays the groundwork for deeper connections and a more collaborative learning experience.

Positive teacher-student relationships also play a vital role in motivating students, as substantiated by Self-Determination Theory, “the interplay between the extrinsic forces acting on persons and the intrinsic motives and needs inherent in human nature is the territory” (CSTD, 2025). When students feel supported and understood by their teachers, they are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation, which is essential for sustained engagement and academic success (Saxena et al., 2024, p.160). The emotional intelligence of teachers, characterized by their ability to recognize and respond to the emotional needs of their students, is a critical factor in this process. Additionally, cultural sensitivity enhances inclusion by allowing teachers to appreciate and respect the diverse backgrounds of their students, thereby fostering an environment where all students feel acknowledged and valued. By integrating emotional intelligence and cultural awareness into their teaching practices, educators can create a more inclusive atmosphere that not only promotes academic achievement but also nurtures the holistic development of every student.

Humanistic management encourages emotional literacy, empathy, and mutual respect, qualities central to inclusive education. This approach supports trauma-informed and restorative practices by prioritising understanding and dialogue over punishment. Learners are encouraged to take ownership of their behaviour, promoting intrinsic motivation and self-regulation. However, the success of a humanistic approach depends heavily on teacher capacity and training. Without sufficient support, time, or institutional backing, teachers may struggle to balance emotional understanding with classroom discipline (Gay, 2018). Nonetheless, humanistic principles underpin restorative justice models, which are widely recognised as inclusive because they focus on repairing relationships and reintegrating learners rather than excluding them (UNESCO, 2009).

Identifying barriers at both systemic and classroom levels is crucial for understanding the challenges faced by diverse learners. Factors such as socio-economic disadvantage, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), and cultural differences can significantly hinder equitable access to education (Eikeland, 2022). Tomlinson’s (2014) differentiation model provides a proactive framework for addressing learner diversity, defining differentiation as “an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups” (Tomlinson et al., 2003, p. 121). While differentiation aims to cater to the diverse needs of learners by adapting content, process, and products according to learner readiness, interests, and learning profiles, there is a critical tension where current practices sometimes risk reinforcing segregation by grouping students in ways that may exclude or stigmatize if not executed thoughtfully (Eikeland, 2022). The effectiveness of these practices must be assessed to determine whether they genuinely promote inclusivity or merely create divisions among students based on their abilities or backgrounds. Additionally, reflecting on inclusion policies, such as the UNESCO Inclusive Education Framework and the UK’s inclusive education policies, reveals the broader context in which these practices operate. The UNESCO Inclusive Education Framework and UK inclusive education policies emphasize that inclusion is not only a classroom concern but a systemic imperative requiring organizational adjustments and policy support to dismantle barriers comprehensively (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). These frameworks advocate for a holistic approach to education

that prioritizes the rights of all learners, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive in an inclusive setting. By aligning classroom practices with these policies such as “llais y disgbyl”, educators can work towards dismantling barriers and creating a more equitable educational landscape. Incorporating student voice also “enhances classrooms by promoting belonging and active participation” (UNICEF UK, 2021). Despite this, it is crucial to ensure that such initiatives are not merely tokenistic or restricted to compliant students, as this can undermine the very essence of genuine engagement in the educational process. Furthermore, the Children and Families Act (2014) and the earlier Every Child Matters (2003) framework promote child-centred practice, wellbeing, and safety. However, despite these inclusive intentions, research shows that zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary practices persist, disproportionately affecting students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those from minority ethnic backgrounds (DfE, 2021). This highlights the gap between policy rhetoric and classroom reality.

Effective teaching not only enhances student understanding but also fosters a positive learning environment that encourages engagement and participation by remaining central to quality teaching and learning, supporting both academic progress and emotional wellbeing (DfE, 2022). A well-structured classroom environment enhances consistency, fairness, and engagement, enabling effective pedagogy and better learner outcomes (EEF, 2021). Central to this is the concept of motivation, which plays a pivotal role in student success. To cultivate such motivation, teachers must offer autonomy, recognition, and meaningful learning experiences within a safe and inclusive environment (OECD, 2023). For pupils to feel genuinely motivated, educators must create an atmosphere that nurtures their interests and aspirations, providing them with meaningful challenges and opportunities for autonomy. Genuine involvement allows pupils to shape decisions, fostering shared responsibility and democratic classroom values (Robinson and Taylor, 2020, p.48). This requires a thoughtful approach to behavioral policies, which aim to establish consistency and predictability in the classroom. However, there is a risk that such policies may inadvertently reflect cultural biases or lead to punitive measures that do not address the underlying issues of student behavior. Nevertheless, the successful implementation of restorative practices necessitates significant time, training, and institutional support, which can be challenging to secure. Additionally, differentiation and personalization of instruction are essential for addressing the diverse needs of students, yet these strategies often face obstacles due to workload constraints and limited resources. Although contemporary approaches are grounded in inclusivity, practical barriers remain. Teachers and educational staff often face conflicting demands between maintaining control and supporting individual needs. Overall, effective classroom management is multidimensional, requiring the thoughtful balance of policy consistency, relational empathy, and adaptive pedagogy. Through this balance, teachers create equitable learning environments that empower every learner to succeed.

Current classroom management strategies are increasingly aligned with inclusive principles, particularly those rooted in restorative and humanistic approaches. Nevertheless, inclusivity in practice is uneven. Behaviourist models still dominate, sometimes at the expense of emotional and cultural sensitivity. True inclusivity in education necessitates several key components. First, there must be ongoing teacher training in inclusive pedagogy and culturally responsive classroom management to equip educators with the skills and knowledge needed to meet diverse student needs effectively. Additionally, a balanced approach that merges structured behavioral strategies rooted in behaviorism with empathy

and emotional support found in humanism is essential for fostering an inclusive environment. Finally, stronger policy implementation is critical, supported by adequate resources and a commitment to reflective practice, to ensure that inclusive practices are not only established but also sustained over time. Ultimately, inclusive classroom management is not a fixed set of rules but a continuous process of adapting to learners' evolving needs within supportive, equitable, and empathetic learning communities. Therefore, while classroom management philosophies have evolved, the persistence of outdated behaviorist assumptions within policy frameworks continues to limit the realization of authentic inclusion. Achieving this goal requires not only updated pedagogical strategies but also critical reflection on how institutional systems sustain inequity through behavioral standardization.

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