

# The roles of teachers in enhancing effective classroom management strategies in Gauteng high schools, South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study explores the challenges teachers face in their classroom management roles which are essential for fostering a supportive learning environment. It investigates teachers' roles in implementing management strategies and the obstacles hindering their effectiveness in high schools.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The present study used semi-structured interviews to collect data from twelve Grade 10 teachers in three selected secondary schools located in the Ekurhuleni North District of Gauteng Province, South Africa. The data were interpreted using a phenomenological research design and interpretive paradigm. The study was based on ecological systems theory. Thematic analysis was used to make sense of the data.

**Findings:** The study revealed that key roles of teachers in effective classroom management include appropriate classroom language, acting as managers and self-criticism and evaluation of performance. However, challenges such as insufficient teaching and learning resources and the low academic ability of learners impede the fulfilment of these roles.

**Conclusion:** The study finds that continuous self-criticism and evaluation are critical for improving teaching and learning processes, although teachers play a critical role in monitoring classrooms and resolving difficulties imposed by low academic competence.

**Recommendations:** Recommendations include comprehensive training and support for teachers, the implementation of diverse teaching strategies and a holistic consideration of the ecological system encompassing both learners and teachers.

**Keywords:** Classroom management challenges, Classroom management strategies, Effective classroom management, Roles of teachers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The pivotal role of teachers in the educational development of students encompasses not only academic instruction but also the implementation of effective classroom management strategies (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2011). Enhancing teaching and learning in high schools requires classroom management which includes a wide range of tasks including implementing rules and procedures and organizing the physical environment (MacSuga-Gage & Simonsen, 2015). Implementing effective classroom management strategies helps create a structured and supportive environment that promotes mutual respect, encourages student engagement and participation and contributes to the development of students' social and emotional skills which are essential for their overall development and future success (Jones & Jones, 2016). However, numerous challenges often hinder teachers from implementing effective classroom management strategies. These challenges include inadequate training and professional development, the diverse needs of students and the pressures associated with high-stakes testing (Griffith & Tyner, 2019; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Additionally, classroom management is commonly perceived as a skill that develops with experience. However, novice teachers struggle to manage their classrooms effectively leading to increased stress and burnout, ultimately impacting their teaching effectiveness and students' learning outcomes (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Classroom management is pivotal to creating a supportive and engaging learning environment. However, multiple challenges worldwide inhibit teachers from effectively performing their classroom management roles. For

instance, a study conducted in the United States by [Ingersoll and Strong \(2011\)](#) highlighted that inadequate training and professional development significantly impede teachers especially new teachers leading to increased stress, burnout and subsequently impacting teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. Additionally, a study in Australia by [O'Neill and Stephenson \(2011\)](#) noted that cultural differences between teachers and students, coupled with the diverse needs of students including language barriers, special educational needs and behavioral issues posed considerable challenges for teachers in managing their classrooms. Moreover, according to [Griffith and Tyner's \(2019\)](#) report, the increasing pressure of high-stakes testing frequently results in a teacher-centered approach which reduces student interest and participation. Additional issues arise from socio-cultural variables and the increasing use of digital technologies. According to Norwegian research by [Skaalvik and Skaalvik \(2017\)](#) sociocultural elements including cultural disparities between teachers and students can cause miscommunications and conflicts making it more difficult to create a courteous and encouraging learning atmosphere.

Moreover, a study conducted by [Jones and Jones \(2016\)](#) in the United States highlighted that digital technology can enhance teaching and learning. It also provides new opportunities for distractions and misconduct making classroom management more complex.

In South Africa, teachers face unique challenges stemming from the region's socio-political context. [Heystek \(2017\)](#) noted that South African teachers often work in overcrowded classrooms with insufficient resources making it exceptionally challenging to implement effective classroom management strategies. Additionally, the high levels of poverty, violence and social disruption in many parts of South Africa may affect students' behaviour and engagement in the classroom, posing significant challenges for teachers. Furthermore, the legacy of apartheid has resulted in a deeply divided education system with significant disparities in the quality of education and resources available to teachers and students across different regions and communities ([Heystek, 2017](#)).

The problem of the study lies in the multiple challenges that teachers face while performing their classroom management roles which is crucial for creating a supportive and engaging learning environment. These challenges range from inadequate training and professional development, cultural differences between teachers and students, the diverse needs of students and the increasing use of digital technology to region-specific challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and socio-political disruptions. These hurdles not only affect the teachers' ability to manage their classrooms effectively but also have a cascading effect on student engagement, participation and overall learning outcomes. There is a gap in understanding how these multifaceted challenges interact and impact teachers' classroom management roles in different contexts particularly in regions with unique socio-political challenges like South Africa despite the recognition of these challenges.

There exists a substantial amount of research that examines the diverse obstacles that teachers experience in managing classrooms worldwide. However, there is a noticeable lack of literature that particularly addresses the particular issues that teachers in South Africa face.

Much of the existing research focuses on general challenges, often in the context of developed countries without giving adequate attention to the specific socio-political and cultural challenges that teachers encounter in regions with a history of social and political upheaval. Additionally, there is limited research that provides a comprehensive understanding of how these challenges interact and affect teachers' ability to implement effective classroom management strategies in such contexts. Therefore, there is a pressing need for a study that investigates the specific challenges faced by teachers in South Africa and provides insights into developing targeted strategies and interventions to support teachers in implementing effective classroom management strategies in this unique context. Therefore, investigating the roles of teachers in providing classroom management strategies and the challenges that could obstruct the effective implementation of these strategies is imperative for enhancing teaching and learning in high schools. Hence, the study aims to investigate the roles of teachers in implementing classroom management strategies and the challenges that could hinder the effective implementation of these strategies in secondary schools.

### *1.1. Research Questions*

- The study presented and addressed the following two research questions in the context of the aforementioned arguments:
- What are the roles of high school teachers in implementing classroom management strategies?

- What are the challenges hindering high school teachers from providing effective classroom management strategies?

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, an innovative framework that was created in the 1970s by Urie Bronfenbrenner to comprehend the various environmental factors that impact an individual's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). This theory emerged as a response to the prevailing models of human development which often focused on individual characteristics and ignored the broader environmental context. On the other hand, Bronfenbrenner's theory posited that an individual's development is influenced by a series of interrelated systems ranging from the immediate environment such as family and school (the microsystem) to the broader societal and cultural context (the macro system) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This theory has been improved and extended throughout time to incorporate the chronosystem which explains the changes that take place in an individual's surroundings as well as in themselves over time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). This comprehensive and dynamic framework has been widely adopted in various fields of study, including education, psychology and social work to understand the multifaceted influences affecting individuals' behaviour and development.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is divided into five different levels, each representing a different layer of environmental influence on an individual's development and behaviour. These levels are:

- **Microsystem:** The closest environment to the individual including immediate relationships and interactions, such as with family, school, peers and teachers.
- **Mesosystem:** The interactions between different elements of the microsystem such as the relationships between family and school or between teachers and peers.
- **Exosystem:** The broader social structures that indirectly affect the individual, such as community services, government policies and the media.
- **Macro system:** The overarching cultural context, including societal values, beliefs and customs.
- **Chronosystem:** The changes that occur over time both within the individual and in their environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

This theory is particularly relevant to the study as it provides a comprehensive framework to analyze the multifaceted challenges faced by teachers in implementing classroom management strategies. The microsystem allows for an examination of the immediate challenges faced by teachers in the classroom such as student behaviour, language barriers and resource availability. The mesosystem and exosystem provide a broader perspective by considering the interactions between different elements of the microsystem and the influence of broader social structures such as educational policies and community support. The macro system allows for an analysis of the broader cultural and societal influences that affect teachers' ability to manage their classrooms effectively, such as societal values regarding education and teacher authority. Finally, the chronosystem allows for an examination of how these challenges and their impact on classroom management have evolved over time, considering changes in societal norms, educational policies and technological advancements (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The research endeavors to comprehend the intricate realm of lived experiences through the perspectives of its inhabitants making the interpretative paradigm that frames the study both pertinent and applicable. The interpretive paradigm is grounded in the belief that reality is socially constructed and subjective. It emphasizes the understanding of human experiences and the meanings people attach to them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the context of this study, the interpretive paradigm allows for a nuanced exploration of the teachers' experiences and the challenges they face in implementing classroom management strategies in South African secondary schools. It enables the researcher to delve deep into the complexities of the teachers' world, considering their perspectives, the contexts in which they operate and the broader societal influences that impact their roles. This perspective allows the research to offer a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the difficulties teachers confront which will ultimately aid in the creation of focused interventions and support plans that are based on the teachers' own real-world experiences.

The study adopts a qualitative research approach which is highly relevant and suitable for addressing the research objectives. A qualitative approach focuses on exploring the meanings, interpretations and experiences of individuals in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This approach is particularly relevant to this study as it aims to investigate the roles of teachers in implementing classroom management strategies and the challenges that hinder them in South African secondary schools. The study's use of a qualitative approach enables it to delve deeply into teachers' experiences and perspectives revealing the complexity and nuances of their duties as well as the difficulties they face. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors, both at the micro and macro levels that influence teachers' ability to implement effective classroom management strategies. Ultimately, the qualitative approach enables the study to generate rich, detailed and contextualized insights that can inform the development of targeted and effective interventions to support teachers in managing their classrooms more effectively.

The study adopts a phenomenological design that is particularly well-suited for exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals concerning a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenology focuses on understanding the essence of a phenomenon from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). In this study, the phenomenon under investigation is the challenges faced by high school teachers in South Africa in implementing classroom management strategies and the roles they play in enhancing effective teaching and learning. A comprehensive and detailed investigation of teachers' experiences, emotions and views surrounding classroom management is made possible by the use of a phenomenological design which offers insightful information on the complexity and difficulties that teachers face in their daily practice. Finally, this design helps create specific interventions and support techniques that are based on the reality of teachers' daily challenges by facilitating the development of a deep and empathic knowledge of the teachers' lived experiences.

### *3.1. Data Collection Method*

This study adopted semi-structured interviews as a data collection instrument. Allan (2020) views semi-structured interviews as a method of collecting data that involves asking questions which allows for flexibility in the order and wording of the questions. In other words, this method is appropriate because it enables in-depth discourse to gain better knowledge of the phenomenon under study. This concept makes it possible for the researcher to compile extensive and thorough data about the responsibilities of teachers and the difficulties they face while putting new teaching and learning practices into practice in Gauteng high schools in South Africa. It is also beneficial since it involves face-to-face interviews which allow the researcher to obtain a range of viewpoints on the topic from several interviewees. As a result, this method not only makes it easier to collect a variety of perspectives but it also enables the researcher to delve deeper into the interviewees' responses, resolve any ambiguities and select non-verbal clues that could offer further information about the difficulties and experiences of the teachers.

### *3.2. Sampling and Sampling Procedure*

The selection of participants for this study encompassed twelve grade 10 teachers from the Further Education and Training (FET) phase drawn from three designated high schools located in the Ekurhuleni North District of Gauteng Province, Republic of South Africa (RSA). Each of the selected schools contributed four teachers as participants, culminating in a total of twelve participants for the proposed study. The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique wherein participants were selected based on their profound knowledge and awareness of the phenomenon under investigation. Mupa (2022) posits that the strength and rationale of purposeful sampling reside in the selection of information-rich cases for thorough examination. Such information-rich cases are pivotal for gathering substantial insights into the core issues pertinent to the research objectives. Consequently, this study targeted three secondary schools renowned for exemplifying best practices in maintaining positive discipline as they constitute valuable sources of information.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS**

The study employed thematic analysis as the method for data analysis adhering to the six-step process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach involved the following steps: 1) familiarization with the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) writing the report. Initially, the researchers immersed themselves in the data by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts

to comprehensively understand the content. Subsequently, initial codes were generated by identifying significant patterns in the data. These codes were then grouped into potential themes which were rigorously reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data. Once the themes were defined and named, the final report was written highlighting the most pertinent findings. This methodical approach facilitated a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the data ensuring that the findings were grounded in the participants' experiences and perspectives. Ultimately, thematic analysis enabled the researcher to identify and interpret the key patterns and themes that emerged from the data providing valuable insights into the roles of teachers and the challenges they face in implementing classroom management strategies.

#### *4.1. Ethical Consideration*

The study was conducted with the utmost ethical consideration and was approved by the relevant ethical review board. All ethical considerations were diligently followed such as obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity and respecting participants' rights to withdraw from the study at any stage. Moreover, pseudonyms and codes were used to protect the schools' and participants' identities. For instance, participants were referred to as teachers A, B, C, D, and so on throughout the study. This ensured that participants' comments were published anonymously and their identities were not available to third parties. The study ensured the confidentiality of the participants' and schools' identities and maintained the integrity and ethical standards of the research by following ethical concerns.

#### *4.2. Presentation of Data*

Answering Question One: The roles of teachers in classroom management strategies.

In response to the first research question above, the construct is divided into the following sub-themes: Teacher's appropriate classroom language, teachers as managers, teacher's criticism and evaluation of personal performance.

#### *4.3. Teacher's Appropriate Classroom Language*

According to the collected data, when the teacher pays close attention to instructions given, elicits information, prompts learners, follows learning, explains new words and conducts group monitoring, classroom language can be appropriate for both learners and the subject. The participants elaborate by saying that:

*Educator E: "At various teaching stages, teachers always give instructions to learners so they know what to do and how to do it. Teachers must adhere to specific protocols to accomplish this. These procedures call for instructions to be clear, comprehensive, concise and correct".*

*Educator C "You need to be reasonable and speak slowly. You need to give an example or demonstrate. The last step is to give learners an instruction check question."*

*Educator C made this point very clear and educators A, D, and E agreed, saying that "learners like to speak continuously to their partners and do not pay close attention to their teacher during the lesson if the teacher's instructions are not understandable or his speech is not obvious."*

According to the participants, learners who use efficient policies for teaching languages might cultivate a good attitude towards studying and learning in general. Teachers use the elicitation approach to obtain information from their students. According to Educator B, since information can be gathered from learners rather than given to them, elicitation is a very useful technique. The educator continues to attest that:

*Educator B: "Elicitation technique boosts learners' self-confidence during the lesson and increases learners' participation."*

This idea has been supported by this study's findings that instruction-giving and information-elicitation have positive correlations with participant degrees. These correlations lend credence to the notion that a teacher's use of language in the classroom is one of the fundamental things they do to foster classroom management. On the other hand, educator A who received support from educator F argues that a prompting approach is essential.

*Educator F: "Teachers occasionally present learners with images of objects and ask them to describe or discuss them. In addition to maximizing learners' talk time and minimizing teacher talk time; this method supports learner-centred learning by sustaining group discussions among learners."*

The importance of this technique in advancing learners' learning was demonstrated by the observation of educators F and A's classroom and the positive correlations found between the prompting technique, the instructions given and the classroom management item. Teachers make several attempts throughout the lesson to gauge how well their learners have understood it. Teachers typically assess learners' learning after they finish a task or lesson, teach new vocabulary or discuss a topic. This method enables teachers to assess the balance between the knowledge they impart and the understanding that learners gain. If learners don't understand the concepts, they can choose to speed up or slow down the teaching steps or even change the teaching strategies. Teachers also make an effort to explain and clarify new words or structures using a specific technique. They accomplish this by displaying photos, making charts or bringing in LTSM Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) realia. Teachers will occasionally act out or use imitation in order to aid students in understanding a concept. The learners' response reflects their positive opinions on the significance of this technique as they were observed when the participants were managing their classrooms during the lessons.

#### 4.4. Teachers as Managers

It is clear from the data that teachers have an essential role to play in classroom management.

The participant teachers F, J, K and D corroborated that teachers can fulfil various roles and responsibilities, including planner, manager, facilitator, counsellor and diagnostician.

*Teacher F: "The teacher must carry out these responsibilities during every lesson to achieve excellent classroom management. Class teachers have the ability to carefully plan the teaching and learning process. Lesson materials and exercises are selected by teachers. They design exercises and activities based on the learners' present proficiency levels. Teachers are able to anticipate problems and come up with solutions. They are able to plan lessons and adapt texts."*

According to the participant's response, the teacher's primary role is to plan. This issue was essentially supported by [Marav \(2022\)](#) who mentioned that there are some English teachers who mainly depend on school books and leave other learning resources for the classroom. The participants attest to one another's opinions to support the following:

*Teacher G: "Limiting learners' learning span by using textbooks as their only source of knowledge retards learners' improvement."*

*Teacher I: "Skilled teachers should constantly assess the value and significance of their textbooks and if necessary, they can modify them to better meet the needs of their learners."*

*Teacher G: "The extra tasks that are related to learners' interests can foster a lively learning environment."*

In agreement with teacher G, teacher C adds that:

*Teacher C: "As teachers, we are also responsible for overseeing classroom management by choosing the methods of interaction between ourselves and our learners. We establish a cordial relationship with learners by praising or giving gifts which also helps our learners become more motivated."*

Exercises and activities from lessons are demonstrated by the teachers. Additionally, they establish specific disciplines for particular circumstances. [Gupta \(2019\)](#) revealed that for verbal communications, learners tend to contribute and react to the discussion whereas teachers facilitate the learners' interactions. The teacher's responsibility is to advise and keep focusing on the learners' communicative tasks. Additionally, teachers encourage learners' autonomy by assigning various tasks that serve multiple purposes and asking learners to participate according to their skills and interests. This is asserted by the participant below.

*Teacher L: "As teachers, we always strive to ensure that each individual learner realizes his potential."*

They make an effort to give all learners an equal chance at success. In a different sense, providing counseling is a great need that teachers aim to fill. The participants' support is given below:

*Teacher K: "We occasionally give advice to learners on issues that arise outside of the classroom. We pay close attention to the issues raised by learners and instruct them on appropriate behaviour. That includes helping learners follow and uphold the proper disciplines. Therefore, as teachers, we make an effort to assist learners in creating safer paths to their future success."*

The participants serve as an excellent example of how they consistently identify two major problems in order to uphold the highest standards of professionalism during the teaching and learning process. He continues to provide an example of how teacher-centered or learner-centered instruction may be implemented by teachers.

*Teacher H: "The first ones are instructional strategies or the techniques and methods that we employ to ensure that learners comprehend their lessons. The second factor is the learner's preferred method of learning new information. According to our learning perspective, there are three main types of learners: auditory, kinaesthetic, and visual learners."*

According to the participants, the teacher must provide each student with a placement test at the beginning of the academic year in order to classify them based on their preferred learning methods. Teachers try to develop a range of activities that meet the interests of every individual student. Loeng (2020) revealed that active teachers have to realize that each individual learner possesses his own way of learning style. Teachers must adapt their strategies and pedagogies to meet the diverse learning requirements of their students. It was evident from observing the teachers in practice that they engaged students in the course by asking insightful questions and providing helpful feedback. Participants should show that when teachers properly examine the learning styles of their students during lesson design and classroom teaching, students' studying performance should improve.

#### 4.5. Teacher's Criticism and Evaluation of Performance

According to responses from interviews, the participants view teacher personal criticism as the key from the first day of classes to the last exam. This is verified below:

*Teacher A "says that throughout the lengthy process of teaching and learning, teachers should continuously assess and critique their own performance. Language, methods, activities, class management, and record-keeping files used by teachers should all be subject to criticism and evaluation. It is important to monitor teachers in the classroom in order to assess if the language they use is appropriate for the students or not. Gradually, less time is spent talking by the teacher while more time is spent talking by the learners. The teacher must check to see if the errors are corrected. If it is completed, was it thoughtfully, correctly, or remarkably? Are learners receiving praise? If so, are they verbal, numerical, or both?"*

*Teacher C: "The teacher must also ensure that his or her voice is audible, appropriate and not too obvious. The second set of criticisms covers the strategies and actions taken. The teacher must mix up the exercises, arrange them from simple to complex, and switch between kinesthetic, auditory, and visual tasks. Finding assignments that are appropriate for each learner's skill level is essential. The teacher then has to deal with various techniques like role-playing, dramatization, chain reading, deletion, competition or demonstration."*

The following statement supports what is being said by the participants. This is supported by Elliott's (2019) finding that a particular lesson technique improves learners' activities and performances. The participants below attest by elaborating on the authors' assertion.

*Teacher E: "The teacher must connect the new target point to the prior knowledge. He can connect his lessons to the topics covered in the curriculum. The lesson can be modified by the teacher to meet the requirements and learning goals of the students. The teacher must have improved his rapport with his learners in order to ensure that they understand the presentations. Group work, pair work, good learners with weak learners, and teachers with good learners all carefully address the interaction patterns. This type of relationship enhances the learning environment in the classroom and helps the students. Additionally, audit trails are continually reviewed. Portfolios for both learners and teachers are kept updated. Spelling and grammar mistakes found in textbooks and notebooks remarks made on certain skills and other inaccuracies have all been corrected. Maintaining records is a helpful classroom management strategy."*

This positive correlation demonstrated the necessity of record-keeping for the improvement of classroom management.

Answering Question two: challenges of effective classroom management strategies

The concept is divided into the following sub-themes to address the difficulties teachers have in implementing efficient classroom management techniques as shown by the study questions: Insufficient teaching and learning resources and low academic ability of learners.

#### 4.6. Insufficient Teaching and Learning Resources

According to participants, one of the difficulties teachers face in putting classroom management strategies into practice is a lack of teaching and learning resources. Teachers complained about the lack of appropriate teaching and learning resources that could encourage learners to actively engage in the teaching and learning process. For instance, some schools did not have sufficient textbooks and reference materials. In reality, the book-to-learner ratio in the majority of the surveyed schools was 1:7, 1:10, 1:12 or even higher.

*Teacher B: "The growing number of learners did not have access to enough textbooks. The ratio of books to learners at our school ranges from 1:7 to 1:10. However, the situation is worse in other schools, so you can only imagine how difficult it can be."*

*Teacher D: " Sometimes you would find that we have textbooks but the very same available textbooks and reference books did not match the curriculum as it was at the time."*

*Teacher E: "To add to what my fellow colleague has just said, the textbook's content was unclear regarding how to instruct learners in accordance with National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) requirements."*

Some of the participants observed that some reference books were of low quality because they favoured memorization and cramming over comprehension of the subject matter: Most books written by independent authors are of low quality and some of them are formatted as questions and answers.

*Teacher F: "Learners, unfortunately prefer to read books with questions and answers which forces them to cram and memorize information. This restricts their capacity to learn by doing and by solving problems."*

Teachers also mentioned some schools' lack of libraries and laboratories as barriers to effective learning through hands-on activities and experiments. In an interview, one of the participants stated that:

*Teacher G: "There is no laboratory where we can carry out practical experiments particularly for science subjects. The majority of science concepts cannot be fully understood by learners who merely memorize theories and principles."*

However, in schools where there were labs, there was a lack of supplies or equipment.

*Teacher C: "We don't have enough equipment in our lab to do anything useful. For instance, we only have 15 apparatuses for every 70–80 learners in a class. When it comes to practicals and experiments, each learner should have her own apparatus but due to a shortage, 6-7 learners share one apparatus."*

If we want students to perform well on the actual practical exams, we must improve the environment for these exams in secondary schools, since this frequent reality in the classroom acts as a lesson. In other words, supplying both chemicals and lab equipment is necessary. Learners' problem-solving skills, scientific knowledge and ability to learn through investigation are all enhanced by laboratory-based instruction. Students who attend secondary schools without access to laboratories lose an opportunity to become scientists and engineers.

#### 4.7. Low Academic Ability of Learners

The results of the interviews showed that teachers had difficulty implementing the CAPS curriculum effectively when learners with low ability entered secondary education. Participants reported that it was challenging to use learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning because learners chosen to enroll in secondary schools had low academic ability. Participants confirmed that a large number of the students have low abilities. They pointed out that some of them hardly learned how to read and write.

*Teacher B: "Having learners with low quality is a major challenge for us. It is challenging to help them especially when you rely on learner-centred approaches because the majority of learners who are chosen to enroll in secondary schools, particularly community-based secondary schools like ours do not qualify. For instance, 70 out of 250 are where most learners at this school are cut off. Therefore, it is easy to see how challenging it is to deal with them."*



Similar sentiments were expressed by another participant.

*Teacher G: "I don't know what is wrong with our government; they don't take education seriously. Some of the learners we receive have such low ability levels that they aren't even proficient in reading and writing. A straightforward test was given to grade 8 last year. We were surprised that some learners barely knew how to correctly write their names. Now explain to me how a teacher can use a learner-centred approach to help such learners understand concepts."*

*Teacher G: "Implementing classroom management techniques in the teaching and learning process is challenging in these situations especially when the majority of the learners are academically underqualified. What should a secondary school teacher do with learners who find it difficult to write even their names?"*

The other participant mentioned that the students in her class were good listeners and eager to learn but higher-order questions were difficult for them. The teacher attests to this statement below:

*Teacher C: "They appear perplexed as if they do not understand the question's requirements implying a fundamental lack of comprehension skills."*

These students usually depend only on their teachers for information which is opposed to the CAPS curriculum's principles.

#### 4.8. Presentation of Findings

Table 1 demonstrates how the findings were presented based on the research questions raised in the study. Research question number one was sub-themed into three constructs upon which the findings were discussed and research question two was sub-themed into two constructs upon which the findings were discussed.

Table 1. Discussion of findings.

Research questions	Discussion of findings
1. What are the roles of high school teachers in implementing classroom management strategies?	Teacher's appropriate classroom language
	Teachers as managers
	Teacher's criticism and evaluation of performance
2. What are the challenges hindering high school teachers from providing effective classroom management strategies?	Lack of sufficient teaching and learning resources
	Low academic ability of learners

#### 4.9. Teacher's Appropriate Classroom Language

The findings highlight the importance of a teacher's appropriate use of language in the classroom for effective classroom management. Participants noted that clear, comprehensive, concise and correct instructions are crucial for learners to understand what to do and how to do it. This observation aligns with previous research by Shernoff et al. (2017) which found that clear and concise instructions are associated with higher levels of student engagement and learning. Participants also noted the importance of the elicitation technique which involves gathering information from learners rather than giving it to them. Educator B noted that this technique boosts learners' self-confidence and participation during the lesson. This observation is supported by the findings of a study by Black and William (1998) which found that eliciting responses from students and providing feedback can lead to significant learning gains. Participants also noted the importance of the prompting technique which involves presenting learners with images or objects and asking them to describe or discuss them. Educator F noted that this technique supports learner-centered learning by sustaining group discussions among learners. This observation aligns with the findings of a study by Hattie (2008) which found that prompting and questioning techniques are associated with higher levels of student achievement. Participants also noted the importance of assessing learners' understanding throughout the lesson and adjusting teaching strategies accordingly. This observation aligns with the findings of a study by Brookhart (2007) which found that ongoing assessment of student understanding is crucial for effective instruction. The findings suggest that appropriate use of language, elicitation, prompting and ongoing assessment are crucial techniques for effective classroom management.

#### 4.10. Teachers as Managers

The data collected underscores the multifaceted role of teachers in classroom management, encompassing responsibilities as planner, manager, facilitator, counselor and diagnostician. Teachers are responsible for careful planning of teaching and learning processes, selecting lesson materials and exercises, creating exercises and tasks to match learners' abilities and foreseeing and resolving issues. Marav (2022) and Gupta (2019) support these findings by highlighting the importance of not solely relying on textbooks and the role of teachers in facilitating learners' interactions. Participants also emphasized the importance of establishing cordial relationships with learners, encouraging their autonomy, providing counseling and considering their preferred learning styles. Teacher L emphasized the importance of ensuring that each learner realizes their potential while teacher K highlighted the role of teachers in advising learners on appropriate behavior and helping them create safer paths to future success. Teacher H mentioned the importance of employing appropriate instructional strategies and considering learners' preferred learning styles (auditory, kinesthetic, and visual) in lesson planning and classroom instruction. This is consistent with the findings of Loeng (2020) who highlighted the significance of adapting strategies and techniques to meet the diverse learning requirements of students. The findings highlight the critical role of teachers in classroom management which involves a range of responsibilities and skills including planning, facilitating, counseling, and considering learners' individual needs and preferences.

#### 4.11. Teacher's Criticism and Evaluation of Performance

The finding emphasizes the critical role of self-criticism and evaluation in a teacher's performance and consequently, in classroom management. Teachers must continuously assess and critique their own performance from the start to the end of the academic journey. The findings reinforce the importance of self-criticism and continuous evaluation by teachers, a critical aspect underlined in the broader literature on effective teaching and classroom management. For instance, Hattie (2012) in his seminal work identifies self-assessment and self-monitoring by teachers as a high-impact strategy for enhancing student achievement. This involves not only the evaluation of teaching methods and activities but also the assessment of the classroom environment, interaction patterns and record-keeping, all crucial components of effective classroom management. Moreover, Danielson (2014) emphasizes the importance of reflective practice in the professional development of teachers which includes self-assessment of instructional practices, classroom management strategies and student-teacher relationships. The emphasis on connecting new knowledge to prior knowledge, as noted by teacher E is also supported by the constructivist theory of learning (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978) which posits that new knowledge is built upon the foundation of existing knowledge. Additionally, the importance of establishing a positive rapport with students as highlighted by the participants is corroborated by Cornelius-White (2007) who found a strong positive correlation between teacher-student relationships and student outcomes. Finally, the necessity of record-keeping as highlighted by teacher E is echoed in the work of Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) who identify record-keeping as a key component of effective classroom management. All of these empirical research and theoretical frameworks support the results of this study highlighting the need for a comprehensive strategy to ensure successful classroom management as well as student achievement.

#### 4.12. Lack of Sufficient Teaching and Learning Resources

The findings of the study highlight a significant barrier to the implementation of effective classroom management strategies: the lack of sufficient teaching and learning resources. Participants noted the scarcity of appropriate resources that could foster active engagement in the teaching and learning process. For example, there was a notable shortage of textbooks and reference materials with some schools having a book-to-learner ratio as high as 1:12. Furthermore, some available textbooks and reference books did not align with the current curriculum and the content of some textbooks was unclear regarding instruction in accordance with the curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) requirements. Participants also observed the low quality of some reference books which promoted memorization and cramming rather than comprehension. This preference for memorization was also noted by the learners as expressed by teacher F. Additionally, the lack of libraries and laboratories in some schools hindered effective learning through hands-on activities and experiments as noted by teachers G and C. There was a severe lack of equipment even in schools with laboratories which resulted in several students had to share one apparatus. The study findings underscore a crucial obstacle in executing efficient

classroom management strategies: namely, the inadequacy of teaching and learning resources impedes teachers' classroom management roles (Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011). The findings of the study illuminate a significant hurdle in the application of effective classroom management strategies, specifically, the shortage of essential teaching and learning resources obstructs teachers' abilities to manage classrooms effectively (Motala et al., 2007). The lack of laboratories deprives learners of opportunities to pursue careers as scientists and engineers, ultimately limiting their future prospects and contributing to the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment (World Bank, 2020).

#### 4.13. Low Academic Ability of Learners

The findings reveal a significant challenge faced by teachers when implementing the CAPS curriculum effectively: the low academic ability of learners entering secondary education. Participants noted that many learners enrolled in secondary schools particularly community-based ones, lacked essential reading and writing skills making it extremely challenging to employ learner-centered approaches. This observation aligns with the study of Metto and Makewa (2014) which noted that learners' low academic abilities hinder the effective implementation of learner-centered approaches. Teacher B noted that a majority of learners at their school did not qualify for enrollment as reflected by their low cut-off scores. Teacher G expressed frustration with the government's apparent lack of seriousness about education as evidenced by the enrollment of learners with such low ability levels that they could not even write their names correctly. This sentiment echoes the findings of Guisbond (2012) who argued that government policies often fail to address the root causes of low academic achievement leading to a cycle of underachievement. Teacher C observed that while students in her class were good listeners and eager to learn, they struggled with higher-order questions indicating a fundamental lack of comprehension skills. This observation is consistent with the CAPS curriculum's philosophy which emphasizes the development of higher-order thinking skills (Department of Basic Education, 2011). However, the findings indicate that many learners rely solely on their teachers for knowledge, contradicting the CAPS curriculum's learner-centered approach.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study conclusively underscores the multifaceted role of teachers in classroom management, extending beyond traditional teaching responsibilities to include roles as planners, facilitators, counselors and diagnosticians. Teachers must not only carefully plan teaching and learning processes but also select appropriate lesson materials, facilitate learner interactions, establish positive relationships and encourage learner autonomy. Furthermore, the study revealed the importance of continuous self-critique and evaluation by teachers to ensure the effectiveness of their strategies and methods. Participants highlighted the necessity of adapting to individual learner needs and preferences, using a variety of teaching techniques and maintaining updated records for effective classroom management. Overall, the study concludes that effective classroom management necessitates a comprehensive approach that involves meticulous planning, continuous self-assessment and adaptation to the diverse needs and preferences of learners. This holistic approach is essential for fostering a supportive and productive learning environment that enables all students to realize their potential and achieve success.

The findings of the research lead to the following suggestions which are carried out to address the problems raised:

- Professional Development: Teachers should be provided with regular professional development opportunities to enhance their skills in planning, facilitating, counseling and diagnosing learner needs. Training should also focus on strategies for managing classrooms with learners of varying abilities and learning preferences.
- Individualized Learning Plans: Teachers should develop individualized learning plans for learners, considering their specific needs, abilities and learning preferences. This will help in addressing the challenge of low academic ability among learners by providing targeted support and resources.
- Use of Diverse Teaching Methods: Teachers should employ a variety of teaching methods and approaches to cater to the different learning styles of students. This includes using a mix of auditory, visual and kinesthetic activities to engage all learners and enhance their understanding of the concepts being taught.
- Peer Support and Group Work: Encouraging peer support and group work can help in addressing the challenge of low academic ability by pairing weaker learners with stronger ones. This not only fosters a sense of community and support but also allows for peer-to-peer learning and the sharing of knowledge.

- Regular Self-Evaluation: Teachers should regularly evaluate and critique their own performance, strategies, and methods to identify areas for improvement. This includes reflecting on the language used, the activities conducted and the effectiveness of classroom management techniques.
- Enhanced Government Support: The government and educational authorities should take a more proactive role in supporting teachers and schools in addressing the challenges faced. This includes providing adequate resources, funding and support for implementing learner-centered approaches and classroom management techniques.

### 5.1. Implications of Ecological Systems Theory on the Recommendations

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory emphasizes the interrelatedness of individual and contextual factors in human development. In the context of this study, this theory underscores the multifaceted challenges faced by teachers in classroom management and teaching learners with low academic abilities. The recommendations aimed at addressing these challenges, therefore, cannot be isolated actions targeting only the teacher or the learner. Instead, the recommendations must consider the entire ecological system surrounding the learner which includes the teacher, the classroom environment, the school system, the family and the broader community. For example, a recommendation to address low academic ability cannot solely focus on modifying teaching methods but must also consider the support structures in place at home and in the community. Similarly, a recommendation to improve teachers' self-criticism and evaluation of performance must also consider the broader school environment, including the support and training provided to teachers and the expectations and pressures placed on them. Ultimately, the implications of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory on the recommendations are that they must be comprehensive, multifaceted and consider the entire ecological system surrounding the learner and the teacher.

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### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STATEMENT

The Ethical Committee of the Walter Sisulu University, South Africa has granted approval for this study on 20 March 2023 (Ref. No. FEDSECCO14-03-2023).

### TRANSPARENCY

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Both authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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