

Contemporary Approaches and Challenges in Classroom Management

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Abstract

All teachers are confronted with the role of the class teacher. The class teacher is the person who observes, sanctions, and manages the group of pupils assigned to them at the beginning of the school year. The class teacher also must take on other important and responsible roles required by law and by the various daily situations that arise in the classroom. This study explored how teachers adapted to classroom tasks during the pandemic and the challenges they faced. It found that most teachers relied on virtual platforms such as WhatsApp and Zoom. A wider body of research highlights the challenges of distance learning, such as connectivity issues and infrastructure limitations. In addition, classroom management and human resource constraints emerged as significant barriers for teachers in this context. In this research, we also found that during study, teachers do not acquire sufficient knowledge for effective class management.

Keywords: classroom management, class meeting, classroom tasks, class teacher, distance learning.

1. Introduction

A class, in the context of education, is a group of pupils who require guidance and leadership. The person responsible for supervising and guiding this group is known as the class teacher. The class teacher's role is to manage the class, provide direction and maintain an overall view of the students' academic performance and behaviour. In addition, the class teacher plays a key role in fostering positive relationships among the pupils and in bridging the gap between the pupils and the other subject teachers who educate the class. This involves creating links and encouraging cooperation between pupils, which contributes to a harmonious classroom atmosphere. In addition, the class teacher acts as an important intermediary between the school administration and the parents of the students. Collaboration with parents is essential as the attitudes and behaviours pupils develop at home have a significant impact on their performance, interactions, and engagement in the school environment (Ažman, 2012).

The role of the class teacher is particularly influential in the classroom, where they are in a unique position to influence pupils in several ways. The class teacher acts as a role model and source of inspiration for the pupils, motivating them and setting an example through their words and actions. In situations where pupils display inappropriate behaviour, the class teacher may also take disciplinary and corrective action, thus playing an important role in maintaining order and

discipline in the classroom. In addition, the class teacher tends to develop a close and nurturing relationship with the pupils, fostering a strong teacher-pupil bond that may be different from that of other subject teachers. This bond enables the class teacher to better understand and relate to the pupils on a personal level. In addition, a key aim of the class teacher is to create a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere. They aim to inculcate important values such as respect, tolerance, solidarity, and cooperation among the students, actively promoting these values and making them a fundamental aspect of the learning environment (Kalin, 2001).

- For distance learning, all classroom teachers used the Zoom platforms.
- The biggest problem that arose with distance learning was the connectivity issues and infrastructure limitations.
- Teachers do not acquire sufficient knowledge for effective class management during the study.

The class teacher is defined as a professional body with different competencies, sometimes making decisions, sometimes guiding, and discussing, and sometimes caring and collaborating. This depends on the role and tasks they perform (Pušnik, 2001).

In existing literature, there exist varying definitions of the roles and responsibilities of a class teacher. Žagar defines the role of the class teacher as (Žagar et al., 2001):

- the coordinator who links his or her departmental community with other systems within and outside the school,
- the educator plans and organises situations in which pupils take responsibility for their actions, develop basic human values, and can internalise ethical principles,
- the animator encourages and motivates both students and teachers to develop their skills and ideas or to assume their share of responsibility,
- the planner plans and evaluates the work and life of the departmental community with all the participants,
- the mediator in problematic situations ensures that the whole conflict resolution process is constructive,
- the informer ensures that all the necessary information reaches the people who need it (pupils, parents, members of the Teachers' Council, etc.), and
- the administrator handles the required documentation, i.e., takes minutes, writes reports, issues certificates.

Kalin offers a categorization that encompasses several distinct roles. These include educational functions, which entail addressing students' personal issues; administrative duties, focusing on the management of class-related documentation; acting as a liaison between parents, students, and the school; serving as an arbitrator and advocate, defending the rights of students; functioning as an animator, encouraging active student participation; and acting as an assistant and counsellor, providing guidance and assisting students in their learning endeavours (Kalin, 2001).

On the other hand, Ažman presents a classification that segments the class teacher's tasks into three major areas: leadership, fostering a classroom community, and promoting student achievement (Ažman, 2012). It's crucial to note that these various roles are inherently interconnected and cannot be distinctly isolated.

This article aims a holistic perspective on classroom management, highlighting its central role in education and drawing attention to the challenges it faces in an evolving educational

landscape. It signals the need for further research, support, and adaptation to keep pace with the ever-evolving field of education.

2. Methodology

In this literature review, we conducted a comprehensive search of peer-reviewed articles in reputable databases such as SpringerLink, Elsevier, MDPI, and Taylor Francis. Our main goal was to gain insight into classroom management and remote classroom management during the pandemic. To review the literature, we used simple keywords that are directly related to these areas, such as: classroom teaching, distance teaching, classroom teacher roles, classroom teacher tasks.

In our selection, we deliberately avoided including articles that mention specific levels of students (such as primary, middle, or upper secondary), specific age groups or specific types of educational institutions. Our main inclusion criteria were the presence of the exact term “classroom teacher’s role” in the article, the explicit mention of a specific country in the title of the article, and a publication date after 2000.

2.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on classroom teaching and classroom teaching during a pandemic. Our goal is to review the extent to which classroom teaching is valued and respected and how classroom teaching was conducted during distance education. This review also describes the obstacles that classroom teachers encountered when working remotely.

2.2 Research questions

- (1) Do teachers gain enough knowledge during their studies to be able to lead a class effectively and to practise classroom management skills?
- (2) Were classroom teachers successful in managing distance learning?

3. Results

Authors have expanded the responsibilities of classroom teachers, which include, in addition to the already listed responsibilities, activities such as monitoring absences, accepting excuses, keeping records of absences, recommending, and recognizing student achievements, and communicating with parents about absences, inappropriate behaviour, medical examinations and other relevant information. In addition, class teachers conscientiously document their activities, including writing various opinions, notices, reports (Kalin, 2001). Other authors summarize the roles of the class teacher and interpret them as key tasks, so that they can be divided into four levels (Ažman, 2012):

- class management,
- managing individual students,
- connecting with various stakeholders inside and outside the school and
- concern for one’s own professional development.

Even though the class teacher is a very important part of the educational process, his or her work is undervalued. Researchers abroad also note that the work of the classroom teacher and classroom management has been devalued, although this is one of the essential tasks of teachers. This problem is addressed in American schools by organising different teaching programmes and methods (e.g., positive behaviour support) and by encouraging older and more experienced teachers to mentor younger ones (Stough & Montague, 2015; Gardner, 2019). In English schools, classroom teachers have 4 hours dedicated to classroom management (Fenkart, 2001).

Some authors argue that teacher education programmes are ineffective because they do not equip teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to teach effectively in modern classrooms. Many studies have highlighted this shortcoming, making a compelling case for educational reform (Berry et al., 2010; McMahon et al., 2015; Totto et al., 2016).

The field of education has undergone significant changes, creating new challenges for teachers. The impact of these challenges on teachers is increasing, as they are often caught between the demands of increasingly diverse and dynamic learning environments and the needs of students. Teachers are expected not only to impart knowledge, but also to address complex social-emotional and behavioural issues, while promoting inclusion and equity. Modern teaching requires a more inclusive and flexible approach to a diverse range of students. The situation has been exacerbated by the outbreak of the pandemic, which has presented unprecedented challenges. In this context, educators have had to fend for themselves by independently developing innovative strategies and approaches to adapt to rapidly changing classroom dynamics caused by distance and hybrid learning, online teaching, and diverse student needs. The authors emphasise the resilience, creativity, and dedication of teachers in the face of difficulties and recognise their key role in education. Educational institutions are being forced to innovate programmes and provide professional development initiatives. It appears that these reforms should address the complex and evolving demands of 21st century classrooms and ensure that teachers are well equipped to meet these challenges effectively (Li & Yu, 2022).

The teacher must perform pedagogical tasks at a sufficiently high level. For this work to be sufficiently professional, he/she must analyse the educational and learning results of the department's students, carry out developmental research tasks, and ensure the professional and consistent management of the department's pedagogical documentation. Such an approach leads to successful management of pedagogical work and solving educational problems (Žagar et al., 2001).

Conclusions and results of analyses, development and research tasks, observations and other events in the department show him/her the contents and goals to be realised (Žagar et al., 2001):

- leading, guiding and advising students and coordinating the pedagogical work in the department,
- leading the department's Teachers' Council,
- working with the parents of the department's students,
- liaising with the school's professional bodies,
- co-operation with the staff of the counselling service and the school management,
- cooperation with professional and other institutions dealing with children and young people.

Classroom management should include a variety of strategies that a teacher uses daily to create a positive classroom environment that is structured, engaging, productive, and promotes student learning and growth. These practices include setting expectations, monitoring student behaviour, and anticipating and responding to student needs. Effective classroom management techniques affect student achievement, productivity, and accuracy of student work, reduced disruptive behaviour, higher levels of classroom engagement and attention, and increased prosocial behaviour and positive peer relationships among students (Cho et al., 2020). These strategies include effective classroom management, whole-class goal setting, learning methods and behaviour.

These concepts are very important if we want students to acquire positive values. If this happens in all departments, these values will be transferred to the whole school and the whole environment. This can be achieved in several ways: by setting an example as a teacher, by a class teacher establishing norms, values, and appropriate communication in the class, by systematic problem solving (talking to the student, talking to the parents, counsellor, etc.), by creating a vision of work with the department (relationships between students, counsellor, etc.). by creating a vision of the work with the department (relationships between pupils, promotion of belonging, effective conflict resolution, etc.), by planning the work (objectives, methods, etc.).

3.1 *Distance classroom management*

Distance learning is not an innovation. Its origins go back to some of the earliest known applications when students in the United States received weekly lessons by mail. Similarly, countries such as England, Switzerland and Australia have long been involved in distance education through various means, including mail, radio, and television, to address the challenges posed by geographically dispersed and sparsely populated regions. This shows that the concept of distance education has been in practice for some time and has evolved in response to geographical and demographic needs. Within the field of education, there are several terms that, although often used interchangeably, have distinct nuances in their definitions and applications. Terms such as “open education,” “online education,” “virtual education,” “e-learning,” and “m-learning” are often used interchangeably. However, it’s important to recognise that each of these tools represents a different facet of distance learning, with different methods and systems (Burns, 2011).

For example, “m-learning” involves educational practices delivered via mobile phones or tablets, using wireless access for learning. On the other hand, “e-learning” uses similar tools but differs in that it provides greater access to learning materials and encourages collaborative interactions between participants (Ally, 2006). The distinction between these terms underlines the need to appreciate the subtle differences in their pedagogical mechanisms and functionalities.

Technological advances have facilitated the transformation of traditional channels of knowledge and information exchange, ushering in an era of dematerialisation. This phenomenon is evident in the transformation of printed books into digital e-books, the metamorphosis of newspapers and magazines into online websites, and the evolution of traditional bricks-and-mortar classrooms into dynamic e-learning environments (Heeks, 2020). Particularly in today's context, where periods of social isolation are increasingly common, m-learning stands out as a particularly advantageous educational approach. With its ability to provide both online and offline access to educational resources, m-learning has distinct advantages, a feature that distinguishes it from e-learning (Dahya, 2016; Korucu & Alkan, 2011).

While distance learning offers significant opportunities for expanding access to education, especially during a pandemic, it is not without its challenges. Relying solely on lecturing and teaching in distance learning does not guarantee a quality educational experience; it is only

one facet of the multifaceted task. In this online teaching environment, educators are required to model exemplary teaching practices to motivate and promote student success (Burns, 2023).

To meet this demand, teachers need to have a high level of technological knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, the number of teachers with these skills and abilities remains limited. Paradoxically, in the modern educational landscape, many students, from primary and secondary schools to universities, demonstrate a more robust grasp of technological literacy than some of their teachers teaching the same age group.

Conversely, recent research, such as that conducted during the pandemic by Gonzalez et al. (2020), suggests that distance learning, with its ability to allow teachers to objectively assess student performance, has positively impacted student success by introducing new learning methods. This suggests that while challenges exist, distance education also offers opportunities for innovative approaches to education (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

Some authors showed that the professional roles of teachers changed significantly during the pandemic. During online teaching, they were assigned more tasks, which also affected the decline in teacher satisfaction. In the article, the authors emphasize that a mixed teaching model should be implemented in educational institutions after the pandemic. Teachers should have adequate digital literacy to be able to meet the new needs of the currently innovative educational model in the future. In addition, the study reveals that teachers' level of digital literacy, career satisfaction and professional role are significantly related (Li & Yu, 2022).

The authors also report that during the pandemic, most teachers used WhatsApp messenger to monitor the learning process. Many of them also used apps like Google, YouTube, Zoom, etc. The problems that teachers and students faced were internet access and lack of infrastructure, slow Internet, the connection was often interrupted (Sari & Nayir, 2020).

In line with the broader societal shift towards technology integration, pedagogy must also evolve. The advent of the Internet has revolutionised access to vast information resources, contributing to greater efficiency and time savings. Online technologies have become particularly important in contemporary educational approaches, a facet that is of paramount importance for the younger cohorts who have grown up in the digital age and have a natural affinity with modern technology. This technological transition is closely linked to the changing preferences of these new generations. Today's students show a marked inclination towards learning through mobile applications and video-based content, which is a notable departure from traditional teaching formats. Authors have astutely observed that students often emulate their educators who have adopted modern technology as an integral part of their teaching methodology, even extending its application to home-based learning. This trend underlines the increasing importance of technology integration in both educational institutions and home-based learning environments (Szymkowiak et al., 2021).

4. Discussion and conclusion

Teacher education programs are still outdated and therefore not as effective as they could be. In this context, programmes need to be supplemented with new approaches that include modern technology and, of course, the skills to use it effectively. Nevertheless, teachers have been successful with their innovative approaches during the pandemic.

This is the answer to the first research question, which was whether teachers acquire sufficient knowledge during their studies to be able to effectively manage a classroom effectively and practise classroom management skills.

The authors' research revealed certain challenges and limitations faced by teachers in distance learning. These challenges included issues related to internet connectivity and lack of

adequate infrastructure. However, it is important to recognise that the shift to distance learning has also brought many benefits. It has increased and accelerated the development of digital literacy among all participants in distance learning, including both students and teachers. And this is answer to second research question.

Most teachers managed the abrupt transition from traditional face-to-face teaching to the online teaching mode required by the pandemic. However, there were significant challenges to this adaptation. Teachers experienced increased stress and workload. As a result, the pandemic led to significant shifts in teachers' professional roles and reduced job satisfaction. In addition, teachers faced significant digital literacy hurdles as they attempted to juggle their multiple responsibilities spanning teaching, professional development, and personal life amidst the urgent demand to transition to online instruction. These increased responsibilities often led to increased psychological strain for teachers. Respondents also emphasised the need for greater respect for the role of the class teacher. They pointed out that a high-quality classroom community is one of the essential components in creating a more advanced, contemporary, and student-centred educational environment, which in turn benefits society.

Promoting student-centred leadership in schools requires school leaders to have a deep understanding of how students learn, to support teachers in creating supportive learning environments, to monitor and evaluate progress, and to foster collaboration and a sense of community within the school community. This involves creating the conditions for effective learning, monitoring educational progress, and fostering a culture of collaboration and community within educational institutions. To effectively address the challenges facing schools, teachers need to feel a sense of agency and empowerment that allows them to take initiative in their roles.

When you take on the role of class teacher, you don't know what kind of pupils you'll have in the classroom, whether they'll be clever or hardworking, or whether they'll seek attention in different ways, including ways that are distracting to the teacher. It doesn't matter what the pupils are like, what matters is that the class teacher accepts them for who they are and helps and counsels them when they are in trouble, liaising with the appropriate school staff. In this article we have outlined the roles and responsibilities of the class teacher. The class teacher faces various obstacles, the main ones being inexperience, ignorance, and workload. To ensure the quality of the class teacher's work, a systemic solution should be to give the class teacher more time for classroom work and to provide some kind of in-service training, workshops, or study groups. We have analysed the distance teaching in our institution. We agree with the respondents that the work of the class teacher should be more respected, because a quality classroom community is one of the most important keys to a better quality, modern and student-friendly school and thus society. Only in this way will we be able to educate critical, self-confident, original, and tolerant future intellectuals.

The article provides a comprehensive overview of the basic responsibilities and roles of classroom teachers to shed light on the multifaceted nature of classroom management. It offers a general definition of classroom management, emphasising the central role of the classroom teacher in creating a conducive and productive learning environment for students. This role extends beyond the academic to include mentoring and personal development guidance. The article also explores the various challenges and obstacles that classroom teachers face in fulfilling their demanding responsibilities. It highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the challenges associated with distance teaching, particularly when adapting to new and rapidly changing teaching environments. The article highlights the importance of recognising and addressing the difficulties that classroom teachers face in trying to manage their classrooms effectively. It also explores how the area of classroom management has been somewhat underemphasised in the wider educational context, often resulting in inadequate educational

content and training for teachers in this vital role. It reflects on the need for more comprehensive support and professional development opportunities for classroom teachers.

Looking to the future, the article points to the need for classroom teachers to adapt to modern educational trends, including the increasing integration of digital tools and content. This adaptation should include equipping teachers with the skills and resources needed to effectively integrate these digital tools into their classroom management strategies.

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