

## **Role of Teachers in Effective Classroom Management in Secondary Schools in Ekiti State**

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### **Abstract**

Effective classroom management is a critical component of successful teaching and learning, particularly in secondary schools across Ekiti State, Nigeria. This paper examines the pivotal role of teachers in fostering and sustaining an orderly, engaging, and respectful classroom environment, despite systemic challenges such as overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient administrative support. While a common misconception holds that discipline is the sole responsibility of school authorities, this study argues that teachers possess significant agency in shaping student behavior and learning outcomes through their daily practices. The paper identifies four key teacher-led strategies essential to effective classroom management: subject mastery and instructional competence, the use of varied teaching methods to enhance student engagement, reinforcement and motivation to encourage positive behavior, and professional comportment as a model for students. Each of these elements contributes to creating a classroom climate where learning thrives and behavioral issues are minimized. Drawing on empirical research and context-specific insights, the study demonstrates how these strategies empower teachers to lead, inspire, and manage effectively. The findings suggest that improving classroom management in Ekiti State requires not only institutional support but also a deliberate investment in teacher development, training, and empowerment. Ultimately, the success of any educational system depends on the capacity of its teachers, not just to deliver content, but to create environments where students feel motivated, respected, and engaged.

**Keywords:** Classroom Management, Teacher Agency, Effective Classroom, Secondary Schools

### **Introduction**

The classroom serves as the fundamental nexus of the educational process, where the quality of management directly dictates the efficacy of pedagogical delivery and student attainment. Globally, an enduring consensus among educational researchers posits that without robust classroom management, even the most sophisticated instructional strategies are likely to be undermined by disarray and student disengagement. In the Nigerian context, and particularly within the secondary school system of Ekiti State, the challenge of maintaining an environment conducive to learning has become a matter of urgent concern. As the demand for quality education

grows, the ability to regulate classroom dynamics effectively is no longer merely a desirable skill but a critical prerequisite for achieving national educational objectives. However, the discourse surrounding management is often clouded by a narrow focus on punitive measures, overlooking the complex interplay between teacher behavior, student motivation, and the physical learning environment.

Classroom management is a multi-dimensional construct encompassing the diverse array of strategies employed by educators to ensure that instructional activities proceed in an orderly, productive, and respectful manner. This involves a spectrum of interventions, ranging from establishing clear normative expectations and maintaining student focus to creating a socio-emotionally supportive atmosphere. At the heart of these processes is the teacher, who functions not only as a transmitter of knowledge but as a facilitator, organizer, and moral exemplar. In Ekiti State, where secondary schools often contend with persistent systemic hurdles such as overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated infrastructure, and insufficient administrative oversight, the teacher's role as the primary agent of order is amplified. In these resource-constrained settings, the teacher's capacity to navigate complex behavioral landscapes often determines whether meaningful learning occurs or is entirely eclipsed by environmental distractions.

Despite the intrinsic importance of teacher agency, a prevalent misconception persists in many Nigerian educational circles that maintaining discipline is an administrative burden rather than a pedagogical responsibility. This perspective suggests that the "policing" of student behavior resides within the principal's office, effectively stripping teachers of their authority and encouraging a reactive rather than proactive approach to management. This study seeks to challenge this paradigm by arguing that effective classroom management in Ekiti State is inextricably linked to the strategic roles and professional comportment of the teacher. The rationale for this inquiry stems from the need to empower educators to reclaim their classroom authority through evidence-based practices rather than relying on top-down administrative interventions, which often fail to address the root causes of student indiscipline.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the pivotal influence of teacher-led interventions in fostering successful learning environments within the specific socio-educational climate of Ekiti State. By synthesizing empirical literature with context-specific observations, the study investigates how internal teacher variables can mitigate external systemic challenges. To achieve this, the paper is structured around four critical areas of discussion: the impact of subject mastery and instructional competence on student respect; the role of varied pedagogical methods in maintaining student engagement; the strategic application of reinforcement and motivation as behavioral tools; and the influence of professional comportment as a foundation for moral authority. Ultimately, this paper provides a roadmap for enhancing the quality of secondary education by repositioning the teacher as the central architect of classroom order.

### **Methodological Approach**

As a conceptual position paper, this study does not employ primary data collection through traditional instruments, such as questionnaires. Instead, the methodology relies on a thematic synthesis of secondary data and literature. The approach involved a systematic review of contemporary educational journals, textbooks, and policy documents relevant to the Nigerian secondary education sector. Literature was selected based on its relevance to classroom

management, teacher self-efficacy, and the specific socio-educational context of Southwest Nigeria. The arguments presented are derived from a critical analysis of these sources, combined with context-specific observations of the secondary school system in Ekiti State.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This discussion is anchored on two prominent educational theories: Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Canter's Assertive Discipline Theory.

Central to the argument for teacher-led agency is Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which offers a robust framework for understanding how teacher behavior directly shapes the classroom climate through the dual mechanisms of modeling and self-efficacy. At the core of this theory is the concept of observational learning, which posits that students are not passive recipients of rules but active observers who internalize appropriate conduct by mirroring the professional demeanor and emotional stability exhibited by their instructors. In the context of secondary schools in Ekiti State, where teachers are often viewed as primary moral and social exemplars, their ability to maintain composure and professional comportment serves as a live demonstration of self-discipline. When a teacher handles classroom disruptions with a blend of firmness and fairness, they provide a behavioral blueprint that encourages students to adopt similar standards of respect and orderliness, thereby reducing the need for external administrative intervention.

Furthermore, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) emphasizes the crucial role of management self-efficacy, the internal belief that educators hold regarding their own ability to create a productive learning environment and effectively manage challenging behaviors. This psychological dimension is particularly significant in the resource-constrained settings of Ekiti State. A teacher who possesses high self-efficacy is more likely to perceive overcrowded or under-equipped classrooms not as insurmountable barriers to discipline, but as manageable challenges requiring strategic pedagogical interventions. Within the scope of this paper, Bandura's insights emphasize that effective classroom management is not merely a product of top-down policies but is fundamentally rooted in the teacher's personal confidence and their capacity to serve as a stabilizing force. Consequently, by fostering high levels of management self-efficacy, educators are empowered to reclaim their classroom authority, transforming the learning space from one of potential disorder into a structured environment conducive to academic excellence.

Complementing the psychological focus on self-efficacy is the Assertive Discipline Theory developed by Canter and Canter (2001), which provides a normative and structural basis for teacher-led authority. This theory is based on the fundamental premise that both teachers and students possess reciprocal rights within the educational space: specifically, the teacher's right to teach without disruption and the student's right to learn in a calm, safe, and predictable environment. Within the context of this study, such a perspective is transformative; it elevates classroom management from a mere set of logistical tasks to a professional imperative rooted in the protection of the learning process. By asserting that a chaotic classroom is a violation of these fundamental rights, the theory rejects the prevailing misconception that discipline is a secondary administrative burden to be offloaded to the school head. Instead, it positions the teacher as the primary custodian of the instructional atmosphere, responsible for creating the conditions necessary for academic success.

In practice, the Assertive Discipline model empowers educators to move beyond reactive and punitive measures by establishing a proactive framework of clear, firm boundaries and consistent consequences. For secondary schools in Ekiti State, where administrative response times may be delayed by systemic inefficiencies or high student-to-teacher ratios, the application of this theory encourages a shift toward immediate, teacher-centered intervention. By articulating explicit behavioral expectations and following through with equitable consequences, teachers can establish a "take charge" presence that minimizes the need for external disciplinary referrals. This approach does not advocate for authoritarianism, but rather for a structured, assertive leadership style that fosters mutual respect. Consequently, the integration of Canter and Canter's principles into the teacher's repertoire serves to strengthen their perceived authority and professional autonomy, ensuring that the classroom remains an orderly sanctuary for learning regardless of the structural challenges existing outside its walls.

### **Critical Perspectives on the Administrative Misconception of Classroom Management**

A prevalent discourse in educational literature concerns the locus of responsibility for classroom discipline, often framed as a tension between administrative oversight and pedagogical imperative. A frequently cited counterargument to teacher-led management is the pervasive belief that maintaining order is primarily an external administrative function rather than an internal classroom process (Schimmel, 2013; Hoy & Weinstein, 2013). This perspective is particularly acute within the Nigerian educational landscape, where Enefu, Obaka, Okaforcha, and Haruna (2019) observe that many educators perceive discipline as the "policing" arm of the school's central office. This conceptualization leads to a high frequency of disciplinary referrals for even minor infractions, a phenomenon that suggests a systemic abdication of teacher authority. Such a reliance on school heads often stems from a fundamental lack of self-efficacy in personal management strategies. However, as Hezekiah and Nkechi (2015) argue, an over-reliance on administrative intervention creates a professional paradox; it simultaneously weakens the teacher-student bond and diminishes the teacher's perceived authority in the eyes of the learners. In the socio-culturally sensitive environment of Nigerian secondary schools, where respect and leadership are closely intertwined, a teacher's failure to command their own classroom space can lead to a permanent erosion of instructional credibility.

Furthermore, this misconception is often reinforced by the tangible structural challenges that characterize the public education sector in regions like Ekiti State. Proponents of the administrative-led model argue that systemic issues, ranging from overwhelming class sizes and dilapidated infrastructure to a lack of formal enforcement mechanisms, render the individual teacher powerless to effect change. In many Ekiti State secondary schools, where resources are chronically stretched, the argument that classroom management is an "impossible task" without top-down intervention appears to hold significant merit. Yet, while these institutional and environmental deficits are undeniable, they must not be viewed as absolute barriers to effective management. Building upon the work of Apriani and Suhermanto (2023), it is essential to recognize that effective classroom management is less an exercise in enforcing rigid, top-down rules and more an ongoing, daily practice rooted in the teacher's micro-interactions. Even in under-resourced or overcrowded environments, teachers who proactively establish clear routines, maintain firm yet respectful expectations, and cultivate genuine rapport with their students consistently report fewer behavioral disruptions. By involving students in the collaborative development of classroom norms, teachers foster a sense of collective ownership and accountability that transcends the limitations of institutional mandates.

The primacy of the teacher's role over administrative policy is further validated by a growing body of empirical evidence. Research conducted by Ning, Van Damme, Van Den Noortgate, Yang, and Gielen (2015) demonstrates that student behavior is more significantly and positively influenced by consistent, supportive classroom interactions than by the mere existence of top-down disciplinary protocols. This suggests that despite the presence of external stressors, teachers possess substantial agency in shaping the socio-emotional climate of the classroom and, by extension, the academic outcomes of their students. Consequently, while administrative and systemic support remain necessary conditions for optimizing the educational environment, the functional responsibility for behavioral management rests squarely with the teacher. To move forward, the focus must shift from reactive, school-wide discipline policies to the development of proactive, skill-based management competencies. This transition requires a professional re-orientation where teachers view themselves not merely as deliverers of content, but as the primary architects of a controlled, engaging, and transformative learning environment.

### **Conclusion**

Effective classroom management is an indispensable element of successful teaching and learning, particularly in secondary schools within Ekiti State, Nigeria. This paper has clearly established that teachers play a central role in shaping the classroom environment through their mastery of subject content, adoption of varied teaching methods, use of positive reinforcement, and demonstration of professionalism. While systemic challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and insufficient administrative support exist, they do not negate the teacher's capacity to manage classroom dynamics effectively.

The arguments presented refute the notion that discipline is solely an administrative responsibility, emphasizing instead that the teacher's everyday decisions, conduct, and instructional strategies significantly determine classroom order and student engagement. Teachers who exhibit self-discipline, foster respect, motivate students, and adopt flexible yet structured pedagogical practices are more likely to create an environment conducive to academic excellence.

Therefore, to strengthen classroom management practices in Ekiti State, deliberate investment must be made in continuous professional development, provision of instructional resources, and policies that empower teachers as frontline managers of the classroom. Ultimately, the success of any educational system hinges on the capacity of its teachers not only to teach, but to lead, inspire, and manage the learning process effectively. A well-managed classroom is not just a reflection of institutional order, but a testament to the competence and commitment of the teacher at its helm.

### **The Way Forward**

#### **Subject Mastery and Instructional Competence**

A teacher's mastery of subject content is arguably the most fundamental component of effective classroom management (Zbuzant, 2024). When teachers demonstrate deep and confident knowledge of the subject matter, they command authority, earn student respect, and create an intellectually stimulating environment that minimizes distractions and misbehavior. According to McLaughlin, McGrath, Burian-Fitzgerald, Lanahan, Scotchmer, Enyeart, and Salganik, (2005), a teacher who has mastery of the subject matter is more likely to design good lesson plans, anticipate students' misconceptions, and respond accurately to questions, all of which reinforce students' engagement and focus.

In the context of secondary schools in Ekiti State, the lack of subject mastery among some teachers has been a contributing factor to classroom disorder. Students quickly perceive when a teacher lacks content confidence, often resulting in disengagement, inattentiveness, or even disrespect. Conversely, a well-prepared and knowledgeable teacher keeps learners attentive and intellectually curious, reducing the likelihood of behavioral disruptions. This correlation highlights why strong subject knowledge is not just a pedagogical asset, but also a behavioral management tool.

Moreover, mastery of the subject allows teachers to employ a variety of instructional methods—such as discussions, problem-solving tasks, and group work which cater to diverse learner needs and promote active engagement. Active students are far less likely to misbehave or distract others. By weaving strong content delivery with adaptive pedagogy, teachers set the tone for a disciplined and dynamic learning atmosphere.

Thus, it becomes evident that subject mastery and instructional competence are not only central to effective teaching, but are also instrumental in achieving classroom control. A knowledgeable teacher is empowered to manage both content and conduct, which are inseparable elements of the learning process.

### **Varied Teaching Methods and Student Engagement**

Beyond subject mastery, the ability of a teacher to implement varied and dynamic teaching methods is a critical factor in managing classroom behavior effectively. Effective classroom managers are those who keep students actively engaged by diversifying instructional strategies to accommodate different learning styles and abilities. According to Agarwal and Janshi (2024) employing a range of pedagogical approaches such as cooperative learning and storytelling can transform the classroom into a vibrant and interactive learning environment where students are less likely to engage in disruptive behavior.

In Ekiti State secondary schools, many teachers rely heavily on traditional lecture-based instruction, often due to limited resources or lack of training. This overreliance on one-way teaching reduces student participation and often leads to boredom, restlessness, and inattentiveness; conditions that foster misbehavior. However, when teachers incorporate interactive and student-centered methods, they not only increase comprehension and retention, but also minimize behavioral issues by keeping students meaningfully occupied.

For instance, a teacher who begins a lesson with a stimulating question, follows up with a short group discussion, and concludes with a multimedia presentation is more likely to maintain order and enthusiasm throughout the class period. This strategy aligns with the idea that engagement is a preventive tool against disruption. When students are intellectually, emotionally, and physically involved in the learning process, their focus is directed towards the task at hand rather than external distractions.

Ultimately, the use of varied teaching methods is not a supplementary option but a core requirement for effective classroom management. By engaging students through diverse instructional techniques, teachers foster an inclusive and orderly environment conducive to meaningful learning.

### **Reinforcement and Motivation as Behavioral Management Tools**

Effective teachers understand that motivation is a driving force behind student engagement and classroom order. One of the most practical tools at a teacher's disposal is the strategic use of positive reinforcement to encourage desirable behavior and academic performance. According to Maisarah (2024), reinforcement, whether in the form of praise, tangible rewards, or leadership roles helps cultivate a classroom culture where students are motivated to behave appropriately and take learning seriously.

In the context of secondary schools in Ekiti State, where external motivation may be lacking due to socio-economic or environmental factors, the teacher's ability to provide timely encouragement can significantly influence student conduct. A simple verbal commendation such as "Well done" or a public acknowledgment of effort can instill pride and encourage students to continue exhibiting positive behaviors. Teachers who consistently recognize good behavior and academic diligence tend to experience fewer disciplinary problems, as students are eager to maintain approval and status among peers.

Furthermore, reinforcement has a ripple effect. When one student is rewarded for positive conduct, others are likely to emulate that behavior in anticipation of similar recognition. Over time, this creates a self-regulating classroom where students hold one another accountable and work collectively to uphold expectations. The absence of this approach often results in a punitive classroom climate, which can provoke resentment, defiance, or disengagement.

In sum, reinforcement is not merely a behavior management technique; it is a powerful pedagogical strategy that fosters intrinsic motivation and a positive emotional climate. Teachers who intentionally integrate praise, incentives, and opportunities for student leadership into their classroom practices strengthen both discipline and academic achievement.

### **Teacher Comportment and Professionalism as Foundations of Authority**

A teacher's comportment, encompassing demeanor, dress, communication style, and emotional stability, plays critical yet often underestimated roles in classroom management. Students observe and respond to the behavior of their teachers, often modeling or mirroring what they see. A teacher who maintains composure, dresses appropriately, and communicates respectfully is more likely to command authority and establish a classroom environment grounded in mutual respect. As noted by Sule-Dan and Ilesanmi (2015), the personal discipline and professional conduct of a teacher directly influence students' willingness to conform to rules and engage in learning.

In Ekiti State secondary schools, where teachers often contend with limited institutional support, the ability to project professionalism becomes an essential tool for asserting leadership and maintaining order. A teacher who arrives prepared, begins lessons promptly, avoids excessive digressions, and handles disruptions with firmness and fairness sends a clear message about expectations and boundaries. This not only fosters trust and consistency but also deters disruptive behavior by creating a structured learning environment. Furthermore, a teacher's comportment sets the emotional tone of the classroom. For instance, a calm and patient teacher is more likely to de-escalate tensions and guide students through conflict resolution, whereas an impatient or visibly frustrated teacher may inadvertently escalate conflict. When students perceive their teacher as stable, respectful, and in control, they are more inclined to exhibit self-control and cooperation. Therefore, teacher comportment is not simply about maintaining appearances; it is a strategic

element of classroom leadership. Through professionalism and personal discipline, teachers model the behavior they wish to see in students, thereby reinforcing norms of respect, focus, and academic responsibility

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