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Unveiling the Online Classroom Management in Higher Education

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This study addresses the lack of understanding surrounding effective management of online classrooms in the context of the increasing shift towards online learning in education. The research focuses on identifying the challenges faced by educators in managing virtual classrooms and suggest suitable classroom management strategies for online settings. Employing a qualitative approach, the study conducts a systematic review of 20 peer-reviewed papers obtained through EBCOST data base. The results indicate that educators encounter both familiar challenges in online environments, similar to face-to-face settings, as well as distinct challenges unique to the online medium. These specific challenges include issues like unpreparedness to class such as unstable internet connectivity, unmuted microphones, students being late to virtual classes, improper use of web cameras, and inappropriate attire and less interactions. The study also highlights practical strategies for managing online classrooms, including setting classroom rules, effective communication with students, and skillfully managing asynchronous discussions and online teamwork. Based on the results, the study emphasizes the necessity for professional development in online education to enhance online classroom management practices.

1. Introduction

The ability of the teacher to manage and control class is pertinent to effective learning. Ghateolbahr and Samimi (2021) argues that like face-to-face classes, Online classes, like need effective management as well so that they do not get out of the teacher's control and students have valuable and meaningful learning. Bozkus (2021) supports that educators' classroom management skills are considered one of the most important elements that educators should have to create effective education and training environment.

Several published studies report that educators feel unprepared to establish a structured classroom environment, engage students in learning, and deal with challenging behavior Markkanen et al., (2019).Yet, effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a poorly managed classroom. Hojeij et al., (2023) support that a disorderly learning spaces, disrespectful interactions, and disruptive student behavior lead to chaos, ultimately draining instructional time .

In an online classroom in particular, Al Rawashdeh et al., (2021) asserts that disruptive students can present obstacles for the entire class, hindering the learning process unlike traditional physical classes because of the reduced educator interaction. In addition, discipline is more easily enforced in physical classes because the system has ingrained in students the consequences and punishments they may face if they disrupt the learning environment. Hence, some educators believe that teaching in the physical setting is the only way to ensure proper classroom management.

Although research into online classroom management is critical, current research in higher education is insufficient (Junxiang & Marilou, 2023). Acknowledging the importance of exploring the field of online classroom management, it is necessary to draw attention to the current shortcomings in higher education research. The paucity of existing research in this area emphasizes the urgent need for more thorough studies and insights into the complexities of overseeing virtual classrooms in higher education. To improve our comprehension of the difficulties faced by instructors in higher education when navigating online learning environments and to develop well-informed strategies to maximize the virtual learning experience for instructors and students, it is imperative that this research gap be filled.

2. Literature Review

Conceptualization of Online Classroom Management

It refers to the tactics utilized by an educator to create a conducive environment that promotes student learning. It is broadly defined as everything a teacher does to create an environment for both academic and behavioral education (Evertson et al., 2006).

Therefore, Ghateolbahr and Samimi (2021) assert that a teacher has an effective role in teaching the student, and successful online classes are the result of a set of common roles and responsibilities between the teacher and the students.

However, Khalid and Mirghani (2022) argues that educator interaction is drastically stunted in virtual mode bringing the educator to the conclusion that teaching in the physical mode is the only way to ensure classroom management. Therefore, there are debates on how a facilitator can effectively keep your students focused despite having limited control over their surroundings. How can a facilitator student interaction when they are not physically present in the same room? As (Bates 2020) puts it, the literature does not provide enough evidence on, hence little is known on how to effectively manage online classes despite many recommendations provided to educators to manage online classes. This suggests that teachers might be depending on guidance that isn't completely supported by established research findings as they navigate the challenges of managing an online classroom with some degree of ambiguity.

Comprehensive research projects delving into the complex dynamics of online class administration are desperately needed to close this gap.

3. Theoretical framework

Social Learning Theory: Developed by Albert Bandura, this theory emphasizes the importance of observational learning and social interactions in shaping behavior. In virtual classrooms, observing the teacher's presence and actions can influence student behavior and engagement (Bandura, 1977). The Social Learning Theory is especially important in the context of virtual classrooms since it clarifies the dynamics of this type of learning environment. The notion emphasizes how important it is for teachers to act as role models for students in this situation. Learners' conduct, involvement, and general level of engagement with the learning process are significantly influenced by the teacher's virtual presence and behaviors.

Learners engage with the virtual learning environment as active observers of their virtual surroundings rather than just as information consumers. The teacher sets the standard for appropriate behavior, proper communication, and the general climate of the classroom by acting as an example.

4. Results

The study reviewed 20 Peer-reviewed articles searched through EBCOST database. The review consisted of the analysis, descriptions and comparison of data which ultimately generated themes for interpretations and discussions. The generated themes for interpretations and discussions as tabulated in Table 1 below:

Theme 1	Subthemes
Experienced challenges in the virtual classroom	1. Time management : students' unreadiness to join the virtual class
	2. Students unstable Internet connectivity and network
	3. Students learnt inattentively
	4. Less /lack of interaction
	5. Unmuted mics and disturbing background
Theme 2	**Subthemes**
The strategies for an effective virtual classroom.	1. Communication: Set online class rules
	2. Use of online supporting tools: Eg: online attendance :
	3. Control on tone of voice and the pitch
	4. Establishing Social Presence
	5. Time management : optimize the teacher-students interaction: Maintaining a high proportion of positive and corrective
	6. Provide quick teacher feedback through a variety of tools
	7. Create and maintaining positive connections with students and motivate students
	8. Teaching method should attend to varies learning styles and special needs of the students.
	9. Develop appropriate instructional content with online instruction online curriculum
	10. Develop appropriate online assessments which is online friendly and assessing authentically

5. Discussions

Educators have identified students' lack of preparedness to participate in virtual classes as a primary challenge. Additionally, unstable internet connections pose an ongoing obstacle, causing students to frequently log in and out, leaving educators with less control compared to face-to-face lessons (Almahasees et. al ,2021). Students faced a challenge in having proper access to the internet for many reasons, such as the cost of having a fiber network, which is not affordable for some students (Uxatia, 2020). Moreover, students' inattentive learning style results in reduced interaction compared to traditional classes. Moreover, some of the students have shown that the lack of interaction is also considered a challenge for students, reflecting on their progress and personalities (Almahasees et. al ,2021). Unmuted microphones and disruptive backgrounds also disturb the rest of the class.

Despite of the challenges, the study finds that virtual classroom management requires a set of practical strategies, knowing how to communicate well with students including controlling the tone and the pitch and having an effective classroom management program, managing asynchronous discussions and online team. Synchronous systems that enable students to engage in live virtual conferences using multimedia services such as live-streamed video and audio. A critical aspect of online communication is the visual presence of the teacher or establishing social presence (Cunningham, 2015) in the online classroom such Web 2.0 technology such as Voki avatars. (Cunningham, 2015.p.45) research suggests that "the instructor's presence and interacting with other students establishes more social presence than any talking dog or cartoon character is capable of doing on its own". Therefore, it is essential for students to be able to see the teacher, not only to uphold privacy in the virtual setting but also to provide motivation. The teacher's presence plays a vital role in enhancing students' learning experience and fostering a sense of community within the online classroom (Schwartz, 2021).

In online classrooms, effective communication strategies include the teacher promptly responding to students' comments, demonstrating value for their participation. Feedback should be a model, starting with positive remarks and offering suggestions for further studies. Encouraging student responses and participation while boosting their self-confidence is vital (Schwartz, 2021). Barrot and Fernando (2023), it is evident that educators play a critical role in establishing rapport and fostering a positive, secure, and amicable environment in online classrooms. Therefore, educators should create an engaging classroom environment, build community, establish rules and procedures, and create student-centered structures in the

online classroom.

To effectively manage online learning, the teaching approach must cater to diverse learning styles and accommodate students' individual needs, thus preventing disruptive behaviors. Utilizing suitable instructional content and a well-structured online curriculum is crucial for successful management with tailor made assessments. A recent study of conducted by shows that students prefer educators who offer more interaction, communication, collaborative decision-making and motivation when learning online (Junxiang & Marilou, 2023). The study findings on the strategies contradicts Junxiang and Marilou (2023) that found effective classroom management strategies for the online environment to be same as those considered effective in the face-to-face classroom.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, online classroom presents a unique and sometimes challenging environment when it comes to keeping students engaged and attentive, however, it came out clear that there is no single prescribed method for effectively implementing teaching and learning in a virtual classroom, but educators should use various workable strategies.

7. Recommendations

Due to the many difficulties in online education, it's essential to create training programs and workshops for educators. These programs will teach them important strategies for managing online classrooms effectively, helping them become better at handling their classes in a creative and efficient way.

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