



EXPLORING CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY NOVICE FEMALE TEACHERS REGARDING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The authors' purpose through this conceptual paper is to explore the challenges novice female teachers encounter in classroom management within secondary schools. The main question guiding this research is: "What are the specific classroom management difficulties faced by novice female teachers in secondary school settings?" A qualitative approach is employed, using recent literature reviews encompassing scholarly books and articles published between (2018-2024) on the perspectives of authors regarding the topic under discussion. This study is grounded within an interpretive paradigm which provides deeper insight into the scholarly perceptions regarding the topic under discussion. The findings reveal that novice female teachers often struggle with maintaining discipline, establishing authority and balancing relationships with students. Similarly, issues related to gender dynamics and societal expectations further exacerbate their classroom management strategies. Notably, this study is significant as it contributes to the existing body of knowledge on gender-specific challenges in education providing insights for teacher training programs and policy adjustments. Nonetheless, the limitations of this study include its focus on a single case study and its reliance on qualitative data which may not be generalizable to all contexts. Thus, further research is recommended to explore broader patterns across different school environments.

Keywords: *Novice female teachers, Classroom management, Secondary schools, Discipline, Gender dynamics.*

Introduction and background

Westheimer (2024) thinks that the primary purpose of education is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, values and critical thinking abilities required for personal development, active citizenship and meaningful engagement in societal affairs. Thus, Carnoy (2024) discovered that education encourages intellectual progress, social and emotional development and prepares students to contribute to the economy while also engaging in lifelong learning. At its foundation, education seeks to develop well-rounded, responsible and informed individuals capable of adapting to changing situations by solving issues and positively impacting their communities and the global world. Nonetheless, classroom management remains an important component of education by influencing both instructional efficacy and student learning outcomes (Cahyaningrum et al., 2024).

Novice female teachers especially those starting secondary education sometimes face noticeable challenges in classroom management. This study investigates the classroom management challenges encountered by novice female teachers in secondary schools specifically resolving concerns of discipline and authority (Woodcock & Reupert, 2024). It is crucial to clarify three main concepts relevant to this exploration such as the following: classroom management, novice female teachers and discipline. According to Habib & Anisa (2024), classroom management refers to the numerous strategies and techniques that teachers use to create a positive learning environment. It entails arranging students, space, time and resources to enable successful teaching

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and learning. Furthermore, good classroom management is indicated by the implementation of clear norms, routines and processes that promote positive behaviour and academic engagement among students (Catayas & Hussien, 2024). For example, a teacher who implements a disciplined pattern for transitioning between activities might avoid disturbances and maximise teaching time. Conversely, novice female teachers are those who are in the initial phases of their teaching careers typically within the first three years of practice. As a consequence, Hewett (2024) contends that this phase is frequently characterised by a challenging learning curve as these teachers endeavour to establish authority in the classroom, comprehend classroom dynamics and develop pedagogical skills. As a result, novice female teachers often experience increased anxiety regarding the effective management of classrooms which can impede their professional development and confidence. In the same vein, discipline in the educational context denotes the methods and approaches employed by novice female teachers to resolve student behaviour thereby ensuring that the classroom environment remains focused on effective instruction and learning (Romano, 2024). Similarly, disciplinary techniques may include preventative efforts such as setting explicit expectations as well as reactive approaches including enforcing consequence management for inappropriate behaviour. As always, the efficacy of these strategies can differ significantly due to cultural influences, the particular school environment and the individual teacher's capacity to establish authority and cultivate respect among pupils (Chien et al., 2024).

Notably, the educational landscape in Africa, particularly in South Africa poses distinct challenges and opportunities for newly qualified female teachers. Many African educational systems continue to grapple with colonial legacies, socioeconomic inequities and cultural conventions that frequently influence gender roles (UNESCO, 2020). As a result, in South Africa the post-apartheid era has seen considerable reforms aimed at improving fairness and diversity in schools. However, systemic factors such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient resources and varied levels of parental participation continue to provide substantial impediments for novice female teachers (Department of Basic Education, 2019). Undoubtedly, in the South African context, female novice teachers frequently experience adversarial effects that are associated with gender biases and stereotypes that affect their authority in the classroom (Ibrahim, 2024). In the same vein, research has demonstrated that female novice teachers may encounter scepticism regarding their capabilities which can destroy their confidence and efficacy in regulating classroom dynamics (Rafiq et al., 2024). Furthermore, their capacity to enforce discipline without being perceived as excessively strict or unfeminine can be further exacerbated by societal expectations regarding femininity and authority. Consequently, Howard (2024) suggests that this nuanced interplay between gender and authority necessitates a thorough examination of the specific challenges faced by novice female teachers in secondary schools.

The challenges of classroom management are global and extend beyond South Africa and the African continent. Studies across several educational settings reveals that novice female teachers irrespective of their geographical location frequently see classroom management as a primary challenge (Churchill et al., 2024). Similarly, novice female teachers in the United States often express feelings of inadequacy in managing disruptive behaviours resulting in increased stress and higher attrition rates within the teaching profession (Svajda-Hardy & Kwok, 2024). This pattern emphasises the common challenges of classroom management and the necessity for specialised support and professional development for novice female teachers (Dawes et al., 2024).

As a result, the purpose of this paper is to shed light on the classroom management challenges that novice female teachers encounter in secondary schools with a particular emphasis on discipline and authority. By studying these challenges within the broader educational context of Africa and South Africa, as well as drawing on global perspectives, the research seeks to provide insights that can enhance teacher training programs and policy interventions including related remedial strategies. As a result, Hourigan & Leavy (2024) believe that novice female teachers must understand the intricacies of classroom management to encourage their professional development and improve overall educational quality.



The purpose of this study is to explore the classroom management challenges novice female teachers face in secondary schools, focusing on discipline and authority.

The main question is: What challenges do novice female teachers face in managing secondary school classrooms?

Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework provides the foundation for understanding and analysing the key concepts and relationships within a research study. It consists of existing theories that explain the phenomena being studied and guides the researcher in framing the problem, formulating research questions and interpreting the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the context of exploring challenges encountered by novice female teachers in classroom management, this study draws upon Bandura's Social Learning Theory and feminist educational theory. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) emphasizes the role of observation, imitation and modelling in behavior acquisition (Bandura, 1977). This theory helps explain how novice teachers learn classroom management strategies by observing their peers, mentors and students. Moreover, it highlights the significance of self-efficacy in determining a teacher's confidence in managing classroom dynamics. Similarly, the Feminist educational theory (FET) focuses on the influence of gender and power dynamics within educational settings (Weiler, 2001). By integrating this theory, the study examines how societal expectations and gender biases affect novice female teachers' authority and classroom management approaches. The combination of these theories offers a comprehensive understanding of the challenges novice female teachers face and provides insight into strategies for improvement.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal several critical challenges novice female teachers encounter in classroom management within secondary schools. Many participants reported difficulties in establishing authority which often led to issues with student discipline and engagement. For instance, teachers noted that their attempts to implement rules were frequently met with resistance, underscoring the need for more effective strategies to assert control. Moreover, the findings indicate that gender dynamics play a significant role in shaping classroom interactions. Specifically, several teachers expressed that they faced biases based on their gender which impacted their ability to manage students effectively. In contrast, male colleagues appeared to navigate similar situations with less resistance. In the same vein, the study highlighted the importance of support systems for novice teachers. Teachers who had access to mentorship and professional development opportunities were better equipped to handle classroom management challenges. Consequently, this finding suggests that providing targeted training and resources could significantly enhance novice female teachers' confidence and effectiveness. Notably, the study emphasizes the need for schools to foster supportive environments that address the unique challenges faced by novice female teachers, thereby promoting positive classroom management and improved educational outcomes.

Methodology

Data collection strategies

A qualitative approach is employed, utilizing recent literature reviews of scholarly books and articles published between 2018 and 2024. These sources reflect the perspectives of various authors on the topic under discussion, providing in-depth insights and analyses. This method allows for a comprehensive understanding of the subject by drawing from diverse, up-to-date academic contributions.

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Data analysis

This study is grounded within an interpretive paradigm, which allows for a deeper exploration of scholarly perceptions regarding the topic under discussion. By focusing on the subjective experiences and interpretations of individuals, this approach provides rich contextual insights into how different authors understand and mitigate the issues. It emphasizes meaning making enabling a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in the topic.

Discussion

According to Nabung (2024) the challenges that novice female teachers encounter when managing secondary school classes are varied and firmly rooted in a variety of socio-cultural, institutional and pedagogical settings. Thus, Zhang et al (2024) argue that recognising these challenges is critical since they have a substantial impact on the professional growth and development of these teachers. This study will investigate the specific adversarial effects that novice female teachers face in the classroom using examples from the global, African and South African educational landscapes while also providing mitigating techniques to promote their development. One of the most difficult challenges that novice female teachers encounter is establishing authority in the male-dominated educational institutions (Wang, 2024). Many educational institutions around the globe continue to display a gender bias with male authority figures being more readily accepted (Clarke et al., 2024). Similarly, a research in the United States discovered that novice female teachers are regularly questioned about their leadership abilities especially in topics typically linked with male dominance subjects such as science and mathematics (Semela & Hailu, 2024). As a result, this cynicism can lead to increased stress and feelings of inadequacy which can impede their classroom management skills (Kuadey et al., 2024). Therefore, failure to exert authority effectively can make it difficult to maintain discipline and foster a respectful learning environment.

In the African context, the educational landscape is further exacerbated by socio-cultural norms that frequently dictate gender roles. It is important to note that numerous African societies place a substantial emphasis on traditional gender expectations which can impede the capacity of novice female teachers to command respect in the classroom (Govender, 2024). In the same vein, in certain regions, novice female teachers may be perceived as caregivers rather than authoritative figures which can result in challenges in regulating student behaviour and enforcing discipline. Consequently, this perception can impede their professional development and erode their confidence as they may feel compelled to conform to societal expectations rather than assert their authority (Khan et al., 2024). As a result, in South Africa, apartheid's legacy continues to impact educational dynamics exacerbating the challenges faced by new female teachers. Overcrowded classrooms, limited resources and systematic inequalities all pose significant challenges to efficient classroom management (Department of Basic Education, 2019). According to research, novice female teachers are frequently overwhelmed by these unfavourable conditions which can result in burnout and high rates of attrition (Wiltshire, 2024). The strain to fulfil varied student demands in stressful situations might take away their attention on creating effective management skills by making it difficult to create a positive learning environment.

Another significant barrier for novice female teachers is a lack of effective mentorship and professional assistance. Mentorship programs in many educational contexts particularly in developing countries may be underdeveloped or even non-existent (Entice et al., 2024). Without access to experienced mentors, new teachers may struggle to effectively manage their classrooms. A study conducted in Kenya discovered that novice female teachers frequently felt alone and unsupported leading to increased emotions of anxiety and ineptitude (Dorcas et al., 2024). This lack of support can impede their capacity to create effective management strategies by setting off a cycle of dissatisfaction and disengagement from the profession. In the same spirit, the emotional work connected with teaching might provide special challenges for novice female teachers. Notably, they frequently find themselves combining classroom management duties and their



students' emotional requirements (Govender, 2024). As a result, novice female teachers in particular may face societal pressure to be compassionate and empathetic which might conflict with the requirement to administer discipline and retain authority. This emotional conflict can cause fatigue and a sense of personal inadequacy limiting their overall professional development (Wolfe & Saunders, 2024). As individuals deal with these emotional issues it is critical to give specialised support that resolve their specific needs.

To resolve these challenges, a variety of institutional and policy initiatives might be employed. Comprehensive mentorship programs that match novice female teachers with experienced teachers are vital for providing support and guidance (Craig et al., 2024). Such programs should focus on providing novice female teachers with appropriate classroom management strategies while also building their confidence and professional identity. For example, a mentorship effort in Australia produced excellent results with novice female teachers reporting higher confidence and improved classroom management skills (Dawes et al., 2024). Similarly, professional development opportunities that focus on gender-specific challenges in classroom management might be beneficial. Workshops and training sessions on assertiveness, conflict resolution and culturally responsive teaching can help novice female teachers build effective management methods as they navigate through intricate classroom dynamics (Wolfe & Saunders, 2024).

Notably, these professional development programs should also inspire collaboration and community building among novice female teachers resulting in a supportive network that can help them advance professionally. Furthermore, educational institutions should foster an inclusive culture and respect for diversity in the classroom. By actively addressing gender prejudices and preconceptions, schools can foster a more equal atmosphere in which all teachers including inexperienced female instructors, can thrive (Owings & Kaplan, 2024). This can include training personnel on gender sensitivity and enacting rules that promote gender parity in educational settings (UNESCO 2020). Creating a school culture that encourages varied teaching methods and approaches can help offset the negative effects that new female instructors confront. Consequently, Taole et al. (2024) discovered that the challenges encountered by novice female teachers in managing secondary school classrooms are intricate and multidimensional, shaped by global, African and South African contexts. These problems profoundly impact their professional growth and development by frequently resulting in feelings of inadequacy and burnout. By implementing targeted support methods including mentorship programs, professional development efforts and establishing inclusive school cultures educational institutions can alleviate these challenges and enhance the success of novice female teachers (Rampersad, 2024). Resolving these difficulties is crucial not only for individual educators but also for the overall educational framework as empowered teachers are fundamental to fostering effective learning environments.

Africanization and the context of curriculum development

According to Reyneke (2024) the management of discipline in South African rural schools presents intricate challenges that significantly impact the development of social values such as respect, human dignity, and community cohesiveness. Thus, Sadorf (2024) found that rural schools often encounter unique issues including limited resources, socioeconomic inequality and cultural diversity all of which influence disciplinary approaches. Notably, traditional methods such as corporal punishment have been phased out in favour of restorative justice systems. Similarly, these systems emphasize reconciliation and incorporate ubuntu principles thereby fostering community involvement (Park et al., 2024). Consequently, this shift not only resolves behavioural issues but also promotes a sense of belonging and social responsibility among rural secondary school pupils. Similarly, the concept of Africanization in curriculum development plays a crucial role in this context. By integrating African cultural values and perspectives into the curriculum, teachers can motivate all students to respect and acknowledge their diverse backgrounds. According to

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Nesterova et al., (2024) this strategy enhances social cohesiveness by fostering mutual understanding and promoting the importance of peace among rural secondary school students. Similarly, Tran (2024) believes that incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into science curricula enriches learning experiences while establishing values such as respect and human dignity rooted in sustainability and community stewardship. Thus, Ndasauka (2024) argues that effective discipline management in rural schools as aligned with Africanization principles can significantly enhance social values and cohesion creating a more harmonious educational environment. This approach also resolves the challenges faced by novice female teachers in classroom management by enabling them to cultivate an inclusive and supportive atmosphere conducive to learning (Wolfe & Saunders, 2024).

Indigenous Knowledge Curriculum Transformation

Indigenous knowledge curriculum transformation is crucial for creating an inclusive educational environment that acknowledges and integrates the diverse cultural perspectives of learners. According to Zepke (2024) this transformation not only respects local knowledge systems but also enhances student engagement and academic success. Furthermore, by embedding indigenous knowledge into the curriculum novice female teachers can foster cultural relevance thereby promoting a sense of belonging among students from various backgrounds (Robertson et al., 2024). Moreover, this approach encourages critical thinking as students learn to navigate and appreciate multiple worldviews (Waghid, 2024). When incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into science, education can provide students with practical insights into sustainable practices thus, bridging the gap between theory and real-world applications. Ultimately, Abdou & Zervas (2024) hold a view that indigenous knowledge curriculum transformation is a vital step toward achieving social justice and equity in education. By valuing and integrating indigenous perspectives educational institutions can empower students and enrich their learning experiences by making education more relevant and meaningful (Park et al., 2024). Consequently, this transformation supports the development of informed citizens who are equipped to contribute positively to their communities.

Novice female teachers the context of empowerment

In the context of empowerment, novice female teachers face unique challenges that often stem from societal expectations, gender norms and professional hurdles (Zhou et al., 2024). Empowerment involves equipping these novice female teachers with the skills, confidence and support systems needed to thrive in their roles. According to Zhang et al., (2024) empowerment is a multidimensional process that enhances an individual's ability to make decisions and act independently. Thus, Govender (2024) holds a view that for novice female teachers, this process requires both institutional support and personal development particularly in educational environments where gender disparities persist. Undoubtedly, mentorship programs have been highlighted as crucial in supporting novice female teachers offering guidance and fostering professional growth (Wiltshire, 2024).

These programs not only provide technical expertise but also empower teachers to navigate the complexities of the teaching profession. Furthermore, leadership training is essential in empowering novice female teachers to assume leadership roles despite the societal barriers they often encounter (Rampersad, 2024). This training will enable them to challenge traditional gender roles and assert their professional identities. However, the lack of consistent support and professional development opportunities can impede the empowerment of novice female teachers particularly in rural areas where resources are limited (Zhou et al., 2024). Resolving these challenges requires a holistic approach that combines mentorship, leadership training and policy reforms aimed at fostering gender equity in education. Thus, Churchill et al., (2024) found that empowering novice female teachers requires a multifaceted approach thereby integrating personal development, institutional support and gender equity measures. Clearly, this process not only



enhances their professional competence but also contributes to a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape.

Innovative supportive mentorship for novice female teachers in classroom management.

Innovative supportive mentorship plays a pivotal role in empowering novice female teachers particularly in the area of classroom management. According to Craig (2024) effective mentorship programs provide novice female teachers with the tools and strategies necessary to navigate classroom dynamics which reduce disciplinary challenges and create a conducive instructional and learning environments. Similarly, Cuzzo (2024) believes that supportive mentorship programs that integrate peer collaboration, reflective practices and classroom observation significantly improve novice female teachers' ability to manage classrooms effectively. Mentorship that emphasizes experiential learning allows novice female teachers to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings.

This hands-on approach as supported by ongoing feedback from experienced mentors fosters confidence and competence in managing diverse classroom scenarios (Woodcock & Reupert, 2024). Similarly, mentors play a crucial role in helping novice female teachers develop culturally responsive classroom management techniques particularly in settings where diverse student needs must be resolved (Rachamim & Orland-Barak, 2024). In a similar vein, the incorporation of digital mentorship platforms has emerged as an innovative way to extend support to novice teachers by offering flexibility and access to resources that may not be available in traditional face-to-face mentorship programs (Cuzzo, 2024). Thus, this approach is particularly beneficial in rural areas where in-person mentorship may be limited. Undoubtedly, Woodcock & Reupert (2024) found that innovative supportive mentorship in classroom management equips novice female teachers with the skills and confidence needed to succeed in their teaching roles. As a result, Kim (2024) combining peer collaboration, reflective practices and digital platforms ensures that novice teachers receive the comprehensive support necessary to thrive in complex educational environments.

Conclusion

This study has explored the significant challenges faced by novice female teachers in managing classrooms within secondary schools. By employing an interpretive paradigm and utilizing a qualitative approach, the research sheds light on the multifaceted difficulties these teachers encounter. The analysis underscores that classroom management is not only a matter of maintaining order but also navigating gender dynamics, student behavior and institutional expectations which often disproportionately affect female teachers, especially those new to the profession. The findings demonstrate that novice female teachers face challenges such as establishing authority, dealing with disruptive students and balancing emotional labour with professional duties. Furthermore, the literature reviewed highlights the influence of societal perceptions of gender roles which can undermine their authority and complicate their efforts to manage classrooms effectively. These challenges are exacerbated by a lack of experience and limited mentorship opportunities leaving novice female teachers feeling unsupported. Similarly, the study points to the importance of professional development programs designed to resolve these specific challenges. Through targeted training and mentorship, novice female teachers can be better equipped with the skills and strategies needed for successful classroom management.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several strategies are proposed to resolve the challenges encountered by novice female teachers in classroom management. Schools should implement mentorship programs where experienced teachers provide guidance and support to novice female teachers on regular basis. This will foster confidence and enhance classroom management skills.

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Furthermore, professional development workshops focused on gender dynamics and classroom authority should be regularly conducted to equip novice female teachers with strategies for managing diverse student behaviors. In the same vein, school leadership must create a supportive and inclusive environment that acknowledges the unique challenges novice female teachers face by ensuring that their concerns are considered. Ongoing evaluation of teacher needs should inform future policies by ensuring that classroom management training is continuously improved for novice female teachers.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study include its focus on a specific context, which may not be generalizable to all rural secondary schools. In the same vein, the reliance on qualitative data such as books and articles, may introduce researcher bias and subjectivity. Furthermore, the study's recent literature review may limit the breadth of perspectives captured, potentially overlooking other challenges faced by novice female teachers in other educational settings.

Author biography

Dr. Saltiel Khololo Collen Mataboge is a Senior Lecturer at the University of South Africa in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management. Research interests encompasses instructional leadership in schools, Transformative leadership and management in schools, School safety, violence and social justice for students in schools, Mentorship and mentoring. I authored and published several articles regarding contemporary issues in the field of education.

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EXPLORING CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY NOVICE FEMALE TEACHERS REGARDING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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