

## **Novice Teachers' Experiences of Constructing Classroom Management Skills during Teaching Practice Programme in Kenya**

*Diana Achuch Ogollah,<sup>1</sup> Stellah Keter<sup>2</sup>, Curwyn Mapaling<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, Moi University  
Email: [achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies, Moi University  
Email: [stellahketer@yahoo.com](mailto:stellahketer@yahoo.com)

<sup>3</sup>North-West University-Subject Group Psychology  
Email: [curwyn.mapaling@nwu.ac.za](mailto:curwyn.mapaling@nwu.ac.za)

### **Abstract**

Novice teachers, those with less than 3 years of experience, mostly enter the classroom with strong content knowledge but limited classroom management experience. This study explored how participation in teaching practice programmes (TPPs) contributes to building novice teachers' classroom management skills in Kenya. Guided by Marzano's Classroom Management Theory and Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, a phenomenological research design was adopted within an interpretivist paradigm. Fifteen novice teachers from 13 public junior secondary schools in Kisumu Central Sub-County, were purposively selected. Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions, and were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that during TPPs, novice teachers gradually constructed key classroom management competencies through real classroom experiences. They learned to enforce rules and handle student behaviour, including confronting misbehaviour and establishing their authority; organise instruction, work with resource-constrained classes; foster teacher-student relationships while maintaining professional boundaries; and reflect on their practice to shape their emerging teacher identity. Growth in skills was evident, for example, some novices developed effective non-confrontational discipline strategies and adaptive lesson planning, yet significant challenges persisted, such as coping with overcrowded classes, time management difficulties, and feelings of inadequacy. The study recommends strengthening TPP design through structured mentorship, guided reflection sessions, and better alignment between university preparation and classroom realities. These measures would enable novice teachers to gain confidence and effective management strategies, ultimately creating more orderly and engaging learning environments.

**Keywords:** *Novice Teachers, Classroom Management Skills, Teaching Practice Programmes, Teacher Mentorship, Teacher Identity*

### **1.1 Introduction**

Teacher professional competence is globally recognised as a significant factor in education quality. Classroom management, in particular, underpins effective teaching by ensuring an orderly, supportive environment for learning (Aibinuomo & Kennedy, 2021). Early-career teachers, defined as having up to 3 years of experience, undergo rapid professional growth in their initial years, much of which comes from mastering fundamental skills like classroom management. Research indicates that highly competent novice teachers who can adapt instruction, maintain clear

routines, and manage student behavior tend to improve student achievement and holistic development. Jentsch and König (2022) note that new teachers develop both cognitive and motivational competencies over time, and effective classroom management is among the essential skills that evolve with experience. Furthermore, international standards stress the importance of practical training in building these skills: for example, UNESCO's Teacher Task Force has advocated incorporating classroom management strategies in teacher education curricula (UNESCO, 2021).

Despite its importance, classroom management remains one of the greatest challenges for novice teachers worldwide. Novice teachers often feel less confident about managing classrooms than about other aspects of teaching (Vukovic, 2021). Studies have long shown that new teachers struggle to maintain discipline and engagement, a problem documented in contexts from the United States to Sub-Saharan Africa (Baker, 2005; Emmer & Sabornie, 2015; Adarkwah et al., 2022). Difficult classroom environments can contribute to teacher stress; in some cases, classroom management difficulties are cited as a primary reason why early-career teachers consider leaving the profession (Sparks, 2025). A recent large-scale study by Sparks (2025) found that the speed at which novice teachers acquire strong classroom management skills is a key predictor of their effectiveness and likelihood of remaining in teaching. In many developing countries, systemic issues exacerbate these challenges. New teachers are frequently posted to schools with overcrowded classes, scarce resources, and prevalent student discipline problems, which can overwhelm their growing skills. For instance, in Pakistan, novice secondary teachers reported that large class sizes, limited teaching materials, and frequent disruptive behavior significantly hindered their performance (Ahmed & Din, 2024). Similarly, in Ghana, beginning teachers commonly face pupil indiscipline, time management problems, and oversized classes that undermine their confidence (Adarkwah et al., 2022). These conditions make effective classroom management even more challenging for an inexperienced teacher.

In Kenya, reforms in teacher education have recently aimed to improve practical skills: the national competency-based teacher education framework emphasises creating positive learning environments and managing student behavior. The Teachers Service Commission now requires new teachers to undergo a structured induction programme, including classroom management training (TSC, 2024). Nonetheless, many Kenyan novice teachers still report entering the profession with limited hands-on training in managing classes (Yegon et al., 2019). Local studies and reports highlight ongoing problems: frequent student unrest and indiscipline in secondary schools have been linked to poor classroom management strategies. In Kisumu County, education stakeholders observe that freshly deployed teachers often lack confidence in maintaining classroom order and handling misconduct (Odanga & Aloka, 2024). For example, a recent study in western Kenya found that younger, less experienced teachers had significantly lower self-efficacy in classroom management compared to older colleagues. Such findings underscore a pressing need to better prepare novice teachers for the realities of managing Kenyan classrooms.

Teaching Practice Programmes (TPPs) are intended as a key opportunity to develop this competence. A TPP allows pre-service teachers to apply pedagogical theory in real classrooms under supervision. During TPPs, novices can practice establishing class rules, organising lesson activities, maintaining discipline, and building rapport with students, all in a controlled learning

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>

environment. International research confirms that well-designed TPPs improve new teachers' classroom management and instructional skills (Fitzsimons et al., 2024). In Kenya, TPPs are a mandatory component of teacher education, and policymakers expect them to produce graduates who can create productive learning environments from the start. However, the effectiveness of TPPs in achieving these outcomes has come into question. Even with TPP experience, novice teachers frequently report classroom management difficulties in their first jobs, suggesting possible gaps in the TPP process (Mboko & Mutunga, 2023). For example, Mboko and Mutunga (2023) found that certain practical skills, such as handling disruptive behavior and arranging the classroom for learning, were often neglected or under-emphasised during TPPs, leaving novice teachers ill-prepared for actual classroom conditions. Kulu et al. (2024) similarly note that classroom management remains one of the most significant challenges faced by Kenyan secondary school teachers, particularly novices, despite the inclusion of TPP in training. They observed issues such as disorganised lessons, inconsistent enforcement of rules, and inadequate student engagement among beginning teachers. These observations point to a need to understand more deeply how novice teachers experience the development of classroom management skills during their TPPs, and what factors might be limiting the impact of those experiences.

### **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Classroom management is fundamental to quality teaching because without it, instructional time is lost and learning suffers (Aibinuomo & Kennedy, 2021). In Kenya, national education frameworks and induction programmes emphasize classroom management, while TPPs are expected to provide novices with real opportunities to build this competence (Kulu et al., 2024). Yet, despite these measures, many novice teachers continue to face difficulties in maintaining discipline, organising large classes, and sustaining student engagement, even after completing their TPPs (Mboko & Mutunga, 2023; Mutende, 2025). Research further shows that follow-up on how teachers actually translate TPP experiences into practice is limited (Opiyo et al., 2025; Clark-Davis, 2024). This has created a gap in understanding the lived experiences of novice teachers as they construct classroom management skills. Against this backdrop, this study sought to explore how novice teachers experience the construction of classroom management competencies during TPPs.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to explore novice teachers' experiences of constructing classroom management skills during TPPs in public junior secondary schools in Kenya.

### **1.4 Research question**

What are the novice teachers' experiences of constructing classroom management skills during TPPs in public junior secondary schools in Kenya?

### **1.5 Theoretical and conceptual framework**

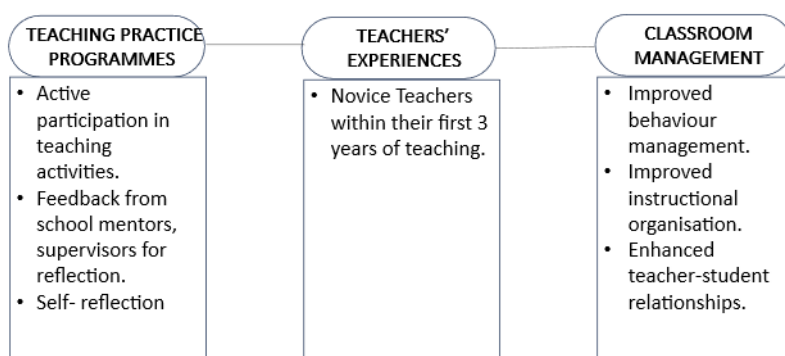
This study was guided by two complementary frameworks: Marzano's Classroom Management Theory and Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. Marzano's model of classroom management (Marzano & Marzano, 2003) provides a comprehensive conceptualization of the key components of effective classroom management: these include establishing and enforcing clear rules and procedures, implementing fair and consistent disciplinary interventions, and building positive teacher-student relationships. Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) major tenet is

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>

that knowledge is created through experience and reflection. Kolb's theory suggests that the extent to which novices learn from these experiences depends on their opportunities for reflection and conceptualization during and after the TPP. Figure 1 puts these theories into a tangible perspective.



*Figure 1: A conceptual framework of the theory of classroom management*

## 2.0 Literature review

Effective classroom management has been widely studied, and its significance for teacher success is well documented. Evertson and Weinstein (2006) describe classroom management as the collection of strategies that teachers use to establish a smoothly functioning learning environment, noting that these strategies are fundamental to maximising instructional time and student engagement. Research consistently shows that novice teachers often feel underprepared in this aspect, which can impact their efficacy. Globally, classroom management challenges are among the top challenges reported by new teachers. For example, a survey by the OECD (2018) found that novice teachers across several countries reported significantly lower confidence in handling disruptive behavior compared to their more experienced peers (Vukovic, 2021). Baker (2005) observed that many beginning teachers struggle to meet the demands of managing student behavior and need substantial support to develop these skills. Emmer and Sabornie (2015) further highlight that without adequate training, novices tend to rely on trial-and-error or may adopt authoritarian methods that are not always effective in the long-term. This early struggle has serious implications, such as poor classroom management, which not only depresses student learning but also contributes to teacher burnout. In the United States, for instance, classroom management issues have been linked to new teachers leaving the profession within the first five years (Sparks, 2025). Conversely, there is evidence that targeted development of classroom management competence can improve teacher retention; one study suggests that novice teachers who quickly build up effective classroom management are more likely to persist in teaching and become effective instructors (Sparks, 2025).

Literature emphasises the critical role of TPPs in constructing classroom management skills. TPPs allow novice teachers to apply theoretical knowledge of pedagogy in real scenarios and to learn classroom management by practicing. According to Kulu et al. (2024), TPP provides supervised, real-time classroom experience, which is invaluable for translating coursework on classroom

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>

management into actionable skills. Indeed, multiple studies report that novices who undergo extensive TPPs show improved classroom management compared to those with shorter or less-guided TPPs (Fitzsimons et al., 2024; Aglazor, 2017). For example, a study in Ireland (Fitzsimons et al., 2024) found that student teachers significantly enhanced their classroom management strategies, such as organising class activities and responding calmly to misbehavior, through repeated practice and feedback during their TPPs. In South Africa, Abongdia et al. (2015) noted that pre-service teachers valued the TPPs as they taught them practical skills like arranging classrooms and dealing with discipline issues that were not fully learned through theory alone. However, the quality and context of the TPPs greatly influence outcomes. Being placed in a classroom is not a guarantee of learning; the presence of effective mentorship, opportunity for reflection, and a reasonable teaching load all affect what novice teachers gain (Avalos & Valenzuela, 2016). If a student teacher is thrown into a very challenging class with little guidance, the experience may be overwhelming rather than instructive (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). This suggests that structured support during TPP, such as regular observations by experienced teachers, feedback sessions, and peer discussions, is essential for novices to internalise classroom management skills.

Several researchers have examined common challenges that Kenyan pre-service teachers encounter during TPPs, which often relate to classroom management. Odundo et al. (2018) observed that teacher trainees frequently struggle with large class sizes and diverse student needs, and they recommended more robust preparation in handling such diversity. Overcrowding and resource shortages are recurrent issues in Kenya's public schools, meaning that novice teachers might face 60 plus students with insufficient textbooks or facilities (Ahmed & Din, 2024). Kenyan novice teachers have also reported feeling unsupported by school staff or mentors during TPP. Njui (2017) and Mwang'ombe (2021) both found that weak communication between universities and placement schools, along with minimal mentor engagement, left student teachers on their own. Such factors can impede skill development, as novices miss out on feedback or modeling of effective practices. Despite these challenges, TPP remains a crucial learning platform. Mutende (2025) showed that when Kenyan pre-service teachers were given structured opportunities to practice, such as micro-teaching sessions followed by reflection, their readiness to manage real classrooms improved significantly. This aligns with Kolb's (1984) notion that experience coupled with reflection leads to learning. In summary, the literature suggests that to foster strong, effective classroom management, teacher education programmes should ensure meaningful, supported TPPs experiences where novices can practice key skills like behavior management, lesson organisation, and student engagement. However, gaps remain in understanding exactly how novices in contexts like Kenya experience this skill development process and what they feel helps or hinders them. The present study builds on the literature by providing an in-depth qualitative exploration of novice teachers' own experiences of constructing classroom management competencies during their TPP.

### **3.0 Materials and methods**

#### **3.1 Research design and approach**

This research adopted a qualitative phenomenological design, situated in an interpretivist paradigm, because the study sought to explore and describe the lived experiences of novice

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>



teachers constructing classroom management skills during TPPs. Interpretive phenomenology focuses on exploring how individuals make sense of their lived experiences within specific contexts (Smith et al., 2022). Data collection centered on personal narratives obtained through interviews and focus group discussions, and thematic analysis was utilised.

### **3.2 Study setting**

This study was conducted in Kisumu Central Sub-County, which is one of the seven sub-counties in Kisumu County. It lies in the western region of Kenya, bordering Lake Victoria, and serves as a key urban and educational hub. Kisumu Central Sub-County was selected due to its high population density of 174,145 (KNBS, 2020), diverse socio-economic activities, concentration of urban schools, and strategic location within Kisumu City, which enhances research feasibility. It offers an opportunity to explore an urban context, a relatively under-researched area in Kenyan education studies.

### **3.3 sampling**

The study employed purposive sampling to select novice secondary school teachers who had recently completed their TPP and teacher education course, within the last 3 years, and were teaching in public junior secondary schools. Fifteen novice teachers (8 female and 7 male) from 13 different junior secondary schools in Kisumu Central Sub-County were invited to participate.

### **3.4 Data collection**

According to Kalu and Bwalya (2017), a qualitative researcher is free to select the framework that best suits their data collection needs in order to comprehend the phenomenon under investigation. Data were gathered using semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs).

### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

Before beginning the study, the researcher obtained approval from the principal of the school and the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). In addition to being educated about their safety, the preservation of their identity, and the opportunity to discontinue participation at any moment, the participants were asked for their agreement.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Verbatim transcripts of the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were created. A thematic analysis was used to examine this data. After the data were sorted, coded, and ready for analysis, categories and themes were created.

## **4.0 Results and discussion**

The study set out to explore novice teachers' experiences of constructing classroom management skills during their teaching practice programmes. The themes and their categories that emerged from the data have been presented in Table 1.

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>

**Table 1: Summary of themes and categories of the experiences of novice teachers in constructing classroom management competencies during TPPs**

Emerging Themes	Categories
Behaviour Management	-Confronting Extreme Misbehaviour -Establishing Authority and Respect
Instructional Organisation	-Coping with Large Classes and Resource Shortages -Time Management and Pacing Lessons -Adapting and Improvising Instruction
Student-Teacher Relationships	-Building Rapport and Trust -Maintaining Professional Distance for Safety -Navigating Boundary and Respect Issues
Emerging Teacher Identity	-Initial Shock and Reality Check -Feelings of Incompetence and Inferiority -Growing Confidence and Professional Growth
Self-Reflection	-Lack of Reflection -Deliberate Reflective Practice -Reflecting Overtime

#### 4.1 Behaviour Management

For most participants, managing student behaviour was the entry point to understanding classroom management. Many described this aspect as central to what they thought classroom management meant. Consistent with Marzano's framework, this emerged as the first theme. Under this theme, the categories include:

##### *Confronting extreme misbehaviour*

A few novice teachers recounted facing severe disciplinary incidents that tested their authority and instincts. For example, one novice reported:

*"...there was a scenario where a learner became so aggressive... he was about to manhandle the female teacher, and I had to bat him... the learner exchanged physical blows and I returned physical blows" (FGD 1, Speaker 2, p. 2 lines 48-50, {31-05-2025}).*

While not a recommended approach, this experience highlights the reality that novice teachers sometimes find themselves unprepared for severe indiscipline and react instinctively. It shows an emotionally reactive moment for this teacher which emphasises the urgency for understanding authority. It underlines the importance of training and support in conflict management for novice teachers.

##### *Establishing authority and respect*

Most participants, even those who never faced extreme incidents, spoke about the struggle to assert their authority as "teachers." A common sentiment was that students did not automatically respect them, as one teacher explained,

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>

*“...learners may see those teachers as their peers or their brothers and sisters, or they may see them as less authoritative... that teacher will actually not have an easy time when it comes to class control... enforcing discipline” (FGD 2, Speaker 2, p.1 lines 25-28, {15-06-2025}).*

Because they lacked automatic power, new teachers had to gain respect through their demeanor and behavior. Knowing that the inexperienced teacher was not a permanent authority figure, students would test limits or disregard directions, which also created discipline issues. Some beginners responded by taking a firm stand and enforcing consistent rules to establish authority, while others looked to school teachers for guidance on how to deal with indiscipline.

#### **4.2 Instructional Organisation**

The second major theme, instructional organisation, refers to how the novice teachers managed the practical aspects of teaching: lesson planning, time management, classroom arrangements, and adaptation of instruction, to maintain an orderly environment. Under this theme, categories include:

##### *Coping with large classes and resource shortages*

Many participants were assigned to overcrowded classrooms with limited materials, which tested their organisational skills. One participant recalled the challenge of managing a large group:

*“...a class of about 90 learners... to control that class, it's a bit challenging to a student teacher” (FGD 2, Speaker 1, p.1 lines 7-14, {15-06-2025}).*

The same participant found routine tasks exhausting:

*“you are giving out a task... supposed to mark their books within 40 minutes... it becomes a tedious thing... Resources are not enough... textbooks... learning materials are not enough when the classroom is huge” (FGD 2, Speaker 1, p.1 lines 7-14, {15-06-2025}).*

These voices portray material scarcity as both constraint and catalyst for creative resilience. The participant was forced novices to improvise, for instance, by sharing textbooks or using group work to reduce marking. Another participant confirmed that resource shortages hindered teaching:

*“you find when you want to deliver that content, it becomes a hindrance, because there are no resources... you will not deliver that content fully” (FGD 2, Speaker 4, p.2 lines 54-56, {15-06-2025}).*

These challenges encouraged flexibility, with some writing their own notes or using locally available materials. Consistent with Marzano's model, the novices recognised that classroom management also depends on having essential teaching resources in place. The meaning constructed is that effective classroom management under scarcity requires adaptability that transcends technical competence.

##### *Time management and pacing lessons*

Another organisational challenge was managing class time and keeping students engaged. Several participants admitted struggling to complete lessons within the allocated period. As one stated:

*“managing time is a big issue... what you need to do within that 40 minutes is difficult for a teacher who is not so experienced” (FGD 1, Speaker 4, p.5 lines 217-218, {31-05-2025}).*

Interruptions made pacing harder, as one explained:

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>



*“when an indiscipline case arises in class, you will stop teaching... deal with it first, then continue... you find that your lesson has not been smoothly delivered... you will not deliver it within the time given”* (FGD 2, Speaker 4, p.2 lines 58-60, {15-06-2025}).

Novices responded by planning tightly and following the lesson structure. One emphasised:

*“if it’s 40 minutes, it should be 40 minutes... follow the lesson plan introduction, body and completion”* (Interview, Participant 1, p.1 lines 39-41, {15-06-2025}).

Over time, they adapted their pace, either simplifying tasks when time was short or preparing extra activities for early finishers, which improved lesson flow and reduced off-task behaviour.

#### *Adapting and improvising instruction*

Real classroom conditions taught novices to adapt their methods to manage diverse learners and unexpected challenges. One teacher reflected that working with varied abilities:

*“...built in me patience and that ability to do more research and understand these learners... I could now learn that we can tailor-make teaching methodologies based on their personalities and backgrounds. So, it was a very important resource”* (FGD 1, Speaker 4, p.5 lines 83-89, {31-05-2025}).

Instead of seeing mixed abilities as a problem, this participant viewed differentiation as part of classroom management, consistent with Kolb’s view that concrete experiences lead to new strategies. Resource shortages also pushed novices to improvise. As the same participant noted:

*“...builds in me the ability to quickly improvise... so that learners do not miss out on a concept... you have to quickly think outside the box. ...Those are the kind of challenges I met that helped me develop my teaching style”* (FGD 1, Speaker 4, p.5 lines 90-94, {31-05-2025}).

Through such experiences, novices developed problem-solving skills, adaptability, and confidence, recognising that effective classroom management relies on planning, time use, and flexibility.

### **4.3 Student-Teacher Relationships**

The quality of relationships that novice teachers formed with their students emerged as a crucial theme. Marzano (2003) underscores that teacher-student relationships significantly impact classroom management, a point echoed strongly by participants’ experiences.

#### *Building rapport and trust*

Many novices found that earning students’ trust improved cooperation and classroom atmosphere. One participant deliberately built bonds, recalling:

*“I really... made a closeness with them, even became friends. They could even tell me, ‘Madam, come and stay with us on Saturday...so I became their favorite. Then everything just went on well”* (Interview, Participant 4, p.1 lines 183-186, {15-06-2025}).

Her rapport and interest in students’ lives gained their respect, making management easier. Others also noted that conversations, humour, and involvement in activities helped students see them as mentors, supporting the idea that strong teacher-student relationships create a positive learning environment.

#### *Maintaining professional distance for safety*

Some novices cautioned that excessive familiarity could undermine authority, especially with a small age gap. Young female teachers in particular felt the need to keep a distance. One explained:

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>

*“the situation forced me to stay away from the learners. You find yourself in tricky situations every time... By the end, I can tell you I don’t know even one name of the learners... I don’t have that relationship with the learners”* (FGD 1, Speaker 1, p.6 lines 223-228, {31-05-2025}).

Inappropriate remarks and lack of seriousness from students led her to avoid interaction, protecting her authority but losing rapport. Feelings of fear emerge from this situation which deters the participant from participating actively in classroom management development. This highlights the difficulty of balancing approachability with professional boundaries.

#### **4.3.3 Navigating boundary and respect issues**

A few participants described serious breaches of student-teacher boundaries. One male novice in a mixed school narrowly avoided a sexual assault when a group of girls cornered him under the guise of consultation. Another recalled harassment of female teachers:

*“I would see female teachers come and then it would get so ugly... before she knows, she is spanked and receiving funny comments from the boys. I think they were a big challenge”* (FGD 1, Speaker 1, p.5 lines 201-204, {31-05-2025}).

Such incidents left novices feeling vulnerable and sometimes scared to be alone with certain students, making professional distance and firm behavioural expectations vital. Participants also noted inadequate protection from school administrations.

In contrast, some managed to build respectful relationships without such problems, as with a teacher who was students’ favourite yet maintained authority. Overall, the social dimension of classroom management was critical, with mutual respect enabling success and poor boundaries causing difficulties.

#### **4.4 Emerging Teacher Identity**

During TPPs, novices experienced growth and challenges that shaped their emerging professional identity. This theme highlights how classroom experiences influenced their self-perception, with participants building confidence in some areas while questioning themselves in others. In line with Kolb’s theory, their accounts show reflection as a key part of learning to teach. Categories include:

##### *Initial shock and reality check*

Many novices entered classrooms with idealistic expectations, only to face a reality shock. One reflected:

*“...a shock, because you’ve been trained to deal with high-school students... but now I have to adjust to junior school learners... I had not trained for that”* (FGD 1, Speaker 1, p.3 lines 100-102, {31-05-2025}).

She found that university methods did not always apply, especially with younger learners, and concluded that teaching practice cannot fully prepare one for all scenarios. While initially leaving novices anxious and unprepared, these experiences prompted emotional adjustment and the development of flexibility, patience, and resilience.

##### *Feelings of incompetence and inferiority*

Novices’ sense of identity was also shaped by how they were treated during practicum. Some reported that experienced teachers’ attitudes undermined their confidence:

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>

*“see you like you are new... they feel like you don't know anything... they feel they are superior”, which “makes you feel... undermined” (Interview, Participant 4, p.3-4 lines 131-138, {15-06-2025}).*

Negative comparisons with permanent teachers, and discouraging responses from schools or communities, left some feeling *“demotivated”* with low self-esteem (FGD 2, Participant 4, p.2 lines 49-52, {15-06-2025}). While some mentors were supportive, others' criticism or indifference pushed novices to either doubt themselves or become more assertive.

#### *Growing confidence and professional growth*

By the end of TPPs, most novices reported growth in skills and mindset, strengthening their teacher identity. Challenges that once were overwhelming became valuable learning experiences. One reflected:

*“I met different kinds of learners... it built in me patience... I could tailor my teaching... Scarcity of materials... taught me to improvise... those challenges... helped me develop my teaching style” (FGD 1, Speaker 4, p.3 lines 82-94, {31-05-2025}).*

This shift shows transformative learning, moving from struggling to coping with adaptability and patience. Others mentioned small victories, such as managing a difficult student or completing the syllabus, which boosted confidence. One noted:

*“I felt very comfortable... it was very nice, I enjoyed my stay there” (Interview, Participant 4, p.6 line 227, {15-06-2025}).*

Through such experiences and reflection, many began to see themselves as real teachers, gradually building professional identity, confidence, and practical wisdom.

#### **4.5 Self-Reflection**

Kolb's theory identifies reflection as a key stage in experiential learning. Among novices, engagement in reflecting on classroom management varied greatly. Some deliberately used daily experiences to learn, while others, particularly under stress, reflected little. This theme explores how reflection or its absence shaped participants' experiences and growth. Categories include:

##### *Lack of reflection*

Some novices admitted that during the intensity of teaching practice, they rarely reflected. One, who faced a particularly hostile environment, said:

*“At that particular point I was tired... I was like, when will I leave? ... I didn't have that time to say whether I learned or not... I didn't reflect on it. ... I just wanted to disappear” (FGD 1, Participant 3, p.8 lines 335-352, {31-05-2025}).*

For him, coping with daily challenges left no space for reflection, and he left as soon as schools closed. This shows how, under stress, novices may miss opportunities for growth, highlighting the need for structured reflection support.

##### *Deliberate reflective practice*

In contrast, some novices deliberately reflected on their classroom management to improve. One described a weekly habit of meditating on his teaching:

*“I did reflect. I'd call it meditation... I would do that frequently, especially around Friday... I see where we are doing well, I see where we are not doing well. At some point it acts as a strength... at some point, it is discouraging, because... you're not doing it well...”*

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>

*quite a number of times I had thought of quitting... it requires so much patience” (FGD 1, Participant 4, p.3 lines 335-362, {31-05-2025}).*

His reflections helped him acknowledge both successes and shortcomings, make adjustments, and prepare for challenges. Others used journals or peer discussions. Those who reflected gained insights into what worked and what did not, thereby improving competence over time.

### *Reflecting over time*

For some novices, reflection developed after feedback from mentors or supervisors. One recalled:

*“At first, no... we were just like, this is just a process... not a serious reflection.” It was only “after the first assessment, you sit with the supervisor who tells you where you went wrong, where you did right ...from that time I started now trying... we interrogated our practices.” Through this process, “after reflection, we came to understand that it’s in order, it is a necessity to do things properly, and actually they make one’s work easier” (Interview, Participant 2, p.8-9 lines 343-353, {15-06-2025}).*

External evaluation prompted him and peers to value good practices, such as preparing lesson notes and teaching aids, which made teaching smoother. Reflection then became part of his routine, helping identify weaknesses, build strengths, and adapt strategies.

## **5.0 Conclusion and recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

This study explored how novice teachers in Kenya develop classroom management skills during teaching practice. Findings show that the practicum is a formative period in which novices broaden their understanding of management from discipline enforcement to include instructional planning, relationship-building, and reflection. Initially, many saw management as controlling behaviour, but real classroom challenges taught them proactive strategies such as organising engaging lessons, establishing routines, and building rapport to prevent problems. Novices reported growth in techniques like using positive reinforcement, managing large classes through group work, and adjusting lesson pace to maintain focus. Many gained confidence after successes, such as calming disruptive classes or improvising effective teaching aids. However, persistent challenges remained, including overcrowding, scarce resources, difficulty asserting authority, and emotional strain. A few also faced safety concerns related to student teacher boundaries. Support and reflection strongly influenced outcomes. Those with mentoring or structured reflection turned difficulties into learning opportunities, developing self-efficacy, professional identity, and a repertoire of management strategies. Others, lacking such support, progressed more slowly or internalised negative experiences. Overall, participants saw TPP as an essential, if imperfect, step that provided a reality-based foundation for classroom management. The findings affirm that classroom management is not merely a set of strategies or techniques, it is a personal, emotional, and developmental journey for teachers. My analysis shows that novice teachers construct their classroom management competence through emotions such as fear, doubt, courage, reflection, and interaction with contextual factors such as large classes, gendered respect and mentorship. This reconceptualizes classroom management as a process of becoming rather than a checklist of behaviors. Combining the Marzano and Kolb’s theory also reveals classroom management is development as behavioural skills and experiential learning process. Strengthening these

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>

conditions such as reflection and mentorships can enhance novices' competence, confidence, and readiness for the profession.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, several recommendations are made for teacher education programmes, practicum schools, and policymakers to better support novice teachers in developing classroom management skills during TPPs. First, structured mentorship should be strengthened through assigning trained, experienced mentors to each student-teacher, providing regular observation and constructive feedback, and advocating for novices within the school. Second, practicum preparation should include training in conflict management and professional boundaries, using role-plays and clear protocols to equip novices with safe, effective strategies for handling misbehaviour or inappropriate interactions. Third, given the reality of overcrowded classrooms and scarce resources, student-teachers should be prepared with adaptive strategies such as group work, peer tutoring, and improvisation of teaching aids, while schools should, where possible, place novices in manageable contexts and ensure basic materials are available. Fourth, reflective practice should be embedded into TPP through guided journals, peer discussions, and supervisor feedback, making reflection a habitual process for improving classroom management. Fifth, closer school university collaboration is essential, with clear agreements on roles, joint orientations, and regular progress reviews to ensure consistent support. Finally, consideration should be given to extending or restructuring TPP to allow novices more time to consolidate skills, possibly through longer placements, split TPPs in varied contexts, or reduced initial workloads to allow for observation and feedback sessions. Implementing these measures will create a more supportive practicum environment, enabling novices to develop stronger classroom management competencies, greater confidence, and improved readiness for the profession, ultimately benefiting both teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

## References:

- Abongdia, J. A., Adu, E. O., & Foncha, J. W. (2015). Pre-service teachers' challenges during teaching practice in one university in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 11(1), 50-56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09751122.2015.11890374>
- Adams, R. (2025, March 13). Teacher vacancy rates at record high in England, report finds. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/mar/13/teacher-vacancy-rates-record-high-england-report#:~:text=Teachers%20in%20England%20are%20abandoning,record%2C%20according%20to%20a%20report>
- Adarkwah, M. A., Yu, Z., Sarpong, K., & Mensah-Abludo, W. (2022). Novice teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in teaching multiple subjects: A case of Ghana. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 14(1), 101-125. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357516911\\_Novice\\_teachers%27\\_self-efficacy\\_beliefs\\_in\\_teaching\\_multiple\\_subjects\\_Relations\\_to\\_academic\\_performance\\_of\\_basic\\_school\\_students\\_in\\_Ghana](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357516911_Novice_teachers%27_self-efficacy_beliefs_in_teaching_multiple_subjects_Relations_to_academic_performance_of_basic_school_students_in_Ghana)
- Ahmed, Y., & Din, M. (2024). An analysis of classroom management challenges to the novice elementary school teachers in Islamabad, Pakistan. *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS)*, 5(2), 37-56. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.jhsms/5.2.3>
- Aibinuomo, O., & Kennedy, J. (2021). Classroom management as a determinant of learning outcomes in secondary schools. *International Journal of Education Studies*, 9(4), 55-68.
- Aibinuomo, P. M., & Kennedy, I. (2021). Management of disciplinary problems in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. *Benin Journal of Educational Studies*, 27(1), 83-92.

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>



- [https://r.search.yahoo.com/\\_ylt=AwrFom0Xu6loIwIAu4xXNyoA;\\_ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMe2VjA3Ny/RV=2/RE=1757163543/RO=10/RU=https%3a%2f%2fbeninjes.com%2findex.php%2fbjes%2farticle%2fview%2f73%2f/RK=2/RS=en4fLeBfM9nSeJwXLgleNiPOIBU-](https://r.search.yahoo.com/_ylt=AwrFom0Xu6loIwIAu4xXNyoA;_ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMe2VjA3Ny/RV=2/RE=1757163543/RO=10/RU=https%3a%2f%2fbeninjes.com%2findex.php%2fbjes%2farticle%2fview%2f73%2f/RK=2/RS=en4fLeBfM9nSeJwXLgleNiPOIBU-)
- Baker, P. H. (2005). Managing student behavior: How ready are teachers to meet the challenge? *American Secondary Education*, 33(3), 51-64. [https://bottemabeutel.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Baker\\_Teacher-readiness-challenging-behavior.pdf](https://bottemabeutel.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Baker_Teacher-readiness-challenging-behavior.pdf)
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235356393\\_Using\\_thematic\\_analysis\\_in\\_psychology](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235356393_Using_thematic_analysis_in_psychology)
- Clark-Davis, V. (2024). *Exploring the lived experiences of novice K-3 teachers to understand the perceived effectiveness of traditional four-year teacher preparation programs: A phenomenological study* (Doctoral dissertation, Drexel University). <https://www.proquest.com/docview/3076836384>
- Dias-Lacy, S. L., & Guirguis, R. V. (2017). Challenges for new teachers and ways of coping with them. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 6(3), 265-272. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1141671.pdf>
- Emmer, E. T., & Sabornie, E. J. (Eds.). (2015). *Handbook of Classroom Management: Research, Practice, and Contemporary Issues* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9780203074114/handbook-classroom-management-edmund-emmer-edward-sabornie>
- Evertson, C. M., & Weinstein, C. S. (2006). *Handbook of Classroom Management: Research, Practice, and Contemporary Issues*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203874783>
- Fitzsimons, L., Kelly, N., & O'Shea, J. (2024). *Developing classroom management through teaching practice: An Irish case*. *Journal of Teacher Education Research*, 20(2), 45-63.
- Fitzsimons, S., et al. (2024). Understanding pre-service teachers' improvement in professional practice: A quantitative perspective. *Irish Educational Studies*, 1-17. : <https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2024.2330883>
- Flores, M. A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers' identities: A multi-perspective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(2), 219-232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.09.002>
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 201-233. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311403323>
- Jentsch, A., & König, J. (2022). Teacher competence and professional development. In *International Handbook of Comparative Large-Scale Studies in Education* (p. 1167-1183). Springer. [https://link.springer.com/rwe/10.1007/978-3-030-38298-8\\_38-1](https://link.springer.com/rwe/10.1007/978-3-030-38298-8_38-1)
- Kalu, F. A., & Bwalya, J.C. (2017). What makes qualitative research good research? An exploratory analysis of critical elements. *International Journal of Social Science Research*, 5(2)43-57. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijssr.v5i2.10711>
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2020). *2020 Kenya population and housing census: Volume 1 -Distribution of population by county and sub-county*. Government Printer. <https://www.knbs.or.ke/reports/2020-kenya-facts-figures/>
- Korthagen, F. A., & Vasalos, A. (2005). Levels in reflection: Core reflection as a means to enhance professional growth. *Teachers and Teaching*, 11(1), 47-71. <https://korthagen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Levels-in-reflection.pdf>
- Kulu, G., Bushra, A., & Mohammed, F. A. (2024, April 30). Issues, Challenges and Proposed Solution to Classroom Management Facing Secondary School Teachers in Bauchi State. <https://ssaapublications.com/index.php/sjestp/article/view/196>
- Larrivee, B. (2000). Transforming teaching practice: Becoming the critically reflective teacher. *Reflective Practice*, 1(3), 293-307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713693162>
- Marzano, R. J., & Marzano, J. S. (2003). *Classroom management that works: Research-based strategies for every teacher*. ASCD.
- Mboko, C. W., & Mutunga, S. L. (2023). Influence of teachers' classroom management on students' academic performance in Kwale County, Kenya. *International Journal of Education, Business and Economics Research* (IJEER), 3(2), 208-217. [https://r.search.yahoo.com/\\_ylt=AwrEsti7v6loCwIAHABXNyoA;\\_ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzIEdnRpZAMe2VjA3Ny/RV=2/RE=1757164732/RO=10/RU=http%3a%2f%2frepository.kemu.ac.ke%3a8080%2fhandle%2f123456789%2f1769%3fshow%3dfull/RK=2/RS=BU\\_ZrpV5AnhbPvHAI8G1dT2gp0-](https://r.search.yahoo.com/_ylt=AwrEsti7v6loCwIAHABXNyoA;_ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzIEdnRpZAMe2VjA3Ny/RV=2/RE=1757164732/RO=10/RU=http%3a%2f%2frepository.kemu.ac.ke%3a8080%2fhandle%2f123456789%2f1769%3fshow%3dfull/RK=2/RS=BU_ZrpV5AnhbPvHAI8G1dT2gp0-)
- Mutende, R. A. (2025). Bridging theory and practice in STEM teacher education: Examining the impact of teaching competency development and micro-teaching on pre-service teachers' classroom readiness in Kenya.

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>



- International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(6), 1396-1411. <https://www.rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/Digital-Library/volume-9-issue-6/1396-1411.pdf>
- Mwang'ombe, A. M. (2021). Competency Based Curriculum in Kenya: Teachers' understanding and skills on the ground, success, challenges and recommendations on the implementation of CBC. *African Journal of Education and Social Sciences Research*, 10(3), 114-131. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356267149\\_Competency\\_Based\\_Curriculum\\_CBC\\_in\\_Kenya\\_Teachers\\_understanding\\_and\\_skills\\_reality\\_on\\_the\\_ground\\_successes\\_challenges\\_and\\_recommendations\\_on\\_the\\_implementation\\_of\\_Competency-Based\\_Curriculum\\_CBC\\_in\\_the\\_implementation\\_of\\_Competency-Based\\_Curriculum\\_CBC\\_in\\_the](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356267149_Competency_Based_Curriculum_CBC_in_Kenya_Teachers_understanding_and_skills_reality_on_the_ground_successes_challenges_and_recommendations_on_the_implementation_of_Competency-Based_Curriculum_CBC_in_the_implementation_of_Competency-Based_Curriculum_CBC_in_the)
- Njui, H. W. (2017). Teacher education in contemporary society: Transforming teacher education through technology integration in learning. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 3(3). <https://doi:10.46827/ejes.v0i0.1083>
- Noddings, N. (2012). *The caring relation in teaching*. Oxford University Press. <https://tomlinson.ua.edu/681nurse/Readings/The%20Caring%20relation%20in%20Teaching.pdf>
- Odanga, S. J. O., & Aloka, P. J. O. (2024). Effects of age on teachers' self-efficacy: Evidence from secondary schools. *Athens Journal of Education*, 11(4), 301-313. <https://www.athensjournals.gr/education/2024-11-4-3-Odanga.pdf>
- Odundo, P. A., Ganira, K. L., & Ngaruiya, B. (2018). Preparation and management of teaching practice process at University of Nairobi, Kenya: Appropriateness of methods and resources. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 17(8), 107-128. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327738200\\_Preparation\\_and\\_Management\\_of\\_Teaching\\_Practice\\_Process\\_at\\_University\\_of\\_Nairobi\\_Kenya\\_Appropriateness\\_of\\_Methods\\_and\\_Resources](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327738200_Preparation_and_Management_of_Teaching_Practice_Process_at_University_of_Nairobi_Kenya_Appropriateness_of_Methods_and_Resources)
- OECD. (2018). *Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 Results*. OECD Publishing.
- Opiyo, J. O., Asesa, E., & Olel, M. (2025). Implementation of classroom management practices in public secondary schools in Siaya County, Kenya. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 12(3) 7. <https://doi:10.46827/ejes.v12i3.5897>
- Siri, A., Supartha, I. W. G., Sukaatmadja, I. P. G., & Rahyuda, A. G. (2020). Does teacher competence and commitment improve teacher's professionalism? *Cogent Business & Management*, 7(1), 1781993. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1781993>
- Sparks, D. S. (2025). Want Novices to Keep Teaching? Focus on Their Classroom-Management Skills. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/want-novices-to-keep-teaching-focus-on-their-classroom-management-skills/2025/01#:~:text=Even%20more%20than%20the%20ability,to%20manage%20class%2C%20includings%20student%20behavior>
- Teachers Service Commission. (2024). *Distribution of junior secondary school teachers by sub-county*. Nairobi, Kenya: TSC. <https://arena.co.ke/tsc-distribution-slots-per-sub-county-for-jss-teachers-pnp-2024/#:~:text=17%20Kisumu%2C%20A0806%20Kisumu%20Central%2086,118%20Seme%20124%20Kadibo%2021>
- UNESCO. (2021). *Teacher Task Force: Transforming teacher education*. UNESCO.
- Vukovic, R. (2021, May 4). TALIS 2018: Teachers applying knowledge and skill. Teacher Magazine. [https://www.teachermagazine.com/au\\_en/articles/talis-2018-teachers-applying-knowledge-and-skill#:~:text=%E2%80%98Novice%20teachers%20feel%20less%20confident,instructional%20practices%2C%27%20the%20report%20says](https://www.teachermagazine.com/au_en/articles/talis-2018-teachers-applying-knowledge-and-skill#:~:text=%E2%80%98Novice%20teachers%20feel%20less%20confident,instructional%20practices%2C%27%20the%20report%20says)
- Yegon, K. J., Githua, B. N., & Ng'eno, J. K. (2019). Relationship between classroom management practice and students' disruptive behaviour in mixed secondary schools in Kisauni Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 7(12), 1-14. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376020838\\_Relationship\\_between\\_classroom\\_management\\_practice\\_and\\_students%27\\_disruptive\\_behaviour\\_in\\_mixed\\_secondary\\_schools\\_in\\_Kisauni\\_Sub-county\\_Mombasa\\_County\\_Kenya](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376020838_Relationship_between_classroom_management_practice_and_students%27_disruptive_behaviour_in_mixed_secondary_schools_in_Kisauni_Sub-county_Mombasa_County_Kenya)

### Conflicts of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest in the conduct of this study.

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>

**About Authors**

*Diana Achuch Ogollah* is a Master of Education student at Moi University in the Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies. She is interested in research on teacher training programmes, teacher development, community involvement, African studies and sustainability.

*Dr. Stellan Keter* is a lecturer in the Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies, School of Education, Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya. She has supervised numerous postgraduate students and has research interests in educational leadership, policy, and school improvement.

*Prof. Curwyn Mapaling* is an Associate Professor in the Subject Group Psychology, Faculty of Health Sciences, North-West University, South Africa. His expertise spans psychological research and higher education training, with extensive experience in teaching and supervision at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Email of Corresponding Author:

[achuchdiana@gmail.com](mailto:achuchdiana@gmail.com)

<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>