

Reconceptualizing Classroom Management: A Qualitative Analysis of Agricultural Science Teachers' Perceptions Through Professional Development

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Introduction

Classroom management refers to the practices and strategies teachers use to maintain an organized, supportive, and effective learning environment (Marzano & Marzano, 2003; Wong & Wong, 2009). Classroom management plays a critical role in allowing teachers to maximize instructional time, minimize disruptions, and create a positive classroom climate where students feel safe and encouraged to engage with the material (Marzano & Marzano, 2003; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). When executed well, classroom management practices support teachers' instructional confidence, promote reflective practice, and support ongoing professional growth (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Despite the importance of classroom management, many teachers face challenges when establishing and maintaining effective classroom strategies (Emmer & Evertson, 2013; Garrett, 2008). In agricultural education research, it has been noted that teachers need training in classroom management (Boone & Boone, 2007; Myers et al., 2005, Sorensen et al., 2014) To address this gap, the purpose of this study was to examine how a targeted professional development workshop on foundational classroom management practices influenced teachers' perceptions of effective classroom management before and after participation. Specifically, we sought to evaluate changes in beliefs related to setting clear expectations, establishing consistent procedures, and implementing positive behavior management techniques. The research objectives were as follows: (1) categorize agricultural science teachers' perceptions of classroom management into key constructs of our conceptual framework and (2) examine how the categories shift after the professional development intervention.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study draws upon the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977) and established classroom management models by Wong and Wong (2009) and Marzano and Marzano (2003). The social cognitive theory emphasizes that individuals learn by observation and consistent reinforcement. The established classroom management models highlight the importance of setting clear expectations and subsequent reinforcement. Together, the framework focuses on three core constructs: clear expectations and procedures, modeling and reinforcement, and positive environment and relationships. These practices are theorized to reshape how teachers conceptualize and communicate their understanding of classroom management. By aligning emergent themes from the qualitative content analysis with these core constructs, the framework provides a structured lens through which to interpret how targeted professional development transforms teachers' perceptions and discourse.

Methods

This study utilizes a qualitative content analysis design to explore shifts in agricultural science teachers' perceptions of effective classroom management (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Data were gathered from open-ended survey responses (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002) in which teachers described their views on classroom management both before and after participating in a targeted one-hour professional development workshop at the [State] Agriculture Teacher's Conference. The workshop provided instruction and strategies for establishing clear expectations and procedures, modeling and reinforcement, and positive environment and relationships. The number of participants at the beginning of the workshop was 119, however, due to the scheduling of the conference, only 76 participants completed the post-survey. The textual data were initially visualized using word cloud analysis to identify frequently occurring terms, followed by

systematic coding and thematic categorization to uncover underlying patterns and constructs (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This method allows for an exploration of changes in language, providing insights into how teachers articulate their evolving understanding of classroom management. Participant attrition reduced the overall sample size, potentially affecting the representativeness of the findings (Fraenkel, et al., 2023). Additionally, the lack of demographic data hindered an examination of how factors such as teaching experience or age might influence perceptions of classroom management. Finally, because survey responses were collected anonymously, it was not possible to match pre- and post-intervention responses.

Results/ Findings

The category with the highest frequency in the pre-survey data was positive environment and relationships with 33 words (14.10%) of 234 responses. The most frequent words used in this category were respect ($f = 16$, 6.84%) and relationship ($f = 11$, 4.71%). There were 24 words (10.26%) that created the clear expectations and procedures category. Within the clear expectations and procedures category the most frequent words were structure ($f = 29$, 12.39%) and routines ($f = 20$, 8.56%). The lowest category in the pre-survey data was modeling and reinforcement with 5 words (2.14%). The most frequent word used was behavior ($f = 13$, 5.56%). The category with the highest frequency in the post-survey data was clear expectations and procedures with 25 words (15.06%) out of 166. The most frequent words used in this category were expectations ($f = 21$, 12.65%) and consistency ($f = 20$, 12.05%). There were 20 words (12.05%) in the positive environment and relationship category. The most frequent words were positivity ($f = 13$, 7.83%). The second most frequent words were relationships, culture, and creative ($f = 4$, 2.41%). The category with the lowest frequency was modeling and reinforcement with 6 words (3.61%) with the most frequent word being reinforcement ($f = 4$, 2.41%).

Conclusions/ Implications/Recommendations/Impact

The findings of this study illustrate that targeted professional development can meaningfully reshape agricultural science teachers' perceptions of effective classroom management. Before the workshop, teachers placed the greatest emphasis on fostering a positive environment and building relationships with students, while afterward, the importance of setting clear expectations and procedures was more prominent. This shift aligns with Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, as the structured training provided in the workshop likely acted as a catalyst for teachers to internalize and apply these strategies. Additionally, this transformation in perceptions reinforces the effectiveness of established classroom management models (Wong & Wong, 2009; Marzano & Marzano, 2003). The observed shift aligns with the literature emphasizing that effective classroom management practices contribute to greater instructional confidence and improved student engagement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The lower frequency of references to modeling and reinforcement suggests that future professional development efforts should focus on these aspects to ensure that teachers gain a comprehensive understanding of effective classroom management. Teacher education programs should integrate explicit instruction on classroom management techniques, with a focus on clear expectations, modeling, and reinforcement to lay the foundation at the preservice stage. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of professional development interventions on teachers' classroom management strategies and instructional effectiveness.

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