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Exploring the Philosophy Behind Teachers' Classroom Management Practices in Secondary Schools in Kayunga District, Uganda

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There is a common prevalence of open-ended classroom management practices among teachers today which leaves many education stakeholders suspicious of such actions. Due to such unprecedented prevalence, this study explored the philosophy behind teachers' classroom management practices in view of enhancing effective teaching and learning in Uganda. While conducting the study, teachers' classroom management practices were conceptualized as controlling students' behaviour and classroom space, the philosophy behind these practices was conceptualized as teachers' beliefs on the reality about students' learning, the nature and sources of valuable knowledge, and the values they aim to instil in students. Danielson's 1996 framework for effective teaching model informed this qualitative descriptive tripartite case study, underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. Nine teachers from three schools (three from each school) in Kayunga district, participated in this study. Data was collected from the teachers, their Headteachers, directors of studies and students. The findings revealed that the philosophy behind teachers' classroom management practices is a blend of pragmatism and essentialism. This is reflected in teachers tailoring their management approaches to their understanding of how students learn best, while also adhering to curriculum demands and stakeholder expectations. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education and Sports should design and implement a professional development program through its teacher training institutions to help teachers balance student-centred management with curriculum demands.

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INTRODUCTION

The philosophy behind teachers' classroom practices in secondary schools has developed over centuries, shaped by evolving beliefs about the nature of knowledge, learning processes, and the broader purpose of education (Yan, 2023). These philosophies influence how teachers interact with students, organize classroom spaces, manage behaviour, and determine the content and values emphasized in teaching. Tracing this historical evolution helps explain why certain practices persist and how philosophical traditions continue to shape education today. In ancient times, education was fundamentally philosophical, with key figures like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle laying the foundations for Western educational traditions (Aziz, 2023). Their views placed teachers in the role of intellectual guides, promoting structured learning environments that valued discipline, order, and the pursuit of truth. However, in the medieval period, education was dominated by religious institutions and classroom practices were authoritarian and based on rote memorization, reflecting perennial thinking that treated knowledge as eternal and unchanging. Teachers were seen as custodians of sacred truths, and this model fostered obedience and reverence for authority—traits that still subtly shape teacher-student dynamics in various contexts (Ogwora, 2023).

With the rise of industrialization, essentialism emerged as the dominant philosophy, promoting teacher-led instruction, core content delivery, and tightly controlled classroom management to produce disciplined and literate citizens. This

approach became deeply embedded in global education systems, particularly through colonial models implemented in Africa, where education emphasized conformity, examination success, and compliance (Roberts, 2024). In response, the early 20th century saw the emergence of the progressive education movement, championed by thinkers like John Dewey. Progressivism called for democratic, student-centred classrooms rooted in real-life experiences and aimed at developing critical thinking. Teachers were encouraged to act as facilitators, guiding students to explore, question, and construct knowledge collaboratively (Li & Li, 2020). However, in many post-colonial societies, including Uganda, fully implementing these progressive ideals has been challenging due to systemic barriers like large class sizes, limited resources, and exam-oriented systems. Today, philosophy continues to influence teachers' contemporary classroom management practices (Curren, 2025).

Understanding the philosophy behind teachers' classroom management practices enhances the effectiveness of teacher training and professional development by promoting critical thinking, adaptability, and intentional teaching (Ramnarain & Hlatwayo, 2023). These practices involve setting clear expectations for behaviour, organizing the classroom space, managing time efficiently, and creating a respectful and inclusive atmosphere that supports student learning. Philosophy defines the goals, principles, beliefs, values, and forms of knowledge that are appropriate for individuals, considering their needs and interests (Lajul, 2002).

One's philosophy is essential to one's practices as it offers a guiding framework that shapes decision-making, actions, and professional identity (Farrell & Macapinlac, 2021). In the context of the study, philosophy refers to the underlying beliefs that shape teachers' classroom management practices, while classroom management practices are the methods teachers use to organize the classroom and guide student behaviour to create a positive learning environment. Teachers' philosophy is reflected in their beliefs about how students learn, what knowledge is valuable, and the values they aim to instil. These beliefs influence how teachers control students' behaviour and structure the classroom space.

Based on this understanding, the study addresses a critical gap by exploring how secondary school teachers in Kayunga District integrate their beliefs about student learning, the nature and sources of knowledge, and the values they aim to instil through classroom management practices. Few studies investigate these intersections within under-researched rural Ugandan contexts, despite evidence that teacher beliefs, epistemological orientations, and interpersonal competencies significantly influence classroom dynamics and student engagement (Sheehy et al., 2021; Kabugo et al., 2023). Moreover, research on rural Ugandan schools emphasizes the enduring dominance of teacher-centred "chalk-and-talk" methods and highlights the need to understand how teachers' philosophical orientations shape classroom interactions beyond mere discipline (Hardman et al., 2020; Klöker et al., 2024). By focusing on how teachers' educational philosophies inform what counts as valuable knowledge and the moral or civic values they promote, this study offers localized insights into classroom management—an area largely overlooked in recent educational research in rural Sub-Saharan Africa. To address this gap, the study was carried out in Kayunga District and aimed at exploring teachers' beliefs about:

- Student learning as reflected in educational philosophy during classroom management practices in secondary schools.
- Nature and sources of knowledge are considered valuable for students during classroom management practices in secondary schools.
- Values they aim to instil in students during classroom management practices in secondary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers' classroom management strategies are strongly shaped by their underlying educational philosophies, which influence how they perceive discipline, student behaviour, and instructional goals. Behaviourist approaches emphasize external control through rewards and punishments, often leading to teacher-centred classrooms focused on maintaining order (Apetrei et al., 2021). In contrast, constructivist and humanistic philosophies promote learner-centred environments where management is seen as a shared responsibility, emphasizing collaboration, emotional support, and student autonomy (Deng et al., 2022; Marambe et al., 2020). Teachers with existentialist or humanistic orientations tend to prioritize mutual respect, self-regulation, and personal growth, fostering psychologically safe and inclusive classrooms (Farrell & Macapinlac, 2021).

Other philosophies, such as essentialism and perennialism, favour structure, discipline, and academic rigour, often resulting in traditional, authority-driven classroom management. Research in Ugandan secondary schools shows that many teachers continue to apply these philosophies despite curriculum reforms, due to persistent beliefs about teacher authority and content mastery (Klöker et al., 2024). Meanwhile, educators influenced by critical pedagogy encourage democratic participation, dialogue, and shared norms, viewing classroom management as a means of

empowerment and equity (Sheehy et al., 2021). These varied philosophical orientations highlight that effective classroom management is not merely technical but deeply rooted in what teachers believe about learning, knowledge, and values.

Teachers' classroom management practices in secondary schools are shaped by beliefs about student learning, the nature of knowledge, and the values they aim to instil. These beliefs do not remain abstract; they significantly influence how teachers manage students' behaviour and organize classroom spaces, reflecting broader orientations toward teaching and learning (Beatty et al., 2020). Teachers' beliefs about how students learn are central to their instructional decisions and behaviour management strategies. Those who adopt a constructivist perspective often believe that students learn best through active engagement, collaboration, and exploration. As such, these teachers design classroom management approaches that encourage students' autonomous and intrinsic motivation, fostering respectful and democratic interactions. On the other hand, teachers who hold a transmission-based view of learning typically see students as passive recipients of fixed knowledge and thus prioritize orderly environments where discipline and compliance are emphasized. A 2020 study by Ning et al. affirmed this distinction, noting that teachers with constructivist beliefs favoured student-centred strategies, while traditionalists preferred structured and teacher-led approaches.

Closely linked to these beliefs about learning are teachers' epistemological views concerning the nature and sources of valuable knowledge. Teachers who see knowledge as absolute and transmitted from authoritative sources often rely on didactic teaching, reinforcing their role as knowledge-givers and enforcers of discipline. In contrast, those who believe knowledge is constructed through inquiry and social interaction tend to use more flexible and dialogic approaches. Rind (2016) demonstrated that positivist-oriented teachers were more likely to use rigid, rule-based classroom management, whereas

constructivists supported critical thinking and learner agency, reflected in more adaptive and inclusive classroom environments. Additionally, the values that teachers aim to instil in students—such as responsibility, empathy, and independence—also manifest in their classroom management styles. Teachers who emphasize self-direction and cooperation are inclined to use participatory and supportive strategies, whereas those focused on obedience and order may prefer authoritative or authoritarian techniques. Barni et al. (2018) found that teachers' personal values were predictive of their classroom management styles, with prosocial values linked to democratic, student-centred approaches and more conservative values tied to strict behaviour control. These values not only guide how rules are enforced but also influence the moral and social climate of the classroom.

Teachers' control over student behaviour and the organization of physical classroom space serve as practical reflections of their educational philosophies. For instance, teachers with progressive views often employ proactive behaviour management strategies that focus on relationship-building and preventive measures. These teachers view misbehaviour as an opportunity for growth rather than punishment. In terms of spatial arrangements, constructivist educators typically design flexible learning environments that support collaboration and movement, while traditionalists may opt for fixed, teacher-centred layouts. As Kelly et al. (2024) note, higher teacher self-efficacy is often associated with proactive engagement strategies that align with student-centered philosophies. Similarly, Ringgold (2025) emphasized the role of adaptable classroom designs in supporting contemporary learning needs. While beliefs and philosophies shape practice, contextual factors often mediate this relationship. School climate, leadership support, and institutional constraints can either reinforce or challenge the alignment between beliefs and practices. Şahin (2020) observed that supportive school environments tend to encourage progressive

teaching philosophies, whereas rigid or unsupportive climates may compel teachers to adopt more authoritarian practices regardless of their personal convictions. Fukuda et al. (2024) similarly found that institutional pressures, such as performance-based assessments and curriculum mandates, can lead to discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and their actual classroom practices, especially at higher school levels.

Theoretical Perspective

Danielson's (1996) Framework for Effective Teaching underpinned this study by providing a structured lens through which to interpret teachers' beliefs about classroom management and the educational philosophies that shape them. This is because the model integrates theoretical and practical elements of effective classroom management as one of the domains of teachers' pedagogical practices, making it suitable for guiding the study (Keller, 2022). Specifically, the study's focus on teachers' beliefs about student learning, the nature and sources of knowledge, and the values they aim to instil aligns closely with Danielson's domain of 'The Classroom Environment', which emphasizes creating a respectful culture for learning, managing student behaviour, and organizing classroom space for effective instruction.

Firstly, Danielson's (1996) emphasis on cultivating a learning-centered environment supported the analysis of how teachers' educational philosophies inform their beliefs about student learning. Teachers who viewed learning as active and socially constructed were seen to align with constructivist or pragmatic philosophies (Marambe et al., 2020; Deng et al., 2022), reflecting Danielson's principle of fostering engagement and encouraging responsibility in learners. Secondly, the study's exploration of the nature and sources of knowledge resonated with Danielson's call for teachers to create environments where students feel intellectually safe and are exposed to meaningful content. Teachers who valued experiential and

contextual knowledge reflected a shift from rote memorization to more dynamic and learner-centred approaches, consistent with Danielson's vision of purposeful, knowledge-rich classrooms (Apetrei et al., 2021). Lastly, Danielson's (1996) principle of establishing a culture of respect and rapport provided a valuable framework for analyzing the values teachers aim to instil—such as discipline, collaboration, critical thinking, and empathy. Teachers' classroom management decisions were found to be deeply influenced by their desire to cultivate these values, reinforcing the notion that effective classroom management is not solely about control, but about nurturing a moral and civic learning environment (Farrell & Macapinlac, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the interpretivist paradigm. It used the qualitative approach. Besides, a descriptive tripartite case study design was employed. The researchers selected three secondary schools with different foundations—government-aided (Lion S.S), proprietary (Elephant S.S), and government USE (Tiger S.S)—to enable cross-referencing based on the varied educational philosophies influenced by each school's governance, funding, and societal expectations (Davis & Sumara, 2022). From each school, they purposively selected three teachers—one from sciences, one from arts, and one from vocational subjects—across S.1 to S.3 classes. These subject areas were chosen due to their distinct pedagogical demands, offering diverse perspectives on teachers' classroom practices. Teachers of S.1 to S.3 were included because they are directly involved in implementing Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) at the lower secondary level. Additionally, S.2 and S.3 students from the selected schools participated, as they are actively experiencing the CBC and could provide informed insights on its impact on teaching and learning.

The researchers ensured transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability to maintain data quality control. They employed thematic analysis to systematically identify and interpret patterns within

qualitative data from interviews, lesson observations, focus groups, and document reviews. After familiarizing themselves with the data through transcription and initial note-taking, they generated codes based on explicit practices and implicit beliefs, linking them to broader philosophical orientations such as essentialism, pragmatism, and constructivism. These codes were then organized into themes reflecting recurring ideas about instructional choices and classroom decision-making. Themes were reviewed, refined, and clearly named to reflect both surface practices and deeper philosophical meanings. Finally, they integrated these themes into a coherent narrative, interpreting them through the lens of educational

philosophy and relevant literature such as Danielson's (1996) framework. This approach illuminated how teachers' beliefs about student learning, valuable knowledge, and educational values shape their pedagogical decisions within the sociocultural and institutional context of Kayunga's secondary schools.

RESULTS

The first objective of this study was to explore teachers' beliefs about students' learning as reflected in educational philosophy during classroom management practices in secondary schools in Kayunga District. Table 1 thus shows the results across the three schools.

Table 1: Teachers' Beliefs about Students' Learning as Reflected in Educational Philosophy during Classroom Management Practices Across the Three Schools.

Sub-themes emerged across all cases.	Teachers' classroom management Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring easy attainment of learning objectives • Protecting individual students' freedom of expression • Boosting students' attention • Embracing competitive learning progress • Ensuring personal professional growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Setting clear lesson targets and using guided instruction. ✓ Encouraging students' opinions. ✓ Using visual aids, storytelling, or student names to keep focus. ✓ Organizing quizzes, contests, or peer comparisons. ✓ Attending training and reflecting on teaching practices.

The first sub-theme is ensuring easy attainment of learning objectives. This is used in reference to teachers making sure that the competences expected of students to gain are achieved with ease. From the lesson observations during data collection, the researchers were able to witness that teachers put students in groups where they shared ideas pertaining to the ongoing lesson's content. The researchers were prompted to ask them what was the essence behind such groupings and we were informed that if students were to understand the objectives which teachers set for their lessons, the small groups would at least make every learner engaged and this would speed up the rate at which they were understanding. One of the teachers, for example, narrated that;

With the new curriculum, we have to set competencies or may be objectives which we expect our learners to achieve at the end of the lesson. The only way this can easily be achieved especially given the big numbers we have here is to group these learners such that they can also help each other to learn better. In fact, the aim of these groups is to ensure that at least every student picks a competence from what is being taught (Teacher C, Lion S.S).

The interpretation of this is that teachers' classroom management practice of grouping students to ensure easy attainment of learning objectives reflects a blend of constructivist and pragmatic philosophical orientations.

The other subtheme is protecting individual students' freedom of expression. This subtheme refers to teachers making sure that each student is given a chance to participate in the classroom activities. During the data collection process, teachers informed the researchers that they assigned each student a role to play in their respective groups such that everyone is part of the process of attaining the desired competencies. Even during the observation of lessons, every student was seen active in their respective groups after being assigned activities by the teachers, and the teacher was picking randomly from the groups to get a representative to present. When asked why this was being done like this, in her own words teacher A had this to say;

Of course, if you don't make sure that at least each and every student has an equal chance of being selected to come out and present to others, you may end up not supporting them to show what they can do. In fact, I try as much as possible to give everyone the freedom to express themselves during the lesson. And if they expect to be chosen any time, you find that they will always be attentive in class (Teacher A, Lion S.S).

The researchers interpreted this to mean that teachers' classroom practices reflect a humanistic and constructivist philosophical orientation, grounded in the belief that learning is most meaningful when it respects individual autonomy and promotes active engagement.

The researchers also observed the teachers giving students an opportunity of playing an important role such as carrying out the classroom routines like cleaning the blackboard, extending the desk and organizing the teacher's seat and table. When the students were asked why they were doing so, they all agreed that their teachers were so friendly to them which encouraged them to always be free with them. One student, for example, commented that:

Yes, our teachers are so welcoming to us when we are in class and I think it is why we don't fear to tell them our answers even if they are not correct. The truth is that our classroom environment for some teachers is ever interesting and therefore everybody is always willing to respond to teachers' questions in class (Student, Lion S.S).

The underlying meaning of this is that teacher's classroom management practices reflect a humanistic and social constructivist philosophy, emphasizing respect, mutual responsibility, and the creation of a positive learning environment.

Boosting students' attention. This subtheme is in reference to the teachers' need to maintain motivated learners who are ready to achieve the set competencies. During observation of teachers' lessons, teachers were initiating interesting stories during their lessons and this helped them to bring distracted students back to them. When asked about these kinds of stories, one of the teachers informed the researchers how students today are always overtaken by non-academic things more than those that are academic. As such, if the teachers are to keep them on track, they have to look for all possible ways of motivating them to remain following their lessons and one of these ways is telling them non-academic interesting stories. Teacher D, for example, said that;

It is even very worse for us teaching sciences. Students easily get bored especially due to the complex nature of some of the concepts which we teach them. The only way one can easily bring them back to be attentive is by cracking for them funny stories although sometimes when you tell such stories, they don't want to have them come to an end...it sometimes also affects classroom control (Teacher D, Elephant S.S).

The interpretation of this finding is that the classroom practices described in this data reflect a pragmatic philosophy of education, emphasizing the importance of engaging learners based on their

current realities and interests to ensure effective learning.

Embracing competitive learning progress. This subtheme is used in reference to teachers ensuring that every student strives to be the best in order to win a class appreciation. During the interview with the teachers, they informed the researchers that they promised gifts to their best-performing students and those who actively participated in their classes. When asked why they did so, they were informed that the class becomes more competitive as well as instilling in them the spirit of giving to others as a way of appreciation. One of the teachers for example narrated that;

On arrival to most of our lessons, I start with a question and promise our students that the one who gets it right receives a gift from me. You find that every student is striving to be the winner of the gift although am personally interested in not only gaining a competitive class but also ensuring that our students grow with that spirit of giving to others (Teacher H, Tiger S.S).

This finding means that teachers' classroom management practices reflect a blend of behaviourist and pragmatist educational philosophies regarding teachers' beliefs about the

reality of students' learning during classroom management.

Ensuring personal and professional growth. This is used in this study in reference to strategic processes by the teachers to look for new skills and experience aimed at improving their personal teaching career. In the interviews with teachers, they informed that they shared their classroom setting practices in their respective professional learning WhatsApp groups where they sought guidance from experienced teachers. When one of the teachers was asked why she shared her classroom experiences on social media platforms, she had this to say;

Learning does not end and agriculture being a practical subject, so many things keep on changing, especially on how well concepts can best be taught... For me, I share with experienced colleagues such that I can also keep myself in the know of the changes as well as growing myself professionally (Teacher J, Tiger S.S).

The data reflects a constructivist educational philosophy in relation to teachers' beliefs about the reality of students' learning during classroom management. Constructivism emphasizes that both teaching and learning are dynamic, evolving processes where knowledge is constructed through experience, reflection, and social interaction.

Table 2: Teachers' Beliefs About Nature and Sources of Valuable Knowledge as Reflected in Educational Philosophy during Classroom Management Practices Across the Three Schools

Sub-themes emerged across all cases	Teachers' classroom management Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to embrace technology. • Suiting well with learners' needs • For sustainability of learning outcomes • Adaptation to competence-based classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Using digital tools like projectors, apps, or e-learning platforms. ✓ Differentiating content to match students' learning styles. ✓ Linking new content to real-life situations and prior knowledge. ✓ Including tasks that develop real-world skills.

Need to embrace technology. This subtheme is used in reference to the desire by teachers to move away from analogue to digital classroom environments

that ease learning. The observation of teachers' lessons revealed that teachers demonstrated laboratory equipment on projectors while others

used their own smartphones to show these materials to students for them to appreciate such materials even if not physically. The researchers, therefore, asked teachers why they were doing it like that and they were informed that the current enhancements in the use of technology in this era attract students toward learning than ever before. In fact, to them, if one fails to embrace technology, their classrooms can hardly be lively as compared to those that embrace it. From students' focus group discussions, they were informed by one of the students that;

We are always interested in teachers who bring to us a projector in class for us to use for learning. According to me, most students are ever attentive when the teacher comes with a projector to teach or some teachers use their phones to show us different things about what we are learning and make lessons enjoyable (Student, Lion S.S)

The meaning derived from this is that the integration of technology into classroom management practices, as observed and described by both teachers and students, reflects a pragmatic and constructivist philosophical orientation regarding the nature and sources of knowledge.

Suiting well with learners' needs. This sub-theme is used in this study in reference to ensuring that what is taught reflects what happens in society so that students' need is met. During the interview with the director of studies, the researchers were informed that teachers took students outside the school simply to appreciate that what is taught actually happens out there in their communities. The director of studies emphasized that whenever there was a chance for teachers to take students to learn from the community, this was also done by granting the teachers the opportunity to do so. In his words the director of studies said;

One of the things our teachers commonly do here ever since the new curriculum was introduced is teaching learners from outside the classroom setting. We allow them to take

students outside the school, may be around Kayunga town as they keep on learning competencies stipulated in the new curriculum. Recently the teacher of technical drawing took them to see how the furniture is made out there (Director of studies, Lion S.S)

The findings indicate that teachers' classroom management practices reflect a reconstructionist and experientialist philosophy regarding the nature and sources of valuable knowledge. Teachers believe that meaningful learning occurs when students relate classroom content to real-world contexts, suggesting that knowledge should be practical, relevant, and grounded in societal realities.

For sustainability of learning outcomes. This subtheme is used in reference to supporting students' learned competencies to stick in their heads for them to be effectively used even in future after school. Teachers enforced hands-on practice especially when students were requested to work on their respective projects. During the interview with the Headteacher, he informed the researchers how the school put much emphasis on students developing individual projects both as part of curriculum requirements and also as a way of helping students gain skills that will help them to go through their life after school. In his words, he said that;

It is commonly known everywhere in Uganda today that the competence-based curriculum that was introduced in Uganda requires students to attain competencies that would support them to survive after school. So here I make sure that our teachers take students through different projects which I think support students to have something to do even if they stop at the secondary school level (Headteacher, Elephant S.S).

The meaning derived from this finding is that the teachers' classroom management practices reflect a pragmatic and constructivist philosophy of

education, where the focus is on preparing students for real-world challenges by emphasizing practical, hands-on learning that extends beyond traditional academic knowledge.

Adaptation to the competence-based classroom. This subtheme is used in reference to teachers obeying the demands of the new competence-based curriculum at all times in their classrooms. From the observation of lessons, teachers told students to write their own notes especially after a guided classroom discussion had been done however, most students could not manage. Even from the checking of students' books which was done, students had a lot of gaps that were not filled with notes and when they were asked about them during their focus group discussion, one of the students said that;

Sometimes they tell us to make notes by ourselves but we don't know how to make those notes. Many of us end up leaving empty gaps in our books after failing to make notes. But also, to make matters worse, the student guidebooks are very few yet it is the only source where we can get notes from (Student, Tiger S.S).

This finding implies a progressivist educational philosophy underlying teachers' classroom practices, particularly in how they perceive the nature and sources of knowledge valuable to students. Progressivism emphasizes learner-centred education, critical thinking, and learning by doing—ideals aligned with Uganda's competence-based curriculum.

Table 3: Teachers' Beliefs on the Values Teachers Intend to Instil in Students during Classroom Management Practices Across the Three Schools

Sub-themes emerged across all cases	Teachers' classroom management Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining the status quo • Embracing a comparative learning environment • Clarity of instructional procedure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Following established school routines and rules. ✓ Facilitating peer reviews or cross-group activities. ✓ Presenting step-by-step instructions visibly or orally

Maintaining the status quo. This subtheme is used in this study in reference to the desire by teachers to remain in silent classroom environments despite the demand for louder classroom discussions in the competence-based curriculum. During the interview with Headteacher, it was discovered that teachers did not want students to make noise in their classes yet the curriculum necessitates open discussions. According to the Headteacher, he always emphasized the issues of letting students discuss in their groups during lessons but most teachers had failed to implement it by always wanting students to keep quiet even if in a discussion. The researchers were forced to ask one of the teachers why he kept on enforcing silence yet the Headteacher encouraged loud class. In his own words, the teacher told me that;

Our brother there is a big difference between a loud and noisy classroom. What I always emphasize is a focused discussion between students and you will realize that this does not equal to noise. The moment you entertain noise, students end up resorting to other conversations away from the intended classroom discussion (Teacher B, Lion S.S).

The meaning of this is that the classroom practices described, particularly the insistence on maintaining a silent and orderly environment despite the competence-based curriculum's emphasis on open discussions, reflect an essentialist philosophy of education.

Embracing comparative learning environment. This subtheme is used in reference to teachers making sure that what is happening in other schools also

happens in their schools, especially with respect to the demands of the new competency-based curriculum. Teachers informed the researchers that they had visited other schools and they had witnessed the fact that teachers in other schools were allowing students to move out of classrooms, look for answers and come back, and this was also started in their schools. Teacher C for example informed me that;

In this new curriculum, you can't just teach without asking how other teachers are doing it in other schools. Otherwise, the curriculum requires us to help students to do their own notes by carrying out research although we lack facilities. So, when I get to know how our fellow teachers do it in other schools, I find it easy to do also (Teacher C, Lion S.S).

The data reveals that teachers' classroom management practices, such as allowing students to move out of class to conduct inquiries and later return for presentations, are rooted in a progressivist educational philosophy that values experiential and comparative learning.

Clarity of instructional procedure. This is used in this study in reference to zero tolerance for misconduct in a class by clearly stating the required rules of procedure. Teachers had pinned classroom rules and regulations in classrooms and often referred to them during their lessons. During interviews, it was established that teachers were consistent as far as the pinned classroom procedures were concerned. They for example did make sure that all classroom routines were smoothly functioning in each and every lesson they conducted. For teacher F, all her students knew what to do, where to move and when to do so during each of her lessons. When observing one of her lessons, there were clearly stipulated standards of conduct posted and she made one student mention all of them before she started her lesson. One of the teachers told me during the interview that:

The kind of learners we deal with are sometimes not easy especially if you don't create strict conditions for them. I personally try to make sure that the posted classroom rules are strictly adhered to by each learner in our classes to avoid indiscipline of some sort (Teacher F, Elephant S.S)

The data reflects a philosophy grounded in essentialism and behaviourism, where teachers emphasize discipline, order, and adherence to established norms as central to effective classroom management.

DISCUSSION

Findings from teachers' interviews as well as lesson observations indicated how teachers had pinned classroom rules and regulations in classrooms and often referred to them during their lessons. This finding agrees with Jones and Taylor (2022) who urged that teachers should focus on establishing clear routines, expectations, and consequences to minimize disruptions and foster a sense of security among students. However, the finding disagrees with Simonsen et al's. (2021) view that classroom rules and regulations which are not accompanied by effective classroom management may fail to prevent disruptions as well as foster an environment where students can thrive both academically and socially. Therefore, students' discipline is a key component of Danielson's (1996) domain of classroom environment, Johnson and Clark's (2022) contention that teachers should view discipline as a key value to instill in students through the use of clear and consistent rules, procedures, and expectations is justified.

Further findings from lesson observations show that teachers put students in groups where they shared ideas pertaining to the ongoing lesson's content. In the groups, students were requested to make presentations and were randomly picked by the teachers such that everyone gets an opportunity to be chosen. This finding disagrees with Smith et al. (2023) who contended that objective grouping may

sometimes be complicated especially due to external pressures such as large class sizes, diverse student needs, and policy mandates. Jones and Patel (2023) do not only agree with this finding but also show how teachers' adoption of grouping strategy promotes respect for the unique backgrounds and experiences of each student. Indeed, as Johnson and Clark (2022) suggest, teachers are often required to balance instructional strategies with differentiated behaviour management to cater to diverse student populations.

Also, findings revealed that teachers encouraged the active participation of learners, showed appreciation for students' efforts no matter how small as well as tried to be approachable and patient with weak students. In fact, teachers collaborated with their students by giving them an opportunity to play an important role such as carrying out the classroom routines like cleaning the blackboard, extending the desk and organizing the teacher's seat and table. This agrees with Brown and Harris's (2022) finding that teachers who collaborate with their students often promote participatory and student-centred approaches to management, emphasizing dialogue, shared responsibility, and mutual respect. Although the involvement of students in the organization of a suitable furniture arrangement which makes them comfortable for the learning activities agrees with Johnson and Patel (2022) disagree by arguing that students need more than that, perhaps giving them a chance to engage in classroom rule-setting, promoting self-regulation, and providing them with the opportunities for peer-led activities.

This underscores the importance of creating inclusive, participatory, and supportive learning environments to maximize student engagement and learning outcomes. However, the potential for greater student empowerment exists if teachers expand their strategies to include activities like classroom rule-setting and peer-led initiatives, as suggested by Johnson and Patel (2022). Incorporating such strategies could further enhance

students' autonomy, leadership skills, and readiness for future challenges. Teachers encouraged active participation, appreciated students' efforts, and supported weaker learners, reflecting a focus on individual needs. Their collaboration with students in classroom routines, such as cleaning the blackboard and organizing desks, aligns with John Dewey's idea that education should prepare students for democratic participation and real-life experiences. By fostering engagement, responsibility, and a supportive learning environment, these practices embody the core principles of progressivism. Hence, the philosophy behind these teachers' practices is progressivism.

Findings from teachers' interviews also revealed that teachers assigned each student a role to play in their respective groups such that everyone is part of the process of attaining the desired competencies. Even during the observation of lessons, every student was seen active in their respective groups after being assigned activities by the teachers, and the teacher was picking randomly from the groups to get a representative to present. This finding indirectly agrees with Jones et al. (2022) who believe that classroom control should not merely be about maintaining order but empowering students by assigning them roles that will regulate their own behaviour and become active participants in their learning journey. Jones and Patel's (2022) submission however neutralizes this strategy by instead suggesting teachers' adjustment of rules and management styles to accommodate different learning preferences and cultural contexts when dealing with the groups. Teachers thus need less rigid classroom control strategies but instead more flexible groupings that can promote both students' attention while in the classroom as well as higher-order thinking (Foster & Lee, 2023).

Related findings to the above revealed that teachers enforced hands-on practice done outside classroom confines especially when students were requested to work on their respective projects. The schools put much emphasis on students developing individual

projects that connect the school to the community both as part of curriculum requirements but also as a way of helping students gain skills that will help them to go through their life after school. This disagrees with the findings of Jones and Taylor (2022) who urged that teachers view knowledge as fixed and objective, often derived from authoritative sources like textbooks or curriculum guidelines, and thus employ only structured classroom control practices. Further disagreement is with Brown and Carter's (2023) argument that maintaining an in-house classroom environment would minimize disruptions and maximize the transmission of information. The finding finally disagrees with Smith and Taylor (2022) the common classroom management control strategies are those that simply ensure mastery of factual knowledge and standard curricula.

The study results revealed that teachers were polite to students and reinforced positive students' behaviour by creating a pleasant, safe and accessible environment for all students. In fact, there was no evidence for criminology because the teachers seemed to be aware of students' conduct as well as maintaining a respectful and turn to talk during their lessons which helped teachers to establish a culture of learning, proper management of classroom procedures as well as managing students' behaviour. These being key components of Danielson's (1996) domain of classroom environment, this finding positively supports his framework for effective teaching. Moreover, further observation of lessons indicated smooth functioning of all classroom routines as well as encouragement of students by the observed teachers. The findings agree with Bartlett (2015) that positive reinforcement is a useful strategy for teachers to boost students' self-esteem and prevent feelings of being a failure which could cause a child to disengage from the lesson. Indrawati et al. (2021) however partly disagrees by stressing the need to balance the reinforcement since too much praise can be detrimental to the learning of the students.

Related findings also show teachers promised gifts to their best-performing students and those who actively participate in their classes so as to have a more competitive class as well as instilling in them the spirit of giving to others as a way of appreciation. This disagrees with Jones and Patel's (2023) argument that classroom teachers are more likely to use punitive measures to maintain order though with emphasis on the importance of fairness and transparency in the enforcement of rules. Jones and Patel's argument still disagrees with that of Brown and Harris (2022) suggesting that students should instead be trained to take ownership of their actions and thus teachers should design classroom environments that promote students' self-regulation. In fact, Smith & Clarke (2023) emphasized the point of student ownership of their actions within an environment of a well-resourced educational setting where giving the student a chance to use the teachers' laptop for a day would both make the student responsible and yet feel rewarded, thus encouraging such student to participate well in the learning processes.

In summary, the discussion of results for this study's second objective demonstrates how the philosophy behind teachers' classroom management practices is not only rooted in the individual teachers' understanding of how best their respective students learn but also in the demands and interests of different stakeholders that play within the teachers' pedagogical space. Besides, the discussion also reveals that, although teachers undertake possible classroom management strategies aimed at helping their students to achieve the expected competencies, there is less innovative and creative initiatives by teachers to define their own classroom setting. For instance, settings that do not simply follow the set standards of the materials provided by the curriculum or perhaps the schools where they teach. This calls for an urgent need for a synthesis of what needs to be done to ensure that teachers can objectively think through feasible philosophical orientations that can effectively support a powerful classroom environment that can

enable students to always achieve the expected competencies.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One limitation of the study was its restricted scope, as it focused on only three secondary schools within the Kayunga District—each with a different foundational background (government-aided, proprietary, and government USE). While this purposive selection enabled meaningful cross-case analysis, it limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions or school contexts in Uganda. To address this, the study employed thick contextual descriptions to enhance transferability.

Another limitation was the potential for subjectivity in interpreting qualitative data. Given that data were gathered through interviews, lesson observations, focus group discussions, and document reviews, there was a risk of researchers' bias influencing the analysis. This was mitigated by using triangulation to validate data across sources and applying member checking and peer debriefing techniques to ensure that interpretations aligned with participants' intentions and experiences.

The study also faced the challenge of social desirability bias, especially from teachers who might have wanted to align their responses with perceived curriculum expectations. To counter this, participants were reassured of confidentiality, and interviews were conducted in a relaxed, non-evaluative manner. Additionally, direct classroom observations were used to confirm or contrast self-reported beliefs and behaviours.

CONCLUSION

The study draws several conclusions about teachers' classroom management practices.

Firstly, it finds that teachers employ pragmatic principles by tailoring their management strategies to align with their understanding of how students learn most effectively. This pragmatism is evident in their willingness to adapt their approaches in

response to real-time classroom dynamics, with the goal of fostering effective learning outcomes.

Secondly, the study identifies an essentialist orientation among teachers. This is reflected in their strong emphasis on meeting curriculum requirements and adhering to the expectations of educational stakeholders. Such an approach highlights a belief in the importance of transmitting foundational knowledge and maintaining structured, orderly environments. In this context, knowledge is understood to originate both from the teacher's professional judgment and from institutionally mandated frameworks.

Thirdly, the values promoted through classroom management—such as discipline, responsibility, respect, and academic focus—reinforce the essentialist goal of moulding students into informed and responsible citizens. At the same time, these values also align with pragmatic ideals, as they underscore the importance of being responsive to context and ensuring practical effectiveness in the learning environment.

In summary, the underlying philosophy guiding teachers' classroom management practices emerges as a blend of pragmatism and essentialism. Teachers strive to balance their personal insights into student learning with the imperatives of the curriculum, reflecting a hybrid approach that integrates flexibility with structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations;

First, it advocates for the establishment of clear behavioural guidelines that are firmly grounded in curriculum expectations and the demands of educational stakeholders. However, these guidelines should be flexible enough to allow teachers to exercise professional discretion, enabling them to respond effectively to the unique dynamics of their classrooms.

Secondly, the study recommends that in-service teacher training should place greater emphasis on context-responsive discipline strategies. Such training would equip teachers with the skills needed to manage student behaviour in ways that are sensitive to individual learner differences, promoting a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

Thirdly, it is suggested that behaviour policies be collaboratively developed with input from key stakeholders, including school administrators, parents, and students. This collaborative approach would help ensure that the essentialist emphasis on discipline and respect is balanced with the pragmatist need for adaptability and responsiveness to specific classroom contexts.

Finally, the study calls on the Ministry of Education and Sports to design and implement a comprehensive professional development program through its teacher training institutions. This program should aim to support teachers in balancing student-centred management approaches with the demands of the national curriculum, fostering both pedagogical flexibility and curricular fidelity.

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