

Managing Grade 2 Learners: Experiences of Teachers in Implementing Effective Classroom Routines

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Abstract: This study explores the experiences of Grade 2 teachers in implementing effective classroom routines to manage their students' behavior and foster an optimal learning environment. Classroom routines are essential in the early years of education, as they provide structure and predictability, which are crucial for young learners' emotional and academic development. Through qualitative research, this study investigates the strategies and challenges faced by teachers in managing classroom routines, and how these routines influence student engagement, behavior, and overall classroom dynamics. Interviews with 12 Grade 2 teachers from various schools provide insights into their approaches, the obstacles they encounter, and the impact of these routines on student outcomes. The study contributes to understanding how effective classroom management techniques can enhance learning experiences for young students, offering practical implications for teacher training and educational practice.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Effective classroom management, particularly in the early years, is a critical component of a positive and productive learning environment. Classroom routines, which include organized patterns of behavior and structured activities, play an important role in maintaining this environment. For Grade 2 learners, who are typically aged 7 to 8, routines help establish stability, reduce anxiety, and guide students in developing self-regulation skills. However, despite the widespread recognition of the importance of classroom routines, little research has focused on the lived experiences of teachers, particularly in Grade 2 classrooms, as they implement these practices.

This study aims to fill that gap by examining how Grade 2 teachers design and implement classroom routines, the challenges they face, and how they perceive the effects of these routines on their students. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the experiences of Grade 2 teachers in implementing effective classroom routines?
- What strategies do teachers use to establish and maintain classroom routines?

- What challenges do teachers face in managing classroom routines, and how do they address them?
- How do classroom routines impact student behavior and engagement in Grade 2 classrooms?

While previous studies have explored classroom management techniques, this research specifically focuses on the application of routines in early elementary classrooms and provides valuable insights for improving classroom management in the context of younger learners.

II. METHODS

This study used a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach, which is appropriate for exploring the lived experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology allows for a deep understanding of how Grade 2 teachers perceive and experience the implementation of classroom routines. A purposive sampling method was used to select 12 Grade 2 teachers from different schools within the region. Participants were chosen based on their experience in managing classroom routines, with all teachers having at least two years of experience teaching Grade 2.

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection. The interview guide included questions designed to explore the teachers' strategies, challenges, and perceived outcomes of classroom routines. The questions focused on routine types (e.g., morning rituals, transition routines, and dismissal procedures), challenges in maintaining routines, and the impact of routines on student behavior. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying recurring themes and patterns in the participants' responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To enhance validity and trustworthiness, member checking was used, where participants reviewed the findings to ensure the accuracy of the interpretations.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data revealed several key themes regarding the experiences of Grade 2 teachers in implementing classroom routines:

➤ *Establishing and Maintaining Routines*

Teachers reported that establishing clear, consistent routines from the beginning of the school year was crucial for setting expectations and helping students understand what to expect in the classroom. Effective routines were described as those that were predictable, simple, and repetitive, allowing students to internalize the behavior expected of them. Teachers used visual cues, songs, and gestures to reinforce routines, especially for younger learners who may struggle with verbal instructions alone.

➤ *Challenges in Managing Routines*

A common challenge reported by teachers was managing students' behavior during transitions between activities. Transitions, such as moving from one subject to another or lining up for lunch, were times when students were most likely to become disruptive. Teachers emphasized the need for patience and constant reinforcement to maintain the flow of the routines. Additionally, some teachers noted that individual differences in students' attention spans and abilities posed challenges in keeping all students engaged during routine activities.

➤ *Teacher Strategies for Addressing Challenges*

To address the challenges of maintaining effective routines, teachers employed a range of strategies. Some teachers used positive reinforcement, such as rewards or praise, to encourage students to follow routines consistently. Others implemented collaborative approaches, where students helped each other to stay on task and adhere to routines. Some teachers also incorporated playful activities, such as games or songs, to make transitions more engaging and less stressful for students.

➤ *Impact of Routines on Student Engagement and Behavior*

Teachers observed that well-structured routines had a significant positive impact on student behavior and engagement. Students who followed predictable routines exhibited less anxiety and showed greater participation in classroom activities. Teachers also noted that routines helped students develop self-regulation skills, as they learned to manage their time and responsibilities. Moreover, students were less likely to engage in disruptive behavior when routines were firmly established and consistently reinforced.

The findings of this study support the existing literature on the importance of routines in early childhood education and provide additional insights into the practical application of these routines in Grade 2 classrooms. Teachers in this study consistently highlighted the significance of consistency, clarity, and predictability in routines, which align with theories of effective classroom management (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015). The positive impact of routines on student behavior and engagement further reinforces the notion that structure and routine are essential for young learners' emotional and academic development (Brophy, 2010).

However, the study also revealed that transitions remain a particularly challenging aspect of classroom management, which is consistent with previous research (Simonsen et al., 2008). Teachers in this study employed a variety of strategies to address these challenges, including the use of positive reinforcement and collaborative approaches, which have been found to be effective in maintaining student engagement (Skinner et al., 2008).

The study also highlights the importance of teacher training in effective classroom management techniques. While many teachers demonstrated resourcefulness and creativity in overcoming challenges, the lack of formal professional development in this area may hinder the implementation of optimal routines. Future research should explore the effectiveness of teacher training programs focused on classroom management and routines, particularly for primary grade teachers.

This study provides valuable insights into the experiences of Grade 2 teachers in implementing classroom routines, emphasizing the importance of consistency, clarity, and structure in fostering a positive learning environment. The findings suggest that effective classroom routines not only help manage student behavior but also promote student engagement and the development of self-regulation skills. However, teachers face ongoing challenges, particularly during transitions, and would benefit from greater support and professional development in classroom management strategies. Future studies could further explore the long-term impact of these routines on student achievement and behavior, as well as investigate the role of school administrators in supporting teachers in implementing these routines effectively.

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