

Classroom Management Skills of Prospective Teachers in Tripura: A Study across Gender, and Academic Stream

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Abstract

Classroom management is widely recognised as one of the strongest school level influences on student learning, yet it remains a persistent source of difficulty for beginning teachers. The present study assessed the classroom management skills of prospective teachers in Tripura, India, and examined whether these skills differ across gender, academic year and academic stream. A descriptive survey design was adopted. Data were collected from 119 prospective teachers of The ICFAI University Tripura through the Classroom Management Skills Inventory (CMSI, Tripura Context), a 42 item five point Likert scale covering six dimensions, namely motivation, instructional communication, behaviour management, positive interactions, physical environment and time management (Cronbach's alpha = .96). The results revealed that most prospective teachers (69.7 per cent) possessed a moderate level of classroom management skills, while 17.6 per cent reported a high level and 12.6 per cent a low level. Motivation and positive interactions emerged as the strongest dimensions and time management as the weakest. No significant difference was found with respect to gender or academic stream. However, second year prospective teachers scored significantly higher than first year prospective teachers ($t = 2.44$, $p = .016$, $d = 0.46$). The findings underline the need to strengthen practicum based preparation in classroom management, particularly time management, within teacher education programmes.

Keywords: Classroom management skills, prospective teachers, teacher education, Tripura, descriptive survey

Introduction

Classroom management refers to the wide range of actions through which a teacher

establishes and sustains an environment in which meaningful learning can occur. It embraces far more than the control of misbehaviour; it includes motivating learners, communicating instruction clearly, building positive relationships, organising the physical setting and using instructional time productively (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Classic observational research established that effective managers are distinguished less by how they respond to disruption than by how they prevent it through withitness, smooth transitions and well planned activity flow (Kounin, 1970; Doyle, 1986). Subsequent syntheses have confirmed that classroom management is among the strongest school level correlates of student achievement and that programmes which develop teachers' managerial competence yield measurable gains in pupil outcomes (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk, & Doolaard, 2016).

For prospective teachers, classroom management carries particular weight. Beginning teachers consistently identify discipline and management as their gravest concern, and perceived inability to manage a class is a leading contributor to early career stress and attrition (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015). Self efficacy theory offers a useful lens here: teachers who believe they can organise and execute the actions required to manage a classroom persist longer with difficult learners and adopt less punitive practices (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Because beliefs about capability crystallise during initial preparation, the pre service stage is the most opportune point at which to assess and cultivate management skills. Evidence based reviews likewise stress that proactive, non punitive strategies can and should be taught explicitly during teacher preparation rather than left to be discovered through trial and error in the first year of service (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008).

In the Indian context, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCTE, 2009) and the National Education Policy 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2020) both envisage teachers who can create inclusive, engaging and well organised classrooms. Tripura presents a distinctive setting for such preparation. Its classrooms bring together learners from Tribal and Bengali communities with differing languages, customs and prior experiences of schooling, and its teacher education institutions are expected to prepare graduates who can manage such diversity with sensitivity. Despite this, empirical evidence on how prepared prospective teachers in Tripura feel to manage classrooms is scarce, and studies that profile their skills across the constituent dimensions of management are rarer still.

The present study therefore assessed the classroom management skills of prospective teachers of The ICFAI University Tripura using a context specific inventory. Three objectives guided the study: first, to determine the overall level of classroom management skills of prospective teachers; second, to compare their skills across the six dimensions of the inventory; and third, to examine whether classroom management skills differ significantly with respect to gender, academic year and academic stream. Corresponding null hypotheses stated that there is no significant difference in classroom management skills of prospective teachers with respect to gender, academic year and academic stream. Answers to these questions can help

teacher educators identify which managerial competencies develop satisfactorily during the programme and which require deliberate strengthening.

Design of the Study

The study employed a quantitative, descriptive survey design, which is appropriate when the purpose is to portray the characteristics of a defined group and to test differences between its subgroups (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The population comprised prospective teachers enrolled in the teacher education programme of the Faculty of Education, The ICFAI University Tripura, India. Through convenience sampling, 119 prospective teachers participated in the study, of whom 86 (72.3 per cent) were female and 33 (27.7 per cent) were male; 46 (38.7 per cent) were in the first year and 73 (61.3 per cent) in the second year of the programme. By academic stream, 46 respondents belonged to Language, 29 to Science, 29 to Social Science, 4 to Mathematics and 3 to Commerce, while 8 did not indicate their stream.

Data were collected through the Classroom Management Skills Inventory (CMSI, Tripura Context), a structured self report inventory developed for the local setting and administered online through Google Forms in January 2026. The inventory contains 42 positively worded statements distributed equally across six dimensions, with seven items each: motivation, instructional communication, behaviour management, positive interactions, physical environment and time management. Respondents rated each statement on a five point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), so possible total scores range from 42 to 210, higher scores indicating stronger perceived classroom management skills. In the present sample the inventory showed excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha of .96 for the full scale and dimension wise alpha values ranging from .83 to .87. There were no missing responses, so all 119 cases were retained for analysis.

Participation was voluntary, respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, and responses were treated confidentially and used only in aggregate form. The study was delimited to a single teacher education institution and to perceived, self reported competence; observed classroom performance was outside its scope. For analysis, item responses were scored and summed to obtain dimension scores and a total score. The level of classroom management skills was classified using the conventional criterion of one standard deviation around the mean, producing low, moderate and high categories. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the distribution of total scores did not depart significantly from normality ($W = .978$, $p = .053$), justifying parametric tests. Independent samples *t* tests were used to examine differences by gender and academic year, with Levene's test used to check homogeneity of variances and Welch's correction applied where the assumption was untenable. A one way analysis of variance compared the three major streams (Science, Social Science and Language, $n = 104$); the Mathematics and Commerce groups were excluded from this comparison because their sizes were too small for stable estimates, and results were verified with Welch's robust test and the Kruskal-Wallis test. Cohen's *d* and eta squared were computed as effect size measures, and the level of significance was fixed at .05.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The analysis is presented in three parts. The first part describes the overall level of classroom management skills, the second compares the six dimensions, and the third tests the hypotheses concerning gender, academic year and academic stream.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Total Classroom Management Skills Score (N = 119)

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
119	126	210	165.82	18.18	0.28	-0.20

Note. Possible range of scores is 42 to 210.

Table 1 shows that the total scores ranged from 126 to 210 with a mean of 165.82 ($SD = 18.18$), which corresponds to an average item response of about 3.95 on the five point scale. The mean lies clearly above the scale midpoint of 126, and the small skewness and kurtosis values indicate an approximately normal distribution. Prospective teachers therefore perceived themselves, on the whole, as reasonably capable classroom managers. Using the mean plus and minus one standard deviation as cut off points (147.64 and 184.00), respondents were classified into three levels, as presented in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 2

Levels of Classroom Management Skills of Prospective Teachers

Level	Score range	Frequency	Percentage
Low	Below 147.64	15	12.6
Moderate	147.64 to 184.00	83	69.7
High	Above 184.00	21	17.6

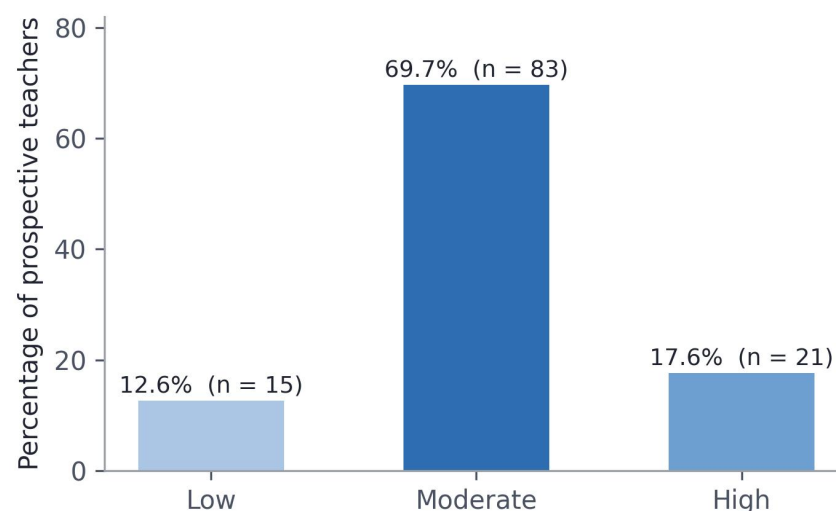


Figure 1. Percentage distribution of prospective teachers across levels of classroom management skills.

Table 2 and Figure 1 reveal that nearly seven out of ten prospective teachers (69.7 per cent) possessed a moderate level of classroom management skills, 17.6 per cent reported a high level and 12.6 per cent a low level. The concentration of respondents in the moderate band suggests that the teacher education programme has succeeded in building a sound general foundation, while a meaningful minority still requires focused support before entering the profession.

Table 3

Dimension wise Descriptive Statistics of Classroom Management Skills (N = 119)

Dimension	Mean	SD	Mean per item	Rank
Motivation	28.03	3.47	4.00	1
Positive interactions	28.03	3.40	4.00	1
Instructional communication	27.72	3.42	3.96	3
Behaviour management	27.43	3.23	3.92	4
Physical environment	27.41	3.52	3.92	5
Time management	27.19	3.57	3.88	6

Note. Each dimension contains seven items; possible dimension scores range from 7 to 35.

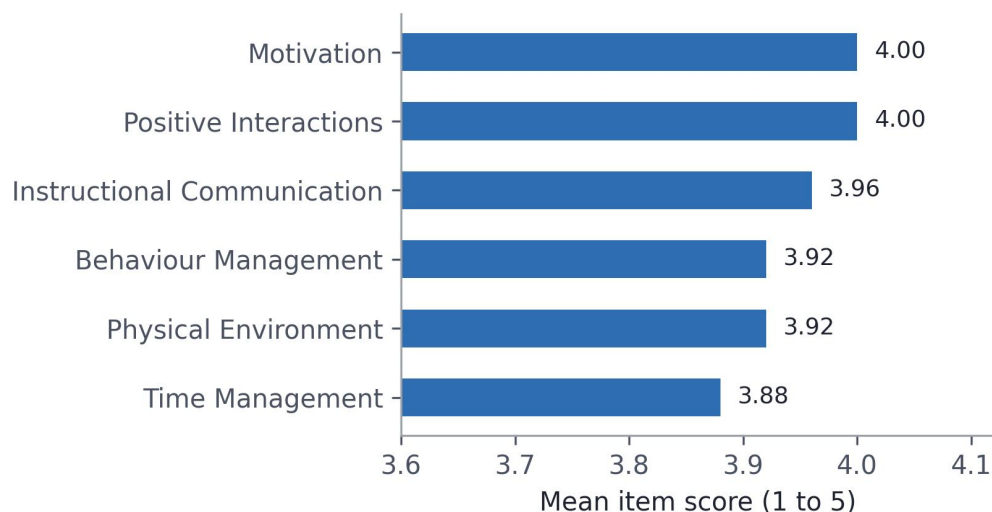


Figure 2. Mean item scores of the six dimensions of classroom management skills.

Table 3 and Figure 2 indicate that all six dimensions attracted mean item scores close to 4, corresponding to Agree on the response scale, yet a consistent ordering is visible. Motivation and positive interactions shared the first rank (mean per item = 4.00), followed by instructional communication (3.96), behaviour management (3.92), physical environment (3.92) and, at the last rank, time management (3.88). At the item

level, the highest rated statements concerned fostering an environment where students feel safe to express their thoughts ($M = 4.23$), providing timely and constructive feedback ($M = 4.21$) and creating a psychologically safe learning environment ($M = 4.17$), whereas the lowest rated statements concerned the use of digital timers and scheduling tools ($M = 3.75$), attention to the learning affordances of physical space ($M = 3.78$) and the use of digital media and simulations ($M = 3.79$). Prospective teachers thus felt most confident about the relational and motivational aspects of management and least confident about time related and technology supported routines.

Table 4

Difference in Classroom Management Skills with respect to Gender

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (117)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Male	33	167.15	18.94	0.49	.624	0.10
Female	86	165.31	17.97			

Table 4 shows that male prospective teachers ($M = 167.15$) and female prospective teachers ($M = 165.31$) obtained very similar mean scores, and the difference was not statistically significant ($t = 0.49$, $p = .624$, $d = 0.10$). Dimension wise comparisons repeated this pattern, with no dimension showing a significant gender difference. The null hypothesis of no significant gender difference was therefore retained: classroom management skills appear to be independent of gender in this sample.

Table 5

Difference in Classroom Management Skills with respect to Academic Year

Score	I year Mean (<i>SD</i>)	II year Mean (<i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Total score	160.80 (20.32)	168.99 (16.04)	2.44	.016	0.46
Motivation	27.26 (4.06)	28.52 (2.97)	1.95	.054	0.37
Instructional communication	26.57 (3.86)	28.45 (2.91)	2.85	.006	0.57
Behaviour management	26.89 (3.52)	27.77 (3.01)	1.45	.151	0.27
Positive interactions	27.20 (3.82)	28.56 (3.01)	2.05	.043	0.41
Physical environment	26.63 (3.91)	27.90 (3.18)	1.94	.054	0.37
Time management	26.26 (3.82)	27.78 (3.29)	2.30	.023	0.43

Note. $n = 46$ (I year) and 73 (II year). Welch's correction was applied for instructional communication and positive interactions, where Levene's test indicated unequal variances; absolute values of t are reported.

Table 5 reveals a clear and consistent advantage for second year prospective teachers. On the total score, the second year group ($M = 168.99$) significantly outscored the first year group ($M = 160.80$), with a medium effect size ($t = 2.44$, $p = .016$, $d = 0.46$). The

difference was significant for instructional communication ($p = .006$, $d = 0.57$), positive interactions ($p = .043$) and time management ($p = .023$), and approached significance for motivation and physical environment. The null hypothesis concerning academic year was therefore rejected. The added year of coursework, school engagement and practice teaching appears to translate into stronger perceived management competence.

Table 6

One way ANOVA of Classroom Management Skills across Academic Streams (n = 104)

Stream	n	Mean	SD	F(2, 101)	p	Eta squared
Science	29	164.00	15.00	0.08	.920	.002
Social Science	29	165.62	14.43			
Language	46	163.98	21.92			

Note. Mathematics ($n = 4$) and Commerce ($n = 3$) were excluded owing to very small group sizes. Because Levene's test was significant ($p = .024$), the result was verified with Welch's robust test, $F(2, 65.7) = 0.11$, $p = .893$, and the Kruskal-Wallis test, $H = 0.77$, $p = .680$, both of which confirmed the absence of a significant difference.

Table 6 shows that the mean scores of the Science, Social Science and Language streams were nearly identical, and the ANOVA was far from significant ($F = 0.08$, $p = .920$, eta squared = .002). The robust alternatives corroborated this result. The null hypothesis concerning academic stream was retained: the subject background from which prospective teachers enter the programme has no bearing on their perceived classroom management skills.

Findings and Discussion

Four principal findings emerge from the analysis. First, prospective teachers of The ICFAI University Tripura reported, on average, a moderate level of classroom management skills, with 69.7 per cent in the moderate band, 17.6 per cent in the high band and 12.6 per cent in the low band. Second, the dimensions of motivation and positive interactions ranked highest while time management ranked lowest. Third, gender and academic stream made no significant difference to the scores. Fourth, second year prospective teachers scored significantly higher than their first year counterparts, with a medium effect size.

The predominance of the moderate level is an encouraging but qualified result. It indicates that the programme equips most trainees with a serviceable managerial foundation, yet the scarcity of high scorers suggests that mastery is not being achieved by the majority before entry into service. This mirrors the wider literature, which portrays classroom management as a competence that beginning teachers possess only partially and consolidate through supported practice (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015). The strength of the relational dimensions, motivation and positive interactions, is consistent with the emphasis that contemporary Indian teacher education places on

learner centred, empathetic pedagogy (NCTE, 2009). By contrast, the relative weakness of time management, particularly items on pacing tools, transitions and the productive use of instructional time, echoes classic findings that the orchestration of activity flow is among the most demanding managerial skills and is acquired late (Kounin, 1970; Doyle, 1986).

The absence of a gender difference accords with the position that managerial competence is a learned professional skill rather than a dispositional trait distributed differently between men and women; similar null results have been reported in several Indian and international studies of pre service and in service teachers (Korpershoek et al., 2016). The absence of a stream difference likewise suggests that subject background confers no particular advantage, which is understandable given that the inventory measures generic pedagogical competencies rather than content knowledge. Taken together, these two null findings carry a practical message for programme design: classroom management preparation need not be differentiated by gender or by subject group, and common workshops, simulations and practicum tasks can serve all trainees equally well. What differentiates trainees is not who they are or what they studied earlier, but how far they have progressed through the programme, which places the responsibility for growth squarely on the curriculum and its practicum components rather than on entry characteristics.

The significant advantage of second year trainees is arguably the most instructive finding. The second year of the programme carries the bulk of school internship, microteaching and practicum experience, and the largest year gaps appeared in instructional communication and time management, precisely the dimensions most dependent on real classroom rehearsal. Read through the lens of self efficacy theory, mastery experiences gathered during the practicum are the most potent source of efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), and the present data are consistent with that mechanism. At the same time, because the design is cross sectional, cohort differences cannot be ruled out, and longitudinal confirmation is desirable. The findings should also be read with the caveats that the sample was drawn from a single institution and that the inventory captures perceived rather than observed competence; self reports can overestimate actual skill (Simonsen et al., 2008). Even so, the internal consistency of the pattern, with the weakest self ratings appearing exactly where the literature predicts difficulty, lends the results credibility and practical value for programme review.

Conclusion

The study set out to profile the classroom management skills of prospective teachers in Tripura and to test whether those skills vary by gender, academic year and academic stream. The evidence shows a workforce in preparation that is competent but not yet accomplished: most trainees rated themselves at a moderate level, strongest in motivating learners and building positive relationships and weakest in managing instructional time. Neither gender nor academic stream differentiated the scores, whereas the second year cohort clearly outperformed the first, pointing to the

formative value of practicum experience. For teacher educators, the implications are direct. Explicit instruction and rehearsal in time management, lesson pacing and transition routines should be embedded early in the programme rather than deferred to the internship year, and the practicum components that appear to drive growth deserve protection and expansion under the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020. Institutions may also consider diagnostic screening with instruments such as the CMSI so that the minority of trainees at the low level receive targeted mentoring. Future research should extend the inquiry to multiple institutions across Tripura, employ observational measures alongside self reports and follow trainees longitudinally into their first years of service to verify how perceived competence matures into demonstrated practice.

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