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Exploring the relationship between certification sources, experience levels, and classroom management orientations of classroom teachers

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Abstract

Teachers continue to report that classroom management is one of their greatest challenges in the classroom. Classroom management involves teacher's efforts to oversee classroom activities such as learning, social interaction, and student behavior. In this study, we examined the relationship between sources of teachers' certification (traditional or alternative), teachers' experience levels (experienced or novice), and teachers' classroom management orientations (interventionist, non-interventionist, or interactionalist). We discovered that neither source of certification nor experience level alone impacts a teachers' classroom management orientation. However, teachers with traditional certification and many years of experience exert significantly less control over classroom activities and students' behaviors than do their colleagues with other educational and experimental backgrounds. Potential causes and ramifications of these findings are discussed.
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1. Introduction

Educators at all levels recognize the significant contribution of effective classroom management to student learning and development (Ormrod, 2003; Vitto, 2003). Unfortunately, teachers continue to report that classroom management is one of their most enduring and widespread challenges in the classroom (Manning and Bucher, 2003; Smith, 2000; Sokal, Smith, & Mowat, 2003). This challenge establishes the need for the current investigation of factors that influence classroom management in our nation's schools.

Researchers generally describe classroom management as the full range of teacher efforts to oversee classroom activities, including learning, social interaction, and student behavior (Burden, 2000; Good & Brophy, 2000; Iverson, 2003; Weinstein, 1996). Doyle (1986) suggests that classroom management revolves around teachers' and students' attitudes and actions that influence students' behaviors in the classroom. Brophy (1986) defines classroom management as a teacher's efforts to establish and maintain the classroom as an effective environment for teaching and learning.

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A variety of classroom management strategies are available to teachers.

Glickman and Tamashiro (1980) and Wolfgang (1995) conceptualized a model in which classroom management strategies are classified as interventionist, non-interventionist, or interactionalist. According to this model, interventionists believe that students learn appropriate behaviors primarily when their behaviors are reinforced by teacher-generated rewards and punishments. Consequently, interventionists contend that teachers should exercise a high degree of control over classroom activities. At the other extreme, non-interventionists believe that students have an inner drive that needs to find its expression in the real world. As a result, non-interventionists suggest that students should be allowed to exert significant influence in the classroom and that teachers should be less involved in adjusting student behaviors. In the middle, interactionalists believe that students learn appropriate behaviors as a result of encountering the outside world of people and objects. Therefore, interactionalists suggest that students and teachers should share responsibility for classroom management.

To measure teachers' interventionist, non-interventionist, and interactionalist orientations, Martin, Yin, and Baldwin (1998a) developed the Attitudes and Beliefs on Classroom Control (ABCC) Inventory. This instrument measures teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward classroom management in three broad dimensions—instructional management, people management, and behavior management. Instructional management includes activities such as establishing daily procedures, allocating materials, and monitoring students' independent work. People management refers to the teachers' efforts to establish teacher–student relations. Behavior management is any pre-planned intervention aimed at preventing misbehavior.

Researchers have examined an array of dispositional and situational variables related to a teacher's propensity to behave as an interventionist, non-interventionist, or interactionalist (Henson, 2001; Martin & Baldwin, 1994; Martin & Shoho, 2000; Martin, Yin, & Baldwin, 1998b). Unfortunately, the results of these studies have been mixed. For example, Martin and Shoho's (2000) investigation of differences in the classroom management orientations of teachers certified through a traditional university training program and those participating in an alternative certification program revealed that teachers in alternative certification programs were significantly more interventionist (i.e., controlling) than were traditionally certified teachers regarding instructional management. However, these alternatively certified teachers were not more interventionist regarding people management or behavior management.

In another study, Martin and Yin's (1999) examination of classroom management differences between teachers in rural settings and those in urban settings found that urban teachers were significantly more interventionist than were rural teachers regarding people management. However, in the same study, rural teachers were more interventionist regarding instructional management.

In a study examining gender differences, Martin and Yin (1997) discovered that females were significantly less interventionist than were males regarding instructional management and regarding student management (i.e., a combination of people and behavior management). However, in a separate investigation, Martin, Yin, and Baldwin (1997) found no gender differences related to *any* of the classroom management orientations.

Finally, in an investigation of the impact of teachers' experience levels on classroom management practices, Martin and Baldwin (1994) found that novice teachers were significantly more interventionist than were experienced teachers. However, in a similar study, Martin and Shoho (2000) found that experienced teachers were significantly more interventionist than were novice teachers regarding people and behavior management, but not regarding instructional management.

Clearly, additional research is needed regarding situational and dispositional factors that influence classroom management. Toward that end, the current study sought to clarify and expand the findings of previous studies involving the relationship between source of teachers' certification (traditional or alternative), teachers' experience levels (experienced or novice), and teacher's classroom management orientations (interventionist, non-interventionist, or interactionalist).

1.1. Independent variable 1

The first variable examined in this study was teachers' certification source—traditional or alternative. Traditionally certified teachers enter the teaching profession by completing certification and 4-year baccalaureate degree requirements while enrolled in an accredited college or university teacher education program. These programs typically require large