



Challenges of university students management and effective in-class strategies

Le Thi Dung, Nguyen Van Chuc

Department of National Defense and Security Education Center, Trade Union University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Abstract

The changing dynamics of higher education, characterized by heightened diversity, digital integration, and escalating mental health issues, have rendered efficient student management in university classrooms both crucial and intricate. This article examines the theoretical principles and practical approaches essential for regulating student behavior and involvement in the classroom. This also synthesizes material from academic sources to identify the obstacles and opportunities in cultivating a supportive and effective classroom climate. The results highlight the necessity for proactive, comprehensive, and flexible strategies that combine educational theory with practical implementation. The study finishes with pragmatic recommendations for educators and institutions, highlighting the significance of faculty development, inclusive pedagogy, and student-centered approaches to improve learning outcomes and foster academic success.

Keywords: University student management, classroom engagement, higher education, in-class strategies, student behavior

Introduction

Driven by globalization, technology developments, and shifting society expectations, higher education has experienced major change in recent years. Students from many ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds abound in university classrooms today, which have evolved from their past. Furthermore, the growing mix of digital tools and online platforms has changed how education occurs both within and outside of the classroom. For student management in university environments, these changes have brought fresh complexity.

The increasing mental health issues among university students compound these developments. Studies from academic institutions and international health groups show that stress-related disorders, anxiety, and depression are more common among students. Faculty members are simultaneously expected to help students with their well-being without always having access to sufficient tools or training. The COVID-19 epidemic accentuated these trends even further by elevating digital engagement and mental health issues into top priority in academic debate.

An other main issue is the changing responsibility of teachers. Faculty members are required more and more not merely to provide academic material but also to be supervisors of student conduct, mentors, and supporters of inclusive learning. Larger class sizes and more sophisticated student needs mean that conventional classroom management techniques sometimes fail. More often occurring are challenges including disengagement, academic dishonesty, irregular attendance, and improper use of technology.

In light of this background, the problem of properly supervising pupils in academic environments calls immediate attention. Improving academic results and student experiences requires first knowledge of the particular difficulties teachers confront and then investigation of creative and inclusive classroom management techniques. This work aims to examine these several problems and offer practical suggestions for improving in-class student management in higher education.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Foundations of Classroom Management

Several fundamental theoretical stances underlie effective classroom management in higher education. These models not only guide teachers' response to student conduct but also help to define their teaching plans and the general learning environment. Three main paradigae—behaviorist, humanistic, and socio-cultural—offer different but complimentary ideas on running college courses.

Foundations of Behaviorists

Behaviorist theories—especially those put out by B.F. Skinner (1953) ^[13]—assert that reward and punishment change behavior. This strategy underlines the need of well defined policies, orderly surroundings, and regular penalties in order to inspire good conduct and discourage disruptive one. Though in more complex forms, behaviorist techniques remain relevant in higher education even if they were first mostly used in primary and secondary school.

Behaviorist ideas show up in university environments through the employment of positive reinforcement strategies including timely feedback, public acknowledgement of academic accomplishment, and set incentives for involvement. Motivating methods may include participation points, compliments for critical thinking, or well defined grading scales. These techniques support behaviors fit for academic performance as well as serve to keep classroom control.

Humanistic Viewpoints

As stated by Carl Rogers (1969) ^[12], the humanistic approach to education emphasizes on the whole growth of the student. It stresses as fundamental elements of the learning process empathy, respect, and emotional well-being. Rogers contends that real learning takes place in settings where children feel appreciated, heard, and emotionally safe.

This viewpoint is particularly pertinent in modern university environments, where mental health and well-being of students have grown urgent issues (Carello & Butler, 2015;

Eisenberg *et al.*, 2013)^[2, 3]. Humanistic teachers aim to create inclusive environments that fit different emotional and psychological requirements, enable self-directed learning, and build trustworthy connections by means such Techniques like flexible teaching strategies and trauma-informed pedagogy fit very nicely this paradigm.

Socio-Cultural and Constructivist Theories

Inspired much by Lev Vygotsky's work, socio-cultural and constructivist theories see learning as a social and culturally anchored process. According to Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), given pupils receive suitable assistance or "scaffolding" from teachers or peers, assignments somewhat beyond their current abilities should help them learn best.

This theoretical lens gives interaction, cooperation, and the cultural settings of learning great weight. Peer-based learning, group projects, and co-construction of knowledge help to operationalize these ideas in higher education. Grounded in socio-cultural values, Marzano and Marzano's 2003^[9] proactive classroom management model It supports orderly, encouraging surroundings that advance close relationships between teachers and students, mutual respect, and group accountability.

Combining Models for Holistic Management

Behaviorist, humanistic, and socio-cultural theoretical perspectives are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they offer a whole basis for running university courses. While humanistic ideas provide emotional and psychological support, behaviorist techniques give structure and consistency; socio-cultural approaches promote interaction and contextual learning. Combining ideas from every one of these frameworks will help teachers create dynamic, inclusive, well-run classrooms that foster both academic excellence and personal growth. Dealing with the several and changing demands of students in contemporary higher education settings calls for a multifarious strategy.

2. Elements of Student Management

Student Engagement and Motivation

A systematic review by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004)^[4] categorizes engagement into behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Contemporary research in university contexts continues to draw on this typology. According to Kahu and Nelson (2018)^[8], engagement is heavily influenced by institutional culture, teaching practices, and individual student characteristics. The shift toward student-centered learning has emphasized active learning strategies such as problem-based learning (PBL), flipped classrooms, and experiential learning as means of boosting engagement.

Technology Integration and Classroom Distractions

Digital devices in classrooms represent a double-edged sword. While they provide access to information and support collaborative learning, they also introduce distractions. Junco (2012)^[7] found that frequent use of social media during class negatively correlates with academic performance. This has prompted universities to explore device management policies and promote intentional digital literacy programs. More recent studies, such as those by McCoy (2016)^[10], have confirmed that

multitasking with digital devices hinders comprehension and retention.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

Classrooms today reflect a mosaic of racial, cultural, linguistic, and neurodiverse identities. The literature increasingly highlights inclusive teaching as not just a moral imperative but also a pedagogical one. Gay (2018)^[5] emphasizes that culturally responsive teaching enhances engagement and equity. Meanwhile, Hockings (2010)^[6] points out that many faculty lack training in inclusive practices, which can unintentionally alienate students from marginalized backgrounds. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is gaining traction as a framework that ensures accessibility for all students by offering multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression.

Mental Health and Emotional Well-being

Eisenberg, Hunt, and Speer (2013)^[3] report that one in three university students experience significant symptoms of mental health disorders. The presence of mental health issues can disrupt classroom dynamics, attendance, and performance. Recent literature advocates for trauma-informed pedagogy (Carello & Butler, 2015)^[2], which encourages faculty to create predictable, empathetic, and flexible classroom environments. Mental health support is no longer seen as the sole responsibility of counseling centers; educators play a critical role in recognizing distress and facilitating referrals.

Faculty Preparedness and Professional Development

A recurring theme in the literature is the gap in faculty preparation for classroom management. A study by McInnis (2016)^[11] finds that most professional development programs for university instructors focus on content delivery rather than behavioral strategies or emotional intelligence. This shortfall is critical, as effective classroom management requires both pedagogical skill and interpersonal acumen.

Academic Integrity and Accountability

Another emerging concern is academic dishonesty, particularly with the rise of online learning environments. According to Bretag *et al.* (2019)^[1], contract cheating and plagiarism have seen significant increases, necessitating clearer policies and the integration of academic integrity education within the curriculum. Strategies like scaffolded assignments, transparent assessment criteria, and the use of plagiarism detection software are recommended to uphold academic standards.

The paper reveals that managing university students effectively requires a multifaceted approach informed by both classic theories and modern empirical evidence. Key themes include fostering engagement, navigating technological impacts, supporting mental health, embracing diversity, and enhancing faculty preparedness. While foundational theories offer guiding principles, contemporary challenges call for adaptive, evidence-based strategies that align with the dynamic nature of higher education today.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, narrative review methodology to synthesize existing literature on student management within university settings. The research process involved systematically identifying, analyzing, and

categorizing relevant peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and institutional reports published primarily between 2010 and 2024. Electronic databases such as ERIC, JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar were utilized to retrieve materials.

Discussions

1. Challenges in Managing In-Class University Students

The contemporary university classroom is a vibrant and complex setting. Faculty members face numerous obstacles, including managing disengaged students, resolving disruptive conduct, tackling mental health issues, and promoting inclusive policies. A significant difficulty is student disengagement, shown in inadequate attendance, minimal participation, and diminished enthusiasm. Kahu and Nelson (2018)^[8] assert that student involvement is not only reliant on intrinsic drive; rather, it is substantially affected by the quality of instruction, institutional culture, and external life stressors.

The utilization of technology in the classroom presents an additional challenge. Although digital technologies can enhance the educational experience, they sometimes provide distractions. McCoy's (2016)^[10] research indicated that students often utilize cellphones and computers for non-academic activities during lectures, adversely impacting their focus and educational results. Faculty frequently encounter challenges in balancing the promotion of effective technology use with the reduction of distractions.

Mental health is a significant issue. Eisenberg, Hunt, and Speer (2013)^[3] indicated that a considerable percentage of university students exhibit symptoms of anxiety and depression, which may hinder their academic performance and disturb classroom dynamics. Faculty often serve as the initial observers of distress signals but may be insufficiently trained to offer appropriate help or recommendations.

Diversity and inclusion present more complexities. In progressively multicultural classrooms, students present diverse communication methods, cultural norms, and academic expectations. Hockings (2010)^[6] indicates that numerous educators perceive themselves as inadequately equipped to confront these disparities, which may result in inadvertent exclusion or misinterpretation. The task is to establish an environment in which all pupils feel esteemed and competent to succeed.

Ultimately, academic dishonesty is an escalating issue. The proliferation of online resources has augmented prospects for plagiarism and contract cheating. Bretag *et al.* (2019)^[11] discovered that ambiguity regarding academic integrity policies and inconsistent enforcement exacerbate this problem. Faculty require enhanced resources and institutional backing to properly maintain academic standards.

2. Effective Strategies for In-Class Student Management

Confronting these difficulties necessitates a systematic, evidence-driven methodology. An effective strategy is the implementation of active learning strategies. Methods like think-pair-share, problem-based learning (PBL), and case discussions enhance engagement by fostering student participation and ownership of their learning (Fredricks *et al.*, 2004)^[4]. These tactics correspond with constructivist theories, which highlight interaction and the collaborative creation of knowledge.

Establishing a nurturing school environment is of equal significance. Utilizing Rogers' (1969)^[12] humanistic approach, educators should strive to establish trust and connection with students. This entails exhibiting empathy, recognizing pupils' individual difficulties, and upholding an open-door policy. Fundamental techniques such as familiarizing oneself with students' names, providing formative feedback, and maintaining approachability can profoundly influence student motivation and conduct.

Unambiguous expectations and uniform policies further enhance effective management. Setting foundational guidelines at the outset of the course about attendance, participation, technology utilization, and academic integrity can mitigate ambiguity and promote orderliness. These standards must be articulated in syllabi and consistently reinforced.

Incorporating inclusive pedagogies is crucial for tackling diversity. Faculty should apply the concepts of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to address diverse learning preferences and abilities. This encompasses supplying resources in many formats, facilitating various assessment methods, and encouraging collaborative activities that enhance cross-cultural communication. Gay's (2018)^[5] culturally responsive teaching model enhances the establishment of behaviors that validate students' cultural identities and experiences. Faculty can use trauma-informed strategies to address mental health issues (Carello & Butler, 2015)^[2]. These encompass dependable course frameworks, adaptable deadlines, and awareness of triggers or stresses. Faculty should be cognizant of campus mental health resources and promote the utilization of support services by students as necessary.

Digital distractions can be mitigated by the implementation of organized technology regulations. For instance, several educators implement "tech breaks" that permit students to access their gadgets for a designated period, thereby diminishing the temptation to furtively check them during lectures. Others integrate technology well using tools such as polling applications, online discussion forums, or collaborative papers.

Ultimately, professional development is essential. Institutions must allocate resources for faculty training that include not only material delivery but also classroom management, cultural competence, and understanding of student mental health. Workshops, mentoring programs, and teaching fellowships can provide educators with the skills and confidence necessary to manage intricate classroom dynamics (McInnis, 2016)^[11].

The incorporation of theory into practice underscores the significance of a holistic and adaptable strategy for classroom management. Behaviorist tactics, such as reinforcement, are effective for creating classroom standards, but humanistic and socio-cultural theories underpin the development of relationships and the promotion of inclusivity. An effective student management plan in higher education should be proactive instead of reactive. This entails anticipating student requirements, crafting inclusive and engaging curricula, and perpetually evaluating pedagogical methods. Faculty must engage with student affairs professionals, mental health counselors, and instructional designers to provide integrated support systems.

Enhancing in-class student management leads to improved learning results, increased student happiness, and more fair

educational environments. Institutions that emphasize teacher development and student support are more adept at addressing the changing requirements of higher education.

Conclusion

Academic achievement and institutional progress depend mostly on efficient student management in university classrooms. Faculty members are increasingly charged, as this article has shown, with negotiating a challenging educational terrain marked by student disengagement, mental health issues, technology diversions, and cultural diversity. Although important, these obstacles are not insurmountable.

Inspired by a strong corpus of theoretical and empirical data, this study has found a spectrum of approaches to improve in-class management. Institutions have several strategies at their disposal from putting inclusive teaching methods and active learning into use to creating explicit policies and funding faculty development. Behaviorist, humanistic, and socio-cultural viewpoints taken together offer a comprehensive strategy for controlling student involvement and behavior.

Managing students in university environments calls for a comprehensive and introspective approach at least in general. Institutions have to help professors by means of continuous professional development and offer tools to meet the various needs of the modern students. Effective classroom management investments by universities set the stage for more significant learning opportunities, more equity, and ongoing academic performance.

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