



Classroom Management in an Online-Supported Learning Environment for Adult Students – from the Students' Perspective

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Abstract

Given the critical role of teacher-student interaction in fostering online social cohesion and collaborative learning, this article explores adult students' perceptions of key aspects of teachers' effective classroom management practices in an online-supported learning environment. The focus is on what students identify as key competencies for good teaching, where the course is designed to facilitate a balance between education and family or work commitments. Aiming for a comprehensive understanding of the students' perspectives, we conducted twelve qualitative semi-structured interviews, focusing on their personal experiences and unique insights. The data were analyzed using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as it provides a framework for understanding how individuals interpret and make sense of their personal and social experiences. The students' descriptions were further assessed through the three perspectives on classroom management from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training [1]: cultural, structural, and learning perspectives (our own translation). The findings from the study show that adult students value a learning environment that fosters security and strong relationships with both fellow students and teachers, in addition to a clear, predictable structure. When students feel cared for by a teacher who prioritizes their development and expresses confidence in their abilities, it enhances both their joy of learning and their sense of mastery. Insights from this study may benefit educational researchers, teachers, and course developers in identifying factors that promote student engagement, enjoyment in learning, and academic success.

Keywords: Classroom management, online-supported learning environment, adult students.

Introduction

Classroom management involves the teacher's work that contributes to students' academic, social, and emotional learning and development, encompassing a wide range of practices. It involves leading groups as teams, guiding individual students as members of a group, and facilitating learning within the student community. Teachers primarily lead through teaching, and leadership is therefore closely linked to subject didactics and learning-oriented work. Leadership implies paying attention to each individual student while also maintaining an overview of the class as an academic and social community. At the same time, leadership requires the development of structures, routines, and culture [1]. Classroom management can be understood in light of three perspectives that complement and supplement each other: the structural, cultural, and learning perspectives. Together, they contribute to a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the teacher's responsibilities and tasks as a leader. The structural perspective emphasizes what teachers do to create security and clarity for students through the establishment of clear frameworks and structure. The cultural perspective focuses on what teachers do to foster secure relationships by building the group's shared norms and culture. The learning perspective highlights what teachers do in collaboration with students to ensure mastery and progress in both their academic and social learning. A teacher works with all these perspectives simultaneously to create a classroom community where students feel a sense of belonging, supported by interactions that are clear, warm, and cooperative [1]. In addition to fostering a supportive learning environment in the classroom, education systems are increasingly recognizing the need to adapt to the diverse circumstances of adult learners, offering flexible study models that accommodate personal and professional commitments.

A significant number of universities offer online-supported study models that enable students, regardless of their location, to engage in education alongside work and family life. These programs provide adult learners with the opportunity to continuously develop themselves throughout life and are

well-suited to a reality where continuous learning is becoming ever more important. Online-supported education often lasts longer than traditional campus courses, and the students typically live geographically far from the university and the fellow students they collaborate with [2, 3]. The situation for these students is often characterized by the necessity to adapt their studies to the demands, tasks, and schedules they face at home and at work [2], which underscores the importance of flexible educational opportunities that support lifelong learning. In line with this, it is important to acknowledge the unique challenges adult students face in online learning environments, such as feelings of isolation and the lack of immediate support [4], as many juggle work and family responsibilities and lack the support networks typically available to younger students. Together, these factors highlight the pressing need for well-designed, flexible learning models, as adult education has evolved significantly over the past century, guided by influential theorists who have greatly shaped our understanding of the importance and methods of lifelong learning for adults.

In the early 20th century, Edward Thorndike's research challenged the belief that learning ability declines sharply with age, showing instead that while older adults may learn more slowly, their capacity to learn remains strong. He emphasized that adult learners rely on life experience and prefer practical knowledge [5]. Thorndike's work paved the way for Malcolm Knowles, who introduced the concept of andragogy in the 1960s, which highlighted that adults prefer self-directed, goal-oriented learning that is relevant to their lives [6], a model that remains foundational in adult education. Houle [7] research categorized adult learners into goal-oriented, activity-oriented, and learning-oriented groups, while also noting the barriers they face, such as time, financial, and psychological constraints. Flexible learning solutions like part-time programs and online education have emerged to address these challenges. Michael G. Moore's Theory of Transactional Distance [8] underscored the need for autonomy and structure in distance learning, and the rise of Massive Open Online Courses in 2010s, MOOCs, further expanded access to education, though completion rates remain a challenge. Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory [9] emphasized how education can lead to profound personal and societal change by encouraging adults to critically reflect on their assumptions and perspectives. At the heart of the theory is the idea that adults can fundamentally transform their beliefs, attitudes, and worldviews by engaging in critical reflection. This reflective process challenges individuals to question the assumptions and perspectives they have developed over time, often shaped by their life experiences, social norms, and cultural values. In line with this, modern adult education, as highlighted by scholars like Merriam, Caffarella [10], increasingly prioritizes diversity and inclusion, recognizing the diverse cultural and social contexts that influence adult learning experiences.

This research aims to explore the students' perceptions of effective classroom management by acknowledging the unique needs and contexts of adult learners. It seeks to identify the key factors that not only cultivate a positive learning environment but also increase students' learning potential and support their continuous development. For this study, the following research question was formulated:

What do Adult Students Perceive as Effective Classroom Management in an Online-Supported Learning Environment?

Methods

To address the research question posed in this study, we adopted qualitative research methods and conducted 12 semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights from participants, an approach that allows for a flexible yet focused exploration of the participants' experiences and perceptions. The data was analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a method aimed at understanding how individuals interpret their personal and social realities. IPA emphasizes the subjective significance of events and experiences in participants' lives, consequently making it a suitable approach for capturing the nuanced perspectives of adult learners on how teachers exercise classroom management.

Data Collection

To gather the students' narratives, we conducted qualitative interviews using a semi-structured interview guide [11]. The main themes of the interview guide were based on the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training's three perspectives on classroom management: the Cultural Perspective, the Structural Perspective, and the Learning Perspective [1]. This was chosen as a starting point to create a good structure and to provide an indication of what the students would consider relevant to address in the conversation. The interview guide was semi-structured and open, as we wanted to gain

insight into the students' experiences with selected topics, ensuring that their responses would be influenced as little as possible by our preconceived opinions. The dataset comprises twelve semi-structured interviews with adult students, aged 25 to 55, who participated in a one-year educational science program. Since we had no prior knowledge of these students, an email was sent to everyone with a request for participation, clearly stating that participation was entirely voluntary and without any form of obligation. The interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams due to the geographical distribution of the students, who were located throughout Norway, and each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. The students were recruited from the same university and participated in the same online course, which, over several years, has become well integrated into the university structure, while the staff teaching the course have developed extensive experience in online education.

Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) offers a means for understanding how individuals interpret their own personal and social worlds [12] and the significance that specific events and experiences hold for them [13]. Rooted in phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, and ideography [14], IPA rejects the notion of an objective 'truth' about experiences, focusing instead on personal perspectives and the unique value of first-person experience [15]. Therefore, IPA does not seek to create an objective truth but rather respects individuals' subjective experiences, perceptions, and accounts [16]. As IPA focuses on subjective meaning [17], it allows researchers to appreciate the perspectives of a specific group without hastily drawing generalized conclusions that could lead to misinterpretations [13], and it contributes to interpretative theory, enhancing understanding and generating new hypotheses.

The analytical process followed several key steps. Initially, the data were read and reread to ensure a deep understanding of the material. This stage involved free association and the exploration of semantic content, such as writing notes in the margins. Emerging themes were then developed by focusing on specific sections of the transcripts, analyzing the notes, and synthesizing them into overarching themes. Connections between these themes were then explored by abstracting and integrating them into identify patterns. When moving on to a new case, previous themes were set aside to maintain an open mind and respect the individuality of each new case. As more cases were analyzed, patterns across them were identified, particularly higher-order qualities, while also noting unique and idiosyncratic elements. Finally, the interpretations were deepened through the use of metaphors, temporal references, and by applying theoretical frameworks as lenses through which the analysis was viewed. This added layers of depth to the overall interpretation [12, 14].

Theoretical Approach

The following presents perspectives on classroom management: the Cultural Perspective, the Structural Perspective, and the Learning Perspective. These perspectives are meant to complement each other and provide a comprehensive view of how the teacher can create a learning environment that promotes students' academic, social, and emotional development. Together, these approaches offer a holistic understanding of how the practice of classroom management can play a significant role in both individual growth and collective progress in an educational context.

Classroom Management

Effective classroom management is defined as the teacher's work that contributes to students' academic, social, and emotional learning and development, and it encompasses a broad field of practice [1]. Therefore, we chose to follow the Norwegian Directorate for Education's division, where classroom management is divided into three different perspectives.

The Cultural Perspective

One of the most important aspects of effective classroom management is establishing a positive relationship between the student and the teacher. A strong relationship is considered the cornerstone of effective classroom management, as the teacher-student relationship impacts students' learning outcomes and behavior [1]. A teacher who demonstrates a supportive relationship does so through both emotional and academic support. Emotional support can be linked to the student's social situation [18], while academic support is more closely related to the teacher's recognition of the students'



learning. This is demonstrated by the teacher expressing warmth and interest in what the students aim to achieve, helping them maintain their motivation for learning. From this perspective, the teacher is the team leader, with the primary task of building a positive classroom culture that promotes well-being and learning [1]. The teacher must be willing to care for all students, show interest in their situations, provide support, and set expectations for their development [18-20]. Carl Rogers [21] emphasizes the necessity of creating a facilitative learning climate in his description of person-centered adult education. He highlights the need for an atmosphere of authenticity, care, and understanding in the classroom and school. While the teacher, as the classroom leader, initiates the learning environment, as the process progresses, increasingly mutual learning will occur among participants [21]. The teacher must care for all students, demonstrate interest, provide support, and hold the expectation that students develop both academically and socially [18-20], while also taking on the responsibility, as the classroom leader, to act as a central figure in fostering positive relationships [19].

The Structural Perspective

The structural perspective is characterized by classroom management based on well-defined rules. The teaching is led by the teacher, the learning content is delivered in a structured manner, and the teacher assumes the role of a leader with clear expectations. The teacher facilitates the conditions through established routines and a clear organization of teaching activities. The aim is to create a learning environment that motivates students to engage actively in their learning. From the structural perspective, the teacher serves as the leader, with the central task of creating calm and order through the establishment of routines and predictability [1]. While Mezirow [22] highlights that adult students often exhibit greater autonomy, he also emphasizes that this does not diminish their need for clear structures. Rogers [21] underscores the importance of maintaining a stable learning environment to prevent students from being pushed into less desirable situations when engaging in learning activities. In primary school, establishing clear structures, rules, and routines is essential for promoting learning in the classroom. Similarly, for adult students in a flexible university-level study model, a Norwegian study highlights that respondents also emphasize the importance of the teacher, and the pedagogical framework provided [23, 24]. Aarsand, Håland [25] argues that children, adolescents, and adults go through different phases when it comes to learning. For adult students, learning may not only involve adding new knowledge to what they already know but also reevaluating and replacing previous knowledge with new insights [25]. In alignment with this, Knowles, Holton [26], Knowles, Holton III [27] and Mezirow [28] agree that learning activities for adults and children are qualitatively different, emphasizing that teachers of adult students must consider these differences to help students adopt appropriate strategies for their own learning. According to Aarsand, Håland [25], learning is largely about creating meaning, which is constructed through interaction with others and through experiences with the people and things around us. Furthermore, adults can develop a sense of personal competence and the ability to reflect, which can, in turn, motivate them to move forward and make meaningful progress [22, 29].

The Learning Perspective

The teacher must support students in the learning process by clarifying the purpose of activities. By setting clear expectations, discussing the objectives of the work, and summarizing what has been learned, students are encouraged to reflect on their own learning, fostering metacognitive learning strategies and essential skills [20]. Through this process, both students and teachers engage in dialogue and collaboratively develop knowledge by utilizing various learning activities and resources. To ensure that the focus remains on learning, teachers must guide the process in ways that promote learning, using subject knowledge, didactics, and tools as integral parts of their leadership [1]. This leadership is inherently woven into the learning activities within teaching, as the teacher's choices of learning materials, teaching methods, and prioritization of activities significantly influence the learning outcomes of both individual students and the class as a whole. When leadership is effective, the learning process flows smoothly. However, when leadership fails, is absent, or undermines learning in any way, it becomes difficult for students to concentrate on their learning. Teachers must be able to manage the diversity of impressions and inputs while also capturing spontaneous moments and always maintaining momentum. In this capacity, the teacher takes on the role of a learning leader, guiding and facilitating the educational process [1].

In Norway, the framework for teachers' professional digital competence emphasizes the importance of using varied teaching methods to inspire students to develop a desire for learning, effective learning strategies, and the ability to adapt in a technological environment [30]. While classrooms enriched with

digital tools may include advanced resources, they are fundamentally not so different from traditional ones, as the teacher's primary responsibility remains the same: facilitating and sustaining student collaboration across various activities. By organizing and bringing the classroom to life, the teacher creates the conditions necessary to engage students actively in academic activities, highlighting the enduring importance of classroom management even in a technology-rich environment. This requires the teacher to focus attention on the class as a whole and the various activities that help organize and guide collective actions within the learning space [31]. Another important aspect is the consideration of the life experiences adult students bring with them. Unlike primary school students, adults have a greater need to connect subject matter to their prior experiences and reflections [24]. Building on the idea that effective classroom management fosters engagement in academic activities, these factors highlight the importance of tailoring teaching strategies to the unique needs of the learners, whether in traditional or technology-rich learning environments.

Findings and Discussion

In the following section, we present our findings and analyze them within the framework established by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. This framework delineates three fundamental assumptions underlying effective classroom management, as outlined earlier: the Cultural Perspective, the Structural Perspective, and the Learning Perspective [1].

Cultural perspective on classroom management

The cultural perspective focuses on the culture created within the specific learning environment, emphasizing the importance of relationships as a key theme. The students we interviewed highlighted how crucial relationships were for their learning experiences. Close social connections within the learning setting were identified as essential for fostering a positive learning environment, as one student expressed: *"For me, it is very important to have a good relationship with my teachers, especially in terms of my personal development and, not least, my ability to benefit from the subject matter. It was crucial for me that the teachers took the initiative to establish a good relationship between us early in the course."* The student emphasizes that the teacher plays a key role in creating conditions that enable such positive relationships among students. This statement reinforces the assumption that supportive relationships, particularly the teacher-student relationship, are the cornerstone of effective classroom management and essential for students' learning outcomes and behavior, even for adult learners. Another student says: *"This is a very important foundation for students to have the best possible learning environment, as it significantly contributes to the students' well-being. Good relationships lead to well-being. Well-being is important to me because it has a positive effect on the learning environment and learning outcomes."*

It is essential for students to feel supported in the learning environment, as such care fosters improved learning outcomes. When asked about the importance of closeness and a sense of security, one student articulated the teacher's efforts to establish a positive relationship between students and teachers as follows: *"Supportive relationships cultivated an atmosphere where we felt secure with both each other and the teachers. The integration of this supportive environment as an inherent part of the course significantly facilitated our participation, particularly in oral contributions during lessons. The teachers promptly established a framework of safety within the classroom, which heightened our engagement with the subject matter and inspired a greater desire to learn"* Another student states: *"It is important that the teacher allows us time to get to know one another along the way. I believe this is one of the factors that makes us feel more secure, knowing that we will be accepted regardless of our individual backgrounds. I think that a sense of security provides a solid foundation for learning and will help me focus on my learning process."* The students emphasized closeness and security, suggesting that these factors hold particular significance for adult learners. Carl Rogers [21] highlights the necessity of fostering a supportive learning environment in his description of person-centered adult education. He underscores the importance of creating an atmosphere of authenticity, care, and understanding within the classroom and the school. While the classroom leader initiates the learning environment, as the learning process progresses, mutual learning among participants becomes increasingly prominent [21].

A student emphasizes how a sense of security creates opportunities for a broader learning environment *"Good relationships between teachers and fellow students significantly enhance the classroom atmosphere and foster positive social connections among students. Humor and personal experiences shared by teachers also contribute to improving the classroom environment. We, as students, value this and are willing to share some of our own experiences as well. We do not mind*

being 'seen'.” By recognizing and incorporating students' life experiences into the daily classroom context, it becomes possible to establish a learning space where students feel a sense of ownership over the discussions. Adult students bring with them a wealth of experiences that can be effectively utilized in teaching. However, for this to succeed, strong relationships between teachers and students must be established.

In doing so, students can develop a sense of personal competence and reflective ability, which further motivates them to continue learning and pursuing their goals [28]. This is underscored by the following statement: *“The teachers have incorporated the students' own experiences and know each of us individually. This feels highly relevant to me because it is connected to practice and the real world. I appreciate this sense of mastery.”* A sense of accomplishment is also a key factor in supportive relationships. All participants in this study highlighted the importance of teacher support in their learning process, as one student expressed *“The fact that the teachers care about my performance motivates me to learn more.”* This emphasis on strong, supportive relationships between teachers and students aligns with the idea that a sense of security fosters opportunities for a broader and more inclusive learning environment.

Summary

Genuine commitment and a teacher who actively takes responsibility for building strong relationships are crucial for adult students' learning. The students highlighted how strong relationships can enhance learning outcomes, particularly by integrating personal experiences into teaching. Moreover, positive relationships and an engaged teacher contribute to an increased sense of mastery and a stronger motivation to learn.

Structural Perspective on Classroom Management

The structural perspective focuses on how teaching is organized and structured. In this context, we sought to gain insight into what adult students consider important in terms of the practical facilitation and organization of various learning activities. One aspect that emerged clearly from the interviews was the importance of providing students with clear and concrete information regarding the practical content of the courses. This is exemplified in the following statements: *“Having a yearly plan where all dates and assignments are listed helps create a sense of security for me, as it allows me to know what is expected of me. Clear information about the terms and guidelines of the course, especially regarding exams. Clear, written, and well-explained objectives throughout the course, as well as details about the subject matter to prepare for the sessions ... this enables me to plan effectively around my personal responsibilities.”* The student clearly emphasizes the importance of having a well-defined structure for what will take place, as well as clarity regarding what is expected of them as a student. Additionally, the interviews revealed that students also value a teacher who is thoroughly prepared, as one student explained *“Sometimes I am unable to familiarize myself with all the course material we are going to cover in the session. Since much of the subject matter is new to me, it really helps when the teacher is well-prepared so that I can understand what is being taught.”* The student experiences a significant amount of new content to learn, which becomes more manageable when the teacher appears confident and well-prepared. A well-prepared teacher enhances the clarity of the subject matter for the students, for instance, by providing access to PowerPoint presentations for lectures ahead of the session *“It is reassuring to know what will happen during the sessions, to have access to the PowerPoint presentations well in advance, and to feel comfortable asking 'silly' questions without fearing ridicule from the teacher. I perceive the teachers as clear leaders.”*

Equally important is collaboration among teachers, which fosters consistency and clarity for students. One student emphasized, *“It is very important to clarify at the beginning of the course who students should contact regarding any doubts or questions. Teachers should also provide consistent answers to students; in other words, they must collaborate with each other.”* Learning is largely about creating meaning [25], and meaning is created or constructed through interaction with others and through the experiences we have with the people and things around us, as a student described, *“If I hadn't had contact with my fellow students, I wouldn't have been able to complete this course. It is through group assignments that I gain a proper understanding of how theory and practice are interconnected.”* Another student remarked *“The teachers gave me confidence that, as an adult learner, I could master something new, even though this learning situation was completely unfamiliar to me. This motivated me to continue studying!”* Structure and stability are closely linked, and unexpected events, such as a change of teachers midway through a course, can cause adult students to lose confidence in completing the course and achieving their academic goals, as a student stated *“The class is not*



satisfied when the teacher responsible for the program is replaced after we have come so far in the course. Some students lose motivation when there are too many changes, and this does not align with what we are taught about supportive relationships and their importance! Stability is crucial for us." Collaboration among teachers plays a crucial role in ensuring this stability and fostering a supportive learning environment. When teachers work together effectively, they can provide consistent guidance and build trust among students. This collaborative approach not only enhances the learning experience but also reinforces the importance of clear communication, mutual support, and aligned teaching practices, which are especially critical for adult learners navigating new educational challenges.

Summary

Adult students value structure, clarity, and stability in teaching, as these help them balance studies with work and family. Clear course content, objectives, and assessments, along with consistent teacher collaboration, foster a sense of security. Unpredictable changes, like mid-course teacher replacements, can undermine motivation. Group work and peer collaboration are essential for connecting theory to practice, while supportive and well-prepared teachers boost confidence and motivation. Stability and clear frameworks are also critical for adult students to succeed academically.

Learning Perspective on Classroom Management

Regarding the learning perspective, we were particularly interested in understanding students' metaperspectives on learning, thereby shedding light on factors related to classroom management. Here, too, students emphasized the importance of relationships, and their connection with the teacher proved to be highly significant. One student highlighted how she perceived the teacher's genuine engagement as essential to her learning process. She explained it as follows: *"What I found educational was how the teachers were, how they behaved. It took my elementary school teacher 10 years to gain my attention, but in this course, they had it immediately and managed to motivate me to participate in the lectures. They are also the only teachers I've ever had who made me not want free time! I learned so much just from their body language. They showed us that they wanted to be there with us."* This quote illustrates how crucial the teacher's presence, engagement, and ability to build relationships are for students' learning experiences. When a teacher successfully establishes a positive and supportive relationship, it creates an environment where students feel seen, heard, and motivated to actively participate in the learning process. This highlights the importance of classroom management as not only a matter of structure and organization but also as a means to foster a learning environment that inspires curiosity and personal growth.

Another student expressed that a safe learning environment was crucial for her ability to learn. When she felt secure, she was able to speak up and participate in discussions: *"I want to emphasize that the classroom environment is very good. This applies to both the students and the teachers. This is something very important for me to feel safe in such a setting. For as long as I can remember, I have struggled to speak in such a large group, but now I can participate in the discussions we have."* This highlights the importance of classroom leaders teaching adult students to establish an inclusive learning environment that encourages active participation. Such classroom leaders can be considered effective leaders and, consequently, effective teachers [32]. A fellow student affirms the significance of the teacher's role in fostering engagement and accessibility: *"The teachers give so much of themselves, and that makes me curious and motivated, which makes the academic content easily accessible! I feel confident asking questions about newly acquired knowledge, even when I'm unsure if I've understood it."* This underscores how personal engagement from the teacher creates an atmosphere of trust and motivation, enabling students to embrace learning with greater confidence and enthusiasm.

In addition to creating a supportive environment, students emphasized the importance of academic development, particularly through assignments that are directly tied to the material covered in lectures. The classroom leader plays a key role in facilitating this connection, as one student explains: "It is important that the teacher can link the material covered in lectures to the curriculum and/or learning objectives." A fellow student confirms this by stating: *"The teachers give so much of themselves, and that makes me curious and motivated, which makes the academic content easily accessible! I feel confident asking questions about newly acquired knowledge, even when I'm unsure if I have fully understood it."* The student emphasizes the importance of the teacher's personal engagement in the learning situation, noting that this fosters joy in learning and enhances understanding. The students highlighted the significance of academic development, particularly when the teacher provides

assignments based on the material covered in lectures. The classroom leader is responsible for facilitating learning, as one student expressed *"It is important that the teacher has the ability to connect the material covered in lectures to the curriculum and/or learning objectives."*

A student highlights the importance of being able to relate personal experiences to academic content through shared discussions and seminars: *"A mix of lectures, seminars, and group discussions is a very effective way for me to acquire knowledge. I learn a lot when I discuss the subject matter from different perspectives... relating it to my own professional practice and experiences makes it easier to understand and remember the content."* In situations where the classroom leader successfully integrated students' prior experiences with the subject matter, motivation for academic work increased among adult students. One student expressed this as saying that *"Everyone in the course works with communication and guidance, but they come from very different professional backgrounds. It was important that the teachers still provided examples and exercises that were relatable to everyone. I felt that I learned a lot from this, both about myself and in relation to my daily work."* This approach demonstrates the importance of adapting teaching to the individual experiences and professional backgrounds of the students. When teachers make the learning content relevant and applicable, the learning outcomes become more meaningful for adult students.

Summary

Students emphasize the importance of a supportive and inclusive classroom culture by noting that a teacher's genuine engagement makes learning enjoyable and fosters active participation. Effective teachers create environments where students feel valued and motivated, using group discussions, seminars, and assignments linked to lectures to bridge theory and practice. Adapting content to diverse backgrounds and professional contexts makes learning more relevant and applicable. Beyond organization, strong classroom management fosters curiosity, collaboration, and purpose, enriching the overall learning experience.

Conclusion

This study explores adult students' perceptions of effective classroom management within an online-supported learning environment, focusing on the three perspectives of classroom management: culture, structure, and learning – and their influence on the overall learning environment. By examining what students identify as key competencies for good teaching, the findings emphasize the importance of designing courses that balance educational demands with family and work commitments, enabling students to thrive academically while maintaining other responsibilities.

The findings highlight that adult students flourish in environments where strong relationships, clear structure, and active engagement are prioritized. Teachers who are genuinely committed to building meaningful connections and incorporating students' personal and professional experiences into their teaching significantly enhance learning outcomes. Such practices foster increased motivation, a sense of accomplishment, and greater mastery of new concepts. Clarity and stability are particularly vital for adult learners, as well-structured course plans, clear objectives, and consistent communication help establish a sense of security and enable students to plan effectively. Collaboration among teachers also ensures coherence and reliability in instruction, while unexpected changes, such as mid-course teacher replacements, can undermine students' confidence and motivation. Collaborative learning plays a central role in adult education, with group work, discussions, and assignments effectively bridging the gap between theory and practice. Teachers who cultivate an inclusive and supportive classroom culture further enhance this process by encouraging curiosity, active participation, and a sense of purpose. Moreover, adapting course content to align with the diverse backgrounds and professional contexts of adult learners makes learning more relevant and applicable. Ultimately, these practices empower adult students to achieve their academic and personal goals while enriching their overall learning experience, providing a model for balancing educational excellence with the complexities of adult life.

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