# RESEARCH ON CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN TAIWAN OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS: A META-ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to explore research on the topic of classroom management by Taiwanese researchers over the last 10 years, from a meta-analysis perspective, specifically: 1) to analyze trends in research methodology for classroom management; 2) to explore the research subjects in theses and dissertations on classroom management; 3) to identify the variables related to theses and dissertations on classroom management; and 4) to provide suggestions for educational researchers in their theses and dissertations about classroom management.*

*The research subjects included mostly elementary school teachers and students, followed by junior high school teachers and students. The results of this study revealed that in terms of research methodology, more objective quantitative questionnaire surveys had been conducted, followed by action research and case studies. A transition from quantitative to more qualitative research was also observed, with a trend toward a balanced approach between the two. Most background variables revealed significant differences in classroom management variables; the tendency was toward an increasing number of variables related to classroom management. Analyses of abstracts of classroom management theses and dissertations revealed that most theses were written for Masters-level programs, and of those, many gave the impression of being incomplete or insufficient. Few doctoral students had written dissertations about classroom management. Based on these findings, five suggestions are proposed for future studies.*

**Keywords:** Classrooom management, Dissertations, Taiwan

## INTRODUCTION

Taiwanese universities have recently established many schools of education and centers for training teachers and educational researchers in the fields of instruction or education. Educational research has continued to receive attention; more educational research methods are being applied, and more studies are focusing on education or instruction. However, among the research issues in education, classroom management strategies have received very little attention. Classroom management is a necessary professional ability for teachers, and must be addressed in teacher training courses. The first motivation for this study was the emphasis placed on classroom management courses by teacher training institutions.

Bosch (2006) defined classroom management as the process of how teachers work, how classes operate, how teachers and students work together, and how instruction and learning take place. For students, classroom management refers to having partial control over class operations and an understanding of how teachers and students interact. A summary of

scholarly views toward classroom management reveals three general categories of classroom management. In the first, classroom management is viewed as a process; e.g., Stichter et al. (2009) defined classroom management as environmental and instructional variables that promote planning, organization, expectations, and feedback in class. In the second, classroom management is defined in terms of objectives and outcomes; e.g., Hardin (2008) used various concerns and objectives to provide different definitions of classroom management from three perspectives: as a discipline, as a system, and as instruction. In the third, internal traits are emphasized; e.g., Jones (1996) reported that classroom management is the main factor affecting teachers' efficacy and psychological health.

Classroom management is as important as course instruction. Karen (2006) conducted a meta-analysis on studies about classroom management over the past 50 years, and found that classroom management was a key factor influencing the learning achievements of students, even more so than the students' personal abilities. Effective classroom management is a necessary condition for effective instruction, while the quality of classroom management is closely related to the classroom atmosphere and student learning achievements. Most junior high and elementary schools in Taiwan organize their classes into units, with homeroom teachers in charge of all classroom affairs. Most teachers also instruct classes as units, and their knowledge, capabilities, and attitudes with regard to classroom instruction strongly affect the instructional quality and their students' ability to learn. Thus, one motivation for this study was to explore the research subjects of theses and dissertations, along with their approach toward classroom management.

The search parameter "classroom management" was used to find theses and dissertations published from 2001–2010 in the Taiwan National Library's National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations. The search results yielded a total of 217 theses and dissertations: 43 had been published in 2008, 42 in 2009, 26 in 2007, 23 in 2005 and 2010, and 17 in 2006. Numbers have greatly increased in the last few years, peaking in 2008 and 2009, demonstrating that the issue of classroom management is a hot research topic in the field of educational research. Such rich literature on classroom management needs to be analyzed, organized, summarized, and compiled to provide a holistic understanding of the recent research accomplishments in classroom management. Therefore, the main goals of this study were to review and integrate the research on classroom management to benefit the development of the field, and to serve as an important reference for future studies about classroom management. Specifically, this study: 1) analyzed trends in research methodology for classroom management; 2) explored research subjects in theses and dissertations about classroom management; 3) identified the variables related to theses and dissertations about classroom management; and 4) provided suggestions for educational researchers about theses and dissertations on classroom management.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Methodology

A meta-analysis methodology was applied.

### Data Collection

The search parameter "classroom management" was used to identify relevant articles from the Taiwan National Library's National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in Taiwan, and the abstracts of these theses and dissertations were read to facilitate further analysis.

**Data Analysis**

I.  In analyzing research methods for classroom management, observations, interviews, verbal protocol analysis, the Delphi method, and interpretive analysis were all classified as "other research methods."

II. In analyzing classroom management research subjects, literature surveys, hybrid teacher groups, and websites and web pages were all classified as "other research subjects."

**Research Limitations**

The search parameter was "classroom management." If the keywords of theses and dissertations did not include "classroom management" they were not included in the results, even if they were related to classroom management.

**RESULTS**

**Analysis of Research Methodology**

Chart 1 lists the theses and dissertations about classroom management published from 2001–20101: 7 were published in 2001, 11 in 2002, 10 in 2003, 15 in 2004, 23 in 2005, 17 in 2006, 26 in 2007, 43 in 2008, 42 in 2009, and 23 in 2010 for a total of 217. Of these, 121 used questionnaire surveys (55.8%), 6 involved quasi-experimental researches (2.8%), 48 used actions research (22.1%), 26 used case studies (12%), and 16 were classified as "other" (7.4%); see Figure 1.

**Chart 1. Classroom management research methods by type published from 2001–2010.**

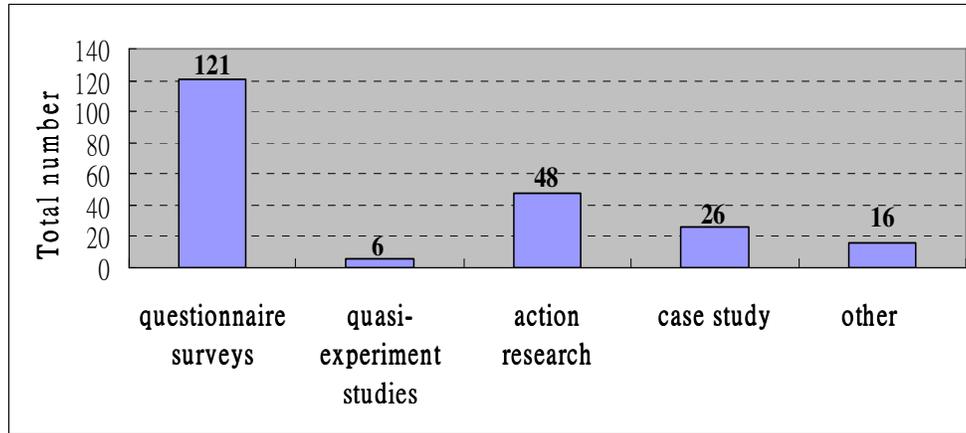| Year | Total Number | Research methods by type | | | | |
|------|--------------|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | | Questionnaire Surveys | Quasi-experiment Studies | Action Research | Case Study | Other |
| 2010 | 23 | 15 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| 2009 | 42 | 23 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 3 |
| 2008 | 43 | 19 | 1 | 11 | 8 | 4 |
| 2007 | 26 | 17 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| 2006 | 17 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| 2005 | 23 | 13 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| 2004 | 15 | 7 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| 2003 | 10 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| 2002 | 11 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| 2001 | 7 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 217 | 121 | 6 | 48 | 26 | 16 |
| Ratio | | 55.8% | 2.8% | 22.1% | 12.0% | 7.4% |

Figure 1. Research methods used in classroom management studies

## Analysis of Research Subjects

Chart 2 lists the classroom management research subjects of the 217 theses and dissertations. Of the 217, 5 involved preschool teachers and students (2.3%), 116 involved elementary school teachers and students (53.5%), 55 involved junior high school teachers and students (25.3%), 31 involved high school and vocational school teachers and students (14.3%), and 10 involved "other" research subjects (4.6%); see Fig. 2.

**Chart 2. Research subjects of theses/dissertations published about classroom management from 2001–2010**

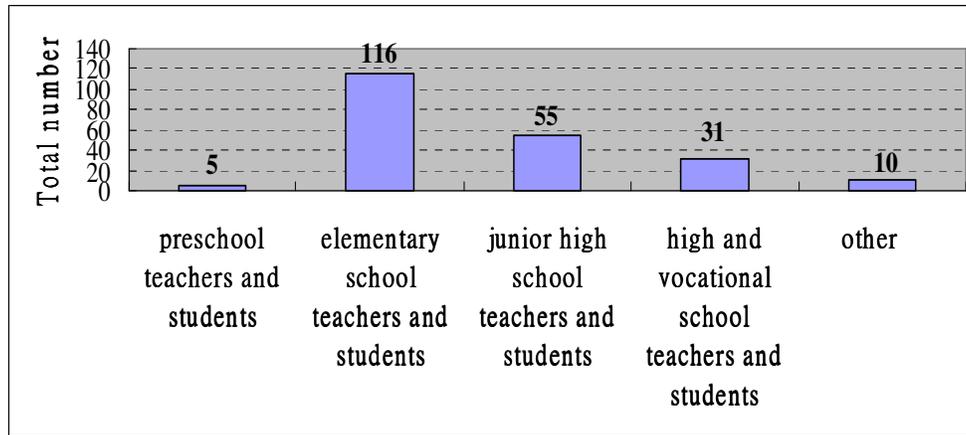| Year | Total | Research subjects | | | | |
|------|-------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------|
|      |       | Preschool teachers and students | Elementary school teachers and students | Junior high school teachers and students | High and vocational school teachers and students | Other |
| 2010 | 23 | 0 | 12 | 6 | 5 | 0 |
| 2009 | 42 | 1 | 28 | 10 | 2 | 1 |
| 2008 | 43 | 1 | 30 | 9 | 3 | 0 |
| 2007 | 26 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 3 |
| 2006 | 17 | 0 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| 2005 | 23 | 0 | 12 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| 2004 | 15 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| 2003 | 10 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 2002 | 11 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 2001 | 7 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| Total | 217 | 5 | 116 | 55 | 31 | 10 |
| Ratios |  | 2.3% | 53.5% | 25.3% | 14.3% | 4.6% |

Figure 2. Research subjects of theses/dissertations published about classroom management from 2001–2010

## Analysis of Correlated Variables in Classroom Management Research

### Analysis of Background Variables

In terms of the background variables assessed in classroom management research, 12 personal variables were particularly prominent: gender, age, service years, education, marital status, job responsibilities, teaching subject, teaching grade, amount of time spent leading classes, the way qualification was obtained, experts versus novices, symposia versus 'cram' schools. Five main background variables were related to the school environment: class size, school size, school location, school characteristics, and school history.

 Further analysis revealed significant differences in personal background variables and school environment variables; see Chart 3.

**Chart 3. Significant differences in personal background variables and school environment variables**

| Classroom management variables | Personal background variables | School environment background variables |
|---|---|---|
| Classroom management methods | Gender | |
| Classroom management strategies | Gender, age, service years, marital status, job responsibilities, teaching grade, symposia versus cram schools | |
| Classroom management efficacy | Gender, age, service years, education, marital status, job responsibilities, teaching subject, teaching grade, experts and novices, the way qualification was obtained, amount of time spent leading classes | Number of students in a class, school size, school location, school characteristics, school history |
| Classroom management style | Age, job responsibilities, teaching subject | |
| Classroom management system knowledge application | Age, education | School location |
| Classroom management knowledge structure | Experts versus novices | |
| Classroom management knowledge management and application | Gender, service years | |
| Classroom management learning organization applications | Gender, job responsibilities | School location |

### Analysis of Classroom Management and Related Variables

Classroom management variables included classroom management strategies, classroom management beliefs, classroom management efficacy, classroom management style and types, and classroom management knowledge. Additionally, 18 influential variables were related to classroom management: learning motivations and adaptation, leadership behavior and styles, instructional attitudes, knowledge management, emotional management, comprehensive quality management, personality traits, classroom atmosphere, instructional beliefs, learning-based organization, self-efficacy, friendly campus, interpersonal relationships, organizational identity, marketing management, human rights attitudes, parental participation, and ethics education.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### Research Methodology

1.      Most studies involved objective and quantitative questionnaire surveys, followed by action research and case studies.

Classroom management studies most commonly used questionnaire surveys, based on both overall and yearly categories (55.8%). Questionnaire surveys were more frequently used beginning in 2005, when studies became more oriented toward quantitative and empirical survey research. However, as researchers' roles changed from objective and neutral positions to participant positions in their research contexts, teachers gradually became active researchers. Thus, some research methodologies moved toward action research and case studies. Action research and case study theses increased beginning in 2008, suggesting that questionnaire surveys, action research, and case studies were the main quantitative and qualitative research methods used to explore classroom management; only six studies involved quasi-experimental research.

2.      A transition occurred from quantitative to qualitative research, and the trend was toward balancing qualitative and quantitative research.

In 2004 and 2005, half of the studies were quantitative and the other half were qualitative. The use of questionnaire surveys started to increase in 2005, and the use of action research and case studies began to increase in 2008 and 2009. Classroom management research methodologies not only emphasized the prevalent objective and quantitative studies, but also began to involve qualitative research that emphasized the significance of the phenomenon. From 2001–2010, 48 education theses used action research (22.1%) and 26 used case studies (12.0%).

### Research Subjects

1.      Most research subjects were elementary school teachers and students, followed by junior high teachers and students of the studies published about classroom management from 2001–2010, 53.5% (116) involved elementary school teachers and students as research samples or subjects and 25.3% (55) involved junior high teachers and students. Most of the studies that focused on elementary school teachers and students were published from 2008–2009, while most of the studies published in 2005 and 2009 focused on junior high teachers and students. Thus, elementary school classroom management has gradually received more attention, especially in 2008 and 2009; junior high classroom management began to receive more attention in 2005 (but still less than the elementary school stage); and the number of high school and vocational school classroom management studies remained fairly constant, without significant changes over the 10-year period.

2.    Transitioning from general subjects to specific subjects with specific purposes with the shift in research paradigms, research subjects have changed from randomly sampled general subjects to purpose-based specific subjects. Some studies used personal subjective instructional reflections, research literature, websites and web pages, instructional software, or students with special needs as research subjects; this further demonstrates classroom management needs in real-world elementary, junior high, high school and vocational school instructional contexts. Research subjects in classroom management studies have become more diverse, and are no longer limited to junior high and elementary school teachers and students. This suggests that teachers are applying what they have learned in their own instructional environments, covering both practical and theoretical dimensions.

### Research Variables

Analyses revealed that most background variables differed significantly in terms of classroom management variables. Additionally, an increasing trend was observed in terms of research about the variables of interactive relationships in classroom management (e.g., learning motivation and adaptation). This may be because many of the Masters-level students engaged in research issues related to classroom management were junior high or elementary school teachers; while completing their theses, they would incorporate issues related to educational reform or activities and policies at junior high and elementary schools. Thus, issues such as learning-based organizations, friendly campuses, human rights education, and ethics education would all be incorporated as relevant variables.

### Most Theses Were Written By Masters-Level Students; Doctoral Dissertations Should Be Encouraged.

Overall, 217 theses and dissertations published from 2001–2010 included the key terms "classroom management." Of these, only one was a doctoral dissertation; the rest were all Masters-level theses. Although most graduate students exploring classroom management were Masters-level students, the scope of classroom management is extremely broad, and many topics are available for doctoral-level research.

### The Clarity Of The Thesis Abstracts Was Insufficient.

Many of the abstracts of the theses related to "classroom management" did not clearly describe the content, so it was difficult to read and analyze them. In particular, often the research subjects were not clearly explained, the research methodology was not clearly defined, and the research conclusions were not specific and clear. This made it impossible to understand the totality of the research, and the benefits of the thesis abstract were lost. Incomplete research abstracts, or abstracts that are not concise, cannot effectively share academic knowledge.

### SUGGESTIONS

1.   Clarify the definitions of "case study" and "action research" to ensure conformity in research purposes. Some researchers in the field of classroom management did not clearly define their case studies and action research, and labeling the research simply as "qualitative methods" lacks clarity. Action research and case studies differ in terms of research purpose and methodology: in action research, the researcher works in the actual context and seeks to resolve problems through real-world work. Other than this action cycle process, the researcher's individual characteristics are often apparent in this kind of research. Case studies involve specific subjects, emphasizing contextual descriptions and behavioral analyses of cases; researchers using this approach attempt to understand the uniqueness and complexity and then apply it practically to education.

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2.  The scope of research subjects should be expanded to include special groups in the educational field. In Taiwan, many kinds of special education classes cater to gifted students, physical education, music, fine arts, and skills purposes, and to physically- and mentally-disabled students. Very few studies have been published on classroom management in these classes. The recent trend in mainstream special education has been to allow students with special challenges to return to regular classes, and the effect on classroom management is worth exploring. Additionally, differences or similarities between gifted and regular classroom management are also worthy of comparative analysis.

3.  In-depth exploration should focus on the correlations between classroom management variables and relevant variables, to inform academic research. The analyses revealed that in terms of research content, explorations of relationships among quantitative research variables are too simplistic and cannot accentuate the relationships among mediating variables, moderating variables, independent variables, and dependent variables in the process of classroom management. Researchers should read the literature about classroom management closely, and then design relevant variables for more valuable in-depth explorations.

4.  Interested doctoral students should be encouraged to conduct research on classroom management. Of the 217 theses and dissertations with the keywords "classroom management," only one was a doctoral dissertation; the rest were all Masters-level theses. Because most graduate students exploring classroom management were Masters-level students, it is necessary to encourage interested doctoral students to research issues related to classroom management. Doctoral students can use their own preferences and expertise in methodology to choose suitable research methods, whether quantitative or qualitative.

5.  The content of thesis abstracts should be concise and clear. Empirical and quantitative research abstracts should include the research purposes, research methodology, research subjects, research tools, statistical methods, and important conclusions. Qualitative studies should at least clarify the purpose of the research, the research subjects, the data collection methods, research findings, and reflections.

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