



Review Article

Managing multicultural classrooms: Characteristics of culturally responsive classroom management

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This study explores the defining features of culturally responsive classroom management and its impact on effective teaching within multicultural classrooms. The primary objective is to identify key management strategies suitable for culturally diverse educational settings by synthesizing findings from existing empirical research. Adopting a basic qualitative research design, the study employed documentary analysis of 20 peer-reviewed studies published between 2003 and 2023. The findings reveal that effective culturally responsive classroom management is rooted in teachers' development of cultural self-awareness, the creation of inclusive and supportive learning environments, and the use of disciplinary strategies aligned with students' cultural contexts. Additionally, teacher-student relationships grounded in cultural responsiveness were found to significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. The study concludes that culturally responsive classroom management fosters both academic success and social cohesion. As such, it should be embedded as a core component in teacher education programs to support effective pedagogy in multicultural settings.

Keywords: Classroom management, documentary analysis, culturally responsive education, culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive teacher, multicultural classrooms

1. Introduction

Regardless of the underlying causes of student behavior—whether stemming from poverty, personality traits, disabilities, family dysfunction, or experiences of abuse—teachers bear the ultimate responsibility for managing their classrooms. They are tasked with fostering collaboration among students in shared spaces over extended periods and facilitating meaningful learning experiences (Haberman, 1995). Haberman's assertion highlights the critical role teachers play in creating and maintaining optimal learning environments that support student success. Classroom management encompasses a variety of strategies and practices designed to establish a positive, structured, and inclusive environment conducive to effective teaching and learning (Martin & Sugarman, 1993). These strategies include setting clear expectations, monitoring behavior, anticipating student needs, and responding appropriately to maintain order and engagement (Pas et al., 2015). Importantly, classroom management extends beyond behavior control to include fostering enriching, inclusive experiences that recognize and respect student diversity (Gay, 2006).

A growing body of research has shown that effective classroom management is associated with improved academic outcomes, greater student participation, fewer behavioral disruptions, and enhanced peer relationships (Martin & Sugarman, 1993; Rose & Gallup, 2005; Simonsen et al., 2008). Given the foundational aims of education, effective classroom management is widely acknowledged as essential. Moreover, an examination of classroom management approaches over time reveals their evolution in tandem with broader management theories and paradigm shifts. Table 1 illustrates the alignment among educational paradigms, management models, and classroom management approaches, reflecting this theoretical progression.

Table 1

Relationship between Paradigms, Management Models and Classroom Management Models

<i>Paradigms</i>	<i>Management Models</i>	<i>Classroom Management Models</i>
Positivism	Classical	Traditional Model
Post-positivism/ Interpretive	Neoclassical	Reactive Model
Constructivism	Modern (System/ Situational- Contingency)	Preventive Model
Critical	Postmodern	Developmental Model

As illustrated in Table 1, classroom management models have evolved alongside developments in management theory and educational paradigms. This relationship has been widely documented in educational management literature (Brophy, 2006; Emmer & Sabornie, 2015; Freiberg, 1999). During the era dominated by the positivist paradigm, classroom management focused on rigid, teacher-centered structures, giving rise to "traditional" and "reactive" models. In the traditional model, teacher authority is emphasized, and students are viewed as passive recipients of knowledge. The reactive model, meanwhile, centers on controlling behavior through immediate interventions in response to disruptions (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015). With the emergence of post-positivist and interpretive paradigms, educational practice shifted toward more humane, student-centered approaches. This transformation led to the development of preventive and developmental classroom management models. The preventive model prioritizes proactive strategies to encourage appropriate behavior and minimize disruptions, while the developmental model promotes flexibility and responsiveness to individual student needs (Jones & Jones, 2012). These models aim to support both academic achievement and students' social-emotional development.

The rise of constructivist paradigms further advanced this evolution by introducing system-based models that view the classroom as a dynamic, interactive ecosystem. These models emphasize the interconnected roles of students, teachers, and the learning environment (Evertson & Weinstein, 2013). More recently, critical paradigms have influenced the development of culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM), which integrates principles of equity, social justice, and inclusivity into classroom practice (Weinstein et al., 2003). These paradigm shifts underscore the evolving nature of classroom management, demonstrating how educational values and societal changes shape models of teaching and learning. Each paradigm contributes a unique perspective on classroom interaction, teacher-student relationships, and behavioral expectations. In turn, these perspectives influence how learning environments are structured and experienced.

Table 2 outlines the defining characteristics of each classroom management model, including their historical origins, core features, implementation strategies, and impact on practice. It draws on foundational and contemporary sources that have shaped the theoretical and practical understanding of classroom management (e.g., Bear, 2010; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Brophy, 2006; Emmer & Sabornie, 2015; Gardner, 1993; Jones & Jones, 2012; Skinner, 1953; Tomlinson, 2001). This historical overview provides a comprehensive lens through which to understand the continuous adaptation of classroom management in response to shifting educational goals and diverse student needs.

Table 2 delineates the historical evolution of classroom management models alongside broader educational paradigms, offering a critical lens on how shifting societal and philosophical orientations have shaped classroom practices. The traditional model, grounded in positivist and industrial-era values, emphasized teacher authority, uniformity, and control—reinforcing a rigid, hierarchical classroom structure where students were treated as passive recipients of knowledge (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015).

Table 2

The Historical Evolution of Classroom Management Models, Their Core Characteristics, and Impact on Educational Practice

<i>Classroom Management Model</i>	<i>Historical Background</i>	<i>Key Features</i>	<i>Implementation Methods</i>	<i>Impact on Educational Practice</i>
Traditional Model	Emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. After the Industrial Revolution, concepts like discipline and obedience became important in schools, and classroom management was structured within this framework.	Teacher-centered structure; knowledge transfer occurs through the teacher, and students are passive participants.	Teacher-led lessons; limited student participation. Discipline is maintained through a reward-punishment system.	Limited development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills; students may lack motivation for learning.
Reactive Model	Developed in the mid-20th century under the influence of behaviorist psychology; characterized by immediate interventions in response to undesirable behaviors and a reward-punishment mechanism.	Emphasis on the idea that behaviors can be changed by external factors, with quick reactions to negative behaviors.	Use of punishment and reward techniques; constant monitoring and control of student behavior.	Provides short-term discipline but may reduce students' intrinsic motivation and create a negative classroom climate. Students may demonstrate superficial changes in their behavior, but their deep understanding of why they need to make these changes remains limited.
Preventive Model	Emerged in the last quarter of the 20th century due to the need for proactive strategies; gained importance with child development and social skills training.	Focuses on detecting and preventing potential problems in advance; improves the social and emotional environment of the classroom.	Proactive classroom management plans, social skills development programs, regular feedback, reminders of classroom rules, and use of positive reinforcements.	Creates a positive classroom climate, supports students' social and emotional development, and encourages lasting behavioral changes.

Table 2 continued

<i>Classroom Management Model</i>	<i>Historical Background</i>	<i>Key Features</i>	<i>Implementation Methods</i>	<i>Impact on Educational Practice</i>
Developmental Model	Gained popularity from the 1980s with the influence of student-centered approaches and the theory of multiple intelligences.	Considers individual differences and developmental needs of students; adopts a flexible, student-centered teaching approach.	Lessons and teaching strategies are adapted to students' individual differences and learning styles. Teachers play a guiding and facilitating role, with student-teacher relationships based on cooperation and communication.	Enhances students' self-confidence and encourages active participation in their own learning process, supporting both academic achievement and social-emotional development.
Holistic Model (System Model)	Developed after the 1990s under the influence of systems theory and ecological psychology; views the classroom as a dynamic system.	Evaluates the classroom, students, teachers, and environmental factors through a holistic approach, focusing on the interaction of all components.	Integrated and multidimensional strategies are developed, considering the impact of both in-class and out-of-class factors on students' learning processes; student-teacher collaboration is encouraged.	Supports academic, social, and emotional development of students through a holistic educational approach that considers diversity and individual differences, providing an inclusive and equitable learning environment.
Culturally Responsive Classroom Management	Emerged as part of critical pedagogy and postmodern management approaches, focusing on equity and social justice in education.	Focuses on acknowledging students' diverse cultural backgrounds and respecting their individual needs.	Classroom management strategies are shaped by understanding cultural differences and fostering an inclusive environment that supports all students.	Promotes social justice and equity in education, helping teachers create classrooms where students of all cultural backgrounds can thrive academically and socially.

The reactive model, emerging from mid-20th century behaviorist frameworks, introduced external reinforcement as a primary tool for managing student behavior. While this model provided structured disciplinary mechanisms, it has been criticized for prioritizing surface-level compliance over the cultivation of intrinsic motivation and meaningful engagement (Bear, 2010). Subsequent paradigm shifts, informed by child development theory and constructivist ideals, gave rise to the preventive and developmental models. These approaches redefined classroom management as a proactive, student-centered process emphasizing differentiation, socio-emotional learning, and the anticipation of behavioral needs (Tomlinson, 2001). Rather than focusing on control, these models positioned the teacher as a facilitator of positive learning environments tailored to students' developmental and individual differences.

More recently, the rise of systemic and critical paradigms has spurred the development of the holistic/system model and CRCM. Rooted in systems theory, the holistic approach views the classroom as a dynamic ecosystem of interdependent relationships, requiring integrated, context-sensitive management strategies (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Meanwhile, CRCM—aligned with critical pedagogy—seeks to challenge dominant cultural norms by affirming student diversity, promoting equity, and advocating for socially just teaching practices (Weinstein et al., 2003). Overall, the historical trajectory of classroom management reflects a significant shift in the teacher's role: from an authoritarian enforcer of conformity to a responsive and reflective facilitator of inclusive, equitable, and culturally aware learning environments.

From past to present, classroom management models have evolved in response to changing societal needs, educational philosophies, and growing student diversity. Contemporary forces such as globalization and migration have intensified the need to restructure educational systems and adopt culturally responsive frameworks (Banks, 2008; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). Traditional classroom management models, often rooted in cultural hegemony, assume homogeneity in classroom contexts and can marginalize students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Bowers & Flinders, 1990; Weinstein et al., 2003, 2004). As Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) assert, educational systems that fail to reflect students' histories, perspectives, and identities ultimately reproduce social inequalities. This disconnect may lead to cultural misunderstandings, misinterpretation of student behaviors, and disproportionate disciplinary measures, further widening gaps in academic achievement and student engagement (Blanchett, 2006; Gay, 2018; Kinsler, 2011; Klingner et al., 2005; Monroe, 2005).

As a result, there is growing recognition of the need to replace traditional, assimilationist management practices with inclusive and equitable approaches that affirm students' cultural identities and learning needs (Brown, 2004). Effective management of multicultural classrooms requires several key considerations. First, educators must understand the link between culture and behavior—how social and cultural norms shape students' actions and classroom interactions (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Weinstein et al., 2004). This awareness allows teachers to interpret behavior through a culturally informed lens and to respond with empathy and appropriateness. Misjudgments stemming from cultural ignorance can escalate into conflict or punitive discipline.

Equally important is the teacher's awareness of their own cultural positioning. Educators, like their students, are shaped by their cultural backgrounds, which influence their expectations, responses, and implicit biases (Monroe, 2006). Teachers must actively examine and address these biases to promote equity and foster truly inclusive learning environments (Gay, 2018; Guzelergene & Tanriogen, 2022). Developing this critical cultural self-awareness enables teachers to move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach and engage with students in ways that are just and responsive. In light of these principles, CRCM emerges as a comprehensive and effective model for supporting success in multicultural education settings. CRCM is grounded in the theories of culturally responsive education (Gay, 2002a, 2002b, 2018) and culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2014). It is based on the understanding that all students are cultural beings who bring with them distinct values, beliefs, and behavioral norms. Rather than suppressing or ignoring these differences, CRCM seeks to recognize, validate, and incorporate them into daily teaching and classroom routines. It also critically interrogates how school systems may reflect

broader societal inequities and aims to challenge discriminatory practices embedded in disciplinary and pedagogical norms (Weinstein et al., 2003, 2004). Importantly, CRCM is not a collection of isolated techniques. It is a holistic pedagogical orientation—an ongoing, reflective stance that informs teachers' everyday decisions, behaviors, and relationships with students (Weinstein et al., 2003). Its ultimate goal is not mere behavioral compliance but the creation of equitable, inclusive learning environments where all students are valued and supported.

This study seeks to systematically examine the literature on culturally responsive classroom management to clarify its conceptual foundations, core principles, and practical applications. Given the well-documented link between classroom management and student achievement, it is critical to embed cultural responsiveness within management practices—particularly in culturally diverse classrooms. The study identifies the defining characteristics and actionable strategies of CRCM to offer practical guidance for educators and contribute to the theoretical development of the model. A consistent finding across the literature is that many teachers feel unprepared to manage culturally diverse classrooms (Glock et al., 2019; Guzelergene, 2023; Lew & Regena, 2016; OECD, 2019; Papadopoulou et al., 2022). This research aims to bridge that gap by synthesizing existing studies and providing educators with tools to create inclusive, culturally affirming learning environments. It is also worth noting that while research on classroom management has typically focused on universal or behaviorist approaches, studies on culturally responsive education have tended to prioritize curriculum and instruction (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001). Culturally responsive pedagogy often centers academic success—particularly for marginalized groups—yet classroom climate and behavior management remain underexplored. This is a significant oversight, as classroom management has been shown to impact student outcomes as much as, or more than, cognitive ability, home environment, motivation, or socioeconomic status (Wang et al., 1994). Accordingly, a comprehensive review and synthesis of the CRCM literature is both timely and essential. This study is guided by the following research question:

RQ) What are the defining characteristics of culturally responsive classroom management?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a basic qualitative research design to identify the key characteristics of culturally responsive classroom management. As defined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), basic qualitative research involves exploring the meaning and nature of a phenomenon in depth, allowing for a nuanced understanding of social realities. This approach enables researchers to construct a richer, more comprehensive perspective on the subject under investigation. In this study, a systematic review and interpretation of existing literature on culturally responsive classroom management were conducted. The primary objective was to analyze the current body of knowledge and to uncover the defining features of culturally responsive classroom management through an in-depth examination of empirical and theoretical sources.

2.2. Data Collection and Selection Procedure

In this systematic review, documentary analysis was employed as the primary method of data collection. Documentary analysis is defined as a systematic process of identifying, selecting, examining, and interpreting both printed and digital sources to extract meaningful insights (Bowen, 2009). This method is particularly well-suited for synthesizing findings across multiple empirical studies and provides a robust framework for understanding the scope and evolution of knowledge on a given phenomenon.

The data collection and selection process was carried out in five structured phases.

2.2.1. Identification of databases

To ensure comprehensive and high-quality coverage of relevant literature, internationally and nationally recognized academic databases were selected. The search was conducted across Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, and Google Scholar, which are widely used in educational research due to their extensive indexing of peer-reviewed literature.

2.2.2. Definition of search strategy

A systematic search strategy was developed using carefully selected keywords related to culturally responsive classroom management. Searches were conducted within the Title, Abstract, and Keywords fields, primarily in WoS and Scopus. To maintain specificity and relevance, the search was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2003 and 2023. The keywords included:

- “culturally responsive classroom”
- “culturally responsive classroom management”
- “culturally responsive classroom management practices”
- “culturally responsive classroom management strategies”

2.2.3. Initial screening and selection

The initial search yielded a total of 188 studies. Each study's title, abstract, and keywords were reviewed to assess its preliminary relevance to the research focus.

2.2.4. Application of inclusion and exclusion criteria

To ensure the selection of high-quality and relevant studies, the following **inclusion criteria** were applied:

- The study explicitly addressed culturally responsive classroom management.
- It was based on empirical research (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods).
- It was published between 2003 and 2023.
- It was written in English.
- It appeared in a peer-reviewed academic journal.
- It provided practical implications for classroom management.

The following exclusion criteria were used to filter out less relevant studies:

- Studies focused solely on curriculum design or theoretical discussions with no classroom application.
- Non-peer-reviewed publications.
- Duplicate records retrieved across multiple databases.
- Conference proceedings, book chapters, editorials, and other non-journal sources.

2.2.5. Final sample

After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, a total of 20 empirical studies were selected for in-depth documentary analysis. These works include key contributions from scholars such as Brown (2003, 2004), Curran (2003), Weinstein et al. (2004), Black (2006), Delpit (2006), Monroe (2006), Bondy et al. (2007), Hershfeltd et al. (2009), Tartwijk et al. (2009), Milner and Tenore (2010), Dray and Wisneski (2011), Howard and Terry (2011), Hue and Kennedy (2012), Edwards and Edick (2013), Cholewa et al. (2014), Delale-O'Connor et al. (2017), Siwatu et al. (2016), Caldera et al. (2020), and Nayir (2022).

Table 3 provides a summary of the systematic document selection process, detailing the phases of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion.

Table 3
Summary of the Document Selection Process

Phase	Description	Number of Records
Identification	Records identified via database searching (WoS, Scopus, Google Scholar; filtered by title, abstract, and keywords; document type: journal article; language: English; years: 2003–2023)	188
Screening	Records after duplicates and irrelevant titles/abstracts removed	95
Eligibility	Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	30
Excluded	Full-text articles excluded (e.g., theoretical focus only, not directly addressing CRCM)	10
Included	Studies included in final documentary analysis	20

Table 3 illustrates the progression from an initial pool of 188 identified studies to a final sample of 20 empirical studies, following a systematic and rigorous selection process based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

2.3. Data Analysis

In this study, the data obtained from the selected documents were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely accepted method in qualitative research for identifying, analyzing, and reporting recurring patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach was considered suitable for systematically synthesizing the characteristics of culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM) as represented across the selected empirical studies.

The analysis was conducted through a series of structured and rigorous stages. The first stage involved *initial familiarization* with the data. All selected documents were read in detail to gain an in-depth understanding of their content. During this phase, researchers made preliminary notes on points relevant to CRCM, intentionally avoiding the use of any pre-existing coding framework to allow themes to emerge naturally from the data.

Following this, *initial codes* were generated. Relevant features and distinctive characteristics of CRCM were manually coded from each study. This open coding process was independently carried out by two researchers to ensure systematic and comprehensive data capture. In this phase, significant strategies, concepts, and practices mentioned in the literature were identified and labeled freely, without being constrained by predefined categories.

In the third stage, researchers began *searching for themes* by grouping codes with similar meanings. Through constant comparison, broader thematic patterns were developed to represent recurring elements across the studies. Codes that shared conceptual similarities were clustered under overarching categories, leading to the emergence of preliminary themes.

Subsequently, these themes were *reviewed and refined* to ensure coherence and distinctiveness. This process involved comparing themes against both the coded data extracts and the full dataset. Themes were revised as necessary—some were merged due to overlap, while others were subdivided to capture complexity within a particular area.

Once refined, themes were *clearly defined and named*. Each theme was given a descriptive label that captured its core meaning, and detailed explanations were written to articulate the key ideas represented by the associated codes. These definitions aimed to reflect the nuances and depth of culturally responsive classroom management as discussed across the literature.

In the final stage, the results of the thematic analysis were *systematically reported*. Each theme was presented in the findings section alongside representative examples and characteristics extracted from the analyzed documents, providing empirical support and enhancing transparency.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis, several strategies were employed. Coding was conducted independently by two researchers, and *intercoder reliability* was assessed, with agreement exceeding 90%. Any discrepancies between the coders were resolved through

discussion and consensus. Additionally, expert feedback was obtained from scholars specializing in culturally responsive pedagogy, who reviewed the thematic structure and interpretations to confirm their validity and alignment with the field.

2.4. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the qualitative research criteria of "credibility," "transferability," and "dependability" were considered (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Shenton, 2004).

Credibility refers to how accurately the findings reflect the reality represented in the data. To enhance credibility, investigator triangulation was employed by involving two independent coders in the analysis process. Consistency between coders was high, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion. Additionally, expert opinions from scholars specializing in culturally responsive classroom management were solicited to validate interpretations.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the study's findings can be applicable to other contexts. Detailed descriptions of the research context, document selection criteria, and analysis procedures were provided to facilitate transferability.

Dependability refers to the stability and consistency of the research process over time. To ensure dependability, the entire research procedure – including document selection, coding, and theme development – was systematically documented and transparently reported.

3. Findings

Through the thematic documentary analysis of selected studies, a wide range of characteristics associated with culturally responsive classroom management were identified. The findings are presented systematically below, beginning with a classification of these characteristics based on previous research.

Based on the classifications, the thematic analysis revealed ten key dimensions of culturally responsive classroom management: personal and professional awareness, culturally responsive discipline, creating inclusive learning environments, relationship-based learning and management, cultural guidance and leadership, critical pedagogy and social awareness, family and community involvement, student-centered approach, high expectations and supportive environment, and social and cultural communication skills. These themes reflect the multifaceted nature of classroom management in culturally diverse educational contexts.

The detailed classifications of culturally responsive classroom management characteristics, as identified across the selected studies, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Various Classifications of the Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Classroom Management

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Researchers</i>
Personal and Professional Awareness	Engaging in reflective self-assessment to critically examine personal cultural identity, biases, and group affiliations in educational contexts.	Weinstein et al. (2004), Black (2006), Monroe (2006), Hershfeldt et al. (2009), Delpit (2006), Dray and Wisneski (2011), Milner and Tenore (2010), Nayir (2022)
Culturally Responsive Discipline	Implementing disciplinary approaches that respect students' cultural norms while maintaining clear and respectful accountability practices.	Monroe (2006), Bondy et al. (2007), Siwatu et al. (2016), Dray and Wisneski (2011), Nayir (2022)
Creating Inclusive Learning Environments	Creating learning environments that affirm cultural diversity, promote inclusion, and build a strong sense of classroom community.	Curran (2003), Black (2006), Hershfeldt et al. (2009), Delpit (2006), Caldera et al. (2020), Nayir (2022), Cholewa et al. (2014)
Relationship-Based Learning and Management	Developing authentic, trust-based relationships with students and their families to enhance engagement and support meaningful learning experiences.	Brown (2004), Monroe (2006), Bondy et al. (2007), Hershfeldt et al. (2009), Delale-O'Connor et al. (2017), Edward and Edick (2013)

Table 4 continued

Theme	Characteristics	Researchers
Cultural Guidance and Leadership	Guiding students to strengthen their cultural identities and navigate sociocultural contexts with empathy and resilience.	Delpit (2006), Monroe (2006), Howard and Terry (2011)
Critical Pedagogy and Social Awareness	Promoting critical consciousness by connecting classroom learning to social, economic, and political realities and advocating for social justice.	Delpit (2006), Weinstein et al. (2004), Tartwijk et al. (2009), Howard and Terry (2011), Dover (2013)
Family and Community Involvement	Strengthening partnerships with families and communities by valuing home cultures and integrating them into educational practices.	Monroe (2006), Hershfeldt et al. (2009), Delpit (2006), Nayir (2022), Hue and Kennedy (2012), Edward and Edick (2013), Caldera et al. (2020)
Student-Centered Approach	Designing culturally responsive, student-centered learning experiences that encourage active participation and self-affirmation.	Curran (2003), Hershfeldt et al. (2009), Delpit (2006), Bondy et al. (2007), Cholewa et al. (2014), Siwatu et al. (2016)
High Expectations and Supportive Classroom Environment	Setting ambitious yet culturally sensitive expectations while fostering supportive, compassionate classroom environments conducive to student growth.	Brown (2003), Delpit (2006), Bondy et al. (2007), Brown (2004), Black (2006), Cholewa et al. (2014), Siwatu et al. (2016)
Social and Cultural Communication Skills	Employing culturally responsive communication strategies that incorporate familiar language, humor, and context-sensitive interaction patterns to foster engagement.	Curran (2003), Bondy et al. (2007), Hershfeldt et al. (2009), Monroe (2006), Cholewa et al. (2014)

As shown in Table 4, the characteristics of culturally responsive classroom management identified across various studies demonstrate a wide range of practices and perspectives. To synthesize these findings systematically, a thematic analysis was conducted, resulting in the identification of several overarching themes. These themes provide a structured understanding of culturally responsive classroom management and are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Themes Related to the Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Classroom Management

Theme	Description
Personal and Professional Awareness	Developing teachers' awareness of their own cultural identities, biases, and ethnocentrism to understand and address students' cultural backgrounds.
Culturally Responsive Discipline	Applying fair, consistent, and culturally aligned discipline, considering students' cultural norms and perspectives.
Creating Inclusive Learning Environments	Designing classrooms that ensure students feel safe, accepted, and valued, with culturally relevant curriculum and physical arrangements.
Relationship-Based Learning and Management	Building trust and meaningful relationships with students, respecting and integrating their cultural differences into the teaching process.
Cultural Guidance and Leadership	Supporting students' social and cultural development, helping them connect with their cultural heritage and succeed in broader social contexts.
Critical Pedagogy and Social Awareness	Encouraging critical thinking and social justice awareness, preparing students to question societal structures and address inequalities.
Family and Community Involvement	Engaging families and communities in education to enhance student outcomes, building strong relationships with their cultural contexts.
Student-Centered Approach	Structuring teaching strategies around students' cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and needs to promote active participation and self-recognition.
High Expectations and Supportive Environment	Setting ambitious academic and behavioral goals for all students while providing culturally sensitive support to help them succeed.
Social and Cultural Communication Skills	Developing culturally responsive communication skills to interact effectively with students from diverse backgrounds, fostering self-expression.

Drawing on the thematic findings presented in Table 5, culturally responsive classroom management can be defined through several interrelated characteristics that collectively promote inclusivity, equity, and student-centeredness in educational settings. First and foremost, it involves creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment in which all students feel valued, respected, and acknowledged for their cultural identities. This is supported by the establishment of trust-based, compassionate relationships between teachers and students, as well as a prevailing belief in every student's capacity to succeed. Teachers set high academic and behavioral expectations while adapting classroom practices and communication styles to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, culturally responsive classroom management emphasizes students' active engagement, encourages collaboration, and integrates students' cultural references into the learning process. Teachers develop awareness of their own cultural assumptions and biases, and evaluate students' behaviors through a culturally informed lens. They avoid suppressive disciplinary methods, opting instead for supportive strategies that consider the socio-cultural origins of behavior. Finally, collaboration with families and communities is regarded as an essential element, ensuring that students' educational experiences are grounded in mutual understanding, cultural alignment, and shared responsibility.

In order to further contextualize the features of culturally responsive classroom management, a comparative analysis with traditional classroom management approaches was conducted. Table 6 presents the key differences between traditional and culturally responsive classroom management practices.

Table 6

Comparison of traditional classroom management and culturally responsive classroom management

<i>Traditional Classroom Management</i>	<i>Culturally Responsive Classroom Management</i>
1. Guided by the norms and expectations of mainstream culture, culturally biased.	1. Sensitive to cultural differences, approaches all cultures equally.
2. Evaluates behaviors based on the norms and expectations of the dominant culture and applies the same discipline strategies for everyone.	2. Evaluates behaviors on the premise that behavior is influenced by culture and applies culturally responsive discipline strategies.
3. Ignores cultural diversity and assumes classrooms are homogeneous.	3. Acknowledges cultural diversity and sees classrooms as heterogeneous environments.
4. The goal is conformity and control.	4. The goal is to provide equal learning opportunities for all students.
5. Dominated by an authoritarian and rigid management style.	5. Dominated by a democratic, compassionate, and caring management style.
6. Behavior management focuses on external control.	6. Behavior management focuses on internal control.
7. Reactive and punitive approaches are adopted.	7. Instructional and preventive approaches are adopted.
8. Teacher-centered learning process where the student is passive.	8. Student-centered learning process where students are active, learning from and with each other.
9. The teacher is the absolute authority of knowledge.	9. The teacher acts as a facilitator.

Table 6 provides a comparative overview of the fundamental differences between traditional classroom management and culturally responsive classroom management. The analysis highlights that traditional approaches often reflect the norms and expectations of the dominant culture, prioritize conformity and external control, and adopt authoritarian management styles. In contrast, culturally responsive classroom management is characterized by sensitivity to cultural diversity, a commitment to providing equitable learning opportunities, and an emphasis on democratic, student-centered, and preventive management practices. Culturally responsive approaches focus on internal motivation, culturally aligned behavioral expectations, and fostering active student engagement, while recognizing the teacher's role as a facilitator rather than an authority figure.

The findings of this study revealed a comprehensive set of characteristics and thematic dimensions that define culturally responsive classroom management. Through systematic documentary analysis, critical components such as personal and professional awareness, culturally responsive discipline, inclusive learning environments, and relationship-based management practices were identified. The findings also highlighted the importance of fostering critical social awareness, engaging families and communities, and promoting culturally responsive communication strategies. These results provide a detailed foundation for understanding the multifaceted nature of culturally responsive classroom management and will be further discussed and interpreted in the following section.

4. Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the existing literature on culturally responsive classroom management. The key dimensions identified through the thematic analysis are interpreted by comparing them with previous research findings. This discussion aims to highlight consistencies, divergences, and new contributions to the field, providing a comprehensive understanding of the role of culturally responsive practices in effective classroom management.

This study further revealed that the critical importance of teachers' self-awareness regarding their own cultural identities, biases, and assumptions in establishing culturally responsive classroom management. This is consistent with Hammond (2015), who emphasized that culturally responsive teaching begins with the educator's deep understanding of their own cultural lens and how it influences perceptions of students. Similarly, Gay (2018) noted that teachers who actively engage in reflective self-assessment are better able to recognize and bridge cultural gaps in diverse classrooms. Recent research by Ladson-Billings (2021) further supports this perspective, arguing that cultural humility and self-critique are foundational competencies for educators working in multicultural settings. In addition, Nayir (2022) highlighted that teachers' awareness of their own cultural backgrounds and the integration of students' cultural identities into classroom practices are vital for establishing an inclusive and responsive environment. These findings collectively underscore that cultural responsiveness is not merely about acquiring strategies, but about undergoing a profound internal reflection process. The current study extends previous research by illustrating that continuous self-assessment is not only crucial for building equitable learning environments but also serves as a dynamic, ongoing practice that must be sustained throughout a teacher's professional life.

An important finding emphasized that applying culturally responsive disciplinary strategies, aligned with students' cultural norms and expectations, is essential for promoting fairness and respect in classroom management. This aligns with Monroe (2006), who emphasized that misinterpretations of student behavior often arise when educators impose discipline through a monocultural lens. Gregory et al. (2017) argued that culturally sensitive discipline practices reduce disproportionate disciplinary referrals and support positive behavioral outcomes. Moreover, Rocque (2010) highlighted that culturally responsive discipline requires not only modifying strategies to respect students' backgrounds but also critically examining institutional norms that may perpetuate bias. Additionally, Caldera et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of culturally consistent communication and compassionate classroom environments in managing behavior effectively. The present study supports and extends these findings by suggesting that culturally aligned discipline strategies are not isolated techniques but integral parts of a broader commitment to equity and relational classroom management. By emphasizing accountability through culturally respectful communication, this study deepens the understanding of how discipline can be both firm and affirming in multicultural educational contexts.

Another key finding demonstrated that designing inclusive learning environments, where students feel safe, respected, and valued, is a central element of culturally responsive classroom management. This finding aligns with Villegas and Lucas (2007), who emphasized that culturally inclusive classrooms must affirm students' identities and foster a sense of belonging to promote

academic success. More recently, Alim and Paris (2017) advanced the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy, suggesting that inclusive environments should not only recognize diversity but actively sustain students' cultural and linguistic practices. Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (2014) argued that culturally responsive pedagogy requires educators to construct classrooms where cultural difference is seen as an asset rather than a challenge. The present study supports these perspectives by demonstrating that fostering inclusive learning environments is not merely a surface-level adaptation but involves a deep commitment to honoring students' identities through curriculum design, classroom climate, and interpersonal relationships. This study contributes to the literature by reinforcing the view that inclusion must be intentional, dynamic, and culturally grounded.

The analysis revealed that building trust-based and positive relationships with students and families is a vital component of culturally responsive classroom management. This finding resonates with the work of Noddings (2012), who argued that caring relationships are fundamental to creating ethical and effective learning environments. Similarly, Gay (2018) emphasized that culturally responsive teaching is grounded in deep, meaningful relationships that affirm students' identities and support their academic engagement. More recently, Milner (2020) highlighted that relationship-centered teaching approaches are especially crucial for marginalized and culturally diverse student populations, as they foster resilience, motivation, and connection. In addition, Cholewa et al. (2014) and Delale-O'Connor et al. (2017) stressed that understanding students' emotional needs and out-of-school contexts is critical for building sustainable and supportive educational relationships. The present study supports these perspectives by reaffirming that relationship-building is not peripheral but central to culturally responsive management. Moreover, it contributes to the literature by illustrating that cultivating authentic relationships with both students and their families extends beyond the classroom, becoming a cornerstone for building inclusive school communities.

The results emphasized that acting as a cultural guide and supporting students in connecting with their cultural heritage is a central responsibility of culturally responsive educators. This is consistent with Delpit's (2006) assertion that culturally responsive teachers must empower students by validating their cultural backgrounds and helping them navigate multiple cultural contexts. More recently, Khalifa et al. (2016) emphasized the concept of culturally responsive school leadership, highlighting that educators must actively affirm students' cultural identities while simultaneously equipping them to succeed in broader social structures. Furthermore, Nieto (2017) argued that cultural guidance extends beyond classroom practices and involves shaping school cultures that honor diversity and inclusion. The present study aligns with these perspectives and contributes by illustrating that cultural guidance is not a supplementary activity, but rather a continuous leadership function integral to building equitable and empowering learning environments for all students.

Findings further confirmed that fostering students' critical thinking skills and raising their awareness of social justice issues are fundamental aspects of culturally responsive classroom management. This is consistent with the foundational ideas of Freire (1970), who argued that education must be a practice of freedom, enabling students to question and transform oppressive social conditions. More recently, Dover (2013) emphasized that integrating social justice education into daily classroom practices promotes critical consciousness and empowers students from marginalized communities. Additionally, Sleeter (2017) pointed out that culturally responsive pedagogy must include a critical examination of social inequities and the encouragement of students to engage in transformative civic action. The present study supports these perspectives and extends the literature by illustrating that critical pedagogy is not a separate curriculum component, but an integral part of classroom management strategies aimed at promoting agency, empowerment, and social responsibility among students.

The study highlighted the crucial role of engaging families and communities in culturally responsive classroom management. This is consistent with Epstein's (2018) framework of overlapping spheres of influence, which emphasizes that student success is enhanced when

schools, families, and communities work collaboratively. More recently, Ishimaru (2017) argued that authentic family engagement practices must move beyond traditional communication efforts and involve families as active partners in educational decision-making processes, particularly in culturally diverse contexts. Furthermore, Henderson et al. (2007) highlighted that culturally responsive family engagement requires honoring the values, experiences, and knowledge families bring to the educational setting. The present study affirms these perspectives and contributes by demonstrating that effective family and community involvement is not a supplementary activity but a core component of creating culturally sustaining, inclusive learning environments.

It was found that adopting a student-centered approach, tailored to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, is fundamental to effective culturally responsive classroom management. This is consistent with Gay's (2018) assertion that culturally responsive pedagogy places students' experiences, voices, and identities at the core of instructional practices. Supporting this, Hammond (2015) emphasized that student-centered teaching fosters cognitive engagement by connecting learning tasks to students' cultural frames of reference. More recently, Ladson-Billings (2021) argued that authentic student-centered approaches must empower students as co-constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients. Additionally, Caldera et al. (2020) emphasized the design of physical and instructional environments that accommodate students' social, emotional, and cultural needs as central to student-centered culturally responsive practices. The present study aligns with these perspectives and extends the literature by emphasizing that student-centeredness within culturally responsive management is not merely about adjusting teaching strategies, but about fundamentally repositioning students as active agents in the learning process.

Findings suggested that setting high academic and behavioral expectations, combined with culturally sensitive support, is essential for fostering student success in culturally diverse classrooms. This aligns with the assertion of Weinstein et al. (2003) that culturally responsive teachers maintain rigorous standards while providing the scaffolding necessary for all students to achieve them. Supporting this, Khalifa et al. (2016) argued that high expectations must be culturally contextualized, recognizing students' strengths and addressing systemic inequities that may hinder achievement. More recently, Milner (2020) highlighted that supportive environments characterized by compassion, respect, and cultural affirmation are critical in sustaining high expectations without marginalizing students. The present study reinforces these perspectives and contributes by illustrating that high expectations, when blended with cultural responsiveness, not only promote academic excellence but also nurture students' sense of belonging and self-efficacy.

The analysis showed that effective communication, sensitive to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, is a vital component of culturally responsive classroom management. This finding aligns with Lucas and Villegas (2011), who emphasized that culturally responsive teachers must adapt their communication styles to bridge cultural gaps and foster inclusive learning environments. Supporting this, Irvine (2010) asserted that communication patterns—such as the use of culturally familiar language, nonverbal cues, and relational interaction styles—are critical for building trust and rapport with diverse student populations. More recently, Siwatu et al. (2016) stressed the role of culturally attuned communication in enhancing students' sense of belonging and engagement. The present study contributes to this body of research by demonstrating that culturally responsive communication is not merely about language adjustment but involves a deeper understanding of cultural norms, relational dynamics, and the creation of dialogic spaces where all students' voices are valued.

In light of the findings and their alignment with the existing literature, this study makes several important contributions to the field of culturally responsive classroom management. By synthesizing existing research through a systematic documentary analysis, the study provides a comprehensive and thematically organized framework that captures the multifaceted nature of culturally responsive management practices. Unlike earlier studies that often emphasized specific strategies or isolated aspects, this research highlights the interconnectedness of various dimensions such as self-awareness, inclusive learning environments, culturally responsive discipline, and critical pedagogy. Additionally, by comparing culturally responsive practices with traditional

classroom management approaches, the study offers a nuanced understanding of how cultural responsiveness redefines teacher-student relationships, classroom environments, and disciplinary strategies. Finally, the study contributes methodologically by demonstrating how document analysis can be effectively utilized to systematically map key characteristics of a pedagogical concept, offering a replicable model for future research in culturally responsive education.

While this study offers significant insights into the characteristics of culturally responsive classroom management, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study relied exclusively on document analysis, which, while systematic and rigorous, inherently limits the findings to the interpretations of existing literature rather than direct empirical observations or participant experiences. Second, although efforts were made to include a wide range of studies across diverse cultural contexts, the selection was ultimately constrained by the availability and accessibility of relevant research, particularly in non-Western educational settings. Third, as with all qualitative syntheses, the thematic categorization and interpretation of data are influenced by the researchers' perspectives, despite efforts to enhance credibility through independent coding and expert validation. Recognizing these limitations is crucial for interpreting the findings and for guiding future research toward addressing these gaps through complementary methodologies, such as empirical studies involving teachers and students directly.

Building upon the findings and limitations of this study, several directions for future research are recommended. First, empirical studies involving direct observations, interviews, or surveys with teachers and students could provide deeper insights into how culturally responsive classroom management practices are implemented and experienced in diverse educational contexts. Such studies could also help validate and expand the thematic framework developed in this research. Second, future research should aim to include a broader range of cultural and regional perspectives, particularly from non-Western countries, to enhance the global applicability and inclusiveness of culturally responsive management models. Third, longitudinal studies examining the long-term impacts of culturally responsive classroom management practices on student engagement, achievement, and social development would offer valuable contributions to the field. Finally, mixed-methods research combining qualitative and quantitative approaches could further enrich understanding by triangulating findings across multiple data sources.

This study aimed to identify and synthesize the defining characteristics of culturally responsive classroom management through a systematic documentary analysis. By developing a comprehensive thematic framework, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how teachers can build inclusive, equitable, and empowering learning environments. The findings highlight that culturally responsive classroom management involves more than a set of strategies—it reflects a profound commitment to cultural reflection, relational trust, and social justice. As classrooms continue to diversify, it becomes increasingly vital for educators, policymakers, and researchers to embrace cultural responsiveness as a foundational component of effective educational practice. Future research should continue to explore context-specific applications and long-term impacts, thereby advancing efforts to foster more inclusive, sustaining, and culturally affirming learning environments for all students.

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