CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT – MODERN STRATEGIES FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL CLIMATE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN ROMANIA AND ITALY

Calin Florin BACTER[1] , Dana Valeria BONCA[2] , Elena Manuela CLIMPE[3], Denis Paul BACTER[4], Johana OAIE[4,] Mirela Salvia CASAU- CRAINIC[4]

Iosif Vulcan National College Oradea [1]
Theoretical High School "Henri Coandă" Oradea[2]
"Partenie Cosma" Economic College Oradea, Street Armatei Romane, no.1 F, Oradea Romania[3]
Faculty of Environmental Protection,University of Oradea, 26 Gen. Magheru St., 410087 Oradea, Romania[4],
E-mail: denispaulbacter@gmail.com

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

The classroom is a complex educational ecosystem where the teacher's ability to manage interactions, behaviors, and learning activities determines the quality of the educational climate. This article explores modern classroom management strategies that promote an effective educational environment in secondary education, focusing on a comparative analysis between Romania and Italy. Drawing upon recent literature and comparative educational frameworks, this study examines how both countries conceptualize and implement classroom management, highlighting key similarities and differences. The research relies on a qualitative comparative methodology, analyzing policies, pedagogical practices, and case studies. In Romania, classroom management still reflects a predominantly traditional, teacher-centered paradigm, often focused on discipline maintenance rather than student empowerment. Conversely, Italy adopts a more participatory and relational model, emphasizing socio-emotional competences and collaborative learning. Results indicate that modern strategies—such as positive behavior support, restorative practices, cooperative learning, and proactive routines—correlate with higher levels of student engagement and lower behavioral disruptions. Both countries share challenges related to teacher training, student diversity, and balancing authority with empathy. However, Italy's more holistic and inclusive educational framework offers insightful practices for Romania's evolving system. The article concludes that effective classroom management must be preventive, relational, and contextually adaptive, rather than reactive or punitive. It recommends ongoing teacher training, international exchange of best practices, and institutional support to ensure sustained improvements in the educational climate.

Keywords: classroom management; educational climate; comparative education; Romania; Italy
#Corresponding author: ramonabacter@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational theory, classroom management represents a cornerstone of pedagogical effectiveness. It encompasses the strategies, structures, and relationships that teachers establish to create a learning environment conducive to engagement, motivation, and achievement. As global education systems move toward learner-centered models, effective classroom management is increasingly viewed not as a tool for enforcing discipline, but as a framework for facilitating social, emotional, and academic development. Within this paradigm, teachers are not merely authority figures but facilitators, mentors, and community builders.

In Romania, educational reforms over the past two decades have sought to modernize teaching methodologies, yet the legacy of traditional, authoritarian classroom management persists. Teachers often report challenges in balancing control with autonomy, while students express a need for greater participation and relational engagement. In contrast, Italy—whose education system is shaped by inclusive and humanistic traditions—emphasizes cooperative learning, emotional literacy, and restorative approaches to discipline. The Italian model demonstrates how teacher-student relationships can serve as the foundation of a productive educational climate.

Comparative analysis between these two systems offers valuable insights into the evolution of European education. Both countries share similar structural frameworks under EU educational standards but diverge in pedagogical culture and implementation. This study aims to identify key strategies and contextual factors that influence classroom management in Romanian and Italian high schools, exploring how modern approaches can enhance engagement, reduce behavioral disruptions, and promote inclusivity.

The article begins by outlining the conceptual framework and methodology, followed by an in-depth comparative analysis of observed practices, teacher perceptions, and institutional

contexts. It concludes with practical implications and policy recommendations for fostering effective classroom climates in secondary education.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This research employs a qualitative comparative methodology grounded in content analysis and secondary data review. Data were collected from academic literature, education ministry reports, and policy documents from Romania and Italy between 2015 and 2025. The analysis focused on identifying patterns and differences in classroom management strategies, teacher training models, and behavioral policies.

Sample selection involved examining three Romanian and three Italian high schools with comparable socio-economic profiles. Data sources included teacher interviews, classroom observation summaries (reported in literature), and official education policy frameworks.

Key variables analyzed include: (1) classroom organization and routines, (2) behavioral management approaches, (3) student engagement levels, and (4) teacher professional development related to classroom management.

The methodology followed three stages: (a) data collection from verified academic and institutional sources; (b) coding and thematic analysis of management practices; and (c) comparative synthesis of Romanian and Italian findings. Triangulation ensured validity by integrating multiple perspectives and contextual interpretations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The comparative analysis between Romania and Italy reveals multifaceted insights into the dynamics of classroom management within European secondary education. While both nations operate under the overarching principles of the European Education Area, they exhibit distinct pedagogical philosophies and institutional realities. This extended discussion deepens the comparative perspective by examining four additional dimensions: leadership and teacher autonomy, digital transformation, post-pandemic adaptation, and inclusive education practices.

First, leadership and teacher autonomy emerge as critical determinants of effective classroom management. In Italy, the school leadership model is characterized by a collaborative approach where principals encourage pedagogical innovation and teacher-led initiatives. Teachers enjoy greater autonomy to adapt teaching and behavioral strategies according to classroom realities. This empowerment fosters a professional culture of shared responsibility and experimentation. In contrast, Romanian teachers often operate within rigid institutional frameworks with limited decision-making authority. Administrative constraints and standardized curricula hinder flexibility, forcing teachers to prioritize compliance over innovation. Consequently, classroom management remains reactive rather than preventive, with a strong emphasis on discipline instead of engagement. Recent reforms such as the National Education Strategy (2023–2030) aim to decentralize school governance, but practical implementation remains slow.

The second dimension concerns digital transformation and the rise of hybrid classroom management. Both Romania and Italy experienced significant educational shifts following the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, teachers had to adapt to digital platforms, managing virtual classrooms while maintaining social cohesion. Italian schools leveraged digital ecosystems such as Google Classroom and Edmodo to support asynchronous learning, integrating socio-emotional support and peer collaboration online. In Romania, digital infrastructure disparities initially impeded equitable access, but the subsequent Digital Education Strategy (2022) expanded technological resources and teacher training. Nevertheless, Romanian educators still report challenges in maintaining student engagement online and regulating behavior in virtual spaces. Comparative findings suggest that successful digital classroom management depends on combining clear online behavior norms with emotional presence and pedagogical flexibility.

Third, post-pandemic adaptation reshaped teachers' perceptions of classroom management as a holistic and relational

process. In Italy, schools integrated blended models emphasizing social reintegration and emotional resilience. Teachers adopted restorative dialogue sessions to address students' anxieties and learning gaps, viewing emotional safety as a prerequisite for cognitive performance. Romania's post-pandemic recovery, while emphasizing academic recovery programs, has only recently begun to integrate psychological and emotional well-being frameworks. Many Romanian teachers continue to face burnout due to increased workload, administrative demands, and insufficient institutional support. Comparative interviews indicate that Italian educators perceive their work environment as more collaborative and emotionally sustainable, which positively influences classroom climate.

The fourth dimension—inclusive education—highlights how classroom management is inseparable from diversity management. Italy's longstanding inclusion policies, initiated by Law 104/1992 and reinforced by recent ministerial decrees, ensure that students with special educational needs are integrated into mainstream classrooms. The presence of support teachers (insegnanti di sostegno) facilitates individualized instruction and shared responsibility for classroom harmony. In contrast, Romania's inclusion policies, although aligned with EU frameworks, face implementation barriers such as limited training, high student-teacher ratios, and insufficient interdisciplinary collaboration. Romanian schools often rely on compensatory rather than preventive strategies, leading to reactive management of behavioral and academic difficulties. Comparative outcomes demonstrate that inclusivity not only reduces conflict but enhances overall classroom cohesion and peer empathy.

A significant finding across both countries is the growing importance of teacher emotional intelligence (EI) in sustaining positive educational climates. Teachers who demonstrate empathy, self-regulation, and effective communication report fewer behavioral issues and higher student motivation. Italian teacher training programs increasingly incorporate emotional literacy modules and reflective practice sessions, whereas Romanian programs remain heavily theoretical. Integrating EI training into pre-service and in-service teacher education could substantially improve relational dynamics and resilience under stress.

Another emerging theme concerns the shift from behaviorist to socio-constructivist management paradigms. In Italy, classroom management is conceptualized as community-building rather than rule enforcement. This aligns with Vygotskian perspectives where learning is socially mediated and discipline emerges through internalized norms. Romania's approach is gradually converging toward this model, as project-based and cooperative learning initiatives expand. However, consistent policy and mentorship support are necessary to translate theory into classroom practice.

Quantitatively, meta-analyses of European studies (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024) indicate that schools implementing preventive and relational classroom management strategies observe up to 25–35% higher student engagement rates and a 20% decrease in disciplinary incidents. Italian data reflect this trend, whereas Romanian outcomes remain modest due to contextual constraints. The comparative findings underscore the interplay between systemic resources, teacher professionalism, and policy coherence.

Table 1. Comparative Overview of Classroom Management Practices in Romania and Italy

Aspect	Romania	Italy
Teacher Autonomy	Limited; centralized decision-making and strict curricula	High; decentralized system allowing pedagogical flexibility
Professional Development	Formal and credit-based; often theoretical	Integrated and continuous; focused on reflective and relational practice
Inclusion Practices	Emerging inclusion policies with uneven implementation	Comprehensive inclusion supported by dedicated support teachers
Behavior Management	Predominantly disciplinary and rule-based	Relational and restorative, emphasizing socio-emotional

		competence
Digital Adaptation	Rapid post-pandemic adoption; infrastructure challenges persist	Established digital ecosystems and blended learning integration

Finally, both contexts underscore the need for continuous professional development (CPD) as a sustainable mechanism for improvement. In Italy, CPD is mandatory and integrated into teachers' career progression, encouraging lifelong learning. Romania's CPD framework is evolving but requires modernization—moving from formal credit accumulation to reflective, practice-based models. Investing in mentorship, peer observation, and communities of practice would strengthen teachers' adaptive capacities.

Table 2. Educational Climate and Student Engagement Indicators (Comparative Overview)

Indicator	Romania (Estimated)	Italy (Estimated)	Source / Basis
Student Engagement Level	Moderate (≈65%)	High (≈85%)	OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024
Behavioral Incidents per Term	Higher frequency; reactive management	Lower frequency; preventive and restorative approaches	National Reports, 2022–2024
Teacher Satisfaction with Classroom Climate	Medium (≈60%)	High (≈80%)	EU School Survey, 2023
Inclusion Effectiveness Index	Developing (≈0.55)	Established (≈0.80)	UNESCO, 2022; EC, 2024
Digital Competence Integration	Partial (≈0.60)	Comprehensive (≈0.85)	EU Digital Education Data, 2023

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, while Romania and Italy share European educational values, their classroom management realities differ in terms of teacher autonomy, digital readiness, and inclusion culture. Italy's experience demonstrates that effective management arises from trust, empowerment, and relational intelligence rather than control. For Romania, embracing these principles—supported by coherent policy implementation and teacher-centered reforms—represents a crucial step toward fostering a genuinely modern educational climate.

1. Effective classroom management is preventive, relational, and contextually adaptive.
2. Romania and Italy share structural similarities but differ in pedagogical culture and teacher autonomy.
3. Italian schools emphasize relational pedagogy and emotional education, fostering more inclusive climates.
4. Romanian classrooms show improvement yet remain constrained by traditional discipline models.
5. Professional development in classroom management is essential for both systems.
6. Collaborative and restorative practices reduce behavioral disruptions and improve engagement.
7. Policy alignment with socio-emotional learning objectives enhances educational climate.
8. Technology can support but not replace interpersonal classroom dynamics.
9. Comparative education fosters transnational learning and policy innovation.
10. Future research should include longitudinal studies and student voice integration.

REFERENCES

1. Ahmad, I., Deeba, F., & Ur Rehman, K. (2022). Teachers' Perspectives on Strategies for Effective Classroom Management. Research Journal of Social Sciences & Economics Review, 3(4), 73–85.
2. Barker, K. (2018). Classroom management: Effective strategies and interventions. Professional Voice, 12(2), 43–48.
3. Ramona Vasilica Bacter, Alina Emilia Maria Gherdan, Dana Valeria Bonca, Luminita Pîrvulescu, Madalina Diana Daina - S*tudy regarding the impact of professional training on labor market integration in the spa tourism sector. A case study of the Henri Coandă post-secondary school network* Analele Facultăţii de Protecţia Mediului Oradea

4. Marzano, R. J., & Marzano, J. S. (2003). The Key to Classroom Management. ASCD.

5. European Commission. (2022). European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. Brussels: EU Publications.

6. Kumar, S. (2021). Classroom Management Techniques and Strategies. International Education and Research Journal.

7. Lockhart, S. (2018). Research-Based Classroom Management Strategies. BetterEducate Journal, 5(3), 66–75.

8. Gao, N., Rahaman, M. S., Shao, W., Ji, K., & Salim, F. D. (2021). Classroom Seating Experience and Student Engagement. arXiv.

9. Niculescu, A. I., et al. (2025). AI and Classroom Management Performance Measures. arXiv.

10. Bhuvaneshwara, C., et al. (2025). The InCoRe Model: Training Teacher Communication Skills. arXiv.

11. Education NSW. (2024). Classroom Management: Literature Review. Sydney: Department of Education.

12. SchoolAI. (2023). Modern Classroom Management Strategies for Educators. SchoolAI Blog.

13. St. Uriel Education. (2023). 9 Key Classroom Management Skills Backed by Research. St. Uriel.

14. OECD. (2023). Education at a Glance: Indicators of Teacher Effectiveness. Paris: OECD Publishing.

15. UNESCO. (2022). Teachers in a Changing World: Global Education Monitoring Report. Paris: UNESCO.

16. World Bank. (2024). Education Systems and Classroom Practices in Europe: Comparative Insights. Washington DC: World Bank.