What is this research about?
Teachers can vary in their approaches to classroom management, often adopting management styles ranging from “humanistic” to “custodial” (Willower, Eidell, & Hoy, 1967). “Humanistic” approaches are those that foster democratic classrooms based on respect, self-discipline, and shared-decision making. “Custodial” approaches tend to be more traditional in nature, where the authority of the teacher is emphasized and the class environment is rigidly controlled.

This study investigated whether the classroom management style of new teachers changed over the course of a year and the factors that influence teachers’ choice of classroom management approaches. Specifically, the researchers examined whether any relationship exists between teachers classroom management style and: (a) teachers’ own beliefs about education, (b) the mentorship teachers receive from experienced colleagues, (c) teachers’ participation in the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), and (d) whether administrators at the school displayed a “transformational leadership” style.

What you need to know:
This study examined the relationship between beginning teachers classroom management styles, their internal beliefs about education, and the influence of external factors such as mentorship, teacher induction, and their principal’s leadership style. The findings indicated that, as participants gained experience, their classroom management style became less influenced by external factors and more influenced by their own beliefs about education.

In this study, beginning teachers were considered teachers in their second to fifth year of full-time teaching, and transformational leadership was defined...
leadership that recognizes the expertise of others and views teachers as self-motivated, responsible and trustworthy.

What did the researchers do?
Data for this mixed methods study was collected from a number of sources.

First, 24 beginning teachers employed in one of two Ontario boards completed 4 mail-in questionnaires:

Demographics and Experiential Questionnaire:
Collected data on teachers’ age, gender, teaching experience, institution of teacher preparation, and teacher induction experiences;

Classroom Management questionnaire:
Collected data on teachers’ classroom management style. In this survey, teachers were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed with statements such as “Pupils can be trusted to work together without supervision” and “Pupils often misbehave in order to make the teacher look bad”;

Educational Beliefs Questionnaire
Collected data on teachers’ education beliefs by asking teachers how strongly they agreed with statements such as “teachers should be facilitators of learning”, “schools should be sources of new social ideas” and “drill and factual knowledge are important components of any learning”; 

Transformational leadership questionnaire
This survey measured the transformational leadership style of principals by asking teachers to indicate how strongly they agreed with statements such as: “Leaders in this school promote an atmosphere of caring and trust among staff,” and “Leaders in this school do not encourage me to pursue my own goals for professional learning”.

A second source of data included semi-structured interviews with 10 out of the 24 teachers who had completed the first set of 4 surveys. Interview questions included “how is your approach to teaching and classroom management different now than as a pre-service teacher?” and “what influences have had the strongest influence on your classroom management style and why?”.

What did the researchers find?
Results from this study indicated that:
- Teachers tended to become more humanistic during their beginning
years as compared to their pre-service teaching as indicated by the survey data and 9 of the 10 interviews. In most cases, the reason for this was attributed to having the freedom to decide their own style rather than aligning with the preferred style of their associate teachers and increased confidence in dealing with students.

- While induction programs had only a minor impact on beginning teachers classroom management styles, perceptions of the principal’s leadership styles was found to have an influence. In general, teachers who perceived their school leadership as highly transformational tended to be more humanistic in their classroom management approaches.

- As teachers progressed from pre-service teachers to their beginning years of full-time teaching, the influence of external factors (such as mentorship, leadership, and induction) lessened while their own internal beliefs about education became more influential on their classroom management style. This was especially true for teachers who were progressivists (the belief in discovery learning, student-centered approaches, and teaching the whole child).

How can you use this research?
This research points to the complex nature of the factors that shape teachers’ classroom management styles. Teachers and administrators should consult the larger body of literature and may wish to consider the following:

- Examining the impact of the schools’ leadership style on teachers’ approaches to classroom management;
- Encouraging pre-service teachers to experiment with their own classroom management styles;

About the researchers:
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About this summary
The Ontario Education Research Exchange (OERE) is a project of the Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research, an Ontario network promoting the use of research in education. The OERE’s clear language summaries of academic research aim to support this mandate.

This summary has been adapted from the *ResearchSnapshot* series developed by York University and ResearchImpact and has been developed according to writing and design principles unique to OERE. For more information about this summary or the OERE network please contact oere.knaer.oise@utoronto.ca.

This summary reflects findings from this study only and is not necessarily representative of the broader body of literature on this subject. Please consult the original document for complete details about this research. In case of any disagreement, the original document should be understood as authoritative.

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Pupil control ideology, classroom management, transformational leadership, teacher beliefs.