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Building Competent and Motivated Learners: Insights into Classroom Participation, Learning Skills and Educational Attitudes

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Abstract

Developing competent and motivated learners is a primary goal of kindergarten education, as early learning experiences significantly influence children's cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral development. Classroom participation serves as a vital mechanism through which young learners acquire foundational learning skills and cultivate positive attitudes toward education. This study explored the relationship between classroom participation, learning skills, and educational attitudes among kindergarten learners at Namillangan Elementary School Sto. Domingo Elementary, Philippines. Employing a qualitative case study design, the study involved fifteen (15) kindergarten learners, five (5) kindergarten teachers, one (1) school head, and ten (10) parents selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Findings revealed that active classroom participation contributed significantly to the development of communication skills, social competence, emerging literacy and numeracy skills, self-confidence, motivation, and positive learning attitudes. Teacher support, play-based learning activities, peer interactions, and family involvement emerged as key factors influencing learner engagement and development. The study highlights the importance of developmentally appropriate pedagogical practices that foster active participation and holistic growth among kindergarten learners. Findings provide valuable insights for educators, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to strengthen early childhood education programs in rural public schools.

Keywords: *kindergarten education, classroom participation, learning skills, educational attitudes, learner motivation, early childhood education, qualitative research*

Introduction

Early childhood education is widely recognized as one of the most important stages in a child's educational journey. During the kindergarten years, children acquire foundational competencies that serve as building blocks for future academic achievement and lifelong learning. These competencies include language development, communication skills, early literacy and numeracy, social interaction, self-regulation, and positive learning dispositions. Educational experiences during this stage significantly influence children's readiness for formal schooling and their attitudes toward education.

One of the most critical elements influencing learning and development in kindergarten is classroom participation. Participation involves learners' active engagement in classroom discussions, storytelling activities, play-based learning experiences, collaborative tasks, songs, games, and other educational interactions. Through participation, children become active contributors to their learning experiences rather than passive recipients of information. Such engagement supports cognitive growth, social competence, emotional development, and positive educational attitudes.

Research suggests that classroom participation promotes skill acquisition by providing opportunities for exploration, interaction, communication, and problem-solving. Furthermore, active engagement enhances learners' motivation, confidence, and enthusiasm for learning. Children who participate actively in classroom activities are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward school, demonstrate curiosity, and exhibit stronger learning behaviors.

In rural educational settings, classroom participation plays an especially important role in maximizing learning opportunities and supporting learner development. Despite challenges associated with resource limitations and contextual realities, rural schools continue to implement innovative pedagogical practices that encourage learner engagement and holistic growth.

Sto. Domingo Elementary School serves kindergarten learners from predominantly rural and agricultural communities. Teachers have observed that active participation influences learners' skill development, classroom behavior, and educational attitudes. However, there remains limited qualitative evidence regarding how young learners experience participation and how these experiences contribute to their development.

This study explored the experiences of kindergarten learners regarding classroom participation, learning skills, and educational attitudes. By examining the perspectives of learners, teachers, and parents, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how participation supports competence and motivation during early childhood education.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to explore how classroom participation contributes to learning skills development and educational attitudes among kindergarten learners at Sto. Domingo Elementary School. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Explore kindergarten learners' experiences of classroom participation.
2. Examine how participation contributes to the development of learning skills.
3. Investigate the influence of participation on learners' educational attitudes.
4. Identify factors that encourage active classroom participation among kindergarten learners.
5. Determine pedagogical practices that support competence and motivation in early childhood education.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Sociocultural Theory, Constructivist Theory, and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP).

Sociocultural Theory, developed by Lev Vygotsky, emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and guided participation. Young learners develop cognitive and language skills through interactions with teachers, peers, and their environment.

Constructivist Theory posits that children actively construct knowledge through meaningful experiences, exploration, and engagement. Learning occurs when children interact with their surroundings and make sense of new information.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice advocates instructional approaches that align with children’s developmental needs, interests, and learning styles. It emphasizes active engagement, play-based learning, and supportive learning environments as essential components of effective early childhood education.

Together, these theoretical perspectives explain how classroom participation contributes to the development of competence, motivation, and positive educational attitudes among kindergarten learners.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the experiences of kindergarten learners regarding classroom participation, learning skills, and educational attitudes. A qualitative approach was selected because it enabled an in-depth understanding of participants’ perceptions, experiences, and interactions within their natural educational environment.

The study was conducted at Sto. Domingo Elementary School, a public elementary school serving learners from rural communities. Participants included fifteen (15) kindergarten learners, five (5) kindergarten teachers, one (1) school head, and ten (10) parents selected through purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based on their direct involvement in kindergarten learning experiences.

Data were gathered through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Observations focused on learner participation, engagement behaviors, classroom interactions, and learning activities. Interviews and discussions explored experiences related to participation, skill development, motivation, and educational attitudes.

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis framework. Initial coding procedures were conducted to identify recurring patterns and meaningful units of data. These codes were subsequently organized into categories and themes. Trustworthiness was established through triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and prolonged engagement. Ethical considerations including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the study.

Findings and Discussion

Theme 1: Active Classroom Participation Enhances Foundational Learning Skills

A dominant theme that emerged from the study was the significant role of active classroom participation in developing foundational learning skills among kindergarten learners. Participants consistently described how participation in storytelling sessions, alphabet activities, counting exercises, songs, games, and classroom discussions helped them acquire early literacy and numeracy competencies. Teachers observed that learners who actively engaged in classroom activities demonstrated stronger readiness skills and greater academic progress.

One learner shared:

“Gusto ko po kapag sumasagot ako kasi natututo akong magbasa at magbilang.”

Another participant stated:

“Masaya po kapag may activities kasi natututo ako ng letters at numbers.”

Teachers explained that active involvement allows children to learn through direct experience rather than passive observation.

One teacher remarked:

“Kapag ang bata ay aktibong nakikilahok, mas mabilis nilang natututunan ang mga pangunahing kasanayan sa

pagbasa, pagsulat, at pagbibilang.”

Classroom observations revealed that engaged learners displayed stronger letter recognition, phonemic awareness, number identification, and problem-solving abilities. Participation provided opportunities for repeated practice, immediate feedback, and meaningful application of concepts.

These findings support Constructivist Theory, which posits that learners construct knowledge through active engagement and interaction with their environment (Piaget, 1972). According to Hirsh-Pasek et al. (2022), active participation in early childhood classrooms promotes cognitive growth and strengthens foundational academic skills. Pyle and Danniels (2017) likewise found that participatory learning experiences contribute significantly to literacy and numeracy development among young learners.

Theme 2: Play-Based Participation Promotes Motivation and Enjoyment in Learning

Another significant theme highlighted the role of play-based participation in fostering learner motivation and enjoyment. Learners consistently described classroom games, songs, role-playing activities, and hands-on learning experiences as enjoyable opportunities to learn. They expressed excitement about participating in activities that combined learning with play.

One learner shared:

“Masaya po kapag may laro kasi natututo ako habang naglalaro.”

Another participant remarked:

“Gusto ko po ang classroom activities kasi parang laro lang pero marami akong natututunan.”

Teachers emphasized that play-based participation captures learners’ attention and sustains engagement.

One teacher explained:

“Kapag ginagawang masaya ang pagkatuto, mas interesado at mas motivated ang mga bata na makilahok.”

Observations revealed that learners displayed enthusiasm, curiosity, and persistence when participating in playful educational activities. They were more willing to explore concepts, ask questions, and complete learning tasks.

These findings align with research emphasizing the importance of play in early childhood education. Weisberg et al. (2016) argued that guided play promotes motivation and meaningful learning by combining enjoyment with educational objectives. Zosh et al. (2018) similarly found that playful learning enhances engagement, creativity, and long-term retention. According to Bodrova and Leong (2015), play serves as a powerful context for developing both academic and socio-emotional competencies.

Theme 3: Classroom Participation Strengthens Communication and Language Development

The study revealed that participation in classroom interactions significantly contributes to communication and language development. Learners reported that storytelling, singing, discussions, and question-and-answer activities helped them become more confident in speaking and expressing ideas.

One learner explained:

“Natututo po akong magsalita kapag nakikikwento ako sa klase.”

Another participant stated:

“Masaya po kapag nagtatanong si Teacher kasi nakakasagot kami.”

Teachers observed noticeable improvements in learners’ vocabulary, pronunciation, listening skills, and oral communication abilities.

One teacher shared:

“Habang mas nakikilahok sila sa mga usapan at gawain, mas lumalawak ang kanilang bokabularyo at kakayahang makipag-usap.”

Classroom observations indicated that learners became increasingly comfortable sharing experiences, answering questions, and participating in conversations. Teacher-guided interactions provided scaffolding that supported language acquisition and communication development.

The findings support Vygotsky’s (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in language learning. Dickinson and Porche (2011) found that rich classroom conversations significantly enhance vocabulary and literacy development. Likewise, Wasik and Hindman (2020) emphasized that interactive classroom dialogue contributes to early language competence and communication confidence.

Theme 4: Collaborative Participation Fosters Social Competence and Positive Relationships

Another major theme centered on the role of collaborative participation in developing social competence and positive peer relationships. Participants described group activities, partner tasks, cooperative games, and shared classroom experiences as opportunities to learn how to interact with others.

One learner shared:

“Masaya po kapag may kagrupo ako kasi nagtutulungan kami.”

Another participant remarked:

“Natututo po akong makinig sa mga kaibigan ko.”

Teachers emphasized that collaborative participation teaches children essential social skills such as cooperation, empathy, respect, and sharing.

One teacher explained:

“Ang mga gawaing panggrupo ay tumutulong sa mga bata na matutong makisama at makipagtulungan sa kanilang mga kaklase.”

Observations revealed that learners developed stronger friendships and demonstrated increasing levels of cooperation and social awareness. Collaborative activities encouraged them to communicate, solve conflicts, and work toward common goals.

These findings align with the work of Johnson and Johnson (2018), who found that cooperative learning enhances interpersonal skills and social development. Denham et al. (2014) similarly argued that social competence acquired during early childhood predicts later academic and behavioral success. Coplan and Arbeau (2019) further noted that positive peer interactions contribute significantly to emotional well-being and classroom adjustment.

Theme 5: Positive Reinforcement Builds Confidence and Educational Attitudes

A fifth theme emphasized the influence of positive reinforcement on learner confidence and educational attitudes. Participants reported feeling motivated when teachers praised their efforts, recognized achievements, and provided encouragement.

One learner stated:

“Masaya po ako kapag sinasabihan akong ‘Good Job’ ni Teacher.”

Another participant shared:

“Kapag pinapalakpakan kami, gusto ko pong sumali ulit.”

Teachers noted that positive reinforcement encourages learners to participate actively and develop confidence in their abilities.

One teacher remarked:

“Kapag nakakatanggap sila ng positibong feedback, mas nagiging determinado silang matuto at makilahok.”

Observations showed that learners who received consistent encouragement became more willing to answer questions, complete activities, and interact with peers. Positive reinforcement contributed to the development of favorable attitudes toward school and learning.

These findings support Bandura’s (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, which suggests that successful experiences and positive feedback strengthen confidence and motivation. Dweck (2017) emphasized that encouraging feedback promotes a growth mindset and resilience among learners. Henderlong and Lepper (2002) likewise found that praise can enhance intrinsic motivation and persistence when delivered appropriately.

Theme 6: Family and Teacher Support Sustain Learner Motivation and Engagement

The final theme highlighted the importance of family and teacher support in sustaining learner motivation and engagement. Parents and teachers consistently emphasized the value of encouragement, guidance, and emotional support in promoting positive learning experiences.

One learner shared:

“Masaya po kapag tinutulungan ako ni Mama sa aking activities.”

Another participant remarked:

“Gusto ko po kapag kasama si Teacher habang nag-aaral.”

Parents described their efforts to support learning through reading activities, homework assistance, and emotional encouragement.

One parent stated:

“Kahit simpleng pakikinig at paggabay sa kanila ay nakakatulong sa kanilang pagkatuto.”

Teachers observed that learners who received strong support from both home and school demonstrated greater enthusiasm and persistence.

The findings align with Epstein’s (2018) framework on school-family partnerships, which emphasizes the critical role of parental involvement in educational success. Sheridan et al. (2019) found that family engagement positively influences children’s motivation and academic development. Pianta et al. (2012) similarly highlighted the importance of supportive teacher-child relationships in fostering learner engagement and school readiness.

Conclusion

The study concludes that classroom participation plays a pivotal role in building competent and motivated kindergarten learners at Sto. Domingo Elementary School. Through active engagement in classroom activities, learners develop foundational literacy and numeracy skills, communication competencies, social skills, self-confidence, and positive educational attitudes. Participation serves not only as a mechanism for academic learning but also as a pathway for holistic development.

The findings further reveal that play-based learning, collaborative activities, positive reinforcement, and strong family and teacher support contribute significantly to learner engagement and motivation. These experiences foster positive attitudes toward school and establish a strong foundation for future educational success. Ultimately, meaningful classroom participation enables young learners to become confident, capable, and enthusiastic participants in their own learning journeys.

Implications of the Study

1. Kindergarten teachers should continue implementing participatory and play-based instructional approaches that support holistic learner development.
2. Early childhood education programs should emphasize active learner engagement as a central component of effective instruction.
3. Schools should strengthen partnerships with parents to reinforce learning and motivation beyond the classroom.
4. Teacher training programs should focus on developmentally appropriate practices that promote participation and positive attitudes toward learning.
5. Educational leaders should prioritize supportive classroom environments that encourage exploration, communication, and collaboration.
6. Policymakers should recognize classroom participation as a key contributor to school readiness and long-term educational success.

Recommendations

1. Increase opportunities for play-based, collaborative, and learner-centered classroom activities.
2. Provide continuous professional development programs on kindergarten pedagogy and learner engagement strategies.
3. Develop classroom resources that encourage active participation and experiential learning.
4. Strengthen home-school partnerships through parent education and involvement initiatives.
5. Establish recognition programs that celebrate learner participation, effort, and progress.
6. Conduct future qualitative and mixed-methods studies examining learner engagement and competence development across different kindergarten settings.

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