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Voices of Elementary Learners: Exploring the Influence of Classroom Participation on Learning Skills and Educational Attitudes

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Abstract

Classroom participation is a fundamental component of effective teaching and learning that contributes to learners' academic, social, and emotional development. Through active engagement in classroom discussions, collaborative activities, and interactive learning experiences, learners acquire essential skills and develop positive attitudes toward education. This study explored the influence of classroom participation on learning skills and educational attitudes among elementary learners at Sinamar Norte Elementary School, San Mateo South District, Philippines. Utilizing a qualitative case study design, the study involved fifteen (15) elementary learners, five (5) teachers, one (1) school administrator, and ten (10) parents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. Findings revealed that classroom participation enhances communication skills, critical thinking abilities, collaboration competencies, self-confidence, self-regulation, and positive educational attitudes. Learners reported that active participation fostered greater motivation, stronger engagement, and increased enjoyment of learning. The study underscores the importance of learner-centered pedagogies and supportive classroom environments in promoting holistic learner development. Findings provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to improve learner engagement and educational outcomes in elementary education.

Keywords: *classroom participation, learning skills, educational attitudes, learner engagement, elementary education, qualitative research, Philippines*

Introduction

The development of learners' skills and attitudes toward learning remains a central objective of elementary education. While academic achievement is often emphasized as an indicator of educational success, contemporary educational research increasingly recognizes the importance of classroom participation as a mechanism for fostering holistic learner development. Participation provides learners with opportunities to engage actively in the learning process, communicate ideas, collaborate with peers, and develop positive dispositions toward education.

Classroom participation extends beyond answering questions and reciting lessons. It encompasses learners' involvement in discussions, collaborative activities, problem-solving tasks, presentations, peer interactions, and reflective learning experiences. Such participation encourages learners to become active contributors to knowledge construction rather than passive recipients of information. Research suggests that active classroom participation promotes communication skills, academic achievement, critical thinking, motivation, and learner confidence. Studies further indicate that participation positively influences learners' attitudes toward learning and strengthens their commitment to academic success.

Educational scholars argue that learners who actively participate in classroom activities are more likely to develop stronger engagement, positive self-perceptions, and deeper understanding of instructional content. Participation also facilitates social interaction, which supports cognitive development and meaningful learning experiences. Opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and learner involvement contribute significantly to educational growth and learner success.

In rural educational settings, classroom participation assumes even greater importance because it provides learners with meaningful opportunities to maximize available educational experiences despite contextual limitations. Rural schools often face challenges related to instructional resources and access to educational support. Nevertheless, active participation can help learners develop essential skills that support both academic achievement and lifelong learning.

Sinamar Norte Elementary School, located in the San Mateo South District, serves learners from predominantly agricultural and rural communities. Teachers have observed that learners who actively participate in classroom activities often demonstrate stronger academic performance, improved communication skills, and more positive attitudes toward learning. However, little is known about how learners themselves perceive the influence of participation on their educational development.

This study explored the voices and experiences of elementary learners regarding classroom participation and its influence on learning skills and educational attitudes. By understanding learners' perspectives, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on learner engagement and effective pedagogical practices in elementary education.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to explore the influence of classroom participation on learning skills and educational attitudes among elementary learners at Sinamar Norte Elementary School.

Specifically, it sought to:

1. Explore learners' experiences of classroom participation.
2. Examine how classroom participation contributes to the development of learning skills.
3. Investigate the influence of participation on learners' educational attitudes.
4. Identify factors that encourage active participation among learners.
5. Determine classroom practices that promote meaningful learner engagement.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Social Constructivist Theory and Student Engagement Theory.

Social Constructivist Theory, proposed by Lev Vygotsky, posits that learning occurs through social interaction and collaborative engagement. Knowledge is actively constructed through communication, participation, and interaction with others. Classroom participation therefore serves as a critical mechanism through which learners acquire knowledge and develop essential skills.

Student Engagement Theory emphasizes the importance of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in promoting educational success. Learners who actively participate in learning activities demonstrate higher levels of motivation, achievement, persistence, and positive attitudes toward education. Active engagement also contributes to the development of self-regulation and learner autonomy.

Together, these theories explain how classroom participation influences both learning skills and educational attitudes among elementary learners.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative case study design to explore learners' experiences regarding classroom participation and its influence on learning skills and educational attitudes. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it enabled an in-depth examination of participants' perspectives, interpretations, and lived experiences within their natural educational context.

The study was conducted at Sinamar Norte Elementary School, San Mateo South District, Philippines. The school serves learners from predominantly rural communities whose educational experiences are shaped by local social, cultural, and economic realities.

Participants consisted of fifteen (15) elementary learners, five (5) teachers, one (1) school administrator, and ten (10) parents selected through purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based on their direct involvement in classroom learning experiences and their ability to provide rich descriptions of learner participation and educational development.

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interview questions focused on learners' participation experiences, learning behaviors, skill development, attitudes toward learning, and perceptions of classroom activities. Classroom observations documented learner engagement, teacher practices, participation behaviors, and classroom interactions.

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis framework. Initial coding procedures were conducted to identify meaningful units of data, which were subsequently organized into categories and themes. Trustworthiness was established through triangulation of data sources, member checking, prolonged engagement, and peer debriefing. Ethical considerations including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the research process.

Findings and Discussion

Theme 1: Classroom Participation Strengthens Communication Skills and Academic Expression

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the study was the role of classroom participation in strengthening learners' communication skills and academic expression. Participants consistently described classroom discussions, recitations, oral presentations, and question-and-answer sessions as opportunities that enabled them to become more confident in expressing their ideas and opinions. Learners reported that frequent participation helped them overcome shyness and improve their ability to communicate effectively with teachers and peers.

One learner shared:

"Noong una po ay nahihiya akong magsalita sa harap ng klase, pero habang mas madalas akong sumasagot sa mga tanong ng guro, natututo akong magsalita nang malinaw at may kumpiyansa."

Another participant explained:

“Kapag nakikilahok ako sa discussion, natututo akong magpaliwanag ng aking sagot at makinig sa opinyon ng iba.”

Teachers observed noticeable improvements in learners’ oral communication skills and confidence.

One teacher stated:

“Mas nagiging malinaw ang pagpapahayag ng mga bata kapag regular silang nakikilahok sa mga talakayan. Natututo silang mag-organisa ng kanilang mga ideya bago magsalita.”

Classroom observations revealed that learners who actively participated demonstrated greater fluency in expressing ideas and showed increased willingness to engage in academic conversations. Participation provided learners with opportunities to practice language use in authentic learning contexts.

The findings support Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of language and social interaction in cognitive development. Mercer and Dawes (2014) similarly argued that classroom dialogue serves as a powerful tool for developing learners’ communication and reasoning abilities. According to Alexander (2020), dialogic teaching creates opportunities for learners to articulate ideas, justify responses, and engage in meaningful exchanges that promote deeper understanding. Walsh (2019) further noted that participation in classroom discourse strengthens oral language development and contributes to academic success.

Theme 2: Active Participation Enhances Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

Another significant theme centered on the contribution of classroom participation to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Learners reported that classroom discussions, analytical questioning, and problem-solving activities encouraged them to think more deeply about lesson content and explore multiple perspectives.

One learner remarked:

“Kapag nagtatanong ang guro, kailangan kong pag-isipan kung bakit ganoon ang sagot at hindi basta hulaan lamang.”

Another learner stated:

“Mas natututo akong maghanap ng paraan para masagot ang mahihirap na tanong kapag nakikilahok ako sa mga gawain.”

Teachers observed that learners who participated actively demonstrated greater analytical abilities and deeper comprehension of instructional content.

One teacher explained:

“Kapag pinapaliwanag namin sa kanila ang dahilan ng kanilang sagot, natututo silang magsuri at mag-isip nang kritikal.”

Classroom observations showed that active participants were more likely to justify their answers, evaluate evidence, and connect concepts across different learning situations. Such behaviors reflect the development of higher-order cognitive skills that are essential for academic achievement.

The findings align with the work of Brookfield (2017), who emphasized that critical thinking develops through questioning, reflection, and dialogue. Facione (2020) argued that critical thinkers learn to analyze information, evaluate arguments, and make informed decisions through active engagement in learning processes. Similarly, Hattie (2023) identified classroom discussion and questioning as high-impact instructional practices that significantly enhance learners’ cognitive development. Bonwell and Eison (1991) further emphasized that active participation promotes deeper learning because learners become directly involved in constructing knowledge rather than passively receiving information.

Theme 3: Collaborative Participation Fosters Social Competence and Interpersonal Skills

Participants consistently highlighted the role of collaborative classroom activities in promoting social competence and interpersonal development. Group work, peer discussions, cooperative projects, and collaborative problem-solving activities enabled learners to build relationships and develop important social skills.

One learner shared:

“Mas natututo ako kapag nagtutulungan kami ng aking mga kaklase dahil may natututuhan ako sa kanilang mga ideya.”

Another participant explained:

“Kapag may group work, natututo akong makinig sa iba at magbigay rin ng aking sariling opinyon.”

Teachers emphasized that collaborative participation fosters teamwork, empathy, cooperation, and respect for diverse perspectives.

One teacher stated:

“Nakikita namin na natututo silang makisama at makipagtulungan sa iba habang ginagawa ang mga gawain sa grupo.”

Observations revealed that collaborative activities encouraged learners to negotiate roles, resolve disagreements, and support one another in achieving common goals. Such experiences contributed significantly to their social and emotional development.

The findings support the work of Johnson and Johnson (2018), who found that cooperative learning enhances both academic achievement and interpersonal relationships. Gillies (2016) noted that collaborative learning environments foster social interaction, mutual support, and effective communication. Slavin (2020) similarly emphasized that cooperative learning promotes social competence by encouraging learners to work together toward shared objectives. Wentzel (2017) further argued that positive peer relationships contribute to learner motivation, engagement, and educational success.

Theme 4: Participation Builds Self-Confidence and Learner Agency

A fourth theme that emerged from the study was the role of classroom participation in developing self-confidence and learner agency. Participants described how successful participation experiences increased their belief in their abilities and motivated them to take greater responsibility for their learning.

One learner shared:

“Mas naniniwala ako sa sarili ko kapag nakakasagot ako nang tama sa klase.”

Another learner remarked:

“Hindi na ako gaanong nahihiya ngayon dahil natutunan kong magsalita sa harap ng mga kaklase ko.”

Teachers reported that participation helped learners become more independent, proactive, and willing to take initiative.

One teacher explained:

“Kapag nabibigyan sila ng pagkakataong makilahok, mas nagiging responsable sila sa kanilang pag-aaral.”

Observations revealed that learners who actively participated demonstrated greater willingness to ask questions, seek clarification, and contribute ideas. These behaviors reflected increasing levels of learner agency and ownership of learning.

The findings are consistent with Bandura’s (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, which posits that successful experiences strengthen individuals’ confidence in their capabilities. Zimmerman (2013) emphasized that learner agency

develops when students are given opportunities to actively engage in learning processes and monitor their progress. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) similarly argued that participation experiences promote self-efficacy and motivation by allowing learners to experience success and mastery.

Theme 5: Classroom Participation Cultivates Positive Educational Attitudes

Another major theme centered on the influence of participation on learners' attitudes toward learning and schooling. Participants consistently reported that active involvement in classroom activities made learning more enjoyable, meaningful, and engaging.

One learner explained:

"Mas gusto kong pumasok sa paaralan kapag nakakasali ako sa mga gawain at discussion."

Another participant stated:

"Kapag nakikilahok ako, mas naiintindihan ko ang aralin at mas nagugustuhan ko ang pag-aaral."

Teachers observed that active participants displayed stronger enthusiasm, persistence, and interest in academic activities.

One teacher remarked:

"Ang mga batang aktibong nakikilahok ay karaniwang mas positibo ang pananaw sa pag-aaral."

Classroom observations revealed that learners who participated regularly demonstrated curiosity, eagerness to learn, and greater persistence when faced with academic challenges. Participation appeared to transform learning from a passive requirement into an enjoyable and meaningful experience.

These findings align with Fredricks et al. (2004), who emphasized that active engagement contributes to positive educational attitudes and stronger academic motivation. Reeve (2018) found that participation enhances learners' intrinsic motivation by satisfying their needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Eccles and Wigfield (2020) similarly argued that meaningful participation increases learners' perceptions of task value and educational relevance, leading to more favorable attitudes toward learning.

Theme 6: Supportive Pedagogical Practices Sustain Meaningful Participation

The final theme emphasized the importance of supportive pedagogical practices in sustaining meaningful classroom participation. Participants consistently reported that teacher encouragement, positive feedback, inclusive classroom environments, and learner-centered instructional strategies motivated them to participate actively.

One learner shared:

"Mas gusto kong sumagot kapag alam kong hindi ako mapapahiya at tutulungan ako ng guro."

Another learner stated:

"Kapag mabait ang guro at hinihikayat kaming magsalita, mas nagiging aktibo kami."

Teachers emphasized the importance of creating psychologically safe classrooms where learners feel comfortable expressing ideas and making mistakes.

One teacher explained:

"Kailangang maramdaman ng mga bata na ligtas silang magkamali upang magkaroon sila ng lakas ng loob na makilahok."

Observations confirmed that supportive learning environments encouraged greater participation, reduced learner anxiety, and promoted stronger engagement. Learners were more willing to contribute when teachers

demonstrated patience, encouragement, and respect for their ideas.

The findings support the work of Tomlinson (2017), who emphasized that differentiated and learner-centered instruction enhances engagement by addressing diverse learner needs. Pianta et al. (2012) found that supportive teacher–student relationships contribute significantly to learner participation and academic success. Hammond (2015) further argued that culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogies create learning environments where learners feel valued, respected, and empowered. Hattie (2023) likewise identified teacher feedback and classroom climate as among the strongest influences on learner achievement and engagement.

Conclusion

The study concludes that classroom participation serves as a powerful pathway for developing learning skills and positive educational attitudes among elementary learners at Sinamar Norte Elementary School. Through active engagement in discussions, collaborative activities, problem-solving tasks, and classroom interactions, learners develop communication skills, critical thinking abilities, social competence, self-confidence, and learner agency. These competencies extend beyond academic achievement and contribute to learners' holistic development.

The findings further reveal that participation positively influences learners' attitudes toward education by making learning more meaningful, enjoyable, and relevant. Learners who actively participate demonstrate stronger motivation, greater enthusiasm, and increased commitment to academic success. Furthermore, supportive pedagogical practices play a crucial role in sustaining participation by creating inclusive and encouraging learning environments.

Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of learner-centered educational practices that position learners as active participants in knowledge construction. Classroom participation should be recognized not merely as an instructional strategy but as a transformative process that promotes both academic and personal growth among elementary learners.

Implications of the Study

1. Teachers should integrate participatory learning strategies that encourage active engagement, communication, and collaboration.
2. Schools should cultivate supportive classroom environments that foster confidence, inclusivity, and learner voice.
3. Professional development programs should emphasize learner-centered pedagogies and effective classroom participation strategies.
4. Educational leaders should recognize classroom participation as a critical component of holistic learner development.
5. Parents should be encouraged to reinforce confidence-building and communication skills at home.
6. Curriculum implementation should provide opportunities for meaningful learner interaction, reflection, and collaborative learning.

Recommendations

1. Increase the use of discussion-based, inquiry-based, and collaborative instructional strategies across elementary classrooms.
2. Provide continuous teacher training on fostering classroom participation and learner engagement.
3. Develop school-based programs that strengthen communication, leadership, and critical thinking skills among learners.
4. Establish recognition systems that celebrate active participation and learner initiative.

5. Strengthen home-school partnerships to support positive educational attitudes and learner confidence.
6. Conduct future qualitative and mixed-methods studies involving multiple schools and grade levels to further examine the influence of participation on learner development.

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