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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Classroom Participation as a Pathway to Learner Development: Exploring Academic Skills and Learning Attitudes among Elementary Pupils

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Abstract

Classroom participation is a fundamental component of learner-centered education that significantly influences learners' academic, social, and emotional development. Through active engagement in classroom discussions, collaborative activities, and learning tasks, learners develop essential academic skills and cultivate positive attitudes toward learning. This study explored how classroom participation serves as a pathway to learner development among elementary pupils at Andabuen National High School, Benito Soliven South District, Philippines. Employing a qualitative case study design, the study involved fifteen (15) elementary pupils, six (6) teachers, one (1) school administrator, and ten (10) parents selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. Findings revealed that classroom participation enhances communication skills, critical thinking abilities, collaborative competencies, self-confidence, learner motivation, and positive learning attitudes. Supportive teacher practices, peer interactions, and inclusive classroom environments emerged as significant factors promoting active participation. The study highlights the importance of participatory pedagogies in fostering holistic learner development and educational engagement. Findings provide valuable insights for educators, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to strengthen instructional practices and learner outcomes in rural elementary schools.

Keywords: *classroom participation, learner development, academic skills, learning attitudes, elementary education, learner engagement, qualitative research*

Introduction

Education is most effective when learners actively participate in the learning process. Contemporary educational paradigms increasingly emphasize learner engagement and participation as essential components of meaningful learning experiences. Rather than functioning as passive recipients of knowledge, learners are encouraged to become active contributors who construct understanding through interaction, reflection, and collaboration.

Classroom participation encompasses learners' involvement in discussions, questioning activities, collaborative learning tasks, presentations, problem-solving exercises, and other instructional experiences. Such participation provides opportunities for learners to develop communication skills, critical thinking abilities, social competencies, and positive attitudes toward learning. Educational researchers consistently emphasize that active participation contributes to improved academic achievement, learner confidence, and motivation.

In elementary education, classroom participation is particularly important because it supports the development of foundational academic and socio-emotional competencies. Through participation, learners acquire skills that extend beyond content mastery and include collaboration, self-expression, leadership, and responsibility. Positive participation experiences also contribute to favorable educational attitudes, which influence long-term engagement and academic success.

In rural educational contexts, participation serves as an important mechanism for maximizing learning opportunities and supporting learner development. Schools often function as central spaces where learners acquire both academic knowledge and life skills through interactions with teachers, peers, and the broader learning environment.

Andabuen National High School, located in Benito Soliven South District, serves learners from predominantly rural communities. Teachers have observed varying levels of participation among learners and recognize its influence on academic performance and attitudes toward learning. Understanding learners' experiences of participation can provide valuable insights into instructional practices that foster engagement and development.

This study explored how classroom participation contributes to the development of academic skills and learning attitudes among elementary pupils. By examining learners' experiences, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of participation as a pathway to holistic learner development.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to explore how classroom participation contributes to learner development among elementary pupils at Andabuen National High School.

Specifically, it sought to:

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

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Social Constructivist Theory, Student Engagement Theory, and Self-Efficacy Theory.

Social Constructivist Theory posits that learning occurs through social interaction and collaborative engagement. Learners actively construct knowledge through communication, participation, and interaction with peers and teachers.

Student Engagement Theory emphasizes that behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement significantly

influence educational success. Active participation contributes to motivation, persistence, and academic achievement.

Self-Efficacy Theory explains how successful participation experiences strengthen learners' confidence in their abilities and encourage continued engagement in learning activities.

Together, these theories explain how classroom participation contributes to academic skill development and positive learning attitudes.

Methodology

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

The study was conducted at Andabuen National High School, Benito Soliven South District, Philippines. Participants included fifteen (15) elementary pupils, six (6) 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 participation and learner development.

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interview questions focused on classroom participation, academic development, learner attitudes, classroom interactions, and educational experiences.

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. Coding procedures were employed to identify recurring patterns and themes across participant responses. Trustworthiness was established through triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, and peer debriefing. Ethical principles including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the study.

5. Findings and Discussion

Theme 1: Classroom Participation Strengthens Communication and Academic Expression

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the study was the role of classroom participation in enhancing learners' communication skills and academic expression. Participants consistently described how answering questions, engaging in discussions, participating in recitations, and presenting ideas enabled them to express themselves more confidently and effectively. Learners reported that active participation helped them organize their thoughts, articulate ideas clearly, and communicate with teachers and classmates.

One learner shared:

"Kapag sumasagot ako sa klase, mas natututo akong magsalita nang malinaw at hindi na gaanong nahihiya."

Another participant remarked:

"Mas naiintindihan ko ang aralin kapag nakikilahok ako sa discussion kasi nakakapagbahagi rin ako ng aking opinyon."

Teachers observed that learners who regularly participated demonstrated stronger oral communication skills and greater confidence in expressing ideas.

One teacher explained:

"Ang mga batang aktibong nakikilahok ay mas nagiging mahusay sa pagpapahayag ng kanilang saloobin at pagtalakay ng kanilang mga natututuhan."

Classroom observations revealed that active participants were more willing to engage in academic discourse, ask

questions, and contribute to classroom conversations. These opportunities strengthened both language development and academic communication skills.

The findings support Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which highlights the role of language and social interaction in learning. Mercer and Littleton (2007) argued that classroom dialogue enhances learners' ability to reason, communicate, and construct knowledge. Similarly, Alexander (2020) emphasized that dialogic teaching fosters communication competence and deeper understanding. Walsh (2019) further found that participation in classroom discourse significantly improves learners' oral language proficiency and academic confidence.

Theme 2: Active Participation Enhances Critical Thinking and Academic Skills

Another significant theme centered on the influence of classroom participation on learners' academic skills and critical thinking abilities. Participants described how classroom discussions, problem-solving activities, and inquiry-based learning experiences challenged them to analyze information, evaluate ideas, and justify responses.

One learner explained:

"Kapag may mahirap na tanong si Teacher, kailangan kong mag-isip nang mabuti bago sumagot."

Another participant stated:

"Mas natututo akong maghanap ng tamang sagot kapag nakikilahok ako sa mga activities."

Teachers observed that active participation encouraged learners to become more reflective and analytical.

One teacher shared:

"Kapag hinihikayat silang magbigay ng paliwanag sa kanilang sagot, mas nahahasa ang kanilang critical thinking skills."

Classroom observations showed that learners who participated frequently demonstrated stronger comprehension, reasoning abilities, and problem-solving skills. They became more capable of connecting concepts and applying knowledge to different situations.

These findings align with Brookfield (2017), who emphasized that discussion-based learning promotes reflective thinking and intellectual development. Facione (2020) argued that critical thinking develops through opportunities for analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Hattie (2023) similarly reported that active classroom engagement significantly contributes to academic achievement and cognitive growth. Bonwell and Eison (1991) further emphasized that active learning enhances understanding because learners become directly involved in the learning process.

Theme 3: Collaborative Participation Develops Social Competence and Teamwork

The study revealed that collaborative participation plays a vital role in developing social competence and teamwork skills. Participants frequently described group work, peer learning activities, and collaborative projects as opportunities to learn from others and develop interpersonal relationships.

One learner shared:

"Mas natututo ako kapag nagtutulungan kami ng mga kaklase ko sa paggawa ng activities."

Another participant remarked:

"Kapag may group work, natututo akong makinig sa opinyon ng iba at magbigay rin ng sarili kong ideya."

Teachers emphasized that collaborative participation promotes cooperation, empathy, and respect.

One teacher explained:

“Ang mga gawaing panggrupo ay nagtuturo sa mga bata kung paano makisama, makinig, at makipagtulungan sa iba.”

Observations revealed that learners developed stronger peer relationships through collaborative tasks. They learned to negotiate roles, resolve disagreements, and work toward common goals.

The findings support Johnson and Johnson’s (2018) research on cooperative learning, which found that collaboration improves both academic and social outcomes. Gillies (2016) similarly argued that cooperative learning fosters communication, mutual support, and social competence. Slavin (2020) emphasized that collaborative participation promotes teamwork skills essential for both educational and future workplace success. Wentzel (2017) further highlighted the role of positive peer relationships in enhancing learner engagement and achievement.

Theme 4: Participation Builds Self-Confidence and Learner Agency

A fourth theme highlighted the role of classroom participation in building self-confidence and learner agency. Participants described how active involvement in classroom activities increased their belief in their abilities and encouraged them to take greater responsibility for their learning.

One learner stated:

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

Another participant explained:

“Hindi na ako gaanong nahihiya ngayon dahil mas sanay na akong magsalita sa harap ng klase.”

Teachers reported that participation empowered learners to become more independent and proactive.

One teacher remarked:

“Kapag aktibo silang nakikilahok, mas nagiging responsable sila sa kanilang pag-aaral at mas nagtitiwala sa kanilang kakayahan.”

Observations showed that learners who participated actively demonstrated initiative, persistence, and willingness to engage in challenging tasks. They became more comfortable asking questions and seeking clarification when needed.

These findings are consistent with Bandura’s (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, which posits that successful experiences strengthen confidence and motivation. Zimmerman (2013) argued that active engagement promotes learner agency and self-regulation. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) further noted that participation provides mastery experiences that enhance learners’ perceptions of competence and encourage continued effort.

Theme 5: Classroom Participation Cultivates Positive Learning Attitudes

Another major theme centered on the influence of participation on learners’ attitudes toward learning. Participants consistently reported that active involvement made learning more enjoyable, meaningful, and motivating.

One learner shared:

“Mas gusto kong mag-aral kapag nakakasali ako sa mga gawain sa klase.”

Another participant remarked:

“Kapag nakikilahok ako, mas naiintindihan ko ang aralin kaya mas nagugustuhan ko ang pag-aaral.”

Teachers observed that active learners demonstrated stronger enthusiasm, persistence, and curiosity.

One teacher stated:

“Ang mga batang nakikilahok sa klase ay mas interesado at mas positibo ang pananaw sa kanilang pag-aaral.”

Classroom observations revealed that learners who participated frequently displayed higher levels of engagement and motivation. They approached learning tasks with greater enthusiasm and demonstrated willingness to persevere despite challenges.

The findings align with Student Engagement Theory, which emphasizes the relationship between participation and positive educational outcomes. Fredricks et al. (2004) found that engaged learners develop stronger motivation and more positive attitudes toward school. Reeve (2018) argued that participation promotes intrinsic motivation by satisfying learners’ needs for competence and autonomy. Eccles and Wigfield (2020) similarly found that meaningful learning experiences enhance learners’ perceptions of educational value and relevance.

Theme 6: Supportive Classroom Environments Sustain Meaningful Participation

The final theme emphasized the importance of supportive classroom environments in sustaining meaningful participation. Participants consistently highlighted teacher encouragement, positive feedback, and inclusive classroom practices as factors that motivated them to engage actively.

One learner explained:

“Mas gusto kong sumagot kapag alam kong hindi ako mapapahiya at tutulungan ako ni Teacher.”

Another participant stated:

“Kapag mabait ang guro at supportive ang mga kaklase, mas gusto kong makilahok.”

Teachers stressed the importance of creating safe spaces where learners feel comfortable expressing ideas and making mistakes.

One teacher shared:

“Kailangang maramdaman ng mga bata na ligtas silang magkamali upang magkaroon sila ng kumpiyansang makilahok.”

Classroom observations confirmed that supportive learning environments promoted confidence, engagement, and participation. Learners became more willing to contribute when they felt respected and valued.

The findings support Tomlinson’s (2017) work on learner-centered and differentiated instruction. Pianta et al. (2012) found that positive teacher–student relationships significantly influence learner engagement and achievement. Hammond (2015) emphasized that inclusive and culturally responsive classrooms empower learners to participate actively. Hattie (2023) likewise identified teacher feedback and classroom climate as among the strongest influences on learner success.

Conclusion

The study concludes that classroom participation serves as a significant pathway to learner development among elementary pupils at Andabuen National High School. Active participation contributes to the development of communication skills, academic competencies, critical thinking abilities, social competence, self-confidence, and positive learning attitudes. Through participation, learners become active contributors to the educational process and develop skills essential for academic success and lifelong learning.

The findings further reveal that supportive classroom environments and positive teacher practices are critical in sustaining meaningful participation. Learners who experience encouragement, respect, and opportunities for engagement develop stronger motivation and more favorable attitudes toward education. Classroom participation therefore functions not only as an instructional strategy but also as a mechanism for holistic learner development.

Implications of the Study

1. Teachers should prioritize participatory instructional approaches that actively involve learners in the learning process.
2. Schools should foster classroom environments that encourage collaboration, communication, and learner voice.
3. Professional development programs should emphasize strategies for promoting learner engagement and active participation.
4. Educational leaders should recognize classroom participation as a key factor influencing both academic achievement and learner well-being.
5. Parents should be encouraged to support confidence-building and communication development at home.
6. Curriculum implementation should incorporate meaningful opportunities for discussion, collaboration, and inquiry.

Recommendations

1. Increase the use of collaborative learning, inquiry-based instruction, and classroom discussions.
2. Provide continuous teacher training on learner-centered pedagogies and participation strategies.
3. Establish school programs that strengthen communication, leadership, and critical thinking skills.
4. Develop classroom practices that encourage learner voice and active engagement.
5. Strengthen home-school partnerships that support positive learning attitudes and learner confidence.
6. Conduct future qualitative and mixed-methods studies involving multiple schools to further examine the influence of participation on learner development.

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