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Pedagogical Practices and Classroom Experiences in Shaping Learners' Skills and Attitudes toward Learning: A Qualitative Inquiry in a Rural Philippine Elementary School

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Abstract

Pedagogical practices significantly influence learners' academic development, engagement, and attitudes toward learning. In elementary education, classroom experiences serve as critical spaces where learners acquire essential skills, develop learning habits, and cultivate perceptions about education. This study explored how pedagogical practices and classroom experiences shape learners' skills and attitudes toward learning at San Mateo South Central School, San Mateo South District, Philippines. Using a qualitative case study design, the study involved fifteen (15) elementary learners, six (6) teachers, three (3) school administrators, 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 learner-centered instruction, collaborative learning, supportive teacher-learner relationships, authentic learning experiences, positive classroom climate, and reflective learning opportunities significantly contributed to the development of learners' academic skills and positive attitudes toward learning. The study highlights the importance of responsive pedagogical practices in fostering learner engagement, confidence, critical thinking, and motivation. The findings provide valuable insights for educators and school leaders seeking to strengthen instructional quality and learner outcomes in rural elementary schools.

Keywords: pedagogy, classroom experiences, learning skills, learning attitudes, learner-centered instruction, rural education, elementary education

Introduction

Education is fundamentally shaped by the pedagogical practices employed within classrooms. Pedagogy encompasses the methods, strategies, interactions, and learning experiences through which teachers facilitate knowledge acquisition and learner development. Effective pedagogical practices not only influence academic achievement but also shape learners' attitudes, motivation, engagement, and lifelong approaches to learning. In contemporary educational settings, there is increasing recognition that meaningful learning occurs when learners actively participate in experiences that promote critical thinking, collaboration, reflection, and personal growth.

Learners' skills and attitudes toward learning are developed through continuous interactions with teachers, peers, instructional materials, and classroom environments. Positive classroom experiences foster confidence, curiosity, persistence, and enthusiasm for learning, while negative experiences may hinder participation and reduce motivation. Consequently, understanding how pedagogical practices influence learner development remains an important concern in educational research.

In rural Philippine schools, teachers often face unique challenges related to resource limitations, learner diversity, and contextual realities. Despite these challenges, rural educators continue to implement innovative pedagogical strategies that support learner development. Exploring how learners experience these pedagogical practices provides valuable insights into educational processes that contribute to successful learning outcomes.

San Mateo South Central School, located in the San Mateo South District, serves learners from predominantly agricultural communities. Teachers at the school employ various instructional approaches aimed at promoting active participation, skill development, and positive learning experiences. Understanding learners' perspectives regarding these classroom experiences can contribute to the improvement of pedagogical practices and educational quality.

This study explored how pedagogical practices and classroom experiences shape learners' skills and attitudes toward learning. By examining learners' experiences within a rural elementary school context, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on learner-centered pedagogy and educational development.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to explore how pedagogical practices and classroom experiences shape learners' skills and attitudes toward learning at San Mateo South Central School.

Specifically, it sought to:

1. Explore learners' experiences of classroom pedagogical practices.
2. Examine how classroom experiences contribute to the development of learning skills.
3. Investigate the influence of pedagogical practices on learners' attitudes toward learning.
4. Identify factors that facilitate positive classroom experiences.
5. Determine instructional practices that promote learner engagement and development.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Constructivist Learning Theory and Experiential Learning Theory.

Constructivist Learning Theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful interactions with their environment and social experiences. Learning occurs when individuals engage with content, collaborate with others, and reflect upon their experiences.

Experiential Learning Theory emphasizes that learning develops through concrete experiences, reflection, conceptualization, and application. Classroom experiences therefore serve as important foundations for skill acquisition and attitudinal development.

These theoretical perspectives explain how pedagogical practices and classroom experiences contribute to the development of learners' competencies and educational attitudes.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative case study research design to explore the experiences of learners regarding pedagogical practices and classroom experiences at San Mateo South Central School. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it enabled an in-depth examination of participants' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations regarding learning and instruction. The case study design allowed for a comprehensive investigation of the phenomenon within its real-life educational context.

The study was conducted at San Mateo South Central School, a public elementary school located in the San Mateo South District, Schools Division of Isabela, Philippines. The school serves learners from predominantly rural and agricultural communities, making it an appropriate setting for examining classroom experiences and pedagogical practices.

Participants included fifteen (15) elementary learners, six (6) teachers, three (3) school administrators, and ten (10) parents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis. Interview questions focused on classroom experiences, instructional practices, learner participation, skill development, and attitudes toward learning.

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

Findings and Discussion

Theme 1: Learner-Centered Pedagogies Enhance Academic Skills Development

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the study was the effectiveness of learner-centered pedagogical practices in developing learners' academic skills. Participants consistently described classroom activities that encouraged active participation, inquiry, exploration, and independent thinking. Learners reported that they acquired stronger reading, writing, communication, and problem-solving skills when they were actively involved in the learning process rather than merely receiving information from teachers.

One learner shared:

"Mas marami akong natututuhan kapag kami mismo ang gumagawa ng activities kaysa puro pakikinig lang."

Another learner explained:

"Kapag pinapahanap sa amin ang sagot at kami ang nag-eexplore, mas natatandaan ko ang aralin."

Teachers similarly emphasized the importance of learner-centered instruction.

One teacher stated:

"Kapag aktibong nakikilahok ang mga bata, mas lumalalim ang kanilang pag-unawa at mas nahahasa ang kanilang kakayahan."

Classroom observations revealed that learners demonstrated greater engagement, confidence, and skill

development when participating in hands-on tasks, collaborative activities, and inquiry-based lessons.

These findings support Constructivist Learning Theory, which argues that knowledge is actively constructed through meaningful experiences and social interactions. Research by Jerome Bruner and Jean Piaget suggests that learner-centered pedagogies promote deeper understanding and skill acquisition by encouraging active engagement with learning materials.

Theme 2: Collaborative Classroom Experiences Foster Communication and Social Skills

Another significant theme centered on the role of collaborative learning experiences in developing communication and interpersonal skills. Participants frequently described group work, peer discussions, cooperative learning activities, and classroom projects as opportunities to learn from one another and strengthen social competencies.

One learner remarked:

“Mas natututo ako kapag nagtutulungan kami ng mga kaklase ko.”

Another participant shared:

“Kapag may group work, natututo akong makinig sa opinyon ng iba at magbahagi rin ng sarili kong ideya.”

Teachers observed that collaborative activities enhanced learners' communication skills, teamwork, and confidence.

One teacher explained:

“Malaki ang naitutulong ng collaborative learning sa pagpapalakas ng pakikipagkapwa at pakikipagtalastasan ng mga bata.”

Observations revealed that learners became more comfortable expressing ideas, asking questions, and engaging in meaningful discussions when working collaboratively.

These findings align with the sociocultural perspective of Lev Vygotsky, which emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration. Previous studies have shown that cooperative learning enhances communication competence, social skills, and academic achievement among elementary learners.

Theme 3: Supportive Teacher-Learner Relationships Cultivate Positive Learning Attitudes

A third theme highlighted the importance of supportive teacher-learner relationships in fostering positive attitudes toward learning. Participants consistently described teachers as significant sources of encouragement, motivation, and emotional support.

One learner stated:

“Mas gusto kong mag-aral kapag alam kong handang tumulong ang guro kapag nahihirapan ako.”

Another learner explained:

“Kapag pinupuri kami ng guro, mas ginaganahan kaming mag-aral.”

Teachers acknowledged that positive relationships contribute to learner motivation and engagement.

One teacher shared:

“Kapag maganda ang relasyon ng guro at mag-aaral, mas nagiging bukas sila sa pagkatuto.”

Classroom observations revealed that teachers frequently provided encouragement, constructive feedback, and individualized support. These practices created an atmosphere where learners felt safe to participate, ask questions, and make mistakes without fear of criticism.

The findings support research by John Hattie, which identifies teacher–student relationships as one of the strongest influences on learner achievement and engagement. Positive relationships contribute to learner confidence, motivation, and persistence.

Theme 4: Authentic Learning Experiences Promote Relevance and Motivation

Participants highlighted the importance of authentic learning experiences that connect classroom lessons to real-life situations. Learners expressed greater interest and enthusiasm when lessons reflected their daily experiences, community realities, and future aspirations.

One learner shared:

“Mas naiintindihan ko ang aralin kapag may halimbawa na nangyayari sa aming komunidad.”

Another participant remarked:

“Kapag tungkol sa totoong buhay ang mga gawain, mas nagiging interesado akong matuto.”

Teachers intentionally contextualized lessons to make learning more meaningful.

One teacher explained:

“Sinisikap naming iugnay ang aralin sa mga karanasan ng mga bata upang mas makita nila ang kahalagahan nito.”

Classroom observations showed that contextualized lessons increased participation, curiosity, and engagement. Learners demonstrated stronger motivation when they perceived learning activities as relevant to their lives.

The findings align with Experiential Learning Theory, which emphasizes the role of meaningful experiences in promoting understanding and motivation. Research indicates that authentic learning experiences foster deeper engagement, knowledge retention, and positive attitudes toward education.

Theme 5: Reflective Learning Opportunities Strengthen Critical Thinking and Self-Awareness

Another theme that emerged was the contribution of reflective learning activities to critical thinking and self-awareness. Participants described opportunities to reflect on lessons, evaluate their performance, and express personal insights as valuable learning experiences.

One learner explained:

“Kapag pinapaisip kami ng guro tungkol sa aming natutunan, mas naiintindihan ko ang kahalagahan ng aralin.”

Another learner stated:

“Natututo akong tingnan kung ano pa ang kailangan kong pagbutihin.”

Teachers reported that reflective activities encouraged learners to become more aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and learning processes.

One teacher shared:

“Ang reflection ay tumutulong sa mga bata na mas makilala ang kanilang sarili bilang mag-aaral.”

Observations revealed that learners who engaged in reflective discussions demonstrated greater self-awareness, responsibility, and critical thinking skills.

The findings support metacognitive learning research, which suggests that reflection enhances self-regulation, critical thinking, and academic performance. Reflective learning opportunities empower learners to become active participants in their own educational development.

Theme 6: Positive Classroom Climate Encourages Engagement and Lifelong Learning Attitudes

The final theme emphasized the influence of positive classroom climate on learner engagement and attitudes toward learning. Participants described classrooms characterized by respect, inclusivity, encouragement, and cooperation as environments that fostered enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning.

One learner remarked:

“Masaya akong pumasok sa paaralan dahil maganda ang samahan namin sa klase.”

Another learner shared:

“Kapag positibo ang paligid, mas gusto kong makilahok sa mga gawain.”

Teachers highlighted the importance of creating nurturing classroom environments.

One teacher stated:

“Kapag komportable at masaya ang mga bata sa silid-aralan, mas nagiging interesado silang matuto.”

Classroom observations confirmed that positive classroom climates contributed to increased participation, reduced anxiety, and stronger learner engagement.

Research on school climate consistently demonstrates that supportive learning environments positively influence academic motivation, emotional well-being, and educational achievement. Positive classroom climates cultivate attitudes that support lifelong learning and continuous personal growth.

Conclusion

The study concludes that pedagogical practices and classroom experiences play a significant role in shaping learners' skills and attitudes toward learning at San Mateo South Central School. Learner-centered pedagogies, collaborative learning experiences, supportive teacher–learner relationships, authentic instructional practices, reflective learning opportunities, and positive classroom climates collectively contribute to learners' academic, social, and emotional development.

The findings reveal that classroom experiences extend beyond the acquisition of academic knowledge and serve as important contexts for developing communication skills, critical thinking abilities, collaboration competencies, self-awareness, confidence, and positive learning dispositions. Learners who experience supportive and engaging pedagogical practices demonstrate stronger motivation, active participation, and greater enthusiasm for learning.

Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of responsive and inclusive pedagogies that recognize learners as active participants in the educational process. Such approaches are essential for fostering holistic learner development and promoting educational success in rural elementary school settings.

Implications of the Study

1. Teachers should prioritize learner-centered pedagogies that actively engage learners in meaningful learning experiences.
2. Schools should strengthen professional development programs focused on collaborative, reflective, and

experiential learning approaches.

3. Educational leaders should promote instructional practices that connect learning to real-life experiences and local contexts.
4. Classroom environments should be designed to foster inclusivity, safety, respect, and positive learner interactions.
5. Reflection and metacognitive activities should be integrated into classroom instruction to strengthen critical thinking and self-regulation.
6. Rural schools should continue developing innovative pedagogical strategies that address diverse learner needs and promote equitable educational opportunities.

Recommendations

1. Increase the implementation of learner-centered and inquiry-based instructional strategies across grade levels.
2. Provide continuous teacher training on differentiated instruction, reflective teaching, and learner engagement.
3. Develop contextualized instructional materials that reflect learners' experiences and community realities.
4. Strengthen collaborative learning programs that encourage teamwork and peer support.
5. Integrate structured reflection activities into classroom instruction to promote critical thinking and self-awareness.
6. Conduct future qualitative and mixed-methods studies across multiple rural schools to further examine the relationship between pedagogical practices, learner skills, and educational attitudes.

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