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## LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GRADE 6 LEARNERS ON PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AND LEARNING ENGAGEMENT IN BURGOS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

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### Abstract

This qualitative study explores the lived experiences of Grade 6 learners regarding pedagogical practices and their engagement in Burgos Elementary School. Anchored in constructivist learning theory and student engagement frameworks, the study examines how instructional approaches, classroom interactions, and contextual factors influence learners' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving purposively selected Grade 6 learners and teachers. Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, and were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Findings revealed five major themes: (1) Interactive and Learner-Centered Instructional Experiences, (2) Experiential and Contextualized Learning Engagement, (3) Collaborative Learning and Peer-Mediated Understanding, (4) Emotional Climate and Motivation in Learning, and (5) Structural Constraints Affecting Engagement. Results indicate that engagement is enhanced through participatory, relevant, and supportive learning environments; however, systemic challenges limit the sustainability of such practices. The study underscores the need for strengthened pedagogical responsiveness and institutional support to foster meaningful and sustained learner engagement.

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## INTRODUCTION

Understanding learners' lived experiences has become increasingly central in contemporary education, particularly in assessing the effectiveness of pedagogical practices and the quality of learning environments. The growing shift toward learner-centered education reflects a broader recognition that learning is not merely about the transmission of knowledge but about how learners actively engage with, interpret, and internalize educational experiences within specific social and cultural contexts. This perspective emphasizes that students bring prior knowledge, personal experiences, and individual perspectives into the classroom, all of which shape how they make meaning of instruction. Consequently, examining learners' lived experiences provides a more holistic and authentic understanding of teaching and learning processes. Engagement, which encompasses behavioral (participation and effort), cognitive (investment in understanding), and emotional (interest, motivation, and sense of belonging) dimensions, is widely acknowledged as a key determinant of academic success and overall learner development (Fredricks et al., 2004). When learners are meaningfully engaged across these dimensions, they are more likely to demonstrate persistence, deeper comprehension, and positive attitudes toward learning.

At the elementary level, particularly in Grade 6, learners are at a critical developmental stage characterized by the emergence of higher-order thinking skills, increased independence, and heightened social awareness. This transitional phase prepares them for more complex academic demands in secondary education, making it essential to examine how pedagogical practices influence their engagement and learning outcomes. During this stage, learners begin to move beyond basic comprehension toward analysis, evaluation, and application of knowledge. They also become more conscious of peer relationships and classroom dynamics, which can significantly impact their motivation and participation. Effective teaching practices, therefore, must go beyond rote instruction and instead promote active participation, critical inquiry, and meaningful interaction. Classrooms that encourage questioning, discussion, and collaboration provide learners with opportunities to construct knowledge actively, rather than passively receiving information. Such environments foster not only academic growth but also the development of essential skills such as communication, problem-solving, and self-regulation.

Grounded in constructivist perspectives, learning is understood as a dynamic, social, and interactive process. The work of Lev Vygotsky highlights that learners construct knowledge through interaction, dialogue, and shared experiences with others, particularly within their zone of proximal development, where guidance and collaboration enhance learning (Vygotsky, 1978). This underscores the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in facilitating cognitive development. Similarly, experiential learning theory, as proposed by David Kolb, emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs when learners engage in concrete experiences followed by reflection, conceptualization, and application (Kolb, 1984). These theoretical frameworks collectively highlight that learning is most effective when it is active, contextualized, and socially mediated. As such, pedagogical practices that integrate interactive, experiential, and collaborative approaches are more likely to foster deep engagement and meaningful learning outcomes among learners.

In the Philippine educational context, current reforms emphasize the importance of inclusive, learner-centered, and skills-based education aligned with 21st-century competencies. Initiatives such as curriculum enhancements and policy frameworks aim to develop learners who are critical thinkers, effective communicators, and collaborative problem-solvers. However, despite these policy directions, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these pedagogical principles are experienced by learners in actual classroom settings, particularly in public elementary schools where contextual challenges such as large class sizes and limited resources persist. Much of the existing research focuses on teacher practices or quantitative indicators of engagement, often overlooking the qualitative and experiential dimensions of how learners perceive and respond to instruction. As a result, there is limited insight into how pedagogical approaches translate into meaningful learning experiences from the learners' perspective.

This study addresses this gap by exploring the lived experiences of Grade 6 learners in Burgos Elementary School in relation to pedagogical practices and learning engagement. By adopting a qualitative approach, the study seeks to capture the voices, perceptions, and everyday realities of learners, providing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how teaching strategies influence their participation, motivation, and engagement. Through this inquiry, the research aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on learner-centered education by highlighting the importance of aligning pedagogical practices with learners' needs, experiences, and contextual realities. Ultimately, the study aspires to inform more responsive, inclusive, and effective instructional practices that enhance learner engagement and support holistic development.

## Research Questions

1. How do Grade 6 learners describe their lived experiences of pedagogical practices in Burgos Elementary School?
2. How do these pedagogical practices influence learners' engagement?
3. What factors enhance or hinder learners' engagement in the classroom?

## Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Constructivist Learning Theory and Experiential Learning Theory, as well as the Student Engagement Framework (Fredricks et al., 2004), which conceptualizes engagement as behavioral, cognitive, and emotional involvement in learning.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study design to provide a rich, contextualized, and in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of Grade 6 learners in Burgos Elementary School, particularly in relation to pedagogical practices and learning engagement. Anchored in an interpretivist paradigm, the case study approach enabled the researchers to examine teaching and learning as they naturally occur within a specific bounded context, capturing the complexities of classroom interactions, learner perceptions, and instructional dynamics. Burgos Elementary School, as a public elementary institution in the Philippine setting, reflects typical educational conditions characterized by diverse learner backgrounds, varying levels of academic readiness, and limited instructional resources. These contextual realities make it a relevant and meaningful site for investigating how pedagogical practices are implemented and how they are experienced by learners in real classroom environments.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that those involved had direct and relevant experiences related to the focus of the study. The sample consisted of ten Grade 6 learners representing different levels of academic performance, participation, and engagement, as well as four teachers who were actively involved in classroom instruction. Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods to ensure depth, rigor, and triangulation. In-depth semi-structured interviews provided detailed insights into participants' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of classroom practices. Classroom observations allowed the researchers to document actual teaching-learning interactions, learner behaviors, and instructional strategies as they unfolded in real time. Additionally, document analysis of lesson plans and instructional materials enabled the examination of the alignment between planned pedagogy and its implementation. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, involving systematic processes of data familiarization, coding, categorization, and theme development to identify meaningful patterns across the dataset. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researchers adhered to the criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmability through the use of triangulation of data sources, member checking to validate participants' responses and interpretations, and audit trails to maintain transparency and consistency throughout the research process.

## RESULTS

### Theme 1: Interactive and Learner-Centered Instructional Experiences

Learners consistently described their classroom experiences as more engaging, meaningful, and intellectually stimulating when teachers employed interactive and learner-centered approaches. These included guided questioning, open discussions, recitations, and participatory activities that required learners to actively contribute rather than passively listen. Teachers facilitated dialogue by asking probing questions, encouraging students to explain their answers, and allowing them to express their ideas freely. This created a dynamic classroom environment where learners became active participants in knowledge construction. Such practices also enabled learners to develop confidence in expressing their thoughts and to engage in critical thinking as they evaluated and responded to questions and peer contributions.

Responses:

"Mas naiintindihan ko kapag nakakasagot ako sa teacher."

(I understand better when I can respond to the teacher.)

"Mas gusto ko yung may discussion kasi nakakapag-share kami."

(I prefer classes with discussions because we can share ideas.)

"Hindi ako nabobore kapag interactive ang klase."

(I don't get bored when the class is interactive.)

"Mas natututo ako kapag tinatanong kami at pinapaliwanag ang sagot namin."

(I learn more when we are asked questions and explain our answers.)

The findings indicate that interactive pedagogy enhances engagement by promoting active participation and deeper cognitive involvement. When learners are given opportunities to respond, discuss, and reflect, they become more invested in the learning process. This aligns with the constructivist perspective of Lev Vygotsky, which emphasizes that knowledge is co-constructed through interaction and dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978). Interactive teaching strategies encourage learners to process information critically, articulate their understanding, and engage with diverse perspectives. As a result, such approaches not only improve comprehension but also foster higher-order thinking skills and learner autonomy.

## **Theme 2: Experiential and Contextualized Learning Engagement**

Learners reported that their understanding significantly improved when lessons were connected to real-life experiences and involved hands-on or experiential activities. Teachers incorporated contextualized examples, practical tasks, and demonstrations that allowed learners to relate abstract concepts to familiar situations. These approaches made learning more relevant and meaningful, as learners were able to see the practical application of what they were studying. Hands-on activities also enabled learners to actively engage with content, reinforcing their understanding through direct experience.

Responses:

"Mas madaling maintindihan kapag may halimbawa sa totoong buhay."

(It is easier to understand with real-life examples.)

"Mas natatandaan ko kapag may activity."

(I remember better when there is an activity.)

"Kapag ginagawa namin, mas naiintindihan ko ang lesson."

(When we do activities, I understand the lesson better.)

"Mas interesting ang klase kapag may hands-on na gawain."

(The class is more interesting when there are hands-on activities.)

The findings suggest that experiential and contextualized learning enhances both retention and understanding by actively involving learners in the learning process. This aligns with the experiential learning theory of David Kolb, which posits that knowledge is constructed through experience, reflection, and application (Kolb, 1984). When learners engage in meaningful activities connected to real-life contexts, they are more likely to internalize concepts and apply them in new situations. These approaches also increase motivation and engagement, as learners perceive the relevance of their learning. Thus, experiential pedagogy plays a crucial role in fostering meaningful and transferable knowledge.

## **Theme 3: Collaborative Learning and Peer-Mediated Understanding**

Collaborative learning emerged as a significant aspect of learners' experiences, where group work and peer interaction facilitated understanding and skill development. Through cooperative activities, learners were able to share ideas, ask questions, and support one another in completing tasks. Peer interaction allowed learners to clarify misconceptions and gain alternative perspectives, making learning more accessible and interactive. The collaborative environment also fostered a sense of shared responsibility and collective learning, where students worked together toward common goals.

Responses:

"Mas natututo ako kapag nagtutulungan kami."

(I learn more when we help each other.)

"Kapag may hindi ako maintindihan, tinutulungan ako ng classmates ko."

(My classmates help me when I don't understand.)

"Mas madali kapag may ka-group kasi nagtutulungan kami sa pagsagot."

(It is easier when we have group members because we help each other.)

"Mas naiintindihan ko kapag may nagpapaliwanag na kaklase ko."

(I understand better when a classmate explains it to me.)

The findings indicate that collaborative learning fosters both cognitive and social development by enabling learners to engage in shared meaning-making processes. This aligns with the social constructivist perspective of Lev Vygotsky, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Through collaboration, learners develop communication, teamwork, and critical thinking skills, which are essential for 21st-century learning. Additionally, peer support enhances confidence and reduces anxiety,

encouraging learners to participate more actively. Thus, collaborative pedagogy is a powerful tool in promoting both academic and social competencies.]

#### **Theme 4: Emotional Climate and Motivation in Learning**

Learners' emotional experiences and motivation were found to significantly influence their level of engagement. A positive and supportive classroom environment, characterized by respectful relationships and encouragement, enabled learners to participate more actively and confidently. When learners felt comfortable with their teacher and peers, they were more willing to express their ideas, ask questions, and engage in classroom activities. Conversely, negative emotions such as fear or discomfort hindered participation and reduced engagement.

Responses:

"Mas ganado ako kapag mabait ang teacher."

(I am more motivated when the teacher is kind.)

"Mas nakakapag-participate ako kapag comfortable ako."

(I participate more when I feel comfortable.)

"Hindi ako natatakot magkamali kapag supportive ang teacher."

(I am not afraid to make mistakes when the teacher is supportive.)

"Mas gusto ko ang klase kapag masaya at hindi nakaka-pressure."

(I prefer classes that are enjoyable and not stressful.)

The findings highlight that emotional engagement is a crucial component of learning, influencing learners' motivation, confidence, and participation. This aligns with the engagement framework of Jennifer A. Fredricks, which identifies emotional engagement as a key dimension of effective learning (Fredricks et al., 2004). A positive classroom climate fosters intrinsic motivation and encourages learners to take academic risks, thereby enhancing engagement and learning outcomes. These results emphasize the importance of creating supportive and inclusive learning environments that address not only cognitive but also emotional needs.

#### **Theme 5: Structural Constraints Affecting Engagement**

Despite the presence of engaging pedagogical practices, learners identified several structural constraints that hindered their engagement. These included limited time for activities, large class sizes, and insufficient instructional resources. Such constraints often restricted the implementation of interactive and experiential strategies, leading to more traditional and less engaging teaching methods. Overcrowded classrooms also made it difficult for learners to focus and participate effectively, while limited materials reduced opportunities for hands-on learning.

**Responses:**

"Kulang ang oras para sa activities."

(Time is not enough for activities.)

"Marami kami kaya maingay at mahirap mag-focus."

(There are many of us, so it's noisy and hard to focus.)

"Kulang ang materials kaya hindi lahat nakakasali sa activity."

(Materials are lacking, so not everyone can participate in the activity.)

"Minsan lecture na lang kasi walang gamit para sa activity."

(Sometimes it becomes lecture-based because there are no materials for activities.)

The findings reveal that structural challenges significantly limit the effectiveness and sustainability of learner-centered pedagogical practices. While teachers may implement interactive and engaging strategies, external constraints often hinder their consistent application. This reflects broader systemic issues within the educational context, where resource limitations and classroom conditions affect instructional quality. Consistent with international findings (OECD, 2019), factors such as class size, time allocation, and resource availability play a critical role in shaping learning experiences. Addressing these challenges requires institutional and policy-level interventions to support effective pedagogy and enhance learner engagement.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study reveals that the lived experiences of Grade 6 learners in Burgos Elementary School are significantly shaped by the interplay of pedagogical practices, classroom interactions, and contextual conditions. Interactive, experiential, and collaborative approaches emerged as key drivers of learner engagement, enabling

students to actively participate, construct knowledge, and develop essential cognitive and social skills. These pedagogical practices foster not only academic understanding but also confidence, motivation, and a sense of belonging among learners.

However, the findings also highlight the persistent influence of structural constraints that hinder the sustainability of these effective practices. Limitations in time, resources, and classroom conditions create barriers that prevent the consistent implementation of learner-centered strategies. This underscores the need for systemic support to bridge the gap between pedagogical ideals and classroom realities.

Overall, the study emphasizes that meaningful and sustained learner engagement requires a holistic approach that integrates responsive pedagogy with supportive educational structures. Aligning instructional practices with learners' needs and experiences, while addressing systemic challenges, is essential in fostering inclusive, engaging, and effective learning environments that promote holistic learner development.

Strengthening learner-centered teaching strategies is essential to ensure that learners are actively engaged in the learning process and are given opportunities to think critically, participate meaningfully, and construct knowledge based on their experiences. Teachers should be supported through continuous professional development programs that focus on interactive pedagogy, differentiated instruction, and innovative classroom practices. Equally important is the provision of adequate instructional resources and materials, including visual aids, contextualized learning tools, and technology, which can enhance the delivery of lessons and cater to diverse learning styles. Promoting experiential and collaborative learning should also be prioritized, as these approaches encourage learners to apply knowledge in real-life contexts, work effectively with peers, and develop essential cognitive and social skills.

Furthermore, addressing structural constraints through policy and institutional support is crucial to sustain the effective implementation of these pedagogical approaches. Educational leaders and policymakers must consider reducing class sizes, improving time allocation for interactive activities, and ensuring equitable distribution of resources across schools. Such systemic interventions will enable teachers to consistently apply learner-centered and skill-oriented strategies in the classroom. Lastly, conducting further research using mixed-methods approaches is recommended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of learning engagement and pedagogical effectiveness. Integrating qualitative insights with quantitative data can offer stronger evidence to inform policy decisions and improve instructional practices, ultimately enhancing the quality of education and learner outcomes.

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