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EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING SKILLS AMONG GRADE 2 LEARNERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CLASSROOM PEDAGOGIES

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Abstract

This study explores the development of learning skills among Grade 2 learners through classroom pedagogical practices at Siffu Elementary School. Anchored in constructivist and learner-centered frameworks, the research examines how teachers facilitate foundational competencies such as literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, and social interaction. A qualitative case study design was employed using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The primary participant was a Teacher III handling Grade 2 learners. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Findings revealed that structured pedagogy, interactive engagement, contextualized teaching, and differentiated support significantly contribute to learners' skill development. However, challenges such as limited resources, time constraints, and learner diversity persist. The study underscores the importance of adaptive pedagogies and institutional support in strengthening foundational learning. Implications for practice align with SDG 4 and the MATATAG curriculum reform in the Philippine educational context.

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INTRODUCTION

The early years of education are critical in shaping learners' foundational competencies, which serve as the cornerstone for lifelong learning and academic success. Learning skills encompassing literacy, numeracy, comprehension, problem-solving, and social interaction are developed through intentional and well-structured pedagogical practices. In the Philippine context, persistent concerns regarding learning poverty and low foundational skills have been highlighted in national and international assessments, prompting urgent calls for reform in early-grade instruction.

Teachers play a central role in mediating learning experiences. Their pedagogical choices, instructional strategies, and classroom management approaches significantly influence how learners acquire and internalize essential skills. In Grade 2, learners transition from guided to semi-independent learning, making it a crucial stage for reinforcing foundational competencies.

Despite policy initiatives such as the MATATAG Curriculum and recommendations from EDCOM II, there remains a need for localized, classroom-based evidence that captures the realities of teaching and learning in early grades. This study addresses this gap by examining how pedagogical practices shape the development of learning skills among Grade 2 learners at Siffu Elementary School.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore the development of learning skills among Grade 2 learners through classroom pedagogies. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Describe the pedagogical practices employed in developing learning skills;
2. Identify the learning skills developed among Grade 2 learners;
3. Examine the challenges encountered in facilitating learning;
4. Analyze how teaching practices address diverse learner needs.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study design to provide an in-depth and contextualized understanding of pedagogical practices that support the development of learning skills among Grade 2 learners. The case study approach was deemed appropriate as it allows for a comprehensive exploration of real-life classroom dynamics, capturing the complexities of teaching and learning within a naturally occurring setting. By focusing on a single case, the study was able to generate rich, detailed insights into how instructional practices are implemented and experienced in an actual educational context.

The research was conducted at Siffu Elementary School, located in Purok 2, City of Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines. The school serves as a typical public elementary institution catering to diverse learners, making it a relevant and meaningful site for examining early-grade pedagogical practices. The localized setting provided an authentic environment to investigate how teaching strategies are adapted to meet learners' needs within the realities of public school education.

The primary participant of the study was a Grade 2 Teacher III, selected through purposive sampling based on her direct involvement in teaching foundational learning skills. The teacher's experience and active engagement in classroom instruction made her a key informant capable of providing in-depth perspectives on pedagogical practices. In addition, Grade 2 learners were included as observed participants during classroom sessions to capture authentic interactions, engagement patterns, and responses to instructional strategies.

Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher to elicit detailed insights into instructional approaches, challenges, and reflections on teaching practices. Classroom observations were carried out to document actual teaching behaviors, learner engagement, and classroom interactions in real time. Furthermore, document analysis of lesson plans, activity sheets, and assessment tools was undertaken to examine how pedagogical intentions were translated into instructional materials and practices.

The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, which involved systematic processes of data familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, and interpretation. This approach enabled the identification of recurring patterns and meaningful themes that reflect the core pedagogical practices influencing learning skills development.

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, multiple validation strategies were employed. Credibility was established through data triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents, as well as member checking to verify the accuracy of interpretations. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a clear audit trail of the research process, while confirmability was addressed by grounding findings in actual data and minimizing researcher bias. Transferability was achieved through the provision of thick descriptions, allowing readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational contexts.

RESULTS

Theme 1: Structured Pedagogy as a Foundation for Skill Development

The findings revealed that structured and sequential instruction plays a crucial role in developing foundational learning skills among Grade 2 learners, particularly in literacy, numeracy, and comprehension. The teacher consistently implemented a clear and organized lesson flow from introduction and guided practice to independent work and assessment allowing learners to gradually build understanding and confidence. Through explicit instruction, concepts were broken down into manageable parts, ensuring that learners could follow each step without confusion, while repeated practice reinforced mastery and helped internalize key skills. This structured approach also created a predictable learning environment, enabling learners to stay engaged and actively participate, as they were aware of expectations at each stage of the lesson. As a result, learners not only developed essential academic skills but also gained confidence and independence in performing tasks, demonstrating that systematic and well-sequenced pedagogy is fundamental in supporting early-grade learning success.

Responses:

"Kailangan sunod-sunod ang pagtuturo para hindi sila malito."

(Teaching must be sequential so learners will not be confused.)

"Dahan-dahan naming tinuturo ang pagbasa, mula sa tunog hanggang sa salita."

(We teach reading gradually, from sounds to words.)

"Paulit-ulit naming ginagawa ang activities para masanay sila."

(We repeat activities so they become familiar.)

"Kapag malinaw ang instruction, mas mabilis silang natututo."

(When instructions are clear, they learn faster.)

This finding reflects the principles of structured literacy, which emphasize explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction in developing foundational competencies among early-grade learners. Such approaches ensure that essential skills are taught in a clear and organized manner, allowing learners to build knowledge progressively from simple to more complex concepts (Snow et al., 2019; Ehri, 2020). In early-grade education, where learners are still developing basic cognitive and linguistic abilities, structured instruction is particularly crucial as it minimizes confusion and supports accurate skill acquisition. Moreover, the use of scaffolding enables teachers to provide guided support during the learning process, gradually transferring responsibility to learners as they gain competence and confidence (Vygotsky, 1978; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Explicit teaching further strengthens this process by clearly modeling tasks, setting expectations, and providing immediate feedback, which has been shown to enhance learner understanding and retention (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Rosenshine, 2012). Collectively, these approaches highlight the importance of structured and scaffolded pedagogy in ensuring that young learners successfully develop the foundational skills necessary for future academic achievement.

Theme 2: Interactive and Engaging Learning Environment

The classroom environment was characterized by active learner participation facilitated through the integration of games, group activities, and collaborative tasks, which collectively enhanced learners' engagement, motivation, and social interaction. These interactive strategies created a dynamic and learner-centered atmosphere where students were not merely passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in the learning process. Through play-based and cooperative activities, learners were encouraged to express ideas, share responsibilities, and construct understanding with peers, thereby promoting both cognitive and social development. Such approaches align with constructivist principles, which posit that learning is most effective when learners actively engage in meaningful tasks and social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, the incorporation of games and collaborative learning has been shown to increase intrinsic motivation and sustain attention, particularly among young learners who thrive in stimulating and participatory environments (Plass et al., 2020; Slavin, 2014). The use of group work also fosters communication skills,

teamwork, and peer-assisted learning, allowing learners to benefit from diverse perspectives and mutual support. Overall, the interactive nature of the classroom not only enhanced learners' academic engagement but also contributed to the development of essential social skills, reinforcing the importance of participatory and collaborative pedagogies in early-grade education.

Responses:

"Mas masaya ang klase kapag may laro."

(The class is more enjoyable when there are games.)

"Natuto sila kapag nagtutulungan sila sa group work."

(They learn when they work together in groups.)

"Kapag active sila, mas naiintindihan nila ang lesson."

(When they are active, they understand the lesson better.)

"Hindi sila madaling mainip kapag may activities."

(They do not get bored easily when there are activities.)

This finding supports the view that interactive learning is deeply rooted in constructivist theory, where knowledge is actively constructed through social interaction and meaningful engagement with others. Learners develop understanding more effectively when they participate in collaborative activities that allow them to exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, and build shared knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996). In this context, engagement becomes a critical element, as it sustains learners' attention, increases motivation, and promotes deeper cognitive processing. When learners are actively involved in tasks such as group work and interactive games, they are more likely to retain information and apply concepts in meaningful ways (Fredricks et al., 2004; Plass et al., 2020). Furthermore, interactive learning environments foster a sense of belonging and participation, which enhances both academic and social outcomes. Thus, the findings affirm that engagement-driven, socially interactive pedagogies are essential in optimizing learning experiences and outcomes among early-grade learners.

Theme 3: Contextualized and Localized Teaching Practices

The teacher consistently integrated real-life examples and local contexts into lessons, making learning more meaningful, relatable, and relevant to the learners' everyday experiences. By connecting abstract concepts to familiar situations such as household activities, community practices, and local environments the teacher enabled learners to better understand and internalize lesson content. This approach allowed learners to see the practical application of what they were learning, thereby enhancing comprehension and retention. Moreover, contextualization helped bridge the gap between school knowledge and real-world experiences, making lessons more engaging and easier to grasp, especially for young learners who rely heavily on concrete and experiential understanding. The use of culturally and locally grounded examples also fostered a sense of relevance and inclusivity, as learners were able to recognize their own experiences within the learning process, ultimately strengthening both cognitive and affective engagement in the classroom.

Responses:

"Inuugnay ko sa kanilang pang-araw-araw na buhay ang lesson."

(I connect the lesson to their daily lives.)

"Mas naiintindihan nila kapag halimbawa ay galing sa kanilang paligid."

(They understand better when examples come from their surroundings.)

"Ginagamit ko ang lokal na sitwasyon para mas relatable."

(I use local situations to make it more relatable.)

This finding underscores that contextualized teaching significantly enhances learners' comprehension and retention by linking new knowledge to familiar experiences, thereby making learning more meaningful and easier to internalize. When instruction is grounded in learners' cultural and community contexts, it allows them to activate prior knowledge and construct deeper understanding, which is particularly important in early-grade education (Bransford et al., 2000). This approach reflects the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy, which recognizes and values learners' backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences as essential resources in the learning process (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995). By incorporating local examples and culturally relevant content, teachers create inclusive learning environments that promote engagement, affirm learners' identities, and improve academic outcomes. Consequently, contextualized teaching not only strengthens cognitive development but also fosters a sense of belonging and relevance, making it a vital strategy in enhancing the overall effectiveness of instruction.

Theme 4: Differentiated Support for Diverse Learners

The teacher employed differentiated instructional strategies to effectively address the diverse abilities of learners within the classroom, ensuring that each student received appropriate support and challenge based on their level of understanding. Struggling learners were provided with additional guidance through one-on-one assistance, simplified tasks, and extended practice opportunities to help them grasp foundational concepts. At the same time, more advanced learners were given enrichment activities that required higher-order thinking and deeper engagement with the lesson, allowing them to extend their learning beyond basic requirements. This flexible approach to instruction acknowledged that learners progress at different rates and possess varying strengths, necessitating tailored teaching methods to meet individual needs. By adjusting content, process, and learning activities, the teacher created an inclusive learning environment where all learners were supported in achieving their full potential, thereby promoting equity and maximizing learning outcomes across different ability levels.

Responses:

"Iba-iba ang approach ko depende sa kakayahan ng bata."

(My approach varies depending on the learner's ability.)

"May mga batang kailangan ng extra time at tulong."

(Some learners need extra time and assistance.)

"Binibigyan ko ng mas mahirap na task ang mabilis matuto."

(I give more challenging tasks to fast learners.)

"Hindi pare-pareho ang pacing ng mga bata."

(Learners have different pacing.)

This finding highlights that differentiated instruction is fundamental in inclusive classrooms, as it ensures that teaching is responsive to the diverse needs, abilities, and learning paces of all learners. By adapting content, instructional strategies, and assessment methods, teachers are able to provide equitable learning opportunities, allowing each learner to access the curriculum in ways that are appropriate to their level of readiness (Tomlinson, 2017). In inclusive settings, where variability among learners is expected, differentiation becomes a critical mechanism for preventing learning gaps and promoting meaningful participation (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Moreover, providing targeted support for struggling learners while offering enrichment for advanced learners fosters both academic growth and learner confidence. This approach aligns with inclusive education principles, which emphasize that all learners, regardless of ability or background, should be supported in their learning journey through flexible and responsive pedagogical practices.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study demonstrates that the development of learning skills among Grade 2 learners is shaped by a dynamic interplay of structured pedagogy, interactive engagement, contextualized teaching, and differentiated support, all of which collectively contribute to meaningful and effective learning experiences. Structured and sequential instruction provides a strong foundation for skill acquisition, while interactive and collaborative activities enhance learner engagement, motivation, and social development. At the same time, contextualized teaching ensures that learning is relevant and connected to learners' real-life experiences, thereby improving comprehension and retention. The use of differentiated strategies further strengthens this process by addressing the diverse abilities, learning styles, and pacing of learners, ensuring that no student is left behind. Central to these practices is the role of the teacher, whose pedagogical decisions, adaptability, and responsiveness significantly influence the quality of instruction and the extent to which learners develop essential competencies. However, despite the presence of effective teaching strategies, the study also reveals persistent systemic challenges, including limited instructional resources, time constraints, and the complexity of managing diverse learner needs within a single classroom. These constraints can hinder the full implementation of effective pedagogies and limit opportunities for individualized support. Therefore, strengthening institutional support systems such as providing adequate learning materials, reducing class size pressures, and enhancing continuous professional development is essential to empower teachers and optimize instructional practices. Addressing these systemic concerns is crucial in improving early-grade learning outcomes and ensuring that all learners acquire the foundational skills necessary for long-term academic success.

Enhancing teacher training on differentiated and interactive pedagogies is essential to equip educators with the knowledge and skills needed to address diverse learner needs effectively. Continuous professional development programs should focus on practical strategies that promote learner engagement, inclusive

practices, and adaptive instruction in early-grade classrooms. In addition, providing sufficient instructional materials and resources is crucial in supporting the implementation of varied teaching approaches, as access to appropriate tools enables teachers to design meaningful and effective learning experiences. Strengthening institutional support for early-grade teachers is equally important, particularly through administrative backing, manageable class sizes, and sustained mentoring systems that foster professional growth. Furthermore, promoting contextualized and culturally responsive teaching practices ensures that instruction remains relevant and inclusive, allowing learners to connect academic content with their lived experiences and cultural backgrounds. Lastly, there is a need to conduct further research using mixed-methods approaches to generate more comprehensive evidence on effective pedagogical practices, combining qualitative insights with quantitative validation to inform policy, curriculum development, and classroom implementation.

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