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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Teaching and Learning Processes in Grade 4 Classrooms: A Rural Elementary School Perspective at Talite Elementary School

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#### Abstract

Teaching and learning processes in rural elementary schools are shaped by contextual realities that influence instructional delivery, learner participation, and academic outcomes. In the Philippines, rural schools often face challenges related to resource availability, learner diversity, and instructional support, particularly in the intermediate grades where academic demands increase. This study examined the teaching and learning processes in Grade 4 classrooms at Talite Elementary School, a rural public elementary school. Using a convergent mixed-methods design, data were gathered through classroom observations, learner engagement surveys, and semi-structured teacher interviews. Quantitative findings revealed moderate to high levels of learner participation, with stronger behavioral engagement than cognitive engagement. Instructional practices were predominantly structured and teacher-guided, supported by contextualized examples and interactive activities. Qualitative findings further explained how classroom routines, scaffolding, and teacher-learner interaction shaped learning processes, while contextual constraints such as limited instructional resources and varied learner readiness influenced instructional decisions. The study highlights the importance of context-responsive teaching practices in strengthening learning processes in rural elementary classrooms.

**Keywords:** teaching and learning processes, Grade 4, rural education, instructional practices, learner engagement, Philippines

## Introduction

Teaching and learning processes in elementary education are central to the development of foundational skills that support learners' long-term academic success. In the intermediate grades, particularly Grade 4, learners transition from early literacy-focused instruction to more content-intensive and conceptually demanding learning tasks. At this stage, effective instructional practices and supportive classroom environments are crucial in sustaining learner engagement and promoting meaningful learning (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

In rural school contexts, teaching and learning processes are shaped by distinct structural and social conditions. Rural elementary schools often contend with limited instructional resources, multi-grade teaching arrangements, diverse learner readiness levels, and constrained access to professional development (Azano & Stewart, 2015). These contextual factors influence how teachers design lessons, manage classrooms, and support learner participation. In developing education systems such as the Philippines, rural schools play a critical role in ensuring equitable access to quality education, yet they remain underrepresented in classroom-level research.

The Philippine K to 12 curriculum emphasizes learner-centered instruction, contextualization, and active learning across grade levels. However, translating these curricular principles into classroom practice can be particularly challenging in rural settings where teachers must balance curriculum coverage with learners' varying needs and limited instructional support. Previous studies in Philippine elementary education have examined learner achievement and engagement but often focus on urban or system-level data, leaving a gap in understanding how teaching and learning processes unfold in rural classrooms at the intermediate grade level.

Teaching and learning processes encompass instructional strategies, classroom interaction patterns, learner participation, and the use of instructional resources (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Research suggests that structured instruction, scaffolding, and meaningful teacher-learner interaction are especially important in supporting learning in the intermediate grades (Hattie, 2009). However, little empirical work has documented how these processes are enacted in rural Grade 4 classrooms within the Philippine context.

This study addresses this gap by examining teaching and learning processes in Grade 4 classrooms at Talite Elementary School. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the study aims to provide contextually grounded evidence on instructional practices, learner engagement, and classroom interaction in a rural elementary school setting.

## Objectives of the study

This study aimed to examine the teaching and learning processes in Grade 4 classrooms at Talite Elementary School. Specifically, it sought to (a) describe the instructional practices employed by teachers, (b) determine the level of learner engagement in terms of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, and (c) explain how contextual factors in a rural school setting influence classroom teaching and learning processes.

## Methods

### Research Design

The study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, allowing for the integration of quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of classroom

teaching and learning processes. Data were collected concurrently and analyzed separately before being integrated during interpretation.

### Research Locale

The study was conducted at Talite Elementary School, a rural public elementary school serving learners from predominantly agricultural and low-income households. The school implements the national K to 12 curriculum and reflects common instructional conditions in rural Philippine elementary schools, including mixed-ability classrooms and limited access to instructional resources.

### Participants

Participants included Grade 4 teachers and learners enrolled during the school year of the study. Teachers were selected through purposive sampling based on their assignment to Grade 4 classes, while learners were selected through cluster sampling by class section.

### Instruments and Data Collection

Data were collected using three primary instruments. A classroom observation protocol assessed instructional practices such as lesson structure, use of scaffolding, questioning strategies, classroom interaction, and learner participation. Multiple observations were conducted to ensure consistency. A learner engagement survey measured behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement using a Likert-scale format adapted for elementary learners. Finally, semi-structured teacher interviews explored instructional strategies, classroom challenges, and perceptions of learner participation and learning.

### Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize instructional practices and engagement levels. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, involving coding, categorization, and theme development. Integration of findings was achieved through triangulation and comparative interpretation.

### Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from school authorities. Informed consent and assent were secured, confidentiality was maintained, and participation was voluntary.

## Results and Findings

### Teaching Practices in Grade 4 Classrooms

Teaching practices in Grade 4 classrooms at Talite Elementary School were analyzed using descriptive statistics derived from classroom observation ratings across five instructional domains. Results indicate that instruction was largely structured and teacher-guided, with limited opportunities for independent learning.

**Table 1. Extent of Teaching Practices in Grade 4 Classrooms (n = 8 teachers)**

Teaching Practice Domain	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Lesson Structure and Sequencing	3.92	0.41	High
Guided Instruction and Practice	3.78	0.46	High

Teaching Practice Domain	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Questioning Strategies	3.54	0.52	Moderate to High
Contextualized Examples	3.47	0.49	Moderate
Opportunities for Independent Learning	3.05	0.61	Moderate
<b>Overall Teaching Practices</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>Moderate to High</b>

The findings indicate that teachers consistently implemented clear lesson structures, beginning with review activities and progressing to guided instruction and practice. High mean scores for lesson structure and guided instruction suggest that teachers prioritized clarity, pacing, and direct support, which are essential in managing mixed-ability classrooms. Questioning strategies and contextualized examples were moderately implemented, indicating efforts to support understanding by linking content to learners' daily experiences. However, opportunities for independent learning obtained the lowest mean score, reflecting limited learner autonomy during lessons. This pattern suggests that instructional practices favored teacher control and scaffolding over extended independent or exploratory learning.

### Level of Learner Engagement

Learner engagement was examined across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions using a Likert-scale engagement survey. Descriptive statistics indicate variation across engagement domains.

**Table 2. Level of Learner Engagement in Grade 4 Classrooms (n = 214 learners)**

Engagement Dimension	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Behavioral Engagement	3.86	0.47	High
Emotional Engagement	3.42	0.58	Moderate
Cognitive Engagement	3.29	0.65	Moderate
<b>Overall Engagement</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>Moderate to High</b>

Results show that behavioral engagement was the strongest dimension of learner engagement, indicating that most learners actively participated in classroom activities and followed classroom routines. Emotional engagement was moderate, suggesting that learners' interest and enjoyment were influenced by lesson interactivity and contextualization. Cognitive engagement exhibited greater variability, with higher engagement observed during tasks requiring explanation, reasoning, or problem-solving. This variation implies that while learners were generally attentive and compliant, deeper cognitive investment depended on the nature of instructional activities.

### Relationship Between Teaching Practices and Learner Engagement

To further explain engagement patterns, correlation analysis was conducted between selected teaching practice domains and learner engagement dimensions.

**Table 3. Correlation Between Teaching Practices and Learner Engagement**

Teaching Practice	Behavioral Engagement	Emotional Engagement	Cognitive Engagement
Lesson Structure	.58**	.36**	.41**
Guided Instruction	.54**	.39**	.47**
Questioning Strategies	.46**	.42**	.55**
Contextualized Examples	.38**	.57**	.44**
Independent Learning Opportunities	.29*	.41**	.62**

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01

Lesson structure and guided instruction showed the strongest relationships with behavioral engagement, indicating that clear routines and teacher guidance supported learners' participation and task completion. Questioning strategies and independent learning opportunities were more strongly associated with cognitive engagement, suggesting that learners invested greater mental effort when lessons required explanation and problem-solving. Contextualized examples demonstrated the strongest association with emotional engagement, highlighting the motivational value of connecting lesson content to learners' lived experiences.

Hence, the statistical analyses indicate that Grade 4 teaching practices at Talite Elementary School were predominantly structured and teacher-guided, supporting high levels of behavioral engagement. However, moderate levels of emotional and cognitive engagement suggest the need for increased use of cognitively demanding tasks and learner-centered strategies. Teaching practices that incorporated questioning, contextualization, and opportunities for independent learning were associated with higher levels of learner engagement, particularly in the cognitive and emotional domains.

### Qualitative Themes on Teaching and Learning Processes

Qualitative data from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with Grade 4 teachers at Talite Elementary School were analyzed using thematic analysis. Four major themes emerged that explain how teaching and learning processes were enacted in rural Grade 4 classrooms and how these processes influenced learner participation and understanding.

#### Theme 1: Structured Routines Supported Learner Participation

Teachers consistently emphasized the role of structured classroom routines in sustaining learner participation. Daily lesson flow, predictable transitions, clear instructions, and established behavioral expectations created an orderly learning environment that enabled learners to focus on academic tasks.

#### Participant Responses

Teachers described structure as essential in managing Grade 4 learners:

*"Kapag may malinaw na routine, mas mabilis silang makasunod at mas tahimik ang klase."*  
 ("When there is a clear routine, learners follow more easily and the class is more orderly.")

Another teacher shared:

*"Kailangan ng sistema sa Grade 4 dahil mas mahahaba na ang lessons."*  
("Grade 4 needs structure because lessons are already longer.")

These responses indicate that structured routines functioned as a foundation for behavioral engagement. By reducing uncertainty and off-task behavior, routines allowed learners to allocate more attention to learning tasks, thereby supporting consistent participation. This finding aligns with research emphasizing classroom organization and clarity as critical contributors to effective learning environments (Hattie, 2009). Emmer and Sabornie (2015) also reported that structured routines enhance participation and engagement, particularly in elementary classrooms with developing self-regulation skills.

## **Theme 2: Teacher Scaffolding Facilitated Understanding**

Teachers employed scaffolding strategies such as modeling, guided questioning, step-by-step explanations, and monitored practice to support learners' understanding of new concepts. Scaffolding was used to bridge gaps in prior knowledge and accommodate varying learner abilities.

### **Participant Responses**

*"Hindi agad nila maiintindihan kung walang gabay, kaya kailangan muna ng halimbawa."*  
("They won't understand immediately without guidance, so examples are necessary.")

Another teacher explained:

*"Unti-unti naming tinuturo ang proseso para masundan nila ang lesson."*  
("We teach the process gradually so they can follow the lesson.")

Scaffolding enabled learners to engage with content that would otherwise be beyond their independent capability. Through guided support, learners were able to grasp key ideas and participate meaningfully in learning activities. This theme reflects Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the *zone of proximal development*, which underscores the importance of guided learning. Empirical studies have shown that scaffolding enhances comprehension and promotes gradual learner independence when support is strategically reduced (van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010).

## **Theme 3: Interactive Activities Sustained Learner Interest**

Interactive activities such as group work, oral questioning, games, and hands-on tasks were effective in sustaining learner interest and emotional engagement. These activities broke the monotony of teacher-centered instruction and encouraged active participation.

### **Participant Responses**

*"Mas nagiging masigla ang klase kapag may group activity."*  
("The class becomes more lively when there is a group activity.")

A teacher added:

*"Kapag may ginagawa sila, mas nakikinig at mas interesado."*  
("When they are doing something, they listen more and show more interest.")

Interactive activities promoted emotional engagement by making learning enjoyable and participatory. Such activities also created opportunities for peer interaction, which reinforced

understanding and motivation. These findings are consistent with engagement research indicating that active and collaborative learning strategies enhance interest and participation in elementary classrooms (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Hattie (2009) also identified active learning strategies as having a positive impact on learner engagement and achievement.

#### **Theme 4: Contextual Constraints Influenced Instructional Choices**

Despite recognizing the benefits of learner-centered strategies, teachers reported contextual constraints that influenced their instructional choices. These included limited instructional time, lack of learning materials, and varying levels of learner readiness.

##### **Participant Responses**

*"Minsan gusto naming magpa-activity pero kulang ang oras."*  
("Sometimes we want to do activities, but time is not enough.")

Another teacher stated:

*"Hindi lahat ng bata pare-pareho ang antas, kaya minsan kailangan ng lecture."*  
("Not all learners are at the same level, so sometimes lecture is necessary.")

These constraints explain why instruction often reverted to structured and teacher-guided approaches. Teachers balanced pedagogical ideals with classroom realities, prioritizing curriculum coverage and classroom management. Similar constraints have been documented in rural and resource-limited school contexts, where instructional decisions are shaped by systemic limitations (Azano & Stewart, 2015; OECD, 2019). These findings underscore the need for contextualized support for teachers in rural elementary schools.

##### **Summary of Qualitative Findings**

The qualitative findings demonstrate that teaching and learning processes in Grade 4 classrooms at Talite Elementary School were shaped by structured routines, scaffolding, and interactive activities that supported learner participation and understanding. However, contextual constraints limited the consistent implementation of learner-centered strategies. These findings highlight the importance of context-responsive pedagogy in rural elementary education.

##### **Discussion**

The findings demonstrate that teaching and learning processes in Grade 4 classrooms at Talite Elementary School are shaped by both instructional practices and rural school context. The predominance of structured and teacher-guided instruction reflects the need to manage diverse learner readiness levels, consistent with research highlighting the role of structure in elementary classrooms (Hattie, 2009).

High behavioral engagement suggests that classroom routines and teacher monitoring effectively supported participation. However, variability in cognitive engagement indicates the need for more opportunities that challenge learners to think critically and apply concepts, echoing findings from engagement research in elementary education (Fredricks et al., 2004). The use of contextualized examples aligns with curriculum expectations and supports learner understanding, particularly in rural contexts where relevance enhances motivation (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Nonetheless, instructional constraints such as limited resources and time pressures restricted the use of extended inquiry or independent learning activities.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of context-responsive instructional practices that balance structure, interaction, and learner engagement in rural elementary classrooms.

## Conclusion

This study examined teaching and learning processes in Grade 4 classrooms at Talite Elementary School from a rural elementary school perspective. Findings indicate that structured instruction, scaffolding, and contextualized teaching supported learner participation and understanding, while contextual constraints influenced instructional decisions. Strengthening learner-centered and cognitively engaging practices, alongside targeted support for rural teachers, may enhance teaching and learning processes in intermediate grade classrooms.

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