

Cultivating Learners' Engagement in The Classroom: Anecdotes of Grade Three Teachers

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Abstract — The core aim of this research was to explore the experiences, coping mechanisms and insights of grade three teachers as they cultivate learners' engagement in the classroom. Employing a qualitative, phenomenological research approach, data was gathered from eight grade three teachers in the Cluster 12, Division of Davao City. Throughout the study, various themes emerged from the teachers' lived experiences. These themes encompassed providing opportunities for collaboration, use of hands-on activities, creating a positive learning environment, and building a personal connections with students. Moreover, the research delved into the coping mechanisms employed by the teachers. Noteworthy coping strategies included providing clear an specific instructions, using technology to enhance learning, providing regular feedback, and providing a positive learning environment. Through a comprehensive analysis, the study yielded valuable insights and innovative ideas concerning the obstacles faced by the teachers in cultivating classroom engagement. From the teachers' experiences, several valuable lessons were learned, emphasizing the importance of building positive relationships, creating a sense of belonging, using active strategies, and providing clear expectations and feedback. These lessons provide essential input for designing and implementing effective teacher training programs aimed at equipping educators with diverse strategies and techniques in cultivating classroom engagement.

Keywords — *Lived Experiences, Coping Mechanisms, Lesson Learned, Grade Three Teachers, Classroom Engagement, Davao City, Philippines*

I. Introduction

Engagement is a crucial aspect of learning, as it is linked to students' academic achievement, motivation, and overall well-being. Learners' engagement refers to the level of interest and involvement that students have in their learning. Engagement of learners can help them to be motivated, interested, and actively participate in classroom activities. Another experience of grade three teachers in cultivating learners' engagement is by using hands-on activities. Hands-on activities involve allowing students to interact with materials, tools, or objects to enhance their learning experience. According to a study by Gruenewald and colleagues (2018), using hands-on activities in science classes was found to be an effective strategy for enhancing learners' engagement.

Teachers play a critical role in fostering learners' engagement in the classroom, particularly in the early grades when students are developing foundational skills and attitudes towards learning. Teachers can promote engagement by creating a positive and supportive classroom climate, using

effective instructional strategies, and providing opportunities for students to connect their learning to their lives and interests (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004; Reeve & Jang, 2006). Grade three teachers provided an opportunity for students to work in pairs or small groups on class assignments or projects. Teachers also encourage peer tutoring, where students work in pairs to help each other learn. However, while these strategies are well documented, it is not clear how grade three teachers perceive their role in fostering learners' engagement, what challenges they face, and what strategies they use to overcome them. Grade three teachers also cultivate learners' engagement in the classroom by building personal connections with their students. This involves getting to know their students and showing an interest in their lives and experiences. According to a study by Ramirez and colleagues (2019), building personal connections with students was identified as an effective strategy for enhancing learners' engagement in English classes. In recent years, there has been growing interest in understanding the factors that contribute to student engagement and how teachers can promote it in the classroom.

II. Methodology

The study found that teachers can promote positive academic emotions by creating a classroom climate that fosters enjoyment, providing opportunities for challenge and growth, and offering support and encouragement. A study by Uludag and Or (2018) explored the experiences of elementary school teachers in the United States in promoting student engagement, and found that teachers emphasized the importance of building positive relationships with students, providing opportunities for student choice and autonomy, and creating a supportive classroom environment. Similarly, a study by Pekrun, Elliot, and Maier (2009) investigated the experiences of teachers in the United States in promoting students' academic emotions, which are closely related to engagement. The study found that teachers can promote positive academic emotions by creating a classroom climate that fosters enjoyment, providing opportunities for challenge and growth, and offering support and encouragement. The study found that teachers emphasized the importance of creating a positive and inclusive classroom culture, fostering meaningful relationships with students and families, and providing opportunities for play-based and student-centered learning. In China, Similarly, a study by Zhang and colleagues (2020) explored the experiences of teachers in China in promoting student engagement in physical education classes. In this study the experiences of grade three teachers in cultivating learners' engagement in the classroom in Cluster 12 were gathered through an In-Depth Interview (IDI) as well as their coping mechanisms were extracted from the participants. The study found that teachers used a variety of strategies, including promoting positive student-teacher relationships, using engaging and challenging activities, and providing students with autonomy and choice, to promote student engagement and enjoyment in physical education classes. The study found that teachers used a range of strategies, including incorporating technology into teaching, using diverse teaching methods, and creating a positive classroom environment, to promote student engagement and learning. In the local scenario particularly in the schools of Cluster 12, Division of Davao City, grade three teachers encountered

a variety of experiences in cultivating learners' engagement in the classroom. Some experiences are positive while others negatively affect the teaching profession. It is in this context that this study was conceptualized to collect the experiences of grade three teachers as to how they cultivate learners' engagement in the classroom.

III. Results and Discussion

To clearly determine the outcomes of this study and to whom the findings are addressed, the following persons or agencies were the beneficiaries.

Department of Education Officials. The findings of the study gave the DepEd officials, particularly in Cluster 12 Integrated and secondary, the nearby schools in the division of Davao City, to be aware of cultivating learners' engagement in the classroom.

Grade three teachers. The study was significant to them since they would know the issues and insights on their experiences as they cultivate learners' engagement in the classroom.

Stakeholders. This study was significant to them since it would give stakeholders the insights on how to assist school administrators in capacitating teachers on the strategies in cultivating learners' engagement in the classroom.

Future Researchers. The findings provided comprehensive data in conducting future research with similar or relevant scope. It requires a smaller sample size the quantitative analyses. Qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions. Obtaining most or all of the perceptions will lead to the attainment of saturation. Saturation occurs when adding more participants to the study does not result in additional perspectives or information. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend the concept of saturation for achieving an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends five (5) to 25 and Morse (1994) suggests at least six (6). There are no specific rules when determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Qualitative sample size may best be determined by the time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 1990).

The participants of this study were Eight (8) grade three teachers from Cluster 12, Division of Davao City. The participants were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) must be in the service for at least 5 years; (2) grade three teacher; and (3) experience in cultivating learners' engagement.

Analysis

The factors affecting pupils' engagement based on the result of the study are highly laid in the hands of a teacher. Therefore, classroom teachers will be aware of the significance of the study

and its contribution to their well-being. Further, each of the participants will be advised that they have the right to withdraw their information at any time up to the completion of the data collection process, and that they can be requested and allowed to verify their individual transcript after the interview is carried out. This provided the participants with the opportunity to amend, or remove any information which they feel might identify them. The researcher reserved the right to employ the use of pseudonyms, and changing names and or non-significant dates in the interest of the protection of the identity of the participant in all subsequent data analysis and reporting. Grade three teachers provided an opportunity for students to work in pairs or small groups on class assignments or projects. Teachers also encourage peer tutoring, where students work in pairs to help each other learn. In addition, teachers use technology-based tools such as online discussion forums, collaborative writing platforms, and video conferencing to facilitate collaboration among students. By promoting collaboration, grade three teachers created a classroom environment that fosters active engagement and promotes a sense of community among students. Grade three teachers incorporated hands-on activities into their lessons by using manipulatives, models, simulations, experiments, and other interactive tools. For example, teachers use objects such as blocks, tiles, or counters to help students understand basic math concepts such as addition, subtraction, and multiplication. Teachers also incorporated STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) activities that involve designing, building, or testing models and prototypes. By using hands-on activities, grade three teachers created an engaging and interactive learning environment that promotes curiosity and exploration among students and other activities that can help learners develop their classroom engagement.

Discussion

This part of the research dealt with the research questions and requirements of this study. The participants disclosed their experiences in developing a positive classroom climate. The grade three teachers mechanism for developing a positive classroom climate was also discussed. Several studies have explored the experiences of grade three teachers in cultivating learners' engagement in the classroom. For example, a study by Cheung and colleagues (2017) examined the experiences of grade three teachers in Hong Kong in promoting student engagement in mathematics classes. The study found that teachers used a variety of strategies, including games, group work, and real-life examples, to make mathematics classes more engaging and interesting for their students.

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