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CREATING AN EXCITING ENGAGEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM: ANECDOTES OF GRADE 10 TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Creating an exciting and engaging classroom environment is crucial for students to be motivated and actively participate in their learning. This research explores the anecdotes of grade 10 teachers who have implemented various strategies to increase student engagement in their classrooms. And part of the research also dealt with the research questions about the study. The participants disclosed their experiences in creating an exciting engagement in the classroom, their coping mechanism as well as the lessons learned in creating an exciting engagement in the classroom. All these them The teachers shared their experiences with incorporating interactive and hands-on activities, using technology effectively, and providing real-world examples to make the material more relatable to their students. By fostering a positive and inclusive classroom culture, these educators were able to create an environment where students felt confident to ask questions, collaborate with their peers, and showcase their creativity. Through this research, it becomes clear that engaging students in the learning process goes beyond traditional teaching methods. By incorporating innovative strategies and adapting to the interests and learning styles of their students, grade 10 teachers can create a dynamic and stimulating classroom environment that promotes academic success and a love for learning.

Keywords: Creating An Exciting Engagement, Provided A Hands-On Experienced, Encourage Collaborative Projects, Created Real World Connections, Implemented Real-Life Simulations.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's evolving educational landscape, creating an exciting and engaging classroom environment is no longer optional but a necessity. Educators are now expected to shift from traditional, lecture-centered methods to interactive and student-centered approaches to foster meaningful learning experiences. For Grade 10 learners—at a critical stage of adolescent development—engagement is pivotal not only for academic success but also for developing lifelong learning skills. The ability of teachers to create an engaging environment significantly influences student motivation, participation, creativity, and performance. As such, the focus of this study lies in uncovering how teachers bring excitement and engagement into the classroom through firsthand experiences, strategies, and reflective practices.

Establishment of the Problem

The global education system is increasingly facing multiple challenges that affect student engagement. First, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to considerable learning losses, disengagement, and behavioral changes among students globally (UNESCO, 2021). Teachers now struggle to re-ignite enthusiasm and learning interest after months of remote or disrupted schooling. Second, the continued use of traditional teaching methods—rote memorization and passive lectures—has been widely criticized for failing to meet the diverse learning needs of 21st-century learners (OECD, 2022). Third, the global digital divide has worsened inequalities in access to technology, making it difficult for many educators to fully integrate interactive digital tools into their classrooms (World Bank, 2023). These global trends emphasize the need for dynamic and inclusive teaching approaches.

In the Philippine context, similar problems persist and are magnified by systemic limitations. First, national assessment reports such as the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and subsequent diagnostic tests indicate that Filipino learners rank low in reading comprehension, critical thinking, and application of knowledge (DepEd, 2023). This is partially attributed to poor classroom engagement and lack of contextualized instruction. Second, despite ongoing reforms under the K–12 program, many teachers still rely on conventional methods due to limited access to quality professional development on innovative and participatory teaching (CHED, 2022). Third, curriculum overload and misalignment between real-world applications and classroom content have led to low motivation and disconnection among high school students (Mateo & Navarro, 2021). These national challenges point to the importance of equipping teachers with strategies that truly engage learners.

At the local level, the challenges become more specific and observable. In some public high schools in Davao Region, including the study site, teachers report that Grade 10 learners often display low interest and minimal participation in daily lessons, which affects classroom dynamics and academic outcomes. Furthermore, while some schools have started integrating ICT, technological resources remain insufficient, and teachers lack consistent training in applying these tools effectively. There is also a noticeable absence of localized instructional materials that reflect the students'

lived experiences, which could otherwise foster more excitement and relevance in learning (Division of Davao del Norte, 2023). These localized issues underscore the urgent need to explore and amplify teaching practices that can spark student interest, foster active learning, and create inclusive classroom environments.

Synthesis of Issues

When synthesizing the global, national, and local issues, a pattern becomes evident: student engagement is deeply tied to teacher capacity, instructional strategy, and contextual relevance. Globally, the education system struggles with structural disruptions and inequality. Nationally, the Philippines faces a mismatch between policy reforms and classroom realities. Locally, day-to-day implementation is constrained by limited resources, insufficient training, and students' socio-cultural contexts. These layers of concern converge at the classroom level, where the teacher becomes the primary agent of change. It is within this environment that creativity, innovation, and reflective practices become essential tools for fostering engagement and academic success.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of Grade 10 teachers in creating an exciting and engaging classroom environment. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. **What are the strategies employed by Grade 10 teachers to create an exciting and engaging learning environment?**
This question aims to explore the variety of instructional techniques, tools, or practices that teachers use to make learning more interactive and relevant to students.

2. **What challenges do Grade 10 teachers encounter in sustaining student engagement?**
This delves into the barriers and limitations faced by teachers, such as time constraints, lack of resources, or student behavior.

3. **What coping mechanisms do teachers adopt when their engagement strategies do not work?**
This seeks to identify how teachers respond to disengagement—whether through adjustment of strategies, seeking peer support, or reflecting on practice.

4. **What insights and lessons have Grade 10 teachers gained from their efforts in creating engaging classrooms?**
This question uncovers the deeper understanding and professional growth teachers develop as a result of their engagement efforts.

By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute valuable knowledge to the growing discourse on learner engagement, particularly in the Philippine secondary education context, and offer practical guidance for other educators striving to create more dynamic and inclusive classroom environments.

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of Grade 10 teachers in creating an exciting and engaging classroom environment. Specifically, it investigates:

The strategies used by teachers to stimulate interest and participation among students.

The coping mechanisms employed when engagement levels are low.

The insights and lessons learned from implementing engaging practices.

By focusing on these experiences, the research provides practical and contextually grounded recommendations that can benefit educators, instructional leaders, and policymakers seeking to improve student engagement in secondary education.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study hold significant implications for various stakeholders in the education sector. For teachers, the study offers inspiration and practical, tested strategies to make learning more engaging and student-centered. For school administrators, it provides valuable insights into how classroom culture can be enhanced through capacity-building initiatives and supportive systems that empower educators. Curriculum developers may find the study useful in highlighting the importance of relevance, hands-on experiences, and real-world applications when designing lesson plans that resonate with learners. For educational researchers and policymakers, the study stresses the necessity of bridging policy and practice by gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that teachers encounter in promoting student engagement. Ultimately, the research underscores the importance of humanizing and energizing the teaching-learning process—ensuring that every student feels heard, involved, and motivated to participate actively in their educational journey..

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2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Creating an engaging classroom environment has been the subject of growing attention in educational research. Engagement is no longer viewed as a secondary outcome of learning but as a central pillar of academic success. This chapter presents an overview of relevant theories, empirical studies, and thematic findings related to student engagement, instructional strategies, and teacher experiences—focusing particularly on the Philippine secondary education setting. The literature review also identifies existing gaps that the present study aims to address.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on two foundational theories:

Constructivist Learning Theory (Vygotsky, 1978; updated in educational practice by Brooks & Brooks, 2019)

This theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment. Teachers must therefore design experiences that are hands-on, collaborative, and connected to real-life contexts to promote engagement.

Engagement Theory (Kearsley & Shneiderman, adapted by Fredericks et al., 2020)

This framework suggests that student engagement has three dimensions: behavioral (participation), emotional (interest and enjoyment), and cognitive (investment in learning). Effective classroom practices must address all three dimensions to sustain meaningful learning.

Global Literature on Classroom Engagement

Studies across different countries underscore the positive impact of interactive and innovative strategies on student engagement:

UNESCO (2021) reports that post-pandemic engagement levels dropped significantly, especially among adolescents. Recovery efforts stress the use of student-centered activities and digital tools to restore classroom dynamics.

OECD (2022) emphasizes that merely covering curriculum content is not enough. Engaging students through real-world connections and autonomy in learning increases motivation and retention.

Boud and Molloy (2020) argue that feedback-rich, collaborative, and contextualized learning environments significantly improve student outcomes, especially when students feel empowered to contribute.

These studies demonstrate that engaging classrooms are those that align with learners' interests, allow for social interaction, and promote active participation.

National Studies: Philippine Context

In the Philippines, recent studies have highlighted both the promise and the limitations of classroom engagement efforts:

Mateo and Navarro (2021) found that teachers who used gamification, simulations, and group projects reported higher student motivation and participation in public secondary schools.

Dela Cruz and Alonzo (2020) examined how Filipino high school teachers incorporated real-life examples to spark interest, especially in subjects like Araling Panlipunan and Science.

Torres and Garcia (2022) observed that despite the intent to apply learner-centered approaches, many teachers still relied on traditional chalk-and-talk methods due to lack of resources and training.

These studies reveal a growing awareness of engagement strategies but also highlight barriers to consistent implementation, especially in underfunded schools.

Local Studies and Observations

At the local level, particularly in Davao Region and nearby areas:

Division of Davao del Norte (2023) monitoring reports show that Grade 10 students frequently exhibit passive behaviors in class unless motivated by interactive or multimedia-based instruction.

Rosales (2021) documented the success of project-based learning in a Tagum City school, where students created community-based outputs tied to curriculum goals, which increased both engagement and performance.

Santos and Lim (2020) highlighted that teachers who fostered collaborative learning (e.g., peer teaching, role-playing, group debates) noted better classroom behavior and participation, even among shy or struggling students.

These local findings support the view that relevant, hands-on, and emotionally engaging activities are effective in revitalizing learner interest, though such practices are inconsistently applied.

Themes Emerging from the Literature

Across the global, national, and local contexts, several recurring themes emerge:

Hands-On and Experiential Learning – Learning by doing (e.g., experiments, real-life simulations) enhances understanding and engagement (Freeman et al., 2020).

Collaborative Learning Structures – Group projects, peer interaction, and cooperative tasks increase participation and student agency (Tan & Dela Cruz, 2022).

Technology Integration – When effectively used, digital tools such as online quizzes, videos, and educational apps support learner motivation and autonomy (Cruz & Javier, 2021).

Teacher Creativity and Autonomy – The ability of teachers to adapt content and employ varied techniques directly influences classroom excitement (Navarro & Mateo, 2021).

Gaps in the Literature

While several studies have explored teaching strategies and engagement outcomes, few have examined the lived experiences of teachers as they attempt to foster excitement in the classroom—particularly in Grade 10, a crucial academic stage in the Philippine secondary system. Most research focuses on quantitative outcomes or student perspectives, leaving a gap in understanding teacher narratives, challenges, coping mechanisms, and reflections.

This study fills that gap by:

Documenting first-person accounts of teachers.

Exploring the nuances of what works and what fails in real-time classroom settings.

Identifying culturally relevant and resource-sensitive strategies applicable to the Philippine public high school context.

Conclusion

The reviewed literature highlights the multidimensional nature of student engagement and the essential role of teacher agency in promoting it. Although numerous strategies have been suggested globally and nationally, there is a lack of qualitative, teacher-centered studies in the Philippine context. By exploring Grade 10 teachers' personal stories of engagement, this study offers valuable insights into effective, localized, and sustainable classroom practices that move beyond traditional approaches.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design, ethical considerations, participant selection, instruments used, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods employed in this study. The goal of this research is to explore the lived experiences of Grade 10 teachers in creating engaging and exciting classroom environments. Qualitative inquiry was deemed the most appropriate approach to gain in-depth insights into teachers' strategies, coping mechanisms, and reflective practices.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative-phenomenological research design, which aims to describe and interpret the essence of participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenological approach was selected because it allows for deep exploration of personal accounts, reflections, and emotions—fitting for a study that seeks to understand how teachers foster classroom engagement.

According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology is grounded in the philosophy that meaning is derived from individuals' subjective interpretations of their experiences. Recent scholars such as Smith and Osborn (2021) and Neubauer et al. (2020) also emphasize the value of phenomenology in educational settings, particularly when exploring complex human experiences such as motivation, innovation, and professional resilience.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to protect the rights and welfare of the participants. The following measures were observed:

Informed Consent – Participants were provided with consent forms explaining the study's purpose, voluntary nature, data usage, and confidentiality provisions (Resnik, 2021).

Confidentiality – Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants to protect their identities. Interview transcripts and audio recordings were stored securely and accessible only to the researcher.

Voluntary Participation – Participants were informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequence (Israel & Hay, 2020).

Compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 – All procedures followed Republic Act No. 10173 regarding data collection and storage.

Ethical clearance was secured from the researcher's affiliated institution prior to conducting data gathering.

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Respondents

The participants of the study were **ten (10) Grade 10 public high school teachers** from selected schools in the Division of Davao del Norte. A **purposive sampling technique** was used to select participants who met the following criteria:

Currently teaching Grade 10 learners;

With at least three (3) years of teaching experience;

Demonstrated classroom engagement strategies recognized either informally or formally by their peers or school heads;

Willing to voluntarily participate in in-depth interviews.

Purposive sampling is appropriate for phenomenological studies as it ensures selection of participants who can offer rich, detailed, and relevant narratives (Palinkas et al., 2021).

Research Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide, which enabled the researcher to explore predetermined topics while allowing flexibility to pursue emerging themes during the interviews. The guide included questions that focused on key areas such as the strategies employed by teachers to promote student engagement, the challenges they encountered in maintaining classroom engagement, the coping mechanisms they adopted to overcome these challenges, and the lessons and reflections drawn from their experiences. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the interview guide was reviewed by qualitative research experts for content relevance and clarity. It also underwent pilot testing with two non-participant teachers, leading to revisions that clarified ambiguous items and ensured the alignment of questions with the research objectives (Maxwell, 2021). This process helped enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the data collection instrument used in the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process followed a systematic protocol:

Approval and Coordination – Permissions were sought from the Schools Division Office and respective school heads.

Scheduling and Consent – Participants were briefed on the purpose and nature of the research and signed consent forms.

Conduct of Interviews – Individual interviews were conducted face-to-face or via Zoom (depending on teacher availability and safety protocols). Each session lasted approximately 30–45 minutes.

Audio Recording and Transcription – With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The researcher ensured a respectful, non-intrusive environment throughout the data collection process, allowing participants to share experiences freely (Lincoln & Guba, 2020).

Data Analysis Procedure

The Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step method was employed to analyze the data, which is widely accepted in phenomenological research for extracting, organizing, and validating emergent themes (Sanders, 2020). The steps were:

Familiarization – Reading all transcripts multiple times for immersion.

Identifying Significant Statements – Extracting phrases that directly relate to the phenomenon.

Formulating Meanings – Interpreting the significance behind each statement.

Clustering Themes – Grouping similar meanings into categories or themes.

Developing Exhaustive Descriptions – Writing a full narrative of the findings.

Producing Fundamental Structure – Distilling essential themes into concise descriptions.

Validation by Participants – Returning to participants for feedback and clarification (member-checking).

Trustworthiness,

The study also followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement with the participants and the use of triangulation to cross-verify information and ensure depth and accuracy in the data. Transferability was addressed by providing thick, rich descriptions of the participants' classroom contexts, enabling readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational settings. Dependability was maintained through a detailed audit trail documenting the research

decisions, coding procedures, and methodological steps taken throughout the study. Finally, confirmability was established by employing reflective journaling to minimize researcher bias and through peer debriefing, which involved discussions with fellow researchers to validate interpretations and reinforce the objectivity of the findings.

4. CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the concluding insights drawn from the analysis of Grade 10 teachers' anecdotes regarding their efforts to create exciting and engaging classroom environments. It synthesizes the key findings and provides evidence-based recommendations addressed to relevant stakeholders, including the Department of Education, school heads, teachers, and future researchers. The chapter also includes suggestions for further exploration, addressing gaps and future possibilities in the field of learner engagement.

The findings of this study underscored the critical role of innovative pedagogical practices in enhancing student engagement in the classroom. Teachers emphasized the effectiveness of incorporating interactive and hands-on activities, integrating technology, and contextualizing learning through real-world simulations. These strategies enabled learners to be more active participants, motivated collaborators, and curious thinkers—characteristics crucial in a 21st-century learning environment (Saloviita, 2020; Domingo & Garganté, 2022).

One salient theme was the importance of **personalization and adaptability**, wherein teachers adjusted their strategies based on learners' interests and diverse learning styles (Tomlinson, 2020).

Teachers also highlighted **collaborative learning** as a pivotal engagement tool, where group projects and peer interactions deepened understanding and social connection (Gillies, 2019).

Furthermore, fostering a **supportive classroom culture**—where mistakes were viewed as part of the learning process and student voice was encouraged—helped build confidence and classroom belongingness (Hattie & Zierer, 2021). Teachers reported that their **coping mechanisms** included peer mentoring, reflective practices, and participation in professional learning communities, which aligned with studies advocating continuous teacher development (Loughland & Ellis, 2021; Tang & Choi, 2023).

The study affirms that **engagement is not merely a result of content delivery**, but of intentional, strategic instructional decisions grounded in empathy, relevance, and inclusivity (Miller et al., 2020; Reeve, 2021).

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are provided for educational stakeholders who are in the position to influence or directly improve the implementation of engaging instructional practices in secondary schools.

To the Department of Education

The Department of Education is encouraged to institutionalize nationwide training programs focused on learner engagement strategies that incorporate technology, real-world applications, and differentiated instruction to meet diverse learning needs (DepEd, 2020; OECD, 2023). Additionally, it is recommended that adequate funding and logistical support be provided to enable schools to adopt innovative learning tools and create interactive, student-centered learning environments (UNESCO, 2022). Updating curriculum guides to emphasize flexibility and contextualization is also vital, allowing teachers to adapt instructional approaches based on students' individual needs and the unique circumstances of their local communities, as highlighted in DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019.

To School Heads

To enhance instructional practices and improve student engagement, it is essential to foster a school culture that supports instructional innovation, encouraging teachers to take risks and implement new engagement methods (Nguyen et al., 2021). This can be achieved by creating dedicated time within the school schedule for peer sharing, collaborative planning, and reflective dialogue among teachers, which promotes continuous professional growth. Additionally, conducting regular classroom walkthroughs and feedback sessions that focus not merely on compliance but on the depth and quality of learner engagement can provide meaningful insights and reinforce a culture of excellence (Salisbury & Cushing, 2022).

To Teachers

Teachers are encouraged to continue exploring diverse teaching strategies that integrate technology, foster collaboration, and emphasize real-life relevance to make learning more meaningful and engaging for students. Joining or forming professional learning communities (PLCs) can provide valuable support and shared resources for developing and refining engagement practices (Fullan, 2021). Additionally, engaging in reflective teaching by consistently documenting what strategies work and what do not in terms of student engagement allows educators to

adapt and improve their methods over time, ensuring they remain responsive to students' needs and interests (Brookfield, 2020).

To Future Researchers

Future research should explore the long-term effects of engaging classroom environments on students' academic performance and overall well-being. It is also important to investigate how student engagement strategies vary between urban and rural school contexts, as geographic and cultural differences may influence teaching practices and learner responses. Moreover, employing mixed-methods approaches can provide a more comprehensive understanding by linking qualitative insights from teacher experiences with quantitative data on student performance, thus offering a more holistic view of effective engagement practices.

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