



# Student Engagement in the Classroom: Stance of Elementary Teachers

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**Abstract**— This phenomenological study explored the experiences of teachers in engaging students in the classroom at San Isidro District, Division of Davao del Norte. This also investigated their coping mechanisms from the challenges they encountered, and their insights drawn from the findings of this study. Qualitative–phenomenological study was employed in exploring the views of the ten (10) elementary teachers of which primary instrument of data gathering was through in- depth interview. Major findings indicated that the themes include the experiences of teachers were teaching strategies and techniques, challenges in student engagement, and impact of teacher-student relationship. Further, in navigating the complexities of student engagement, teachers often encounter challenges that prompt the development of coping mechanisms to sustain effective classroom dynamics. This exploration delves into key themes that illuminate adaptive pedagogical strategies, social-emotional support and well-being, and professional development and collaboration. Lastly, in examining the insights of teachers in engaging students, we delve into the multifaceted strategies employed by educators to create dynamic and effective learning environments. This exploration encompasses themes such as pedagogical innovation and flexibility, building positive teacher-student relationships, and the promotion of inclusivity and interactivity within the classroom. Effectively engaging students in the classroom holds profound implications for the overall learning experience and academic success. The manner in which teachers facilitate student engagement influences not only the acquisition of knowledge but also shapes students' attitudes toward learning and their overall educational journey.

**Index Terms**— student engagement, elementary teachers, phenomenology.

## 1. Introduction

Maintaining student engagement may provide a formidable challenge in and of itself. Now consider the increased difficulty that arises when instructing pupils who are physically distant and grappling with unusual learning circumstances. Classroom learning offers several advantages in terms of accessibility, customization, and innovation. However, the aforementioned advantages may only be fully realized if students exhibit high levels of motivation and active participation in the learning process.

The concept of student engagement is a complex one that incorporates several aspects related to being actively involved in an activity, including behavioral, cognitive, and emotional traits. Researchers in the field of educational psychology have

recognized the conceptual ambiguity surrounding student involvement, which is considered a multifaceted construct. Despite this ambiguity, student engagement is widely accepted as a crucial factor in promoting desirable educational outcomes (Wong et al., 2022).

According to a study conducted by Shukla et al. (2016), it has been shown that students in Virginia who exhibit low levels of involvement are more susceptible to the risk of dropping out from both secondary and university education. Furthermore, it has been found that discontinuing one's education is often the last step in the disengagement process. There is a noticeable decrease in student involvement as they transition into college, resulting in a chronic state of disengagement. Moreover, it is crucial to recognize the significant role played in comprehending the progression of a student's academic trajectory and in forecasting their likelihood of completing their education successfully or discontinuing their studies. The issue of dropout rates is a significant challenge within the educational systems of several countries and is presently a subject of considerable political focus (Mastrorili, et al., 2016).

Previous studies of Pedler et al. (2020) have shown that educators often possess divergent conceptualizations of student involvement and frequently use engagement tactics that are inconsistent with these conceptualizations. Given this perspective, the primary objective of the present review is to offer precise directives regarding student engagement as a three-dimensional concept, along with evidence-based definitions and tactics to foster more consistent engagement. The aim is to provide a framework that educators can utilize to effectively implement engagement pedagogies in the classroom. Further, the results of Rangvid (2018) of SEN students included in regular classrooms.

According to the Department of Education's findings, it was observed that, on average, throughout the period from 2005 to 2013, a notable proportion of elementary-level students in the Philippines, namely twenty-six percent, did not successfully progress to the sixth grade. Additionally, it was noted that twenty-three percent of students did not complete their high school education. On average, around 6% of students at the primary level discontinue their education. Cinches et al. (2017) assert that there is a dearth of research pertaining to student participation in the Philippines. Significant results were seen in a limited number of studies. The study conducted by Gonzales

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et al. (2015) successfully replicated previous results, providing more evidence that student academic engagement is influenced by three key factors: future ambitions, identification with school, and perceived relevance of schoolwork.

Similarly, in San Isidro District, Division of Davao del Norte, teachers faced various challenges in engaging students in the teaching and learning process. These include the lack of motivation, having complex learning materials, insufficient support, and usual learners' boredom.

I have read various studies about the challenges of teachers towards student engagement in the classroom but none of those were conducted in the local setting. However, this study focuses on the student engagement in the elementary classrooms not only in inclusive education in San Isidro District thus, the need to conduct this study.

When children exhibit elevated levels of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, there is an increased likelihood of achieving academic excellence, fostering a greater feeling of school affiliation, and cultivating a more favorable perception of social-emotional well-being. The concept of student involvement has been widely recognized as a significant factor in comprehending student attrition, especially as a progressive phenomenon that unfolds over time and ultimately impacts the ultimate choice to discontinue one's education. Furthermore, the active involvement of students in academic pursuits is a pivotal element that significantly influences the overall achievement of pupils. Additionally, it has been shown that student involvement has a significant role in shaping student connectivity, willingness to participate in academic pursuits, and perception of their own capabilities in academic activities.

## 2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of teachers in engaging students in the classroom at San Isidro District, Division of Davao del Norte. This also investigated their coping mechanisms from the challenges they encountered, and their insights drawn from the findings of this study.

At this stage of research, the experiences of teachers were generally defined as their learning and difficult experiences in terms of student engagement in the classroom. Utilizing academic and social engagement strategies may effectively enhance student motivation towards active participation in their courses and other campus events. Student engagement has a crucial role in fostering academic persistence, enhancing the overall university experience, and facilitating academic achievement and knowledge acquisition.

### A. Research Questions

This phenomenological study aimed to explore the experiences of teachers in engaging students in the classroom at San Isidro District, Division of Davao del Norte. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of teachers in engaging students in the classroom?
2. How did the teachers cope with the challenges in

engaging students in the classroom?

3. What insights can be drawn from the experiences of teachers that can be shared with others?

## 3. Methods

The current investigation used qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research employed descriptive data to facilitate the investigation of phenomena characterized by limited comprehension. Creswell (2015) posited that individuals had the capacity to acquire a qualitative comprehension of social and cultural phenomena by means of observing the attitudes, ideas, and behaviors shown within a certain group.

I followed some criteria in selecting the participants, such as: (a) the participants must be holding a permanent position, at least Teacher I, in public elementary schools at San Isidro District, Division of Davao del Norte; (b) they are assigned in the elementary level; (c) these teachers had experienced various challenges in engaging learners in the classroom instructions; (d) they will be composed of either male or female teachers; and (e) they are not members of any ethnic minority or Indigenous People (IP) group and are willing to participate in this study. Furthermore, the inclusion of 10 participants in the in-depth interviews was deemed sufficient to facilitate the identification and generation of themes.

The present research used data coding and theme analysis as methodological approaches for inquiry. In their study, Nowell et al. (2017) analyzed the results obtained by Thorne (2000) to investigate the component of qualitative research that requires the greatest cognitive effort.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### A. Experiences of Teachers in Engaging Students in the Classroom

In exploring the experiences of teachers in engaging students in the classroom, three major themes emerge, offering a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved. These themes include teaching strategies and techniques, challenges in student engagement, and impact of teacher-student relationship.

#### 1) Teaching Strategies and Techniques

This theme delves into the various instructional methods employed by teachers to engage students effectively. It includes discussions on the utilization of diverse teaching techniques, the integration of technology in the classroom, and the adaptation of teaching styles to accommodate different learning preferences. Teachers may share their experiences in experimenting with innovative approaches to capture students' attention and enhance their understanding of the subject matter.

In general, students have indicated a greater level of satisfaction with their learning experience and increased levels of engagement within the context of the flipped classroom. The investigation identified seven characteristics that the students see as particularly favorable for their learning experience. These categories include commitment to peers, recognition, sense of safety, teacher connection, physical learning

environment, collaborative learning with peers, and use of videos for acquiring new knowledge. The findings suggest that the emotional aspect of student involvement is especially notable when students participate in reflective practices within the context of the flipped classroom (Steen-Utheim & Foldnes, 2018).

### 2) *Challenges in Student Engagement*

This theme explores the obstacles teachers face in maintaining student engagement. Discussions within this theme may revolve around addressing student apathy, managing distractions in the classroom, and overcoming language barriers. Teachers can reflect on real-world challenges they've encountered and share strategies or interventions they've implemented to mitigate these challenges, fostering a more interactive and participatory learning environment.

The study conducted by Pedler et al. (2020) investigated the attitudes and implementation of student engagement among teachers, with a specific focus on identifying any inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices. The authors emphasized two significant aspects of investigative significance pertaining to this paradigm: variations in instructors' interpretations of student participation and discrepancies between teachers' conceptions of effective engagement and the actual implementation of engagement strategies.

### 3) *Impact of Teacher-Student Relationship*

The third theme focuses on the significance of the teacher-student relationship in student engagement. It includes discussions on building rapport and trust with students, creating a positive classroom environment, and recognizing and responding to individual student needs. Teachers may share personal anecdotes or insights into how positive relationships contribute to increased student participation and motivation in the learning process.

In two ways, previous studies may have exaggerated differences in student involvement. First, evaluating a student's engagement at a specific point in time confounds persistent differences in participation between students with probable situational shifts in a student's engagement. Second, if a student's participation is only assessed in one instructor's classes, it is impossible to distinguish between a student's general or average level of participation and the prospect of attunement between a specific teacher and a specific student. If these so-called connection effects are not taken into account, student differences may be overestimated (Mainhard et al., 2018).

## B. *Coping Mechanisms of Teachers in Engaging Students in the Classroom*

In navigating the complexities of student engagement, teachers often encounter challenges that prompt the development of coping mechanisms to sustain effective classroom dynamics. This exploration delves into key themes that illuminate adaptive pedagogical strategies, social-emotional support and well-being, and professional development and collaboration.

### 1) *Adaptive Pedagogical Strategies*

Teachers employ various adaptive pedagogical strategies as a coping mechanism to address challenges in engaging students. This theme encompasses the innovative teaching methods, instructional approaches, and use of technology that educators adopt to cater to diverse learning styles and capture students' attention.

Previous studies of Pedler et al. (2020) have shown that educators often possess divergent conceptualizations of student involvement and frequently use engagement tactics that are inconsistent with these conceptualizations. Given this perspective, the primary objective of the present review is to offer precise directives regarding student engagement as a three-dimensional concept, along with evidence-based definitions and tactics to foster more consistent engagement. The aim is to provide a framework that educators can utilize to effectively implement engagement pedagogies in the classroom.

According to Grove's (2019) research on the topic, educators who do not believe it is their responsibility to engage students have limited the scope of their responsibilities. Teachers who feel accountable for their students' learning will adapt and enhance their teachings. Lessons employing these techniques are less likely to be created by teachers who lack the resources and skills necessary to engage students. Teachers with high expectations for all of their pupils will employ strategies to maintain their engagement. Educators should supplement their curriculum with extracurricular resources if they believe their students require more instruction than they can provide in class. Strong self-efficacy in creating a teaching and learning environment conducive to student success is indicative of a teacher's belief that they are competent at engaging students and that their classroom culture promotes learning for all students.

### 2) *Social-Emotional Support and Well-being*

Recognizing the impact of the teaching environment on their own well-being and that of students, teachers incorporate coping mechanisms centered around social-emotional support. This theme explores how educators cultivate positive classroom atmospheres, provide emotional support to students, and implement self-care strategies to navigate the challenges associated with student engagement.

The findings of the study revealed that students who viewed classroom interactions of high quality showed higher levels of involvement in their academic pursuits. Furthermore, it was seen that the emotional support provided by teachers exhibited the most significant correlation with student engagement, both at the individual and collective levels. Moreover, the results revealed that there was a higher level of emotional engagement among elementary school students compared to lower secondary school students. Additionally, it was observed that female students exhibited greater behavioral engagement in comparison to their male counterparts (Havik & Westergård, 2020).

According to Mamun (2018), contemporary research has delineated behavioral engagement as including several aspects of student involvement, including active participation, exertion of effort, focused attention, sustained perseverance, and

favorable demeanor shown towards educational endeavors.

### 3) *Professional Development and Collaboration*

Teachers resort to continuous professional development and collaboration with peers as coping mechanisms. This theme delves into how educators seek ongoing training, engage in collaborative efforts with colleagues, and leverage shared experiences to enhance their skills and resilience in overcoming obstacles related to student engagement in the classroom.

The recommendations include broad issues, such as establishing an institutional culture and formal structure for student participation, and optimizing communication channels between students, peers, and teachers. The tips pertain to many aspects of student involvement, including curriculum creation and development, peer teaching, governance procedures, research activities, peer support programs, and connection with the local community (Peters et al., 2019).

### C. *Insights Drawn from the Experiences of Teachers in Engaging Students in the Classroom*

In examining the insights of teachers in engaging students, we delve into the multifaceted strategies employed by educators to create dynamic and effective learning environments. This exploration encompasses themes such as pedagogical innovation and flexibility, building positive teacher-student relationships, and the promotion of inclusivity and interactivity within the classroom. Understanding these key themes sheds light on the nuanced approaches teachers adopt to enhance student engagement and contribute to a vibrant and effective educational experience.

#### 1) *Pedagogical Innovation and Flexibility*

Teachers frequently employ innovative teaching methods and adaptability in response to diverse student needs. This theme explores how educators introduce creative approaches, incorporate technology, and tailor their teaching styles to better engage students with varied learning preferences.

Cognitive engagement may be defined as the active involvement of students in the process of acquiring information, whereby they exert effort to comprehend intricate concepts and use advanced abilities (Conner, 2016). Discussion forums provide convenient venues for students to engage in group conversations inside e-learning settings. In addition, they facilitate the ability of instructors to monitor and assess student discourse. In order to enhance student learning, it is essential for educators to discern and assess the level of cognitive engagement shown by students inside discussion forums. The findings indicated that almost 50% of the students submitted their postings without providing any accompanying justifications, therefore indicating a diminished degree of cognitive involvement.

Likewise, a significant proportion of the postings had little impact on fostering a substantial degree of cognitive engagement. The findings further indicated a lack of association between gender and cognitive engagement levels (Kew & Tasir, 2021).

According to research conducted by Sesmiyanti (2018) on student cognitive engagement in the learning process, the active participation of students allows them to maximize their

engagement in the learning process and effectively apply the knowledge they have acquired in real-life situations. In order to ensure that students obtain a high-quality education within the classroom setting, it is essential that they maintain focused attention on the subject matter for the whole of the learning process. There is a positive correlation between student engagement in classroom activities and their levels of inspiration, enthusiasm, and cooperation.

#### 2) *Building Positive Teacher-Student Relationships*

The foundation of effective engagement often lies in the quality of relationships between teachers and students. This theme delves into the insights of educators who prioritize fostering positive connections, creating a supportive classroom environment, and understanding the individual strengths and challenges of each student.

The study conducted by Sokmen (2021) examined the levels of behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and agentic involvement among middle school students in the field of science, with a focus on the influence of self-efficacy and characteristics related to the learning environment. The research focused on many learning environment characteristics, including shared control, student bargaining, promotion of mutual respect, and provision of teacher feedback. The promotion of mutual respect had a favorable association with behavioral involvement, but there was no discernible relationship between student negotiating and any of the components of engagement.

Moreover, the findings of their study indicate that the division of behavioral involvement into distinct categories of disengagement, active engagement, and passive engagement have significant significance for both research and conceptual understanding (Nguyen et al., 2018).

#### 3) *Inclusive and Interactive Learning Environments*

Insights from teachers reveal the importance of inclusivity and interactivity in the classroom. This theme explores strategies employed by educators to ensure that lessons are interactive, culturally sensitive, and promote a sense of belonging for all students, thereby enhancing overall engagement.

The concept of student engagement is a complex one that incorporates several aspects related to being actively involved in an activity, including behavioral, cognitive, and emotional traits. Researchers in the field of educational psychology have recognized the conceptual ambiguity surrounding student involvement, which is considered a multifaceted construct. Despite this ambiguity, student engagement is widely accepted as a crucial factor in promoting desirable educational outcomes (Skinner, 2016).

Further, the results of the study illustrate how the arrangement of the classroom facilitates student participation by using inexpensive educational resources and providing a versatile, inclusive environment that supports a range of interactive learning approaches. Furthermore, this case study underscores the need of doing assessments on classroom redesign activities in order to substantiate and enhance subsequent teaching environments (Rands & Gansemer-Topf, 2017).

To enhance student engagement, it is advised to offer equal

opportunities to all learners. Employing student-centered teaching approaches and involving students in group discussions, communication, and cooperative learning are also recommended strategies. Furthermore, teachers should actively assist students in their learning tasks during class and utilize technology to deliver course content, thereby facilitating the development of students' communication skills (Rani Gul *et al.*, 2022).

## 5. Implications and Future Directions

### A. Implications

The implications of employing effective teaching strategies and techniques in engaging students in the classroom are far-reaching and impactful. Firstly, such strategies enhance the learning experience, making it more interactive, dynamic, and tailored to diverse student needs. By adopting varied instructional approaches, educators can cater to different learning styles, fostering a more inclusive and supportive classroom environment. Additionally, engaging teaching strategies contribute to increased student motivation and participation, promoting a positive attitude toward learning. Beyond academic outcomes, these methods instill critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a lifelong love for learning. Furthermore, incorporating innovative techniques helps educators adapt to the evolving landscape of education, preparing students for success in an ever-changing world. Overall, the implications underscore the importance of continuous exploration and integration of effective teaching strategies to create a dynamic and enriching educational experience.

Likewise, results imply that fostering a positive teacher-student relationship for student engagement in the classroom are profound. A strong and supportive connection between teachers and students contributes to a conducive learning environment where students feel valued, respected, and emotionally secure. Such relationships enhance students' motivation to participate actively in class discussions, seek assistance when needed, and take ownership of their learning. A positive teacher-student bond also nurtures a sense of belonging and connectedness, reducing feelings of isolation or disengagement. Moreover, this relationship can act as a catalyst for effective communication, allowing teachers to better understand the unique needs and strengths of individual students. Ultimately, the implications emphasize the transformative impact of cultivating meaningful teacher-student relationships on overall student engagement, academic performance, and socio-emotional well-being.

Professional development and collaboration among teachers have significant implications for engaging students in the classroom. When educators engage in ongoing professional development, they acquire new teaching strategies, technologies, and pedagogical approaches that can enhance their instructional methods. This continuous learning helps teachers stay updated on best practices, creating a dynamic and effective learning environment for students. Collaboration among teachers fosters a supportive community where

educators can share insights, resources, and experiences. This collaborative approach enables the implementation of diverse teaching techniques, addressing different learning styles and needs within the classroom. Moreover, a collaborative teacher community can contribute to a positive school culture, promoting a shared commitment to student success and well-being. Overall, professional development and collaboration play pivotal roles in creating an enriched educational experience that engages and benefits students.

Similarly, pedagogical innovation and flexibility in teaching have significant research implications for engaging students in the classroom. Research in this area can explore the effectiveness of various innovative teaching methods and flexible instructional approaches on student engagement levels. Investigating the impact of integrating technology, project-based learning, or adaptive teaching strategies can provide insights into the most effective ways to capture students' interest and enhance their learning experiences. Moreover, researchers can delve into the factors that contribute to teachers' ability to adapt and innovate in response to diverse student needs. Understanding the relationship between pedagogical innovation, flexibility, and student engagement can inform educational policies, teacher training programs, and curriculum development, promoting an environment that nurtures active and meaningful student participation. Additionally, exploring the role of educator mindset and professional development in fostering pedagogical innovation can offer valuable insights for improving teacher practices and, consequently, student engagement.

Finally, research on inclusive and interactive learning environments has profound implications for engaging students in the classroom. Investigating the impact of inclusive practices and interactive teaching methods on student engagement can contribute to understanding how to create a more participatory and accessible educational experience for all students. Scholars can explore the effectiveness of inclusive curriculum design, differentiated instruction, and the use of technology to enhance interactive learning. Additionally, research in this area can shed light on the benefits of diverse and inclusive classroom environments for student motivation, academic achievement, and overall well-being. The findings may inform educational policies, teacher training programs, and institutional practices to foster inclusive approaches that cater to students with diverse learning needs and backgrounds. Furthermore, understanding the role of teacher attitudes, professional development, and support systems in promoting inclusivity and interactivity can provide valuable insights for cultivating a positive and equitable learning environment.

### B. Future Directions of the Study

Through an anticipatory lens, this research aspires to provide valuable insights that can guide educators, researchers, and policymakers in fostering an engaging and adaptive learning environment for students in the years to come.

#### 1) Department of Education

Future directions for the Department of Education should involve incorporating the insights gained from this study into

teacher training programs. Implementing professional development initiatives that focus on effective student engagement strategies can enhance teaching practices across educational institutions.

### 2) School Administrators

School administrators can use the findings to inform policies that support a positive and engaging learning environment. This may include allocating resources for ongoing teacher training, creating mentorship programs, and fostering a collaborative culture among educators.

### 3) Teachers

For teachers, the future direction lies in continuous professional growth. The study's insights can encourage teachers to reflect on their practices, experiment with new engagement strategies, and share experiences within a supportive community of educators.

### 4) Future Researchers

Future researchers could delve deeper into specific aspects uncovered by this study, exploring nuances in teacher-student relationships, the impact of evolving technology, or the effectiveness of tailored professional development programs. Building on this foundation can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of student engagement in diverse educational contexts.

In conclusion, the future directions of this study open avenues for positive transformation in education. By disseminating insights to educational stakeholders, such as the Department of Education, school administrators, teachers, and future researchers, the study lays the groundwork for informed decision-making and continuous improvement. The ongoing commitment to understanding and enhancing student engagement reflects a collective effort to create dynamic and effective learning environments, ensuring that education remains a catalyst for growth and development. As educators and researchers collaborate on these future directions, the potential impact on the quality of education and the overall student experience is both promising and transformative.

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