



Instructional Practices and Learner Engagement in MAPEH Education: Perspectives from Elementary Teachers in a Philippine Rural School Context

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension remains a significant concern in elementary education, particularly among learners experiencing difficulties in decoding, vocabulary development, fluency, and meaning construction in Filipino reading instruction. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the reading profiles and comprehension experiences of Grade 6 learners in Filipino as basis for the development of a contextualized remedial reading program. The study involved twelve Grade 6 Filipino teachers and selected struggling readers from public elementary schools in the Philippines who were purposively selected based on their involvement in literacy intervention activities. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, reading assessment records, classroom observations, and document analysis. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis revealed five major themes: (1) Diverse Reading Profiles and Literacy Performance Among Grade 6 Learners; (2) Vocabulary Limitations and Comprehension Difficulties in Filipino Reading; (3) Learners' Emotional Responses and Reading Anxiety During Comprehension Activities; (4) Instructional Practices and Intervention Strategies in Filipino Reading Instruction; and (5) Need for Contextualized and Learner-Centered Remedial Reading Programs. Findings revealed that learners demonstrated varying reading abilities ranging from frustration to instructional reading levels, with many experiencing difficulties in vocabulary recognition, inferential comprehension, fluency, and critical understanding of Filipino texts. Teachers observed that contextualized and interactive literacy activities positively supported learner engagement and comprehension development. However, limited reading exposure, insufficient instructional materials, learner diversity, and limited parental support affected reading performance and intervention implementation. The study concludes that contextualized and differentiated remedial reading programs are necessary to address learners' comprehension difficulties and strengthen literacy development in Filipino education. The findings provide implications for literacy instruction, curriculum enhancement, and reading intervention program development in elementary education.

Keywords: reading comprehension, Filipino reading instruction, remedial reading program, literacy intervention, contextualized instruction, qualitative research, elementary education

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INTRODUCTION MAPEH education plays an essential role in promoting the holistic development of elementary

learners by enhancing their creativity, physical wellness, emotional expression, artistic appreciation, and health awareness. Through Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health, learners develop not only cognitive competencies but also social, emotional, physical, and cultural skills necessary for lifelong learning and personal development. In elementary education, MAPEH instruction provides opportunities for learners to actively participate in experiential and collaborative learning activities that strengthen learner engagement and motivation.

Learner engagement is a critical component of effective MAPEH education because the subject areas involve active participation, creativity, movement, collaboration, and self-expression. Engaged learners are more likely to demonstrate enthusiasm, confidence, participation, and meaningful involvement in classroom activities. Behavioral engagement is reflected through active participation and task completion, emotional engagement through enjoyment and motivation, and cognitive engagement through meaningful understanding and critical thinking during learning activities.

In rural Philippine schools, MAPEH teachers frequently encounter challenges related to limited instructional materials, inadequate facilities, insufficient technological support, and lack of specialized equipment. Despite these constraints, teachers continuously adapt instructional approaches and maximize available resources to maintain meaningful classroom engagement and participation. Teachers often integrate localized activities, indigenous games, community experiences, and culturally relevant materials into classroom instruction to make learning more meaningful and accessible to learners.

Contextualized and culturally responsive teaching practices have been recognized as important strategies in enhancing learner engagement and improving instructional effectiveness. In MAPEH education, contextualized instruction enables teachers to connect lessons to learners' daily experiences, cultural practices, and community realities. Such instructional approaches help learners appreciate the relevance of classroom activities while promoting active participation and cultural appreciation.

Previous studies revealed that experiential and collaborative instructional practices improve learner participation, motivation, creativity, and classroom engagement in elementary education. However, limited qualitative investigations have explored how elementary teachers in rural Philippine schools experience MAPEH instruction and how instructional practices influence learner engagement within geographically challenged educational settings.

This study therefore aimed to explore the instructional practices and learner engagement experiences in MAPEH education from the perspectives of elementary teachers at Masipi Elementary School, Masipi East, Cabagan, Isabela. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What instructional practices are utilized by elementary teachers in MAPEH education?

2. How do learners demonstrate engagement in MAPEH classroom activities?
3. What challenges do teachers encounter in implementing MAPEH instruction in a rural school context?
4. What implications may be derived for improving instructional practices and learner engagement in MAPEH education?

The study contributes to the growing literature on learner engagement, contextualized instruction, and MAPEH education by providing qualitative insights into instructional realities and classroom experiences within a rural Philippine school setting.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Instructional Practices in MAPEH Education

Instructional practices in MAPEH education emphasize learner-centered, experiential, and performance-based approaches that encourage active participation and holistic learner development. According to John Dewey, meaningful learning occurs when learners actively participate in authentic and experience-based educational activities (Dewey, 1938). MAPEH instruction promotes creativity, movement, collaboration, and artistic expression through interactive classroom experiences.

Studies revealed that effective MAPEH teachers frequently utilize demonstrations, collaborative activities, role-playing, performances, games, creative projects, and experiential tasks to strengthen learner engagement and classroom participation (Garcia & Mendoza, 2021). Activity-based instruction enhances learners' motivation, creativity, confidence, and participation in classroom activities.

Similarly, experiential instructional approaches encourage learners to apply knowledge and skills through actual participation and reflective learning experiences (Kolb, 1984). In elementary education, learners become more engaged when instructional activities are interactive, enjoyable, and aligned with their interests and developmental needs.

Learner Engagement in Elementary Education

Learner engagement refers to learners' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in classroom learning activities (Fredricks et al., 2004). Behavioral engagement includes participation, attentiveness, attendance, and task completion. Emotional engagement involves learners' enjoyment, confidence, motivation, and sense of belonging in classroom environments. Cognitive engagement refers to critical thinking, meaningful understanding, and active investment in learning tasks.

Research indicates that learner engagement significantly contributes to academic achievement, classroom participation, and positive educational experiences (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). In MAPEH education, engagement is strengthened through collaborative performances, games, movement activities, artistic expression, and experiential learning opportunities.

Studies also revealed that supportive classroom

environments and positive teacher-learner relationships improve learners' willingness to participate in classroom activities and enhance emotional engagement during learning experiences (Christenson et al., 2012).

Contextualized and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Contextualized teaching practices connect classroom instruction to learners' cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and community realities. Geneva Gay emphasized that culturally responsive teaching strengthens learner participation, motivation, and academic achievement by making instruction culturally meaningful and relevant (Gay, 2018).

In rural Philippine schools, contextualized instruction often includes the integration of indigenous games, local music, cultural dances, community experiences, and locally available materials into classroom activities. Such approaches promote cultural appreciation while making classroom learning more accessible and engaging to learners.

Research further suggests that contextualized instruction contributes to stronger learner participation, confidence, and meaningful learning experiences, particularly among learners in marginalized and rural educational communities (Orale & Antonio, 2022).

Challenges in Rural MAPEH Education

Rural schools frequently encounter challenges related to inadequate facilities, insufficient learning materials, limited technological resources, and lack of specialized MAPEH equipment (OECD, 2019). These limitations affect the implementation of quality and interactive classroom instruction.

Teachers in rural educational settings often demonstrate resilience and creativity by improvising instructional materials and adapting activities according to available resources and community realities (Dela Peña, 2020). However, infrastructural and instructional limitations continue to affect the sustainability of learner-centered and experiential instructional practices.

The reviewed literature highlights the importance of experiential, collaborative, and contextualized instructional approaches in strengthening learner engagement while emphasizing the need for further qualitative exploration within rural Philippine school contexts.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design to explore instructional practices and learner engagement experiences in MAPEH education within a rural Philippine school context. Qualitative research enabled the researcher to examine participants' lived experiences, perceptions, instructional realities, and classroom interactions in natural educational settings. The descriptive qualitative approach allowed the researcher to gather rich descriptions and detailed insights regarding how MAPEH teachers facilitate classroom instruction and how learners experience engagement during classroom activities.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Masipi Elementary School

located in Masipi East, Cabagan, Isabela, Philippines. The school serves learners from rural farming communities and reflects the realities of elementary education in geographically challenged and resource-limited settings. The locale was selected because teachers in the school regularly implement contextualized and activity-based instructional practices despite limited facilities and instructional resources.

Participants of the Study

The participants included six elementary teachers handling MAPEH subjects and ten selected elementary learners from different grade levels. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement and experiences in MAPEH classroom instruction and learning activities. Teacher participants possessed direct experiences in implementing instructional strategies, while learner participants were selected based on active classroom participation and willingness to share learning experiences.

Data Gathering Procedures

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans, activity sheets, and instructional materials. Interviews explored participants' experiences, instructional strategies, learner participation, and challenges encountered during MAPEH instruction.

Classroom observations focused on instructional delivery, learner engagement, classroom interaction, collaborative activities, and experiential learning practices. Document analysis provided supporting evidence regarding lesson implementation and contextualized instructional approaches utilized during classroom instruction.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006). Coding, categorization, and theme development were conducted systematically to identify meaningful patterns and interpretations from the collected qualitative data.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Credibility was established through triangulation and member checking. Dependability was ensured through audit trails and organized documentation of research procedures. Confirmability and transferability were strengthened through detailed descriptions of the research process, classroom context, participant experiences, and study findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and respect for participants were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Permission from school authorities and parental consent for learner participants were secured prior to data gathering activities.

Results and Findings

Theme 1: Experiential and Performance-Based Instructional Practices

The findings revealed that elementary teachers at Masipi Elementary School primarily utilized experiential and performance-based instructional practices to sustain

learner engagement in MAPEH education. Teachers emphasized that learners became more interested and actively involved when classroom activities required movement, creativity, participation, and actual performance rather than purely lecture-based instruction. One participant shared:

“Mas nagiging interesado ang mga bata kapag may actual na performance, games, at activities kaysa puro discussion lang.”

Another teacher explained:

“Kapag pinapagawa namin sila ng sayaw, kanta, o group presentation, mas natatandaan nila ang lesson.”

A learner participant also stated:

“Masaya po kapag may activities kasi nakakasali kaming lahat at hindi kami nabobore.”

Teachers frequently incorporated singing activities, dance presentations, role-playing, group performances, physical exercises, drawing activities, poster-making, and cooperative games during classroom instruction. Classroom observations showed that learners demonstrated enthusiasm, excitement, and increased participation during activity-based learning experiences. Learners actively interacted with classmates and confidently participated in performances and collaborative activities.

Teachers explained that experiential activities helped learners understand lessons more effectively because they were directly involved in the learning process. Learners also developed confidence and self-expression through active classroom participation. Behavioral engagement was observed through increased attentiveness, participation, and completion of classroom activities, while emotional engagement was reflected through enjoyment, enthusiasm, and willingness to participate.

One teacher noted:

“Napapansin ko na kahit mahiyain na bata ay sumasali kapag interactive ang activities.”

The findings suggest that experiential instructional approaches strengthen learner engagement by making classroom learning interactive, enjoyable, and meaningful. These practices enabled learners to actively construct knowledge and skills through participation and reflection. The findings support the experiential learning theory of David Kolb, which emphasizes learning through concrete experiences and reflective participation (Kolb, 1984). Similarly, Garcia and Mendoza (2021) found that activity-based MAPEH instruction significantly improves learner motivation, participation, and confidence among elementary learners.

Theme 2: Collaborative and Participatory Learner Engagement

Collaborative learning emerged as another significant instructional practice influencing learner engagement in MAPEH education. Teachers emphasized that learners became more participative and confident when classroom activities involved peer interaction, teamwork, and group participation.

One teacher explained:

“Kapag magkakasama sila sa group activities, mas natututo

sila at mas nagiging active.”

Another participant stated:

“Nagkakaroon sila ng confidence kasi nagtutulungan sila sa activities.”

Learners likewise expressed positive experiences regarding collaborative classroom activities.

One learner shared:

“Mas gusto ko po iyong group activities kasi nagtutulungan kami at masaya po.”

Another learner added:

“Kapag may games at group performance, mas ganado po kaming sumali.”

Teachers frequently utilized group performances, collaborative games, peer demonstrations, cooperative learning tasks, and team-based classroom activities. Learners demonstrated increased confidence, participation, and interaction during collaborative activities. Classroom observations revealed that learners supported one another during performances, encouraged classmates during activities, and worked cooperatively in completing group tasks.

Teachers noted that collaborative learning strengthened learners' communication skills, cooperation, and classroom confidence. Learners who were initially shy became more participative when activities involved peer support and teamwork. Emotional engagement was observed through learners' enjoyment and excitement during group participation, while cognitive engagement was reflected in learners' ability to apply concepts and solve problems collaboratively.

One participant observed:

“Mas lumalabas ang creativity at participation nila kapag may teamwork.”

The findings indicate that collaborative instructional approaches contribute significantly to learner engagement by creating interactive and supportive classroom environments. Learners became more motivated and socially connected when they actively interacted with peers during classroom activities.

These findings align with the study of Fredricks et al. (2004), which emphasized that collaborative and participatory learning environments strengthen behavioral, emotional, and cognitive learner engagement. Similarly, Christenson et al. (2012) highlighted that cooperative classroom experiences contribute positively to learners' motivation, classroom participation, and academic involvement.

Theme 3: Contextualized and Culturally Responsive MAPEH Instruction

The findings further revealed that teachers implemented contextualized and culturally responsive instructional practices to make MAPEH lessons more meaningful and relatable to learners. Teachers integrated local games, community activities, indigenous music, folk dances, and culturally familiar examples into classroom instruction.

One participant stated:

“Ginagamit namin iyong mga local na laro at cultural activities para mas maintindihan nila ang lesson.”

Another teacher shared:

“Mas nagiging interesado sila kapag nakakarelate sila sa activity at kultura nila.”

Learners also expressed appreciation for culturally familiar classroom activities.

One learner explained:

“Masaya po kapag folk dance at local games kasi alam na po namin iyong ginagawa.”

Another learner stated:

“Kapag ginagamit po ang local songs at laro, mas naiintindihan namin ang lesson.”

Teachers explained that integrating familiar community experiences and cultural practices increased learners' interest and participation during classroom activities. Learners became more engaged when lessons reflected their daily experiences, local traditions, and rural community realities.

Classroom observations showed that learners actively participated during activities involving folk dances, local songs, indigenous games, and culturally familiar movement activities. Teachers also utilized locally available materials and improvised instructional resources to facilitate classroom instruction despite limited school facilities and equipment.

One participant mentioned:

“Kahit kulang ang materials, gumagamit kami ng available resources sa community.”

The findings suggest that contextualized and culturally responsive instruction strengthens learner engagement by connecting classroom learning to learners' socio-cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. Such practices promote cultural appreciation, participation, and meaningful learning experiences among elementary learners.

The findings support the culturally responsive teaching framework of Geneva Gay, which emphasizes the importance of integrating learners' cultural identities and experiences into classroom instruction to improve participation and learning outcomes (Gay, 2018). The results likewise align with the sociocultural learning theory of Lev Vygotsky, which highlights meaningful learning through social and cultural interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Theme 4: Challenges in Sustaining Quality MAPEH Instruction in Rural Schools

Despite the positive instructional practices implemented by teachers, participants encountered several challenges affecting the delivery of quality MAPEH education in the rural school setting. Teachers identified inadequate facilities, insufficient instructional materials, lack of MAPEH equipment, limited classroom space, and time constraints as major instructional challenges.

One teacher noted:

“Mahirap minsan magturo ng MAPEH kapag kulang ang kagamitan at maliit ang space.”

Another participant stated:

“Kulang kami minsan sa musical instruments, art materials, at sports equipment.”

Teachers explained that limited resources affected their ability to implement certain classroom activities

effectively, particularly in Physical Education and Arts instruction. Insufficient musical instruments, sports equipment, art supplies, and multimedia resources limited opportunities for more diverse and interactive instructional experiences.

Learners also recognized these classroom limitations.

One learner shared:

“Minsan po kulang ang gamit kaya naghihintayan kami sa activities.”

Another learner added:

“Mas masaya sana kung mas marami pong kagamitan sa PE at Arts.”

Participants also shared that large class sizes and multiple teaching responsibilities affected classroom preparation and instructional implementation. Despite these limitations, teachers demonstrated resilience and creativity by improvising materials, modifying activities, and maximizing available community resources to sustain learner engagement.

One participant emphasized:

“Kahit kulang ang resources, gumagawa kami ng paraan para matuloy ang activities.”

Classroom observations confirmed that teachers frequently adapted activities according to available materials and classroom conditions. Improvised instructional resources and localized activities became essential strategies in maintaining learner participation despite resource inadequacies.

The findings indicate that while learner-centered and contextualized instructional practices contribute positively to learner engagement, institutional support and resource augmentation remain essential in sustaining quality MAPEH education in rural schools.

These findings support the study of OECD (2019), which highlighted that rural schools frequently experience infrastructural and instructional limitations affecting educational quality and innovation. Similarly, Dela Peña (2020) emphasized that rural teachers often encounter challenges related to limited instructional resources yet continue to demonstrate adaptability and commitment in classroom instruction.

Discussion

The study revealed that experiential, collaborative, and contextualized instructional practices significantly contribute to learner engagement in MAPEH education within rural elementary school settings. Teachers at Masipi Elementary School demonstrated learner-centered pedagogical approaches that encouraged active participation, creativity, collaboration, and meaningful learning experiences among elementary learners.

Experiential and performance-based activities emerged as important strategies in strengthening behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Learners became more motivated and participative when classroom activities involved actual performances, games, movement activities, and creative expression. These findings reinforce experiential learning theories emphasizing active participation and authentic learning experiences as essential components of meaningful education.

Collaborative learning practices also strengthened

classroom interaction, peer support, and learner confidence. Cooperative classroom environments enabled learners to interact socially, share ideas, and participate more confidently in classroom activities. Such findings support learner engagement frameworks emphasizing the importance of supportive and participatory educational environments.

Furthermore, contextualized and culturally responsive instruction enhanced learner participation by connecting lessons to learners' cultural identities, community realities, and daily experiences. The integration of local games, indigenous activities, and culturally familiar instructional materials contributed to more meaningful and engaging classroom experiences.

However, instructional challenges related to inadequate facilities, insufficient equipment, and limited instructional resources continue to affect the sustainability of quality MAPEH education in rural schools. Despite these limitations, teachers demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and creativity in implementing meaningful instructional practices.

The findings highlight the importance of strengthening institutional support, resource allocation, and teacher development programs to sustain engaging and inclusive MAPEH instruction in geographically challenged educational settings.

Conclusions

The study concludes that experiential, collaborative, and contextualized instructional practices significantly enhance learner engagement in MAPEH education within rural elementary school contexts. Teachers at Masipi Elementary School utilized learner-centered and activity-based teaching approaches that encouraged participation, creativity, confidence, and meaningful classroom interaction among elementary learners.

Learners demonstrated behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement through active participation in collaborative activities, performances, games, artistic expression, and contextualized classroom experiences. Positive teacher-learner interaction and culturally responsive instruction further strengthened learners' motivation and classroom involvement.

However, inadequate instructional resources, insufficient facilities, lack of specialized equipment, and classroom limitations continue to challenge the delivery of quality MAPEH education in rural schools. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated commitment, adaptability, and innovation in sustaining learner engagement through improvised and localized instructional strategies.

The study emphasizes the importance of learner-centered pedagogy, contextualized instruction, and institutional support in improving instructional quality and learner engagement in rural MAPEH education.

Implications of the Study

The findings imply that MAPEH education should continuously emphasize experiential, collaborative, and culturally responsive instructional practices to strengthen learner engagement and holistic learner development. Teachers may continue integrating activity-based and

contextualized instructional approaches that connect lessons to learners' lived experiences and community realities.

Educational administrators and policymakers may provide stronger institutional support through improved facilities, adequate MAPEH equipment, instructional materials, and technological resources necessary for effective classroom instruction. Schools may also strengthen community partnerships to support contextualized and culturally relevant learning activities.

Professional development programs focusing on learner-centered pedagogy, classroom engagement strategies, creative instructional approaches, and contextualized MAPEH instruction may further enhance teachers' instructional effectiveness in rural educational settings.

Future researchers may conduct similar qualitative or mixed-methods studies exploring learner outcomes, instructional innovations, and culturally responsive pedagogical practices in MAPEH education across diverse Philippine school contexts.

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