Instructional Strategies Employed by Elementary Teachers in Strengthening Pupils' Engagement and Academic Performance in Inclusive Classrooms

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Abstract: Instructional Strategies Employed by Elementary Teachers in Strengthening Pupils' Engagement and Academic Performance in Inclusive Classrooms. Objectives: This quantitative study ascertained Filipino teachers' instructional strategies to strengthen pupils' engagement and academic performance in select Philippine elementary schools. **Methods:** It employed the descriptive survey method, with questionnaire as data collection tool, and descriptive and inferential statistics as statistical tools. **Findings:** Results disclosed that classroom management, peer support, and individualized education plan were the teachers' leading instructional strategies while all instructional strategies were assessed as "Effective." Pupils' engagement was "High" while their performance in English, Mathematics, and Science subjects was "Fair." Furthermore, teachers and pupils' perceptions on the effectiveness of instructional strategies and their assessments on pupils' engagement did not significantly differ. **Conclusion:** Teachers must employ varied instructional strategies to help learners effectively learn and to ensure that classrooms are inclusive to make them a more conducive place for teaching and learning.

Keywords: instructional strategies, pupils' engagement, academic performance

Abstrak: Strategi Pembelajaran yang digunakan Guru Sekolah Dasar dalam Memperkuat Meningkatkan Keterlibatan dan Performa Akademik Siswa di Kelas Inklusif. Tujuan: Studi kuantitatif ini mengkonfirmasi strategi pembelajaran guru Filipina untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan dan performa akademik siswa di sekolah dasar Filipina. Metode: metode survei deskriptif digunakan dengan kuesioner sebagai alat pengumpulan data, dan statistik deskriptif dan inferensial sebagai metode statistik. Temuan: Hasil mengungkapkan bahwa pengelolaan kelas, dukungan sejawat, dan rencana pendidikan mandiri adalah strategi pengajaran utama guru. Keterlibatan siswa tergolong tinggi sedangkan performa siswa dalam mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Matematika, dan Sains tergolong sedang. Selanjutnya, persepsi guru dan murid tentang efektivitas strategi pembelajaran dan penilaian keterlibatan murid tidak berbeda secara signifikan. Kesimpulan: Guru harus menerapkan strategi pembelajaran yang bervariasi untuk membantu peserta didik belajar secara efektif dan untuk memastikan bahwa kelas menjadi tempat yang lebih kondusif untuk kegiatan belajar mengajar.

Kata kunci: strategi pembelajaran, keterlibatan siswa, performa akademik.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, education is regarded as the most essential function of state as well as local governments. It is the main instrument which awakens the child to his or her cultural values, to prepare him or her for future professional training, as well as to help him or her to normally adapt to his or her environment. During these days, it is uncertain that a child might reasonably be anticipated to become successful in life if he or she is deprived of the opportunity to be educated. Such opportunity becomes a right which should be available at equal terms. It is concluded that in education, the doctrine "separate and equal" has no place (Brown v. Board of Education 1954, as cited in Smith & Kozleski, 2005).

These arguments which have been initially applied on race have been manifested to children having disabilities, many of those continue to be separately taught from non-disabled children despite legislations mandating otherwise (US Department of Education, 2003). There has been a solid research base which supports the education among children having learning difficulties together with their non-disabled peers. Even though separate classes, having lower student-to-teacher ratios, controlled environments, and well-trained personnel would seem to afford benefits to a child having a disability, research fails to show the effectiveness of these programs (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; Sailor, 2003).

Students who are having difficulties in inclusive classes display academic gains in several areas, involving increased performance on the standardized tests, mastery of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals, on-task behaviors, grades, and learning motivation (NCERI, 1994). The instructional strategies found within the inclusive classrooms, such as peer tutoring, cooperative learning groups, and differentiated instruction have been found to benefit all learners. For instance, Slavin, Madden, & Leavy (1984) found that mathematics scores of students with and without disabilities improved by closely half a grade level which resulted from working in cooperative learning groups.

Quality inclusive education does not just happen. Teaching children with learning disabilities in general education settings having access to general education curricula needs careful planning and preparation (Deno, 1997; King-Spears, 1997; Scott, Vitale, & Masten, 1998). Studies show that superintendents, special education directors, principals, teachers, parents, as well as community members must be included and invested to ensure successful outcomes of inclusive education (Villa, 1997; Walther-Thomas, 1997). Furthermore, both general and special education teachers must work together to make learning environments and strategies complement for all learners.

Studies highlight some benefits of schools' efforts to find creative and meaningful ways for parents of children having difficulties to engage in and contribute to the school community (Ryndak, Downing, Morrison, & Williams, 1996). The positive outcomes of strong family-school partnerships are well-recorded in literature. Students' academic achievement improves when parents are included; in fact, the higher level of parental involvement, the higher the level of student achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Other benefits involve increased student attendance, higher aspirations for post-secondary education and career development (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1997), enhanced social competence (Webster-Stratton, 1993), and lower rates of high-risk behaviors among adolescents (Resnick, Bearman, Blum, Bauman, Harris, & Jones, 1997).

Engagement is considered a growth-providing activity where an individual focuses attention as an active response to the environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Engagement that is

connected to school activity (or student engagement) has been a vital concept related to multiple educational outcomes (e.g., attendance, achievement, behavior, dropout/completion (Jimerson, Campos, & Greif, 2003; Jimerson, Renshaw, Stewart, Hart, & O'Malley (2009). Student engagement has been the main variable in comprehending student dropout, specifically as a gradual process that is operating in student's life and affecting that last decision to withdraw (Jimerson et al, 2009). Several studies have linked student engagement with increased academic performance and it has been always shown to be a strong predictor of achievement in schools (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008). It has been linked to both health compromising (e.g., aggression, substance abuse, early sexual activity, and depression) and health promoting behaviors (e.g., nutrition, exercise) (Carter, McGee, Taylor, & William, 2007).

The study is concerned with how effective teachers utilize inclusive teaching strategies and their reasons of using them. Given very limited studies on the inclusive instructional strategies of Filipino teachers, this study is timely as well as significant as it affords useful and practical information to education officials and teachers in order to improve the quality of basic education in the country.

Despite its practicality, student engagement has remained a nebulous construct with scholars utilizing ambiguous definitions which are resulting in imprecise measures. Numerous reviews have concentrated on providing meaning to this meta-construct and establishing the stage for future scholarship (Jimerson et al., 2003; Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Researchers recommend that student engagement in school is multifarious and appears to overlay with many constructs (e.g., school connectedness). The said definition involves two indicators (i.e., cognitive, affective, and

behavioral) and facilitators (i.e., personal as well as contextual factors) of engagement (Appleton et al., 2008). Each is essential to have a better understanding of student engagement. Appleton and colleagues (2008) have argued that indicators are given to "…convey a student's degree or level of connection with learning"; while the facilitators are "…factors [that] influence the strength of the connection."

Affective engagement pertains to the student's feelings to his or her learning, school, teachers, as well as peers (e.g., a student has a positive feeling to his or her teachers) (Jimerson et al., 2003). The words "psychological" and "emotional" have likewise been employed in the present literature to describe this construct (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006). Behavioral engagement involves student's participation or actions while in school and is studied through the student's positive effort, conduct, as well as participation (e.g., attendance, participation in extracurricular activities, and work habits) (Fredricks et al., 2004) Historically, studies have been primarily concentrated on this particular aspect of student engagement. Cognitive engagement includes the student's beliefs and perceptions that are often associated with learning and school (e.g., I will perform well in the class if I would try). It also pertains to a cognitive processing that a student carries on the academic tasks and the type and amount of strategies that a student uses (Walker, Greene, & Mansell, 2006).

In view of the foregoing scenario, this quantitative study determined the instructional strategies employed by teachers and the engagement and academic performance of pupils in the elementary schools of Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur, Mindanao, Philippines. Specifically, it aimed to ascertain the instructional strategies that were commonly employed by teachers in their inclusive classrooms; the pupils' level of engagement as to (a) affective, (b)

behavioral, and (c) cognitive; and their academic performance. Furthermore, it endeavored to ascertain the significant difference between the perceptions of the teachers and pupils on the instructional strategies commonly utilized in inclusive classrooms, and between the assessments of the pupils and teachers on pupils' level of engagement.

METHODS

This research utilized the quantitative method, particularly descriptive survey, as it endeavoured to determine the instructional strategies commonly utilized by teachers and the engagement and academic performance of pupils. According to Ariola (2006), the descriptive type of research is designed for the purpose of investigating a certain topic in order to gather information about an existing condition or situation.

The participants were the 16 grade 6 teachers and 235 pupils in the selected elementary schools of Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines. Purposive sampling method was employed in determining the number of participants who were included in the study. The participants were required to accomplish the informed consent in order to guarantee strict compliance with existing ethical standards in conducting research. Furthermore, specific codes were assigned for all the participants to establish their anonymity as well as gave them the assurance that their answers would be dealt with utmost confidentiality.

A survey questionnaire was utilized to gather necessary data from the identified participants of this study. The instrument was composed of the following parts, namely: Part I contained the instrument that was used in determining the instructional strategies commonly utilized by the elementary teachers in teaching their pupils. This part of the questionnaire was adapted from the study of Gyimah (2010) on the teachers' instructional strategies. These strategies included instructional objectives, classroom management, space, peer support, time for assignment, question distribution, instructional materials, record keeping, individualized education plan, as well as alternative means to perform activities. The researchers formulated two (2) descriptive statements/indicators arranged randomly for each of the instructional strategies and conducted a pilot test of the instrument. A Cronbach's alpha of .875 was registered which indicated a high level of consistency for the instrument. To determine the frequency on the teachers' utilization of these instructional strategies, this 5-point Likert-type scale was used: 5 (always), 3 (sometimes), and 1 (never). On the other hand, this 5-point Likert-type scale was followed to ascertain the effectiveness of these instructional strategies: 5 (effective), 3 (less effective), and 1 (ineffective).

Part II contained the two instruments used in ascertaining pupils' level of engagement. For teacher-participants, they were required to assess their pupils' level of engagement using the Student Engagement Walkthrough Checklist of Jones (2009). It comprised several areas which included Positive Body Language, Verbal Participation, Consistent Focus, Fun and Excitement, Student Confidence, Individual Attention, Meaningfulness of Work, Clarity of Learning, Rigorous Thinking, and Performance Orientation. Meanwhile, to identify the pupils' level of engagement as assessed by the pupils themselves, the Student Engagement in Schools Questionnaire (SESQ) of Lam & Jimerson (2008) was adapted. The said questionnaire comprised Affective Engagement, Behavioral Engagement and Cognitive Engagement. The first aspect, Affective Engagement, had two sub-areas namely: Liking for Learning and Liking for School, while the second aspect, Behavioral Engagement, was composed of two sub-areas which included Effort

and Persistence and Extracurricular Activities. To determine the pupils' level of engagement, this 5-point rating scale was employed: 5 (always/high engagement), 3 (sometimes/moderate engagement), and 1 (never/low engagement).

To ensure accurate analysis and interpretation of the collected data, both the descriptive statistics like frequency counts, percentage, and WAM, and the inferential statistics such as the *t*-test were the statistical tools utilized by the researchers.

■ RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS
Instructional Strategies Commonly Utilized by Teachers

Table 1 displays the data on the instructional strategies commonly utilized by Filipino elementary teachers. As shown, it is revealed that out of ten instructional strategies, classroom management ranks first as evidently supported by the highest frequency of 10; followed by peer support which ranks second with the frequency of 8; individualized education plan ranks third with the frequency of 7; and question distribution which ranks fourth with a

frequency of 5. Meanwhile, aside from the common instructional strategies utilized by teachers mentioned above, instructional materials, space, and record keeping are the least employed by teachers as strongly supported by the same frequency of 2, having been ranked the lowest.

Generally, the results clearly reveal that classroom management, peer support, and individualized education plan as the predominant instructional strategies used by teachers in their classrooms. The foregoing results also corroborate with the key findings of Slater and Hortsman (2002) that reciprocal teaching as a component of classroom management has been linked to pupils' improved behaviour and performance. Spencer, Scruggs, and Mastropieri (2003) meanwhile found that peer support helps learners with special needs make gains both academically and behaviourally, and much of this improvement is attributed to individualized practice. Johnson and Johnson (2009) reported that cooperative learning experiences lead to favourable relationships among learners with varying intellectual capacities.

Table 1. Instructional strategies commonly employed by teachers

Instructional strategies	F	R
1. Classroom Management	10	1
2. Instructional Objectives	3	6.5
3. Question Distribution	6	4
4. Instructional Materials	2	9
5. Individualized Education Plan	7	3
6. Alternative Means to Perform the Activity	3	6.5
7. Time	5	5
8. Space	2	9
9. Record Keeping	2	9
10. Peer Support	8	2

Effectiveness of the Instructional Strategies Employed by Teachers as Assessed by the Teachers Themselves

Table 2 presents the data on the effectiveness of the instructional strategies used by the teachers as assessed by the teachers

themselves. As shown, strategy 5, "I regularly monitor all of my pupils while they are doing their class work" and strategy 13, "I keep daily records regarding the progress that my pupils make in our class" both yielded the highest WAM of 4.88; followed by strategy 1, "I make sure that my

classroom environment is comfortable for all pupils," strategy 8, "I offer enough time to all of my pupils to finish their assignments and tests" and strategy 16, "I proceed to the new section/ unit when all of my pupils have comprehended and could perform what they have just learned" received the same WAM of 4.75. The foregoing statements only vary on their WAM obtained but fall under the same adjectival equivalent of "Always," interpreted as "Effective."

Meanwhile, strategy 6, "I choose instructional materials which help my pupils to possibly learn," strategy 14, "I let my pupils work together when performing assignments," strategy 17, "I choose learning task that my pupils who are having disabilities and special education needs can perform," and strategy 22, "I let my pupils having difficulties and special education needs to participate in particular activities elsewhere in my classroom," received the same WAM of 3.31 while strategy 19, "I refer to consultants for their advice when I no longer know how to help all of my pupils to learn" received the lowest WAM of

3.30. The said statements only differ on the WAM earned but all fall under the same adjectival equivalent of "Sometimes" and are all interpreted as "Less Effective."

Analysis on the findings clearly reveals that the instructional strategies used by teachers are "Effective" as strongly supported by the overall mean of 4.06 with the adjectival equivalent of "Always." The result reveals that teachers always prefer to use the said instructional strategies as these are also seen effective in accommodating learners' individual differences and in improving their learning performance. This finding has been consistent with Smith and Smith's (2000) viewpoint that for inclusion to be successful in the classroom, teachers must constantly use inclusive strategies in teaching as well as must have specialized training to help them be prepared for teaching in an inclusive classroom. Moreover, they found that frequent feedback is important for consistent paraprofessional support along with adequate time to collaborate as well as make accommodations in their lesson plans.

Table 2. Effectiveness of the instructional strategies employed by teachers as assessed by the teachers themselves

Strategies	WAM	AE
1. I make sure that my classroom environment is comfortable for all pupils.	4.75	E
2. I guarantee that my classroom is spacious enough to allow for free movement.	4.63	E
3. I make sure that my questions are reasonable and equally distributed to let my pupils contribute to the lessons.	4.50	E
4. I attempt to organize my classroom to allow pupils' active participation.	4.44	E
5. I regularly monitor all of my pupils while they are doing their class work.	4.88	E
6. I choose instructional materials which help my pupils to possibly learn.	3.31	LE
7. I differ the pace in order to assist my pupils to learn.	4.38	E
8. I offer enough time to all my pupils to finish their assignments and tests.	4.75	E
9. I provide individual attention to my pupils who need assistance.	4.63	E
10. I give enough time to all my pupils to practice what they have learned.	4.44	E
11. I present learning tasks in bits to let my pupils learn efficiently.	4.38	E
12. I establish instructional objectives to involve all my pupils including those having disabilities and special education needs.	4.38	E
13. I keep daily records regarding the progress that my pupils make in our class.	4.88	E
14. I let my pupils work together when performing their assignments.	3.31	LE

15. I encourage all of my pupils to help one another.	4.63	E
16. I proceed to the next section/unit when all my pupils have comprehended and could perform what they have just learned.	4.75	E
17. I choose learning tasks that my pupils who are having disabilities and special education needs can perform.	3.31	LE
18. I let my pupils who are having difficulties writing their chance to answer questions through saying it verbally or orally.	4.50	E
19. I refer to consultants for their advice when I no longer know how to help all of my pupils to learn.	3.30	LE
20. I allow my pupils having disabilities and special education needs to work at various activities when an assignment is provided.	4.38	E
21. I formulate my individualized education plan (IEP) for my pupils who are having disabilities and special education needs.	4.06	E
22. I let my pupils having difficulties and special education needs to participate in particular activities elsewhere in my classroom.	3.31	LE
Overall Mean	4.06	E

Effectiveness of the Instructional Strategies Employed by Teachers as Assessed by Pupils

Table 3 displays the data on the assessment of the pupils on the instructional strategies commonly used by the teachers. As displayed, it can be observed that strategy 1, "My teacher makes sure that our classroom environment is comfortable for all of us" received the highest WAM of 4.50; followed by strategy 7, "Differs the pace in order to help us learn," 4.36; strategy 8, "Offers enough time to all of us who need assistance," 4.33; strategy 5, "Regularly monitors all of us while we are doing our class work," 4.28; and strategy 2, "Guarantees that our classroom is spacious enough to allow for free movement," 4.27. Other instructional strategies used by teachers differ only on their WAM earned but they all receive the same adjectival equivalent of "Always", interpreted as "Effective."

Thus, the overall mean of 4.04 reveals that the pupils always prefer the instructional strategies that are used by the teachers as these are seen "Effective" in accommodating their individual differences as well as in improving their performance in school. The foregoing result strongly affirms Lane, Pierson, and Givner's (2003) previous findings which clearly reveal the many benefits that learners will gain from being fully aware and informed of their teachers' expectations especially in the use of inclusive teaching strategies in their respective classrooms. They have also stressed that knowledge of teacher expectations has the potential to stimulate responsible as well as successful inclusive experiences for students who have been receiving special education services.

Table 3. Effectiveness of the instructional strategies employed by teachers as assessed by pupils

Strategies	WAM	AE
1. Makes sure that our classroom environment is comfortable for all of us.	4.50	E
2. Guarantees that our classroom is spacious enough to allow for free movement.	4.27	E
3. Makes sure that his/her questions are reasonable and equally distributed to let us contribute to the lessons.	4.03	E
4. Attempts to organize our classroom to allow for our active participation.	4.17	E
5. Regularly monitors all of us while we are doing our class work.	4.28	E
6. Chooses instructional materials which help us to possibly learn.	3.90	E

7. Differs his/her pace in order to help us learn.	4.36	E
8. Offers enough time to all of us to finish our assignments and tests.	4.33	E
9. Provides individual attention to us who need assistance.	4.20	E
10. Gives enough time to all of us to practice what we have learned.	4.08	E
11. Presents learning tasks in bits to let us learn efficiently.	4.12	E
12. Establishes instructional objectives to involve all of us including those who are having disabilities and special education needs.	3.84	E
13. Keeps daily records regarding the progress that we make in our class.	4.23	E
14. Lets us work together when performing our assignments.	3.74	E
15. Encourages all of us to help one another.	4.12	E
16. Proceeds to the next section/unit when all of us have comprehended and could perform what we have just learned.	4.16	E
17. Chooses learning tasks that we, who are having disabilities and special education needs, can perform.	3.77	E
18. Lets us who are having difficulties writing our chance to answer questions through saying it verbally or orally.	3.90	E
19. Refers to consultants for their advice when he/she no longer knows how to help all of us to learn.	3.81	E
20. Allows us having disabilities and special education needs to work at various activities when an assignment is provided.	3.61	E
21. Formulates his/her individualized education plan (IEP) for us who are having disabilities and special education needs.	3.58	E
22. Lets us who are having difficulties and special education needs to participate in particular activities elsewhere in his/her classroom.	3.80	E
Overall Mean	4.04	E

Pupils' Level of Engagement as Assessed by Teachers

Table 4 presents the data on pupils' engagement as assessed by teachers. Positive body language, consistent focus, verbal participation, student confidence, fun and excitement, individual attention, clarity of learning, meaningfulness of work, rigorous thinking and performance orientation were considered in ascertaining pupils' engagement.

As indicated, it is revealed that the pupils are highly engaged in the learning activities as displayed by their body postures which indicate that they closely pay attention and that they also consider their work exciting, challenging and related to learning as supported by the same WAM of 4.50, with the adjectival equivalent of "Always" interpreted as "High Engagement." It is also revealed that they can always describe the purpose of the lesson, express thoughtful ideas

and insightful answers, and questions that are relevant or suitable to learning, show interest and enthusiasm and express positive humour. Furthermore, pupils also always show confidence and could initiate and finish a learning task having limited coaching as well as could work together in groups; are attentive on learning activities with minimal disruptions; appreciate what quality work means and how it would be assessed; and work together on complicated problems, formulate original solutions, as well as reflect on the quality of their work. However, the data reveal that pupils are moderately engaged when seeking for help and in asking questions as reflected by the WAM of 3.31, with the corresponding adjectival equivalent of "Sometimes" which is interpreted as "Moderate Engagement."

Analysis of the findings reveals that the pupils are highly engaged in the learning activities as evidenced by the overall mean of 4.00 with

the adjectival equivalent of "Always." The preceding finding strongly corroborates with the claim of Jennings and Angelo (2006) that by evaluating learners' level of engagement and considering these affective aspects, teachers can more effectively plan and carry out lessons and activities that will encourage learners to be more active participants in their learning and coursework. Mandernach, Donnelli-Sallee, and Dailey-Hebert (2011) further reveal that measuring learner engagement allows teachers to adapt to their instructional practices in response to the changes in learners' motivation, involvement, and attitudes about their subjects.

Table 4. Pupils' level of engagement as assessed by teachers

Indicators	WAM	AE	I
A. Positive Body Language			
Pupils display body postures which indicate that they pay attention to their teacher as well as to other pupils.	4.50	A	HE
B. Consistent Focus			
Pupils are attentive on a learning activity having minimal disruptions.	3.88	A	HE
C. Verbal Participation			
Pupils express their thoughtful ideas, insightful answers, and questions which are relevant or suitable to learning.	4.13	A	HE
D. Student Confidence			
Pupils show confidence and could initiate and finish a learning task having limited coaching as well as could work together in groups.	4.00	A	HE
E. Fun and Excitement			
Pupils show interest and enthusiasm as well as express positive humour.	4.13	A	HE
F. Individual Attention			
Pupils become comfortable when seeking for help and/or asking questions.	3.31	A	ME
G. Clarity of Learning			
Pupils could describe the purpose of a lesson/unit. This is not similar to being able to characterize the activity that is being done during the class.	4.38	A	HE
H. Meaningfulness of Work			
Pupils consider the work exciting, challenging, and related to learning.	4.50	A	HE
I. Rigorous Thinking			
Pupils work together on complicated problems, formulate original solutions, as well as reflect on the quality of their own work.	3.50	A	HE
J. Performance Orientation			
Pupils appreciate what quality work means and how it would be evaluated. They can also characterize the criteria through which their work would be evaluated.	3.63	A	HE
Overall Mean	4.00	A	HE

Pupils' Level of Engagement as Assessed by the Pupils Themselves

Table 5 discloses the data on the pupils' level of engagement as assessed by the pupils themselves. Three dimensions are considered in determining their level of engagement which include Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive Dimension. Affective Dimension includes Liking

for Learning and Liking for School while Behavioural Dimension comprises Effort and Persistence and Extra Curricular Activities.

With regard to Affective Dimension specifically on Liking for Learning, it is revealed that statement 2, "I believe that what we learn in the school doing is interesting" yielded the highest WAM of 4.66; followed by statement 3, "I like what I learn in the school," and statement 1, "I feel very excited to learn new things," 4.55. They only vary on the WAM earned but all fall under the same adjectival equivalent of "Always," interpreted as "High Engagement." Meanwhile, statement 4, "I find enjoyment in learning new things in the class" obtained the lowest WAM of 2.53, with the adjectival equivalent of "Sometimes," interpreted as "Moderate Engagement." The average mean obtained is 4.08 with the adjectival equivalent of "Always" implies that the pupils are highly engaged in exhibiting their desires to learn their lessons and enjoy learning in different activities. As to Liking for School, the pupils always show their favourable attitudes toward their schools as reflected on the varied WAM earned in all statements. The average mean of 4.49 with the same adjectival equivalent of "Always" also depicts that the pupils always have favourable attitudes toward their respective schools.

In terms of Behavioural Dimension particularly on Effort and Persistence, it is noted that the pupils are also highly engaged in the learning activities as reflected by the varied WAM obtained. The average mean of 4.41 with the corresponding adjectival equivalent of "Always" suggests that the pupils are highly engaged in manifesting their innate desire to participate, exert more effort, as well as being persistent in solving varied problems just to learn. With regard to Extra-Curricular Activities, it is found out that the pupils are active participants who volunteer and take active roles in extracurricular activities as reflected by the WAM obtained. The average mean of 3.93 with the adjectival equivalent of "Always" implies that the pupils always display their willingness to participate in extracurricular activities.

Meanwhile, for Cognitive Dimension, it can also be noted that the pupils always show their willingness in making examples to understand important concepts and in matching what they already know with things they are trying to learn in school as reflected by the same WAM of 4.20; and in trying to connect what they are learning with their own experiences with the WAM of 4.17, with the same adjectival equivalent of "Always." Other statements under this domain also received varied WAM but have the same adjectival equivalent of "Always" and is interpreted as "High Engagement." The average mean of 4.00 with the corresponding adjectival equivalent of "Always" also indicates that the pupils are highly engaged in the learning activities as they always manifest their desires to learn by employing different techniques to better understand their lessons.

Generally, the overall mean of 4.14 with the adjectival equivalent of "Always" signifies that the pupils are highly engaged as reflected by their attitudes shown toward learning and school, their participation and for being active in schools' activities and in finding various means to help improve their ways of learning. The foregoing result strongly confirms Mandernach et al.'s (2011) claim that when learners are motivated to do well in their subjects, invested or involved in their desire to learn, and willing to exert efforts expected by their teachers, they are more likely to be engaged in their education. Furthermore, Briggs (2015) postulates that learner engagement is the level of interest demonstrated by students, how they interact with others in the class, and their motivation to learn their lessons and activities.

Table 5. Pupils' level of engagement as assessed by the pupils themselves

Statements	WAM	AE	I
A. Affective Engagement			
A.1 Liking for Learning			
1. I feel very excited to learn new things.	4.55	A	HE
2. I believe that what we learn in the school is interesting.	4.66	A	HE
3. I like what I learn in the school.	4.59	A	HE
4. I find enjoyment in learning new things in the class.	2.53	S	ME
5. I guess learning is uninteresting.	4.55	A	HE
Overall Mean	4.08	A	HE
A.2 Liking for School			
1. I like my school.	4.57	A	HE
2. I feel very proud to be in my school.	4.61	A	HE
3. Every morning, I look forward to being in school.	4.22	A	HE
4. I become happy when being in my school.	4.56	A	HE
Overall Mean	4.49	A	HE
B. Behavioral Engagement			
B.1 Effort and Persistence			
1. I try hard to perform better in school.	4.44	A	HE
2. In the class, I perform as hard as I could.	4.35	A	HE
3. When I am in the class, I engage in various class activities.	4.40	A	HE
4. I become attentive in the class.	4.23	A	HE
5. When I am in the class, I just act like I am working.	4.00	A	HE
6. In the school, I perform just enough in order to get by.	3.69	A	HE
7. When I am in the class, my mind always wanders.	4.00	A	HE
8. If I find difficulty comprehending a certain problem, I carefully review to understand it.	4.34	A	HE
9. When I work in a complex homework, I keep doing it until I have solved it.	4.41	A	HE
Overall Mean	4.21	A	HE
B.2 Extracurricular Activities			
1. I actively participate in school activities like sports day as well as school picnic.	3.89	A	HE
2. I willingly help in school activities like sports day as well as parent day.	3.95	A	HE
3. I have an active role in the extracurricular activities of my school.	3.94	A	HE
Overall Mean	3.93	A	HE
C. Cognitive Engagement			
1. When studying, I attempt to comprehend the material better through relating it to the things that I have already known.	3.87	A	HE
2. When studying, I figure out how information could be made useful in real world.	4.09	A	HE
3. When learning new things, I attempt to put these ideas in my own words.	4.17	A	HE
4. When studying, I attempt to relate what I am learning with my own personal experiences.	4.20	A	HE
5. I create my own examples to assist me in comprehending the essential concepts that I have learned from school.	4.08	A	HE

6. When studying things for school, I attempt to look into how they complement together with the other things that I have already known.	3.77	A	HE
7. When studying things for school, I almost attempt to relate them with what I have learned in other classes about these similar things.	3.87	A	HE
8. I try to look into the similarities and differences among the things that I am learning for school and the things that I have already known.	3.86	A	HE
9. I try to comprehend how things that I have learned in school will complement with each other.	4.20	A	HE
10. I attempt to match what I have already known with the things that I try to learn for the school.	3.94	A	HE
11. I try to understand through the topics and decide on what I am supposed to learn from others, rather than learning topics through reading them over and over.	3.79	A	HE
12. When learning, I attempt to combine varied pieces of information from the course material in novel ways.	4.00	A	HE
Overall Mean	4.14	A	HE
Grand Mean	4.09	A	HE

Academic Performance of Pupils

Table 6 displays the data which reflect the academic performance of the pupils. The pupils' academic performance was determined through getting their average grades for the three grading periods in these core subjects, namely: English, Mathematics, and Science. Out of 235 pupils, 178 or 75.74% of them have earned grades which range from 78-82, which can be described as "Fair"; 45 or 19.15%, 83-89, "Satisfactory"; 7 or 2.98%, "Very Satisfactory"; and 5 or 2.13%, "Poor." The result reveals that majority of the pupils perform fairly on the three core subjects.

Even though it can be noted earlier that both the pupils and the teachers themselves assessed the instructional strategies used as "Effective" and the level of pupils' engagement as "High" but the result vividly reveals that no significant association can be found among the instructional strategies used by teachers, the pupils' level of engagement, and their academic performance. The preceding result does not confirm Delfino's (2019) finding that instructional strategies as well as behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagements are positively correlated with learners' academic performance. As such, it can be clearly inferred from the given result that there are still other intervening factors that could influence the pupils' academic performance aside from the teachers' instructional strategies and the pupils' level of engagement.

Table 6. Academic performance of pupils

Table 6. Academic performance of pupils			
Grade Range	F	P (%)	Adjectival Equivalent
95 – 100%	0	0	Excellent
90 – 94%	7	2.98	Very Satisfactory
83 – 89%	45	19.15	Satisfactory

78 – 82%	178	75.74	Fair
75 – 77%	5	2.13	Poor
74% and below	0	0	Needs Improvement

Significance of the Difference Between the Perceptions of Teachers and Pupils on the Instructional Strategies Used

The analysis on the significance of the difference between the perceptions of teachers and pupils on the instructional strategies used is apparently revealed in Table 7. As evidently displayed, the computed t - value of 0.38 is less than the critical value of 2.04 with 30 degrees of freedom at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, there is a sufficient evidence to accept the null hypothesis and establish no significant difference. The preceding result clearly signifies that the perceptions of the teachers as well as pupils on the utilization of the teachers of the identified instructional strategies do not significantly differ.

Table 7. Significance of the difference between the perceptions of teachers and pupils on the instructional strategies used

Participants	Mean	SD	df	Level of Sig.	$t - value$	
					Computed	Tabular
Teachers	4.36	0.74	30	0.05	0.38	2.04
Pupils	4.23	1.12				

Table 8. Significance of the difference between the assessments of the teachers and pupils on the pupils' level of engagement

Participants	Mean	SD	df	Level of Sig.	$t - value$	
					Computed	Tabular
Teachers	4.12	2.53	30	0.05	0.03	2.04
Pupils	4.14	0.82				

Significance of the Difference Between the Assessments of Teachers and Pupils on the Pupils' Level of Engagement

The analysis on the significance of the difference between the assessments of teachers and pupils on the pupils' level of engagement is distinctly presented in Table 8. As apparently shown, the computed t - value of 0.03 is less than the critical value of 2.04 with 30 degrees of freedom at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, there is also a substantial evidence to accept the null hypothesis and establish no significant difference. The foregoing result vividly connotes that the assessments of the teachers and pupils on the level of engagement of the pupils do not significantly differ.

■ **CONCLUSIONS**

The results of this research disclose that classroom management, peer support, and Individualized Education Plan are the three predominant instructional strategies used by

teachers in accommodating diverse learners and in improving learners' performance. All these instructional strategies are effectively used to accommodate learners' differences and to improve learners' level of engagement. The pupils are highly engaged in various learning activities in the classroom while they have performed fairly in their academic subjects. An insignificant difference exists between the perceptions of the teachers and pupils on the teachers' utilization of the instructional strategies. Furthermore, an insignificant difference occurs between the assessments of teachers and pupils on the pupils' level of cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement.

This study recommends that the school administrators require teachers to pursue graduate studies to boost their personal and professional growth and are obliged to participate in in-service trainings and seminars in various levels to further enhance their capabilities in teaching diverse learners; that the teachers intensify the use of classroom management as their instructional strategy to effectively cater the individual needs of the learners, provide adequate meaningful learning activities to encourage the learners to participate and prepare a learning environment that is conducive for learning as these are important ingredients for successful learning; and that a similar study be conducted in other learning institutions with an increased number of variables.

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