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Teaching Philosophy of Teachers and Classroom Learning Environment of Public Elementary Schools in Panabo City Division

Esteria L. Muana

The Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc., Philippines
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A B S T R A C T

Creating a positive classroom learning environment has long been a primary objective for teachers, often influenced by their teaching philosophy. However, this relationship has not been specifically explored within the local context. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the extent of teaching philosophy and its impact on the classroom learning environment in public elementary schools within Panabo City Division. Employing probability sampling, 200 elementary teachers from public schools were selected as respondents. The descriptive-correlational survey method was utilized for data collection, which was then analyzed using Mean, Product-Moment correlation, and Regression Analysis techniques. The results indicated a substantial presence of teaching philosophy and a conducive classroom learning environment. Furthermore, a significant relationship between these two variables was observed. Based on these findings, it is recommended that officials from the Department of Education devise strategies to support teachers in fostering a diligent and committed approach toward creating an optimal classroom learning environment, emphasizing the importance of teaching philosophy. It is evident that collaborative efforts across the entire school community are essential for achieving a positive, conducive, and healthy classroom learning environment.

Keywords: Teaching philosophy, classroom learning environment, descriptive correlation, Panabo City Division, Philippines

Introduction

A teacher's individual teaching philosophy holds significant importance, serving as a dynamic force that shapes their approach to teaching practices within the classroom environment and influences their perceptions of teaching, learning, and their students. The development of a teaching philosophy is an ongoing and dynamic process, subject to change or modification with each teaching experience and interaction with students and colleagues. This personally defined teaching philosophy plays a pivotal role in guiding how teachers organize and manage their classrooms (Soccorsi, 2013).

Evidently, the classroom learning environment stands out as one of the pivotal factors influencing student learning outcomes. An optimal learning setting is characterized by students perceiving their classrooms as welcoming and encouraging spaces. It encompasses an atmosphere where students feel both physically and emotionally safe. A nurturing and positive environment plays an indispensable role in the learning process, fostering comfort for students and facilitating the development of healthy relationships with peers and educators. In such a setting, learning becomes a seamless and anticipated experience for students. Establishing this conducive environment necessitates the provision of love, care, and support to young learners (Verma, 2019). Regrettably, teachers often encounter challenges in cultivating such a positive classroom learning atmosphere.

Numerous regions across the country are grappling with overcrowded classrooms. In Georgia, confronted with substantial cuts in school funding, authorities were compelled to remove all restrictions on class sizes to accommodate students with the available faculty. Similarly, Fairfax County in Virginia has been contemplating a plan to enlarge classroom capacities amidst substantial budget reductions. Financial constraints frequently lead to adjustments in classroom sizes. Nonetheless, the consensus among most educators is that teaching becomes challenging when class sizes exceed approximately 30 students (Chen, 2022).

In the Philippines, congested classrooms pose multiple challenges. They hinder students' ability to focus on their studies and restrict the opportunities for teachers to employ innovative teaching approaches like cooperative learning and group activities. Moreover, overcrowded classrooms often force educators to prioritize teaching only the essential curriculum content. Additionally, teachers in such environments tend to be overburdened, increasing their risk of burnout and straining their relationships with students (Jones, 2017).

In the Division of Panabo City, the researcher observed significant challenges in the classroom learning environment. Teachers faced numerous difficulties in managing classrooms, stemming from issues such as overcrowding, insufficient learning resources, inadequate facilities, unclear learning materials, overloaded lesson plans, limited support from peers, and ineffective communication among colleagues. These circumstances contributed to a subpar learning environment, resulting in reduced motivation among teachers to perform optimally and impacting their teaching philosophy. It's important to note that these observations have not been formally validated by relevant stakeholders.

Motivated by these observations, the researcher embarked on an investigation into the classroom learning environment. Additionally, the researcher aimed to assess the scope of teachers' teaching philosophy and its impact on the classroom learning environment. Through this academic pursuit, the researcher aimed to illuminate the current state of classroom learning environments in public elementary schools. Furthermore, the study aimed to offer valuable insights to policymakers, enabling them to formulate policies, programs, interventions, projects, and activities that support teachers in creating positive learning environments.

Various theories have been associated with the classroom learning environment, including Behaviorism Learning Theory (Watson, 1913), Constructivism Learning Theory (Bruner, 1960), Connectivism Learning Theory (Siemens, 2004), and Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984). This study primarily aligns with Behaviorism Learning Theory as proposed by Watson (1913). Behaviorist theory highlights how individuals interact with their environment, suggesting that these interactions, termed "stimuli," shape specific behaviors over time. It posits that student behavior is a product of their interactions with the environment (Cherry, 2022), emphasizing that behaviors are influenced and learned from external stimuli rather than internal factors. In the classroom, teachers can employ positive reinforcement techniques to enhance student learning. Students who receive positive reinforcement are more likely to retain information, a principle derived from behaviorism theory (Feder, 2022).

The relevance of Behaviorism learning theory in this study lies in its acknowledgment that the teacher's provided learning environment significantly shapes how students learn. Evidently, the teaching philosophy of teachers also impacts how they set up the learning environment. Teachers' approaches to creating a classroom atmosphere hinge on their beliefs and teaching philosophy.

Another theory contributing to this study is the Constructivism Learning Theory proposed by Siemens (2004). This theory posits that students construct their own learning based on their prior experiences. They assimilate new information with existing knowledge and experiences, forming a personalized reality. Emphasizing learning as an active, personal process, this theory underscores the individuality of each student's learning journey (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

In this study, constructivism can be applied by teachers to recognize that each student brings their unique background to the classroom daily. In constructivist settings, teachers serve as guides, assisting students in constructing their understanding and learning. They facilitate the development of students' personal processes and realities based on their individual backgrounds. This approach is crucial for helping students integrate their experiences into their learning.

The Connectivism Learning Theory, proposed by Siemens (2004), also influenced this study. It emphasizes that learning occurs through forming connections, whether with others or with various aspects of their lives. These connections can include hobbies, goals, and interpersonal relationships, all of which influence learning.

In the study's context, teachers can apply connectivism by helping students connect their learning to their interests, thus enhancing their motivation to learn. Teachers can leverage digital media to create positive learning connections and foster relationships among students and their peer groups, further motivating students.

Lastly, the Experiential Learning Theory by Kolb (1984) is another theory relevant to this study, focusing on learning through experience. According to this theory, students learn best by doing. Kolb describes effective learning as a cycle, where learners engage in concrete experiences, reflect on these experiences, conceptualize new ideas, and then apply these ideas in new situations. By creating experiential learning environments, teachers provide students with opportunities to apply their knowledge immediately, fostering real-world experiences and improving motivation.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research methodology, specifically adopting the descriptive correlational approach. Quantitative research involves analyzing observed or measured data to explore questions about a specific group of individuals, known as the sample population, using scientific inquiry. It is commonly utilized by social scientists, including communication researchers, to observe and understand phenomena or events that impact individuals. The primary goal of quantitative research is to generate knowledge and deepen understanding of the social world. Furthermore, a descriptive correlation study focuses on describing relationships between variables without aiming to establish causation (Allen, 2017). This research endeavor was classified as quantitative because it relied on numerical data and statistical analysis during data interpretation. It was descriptive in nature because its objective was to assess the scope of teaching philosophy and the classroom learning environment. Moreover, this academic investigation was correlational as it aimed to gauge the relationship between teaching philosophy and the classroom learning environment in public elementary schools within the Division of Panabo City.

Research Respondents

This study targeted 200 public elementary teachers within the Division of Panabo City. It was deemed that this sample size adequately met the requirements for conducting Pearson Correlation analysis (Memon et al., 2020). Thus, the inclusion of 200 respondents was deemed sufficient to fulfill the study's objectives. In terms of inclusion and exclusion criteria, all elementary teachers in the public schools of the Division of Panabo City were offered an equal opportunity to participate. Specifically, elementary teachers with at least 5 years of teaching experience were selected for this study, as their tenure as public servants was expected to enable them to assess the development of a robust teaching philosophy relevant to fostering a positive classroom learning environment. Private school elementary teachers were not included in this research endeavor. Moreover, respondents who felt

uncomfortable or hesitant about completing the survey questionnaire were given the option to withdraw from participation voluntarily. There was no coercion for their involvement, and their decision to withdraw was honored. Evidently, ensuring the well-being of the respondents was prioritized throughout the study's implementation.

Research Instruments

A survey questionnaire which was divided into two sections was utilized in gathering data. The first set was focusing about teaching philosophy while the second set was about the classroom learning environment.

The teaching philosophy questionnaire was adapted from Sadker and Sadker (1997). The instrument consists of 40 items. It has the following indicators, namely: essentialism (1-8); perennialism (1-8); progressivism (1-8); social reconstructivism (1-8); and existentialism (1-8).

The questionnaire will be subjected to a pilot testing having a result of .74 suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency.

The classroom learning environment questionnaire was adapted from Fraser. (1998). It was subjected to pilot testing which revealed a result of .76, suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency. The tool has a total of 15 items. It has seven variables, namely: student cohesiveness (1-8), teacher support (1-8), involvement (1-8), task orientation (1-8), cooperation (1-8) equity (1-8), and differentiation (1-8).

The instrument in this study was contextualized to achieve the purpose of this study. The researcher incorporated all the comments and suggestions of the adviser, panel members and expert validators for the refinement of the tools and to achieve construct validity.

Table

Table 1

Summary on the Extent of Teaching Philosophy

No	Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Essentialism	3.93	Extensive
2	Perennialism	3.29	Extensive
3	Progressivism	4.14	Extensive
4	Social Reconstructivism	4.29	Very Extensive
5	Existentialism	4.04	Extensive
Overall		**3.94**	**Extensive**

Table 1 provides the summary on the extent of instructional leadership. It is exhibited that the overall mean of teaching philosophy is 3.94, which is in an extensive level. This means that teaching philosophy is oftentimes evident.

Data show that the five (5) indicators reveal a varying result ranging from extensive to very extensive level. As arranged chronologically, social reconstructivism has the highest mean score (4.29). This is followed by progressivism (4.14), existentialism (4.04), essentialism (3.93), and perennialism (3.29).

With a comprehensive teaching philosophy, this study reaffirmed Cox's (2020) assertion, emphasizing that a teaching philosophy constitutes a deliberate and introspective framework regarding teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching. It encompasses not only one's convictions about the teaching and learning process but also tangible instances of how these beliefs are put into action in the classroom. For educators, developing a teaching philosophy involves gaining a deeper understanding of their instructional approaches and the underlying rationale behind them. One way to achieve this is by educators becoming cognizant of their educational philosophies, as "true professionals understand not only what they are required to do but also comprehend the principles and motivations guiding their actions" (Yazon & Ang-Manaig, 2017).

Evidently, teachers' philosophical orientations towards education may influence their perspectives and methodologies concerning the teaching-learning process. Previous research has linked teachers' educational philosophy orientations with various aspects, including teaching-learning conceptions (YalçınİncikYalçınİncik, 2018), tendencies in needs assessment (Yargı & Sıvacı, 2021), professional values (Selçuk et al., 2021), beliefs in scientific epistemology (Taşkın, 2020), 21st-century skills (Gökbulut, 2020), self-efficacy beliefs (Er, 2020), principles of critical pedagogy (Kozikoğlu & Erden, 2018), and teaching styles (Koç, 2019).

Table 2

Summary on the Extent of Classroom Learning Environment

No	Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Student Cohesiveness	4.34	Very Extensive
2	Teacher Support	4.01	Extensive
3	Involvement	4.31	Very Extensive
4	Task Orientation	3.32	Moderately Extensive
5	Cooperation	4.34	Very Extensive
6	Equity	4.23	Very Extensive
7	Differentiation	3.33	Moderately Extensive
Overall		**3.98**	**Extensive**

Table 2 provides the summary on the extent of classroom learning environment. It is exhibited that the overall mean of classroom learning environment is 3.98, which is in an extensive level. This means that the classroom learning environment is oftentimes evident.

Data show that the seven (7) indicators reveal a varying result ranging from moderately extensive to very extensive level. As arranged chronologically, student cohesiveness and cooperation have the highest mean (4.34). This is followed by involvement (4.31), equity (4.23), teacher support (4.01), differentiation (3.33), and task orientation (3.32).

The findings suggest that teachers maintain a comprehensive classroom learning environment, as it falls upon them to establish a conducive setting for quality instruction. Given their responsibility to impart knowledge and skills to diverse learners, teachers are expected to ensure that the classroom environment is well-equipped and comfortable for students. They must uphold practices such as fostering student cohesiveness, providing teacher support, encouraging involvement, promoting task orientation, fostering cooperation, ensuring equity, and implementing differentiation.

The favorable outcomes of this study support the assertions of Pajarillo Aquino (2019), emphasizing that the classroom environment serves as a significant motivational factor that enhances the enjoyment of the teaching and learning process. The quality of teaching and learning becomes apparent in educational institutions when appropriate facilities and instructional materials are provided. The presence of these resources enables students to feel more at ease, potentially contributing to improved academic performance. A well-equipped classroom not only impacts learners but also influences the teacher's demeanor in class. The organization and management of the class by the teacher can have positive or negative implications for students.

Moreover, Amirul et al. (2013) underscore the importance of the learning environment as a crucial aspect of the teaching and learning process, vital in determining students' academic progress. It stimulates student engagement and influences their behavior, with various features within the learning environment playing significant roles in enhancing learning outcomes. This environment has the potential to motivate students to participate actively in the learning process and can shape their behavior, as well as contribute to the development of their skills and cognitive abilities.

Table 3

Significance of the Relationship Between the Extent of

Teaching Philosophy and

Classroom Learning Environment

Teaching Philosophy Indicators	Dependent Variable	r-value	p- value	Decision on Ho
Essentialism		0.610	0.000	Ho is Rejected
Perennialism		0.585	0.000	Ho is Rejected
Progressivism		0.632	0.000	Ho is Rejected
Social Reconstructivism	**Classroom Learning Environment**	0.638	0.000	Ho is Rejected
Existentialism		0.625	0.000	Ho is Rejected
Overall		**0.618***	**0.000**	**Ho is Rejected**

*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

Presented in Table 3 are the data on the significance of the relationship between teaching philosophy of teachers and classroom learning environment. Reflected in the hypothesis, the relationship was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The overall r-value of .618 with a p-value of <0.05 signified the rejection of the null hypothesis. It means that there is a significant relationship between teaching philosophy and classroom learning environment. This shows that teaching philosophy is correlated with classroom learning environment.

Doing a pairwise correlation among the measures of both variables, it can be gleaned that essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, social reconstructionism, and existentialism revealed computed r-values of 0.610, 0.585, 0.632, 0.638, and 0.625 respectively with p-values which are less than 0.05 in the level of significance. This implies that as essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, social reconstructionism, and existentialism increase, the classroom learning environment also increases.

The findings align with Gezer's (2018) study, which suggests that educational philosophies serve as guiding principles for meaningful teaching and learning practices from a holistic standpoint. These philosophies are rooted in deep-seated ontological assumptions that mirror educators' perspectives on curriculum and pedagogies. With a holistic view, educational philosophy shapes teachers' educational beliefs, including their views on teaching and learning, their attitudes, values, and decisions, thereby significantly influencing how they organize the classroom environment.

Similarly, Soccorsi (2013) emphasized the importance of a personal teaching philosophy as a fundamental and dynamic element of teaching. Developing a philosophy is impactful as it directs and steers a teacher's instructional practices in the classroom and influences their perceptions of teaching, learning, and their students. Additionally, a personal teaching and learning philosophy is considered a highly desirable attribute in pre-service teachers, encompassing their beliefs and values about teaching and their understanding of optimal learning processes. This process of developing a teaching philosophy is ongoing and dynamic, subject to change based on each teaching experience and interaction with students and peers.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were offered:

The prevalence of teaching philosophies among public elementary school teachers suggests that they are consistently observable within the school environment. Notably, social reconstructivism is consistently apparent, whereas essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, and existentialism are frequently observed. Similarly, the presence of the classroom learning environment is often evident in schools. Specifically, attributes such as student cohesiveness, teacher support, involvement, cooperation, and equity are consistently observed, while task orientation and differentiation are frequently noted. These findings indicate a correlation between teaching philosophy and the classroom learning environment of teachers, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Recommendations

The following suggestions were offered based on the conclusions of the study:

The higher officials in the Department of Education may craft effective policies, programs, projects, interventions and activities which may intensify the teaching philosophy of teachers specifically on perennialism. Meanwhile, the Department may provide further training to teachers when it comes to task orientation and differentiation.

School principals may find means in enhancing teaching philosophy of teachers and helping teachers to create a very positive classroom learning environment. They may keep their teacher updated about teaching philosophy and classroom learning environment through SLAC sessions and in-service trainings. Moreover, they may also craft new interventions strengthening teachers' classroom learning environment specifically on task orientation and differentiation.

Teachers may take an effort keep on upgrading themselves. They may attend various seminars, webinars, or any undertaking that would help them reinforce their teaching philosophy and classroom learning environment. Strengthening their existing knowledge may be possible by exposing themselves to different strategies that are relevant to their teaching philosophy. They may also upgrade themselves about task orientation and differentiation since they are dealing with students who have different abilities and needs.

Future researchers may explore relevant information about teaching philosophy and classroom learning environment. Also, other means of research approach may be utilized to further explore the involved variables in this study.

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