STUDENT-CENTERED CLASSROOMS: PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR LEARNERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract. A student-centered classroom is believed to create an environment that promotes student engagement as it focuses on responsibility for their own learning and directly involves themselves in the learning process. This study delved into engagement strategies employed by public elementary school teachers in a student-centered classroom. The study adopted a qualitative approach, utilizing interviews to explore the lived experiences of the teachers as well as their employed engagement strategies to gain valuable insights. The participants were ten (10) public elementary school teachers in Mati, Davao Oriental/The findings shed light on the various experiences encountered by teachers such as the different learning styles of students, culturally diverse classrooms, improved student engagement and motivation, and creating inclusive classrooms. On the other hand, the engagement strategies employed by teachers were differentiated were instruction, reward systems, and active learning strategies. The results also showed valuable insights including the importance of collaborative learning, learning as an active process, and understanding student diversity. The findings of this study revealed the importance of engagement strategies in the implementation of a student-centered classroom. If implemented properly, both students and teachers can create a learning environment that fosters diversity and promotes an active learning experience.

KEY WORDS

1. student-centered classroom   2. engagement strategies   3. student diversity

1. Introduction

The educational landscape in the 21st century now requires classrooms to be student-centered rather than teacher-centered. Instead of being passive recipients of the information from the teachers, learners need to become active participants to not just learn the what and the who but also the how and the why. Students learn best when teachers involve them in the discussion. They are the center of the educational enterprise, and their cognitive and affective learning experiences should guide all decisions as to what is done and how. Weimer (2002) pointed out that in a student-centered classroom, the roles of the teachers and the students change significantly. Teachers are no longer the "sage on the stage" but a "guide on the side" who views students not as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge but as seekers to be guided along their journey in pursuit of academic and intellectual development. Their role is to facilitate learning activities, understand how learners interpret the given knowl-

edge, guide and help students refine their understanding and interpretations, correct any misconceptions that may arise between learners at an early stage, and improve the learned knowledge quality. A student-centered classroom focuses on how students learn and not on how teachers teach. Learners take responsibility for their own learning and directly involve themselves in the learning process. According to Weimer (2002), students learn by doing, and involving them in learning activities promotes learning. Students find the learning process more meaningful and significant when the lessons and activities are relevant to their lives, wants, needs, and interests. Teacher-centered classroom with a one-size-fits-all learning environment does not promote inclusivity and this nature oftentimes leads to boredom and distraction resulting in disengagement. In a student-centered classroom, lecture notes and PowerPoint presentations are abandoned by the teachers to have a more active, engaging, collaborative style of learning (Wohlfarth, Sheras, Bennett, Simon, Pimentel, Gabel 2008). To cater to the needs of the learners, the teachers must also know their students and consider their individualities in crafting a lesson. The students inside a classroom are all different and unique in their own ways. This means that each student a teacher has different abilities, skills, and talents, their emotions and competency may vary, and their learning styles and levels of intelligence may not match with the others. In this context, what works for the other students may not work for the others because there is no one-size-fits-all type of teaching. According to Reigeluth (1999), as cited by An and Mindrila (2020), student-centered education has the potential to cater to the individual needs of the learners and prepare them for a rapidly changing global world. However, this approach is not easy to implement in an education system that is designed for sorting rather than learning. In a classroom observation study discussed by Weimer (2002) which involved a group of

teachers who were trained in student-centered teaching strategies, 75 percent of the participants revealed that they still used lecture-based teacher-centered pedagogies in practice. The same author also stated that shifting to student-centered approaches can be challenging and it is human to be uncomfortable with change. However, knowing about the possible challenges in advance and planning ahead can help teachers prepare for the implementation of this approach. Teachers can create a classroom that encourages student engagement and promotes collaboration among learners. Student engagement is a complex and multidimensional construct that encompasses academic and social aspects of student experience (Evans, Mujis, Tomlinson, 2015). It may be defined as a student's cognitive investment in, active participation with, and emotional commitment to learning a particular content (Zepke Leach, 2010). It is also essential in terms of educational outcomes such as achievement, retention, and persistence (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, Gonyea, 2008). When students become self-directed as opposed to teacher-directed, they towards an agreed-upon goal together with their classmates which fills the room with activity and excitement (Goldman, 2017). A student-centered classroom is believed to create an environment that promotes student engagement. However, some studies suggest that this can also be experienced as excessively distressing and ultimately disengaging by some students (Roucau, 2016). Researchers have found that students do not always engage in student-centered learning. As a matter of fact, they sometimes resist new methods when they dislike them or whenever they experience distress (Pepper, 2010). In elementary education, indicators of student disengagement include not paying attention to class, not completing schoolwork, disruptive behavior, withdrawal, underachievement, truancy, and school refusal (Stanley Hansen, 1998 as cited by Murray, Mitchell, Gale, Edwards, Zyngier, 2004). A UNICEF-

funded study conducted in the Philippines presented why some children do not attend school, and the primary reason is the lack of personal interest among the children. The lack of personal interest in attending school starts early among those with some elementary education and continues until high school (Orbeta, 2005). According to Pouezevara, De Leon, Sowa, Randolph, and Betts (2021), teachers and parents are faced with challenges when it comes to keeping their children engaged in learning. Children showed signs of boredom, fatigue, and sadness when they did not understand the lessons or whenever they felt overwhelmed with the number of pages and activities to be completed. Some school heads and teachers noticed that students became less interested and less engaged over time. Student-centered classroom focuses on the learning experience of students. At the elementary level, engaging the students in the lesson is a problem for most teachers. Children can be easily distracted by minor things, and keeping their attention for a long time is a challenge. Elementary teachers in Mati City specifically in the north district are facing the same dilemma. It is on this premise that this study was contextualized. The researcher felt the need to fill in the gap by conducting a study in the Philippine context, particularly in the northern district of Mati City. Exploring the challenges experienced by teachers with regard to student engagement in a student-centered classroom can provide insights into how to improve students' performance, progression, and retention.

1.1. Purpose of the Study—The purpose of this study is to dwell on the lived experiences of elementary teachers as well as the engagement strategies they employ in a student-centered classroom. Creating a student-centered classroom has become a necessity rather than an innovative approach in the 21st century. The role of the teacher is no longer the 'sage on the stage" but a "guide on the side". How they employ engagement strategies to promote student participation plays a vital role in the success of the teaching and learning process. Data was gathered through the lived experiences of elementary teachers as well as the engagement strategies they employed in a student-centered classroom. The data gathered helped the researcher formulate significant insights to add to the existing body of knowledge. In particular, this study helped teachers to have a deeper and wider understanding of learners in the 21st century and help improve their engagement strategies to promote student participation in a student-centered classroom.

1.2. Research Questions—This study sought to explore the lived experiences and engagement strategies employed by elementary teachers in a student-centered classroom. This study will be conducted, and the researcher seeks to answer the following questions:

(1) What are the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in a student-centered classroom?
(2) What engagement strategies do teachers employ in a student-centered classroom?
(3) What educational management insights are drawn from the findings of the study?

1.3. Theoretical Lens—The study was anchored on Kearsley and Shneiderman's Engagement Theory (1997). The fundamental idea underlying engagement theory is that students must be meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks. While, in principle, such engagement could occur without the use of technology, we believe that technology can facilitate engagement in ways that are difficult to achieve otherwise. In this study, technology integration is one of the identified strategies. At the same time, it is also a quintessential aspect of 21st-century learning. By engaged learning, we
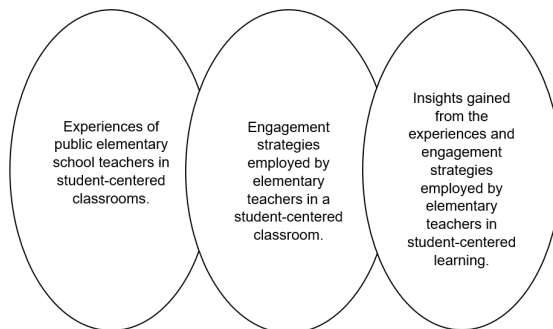
Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of Study

mean that all student activities involve active cognitive processes such as creating, problem-solving, reasoning, decision-making, and evaluation. In addition, students are intrinsically motivated to learn due to the meaningful nature of the learning environment and activities. Kanevsky (2011), mentioned that given the expansion of student diversity in today's inclusive classrooms, the use of effective instructional strategies is found more valued than ever before. Teacher strategies for engagement are essential in keeping the students' interest, attention, and motivation in class. According to Malik (2021), the end goal of engagement theory in the teaching-learning process is to develop an intrinsic motivation in students to be better learners. Further, it's a deep dive into the learning processes and the role of technology in the process. Education technology has developed massively, and student engagement in classrooms is now a significant focus of educators and students. The theory will help us understand the importance of student engagement and teacher strategies in the classroom.

2. Methodology

This chapter of the study presents the method, research participants, data collection, role of the researcher, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations. Exploring facts and knowledge in this study necessitates the consequent design and implementation, as elaborated in this chapter. The three most common qualitative methods are participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Each method was particularly suited for obtaining a specific type of data. Participant observation was appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviors in their usual contexts. In-depth Interviews (IDI) were optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored. Focus groups are effective in eliciting data on the cultural norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern to the cultural groups or subgroups represented. Patton (2002) defined phenomenology as an inquiry that asks the question, "What is the structure and essence of the experience of his phenomenon for these people?" The goal of this research worked well with this definition in trying to discover the engagement strategies utilized by teachers in a student-centered classroom situated in the 21st century. Giorgi (2007) cautioned researchers to be prepared for an investigation that was greater in both depth and breadth than the offered description implied. He suggested the information be viewed as only the tip of the iceberg.

2.1. *Philosophical Assumptions—*

The philosophical assumption was a framework used to collect, analyze, and interpret the data collected in a specific field of study. It establishes the background used for the coming conclusions and decisions. Typical philosophical assumptions have different types and are elaborated on below. Good research – undertaking the selection of the topic, problem, or area of interest, as well as the paradigm. Stanage (1987) traces 'paradigm 'back to its Greek (paradigm) and Latin origins (paradigm) meaning pattern, model, or example among examples, an exemplar or model to follow according to which design actions are taken. Differently stated, a paradigm was an act of submitting to a view. This view was supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) who defend a research paradigm as a "basic set of beliefs that guide action", dealing with first principles, "ultimates' or the researcher's worldview or philosophy. Ontology. This part of the research pertains to how the issue relates to the nature of reality. According to Creswell (2012), the reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants in the study. The ontological issue addresses the nature of reality for the qualitative researcher. The reality was constructed by individuals involved in the research situation. Thus, multiple realities exist, such as the realities of the researcher, those of individuals being investigated, and those of the reader or audiences interpreting the study. In this study, the engagement strategies utilized by teachers in the student-centered classroom will be scrutinized and from the findings of the study, educational management insights will be drawn out. In this study, the researcher relied on the voices and interpretations of the participants through extensive quotes and themes that reflected their words and provided evidence of different perspectives. The answers of the participants to the study were coded and analyzed to build and construct the commonality and discreteness of responses. It was made sure that the responses of the participants were carefully coded to ensure the reliability of the result. The researcher upheld the authenticity of the responses and precluded from making personal bias as the study progressed. Epistemology. This refers to the awareness of how knowledge claims are justified by staying as close to the participants as possible during the study to obtain firsthand information. Guba and Lincoln as cited by Creswell (2012) state that on the epistemological assumption, the researcher attempted to lessen the distance between himself or herself from the participants. He suggests that being a researcher he or she collaborates, spends time in the field with participants, and becomes an 'insider'. Based on Davidson (2000) and Jones (2006), researchers identified phenomenology with the use of thematic analysis as the best means for this type of study. In this regard, individual researchers "hold explicit belief". The intention of this study was to gather information from the participants or the teachers of Fausta Salazar Como Memorial School based on the guidelines set by DepEd and the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF). It was assured that there was an establishment of close interaction with the participants to gain direct information that would shed light on the knowledge behind the inquiry, particularly on the engagement strategies of teachers in a student-centered classroom, specifically in the 21st century. Axiology. It refers to the role of values in research. Creswell (2012) avers that the role of values in a study is significant. Axiology suggests that the researcher openly discusses values that shape the narrative and includes their interpretation in conjunction with the interpretation of participants. Upholding the dignity and value of every detail of information obtained from the participants was ensured by the researcher. The researcher understands the personal and value-laden nature of the information gathered from the study. Therefore, the researcher preserved the merit of the participants' answers and carefully interpreted the answers in the light of the

participants' interpretation. Rhetoric. It means reporting what reality was through the eyes of the research participants. This was important because it meant that the research would report objectively on what was observed and heard from the participants. The research used personal voice and qualitative terms and limited definitions. In the context of the study, the researcher used the first person to elucidate the engagement strategies employed by elementary teachers in a student-centered classroom in the 21st century.

2.2. Qualitative Assumptions—The methodology was different from the method. The methodology was a creative and responsive approach to understanding questions and subject matter, while the method refers to the exact knowledge and procedure (Gerodias, 2013). In this study, the engagement strategies of teachers in a student-centered classroom with participants from Fausta Salazar Como Memorial School were gathered through an In-Depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and the teachers' attitudes on the use of mother tongue as a language of instruction were extracted from the participants. The researcher's drive to know the deeper meaning of the experiences of elementary teachers specifically the engagement strategies for student-centered classrooms became the basis for doing qualitative research, a means which Kalof and Dietz (2008), as cited from Gerodias (2013) considered helpful in looking for "meanings and motivations that underline cultural symbols, personal experiences, and phenomena". By using phenomenology, this need was hoped to be addressed by bringing the experiences and strategies for engagement in a student-centered classroom in a manner that, as David (2005) wrote, the themes, symbols, and meaning of the experiences presented. Phenomenological research was based on two premises. The first was that experience was a valid, rich, and rewarding source of knowledge. According to Becker (1992), as cited in Morrissey and Higgs (2006), that experience is a source of knowledge and shapes one's behavior. From the definition, human experience was viewed as a cornerstone of knowledge about human phenomena and not as an unreliable source. The second premise of phenomenological research lies in the view that the everyday world is a valuable and productive source of knowledge, and that we can learn much about ourselves and reap key insights into the nature of an event by analyzing how it occurs in our daily lives (Morrissey Higgs, 2006). By doing phenomenology which is concerned with the "what" and the "how" (Moustakas, 2000), the researcher projected that the engagement strategies for teachers in a student-centered classroom with 21st-century learners will be explored and educational management insights gained were the basis for the possible future research and policy analysis in relation to this research.

2.3. Design and Procedure—This study employed a qualitative approach to research, specifically a phenomenological research design. According to Creswell, (2012), phenomenology was an approach to qualitative research that focused on the commonality of lived experiences within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach was to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon. Typically, interviews were conducted with a group of individuals who have first-hand knowledge of an event, situation, or experience. Other forms of data such as documents, observations, and art were also used. The data were

read and reread and were culled for phrases and themes that were grouped into clusters of meanings. Through this process, the researcher was able to construct the universal meaning of the event, situation, or experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, Maxwell (2013) also added that with its roots in philosophy, psychology, and education, phenomenology attempts to extract the purest, untainted data, and in some interpretations of the approach, bracketing was used by the researcher to document personal experiences with the subject to help remove him or herself from the process. One method of bracketing is taking notes. According to Corbetta (2003), the phenomenological research design was a qualitative type of research for which interviews provide an in-depth method that can grant access to deep knowledge and explanations and help grasp the subjects' perspective. Creswell (2012) also claimed that interviews were primarily done in qualitative research and occur when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers. Often audio tapes were utilized to allow more consistent transcription. Interviews are also useful to follow up with individual respondents after questionnaires, such as to further investigate their responses. In qualitative research, interviews were used to pursue the meanings of central themes in the world of their subjects. The main task in doing interviews was to understand the meaning of what the interviewees said (McNamara, 1999). Withal, based on the statements of Quad (2016), the researcher transcribed and typed the data into a computer file, in order to analyze it after interviewing. Interviews particularly be useful for uncovering the story behind a participant's experiences and pursuing in-depth information about a topic. The researcher collected data, typically via long interviews, from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation.

Next, the data analysis involved triangulation that extracted significant statements from the transcribed interviews. The significant statements were transformed into clusters of meanings according to how each statement fell under specific psychological and phenomenological concepts. Moreover, these transformations were tied up together to make a general description of the experience, both the textural description of what was experienced and the structural description of how it was experienced. The researcher incorporated his or her personal meaning of the experiences here. Finally, the report was written such that readers understand better the essential, invariant structure of the essence of the experience. Conversely, several challenges have been pointed out. The researcher required a solid grounding in the philosophical guidelines of phenomenology. The subjects that were selected for the study were individuals who have actually experienced the phenomenon. The researcher needed to bracket his or her own experiences and observations, which was difficult to do. The researcher also needed to decide how and when his or her personal observations be incorporated into the study. Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches were based on the paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity and emphasized the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. As such, they were powerful tools for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the cluster of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom Since the focus of this study is to scrutinize the experiences and engagement strategies of teachers in a student-centered classroom with 21st-century learners from Fausta Salazar Como Memorial School including the educational insights that will be drawn out from the findings of the study, the researcher will intend to employ the phenomenology type of qualitative method research.

2.4. Ethical Considerations—Ethical considerations are significant in the design of this research study. The researcher needed to consider several ethical issues regarding the research participant in this fieldwork. Ethical considerations can be specified as one of the most important parts of the research. The researcher needs to adhere to promote the aims of the research imparting authentic knowledge, truth, and prevention of error. Social Value. The research was very essential to society. In this study, the social value was focused on the experiences and engagement strategies of teachers. This study was specifically conducted among the elementary teachers in Fausta Salazar Como Memorial School. This study also served as a basis for the higher authorities to create and gather more strategies, resources, and materials from which elementary teachers implementing engagement strategies inside the classroom would benefit. Informed Consent. In the conduct and practice of this study, the Treaty Principle of Participation as cited by McLeod (2009) adhered to. The invitation to the participants was ensured that their participation in the research was completely voluntary in nature and was based on the understanding of adequate information. The participant recruitment and selection are lodged in the appendices of this study. Gaining the trust and support of research participants was critical to informed and ethical academic inquiry and phenomenological research (Walker, 2007 as cited by Pillerin, 2012). All participants were given an informed consent form before scheduling the interviews and participating in the phenomenological research process. Each participant was required to provide a signed personal acknowledgment, consent, and an indication of a willingness to participate in the study release. The purpose of the informed consent letter is to introduce the research effort, provide contact information, articulate the intent of the study, request voluntary participation by the recipients, and anticipate the information

that the informants were expected to provide. All participants were required to sign and return the letter of consent to the researcher before participating in the research. Vulnerability of Research Participants. The participants of this study were capable of answering the research instrument, for they are all professional teachers in elementary school. Thus, the researcher assured them that as the researcher, he or she can easily be reached through the contact number and address in case there are some clarifications or questions about the study. Risks, Benefits, and Safety. The recruitment of the respondents was free of coercion, undue influence, or inducement. Moreover, respondents were provided with the contact numbers of the chair of the panel or panel members in case they had queries related to the study. Furthermore, in the event that respondents would experience potential discomfort and inconvenience while answering the questions, they will not be forced to participate in any manner. Further, the researcher has ensured that the respondents were safe during the conduct of the survey and interview. Thus, the distribution of the questionnaire was conducted in a safe venue and administered at their convenient time. The dominant concern of this study was the Treaty Principle of Protection, as reflected in the respect for the rights of privacy and confidentiality, and minimization of risk. This was done by assigning pseudonyms for each informant so as not to disclose their identity. The possibility of a degree of risk inherent to this was minimized by taking all reasonable steps to guarantee participant confidentiality. Privacy and Confidentiality of Information. This study observed the Data Privacy Act of 2002 to ensure that the data cannot be traced back to their real sources to protect participants' identities. Thus, utmost care was taken to ensure the anonymity of the data sources. Hence, any printed output that was carried out from this study was kept in anonymity. Furthermore, all the issues were given consideration so that

there would be no conflict of interest between the researcher and the respondents. Any type of misleading information, as well as representation of primary data findings in a biased way, must be avoided. Justice. The respondents were informed of the researcher's role and their corresponding role during data gathering. They were briefed that they have to give their full honesty in answering the survey questions and additionally, any type of communication in relation to the research should be done with honesty. Similarly, they were informed that they were the ones to benefit first from the results of the study. Transparency. The results of the study were accessed by the respondents, and heads of the participating schools because the information is available, and will be placed on CD or other storage devices which can be requested from the researcher to provide. In addition, by learning from the results of the study, participants will be aware of the significance of the study and its contribution to their well-being. Further, each of the participants was advised that they have the right to withdraw their information at any time up to the completion of the data collection process and that they can be requested and allowed to verify their transcript after the interview is carried out. This provided the participants with the opportunity to amend or remove any information which they felt might identify them. The researcher reserved the right to employ the use of pseudonyms, and change names and or non-significant dates in the interest of the protection of the identity of the participant in all subsequent data analysis and reporting. Qualification of the Researcher. The researcher ensured that he or she possesses the needed qualifications to conduct the study. The researcher should complete the academic requirements and

pass the comprehensive examination before thesis writing, which was the last requirement to obtain the master's degree, and the researcher should be qualified to conduct the study physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially. In addition, the advisee-adviser tandem ensured that the study would reach its completion. Adequacy of Facilities. The researcher strived that the study can be completed successfully in the specified time and that he or she is equipped with the necessary resources. Likewise, the technical committee helped in the enhancement of the paper by giving the needed suggestions and recommendations for the improvement of the study. Also, the researcher ensured that he or she had enough funds to continue and finish the research. Thus, this study was hoped to be completed in the target time. Community Involvement. The researcher showed respect for the local traditions, culture, and views of the respondents in this study. Moreover, this study did not involve any use of deceit in any stage of its implementation, specifically, in the recruitment of the participants, or methods of data collection. Furthermore, the researcher necessarily expressed great pleasure for the wholehearted participation of the interviewees in the conduct of the study. Plagiarism and Fabrication as the researcher. The researcher respected other works by properly citing the author and rewriting what someone else has said his or her own way. The researcher also used quotes to indicate that the text has been taken from another paper. Similarly, the researcher assured that honesty was present in working on the manuscript and no intentional misrepresentation and making up of data or results is included, or purposefully put forward conclusions that are not accurate.

2.5. Research Participants—Qualitative analyses typically require a smaller sample size the quantitative analyses. Qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions. Obtaining most or all of the perceptions will lead to the attainment

of saturation. Saturation occurs when adding more participants to the study does not result in additional perspectives or information. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend the concept of saturation for achieving an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends five (5) to twenty-five (25), and Morse (1994) suggests at least six (6). There are no specific rules when determining the appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Qualitative sample size may best be determined by the time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 1990). The participants of this study were Ten (10) elementary school teachers from a public elementary school in the district of Mati North, province of Davao Oriental. The participants were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) elementary teachers (2) currently teaching in Fausta Salazar Como Memorial School; and (3) implementing engagement strategies in the classroom. The researcher utilized the purposive sampling design since the participants were chosen based on the criteria or purpose of the study (Creswell, 2014). It is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling. The selection of the participants was purposefully done to ensure that the findings would be authentic (Marshall, 1996).

2.6. Roles of the Researcher—The researcher has a responsibility to uncover, transfer, and exploit knowledge for the benefit of educational institutions. To do so, the researcher takes up the following roles in the course of the study: Facilitator and Promoter of Unbiased Research. The researcher interviews the participants and guides them in the process. The researcher interprets ideas and responses based on existing works of literature and related studies and not on the researcher's own knowledge, thoughts, and feelings to avoid the intrusion of bias. Expert in qualitative methods. The researcher implements the qualitative method correctly. To do so, the researcher assesses himself and seeks help from the research adviser and other research professionals. These help him exhibit competence in explaining the study without biasing the participants, conducting interviews properly according to the design, making appropriate field observations, selecting appropriate artifacts, images, and journal portions, and employing Environmental Triangulation and Thematic Content Analysis precisely. Collector and Keeper of data. The researcher ensures different ways of making a record of what is said and done during the interview and Focus Group Discussion, such as taking hand-written notes or audio and/or video recording. The recordings are transcribed verbatim before data analysis can begin. Records done by the researcher are properly secured as they contain sensitive information and are relevant to the research. However, when the data are being collected, the primary responsibility of the researcher is to safeguard participants and their data. Mechanisms for such safeguarding must be clearly articulated to participants and must be approved by a relevant research ethics review board before the research begins. Analyst of data. The researcher sees the phenomenon or problem from the participants' perspective by interpreting data, transcribing and checking, reading between the lines, coding, and theming. The researcher makes sure that the findings are true to the participants and that their voices are heard. Organizer and presenter of data. The researcher presents the problem and the related works of literature and studies that support it. Findings of the study are presented by research questions – stating the results for each one by using themes to show how the research questions were answered in the study. Moreover, future directions and implications of the study are given by the researcher for the improvement of educational policy and practices.

2.7. Data Collection—To ensure safe educational continuity admits the challenge of COVID-19, this study, adhered to the Department of Health (DOH) Administrative Order No. 2020-0015 or the Guidelines on the Risk-Based Public Health Standards for COVID-19 Mitigation, cited by the IATF to aid all sectors in all settings to implement non-pharmaceutical interventions. The following is the step-by-step process of gathering the data needed. Securing endorsement from the Dean of Graduate School. The researcher asked for an endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School of Rizal Memorial Colleges in the first week of the month of November, the year 2023 as one of the documents needed for submission to the office of the Schools Division Superintendent in asking permission to conduct the study. Asking permission from the Schools Division Superintendent. The researcher asked permission from the Schools Division Superintendent in the second week of the month of November, the year 2023 to conduct the study in the identified school. The researcher will send a letter addressed to the Schools Division Superintendent with the attached Chapters 1 and 2 together with the research instrument which explains the objectives of the study and the identification of the participants. The researcher will wait for the response of the SDS before the conduct of it. Asking for permission from the school heads. After securing the approval of the SDS, the researcher sent letters to the principals of the schools in the third week of the month of December, of the year 2023 explaining about the study to be conducted in their school. Obtaining consent from the participants. During the fourth week of the month of December, the year 2023, the researcher asked permission from the participants. They were formally oriented about the study and the process they shall go through as participants. Conducting the interview. In the same week, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview using the interview questionnaire. The profile of the participants was taken, jotted down notes, and conversations were recorded using a sound recorder for ease of transcription. The researcher carefully listened and responded actively during the interviews. Transcribing the responses of the interviewees. On the first week of the month of January, the year 2024, the researcher transcribed the responses of the interviewees precisely by recalling their answers from the sound recorder. Since some of the participants used their vernacular language, the researcher translated it into the English language. Data Coding and Thematic Content Analysis. After the transcription, the data will then be categorized and coded. Then, themes were extracted, and individual data within the participants were compared and contrasted. The researcher then conducted a second round of interviews (FGD) to corroborate any data that needed further explanation and input from the participants, Additional information gathered was examined thoroughly and integrated into the existing body of data. After this, data were compared and contrasted between the participants in order to come up with patterns and trends.

2.8. Data Analysis—In this study, thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the gathered data. The researcher analyzed the answers of the participants from the conducted interviews with the use of Creswell's Model, specifically the identifying of themes approach. According to Creswell (2012), themes in qualitative research are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database. Familiarization with the data was common to all forms of qualitative analysis, the researcher immersed herself in and became intimately familiar with the data; reading and re-reading the data and noting any initial analytic observations.

Coding was also a common element of many approaches to qualitative analysis, involving generating pithy labels for important features of the data of relevance to the (broad) research question guiding the analysis. Coding was not simply a method of data reduction; it was also an analytic process, so codes capture both a semantic and conceptual reading of the data. The researcher coded every data item and ended this phase by collating all their codes and relevant data extracts. Searching for themes was a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question. The researcher ended this phase by collating all the coded data relevant to each theme. Reviewing themes. The researcher reflected on whether the themes told a convincing and compelling story about the data, and began to define the nature of each individual theme and the relationship between the themes. For these, Thematic Content Analysis was employed by the researcher. Thematic Content Analysis was a descriptive presentation of qualitative data in which a detailed analysis of each theme was made by identifying the 'essence' of each theme and constructing a concise, punchy, and informative name for each theme (Andersen, 2013). In addition, to enhance validity and to create a more in-depth picture of the phenomenon, Environmental Triangulation was also employed by the researcher. It was a technique to analyze the results of the same study using different methods of data collection. The key was identifying which environmental factors, if any, might influence the information that is received during the study. These environmental factors are changed to see if the findings are the same across the settings (David, 2015). This type of triangulation uses different settings, locations, and other factors such as the time, day, and season in which the study took place. The idea was to determine which of these factors influence the information received; these factors are then changed to see if the findings are the same. If the findings remain unaltered under varying environmental factors, then validity can be established (Naeem, 2019). In this study, such triangulation was used considering that the requirement as mentioned was the use of environmental triangulation best suited to the environment of the research being conducted. Writing-up involves weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data and contextualizing it in relation to existing literature.

2.9. Analytical Framework—The framework analysis of this research was flexible to allow the researcher to either collect all the data and then analyze it or do data analysis during the collection process. In the analysis stage, the gathered data was sifted, charted, and sorted in accordance with key issues and themes. This involves a five-step process: (1) familiarization; (2) identifying a thematic framework; (3) indexing; (4) charting; and (5) mapping and interpretation (Ritchie Spencer, 1994). Familiarization refers to the process during which the researcher becomes familiarized with the transcripts of the data collected (i.e., interview or focus group transcripts, observation, or field notes) and gains an overview of the collected data (Ritchie Spencer, 1994). In other words, the researcher becomes immersed in the data by listening to audiotapes, studying the field, or reading the transcripts. Throughout this process, the researcher will become aware of key ideas and recurrent themes and make a note of them. Due to the sheer volume of data that can be collected in qualitative research, the researcher may not be able to review all of the material. Thus, a selection of the data set would be utilized. The selection would depend on several aspects of the data collection process. For
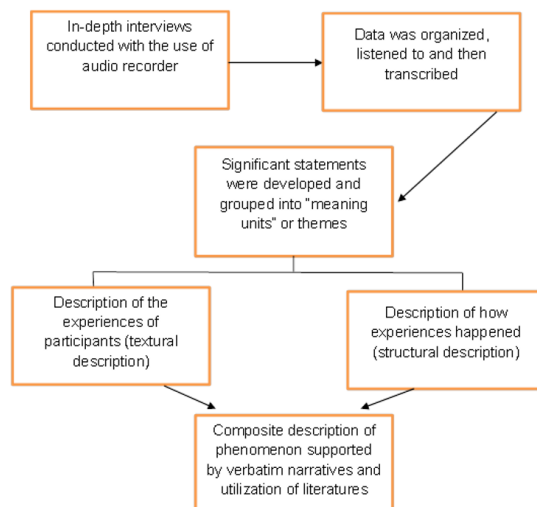
Fig. 2. Analytical Framework of the Study

example, the mix of methods used (e.g., interviews, documents, observations), Identifying a thematic framework, the second stage occurs after familiarization when the researcher recognizes emerging themes or issues in the data set. These emerging themes or issues may have arisen from a priori themes issues however it is at this stage that the researcher must allow the data to dictate the themes and issues. To achieve this end the researcher uses the notes taken during the familiarization stage. The key issues, concepts, and themes that have been expressed by the participants now form the basis of a thematic framework that can be used to filter and classify the data (Ritchie Spencer, 1994). Indexing means that one identifies portions or sections of the data that correspond to a particular theme. This process is applied to all the textual data that has been gathered (i.e., transcripts of interviews). For the sake of convenience, Ritchie and Spencer (1994) recommend that a numerical system be used for the indexing references and annotated in the margin beside the text. Qualitative data analysis tools are ideal for such a task. The final stage, mapping and interpretation, involves the analysis of the key characteristics as laid out in the charts. This analysis should be able to provide a schematic diagram of the event/phenomenon, thus guiding the researcher in their interpretation of the data set. It was at this point that the researcher was cognizant of the objectives of qualitative analysis, which are: "defining concepts, mapping range and nature of phenomena, creating typologies, finding associations, providing explanations, and developing strategies" (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994:186). Once again, these concepts, technologies, and associations are reflective of the participant. Therefore, any strategy or recommendations made by the researcher echo the true attitudes, beliefs, and values of the participants.

2.10.   Trustworthiness of the Study—Trustworthiness was all about establishing credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. In a qualitative study, trustworthiness was very important because the result and finding of the research study would depend on the process of how it was being conducted by the researcher. The trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluate its worth. Due to the nature of the qualitative study, honesty in all the data and details is required. Trustworthiness makes the researcher's study worthy to read, share, and

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be proud of. Credibility was how confident the qualitative researcher was in the truth of the research study's findings. The researcher in this study believed that honesty in everything you do was essential to attain worthwhile success. The researcher has no derogatory records or administrative issues that ruin her integrity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that credibility refers to the idea of internal consistency, where the main issue is "how we ensure rigor in the research process and how we communicate to others that we have done so." Transferability is how the qualitative researcher demonstrates that the research study's findings apply to other contexts. In this case, "other contexts" can mean similar situations, similar populations, and similar phenomena. The researcher has already studied the effects of using a graphic organizer as a strategy for teaching reading comprehension. The use of graphic organizers as a strategy in teaching reading comprehension is effective in the domains of analysis and creation. With this, the researcher is interested to know the students' perspective on using this strategy. Gasson (2004) emphasizes transferability as the extent to which the reader is able to provide a generalization of the study based on his own context and can able to address the core issue of "how far a researcher may make claims for a general application of the theory." Confirmability was the degree of neutrality in the research study's findings. In other words, this means that the findings are based on participants' responses and not any potential bias or personal motivations of the

researcher. This involves making sure that researcher bias does not skew the interpretation of what the research participants said to fit a certain narrative. The information using the audit trail in this situation is thoughtfully recorded by the researcher which highlights every step of data analysis that was made in order to provide a rationale for the decisions made. This helps establish that the research study's findings accurately portray participants' responses. Gasson (2004) states that confirmability was based on the acknowledgment that research is never objective. Dependability was the extent to which the study could be repeated by other researchers and that the findings would be consistent. In other words, if a person wanted to replicate your study, they should have enough information from your research report to do so and obtain similar findings as your study did. A qualitative researcher used an inquiry audit in order to establish dependability which requires an outside person to review and examine the research process and the data analysis in order to ensure that the findings are consistent and can be repeated. In this component, the use of a database was very important in backing up information collected and noting changes for all types of research studies. All the data collected were properly kept for future use as references. Gasson (2004) stated that dependability deals with the core issue that "the way in which a study is conducted should be consistent across time, researchers, and analysis techniques."

3.   Results and Discussion

This chapter provides an overview of the findings obtained through the analysis of the collected interview data, including the identified themes and a comprehensive discussion that addresses the study's objectives. The themes derived from the gathered data are thoroughly examined and discussed in this chapter. Additionally, the results offer a detailed description and background of the participants, who are referred to by assigned pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity.

3.1.   Experiences of Public Elementary School Teachers in a Student-Centered Classroom—

Implementing a student-centered approach inside the classroom offers various advantages for both teachers and students. One key benefit that it offers is the enhanced student engagement that happens as it allows students to become active participants in their own learning process. Jones (2016) argued that in order to adequately prepare students with the essential competencies required in the contemporary landscape, educators should adopt a student-centered learning approach rather than relying solely on traditional lecture-based instruction. The experiences of teachers in the student-centered classroom vary depending on many factors. In this context, elementary teachers share the same experiences in the implementation of a student-centered approach inside their classroom. Their common experiences are clustered into themes and are discussed thoroughly below.

3.1.1.   Improved Student Engagement and Motivation—Utilizing a student-centered approach inside the classroom improves student engagement and motivation as it shifts the focus from a teacher-centered model to one that actively involves and empowers students in the learning process. By giving the students more control over their learning, they become more responsible and invested in their studies. The participants in this study revealed that in a student-centered classroom, students are more engaged and motivated to participate in classroom activities and instruction because of the various strategies they employ. Creating a student-centered classroom requires teachers to adapt their instructional strategies, materials, and teaching methods to cater to the diverse needs of the students. They need to use a variety of resources such as technology as well as fun and interactive activities to make learning more relevant and meaningful to the students. To keep the students engaged throughout the discussion, the participants shared that they employed various strategies that are fun, engaging, and interactive. According to Jaiswal (2019), while classroom activities should involve knowledge exchange between teachers and students, the primary focus should be on students to ensure optimal learning outcomes. The integration of student-centered learning plays a pivotal role in enhancing the meaningfulness and engagement of academic programs for students, thereby promoting their overall academic achievement. A student-centered classroom offers opportunities for students to explore issues that they find interesting and connect them to their own lives. If teachers are successful in implementing student-centered strategies, they will be able to keep the students engaged thereby improving their willingness to learn. Students acquire knowledge through their active engagement in various learning activities. The more they are involved in the learning process, the more they learn and the better they perform. Constructivists advocate for the creation of a classroom environment wherein students can cultivate higher-order thinking skills by engaging in activities that involve analysis, prediction, moderation, and preservation of their ideas (Al Chibani Hajal, 2017). These classrooms foster the development of higher-order thinking skills in students, empowering them to confidently tackle real-world challenges through independent exploration, analysis, and evaluation of information. Additionally, DeVries (2008) highlighted the significant role of teachers in promoting active student involvement in the learning process, thereby discouraging passivity. Within a constructivist teacher's classroom, students are actively engaged in decision-making regarding classroom procedures, curriculum, problem-solving, and various other aspects of their educational journey. Furthermore, the implementation of student-centered classrooms nurtures

greater student autonomy and responsibility. This approach empowers students to establish their own goals, make informed choices, and engage in self-reflection, thereby cultivating essential skills such as self-regulation, independence, and a lifelong passion for learning.

3.1.2. Different Learning Styles—Inside the four corners of a classroom are more than thirty students, and each has different learning styles. As teachers, they have to recognize and appreciate every student possessing unique preferences and strengths when it comes to processing and absorbing information. And most importantly, they need to tailor their teaching style and methods to meet the diverse needs and interests of the students. According to the participants of this study, they need to consider the different learning styles of their students in crafting their instructions and activities to keep them engaged during the discussion. The statements below were shared by the participants about the topic. To tailor their teaching methods and instruction to the learning styles of their students, teachers need to employ various approaches to know their students' preferences. Also, their teaching style must be flexible and adaptable so that they can easily adjust their lesson plans and activities based on the needs of the students. The findings in the study conducted by Övez and Uyangör (2016) revealed that teachers often establish a learning environment that corresponds to their student's individual learning styles. The study indicated that students' achievements improved when teaching methods were tailored to their individual learning styles. Additionally, the results demonstrated a significant relationship between teachers' teaching styles, students' learning styles, and student's academic achievements, particularly when there was a match between their respective learning styles. Another sentiment shared by the participants of this study is the adjustments that the teachers had to make to accommodate the different learning styles of their students. Teachers' knowledge of their students plays an important part in how they match their teaching styles to their student's learning styles. Kubat (2018) emphasizes the crucial role of teachers in effectively addressing the diverse needs of students in a classroom. It is essential for educators to possess a comprehensive understanding of students' learning styles and personal characteristics to ensure effective instructional strategies and support. Interacting and observing their students during class activities can help teachers gain insights into the preferences and behaviors of their students. It is crucial to acknowledge the potential variations in learning styles among students, as individuals may demonstrate a combination of different preferences. Multiple studies indicate that aligning the teaching style of teachers with the learning style of students can enhance students' motivation to learn. (Rahman et al., 2016). Thus, teachers should approach learning styles as a flexible framework rather than a strict categorization. They should consistently adapt their instructional methods to cater to the diverse needs of their students, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

3.1.3. Culturally Diverse Classroom— Each face of the student inside the classroom carries a unique identity that makes them special in their own way. As a teacher implementing a student-centered approach, it is important to create a supportive and inclusive classroom environment for culturally diverse students. Becoming culturally competent teachers helps them deal with student diversity and prevent any discrimination and bias from growing. Based on

the narratives of the participants, they need to consider the diversity of their students in crafting their lesson activities. The statements below are taken from their responses during the interview. The existence of educational inequities, which hinder the provision of equal educational opportunities and quality for students from diverse backgrounds, underscores the imperative for teachers to possess the necessary knowledge, skills, dispositions, and support to ensure the success of all their students (Parkhouse, Lu, Massaro, 2019). Becoming culturally competent and knowing the backgrounds, traditions, values, and beliefs of their students allows them to create meaningful connections, and build an inclusive learning environment that celebrates diversity and prevents cultural prejudice. The challenge brought by student diversity pushed the teachers to become better at handling the differences of their students. Below are the statements they shared about their experience in handling their situation. In teaching a classroom composed of diverse students, it is the teachers' responsibility to consider all of their differences to cater to their needs. One of the struggles faced by teachers is how to provide learners with opportunities to learn in an environment that is safe and conducive. Additionally, expectations on the students must be set sigh to encourage them to achieve their learning goals and teachers must also provide all the learners with the best possible opportunities to learn in a modern and diverse classroom effectively (Keengwe, Onchwari, Onchwari, 2009). Fostering a positive classroom culture is one of the goals of the teachers teaching in a diverse classroom. It is their duty to make students feel valued and respected and to do that, they must be culturally competent to cultivate cultural sensitivity.

3.1.4.   Creating Inclusive Classroom—Every student will be valued, respected, and acknowledged for their individual traits, experiences, and perspectives if inclusivity is practiced in the classroom. As teachers, they need to create a classroom where negativity and discrimination will not grow since one of their main priorities aside from teaching and learning is the student's well-being. Recognizing the differences and similarities of the students and addressing their diverse needs and interests will make them feel like they belong. If they are welcomed in a safe and inclusive environment, students will have more room to grow. The participants of this study shared that to create a student-centered classroom, they also need to create an inclusive one. The students are the main priority in a student-centered approach which is why it is imperative for teachers to socialize and interact with their students. Below are the statements shared by the participants when asked about their experiences. Limited by time and resources, some of the participants were still able to create a learning environment where their students felt included. Handling a large class and dealing with diverse students all at once is a challenge, creating a classroom that is inclusive and is not discriminatory is harder. However, since their duty does not only stop at planning and delivering instruction, they need to exert more effort in supporting the well-being of their students. According to Diller and Moule (2005), teachers need to have cultural competence that entails "mastering complex awareness and sensitivities, various bodies of knowledge, and a set of skills that taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching". Teachers need to create a classroom where the learners' unique identity and natural intelligence are valued, supported, and rewarded. Fortunately, we now live in a world where we are celebrating diversity instead of shaming it. The differences in everyone make them distinct from one another. It is easier to create an inclusive classroom if students
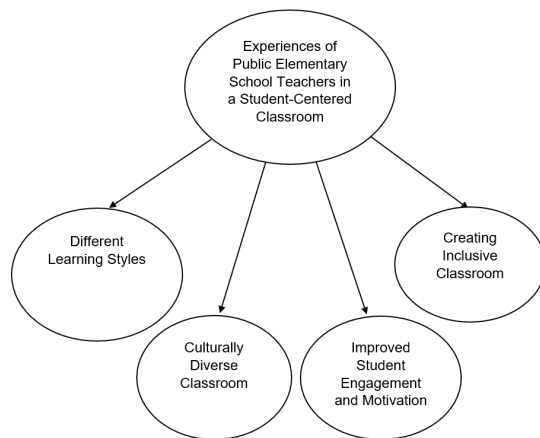
Fig. 3. Experiences of Public Elementary School Teachers in a Student-Centered Classroom

are raised to respect and acknowledge anyone they meet despite their identity, race, and social status. According to some of the participants of this study, a student-centered classroom gives them more opportunity to interact with their students since they need to know them more to be able to match their teaching methods and activities to their student's needs and interests. By socializing with their students, they are also building a positive and strong relationship with them. When teachers become confident in employing student-centered practices, they create an environment that enables student learning by developing positive relationships with the student, facilitating students' independent learning, enabling students to learn from each other, and considering their students' needs (Beckers, van der Voordt, Dewulf, 2015). One way to create a student-centered classroom is to know your students. To know your students, you have to spend time with them and have a conversation about the things they like. Students feel more included if they are given attention. By implementing a student-centered classroom, they are also creating an inclusive one that celebrates diversity and promotes unity. In conclusion, the themes gathered from their experiences of teachers in the student-centered classroom include improved student engagement and motivation, different learning styles, culturally diverse classrooms, and creating inclusive classrooms. These experiences will help teachers recalibrate their classroom management and teaching methods and make them more suitable for students. As they reflect on their experiences, they can innovate more strategies, improve their skills and knowledge, and be able to adapt to a more challenging classroom environment.

3.2. Engagement Strategies Employed by Teachers in a Student-Centered Classroom—In a student-centered classroom, the role of the students are not just mere passive recipients of the information, they create their own learning experience by actively involving themselves in the activity. The teachers will serve as facilitators and the students are the ones responsible for their learning. However, not all students will automatically participate in the discussion just because they are told to. Aside from being facilitators, it is the teachers' duty to employ engagement strategies to encourage student engagement. Sutton (2021) revealed that when students display high levels of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, they are more

likely to excel academically, form a stronger sense of connection with their school, and have a more positive sense of social-emotional well-being. Based on the narratives of the participants in this study, they shared that they employed various engagement strategies to keep students engaged and motivated during the class discussion. Some of the strategies they employed are clustered into three themes and will be discussed individually.

3.2.1. Reward System—One of the engagement strategies employed by some of the participants is the use of a reward system to motivate students to participate in the activities. The use of rewards and incentives to reinforce positive behaviors and academic achievement has yielded positive results in promoting student engagement, motivation, and participation. Students are more motivated to learn and participate in classroom activities when their efforts and achievements are recognized and rewarded. The responses of the participants showed that they employ a reward system inside their classroom whenever their students exhibit positive behavior such as getting perfect scores during quizzes or having the highest grades in any activity. Giving rewards, may it be tangible or intangible, motivates students intrinsically and extrinsically. Teachers see a reward system as a means to promote active participation and collaboration by reinforcing good behaviors. A longitudinal study by Wang (2021), has indicated that reward is a desirable thing for students, it can serve as an outside reinforcement to increase students' motivation to complete assignments and maintain good grades. Also, students could grasp a "healthy learning habit" by giving rewards properly/ The implementation of a reward system in the classroom serves to stimulate students' active participation and motivation to learn, impacting them both biologically and psychologically. When students exhibit low academic performance, it can often be attributed to a lack of motivation. Disappointed by their poor grades, students may struggle to identify ways to improve. Without external support, their motivation to seek solutions diminishes, leading to continued underperformance. However, when teachers provide suggestions for academic improvement and offer rewards as recognition for progress, students' performance significantly improves. (Chen, 2022). These employed strategies helped the teachers in handling a student-centered classroom. The participants elaborated that through the reward system, their students now show active participation in class discussions and activities. They also exhibit good performance in exams and quizzes show more motivation to achieve more and perform better during the learning process. Galvan (2010) explored the corresponding brain functions, and his finding suggests that students' reward-seeking behavior is highly correlated with a hyper-responsive dopamine system, meaning that the more desired rewards are given, the better could be highly responsive to the reward and will be motivated to reach a higher level of academic performance. Students in elementary school are easily driven by rewards such as stickers and certificates recognizing their good performance. Aside from that, according to the narratives of the participants, they also like hearing good feedback about their participation. Saraswati (2022) elicited in her study that all teachers agreed that rewards have a positive influence on students 'learning. Those teachers found that rewards help establish a positive learning atmosphere, increase students' participation, and realize learning goals. Furthermore, the study justified that students are happy to receive rewards from their teachers, and those rewards motivate them to study harder. When they got rewards, they not only got recognition from teachers but also obtained positive feed-

back that encouraged them to inspire their spirits. Rewards range from positive tangible things such as certificates, stickers, and school supplies to intangible things such as positive feedback and verbal praise. Elementary students are easily motivated by these rewards which is why it is easier to use this strategy in engaging and motivating students to participate in the class discussion and activities.

3.2.2. Differentiated Instructionn—OIn dealing with diverse learners, one teaching approach cannot guarantee that it will work with everyone. In creating a student-centered classroom, the teachers must prioritize the learners' needs over their comfort. Differentiated instruction is a teaching approach that acknowledges the different needs of students as well as their interests. Employing this strategy means you have to adapt and modify the teaching methods, materials, and assessments according to the needs of individuals or groups of students. The participants of this study acknowledge the individual differences among their students. They understand that not all students learn at the same speed or with the same materials. They also recognize that a single assessment cannot accurately assess the intelligence or abilities of all students in the classroom. Based on the narratives of the participants, they employ this strategy by giving the students an opportunity to be involved in the activity that they will be doing. Differentiated instruction is one instructional approach that fosters varied instructional activities. This concept that was developed by Carol Tomlinson (1999, as cited from Bender, 2013) represents one of the first, and certainly one of the most effective, efforts to vary how instruction was delivered in order to address individual learning styles and the needs of specific students and to increase their engagement with the subject content. As such, a discussion of differentiated instruction is warranted here. Employing differentiated instruction means personalizing their teaching methods in consideration of the learners' interests, abilities, and level of intelligence. The goal of differentiated instruction is to guarantee that every student can effectively access and engage with the curriculum, regardless of their readiness levels, learning styles, or backgrounds. The participants also elaborated on how differentiated instruction has helped them in engaging the students in the implementation of student-centered learning. Below are their responses during the interview. One of the responsibilities of the teacher is to ensure that every student is learning, regardless of the amount or duration of their learning. Since students do not all learn at the same pace, differentiated instruction assists teachers in catering to each individual student rather than just focusing on the majority. By directly addressing student learning differences in differentiated classrooms, students are more likely to actively engage with the learning material (Sousa Tomlinson, 2011). Differentiated instruction seeks to establish an inclusive and nurturing learning environment that attends to the unique needs of every student. By customizing instruction based on student's abilities, learning styles, and interests, differentiated instruction fosters student engagement, enhances learning outcomes, and cultivates a positive classroom atmosphere. Hence, differentiated instruction is deemed to be an excellent instructional strategy for keeping students engaged in an intensive, meaningful way with the learning content (Bender, 2013).

3.2.3. Active Learning Strategies—

Active learning transforms students from passive recipients of information into active participants who construct knowledge, solve problems, and apply concepts. The more you involve them in the learning process, the more they are willing to learn because they can understand the information given to them hence motivating them to discover and explore more. Employing active learning strategies promotes critical thinking, encourages collaboration, and creates independent learners. The participants in this study revealed that to actively engage students, they employ various strategies that promote active learning. They transform their classroom into a fun and interactive one where students can compete and collaborate. Aside from enhancing student engagement, active learning strategies also foster a deeper understanding and prepare students for real-world challenges. However, due to diversity, teachers may encounter challenges in crafting effective strategies that will work for everyone. According to Kanevsky (2011), given the expansion of student diversity in today's inclusive classrooms, the use of effective instructional strategies is found more valued than ever before. Teachers' attempts to implement useful strategies are often hindered due to the variety of student characteristics such as students' varying interests, readiness levels, learning abilities, attitudes, and language development. To achieve the best results, it is essential to combine differentiated instruction with active learning strategies. This combination ensures that students' diverse needs and learning preferences are catered to, while also actively involving them in the learning process. By integrating active learning strategies with differentiated instruction, educators can optimize the positive influence on student learning and academic success. Employing active learning strategies helps teachers by increasing student participation, providing real-time feedback, fostering strong teacher-student relationships, and improving overall well-being. The partic-

ipants elaborated on how this strategy helped them in handling a student-centered classroom. Participants revealed that they incorporate fun and interactive games and activities that give everyone the opportunity to participate and be involved. Aside from that, these activities also stimulate their curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Haury and Rillero (2015) posit that the hands-on learning approach involves the child in a total learning experience which enhances the child's ability to think critically and have the ability to promote learning and engage the students in the learning process. It is obvious, therefore that any teaching strategy that is skilled in this direction can be seen as an activity-oriented teaching method. Moreover, according to Ekon (2013), Hands-on activities are suggested as a method to enhance students' academic achievement, engagement, and comprehension of scientific concepts. By manipulating objects and engaging in practical experiences, hands-on activities make abstract knowledge more tangible, concrete, and easier to understand. This approach allows students to actively interact with the subject matter, facilitating a deeper grasp of complex concepts. Reward systems, differentiated instruction, and active learning strategies are the three themes that emerged in the engagement strategies employed by teachers in handling student-centered classrooms. Reward systems include providing incentives or acknowledgments to students for their achievements and favorable behaviors. They intend to motivate students and create a positive classroom environment. Differentiated instruction recognizes and accommodates the different needs of the learners, abilities, and interests. It modifies teaching methods, resources, and assessments for individual students, promoting fairness and academic achievement. Active learning strategies involve students through hands-on activities, discussions, and interactive experiences. They promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and deeper understanding. In-
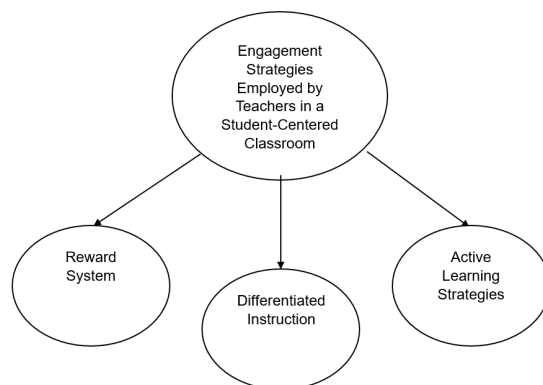
Fig. 4. Engagement Strategies Employed by Teachers in a Student-Centered Classroom

tegration of these themes effectively generates a dynamic and inclusive learning environment that caters to individual student needs, amplifies engagement, and cultivates valuable learning outcomes.

3.3. Educational Insights that are Drawn from the Experiences and Engagement Strategies Employed by Teachers

—Teaching and learning are closely intertwined, reflecting and influencing each other in a reciprocal manner. In today's modern age, the learning of the child greatly depends on them and the role of the teacher has transformed into facilitators. They no longer spoon-feed the information to the students, instead, they only guide them to explore and learn on their own. The role of teachers as facilitators of learning plays a vital role in the teaching and learning process. They go beyond simply disseminating information and instead guide and direct learning, setting clear objectives, and designing activities that promote active participation and knowledge construction. Facilitators foster a positive classroom atmosphere, respecting diverse perspectives and creating a safe space for students to take risks, ask questions, and collaborate. They provide guidance and support, offering feedback and resources to help students navigate the learning process. By acting as facilitators, teachers empower students to become active learners, cultivating critical thinking, problem-solving, and independent learning skills that are essential for their personal and academic development. The experiences and engagement strategies employed by teachers inside a student-centered classroom generated insights that the teachers realized during the interview. These insights are grouped into three and are discussed individually.

3.3.1. Importance of collaborative learning

—Collaborative learning is a crucial educational approach that emphasizes active participation and interaction among students. Students gain a deeper comprehension and recall of the subject matter by participating in conversations, problem-solving, and knowledge-sharing activities while working in groups. Moreover, collaborative learning builds crucial social abilities like clear communication, cooperation, and dispute resolution which are crucial in many facets of life. Additionally, it fosters higher-order thinking by fostering creativity and critical thinking. Furthermore, when students con-

tribute, their motivation and engagement levels considerably rise as they experience a sense of ownership and purpose in their learning. With the ability for students from various backgrounds to share their distinct insights and enhance the learning environment, collaborative learning supports diversity and inclusivity. By creating a cooperative learning environment, collaborative learning maximizes the benefits of collective knowledge and experience, fostering a well-rounded and empowered generation of learners. According to the participants of this study, who have extensive experience teaching in student-centered classrooms and interacting with students, they have recognized and valued the significance of collaborative learning. The statements below are their responses when asked about what they have learned in their experience. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), collaborative learning places significant emphasis on fostering positive interaction among students. It encourages students to actively engage with one another by asking questions, providing detailed explanations, exchanging arguments, formulating fresh ideas and problem-solving approaches, and more. Employing strategies that promote collaborative learning made the participants of this study realize its importance. Although children are easy to make friends with their peers, conflicts may still arise over some insignificant things. Fostering positive relationships among students and teachers is easier when students are accustomed to collaborating with one another. Multiple meta-analyses have demonstrated that students who work in small groups tend to achieve better learning outcomes compared to those who work individually on a task. These benefits include enhanced learning gains and improved performance on standardized or teacher-created tests (Van Leeuwen Janssen, 2019). One of the recommendations of the participants of this study to the other teachers is to employ more collaborative learning activities to promote teamwork and practice leadership roles. Collaborative learning is indeed helpful in the learning process of the learners based on the positive outcomes it possesses. However, these positive outcomes can only be attained when teachers make appropriate instructional decisions. Especially during collaborative activities, it is important for teachers to actively monitor the challenges that students encounter and intervene when necessary (Van de Pol, Volman, Oort, Beishuizen, 2015).

3.3.2. Learning is an Active Process— Learning is a process that requires active participation and engagement from the learner. It requires active interaction with the learning materials, participation in conversations, problem-solving, and hands-on experiences, going beyond passive information absorption. Learners gain a deeper comprehension and strengthen their critical thinking abilities by actively processing and integrating new material with their past knowledge. This active participation in the learning process increases motivation and interest. Based on the narratives of the participants, they learned that learning is an active process, thus, they should provide more opportunities for students to explore more on their own and create their own learning experiences. Kenney (2018) highlighted the significance of active learning in the educational process, highlighting its positive impact on student's cognitive abilities, particularly their critical thinking skills. Furthermore, active learning was found to facilitate a more profound comprehension of the subject matter being taught. By connecting new ideas and experiences to their past knowledge, students learn more actively. In a student-centered classroom, letting students be responsible for their own learning motivates

them to be more involved in the learning process. Al Chibani and Hajal (2017) asserted that within the framework of constructivist educational theories, learners assume an active role in the learning process, rather than passively acquiring knowledge from the teacher. To facilitate students' learning, novel teaching approaches, such as the implementation of student-centered learning strategies, are employed. The participants also emphasized the importance of allowing students to enjoy the learning process, as they found that students learn more effectively when they are not compelled or forced to learn. Lee and Hannafin (2016) put emphasis on the transformation of students' roles in a student-centered learning classroom, where they transcend the passive recipients of information and actively participate in goal-setting and decision-making throughout the learning journey. In this context, teachers assume the role of facilitators rather than being the sole providers of information. Within this framework, students engage in a process of discovery, enabling them to explore and construct knowledge that aligns with their individual goals and objectives.

3.3.3. Understanding Student Diversity— An essential component of a good education is understanding student diversity. It entails appreciating and acknowledging the various backgrounds, experiences, skills, and needs of every learner. Teachers may design inclusive learning environments that take into account a variety of learning styles, cultural perspectives, and individual skills by understanding the diversity of their students. Additionally, it encourages fairness in education, ensuring that all students have an equal chance to thrive. It also aids in fostering a sense of belonging. The ability to differentiate instruction, offer varied support, and foster a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive classroom community that celebrates and supports variety is made possible by educators' understanding of student diversity. The participants of this study recognized that in order to establish a student-centered classroom, it is imperative to first understand the diverse backgrounds and needs of students. For inclusive and student-centered classrooms to be created, it is essential to understand student diversity. Teachers can deliver specialized education, develop a feeling of belonging, and advance social-emotional well-being by recognizing and addressing the particular needs, talents, and backgrounds of each student. Multi-cultural education aims to develop instructional curricula and practices within school communities that effectively cater to the needs of diverse student populations (Gay, 2002). Students exhibit significant variations in terms of academic performance, cultural background, language proficiency, gender-related learning preferences, learning styles, motivation, interests, self-regulatory abilities, and other characteristics (Dijkstra et al., 2016). In addition to improving academic performance, embracing diversity fosters a more inclusive and fair learning environment that equips students to succeed in a diverse and connected society. Aside from creating an inclusive classroom that fosters a positive and supportive environment for everyone, the participants also suggested that teachers must embrace diversity so that they can raise global citizens who are culturally competent. A student's cultural background influences their ideas of what is right and wrong. When the teacher's cultural background and expectations of classroom behavior differ from the student's, conflict often arises. Many times, teachers are quick to discipline students for behaviors that they see as socially unacceptable before ever teaching the child what the expectations are. Because behavior norms can differ greatly from one culture to another, it is vital that teachers take this
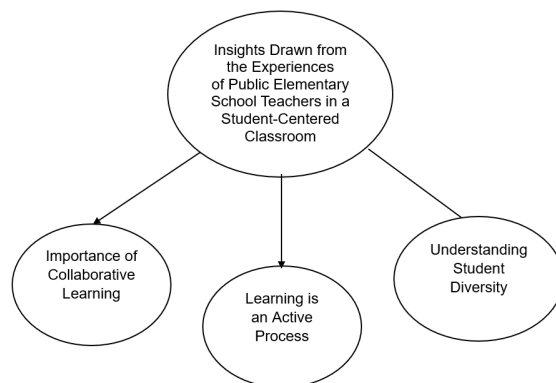
Fig. 5. Insights Drawn from the Experiences of Public Elementary School Teachers in a Student-Centered Classroom

into account when educating and disciplining students (Milner, 2021). Understanding student diversity is crucial for raising global citizens in a globalized world. Teachers assist students in becoming aware and active global citizens by introducing them to a variety of cultures, languages, and viewpoints. Open-mindedness, intercultural communication skills, and the capacity for cross-cultural collaboration are all fostered through understanding and enjoying various cultures. In the context of education, these three themes that emerged in the insights drawn from the experiences of teachers intertwine and support one another. The application of collaborative learning practices is shaped and informed by an understanding of student diver-sity, ensuring that all viewpoints and skills are respected and incorporated into group activities. By encouraging relationships between students from various backgrounds, encouraging empathy, and supporting the exchange of different viewpoints, collaborative learning, in turn, facilitates comprehension of student diversity. Both understanding student diversity and collaborative learning align with the notion that learning is an active process, as they require active engagement, participation, and critical thinking from students. Embracing all of these ideas leads to inclusive, interesting, and productive learning environments that enable all students to succeed.

4.   Implications and Future Directions

In this chapter, the summary of the study is presented, from the summary of the findings, I drew the implications and future directions. The purpose of my study was to find out the stories of Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) teachers as they narrated those outputs of the performance's tasks of their respective students specifically in Kapalong East District, Davao del Norte. To achieve the research objectives, I made use of qualitative phenomenological method with the use of thematic analysis. In adherence to Cresswell's (2006) guidelines in which open ended questions for interview were applied to get authentic understanding of the participants experiences. Furthermore, through this interview approach, I encouraged my participants to fully and openly discuss their own experiences or meaning of the phenomenon being explored which was about their experiences as TLE teachers. Based on the results of thematic analysis of the responses from the participants of the study the following findings and their corresponding themes

were revealed: the experiences of the TLE teachers revealed three themes such as: Increased self-esteem, Heightened motivation and Low student involvement. The coping mechanisms of the teachers were Encouraging full activity participation, strengthening class teamwork and inspiring actual class demonstration. The educational management insights were focused on two factors: Keeping track on students' skills and Creating group circles.

4.1. Implications—In this chapter, the summary of the study is presented, from the summary of the findings, I drew the implications and future directions. The purpose of my study was to find out the lived experiences, strategies, and insights of elementary school teachers as they dealt with the challenges surrounding employed engagement strategies in a student-centered classroom. To achieve the research objectives, I made use of a qualitative phenomenological method with the use of thematic analysis. In adherence to Creswell's (2006) guidelines in open-ended questions for interviews were applied to get an authentic understanding of people's experiences. Furthermore, through this interview approach, I encouraged my participants to fully and openly discuss their own definition or meaning of the phenomenon being explored which were the narratives of elementary school teachers and their experiences in student-centered classrooms and the engagement strategies they employ. In light of the first research question, which refers to the lived experiences of teachers in a student-centered classroom, the interview unfurled four different themes. The first one is the presence of different learning styles. Teachers are greeted by students who possess different learning styles in the four corners of the classroom. All students are unique from one another and each carries their own preferred way of learning. Hence, it is important that a teacher is equipped with the proper knowledge and materials to address the needs of the students in order to foster a meaningful learning experience and promote a student-centered classroom. The second theme is having a culturally diverse classroom. From the interview, it was discovered that in a classroom,

learning styles are not the only rampant and clear difference among students. Elementary teachers have shared their sentiments regarding having a culturally diverse classroom. Students come from different backgrounds, upbringings, and sets of beliefs. The third theme under the experiences of elementary school teachers is improved student engagement and motivation upon employing a student-centered approach in the classroom. When the students feel that they are given importance, attention, and appreciation, it can serve as an extrinsic motivation for them to learn more and do more in the classroom. It was also shared in the interview that a student-centered classroom allows for more open communication and interaction between teachers and students. The fourth and last theme under lived experiences is the teachers' experience in creating an inclusive classroom. From the previous themes discussed, it was stated that students have different learning styles and are from culturally diverse backgrounds, hence it is necessary for a teacher to foster an inclusive classroom. However, it is easier said than done. It has its fair share of challenges, like the limited time and the inadequate resources to cater to the students' diverse set of needs. The second research question tackled the engagement strategies that elementary school teachers employ in order to adopt and adhere to a student-centered classroom. The study unraveled three different themes from the participants' responses. The first theme is by employing differentiated instruction. In learning, there is no one-size-fits-all dictum. Instead, it should be tailor-fit to the needs of the students. In a student-centered classroom, the students are the ones taking center stage, they are now responsible for their own

learning. Differentiated instruction will allow the students to learn in the best way possible. The second theme under strategies is the use of a reward system. Studies have stated that having a reward system will provide students an extrinsic motivation in class. When they are motivated students tend to be more participative and attentive in class. When dealing with a student-centered classroom, one of the focuses is how to make students more involved and responsible with their own learning. The third theme is employing active learning strategies. Due to the rampant spread of technological devices, students' attention spans have become short and they do get bored easily. Their attention and interest should be caught by teachers in order to deliver the lesson to them. From the interview, the participants have stated that engaging and interactive teaching methods will open doors for more interaction with the students and that means that there is more opportunity to promote a student-centered classroom. The third and last research question deals with the insights gathered from the study. The interview revealed three themes. The first theme is realizing the importance of collaborative learning. In a teacher-dominated classroom, the teacher is the giver and the students are the receiver. It is important to note that although that setup is what others perceive as ideal, it will not provide students ample opportunities to learn and grow. Hence, student-centered classrooms are pivotal in ensuring that students are given opportunities while being guided and supported. The second theme is understanding that learning is an active process. From the interview, it is important for teachers to realize that learning is an active process. Students should take on an active role in their learning and not just mere recipients of information. The teachers are no longer a sage on the stage but a guide on the side. The last theme for insights developing an understanding of student diversity. It was highlighted that in order to grow a student-centered classroom, it is important that a teacher recognize diversity. It is important that we do not see students in monochromatic colors, but instead in different colors and shades.

4.1.1.   Findings—Based on the results of the thematic analysis of the responses from the participants of the study, the following findings, and their corresponding themes were revealed: the experiences of an elementary school teacher in a student-centered classroom include different learning styles, culturally diverse classroom, improved engagement and motivation, and inclusive classrooms. The strategies employed by teachers were: individualized instruction, interactive and engaging teaching methods, and a reward system. Meanwhile, the insights drawn from the findings of the study were: understanding student diversity, collaborative learning, and active learning.

4.2.   Implications—The results of my analysis revealed the following significant findings. Student engagement can be seen as the glue that holds together all aspects of student learning and growth. Not only does student engagement make teaching itself more fun, engaging, and rewarding, but it has been shown to have critical impacts on students. Long gone are the days when the teachers spoon-feed information to the students and are the ones taking center stage, making them the sage on the stage. The educational set-up nowadays allows students to be at the core of meaningful learning experiences. Making teachers the guide on the side. Student-centered approaches utilized in classrooms, especially in elementary will hone

students at an early age to be involved and responsible for their own learning. This study was conducted to seek answers regarding the experiences of teachers in a student-centered classroom and the engagement strategies that they utilize to keep the class in harmony. The themes for the lived experiences include different learning styles, culturally diverse classrooms, improved student engagement and motivation, and inclusive classrooms. The themes imply that there are a lot of factors that go with the employment of student-centered classrooms. Teachers face a lot of challenges and hurdles. Some even mention that they learn as they do. The paper also aimed to explore the engagement strategies used by elementary school teachers. The strategies include individualized instruction, more engaging and interactive methods, and a reward system. This goes to show that the teachers exhaust all possible ways to ensure that the students are learning what they need to learn while recognizing their uniqueness from one another. There goes the gist of student-centered classrooms, allowing their students to learn, giving guidance and support, and fostering diversity instead of shaming it. Lastly are the insights gathered in the conduct of the study. These insights shed light on the aspects that can go unseen. It involves: understanding diversity, collaborative learning, and active learning. In a student-centered classroom, what is given the most importance are the students. They are no longer just the mere recipients of learning but they are the ones creating it. Allowing the students to take an active part in their learning will allow them to become responsible and more involved with the learning process. It further implies that when students are included, they learn best.

4.3. *Future Directions*—Based on the findings of the study, it is important that the findings are properly relayed and used by the significant people whom this research was intended for. The educational leaders. They could be more aware of the teacher's experiences and the challenges that they encounter with regard to applying engagement strategies in a student-centered classroom. Once they can recognize and reflect on this existing scenario, such as the lack of resources, they can find a solution to this existing problem. Furthermore, the fundamental move educational leaders can provide is to generate strategies for teachers to supply to their students. Another would be to hold meetings aimed at improving student-centered classroom approaches. The school heads. They can be more receptive to the current challenges that the teachers are facing regarding student-centered classrooms and their employed engagement strategies. They can also be more aware of the state of the implementation of a student-centered classroom in their school and find ways to provide a support system to the teachers to further improve the implementation. The teachers. Other teachers who would want to take on a student-centered approach in their classrooms would find this study helpful by looking into the teachers' strategies. They can learn a thing a two from the experiences and insights gathered in order to equip themselves. Other stakeholders. They may provide support to better enhance the teaching-learning experience in a student-centered classroom. The stakeholders may be the source of other ways and means to solve some of the challenges faced by teachers. The future researchers. They may conduct the study but take on a different setting like private schools, to see if the teachers share the same sentiments. They may also explore different challenges and strategies to open good and new avenues to improve the way learners learn.

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