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Research Article

Unveiling Teacher Roles in Strengthening Early Childhood Education: A Phenomenological Study in Buguias District, Benguet, Philippines

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About Article

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ABSTRACT

The study, Unveiling Teacher Roles in Strengthening Early Childhood Education: A Phenomenological Study in Buguias District, listened to the lived experiences of early childhood teachers in public elementary schools in Buguias, Benguet. Using a phenomenological design, the study invited 10 teachers (purposive sampling) to share their stories in semi-structured interviews and analyzed the data with Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis. The phenomenological essence that emerged is that teachers experience their role as relational, culture-rooted, and resourceful at once caregiver, advocate, and learning designer balancing curriculum expectations with children's needs while weaving local culture and play into lessons and improvising with whatever is on hand. Teachers named real constraints: scarce age-appropriate materials, irregular training, and rooms not designed for young learners. In response, they crafted low-cost, locally relevant materials, built parent and community partnerships, and drew on supervisory guidance to keep learning developmentally appropriate and inclusive. What mattered most was creating a classroom where children felt safe, seen, and ready to explore. The findings point to practical supports that match this reality: ongoing, context-embedded professional learning and coaching (not one-off workshops), steady provision of age-appropriate resources and child-friendly spaces, and stronger school-community coordination that honors local culture. Grounding interventions in these everyday conditions can help teachers sustain play, inclusion, and meaningful learning, keeping early childhood education in rural, mountainous districts practical, equitable, and community-rooted.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Some teachers in early childhood classrooms do more than just deliver lessons. They help decide how teaching happens, follow what the curriculum expects, and support other teachers who are still learning. They also keep growing in their own work. What they do each day affects the way children learn, how lessons are taught, and how the classroom feels for the children who spend time there. It is not just about teaching. It is about how they make the room feel safe, how they respond to young learners, and how they bring life to early learning.

In Buguias District, early childhood programs are shaped by many things. Local traditions, mountain geography, and limited resources often influence how teachers do their work. Because of this, the support of supervisors becomes more important. They help connect national policies to what happens in classrooms. School administrators make sure that the rules are followed, but they also understand that every school has its own needs. They try to balance both. Some studies have shown that when teaching instruction is done with care, both teaching and student learning improve (Duflo *et al.*, 2015). Teachers who give honest feedback, encourage learners to work together, and focus on the real situation inside classrooms tend to bring lasting change (Al-Harthi, 2020). In early childhood classrooms, this support helps teachers match their lessons with what children are ready for. It also helps keep play in the learning process and makes sure no child feels left behind.

This study investigates the lived experience of early childhood teachers in Buguias as they enact and make meaning of their roles within a culturally rooted, resource-constrained context and under supervisory guidance. Put simply, how do early childhood teachers in Buguias experience and make sense of their roles day to day as they navigate local culture, limited resources, and supervisory support?

Some studies have shown that strong teaching in early childhood can help improve both how teachers work and how children learn in the classroom (Duflo *et al.*, 2015). When school leaders offer guidance that is clear and respectful, encourage teachers to learn together, and look closely at what happens during actual lessons, the results often lead to lasting change (Al-Harthi, 2020). In early childhood settings, this means making sure that teaching matches the age and needs of the children, that play remains a part of learning, and that all children are given a chance to take part fully.

Support for teachers in early education matters a lot. It affects how they teach and what children are able to learn. Mundiri and Hamimah (2022) pointed out that teachers do their best when they are given space to grow and when their everyday needs are understood. Copeland (2023) added that schools do better overall when teachers feel supported not just with materials, but also in how they are treated and how they are encouraged. Teachers at all levels need support, but those who work in early childhood classrooms often need it even more. Lavonen and Salmela-Aro (2022) shared that having access to training, good strategies for managing young learners, and clear ways to improve lessons all help teachers grow. Fung *et al.* (2022) and Suson *et al.* (2020) also noted that when teachers are supported properly, they become more skilled and more able to reach children who learn in different ways. This kind of support helps

children stay interested and perform better in school.

There are many challenges that early childhood teachers face every day. Some of these include adjusting lessons to match what young children can understand, managing behavior gently, and finding ways to teach children who learn differently (Iswati & Rois, 2023). These situations are not always easy. Teachers often need someone to guide them. Support can come from coaching, advice from more experienced colleagues, or training sessions where they can learn more (Toropova *et al.*, 2021). Feeling supported also means being noticed. Harahap and Kembaren (2023) said that when teachers feel seen and valued, they work with more energy and are more willing to meet the needs of their learners.

What teachers experience in school affects how children learn. Jeon *et al.* (2018) shared that students do better when teachers are supported in their work. When teachers feel that help is available, they are able to create classrooms where children feel safe and involved (Poekert, 2016). When that happens, children grow in more ways than just academics. They feel connected to their teacher, they learn how to express emotions, and they receive lessons that fit how they learn best (Meth *et al.*, 2023).

In many places, early childhood and primary education have been treated as two different systems. Each one has its own way of teaching and its own set of values (Boyle *et al.*, 2018). Primary school is usually more structured. It follows a curriculum that focuses on helping children build skills in reading, counting, and other academic areas. The goal is often to prepare learners for the next level of school.

Teachers in early childhood programs often work in a very different way from those in regular grade school. Instead of focusing mostly on academics, they help children grow in other ways. These include learning how to express feelings, *get along* with others, and do small tasks without help. Play is a big part of this. In many classrooms, children are allowed to move, explore, and learn at their own pace. Teachers guide them, but the children do a lot of discovering on their own. This kind of setup is based on the idea that early childhood is a special time for building life skills, not just learning facts (Jahreie, 2023).

Some people who study education say the gap between early learning and grade school can cause problems. The way things are done in ECEC is not the same as in formal school. When children move into a more structured classroom, the change can feel big. The shift from a playful setting among learners to a more demanding learning can be difficult, and it might even affect how well they do academically in the future (Boyle *et al.*, 2018; Jónsdóttir *et al.*, 2023). Some experts recommend figuring out how to link the two to address the potential problems it can bring. Mixing ideas from both sides could help make the move easier for children.

In recent years, studies from other countries have shown that early learning is starting to look more like school. This is called “*schoolification*” (Ackesjö & Persson, 2019). This implies that children are now expected to receive more direct academic preparation through ECEC. There are many who argue that the emphasis on results is excessive. According to some, ECEC teachers are being held accountable for incidents that occur later in school (Hatch, 2023).

Some researchers have pointed out that there is now more



pressure on early childhood programs to focus on academics. More people are talking about results, test readiness, and performance. This has started to change how people view early childhood education, how they see the work of teachers, and what it means for a child to be ready for school (Perry *et al.*, 2014). Early learning may harm both teachers and students when it begins to resemble formal schooling, according to some experts. Teachers may be pushed by these changes to place too much emphasis on test results and too little on the overall development of the learners. This could limit how children learn and take away from their early learning experiences (Kimathi & Nilsen, 2021; Pierlejewski, 2020).

Even when a study is carefully done and clearly explained, its results may not apply to everyone. Sometimes what is true in one place does not work in another, especially when the culture or school system is very different (Gough *et al.*, 2017). To make progress in both practice and policy, it helps to look at what is already known about how early childhood teachers see school readiness. It is also useful to ask how this information was gathered and how studies in one place may differ from studies somewhere else. This is why many researchers use systematic reviews. These reviews help show bigger patterns and make it easier to understand what the research is saying (Gough *et al.*, 2017).

There have been past studies on how early childhood teachers think about school readiness in certain countries (Brown & Lan, 2015). Other studies have looked at how children move from preschool to primary school across countries (Boyle *et al.*, 2018). But there is still no review that brings together research on how teachers see school readiness across different parts of the world. This kind of review is needed, especially now that many countries are using ideas from each other when creating education policies.

In the Philippines, early childhood teachers need more support. Helping them helps young children learn better. When teachers feel guided and prepared, they are more able to teach well. Government leaders and school heads should give more attention to this. Small yet practical methods can be helpful. More training, regular mentoring, or just simple materials that are suitable for the requirements of young children might be the solution. In the long run, this can improve early learning and provide children a better chance at school (Lucedo *et al.*, 2024).

In recent years, more researchers have looked into what early childhood teachers do. They often say that teachers shape how young children grow. Yelland (2015) shared that teaching young children is not just about giving lessons. It means creating a classroom that feels safe and warm. Children need care, not just content. Teachers must help them move, think, talk, and *get along* with others. But doing this is not easy. Some teachers lack training. Others do not have enough help from their school or community.

Many teachers in rural parts of the Philippines confront significant obstacles, according to Cabrera *et al.* (2020). Some people are not well trained. Since they don't have any fresh materials, some people keep using the same ones. They have a tougher time teaching effectively as a result. Chien *et al.* (2016) also found that without regular support, teachers struggle. Bautista (2019) added that teachers must also adjust to each

child, especially in places where students have different cultures or ways of learning. These studies show the same thing when teachers are prepared and supported, early education becomes stronger.

Some researchers have written about how teacher and student relationships affect how children learn. Pianta (2018) shared that when teachers are kind and pay attention to their students, children do better. They feel safe and more willing to join in classroom activities. This helps with both school tasks and how they act around others. This is very important in early years. At that age, how children feel and how they *get along* with others matter just as much as what they learn in school.

There are other studies too. Some talk about using play in teaching (Omaga & Alieto, 2019). Some focus on how teachers work with parents (Bartolome *et al.*, 2017). Others look at skills children need for today's world (Reyes and Maranan, 2022). But there is not much written about how teachers use these in different places. Every school and town is different. Some teachers face more challenges than others, depending on where they work.

Garcia (2020) said that parents have a big role in how children grow. But not many studies explain what makes it hard for teachers to involve parents. This is especially true in places that do not have many resources. Lobrin (2018) said that using culture in lessons helps. Still, there is little research in the Philippines about how that works in the classroom or how it helps children get ready for school.

Many families continue to practice their traditions in Buguias, Benguet. They live their lives in large part because of it. There, educators might incorporate local values, music, or stories. Also, they might collaborate closely with parents. In Benguet, people seem to know one another well. That kind of closeness can help children grow. If we study how teachers use culture and work with parents in Benguet, we might learn ways to make early learning even better. It may also help teachers guide children not just in thinking but also in how they feel and how they relate to others.

Many studies have already explored early childhood education in the Philippines. But even with all this research, there is still not much written about the daily challenges and teaching strategies of early childhood teachers in Benguet. Most of what has been studied focuses on schools in cities or big provinces. This means places like Benguet, especially the smaller and more remote areas, are often left out. One study by Cabrera *et al.* (2020) looked at teachers in mountain communities, but there are only a few like it. A lot of research talks about the lack of training and learning materials, but not many explain how these problems affect teachers in Benguet, where the conditions are different.

For teachers in Buguias, it is important to understand how their situation is not the same as those working in urban areas. The culture is different. The location makes travel harder. The resources are fewer. Some parents cannot always be involved in school activities. And many teachers have to create lessons that make sense in their community. These lessons must fit the lives, traditions, and values of the people around them. These challenges have a real effect on how children learn and how teachers do their work.



This study was written to help bring attention to the real work of early childhood teachers in Buguias. It looks at what they go through each day and how they adjust their teaching to match the needs of the children and the community. Their stories show what is often missing in other research. This work may help others understand what kind of support these teachers need. What is shared here may also help improve early learning in other rural places that face the same kinds of challenges. It may offer new ways of thinking about what kind of support is truly needed in communities like this. What is shared here may not only help improve early childhood education in Buguias but may also guide other teachers and schools in similar rural and mountainous areas where the same realities exist.

1.1. Conceptual framework

This framework explains how three parts of early childhood education connect closely with each other. These include the role of teachers, the challenges they face, and the strategies they use to respond to those challenges. At the center of this framework are the teachers. They are the ones who face the realities of the classroom each day. They are expected to notice what is not working, find ways to improve, and support learning in ways that make sense for their students. Their actions affect not only how children learn, but also how schools grow and respond to different needs.

Teachers embody an important role in building stronger early education programs. They help improve how teaching is done, especially when they face problems like a lack of materials, limited training, or changes in the learning environment. What they do to respond to these situations becomes part of their growth as professionals. It also shows how much they care about giving every child a chance to succeed.

This framework also presents a plan that can help teachers respond better to these daily challenges. It includes steps that are based on what teachers need, especially in places that do not have enough support. This may include more training, better tools, or extra help for those working in far or hard-to-reach areas. The goal is to give teachers real solutions that they can use in their own classrooms, so they can continue to improve early education where it matters most.

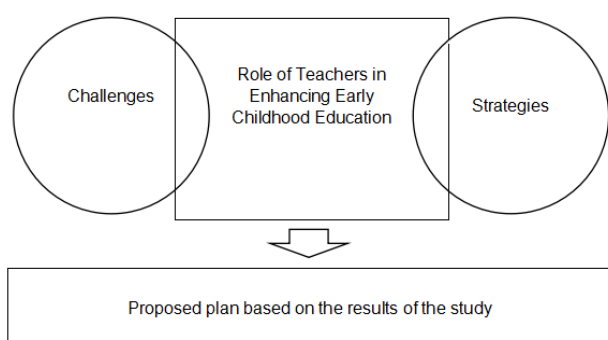


Figure 1. Framework of the Study

1.2. Research questions

This study focuses on exploring the role of teachers in enhancing early childhood education in Buguias District. Specifically, it will answer the following questions:

- i. What are the challenges encountered by teachers in enhancing early childhood education?
- ii. What are the strategies of teachers in enhancing early childhood education?
- iii. What is the proposed plan based on the results of the study?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Early childhood education (ECE) literature consistently underscores teachers as pivotal agents in nurturing the holistic development of young learners. However, studies differ in how they frame teacher roles ranging from implementers of curriculum to co-constructors of learning experiences. International research (Anderson & Thompson, 2022; Jackson *et al.*, 2020) emphasizes teachers' evolving identity as reflective practitioners who adapt pedagogies to learners' developmental, cultural, and emotional needs. In contrast, Philippine and Southeast Asian studies (Bartolome *et al.*, 2017; Jahreie, 2023) highlight persistent challenges in contextualizing global ECE standards within local realities such as resource scarcity, large class sizes, and linguistic diversity. These perspectives reveal that while teachers' functions are widely acknowledged, the conditions that shape their enactment remain unevenly examined.

A growing body of work critiques the tension between child-centered pedagogy and school readiness mandates. Gough *et al.* (2017) and Jahreie (2023) observe that the increasing pressure for early literacy and numeracy often sidelines play-based, exploratory learning. This "schoolification" trend risks reducing ECE to preparatory schooling rather than a developmental stage in itself. Yet, other studies advocate for bridging strategies that align foundational skills with play, communication, and community values suggesting that quality ECE is not about early academics but about developmental appropriateness contextualized to learners' environments.

The literature also identifies support systems and contextual enablers as determinants of effective ECE teaching. Toropova *et al.* (2021) demonstrate that teachers' satisfaction and instructional quality improve with sustained mentoring, adequate facilities, and parental engagement. Bartolome *et al.* (2017) further note that community partnerships foster shared accountability for learning, though such mechanisms are less documented in rural or indigenous settings. Despite the consensus on these enablers, there remains limited exploration of how teachers themselves navigate competing expectations within under-resourced contexts.

Synthesizing these strands reveals a conceptual gap. Existing studies richly document what ECE teachers do and why their roles matter but rarely explore how they interpret, adapt, and sustain these roles amid contextual constraints. Most research remains prescriptive, emphasizing ideal practices rather than lived realities. This study addresses that gap by foregrounding the phenomenological experiences of early childhood teachers in Buguias District, Benguet, where cultural identity, geography, and material limitations intersect. By illuminating teachers' meaning-making processes, the research contributes a grounded understanding of professional agency in rural ECE a dimension often overlooked in existing literature.



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This study used a phenomenological design because the goal was to understand the lived experiences of early childhood teachers in the Buguias District what their work feels like day to day, and what it means to them. Phenomenology fits questions like these: it listens closely to people's own words and looks for the shared meanings in their stories (Creswell, 2013). It also works well in rural contexts where culture, resources, and terrain shape how teaching happens (Patton, 2015).

Guided by this approach, the researcher aimed to set aside prior assumptions as much as possible and stay close to what teachers shared. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used, and analysis moved from significant statements to clustered meanings and then to themes that captured common patterns across participants. This design made it possible to see not just what teachers do, but how they experience their roles and challenges and why those experiences matter for early childhood classrooms in Buguias.

3.2. Research environment

This research was conducted in the northern Philippine province of Benguet, in the district of Buguias, a peaceful, mountainous region renowned for farming, close family ties, and rich cultural traditions. Many residents of Buguias are members of indigenous groups, such as the Ibaloi, Kankanaey, and Kalanguya. These groups have their own languages, customs, and beliefs that are still practiced today. Several public schools in the district offer early childhood education programs. These programs are important because they support the growth and learning of children during their early years.

The location of Buguias gave this study a clear purpose. It helped the researcher learn more about how teachers work in rural schools where there are fewer materials and different expectations. Some schools are far from town. Some classrooms do not have enough books or toys. Some families cannot always take part in school activities. But the culture is strong. Teachers often use what they know from the community to teach in ways that feel familiar to the children. This makes the classroom feel connected to the life outside of school.

Buguias became a place where the study could look closely at both the struggles and the strengths of early childhood education. It showed how teachers work with what they have. It also showed how culture plays a big part in how learning happens. By studying this place, the research offered ideas that may help improve teaching in other rural or indigenous communities that face the same kinds of needs.

3.3. Research participants

The participants in this study were early childhood education teachers who were currently teaching in public schools within the Buguias District of Benguet. These teachers were directly involved in carrying out early childhood education programs and received supervisory guidance from school leaders at both the district and division levels.

The viewpoints and experiences of the teacher-participants were important in determining how their roles as early education educators and the use of effective teaching strategies

in their classes followed the set educational standards. To participate in the study, at least ten early childhood teachers were selected. Their selection was based on clear inclusion and exclusion criteria. The study included teachers who were currently working in the district, had taught early childhood education for at least two years, and had received regular supervision from education officials. Teachers were not included if they had less than two years of experience, were not teaching early childhood classes, or were on leave or working in a non-teaching position during the time of the study.

The study used purposive sampling to identify who would be involved. This method allowed the researcher to choose participants who had the right background and could speak directly about the topic being studied. In this case, purposive sampling helped the researcher focus on teachers who had real experience with supervision and early childhood programs.

Since the study required data derived from real-world experience, this sampling strategy was a good fit. The study ensured that the participants had sufficient classroom time and had collaborated closely with supervisors by choosing teachers who had been in the classroom for at least two years. The study's conclusions were strengthened and given greater significance as a result.

3.4. Data gathering procedures

The process of collecting data for this study began with preparing the research proposal and the informed consent form. These documents were needed to explain the purpose of the research and how the participants would be protected. A formal letter was then written and submitted to the Schools Division Office of Benguet and the district office of Buguias. The letter asked for permission to conduct the study in selected public schools in the area.

After the approval was given, the researcher visited each school. During each visit, the study was explained to the early childhood teachers who had been identified as possible participants. The purpose of the research was clearly discussed, and teachers were informed about what would be expected if they chose to take part. They were also assured that their names would not appear in the study and that their answers would be kept private. Only those who gave their full consent were included.

To gather the information needed, the researcher used semi-structured interviews. A list of open-ended questions had been prepared ahead of time. These questions were checked by experts to make sure they were clear and helpful. The questions asked the teachers to talk about their experiences with educational supervision, the support they received, and how that support influenced the way they taught. Because the interviews were semi-structured, the researcher could also ask follow-up questions when needed.

The interviews were done in a place that each teacher chose. The time was set based on what was convenient for them and did not affect their work in school. Each interview lasted around thirty to forty-five minutes. With the permission of each participant, the interviews were recorded using an audio device. The researcher also took notes during the interviews to capture details that might not be heard in the recordings.



After each interview, the audio was written down word for word. The researcher carefully read through each transcript to make sure it matched what the teacher had shared. The teachers were then asked to review the transcripts. This process, called member checking, allowed them to make corrections if needed. It helped ensure that the findings truly reflected what they meant to say.

All the collected data were stored in a folder on the researcher's personal computer. The folder was protected with a password, and no one else had access to the files. Once everything was checked and confirmed, the researcher read through the interviews again and looked for common patterns. These patterns were grouped into themes. The themes helped explain what teachers experienced during supervision and how that support helped improve their teaching in early childhood classrooms in Buguias.

3.5. Data gathering instrument

The process of collecting data for this study started with preparing the needed documents. These included the research proposal and the informed consent form. After these were completed, a formal request was sent to the Schools Division Office of Benguet and the district office of Buguias. This request asked for permission to carry out the study in selected public schools where early childhood programs were being implemented.

Once the approval was granted, the researcher went to the schools personally. The purpose of these visits was to introduce the study to the teachers and to invite them to participate. During the visit, the researcher explained the goals of the study, what would happen during the process, and how the information would be kept private. The teachers were told that no names would be included in any report. Only those who agreed to take part signed the consent form. No one was forced to join.

The main method used to gather information was the semi-structured interview. A guide with open-ended questions was prepared in advance. These questions were reviewed by experienced individuals to make sure they were clear and appropriate. The questions focused on the teachers' experiences with supervision, the kind of help they received, and how that help affected their work with young children. If needed, the researcher asked follow-up questions based on what the participants shared.

The interviews were done in places chosen by the teachers. Each meeting happened at a time that did not interrupt their schedule in school. On average, the interviews lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes. The researcher asked for permission to record the sessions using an audio device. Notes were also written during each interview to remember what was seen and heard.

After each interview, the researcher listened to the recording and wrote down every word. The written transcript was reviewed more than once to check for any mistakes. Each

teacher was then given the chance to read what was written and to correct anything that did not match what they had said. This part of the process is called member checking. It helped make sure the information truly reflected the teachers' own thoughts and experiences.

All the interview materials were saved in a computer folder that was protected by a password. Only the researcher had access to the files. When all interviews were completed and checked, the researcher read each one again to look for ideas that appeared more than once. These ideas were grouped into themes. These themes helped explain the role of early childhood teachers in Buguias District.

3.6. Data analysis

This study used the six-step method of thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke. This approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to look closely at the patterns and ideas that came from the teachers' stories. The process helped in organizing the information in a way that was simple but meaningful. Since the data came mostly from conversations and shared experiences, the researcher used a mix of coding, content analysis, and narrative reflection to understand what the teachers had gone through in their work.

The analysis began with the transcription of each interview. After writing out all the words, the researcher read the transcripts several times to become familiar with what each teacher had shared. These repeated readings helped build a basic understanding of the stories and to see where some ideas seemed to appear more than once.

The next step was coding. The researcher read the transcripts again and marked specific parts that seemed important. These were given short labels, also called codes. The codes helped in sorting the information into parts that could later be grouped into bigger ideas. After this, the codes were studied again and placed into categories that reflected the goals of the study. These included areas like classroom challenges, teaching practices, supervision, and how teachers adjusted to their setting in Buguias.

After the codes were grouped, the researcher looked more closely at the patterns. This helped in forming early themes. These themes were checked again and compared with the original transcripts. The goal was to make sure that each theme matched what the teachers had actually said. Any parts that did not fit were either removed or placed under another category. This helped make the themes stronger and more accurate.

The final part of the analysis involved naming each theme. The names were chosen carefully so that each one described what the data was really about. These themes were then used to help answer the research questions and to explain what the teachers in Buguias had experienced. During the whole process, the researcher stayed focused on what the teachers were trying to say. The goal was to understand their work, their challenges, and the ways they responded to the needs of their students.



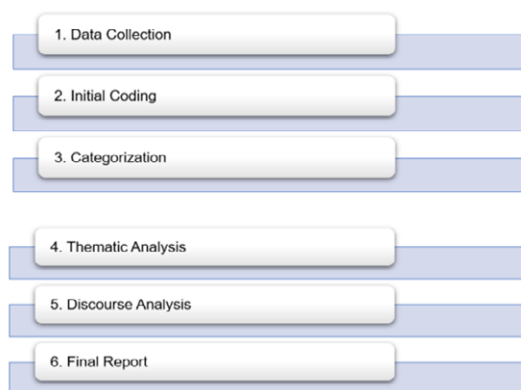


Figure 2. Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis

3.7. Ethical considerations

This study followed ethical guidelines at every stage, from the planning to the collection and analysis of data. The

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter describes the results of the study and provides a thorough discussion of these findings. It includes data analysis, interpretations of the results, and the implications of the study.

4.1. Challenges encountered by teachers in enhancing early childhood education

Early childhood education can be developed and improved with the help of teachers. It is expected of them to implement how lessons are taught and to ensure that the curriculum is applied in ways that promote learning for children. While they try to meet these expectations, teachers often face challenges that make their work harder. Some of these challenges include not having enough chances for training, not having enough learning materials, unclear rules from school leaders, and the difficulty of meeting the needs of children in different learning situations. In early childhood education, it is important to match lessons to the way children grow and learn. Teachers find it more challenging to accomplish this successfully when they lack the required resources and assistance. This may have an effect on how children learn as well as how teachers feel about their work. Learning about the challenges teachers face can help others determine what needs to be addressed. It may also lead to better training programs, more specific instructions from school



Figure 3. Simulacrum on the Challenges encountered by teachers in enhancing early childhood education

officials, and more comprehensive support for teachers working with young children. Understanding their daily experiences is the first step towards improving early learning for all.

In many remote places like the Buguias District, the journey of early childhood teachers is not always smooth. The picture of large rocks scattered along a rough road can help explain what this work feels like. Each rock or boulder stands for a problem that gets in the way of helping young children learn. Some of these are small and can be stepped around. Others are heavier and harder to move.

Some of these boulders come from larger systems. These include the lack of age-appropriate learning materials, small and crowded classrooms, or limited help from government offices. There are also challenges that come from inside the school. Many teachers take on more than one role because there are not enough staff. Some do not have full training in early childhood education. There are also problems outside the school. These include long walks to school, bad weather, or roads that are hard to pass, especially during the rainy season. Even with these problems, teachers keep going. Like travelers on a rough road, they find ways to move forward. They adjust their steps, think of new ways to teach, and stay committed to the children they serve. These obstacles slow them down but do not stop them. This picture of a rocky path shows what many teachers live through each day. It helps others see that their work continues, even when the way forward is hard.

4.1.1. Theme 1: problems in resource access and utilization

These materials are important for helping learners stay interested and for making lessons easier to understand. Teachers of early childhood stated that the shortage of instructional resources in their schools was a common source of problems for them. Many mentioned a lack of storybooks, visual aids, and hands-on activities appropriate for young learners. Without them, teachers found it difficult to follow teaching strategies that match the way young children grow and learn. As a result, some learning needs were not fully met.

Teachers also pointed out that not all schools received the same amount or quality of support. Some schools had sought help from local partners in the community or wealthy families. Other teachers, especially those in more distant areas, had to make do with old or worn-out materials. This made it harder for school leaders to make sure that all children received the same level of learning from these teaching strategies. In some cases, even when supplies were available, teachers were not always trained on how to use them in the classroom. This added more pressure to teachers and also affected the kind of support that school administrators could give.

Another problem raised was how learning materials were ordered and delivered. Because of these limits on classroom materials, it became harder for teachers to give quality instruction. It was also more difficult for school leaders to provide the kind of support that teachers needed. There was no system to make sure that supplies were delivered on time or that each school received what was needed.

Subtheme 1.1: Scarcity of age-appropriate and diverse teaching materials



Teachers often shared that there were not enough learning materials in their early childhood classrooms. Many said that tools like storybooks, activity sheets, learning charts, and hands-on objects were missing or limited. This was especially true in schools located in far areas or in communities with fewer resources. Because of this, it was hard for teachers to use play-based or interactive lessons that are important for the way young children grow and learn.

Without the right materials, teachers had to rely on older ways of teaching. These methods did not always match what young learners needed. Due to a lack of resources to develop new activities, some educators revealed that they frequently had to repeat the same ones. Others claimed that because there were few resources available to facilitate experiential learning, they relied more on talking than on demonstrating or doing.

As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P7: "I do not have enough learning resources that suit the learning styles of my pupils."

P3: "The materials I use mostly do not match the developmental stage of the learners."

P1: "It is difficult to get enough books and activities that are appropriate for my pupils."

P9: "There is a lack of variety in our resources for teaching early childhood."

P5: "I often need to rely on things like printouts because we do not have enough toys or manipulatives."

P8: "The resources I use do not always engage the children as much as I would like."

P4: "It is tough to find diverse teaching materials for different learning styles."

P2: "We do not have enough sensory play materials for the kids."

P6: "The books and materials are limited, and sometimes not appropriate for the age group I teach."

P10: "It is hard to find resources that cater to the specific needs of my students."

Some teachers said they did not have enough materials for young children. Other teachers shared that the things they used were too old or not right for the age group of learners. A few said they had a hard time finding books and activities that matched the learning development of their learners.

There were teachers who shared about using the same printed sheets over and over. Some said they had no choice but to rely on talking through lessons because they did not have toys, tools, or other things to make learning active. Several teachers wanted more variety of learning resources for them to use. They said it was hard to meet the needs of different learners without materials that supported how each child learned. Some mentioned they needed sensory items, but did not have them. Others said the learning materials they applied did not always hold the attention span of their learners. Some teachers realized that the learning resources, like activity sheets, did not help in the specific learning needs. They found planning lessons harder without the right instructional materials in place.

Subtheme 1.2: Prioritization and adaptation of available resources

Due to limited resources, teachers often had to focus on essential

materials and creatively adapt what was at hand. Teachers frequently reused old or makeshift items, like repurposing recycled objects for class activities or handwriting learning materials. Although these actions showcased teacher ingenuity, supervisors expressed concerns regarding the inconsistency and drawbacks of such approaches. The ongoing need to adapt and improvise added extra pressure on teachers and hindered the maintenance of instructional quality across various classrooms. Teachers pointed out that these challenges constrained their ability to standardize monitoring and evaluation efforts, as the instructional tools of each teacher varied widely based on local availability or personal sourcing.

As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P3: "I have to make tough choices about which materials to use when resources are scarce."

P7: "I adapt my lesson plans to fit the materials I have on hand."

P5: "Sometimes, I have to use what I have creatively to make it work."

P1: "I prioritize the most engaging resources for the pupils, even if they are limited."

P9: "I adjust my lessons according to the available resources that day."

P4: "We often improvise with what we have, like using everyday objects for lessons."

P8: "I try to make the best use of the materials, but it can be challenging."

P2: "I focus on what will help the kids learn the most when resources are limited."

P6: "Sometimes, I modify the lesson to fit our available materials."

P10: "I make do with what I have, but it would be easier if there were more options."

The teachers thought of using the available materials they currently have in their classrooms. Sometimes they do enhancements on their old teaching materials like flash cards, activity sheets, and posters. It takes much of their time when they innovate, but it makes them feel fulfilled that they delivered an excellent lesson. Another explained that they gave priority to materials that kept the children interested, even if there were only a few of them to use.

Many also talked about changing their lessons to match what they had. One said they would adjust their lesson plans based on what was in the classroom that day. Another agreed, saying their teaching changed depending on which supplies were left. A few mentioned the need to be creative. One teacher shared that they had to make things work with what was already in the room. Another said they used regular household items in place of actual teaching tools. These stories showed how early childhood teachers had to stay flexible when they did not have the things they needed.

What the teachers shared also showed something more. It showed how they kept doing their work, but at a cost. Several times, the teachers improvise their teaching materials to address their difficulties they have. They continue to think of other options to enhance their existing learning resources to achieve a higher academic performance among their learners. This kind of teaching helps the children keep learning, but it also changes what the learning looks like. When lessons keep



shifting, or when some activities cannot happen because the tools are missing, children lose chances to learn by touching, playing, and exploring. These are the things that matter most in early childhood. The teachers' experiences point to the need for better planning, stronger support from school leaders, and better systems for getting materials that match what children are expected to learn.

What came out in this study also reflects what White and Kendeou (2020) found in their own research. Teachers connect with their learners through innovative activities so as not to rely on the readily available learning materials. The lessons may vary depending on the learning styles and pace of each learner. Teachers know how to adjust their teaching strategies and methods to still meet the required competencies for their students.

4.1.2. Theme 2: professional development and training gaps

Some early childhood teachers shared that they did not have enough training. They said the sessions were not regular, and sometimes not helpful. Most of the time, there was no follow-up or continued support. Some said they learned best when training happened often and focused on what they needed in the classroom.

Some teachers explained that without proper training, it was harder to improve how they teach. It was also harder to solve problems with the children's behavior or learning needs. They felt that they were missing chances to grow in their chosen profession. For other teachers, they shared that this also made it harder for school leaders to give help because of insufficient training. When teachers and learners both lacked support, it was hard to build strong teaching for young learners. Some said the children missed out when teachers were left to figure things out alone.

Subtheme 2.1: Limited access to relevant and regular professional development

Some early childhood teachers said they do not get enough training. They talked about how workshops are rare, and when they happen, they are sometimes not related to what is needed in the classroom. A few mentioned that the sessions often stop after one day, with no follow-up or support afterward.

Without steady training, it becomes harder for teachers to improve how they teach. Some shared that they want to learn new ways to handle classroom problems, but the help is not always there. Others said that when they do not get proper training, it also makes it hard to meet the learning needs of young children. Teachers view training support as helpful in their professional growth. It aids in the enhancement of their teaching skills and knowledge, which reflects on the academic output of the learners.

As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P4: "I am not given enough opportunities for me to attend professional development in early childhood education."

P7: "The workshops I attended are not always aligned with the specific needs of the learners."

P2: "It is difficult for me to attend training sessions that help me stay updated on new teaching techniques for early childhood

education."

P6: "I had a few professional development programs on ECE."

P3: "I feel like there is not enough support for continuous learning in early childhood education."

P8: "We are often given generic training that does not focus on the challenges of early childhood teaching."

P5: "I am willing to go for specialized training, but the opportunities are very limited."

P9: "I have not been able to attend regular workshops that focus on effective early childhood strategies."

P10: "Most of the training we receive is not customized to the unique needs of early education."

P1: "There is a clear lack of training focusing on the needs of young children in my school."

The teachers in this study shared that they had trouble finding regular and helpful training made just for early childhood education. Many said that most of the sessions they attended were not enough and did not fully meet the needs of their work with young children. One teacher said they did not have enough chances for training in early education. Another shared that the training sessions they joined were too few and far apart.

Several also talked about the content of the training itself. A few said that the topics were often too general and did not match the everyday challenges they faced in the classroom. One teacher shared that the sessions were not designed for early childhood and did not help with the real situations they handled every day. Another mentioned that it was hard to find training that helped them stay updated with better ways of teaching young children. Some teachers said they wished there were more training programs that focused on early learning. One explained that they wanted to learn more, but the opportunities were hard to find. Another said that even when workshops were offered, they did not always match the kinds of support young learners really need.

This lack of training made it harder for teachers to try new methods and keep up with what works best for young children. Without steady training, they felt unsure and alone in figuring out how to handle different learning needs. It also made it harder for them to bring new ideas into their teaching. Some said they felt stuck using the same strategies over and over. Others shared that not having the right support lowered their confidence and made them feel less excited about their work. What the teachers shared in this study matches the findings of Ho and Campbell-Barr (2018). Their research also showed that early childhood teachers often attend sessions that are not connected to their actual work in the classroom. They found that teachers need training that is regular, useful, and built around what early learning really looks like.

Subtheme 2.2: Lack of awareness or access to support systems

The teachers acknowledged that there are other options where they can acquire training like attending on early childhood training organized by private institutions, but they have no fund and time to do so. Others shared that there was a late invitation for coaching and mentoring sessions, thus they missed it. Those in far areas said it was even harder. Some



teachers had never been visited by instructional leaders. Others said they rarely got the chance to sit down with fellow teachers to talk or plan together. They said this made them feel isolated and unsure of what was working in other classrooms.

The limited chance of collaboration with other early education teachers hampered them to learn about the new trends. But the other teachers found a way to still connect with their peers through creating online forums and mini-webinars to update each other on the innovations in the field of early education.

As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P2: *"I did not know support systems were available to help with professional development."*

P6: *"The support systems are poorly communicated, so I am often unaware of what is available."*

P7: *"There is no clear pathway to access resources or guidance when I need help with my professional growth."*

P3: *"I have heard about support systems, but I do not have the necessary information to access them."*

P5: *"Sometimes, the lack of awareness about support systems leaves me struggling to improve my teaching."*

P9: *"It is difficult to find out where to go for help when we face challenges in the classroom."*

P10: *"I think there are support systems, but they are not well-publicized or easy to access."*

P1: *"I am unsure where to turn when I need professional guidance or assistance."*

P8: *"It feels like there is no clear direction on how to tap into support systems that could help us grow professionally."*

P4: *"I wish I had more clarity about what support systems exist to help my development as a teacher."*

The teachers in this study often said they were not sure what kinds of support were available to them. Many felt cut off from programs that were meant to help improve their teaching. A few knew that some support systems existed but said there was no clear information about how to use them or where to go. Because of this, some teachers felt unsure and alone, especially when they needed help in their work.

The responses showed that not having enough information made it harder for teachers to grow. There seemed to be a gap between school leaders and the teachers when it came to sharing updates about these programs. Some support tools, like mentoring or learning groups, were in place, but they were not always used. Teachers said this was mostly because they were not told clearly how these programs worked or how to join them. When these support options are not made clear, teachers miss out on the chance to build their skills. This also affects the way early childhood education is carried out in classrooms. Teachers said they needed better ways to find help, not just knowing support exists, but also knowing where to start. Simple steps like clear directions, short orientations, or reminders from school leaders could make a big difference.

This finding supports what Alhassan (2022) also found in a study on early childhood teachers. That research said that many kinds of support were already in place, but teachers did not use them much because they were not well shared or explained. When support is hard to see or not talked about, teachers tend to miss it even when it is available.

Theme 3: classroom management and engagement of learners

Some teachers said it was hard to manage the class while keeping the children focused. They shared that working with young learners takes a lot of patience and steady routines. A few mentioned that the classroom needs to feel both calm and active, and that balance is not easy to keep. Many teachers talked about behavior issues. Some said the children would cry, move around, or stop listening. Others said a few children refused to join the group. These things happened often and made teaching harder. A few teachers said they had systems in place that helped, but others said it was not easy to keep the rules clear every day.

Subtheme 3.1: Dealing with disruptive behaviors and distractions

Some teachers said they had not been trained enough on how to handle behavior. A few shared that they felt unsure about what to do when a child would not follow. Some said they just reacted in the moment, hoping it would work. Others said this led to stress and less time for learning. The teachers said they wanted better ways to guide behavior. They felt that with the right support, they could make the classroom feel safer and more focused. Without training, many felt they were left on their own to figure things out.

As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P5: *"It can be difficult to keep all the children focused, especially when some start acting out."*

P3: *"I try to redirect the students' attention when they get distracted, but it does not always work."*

P7: *"Sometimes, the disruptions make it hard to continue the lesson, and I must stop and refocus the class."*

P6: *"Managing disruptive behavior requires patience and constant reminders of the rules."*

P9: *"I use positive reinforcement, but it is still tough to get the kids back on track when they get distracted."*

P1: *"When children are disruptive, I try to engage them with different activities, but it takes time to regain their focus."*

P2: *"The younger children are especially hard to manage when distracted or misbehaving."*

P10: *"I often have to intervene to prevent small disruptions from becoming larger problems in the classroom."*

P8: *"Some days are more challenging than others, and it feels like I am constantly putting out fires with behavioral issues."*

P4: *"The behavior problems can sometimes distract the entire class, making it hard to move forward with the lesson."*

Many teachers shared that it is hard to manage behavior in the classroom. They talked about how distractions and disruptions often break the flow of lessons. One teacher said it was tough to keep all the children focused, especially when some start acting out. Another said the disruptions sometimes get in the way so much that the lesson has to stop just to calm everyone down. Some teachers said they used different ways to bring back order. A few said they reminded the children about the rules or tried to guide them back by talking to them. One teacher shared that they use rewards or praise to help children stay on track, but even then, it is not always easy. Another said they try to redirect the child's focus, but sometimes it does not work. A few teachers



said the younger children are harder to manage, especially when they get distracted or start moving around too much.

Some also mentioned about how it feels. One teacher said there are days when it feels like all they do is put out small fires. The constant need to manage behavior takes a lot of energy. A few said it leaves them tired and unsure if they are doing the right thing.

The teachers said they wanted more help. They felt they needed more training on how to guide young children when behavior becomes a problem. Even though many said they try their best, they also said that what they know is not always enough. Some teachers said they wished for help from child specialists or school leaders. A few mentioned that having smaller classes or even an extra adult in the room would make a big difference. Others said that having a plan to follow when things get hard would help a lot.

These stories support what Gilliam and Reyes (2018) also found. Their study showed that teachers often struggle with behavior when there is not enough support, not enough training, or when there are too many children for one adult to manage. They said that without the right tools or people in place, the learning breaks down not because the teacher does not care, but because it becomes too much to handle alone.

Subtheme 3.2: Promoting active engagement and participation

There are concerns that the teachers shared about their skills in crafting interactive lessons that will retain the attention of their pupils. This is the second most difficult task of a teacher, which is to keep the entire teaching process a lively experience for the learners to keep them engaged. They explained that how well students stay focused is closely linked to the methods and materials used during instruction.

In classrooms where teachers used music, movement, and storytelling, they noticed that children were more attentive and willing to participate. However, in settings with limited supplies or where teachers lacked experience, lessons became repetitive and centered mostly on the teacher, giving students fewer chances to explore, interact, or stay involved in the learning process.

Teachers stressed that they needed more support in using teaching strategies that encourage curiosity, participation, and stronger learning outcomes. They expressed a desire for practical guidance and tools to help them create lessons that are structured and engaging and developmentally suited to young learners.

As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P6: *"I try to use hands-on activities to keep the learners engaged and interested in the lesson."*

P1: *"Getting the kids to participate actively requires variety in the activities, like using songs or interactive games."*

P5: *"I encourage them to share ideas during lessons, which helps them stay engaged."*

P9: *"Active participation is key, so I ask open-ended questions that get the kids thinking."*

P3: *"I include group work and activities where they can interact with each other, which helps with engagement."*

P7: *"When the children are allowed to move around and*

explore, they are much more engaged."

P2: *"Using visual aids and hands-on materials makes a big difference in keeping them involved in the lesson."*

P10: *"I try to make learning fun by incorporating games, which helps maintain their focus."*

P4: *"Having children participate in the lesson, rather than just listen, keeps them more interested and involved."*

P8: *"I encourage active participation by giving children different roles during group activities, which helps keep them engaged."*

Instead of sticking to lessons where the teacher talks and the children mostly listen, the teachers talked about using methods like singing, pretend play, group work, open-ended questions, and child-to-child interaction. One teacher, P3, said, *"I include group work and activities where they can interact with each other, which helps with engagement,"* pointing out that children learn better when they can talk and play together.

Some teachers also said they used movement in their lessons to help children stay focused and avoid disruptions, like P7 who explained, *"I find that when the children are allowed to move around and explore, they are much more engaged."* Teachers also said they gave students simple jobs or roles during group work to help them stay part of the activity. One of them, P8, said, *"I encourage active participation by giving children different roles during group activities, and it helps keep them engaged."*

All of these strategies show that the teachers are working hard to make lessons that match how young children learn best. The teachers seem to understand that learners in early grades enjoy having fun while learning and discovering things for themselves. This kind of approach makes a big difference in early childhood settings, where short attention spans and the need for movement are part of everyday life.

The results from this study bring out some important points for how early childhood classrooms can be improved, how teachers can be supported, and what training and policies should focus on. First, teachers clearly rely on these kinds of lessons, which means they need more help and support to try out different active teaching methods. If teachers know how to plan interactive lessons, it will surely help keep the learners motivated to participate in class and also improve their behavior. When teachers were given credit for using lessons that focus on children's needs and ways of learning, more classrooms could use these same methods. That would help make sure that more children, no matter where they live, can have lessons that are made for how they learn best.

The results corroborate with the research done by Lillard et.al (2021) found that children learn when they are active compared with when they are passive, and they observed that children who moved around and worked with their hands were more focused, remembered more, and felt better emotionally. Their study showed that learning through movement and discovery helped children grow in many ways, not just academically but socially too.

What the teachers shared in this study fits well with those findings. They talked about using games, group work, movement, and stories to keep children involved. Both this study and the earlier one agree that when children are active and part of the lesson, they enjoy it more and are better prepared for what comes next in school.



4.2. Strategies of teachers in enhancing early childhood education

Early childhood teachers shared that they used different ways to improve early education by supporting instruction, building teacher skills, and working more closely with families and the community. They said they spent time inside classrooms, watching how lessons were taught and giving feedback afterward. The learning sessions helped teachers innovate on how to enhance the lessons and handle classroom routines.

The teachers were also encouraged to co-organize in-service training and learning action cell (LAC) sessions that were designed to match the needs of early childhood learners,

especially in how they followed the curriculum and used child-focused teaching. Some teachers said they worked with each other to share ideas, coach one another, and create a team-like atmosphere in their schools.

Teachers and learners both agreed that families and the wider community play a big role in early learning. Because of this, they reached out to parents and others in the area to build stronger partnerships. These efforts helped bring in more support and encouraged families to take part in the learning process. Everything they did aimed to improve how early childhood education works, especially in schools with fewer resources or those far from town.

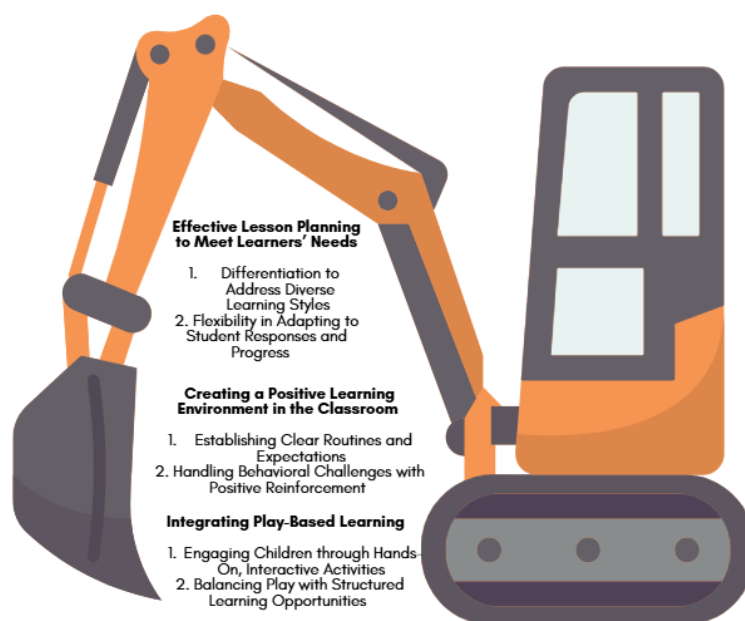


Figure 4. Simulacrum on the Strategies of teachers in enhancing early childhood education

Particularly in areas where teaching conditions are challenging, like the Buguias District, early childhood educators actively work to enhance their teaching strategies despite initial challenges. They are emulating the symbolism of a large truck loader that moves large boulders along the pathways. Teachers try to make learning simpler and more meaningful for young children, even when they are working with few resources and many challenges, just as a loader lifts and moves barriers to make roads easier to pass through.

In this image, the loader stands for the teacher's role in easing the difficulties of early learning by changing how lessons are taught, making their teaching tools, and adjusting their approach to fit what each child needs to grow. It does demonstrate the work of teachers and parents with the whole community in building and protecting a safe environment for the learners.

The mighty work of the loader also depicts the sturdy commitment of early childhood teachers who are always doing their work in the best possible way. They set up their classrooms with care, try out play-based activities, and teach basic skills in ways that connect with children's lives. The way they teach is hands-on, thoughtful, and respectful of the children's culture, helping each learner explore, grow, and feel supported.

4.2.1. Theme 1: effective lesson planning to meet learners' needs

In early childhood education, teachers shared that lesson planning plays a key role in delivering meaningful instruction. Creating lessons that meet the wide range of needs found in young learners is seen as important in building a classroom that feels welcoming and keeps children engaged. The teachers who adjust their lessons based on the learning styles of their students are observed to be more successful in keeping their attention during the lessons and helping them mature.

Subtheme 1.1: Differentiation to address diverse learning styles

The teachers shared about how helpful it was to plan lessons that integrate various ways of teaching to meet the appropriate learning needs of their pupils. They were encouraged to try many kinds of strategies, some that included pictures and visuals, some with songs or sounds, and others that got children moving so that more learners could connect with the lesson. Teachers who did this kind of planning often found it easier to reach every child, no matter how they learned best, and were better able to meet individual needs.

Some children learn better with visuals, when teachers use



images and charts, whereas those who prefer to move, do learn better during psychomotor activities that allow them to touch, feel, and explore. Teachers used these various methods to create a space in which more children felt included, and learning became more personal and linked to how each child makes sense of the world.

As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P4: *"I use a mixture of visual, auditory, and physical activities to cater to the different learning styles of the learners."*

P2: *"Some of my pupils learn better through seeing visuals, so I try to use many pictures and charts in my lessons."*

P5: *"I give different activities to meet the needs of my learners, depending on the pace of their learning."*

P8: *"When a learner struggles with one approach, I apply an alternative that suits their learning style."*

P3: *"I always try to vary my teaching methods so all the learners can engage, whether through games or discussions."*

P1: *"I incorporate activities that appeal to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners."*

P9: *"I group learners according to their learning preferences, so they can work on tasks based on their strengths."*

P10: *"Some of the learners need more visual aids, while others choose movement and interaction, so I adjust accordingly."*

P6: *"Differentiating lessons helps me address the learning needs of my pupils, especially those needing extra support."*

P7: *"I observe the responses of my pupils and adapt my teaching to include a variety of methods that meet their learning styles."*

The participants discussed that as teachers in early childhood education, they are conscious of the fact that each of their pupils learns differently. In this manner, they can adapt their teaching style so that each pupil can keep up. According to teachers, they combine movement, sound-based, and visual activities to better suit how children absorb and retain information. For example, P4 said, *"I use a mix of visual, auditory, and hands-on activities to cater to the different learning styles in my classroom,"* while P1 added, *"I make sure to incorporate activities that appeal to both auditory and kinesthetic learners."*

These stories make it clear that teachers do not just try one method and stop. They said they keep watching and changing their plans depending on what they see in class. P3 explained, *"I always try to vary my teaching methods so all the children can engage, whether through games or discussions."* Others shared what works for them, like P2 using pictures and charts, P9 grouping children by how they learn, and P8 giving other choices when something does not work well for a student.

These arguments demonstrate why effective early childhood education includes accommodations for various learning styles. Children seem to participate more and comprehend more when teachers are aware of each student's learning style and use that information to inform their lessons. This is why it matters in the training of teachers as well as in the classroom. Incorporating practical experience in closely observing students and adapting lessons to accommodate a variety of learning styles is crucial for teacher preparation.

Subtheme 1.2: Flexibility in adapting to student responses and progress

In addition to differentiation, the ability to adapt lesson planning

emerged as a vital strategy to meet students' immediate needs and developmental stages. It was observed that effective teachers frequently adjusted their lesson plans in real-time by considering student feedback, engagement levels, and progress. Teachers are aware of when to adjust the lessons when it seems unclear to the learners. A collection of varied teaching strategies is readily available for teachers to choose from to suit the learning needs of their students. The flexibility of using the differentiation technique is helpful for the learners, regardless of their learning pace and style, to move forward. Additionally, it creates an adaptable learning environment where students are supported and guided throughout their educational journey. As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P4: *"I make changes to the lesson plans based on how the students respond during class."*

P1: *"If I notice that some children are struggling, I slow down and spend more time on that part of the lesson."*

P9: *"Flexibility is key for me, as I adapt my lessons on the spot depending on how well the students grasp the material."*

P5: *"When students lack understanding, I adjust my teaching methods to meet their needs better."*

P3: *"I feel that flexibility helps me address each learner's progress, whether they are excelling or need additional help."*

P6: *"I always monitor the pupils and adjust the pace of my lessons based on their progress."*

P8: *"Sometimes I need to change the approach mid-lesson if I see that pupils are not responding well."*

P7: *"I adapt my lessons based on pupil feedback, making sure to give extra attention to those who need it."*

P2: *"If a pupil is struggling, I provide additional activities or resources to help them catch up."*

P10: *"I find that being flexible with my teaching style helps accommodate the wide choice of learning speeds in my class."*

According to some teachers, modifying their lessons during teaching has become something that happens every day. When things did not go as planned, they discussed instances where they stopped the lesson and tried something different right away rather than pressing it through. One teacher, referred to here as Participant Four, explained that she listens closely to her students and makes changes depending on how they are responding. She shared, *"I make changes to the lesson plans based on how the students are responding during class."* Another, Participant Nine, said something similar. For her, being flexible is not an extra skill but part of how she teaches every day. She said, *"Flexibility is key for me, as I adapt my lessons on the spot depending on how well the students are grasping the material."*

Many teachers shared how important it is to observe their students throughout each lesson. They rely not only on what the students say, but also on how they behave, how focused they are, and whether they seem confident or confused. Participant Six talked about slowing down or speeding up based on how students are keeping up. She said, *"I always monitor the students and adjust the pace of my lessons based on their progress."* Participant One echoed that point and said that if she sees that some children are falling behind, she stops and takes time to go over that part again. In her words, *"If I notice that some children are struggling, I slow down and spend more time on that part of the lesson."* These small decisions, made in the moment, help



make sure no one is left behind.

Several teachers also spoke about the wide range of learning needs in their classrooms. Some children move quickly through new material, while others need more time. Participant Three explained that flexibility helps her support all her learners. She said, *"I feel that flexibility helps me address each student's progress, whether they are excelling or need additional help."* Other participants, including Participant Two and Participant Ten, said they often adjust the materials they use or change the pace of their teaching so that everyone has a fair chance to understand.

Some teachers said that they feel more confident when they have support, whether that means talking with other teachers, attending workshops, or simply having the time to think through what worked and what did not. Another point that came up often was how much teachers rely on subtle signals from their students. They described observing a sudden silence, a change in intensity, or a blank stare. Although these indicators are not included in any official evaluation, they provide educators with the knowledge they need to make decisions. It required time and experience, according to many, to learn to spot these symptoms. Some of them shared that working with other teachers helped them build this skill. They found that informal conversations with colleagues gave them new ideas and the reassurance that they were on the right track. These everyday exchanges, not formal evaluations, were often the most helpful.

The findings of this study align with what Park and Lynch (2021) discovered that students tend to pay more attention and show deeper understanding when teachers are allowed to adjust their lessons as they teach. Trust in their judgment, paired with the right support, can make a real difference in how students learn. The overall learning experience becomes more meaningful when teachers are trusted to guide their classes based on what they observe and hear from their students in real time. Park and Lynch also pointed out that teachers need ongoing professional development to feel confident in making these kinds of decisions on the spot.

4.2.2. Theme 2: creating a positive learning environment in the classroom

Teachers shared the happiness of their learners whenever they create a warm and welcoming classroom atmosphere using vibrant colors of visual materials, and most of all, the ambiance that is created during classes. Many of them pointed out that a positive environment supports the emotional, social, and thinking skills children need as they grow and does more than just help with the improvement of behavior. Moreover, the participants mentioned that transforming the classroom into a conducive learning environment can influence the learners to appreciate and enjoy the fun of being attentive in class.

Subtheme 2.1: Establishing clear routines and expectations

Some teachers said that when the day has a routine, the learners seem to settle in better. One mentioned how starting with a quiet song in the morning helped everyone ease into the day. Then, snack time, story time, things just follow. When it

is always the same, the children stop asking what comes next. They feel more relaxed. A few of them even start leading the line without being told. It might seem small, but it shows they feel safe. One teacher said, *"It's like they can breathe better when they know what to expect."*

They also talked about rules, not strict ones, just simple stuff like waiting for a turn, talking kindly, and listening. Teachers said they repeat the same things over and over, but the children do learn slowly. One child even reminded another to wait for his turn. Teachers said the room feels calmer when routines and gentle reminders are part of each day. The children learn more than just numbers or letters. They learn how to treat people, how to be part of a group, and that school is a place where they belong.

As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P6: *"Having a clear routine helps the kids feel more secure and ready to learn."*

P3: *"I make sure to set expectations at the start of each day so the pupils know exactly what to expect."*

P9: *"Consistent routines help the learners stay on track and manage their time better during the day."*

P2: *"By establishing routines early, the pupils are more likely to follow through with the tasks."*

P7: *"Clear expectations make it easier to maintain structure and prevent chaos during activities."*

P1: *"I always remind them about the rules and routines, especially at the beginning of the week."*

P8: *"Having a well-established routine allows the kids to be more independent in their tasks."*

P10: *"I ensure that my expectations are simple and consistent so the pupils understand what is expected of them."*

P4: *"I use visual schedules to reinforce routines, especially for younger pupils needing more support."*

P5: *"Clear routines help prevent disturbances and keep the class moving smoothly throughout the day."*

Many teachers shared that having a routine helps children feel more settled in the classroom. One said that when the same activities happen at the same time each day, the children feel more at ease. They know what to expect, and that helps them feel safe. Another teacher mentioned that when the day flows in a familiar way, students are able to manage their time better and stay focused. Routines seemed to help not only with behavior but with how children show up emotionally. A few teachers said that when routines are in place, the classroom feels calmer and children are more willing to join group activities without hesitation.

Teachers also talked about setting expectations at the start of the day or week. One said that beginning each morning by explaining what the children would be doing helped everything run smoother. Another teacher said it prevented confusion and helped avoid problems before they started. These small moments gave children a sense of direction and something to hold on to. It made a difference. Some teachers also used visual aids. One shared how her younger students relied on picture schedules on the wall. The children would often look at the pictures to figure out what was coming next. This gave them confidence. It was a quiet support system that helped them stay on task without having to keep asking questions. For those who



needed more help with focus, this tool was especially useful. What came through in many of the interviews was how routines help children feel steady. When they do not have to worry about what will happen next, they can focus on learning. The teachers noticed that students listened better, followed directions more often, and seemed happier during the day. These routines made the classroom feel like a place where children belonged. It was not just about keeping order. It was about building a space where they could feel safe enough to learn.

Several teachers said they needed more support in building these routines. Some wished for more time at the start of the school year to help students adjust slowly. Others hoped for training or even just a chance to share ideas with other teachers. A few mentioned that visual tools, if given early on, would make the process easier for everyone.

These thoughts match what was found in a study by Jackson *et al.* (2020). That study said clear routines help children feel more confident and ready to join in. Teachers in that research also said that students were more engaged and had fewer behavior issues when the classroom ran in a steady way. The teachers in this study seemed to feel the same. They were not looking for perfection. They were looking for peace and they found that routines helped bring that into their classrooms.

Subtheme 2.2: Handling behavioral challenges with positive reinforcement

The participants shared that encouragement is the most helpful strategy in managing the behavior of learners. This could be as simple as saying thank you when a child followed directions or giving a sticker to someone who waited patiently for a turn. Some children were recognized just for trying, even if they did not get the answer right. Over time, this kind of attention made a difference.

They also talked about how important it is to notice effort, not just results. One teacher explained that when a teacher praises the process, like how a child stayed focused or helped a classmate, it helps build confidence. Children begin to feel proud of themselves. They want to keep going. Teachers who took this approach noticed their students were more willing to take part in class and try new things without fear of being wrong.

By creating a classroom that focused more on the good than the bad, teachers found that students behaved better. There were fewer disruptions, and the children felt more connected to the group. The classroom felt calmer, and this kind of atmosphere made teaching easier and learning more enjoyable for everyone. As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P2: *"I find that using praise for positive behavior works much better than focusing on the negative."*

P10: *"When children follow the rules, I recognize their efforts with verbal praise or rewards."*

P4: *"I try to reinforce good behavior with stickers or extra playtime to keep them motivated."*

P1: *"Positive reinforcement helps me encourage students to make better choices without being punitive."*

P5: *"I focus on catching students doing something right and then acknowledge it to encourage repetition of good behavior."*

P3: *"When a student behaves well, I give them a small reward, which motivates them to continue that behavior."*

P9: *"I use positive reinforcement techniques, like giving points for good behavior, to keep the class motivated."*

P8: *"Reinforcing positive behavior makes creating a supportive classroom atmosphere easier."*

P6: *"I have noticed that when I focus on reinforcing good behavior, the classroom runs more smoothly."*

P7: *"I find that offering praise for small achievements encourages the students to stay engaged and behave well."*

Some teachers talked about how they manage behavior in their classrooms. A few said they try not to focus too much on what the kids do wrong. Instead, they try to catch them doing something good. One teacher said, *"I tell them when I notice them listening or sharing, even if it's just once. They light up."* Another teacher mentioned that small praise works better than always correcting. Just saying something kind, in the moment, helps the child feel seen.

Others said they sometimes use small rewards. Stickers. A little extra time to play. A few said those things help, but it is more about how the child feels. When someone notices their effort, not just the result, it sticks. One teacher said, *"Even if they do not finish the task, I tell them I saw how hard they tried."* That kind of thing, the teacher said, makes a difference. The child sits up straighter. Tries again.

Some teachers said they wish they had more time for this. More space to really see the little things. But the classroom gets busy. Still, they try because they know it matters. One teacher said, *"When I stop and give that small bit of praise, it changes the day. For them, and me too."* They also said the mood of the room changes. When they focus on the good things, the class feels calmer. Children talk to each other more kindly. They want to do well. Not because they are told to, but because it feels good to be noticed.

4.2.3. Theme 3: integrating play-based learning

Teachers talked a lot about play. It came up more than once. It was something they cared about. They said play is not just for fun. It is not something to fill time. It is how children learn. One teacher said that when she watches her kids play, she sees how much thinking is going on. Even when they are quiet, their faces show it. They make choices. They test things. They figure out what works and what does not.

Another teacher mentioned that play is when children start to connect with others. They help each other. They fix little problems on their own. They use their hands, their voices, and their whole bodies. There is so much learning in that. You do not need to explain everything. The children just start doing it. Some teachers shared that when play is part of the day on purpose, the energy in the room changes. The children get more curious. They look around more. They ask questions. They try things without needing to be told. One teacher said the kids were building with blocks and talking about how to keep them from falling. Another described how the class acted out a story from a book. The teachers stayed close, but they did not take over. They helped when they had to, but mostly let the kids lead. It was not chaotic. It was full of life.

What stayed with the teachers was that this play was not a break from learning. It was the learning. When the kids had enough time and space to play, they changed. They stood a



little taller. They spoke more clearly, smiled more, and listened to each other. Then, most importantly, they felt a sense of belongingness in the classroom.

Subtheme 3.1: Engaging children through hands-on, interactive activities

A lot of teachers talked about how much it matters for children to use their hands when they learn. Not just sitting and listening, but doing things. They said that is when the learning is absorbed by the learners. One teacher said that the children stay focused longer when they are building something, or painting, or even just playing outside. She noticed they figure things out faster when they get to try things on their own. No one has to tell them what to do every step of the way. Another teacher talked about how learners who start asking questions while they play.

Some teachers shared that when play is part of the routine, children show more interest in what is going on. One class built towers together and talked about how to keep them steady. Another acted out a story from a book, and each child took on a role without being told. The teachers stayed close but let the children lead. It was loud, sure, but it had a rhythm. You could feel the energy, it was real learning.

As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P3: *"I always try incorporating hands-on activities like arts and crafts to keep the kids engaged."*

P5: *"Interactive games like role-playing help kids learn while having fun, so I use them often."*

P2: *"Kids learn best when they can touch and explore materials, so I create opportunities for that during lessons."*

P8: *"I believe hands-on activities are the best way to teach concepts, especially for young learners who need to move around."*

P6: *"Using interactive activities like building blocks helps the students understand abstract concepts better."*

P7: *"I always ensure that activities are interactive, as this keeps the children's attention and makes learning more fun."*

P1: *"Through hands-on activities, learners can explore and learn at their own pace, which is very effective."*

P4: *"Interactive learning opportunities, like using flashcards and puzzles, make learning enjoyable for the kids."*

P10: *"When the learners actively participate in tasks, they absorb the material much more effectively."*

P9: *"Hands-on activities allow pupils to express themselves and develop their creativity while learning."*

The teachers who took part in the study kept coming back to one main idea, that children learn best when they are doing something with their hands. They spoke about how activities like drawing, cutting, building, and acting things out helped the kids stay focused. It was not about keeping them busy. It was about helping them understand what they were learning. One teacher said she uses crafts almost every day because it helps her students stay interested. Another mentioned that when kids are up and moving, not just sitting and listening, they understand ideas better.

These hands-on tasks, according to many of the teachers, gave the children space to move at their own speed. One teacher explained that some of her students need more time, while others move faster, and letting them explore through activities

made that possible. Another pointed out how simple things like flashcards, puzzles, or blocks gave the children something real to hold onto while they worked things out in their heads. It helped them stay engaged without pressure.

Teachers also noticed how these kinds of activities helped kids express themselves. It was about helping the children grow in how they think, how they talk, and how they relate to one another. All of this points to something the teachers seemed to agree on. Children need more than just paper and pencil. Many teachers also said it helped them reach all kinds of learners. Some children need more structure. Others do better when they are free to explore. With hands-on work, teachers were able to meet both needs.

These observations corroborate with the study by Anderson and Thompson (2022), which showed that children learn more when they take part in activities where they can touch and explore. They also showed more interest in the lessons. Teachers in that study saw growth in how students solved problems and how they expressed ideas. The results of the current study seem to say the same thing when children can move, create, and explore, they learn better, and they feel more connected to the classroom.

Subtheme 3.2: Balancing play with structured learning opportunities

Some teachers also talked about the importance of having a balance, while many agree that play is a big part of how young children learn. The participants said that play as a means of motivating learners is powerful, but it works best when there are also more focused moments. Teachers were encouraged to include some structure in the day, like reading stories together, doing short group tasks, or having time for letters and numbers. These were not meant to replace play, but to sit alongside it. They shared that a good classroom usually has a mix. On one hand, you have free play, the kind where kids choose what they want to do and explore at their own pace. But there is also space for planned activities, where the teacher gently guides the children toward specific learning goals.

Teachers believed that this balance helped children grow in more than one way. It gave them time to build friendships, use their imagination, and work through feelings. At the same time, it also gave them the chance to pick up early skills in reading, math, and listening, all of which they will need as they move into the next stage of school.

As supported by the following statements from the participants:

P2: *"I try to balance structured activities with free play so that the children have a mix of learning and fun."*

P5: *"While structured learning is important, I make sure there is always time for play, as it encourages creativity."*

P9: *"I find that alternating between structured lessons and playtime keeps the children engaged and helps them learn better."*

P7: *"Structured learning provides the foundation, but play allows children to reinforce what they have learned."*

P6: *"Balancing play with structured activities ensures that the children stay motivated and excited about learning."*

P10: *"I always make sure to give the children time to play so they can apply what they have learned in a fun, relaxed way."*

P4: *"I structure my lessons so that there is a balance between*



focused learning and creative play.”

P8: “Children need play to process information in their own way, so I incorporate both learning methods into the day.”

P1: “I use structured learning to introduce concepts, then allow playtime to help the children internalize the lesson.”

P3: “By balancing play and structure, I see the children are more engaged and retain what they learn longer.”

The teachers mentioned how important it is to give kids both structure and time to play. They said the two work best when they go together. One teacher said she likes to start with a group lesson, then let the children move around and explore. It keeps them interested. Another said she always makes sure there’s space in the day for free play, even after a long task, because that’s where the kids come alive. You can see the learning happening when they are not being told exactly what to do.

One teacher said her class learned about letters in the morning, and later during play, some of the children started forming those same letters using blocks. No one told them to, they just did it. Another teacher said that her students remember more when they have the chance to play after learning. The ideas are best grasped when the children have time to act them out or state something from what they heard.

The other participants said structure is where kids get the basics. That is where they hear new words, try counting, or practice listening. But play is where the children take it further than the usual learning process. They might draw the letter they learned, or tell a story using those new words. Some learners need to discuss it with their classmates. Others need to move, when they are given the space, they show what they understand in their own way.

Some teachers said switching between structured time and play helps with behavior. Children stay more focused when they know they will not be sitting all day long in the classroom. One teacher said her class listens better during story time when they have already had time to move around. Another said her students stay excited about learning when they know they will get time to build or paint afterward.

They agreed that not all children learn the same way. Some need a quiet space. Some need a positive noise. Some want to figure things out on their own. That is why having both types of learning matters. It gives each child a fair chance to grow. One teacher said that balance is what makes her classroom feel calm and alive at the same time. Some also shared that they wish schools gave them more things to support both kinds of learning. Books, toys, blocks, art supplies, all of it helps. When children have real things to work with, they remember more. It feels real to them.

Everything the teachers shared connects with a study by Kim and Lee (2023). It was found that when children get both structure and play, they stay engaged longer and work better with others. The teachers in this study saw the same thing. Learning is stronger when it is not just one way. When learners get time to move, talk, build, and imagine, alongside the lessons, they grow in more ways than one.

4.3. Proposed intervention plan

This plan came from what many teachers have been saying for a while: they are doing their best with what they have, but it

is not always enough. The first thing the plan focuses on is materials. A lot of classrooms just do not have enough. So the idea is to build a system where teachers can share and borrow what they need things like books, toys, learning tools. Instead of every classroom struggling alone, schools can help each other. It also means reaching out to local businesses and groups who might be willing to donate. Sometimes, those donations include things that matter to the kids, like cultural items that connect with their home lives. The point is to give teachers more to work with, so their lessons can be more hands-on and meaningful.

The second part of the plan is about training. Not every teacher has access to workshops or mentoring, especially those working in far areas. So this part includes things like online training that teachers can do at their own pace. It also includes in-person sessions when possible, as well as regular chances for teachers to talk, share what works, and learn from each other. The training would cover topics that teachers often ask about how to manage behavior, how to use play in learning, how to adjust lessons for different kinds of learners. The goal is to help teachers feel more prepared and supported.

The last part looks at everyday support. Some teachers said they do not always know who to ask when they need help. So the plan suggests making support systems clearer. Regular check-ins with school leaders, or group chats where people can share advice. It also helps to have a way for teachers to get feedback on what they are doing in the classroom, not to criticize, but to help them grow.

5. CONCLUSION

The teachers in this study showed how much they care about their students. They did what they could to meet every learning need. Some changed up their lessons, some mixed play with teaching. They applied the methods that best worked for their pupils. It was not about following a perfect plan. It was about noticing who needed what, and when to implement. Mostly, they relied on small things like giving praise or letting a child take the lead in an activity to keep them engaged.

Some teachers understand that having enough materials can enhance their creativity in crafting learning resources. The learning pace of children must be matched with appropriate teaching techniques from the teacher. Thus, teachers strive to gain more skills through extensive self-learning and research to augment existing training and workshops on early childhood education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers can do a lot when they have the right tools, but the truth is, many still do not. In early childhood classrooms, where every child learns a little differently, having different kinds of materials is not just helpful it is necessary. Schools and the people making decisions behind the scenes really need to stop and look at what’s in the classrooms right now. These things make a difference. When a teacher has what they need, it shows in how the children respond.

There is also the question of training. What teachers get sometimes sounds good on paper, but does not always help in the classroom. The kind of professional development that



makes a real impact is the kind that's built around what early childhood teachers deal with keeping young learners focused, managing behavior, and making sure no child is left behind. The workshops should be simple, clear, and useful right away. Support matters, too. Some teachers shared that they often feel like they are on their own. So much could change if schools just made it easier to ask for help. Maybe that means setting up a mentoring system, or giving teachers a place to talk and share ideas. Even just knowing that someone is checking in can make the hard days easier. And when supplies are low, which happens more than people think, there should be a way to get what's needed without always waiting.

It would also help if researchers looked more closely at how these things connect. It is not always about funding, sometimes it's time, location, or just not knowing what is available. Understanding those barriers better could open doors for more teachers and, in the end, help more children.

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