

# Community-Centered Learning: Fostering Learner Motivation and Engagement Through Collaborative Partnerships

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*Abstract* — This study explored the experiences of teachers, their coping strategies, and insights into fostering learner motivation and engagement. A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with purposively selected 10 elementary school teachers. Data were analyzed thematically to uncover patterns related to challenges, strategies, and realizations about learner motivation. Teachers reported challenges such as learner engagement issues, resistance to group activities, and environmental impediments like gadget distractions and large class sizes. Coping strategies included designing interest-based learning approaches, fostering a sense of belonging, and leveraging resources like educational technology and small-group learning communities. Insights revealed the importance of personalization, strong peer relationships, diverse teaching strategies, and comprehensive support systems in enhancing learner motivation. The findings highlight the need for systemic support from educational stakeholders to address these challenges. Professional development, improved communication channels, and resource allocation were identified as key to sustaining learner engagement. Teachers' strategies emphasize the significance of adaptability and collaboration in overcoming motivational barriers and fostering an inclusive learning environment.

*Keywords* — *Community-centered learning, learner motivation, collaborative partnership, classroom engagement*

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## I. Introduction

Learning motivation has shifted over time, with modern students often more engaged through hands-on activities that foster creativity and innovation. While such approaches can enhance intellectual growth, traditional educational methods still dominate, leading to decreased motivation and passive learning. Introducing community partnerships and collaborative projects can reinvigorate students' interest, encouraging active participation and renewed enthusiasm for learning.

Motivation is essential for student success, requiring more than just intelligence—traits like enthusiasm, confidence, and determination play key roles. Studies in the Philippines reveal a decline in student motivation and participation, emphasizing the need for innovative teaching strategies. Teacher creativity strongly influences student drive, as engaging and inventive instruction boosts confidence and encourages learning. Without motivated teaching and learning environments, achieving educational success becomes more challenging.

This study aimed to explore how collaborative activities influenced student engagement and motivation compared to traditional teaching methods. It also sought to understand teachers' experiences, the challenges they faced, and the insights they gained from using these activities in the classroom. This study aimed to examine how combining cooperative learning activities with traditional teaching methods could enhance student motivation and engagement. It explored teachers' use of these activities, the challenges they faced, and the changes observed in student motivation. The study also highlighted the benefits of peer collaboration and contributed to research on inclusive education, offering insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers to improve collaborative practices.

The reviewed literature highlighted how various factors, such as social and economic background and lack of self-mediation, contributed to low student motivation, causing school to feel more like an obligation than an engaging experience. However, it also showed that collaborative activities helped address this issue by promoting teamwork and making learning more enjoyable, thereby increasing students' willingness and drive to participate.

This study was based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which highlights that learning happens through observing and imitating others, emphasizing collaboration to foster peer willingness and deeper understanding. It showed that learners benefit from diverse perspectives, communication, and teamwork. The study also drew on Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, focusing on autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key psychological needs that drive motivation. When these needs are met, learners feel motivated, capable, and connected, enhancing their engagement in learning.

## II. Methodology

The study used a phenomenological qualitative approach with open-ended questions to deeply explore participants' lived experiences, focusing on understanding their perspectives without bias. This method effectively captured educators' unique views and informed practical insights for policy and improvement. In-depth interviews were conducted to gather detailed personal accounts and observations, providing a comprehensive understanding of participants' daily challenges and experiences. Phenomenology was chosen to investigate real-world contexts, allowing the research to identify and analyze recurring themes from the instructors' narratives.

This text discusses the philosophical foundations of research through three key perspectives: ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Ontology concerns the nature of reality—whether it exists independently of human perception or is socially constructed—which influences how researchers approach their studies. Epistemology focuses on how knowledge is acquired, emphasizing the importance of understanding participants' subjective experiences to interpret their perspectives accurately. Axiology addresses the role of values in research, highlighting the need for transparency, respect for participants' data, and careful interpretation within their context.

Social Constructivism, as their qualitative assumption, views individuals as creating unique meanings through interactions with others rather than from within themselves. Due to the diversity and complexity of these meanings, the researcher focused on exploring a wide range of participant perspectives rather than reducing them to a few categories.

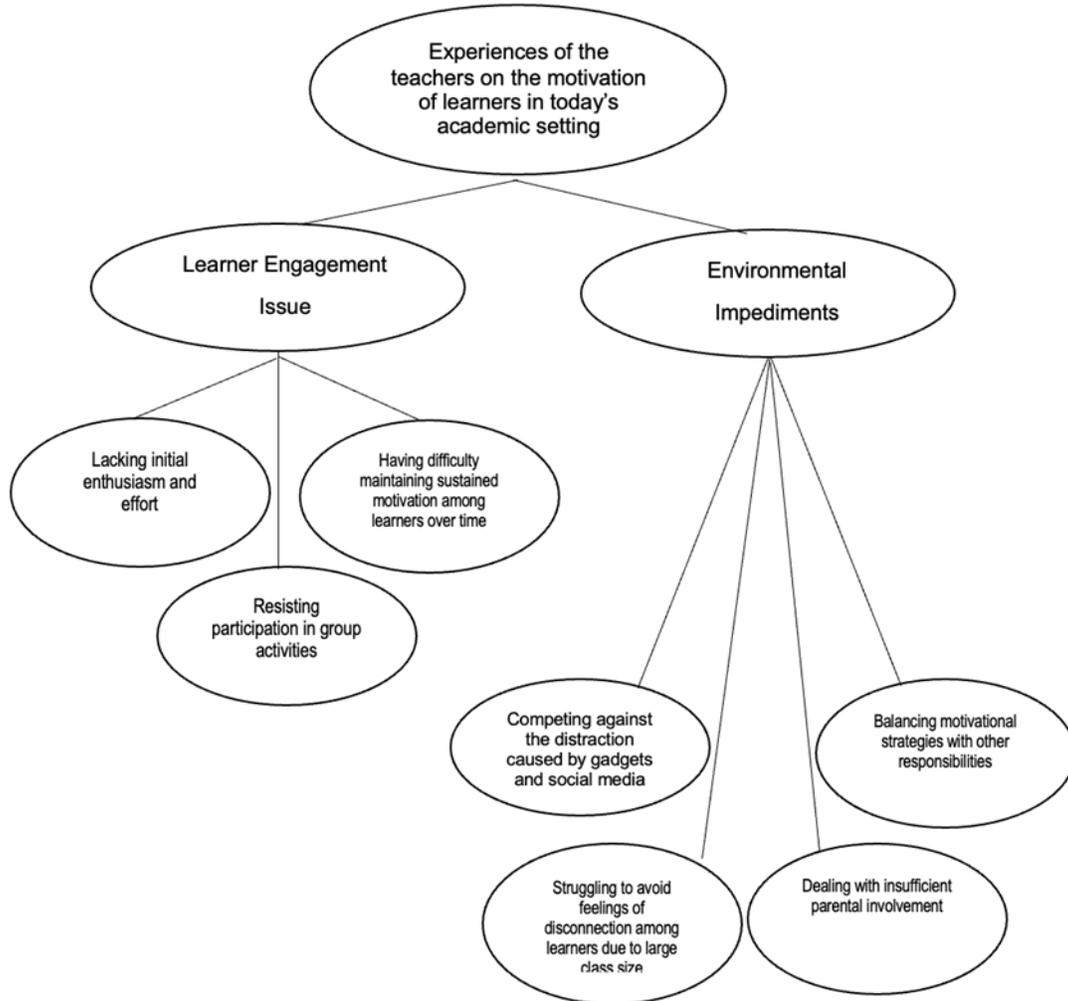
The study involved ten elementary teachers (five for in-depth interviews and five for focus group discussions) selected through purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based on criteria including at least three years of teaching experience, familiarity with using collaborative activities, and being regular employees. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select individuals with relevant expertise to provide valuable data. Key informants were chosen for their observational skills, insightfulness, subject knowledge, and willingness to share their experiences.

Before data collection, the researcher informed participants about the study's purpose and procedures, ensuring they understood and voluntarily signed consent forms, with the option to withdraw anytime. Health precautions were maintained during the process, and interviews were recorded with permission. Formal requests for approval were sent to school authorities and district officials. The researcher selected ten elementary teachers through purposive sampling and used in-depth interviews and focus group discussions for data gathering. Guidelines and forms were prepared for systematic collection, and strategies were set to address potential challenges. A database was used to track changes and securely store data throughout the study.

The researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis method, starting with familiarizing with the interview data. Initial codes were created to capture key data segments, which were then grouped into potential themes. These themes were carefully reviewed and refined, with a thematic map developed to show relationships between themes and subthemes. Themes were clearly defined and named to align with the study's goals. Finally, the researcher produced a report that integrated data extracts into a detailed analysis supporting the research questions.

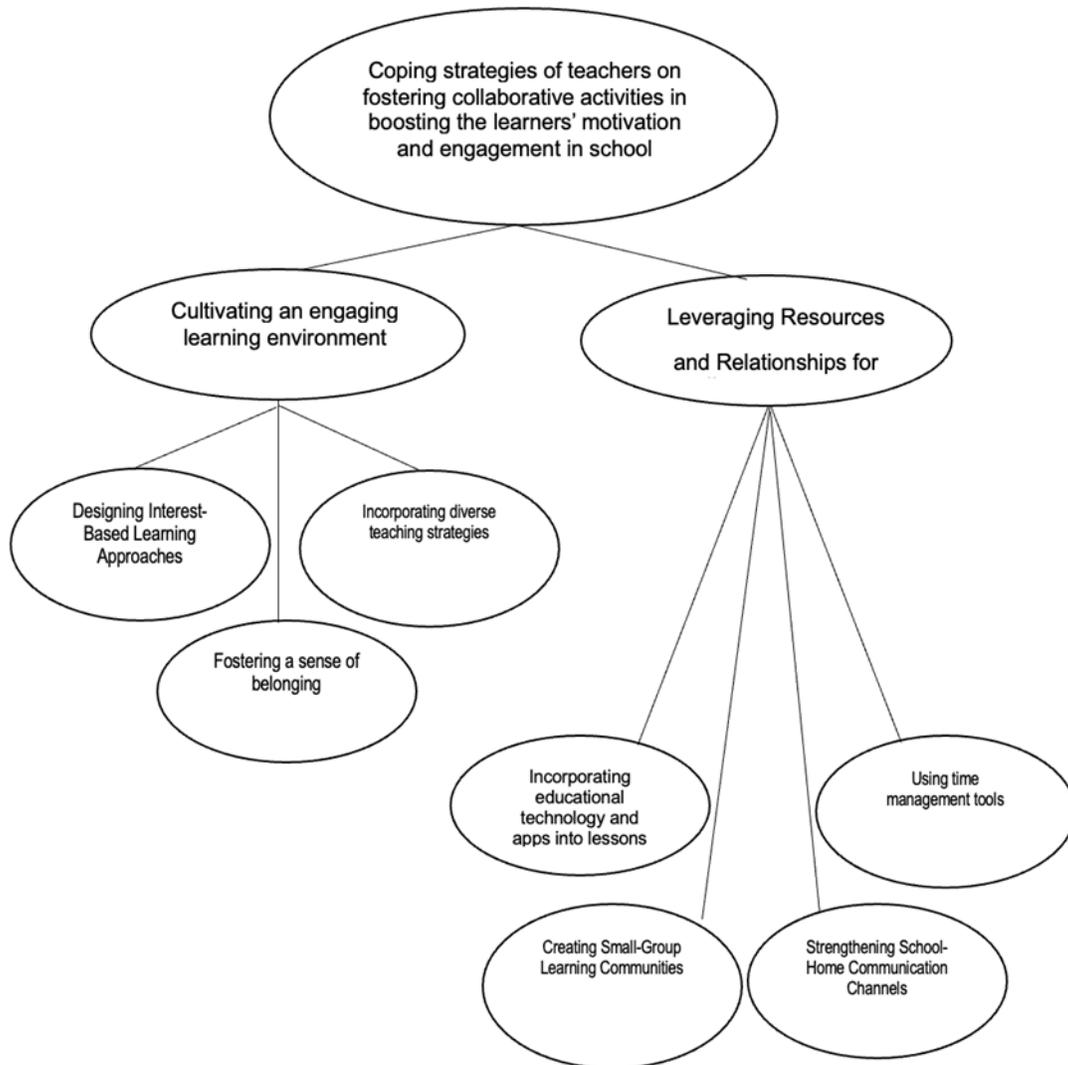
### **III. Results and Discussion**

The first section detailed the effective methods teachers used and the obstacles they faced in encouraging student engagement and enthusiasm. It identified key challenges such as student disinterest, external distractions, and resource limitations, organizing these into themes of learner engagement difficulties and environmental constraints. The section also highlighted the innovative approaches teachers applied—such as interactive activities, individualized support, and the use of technology—to sustain motivation and create a supportive learning atmosphere.



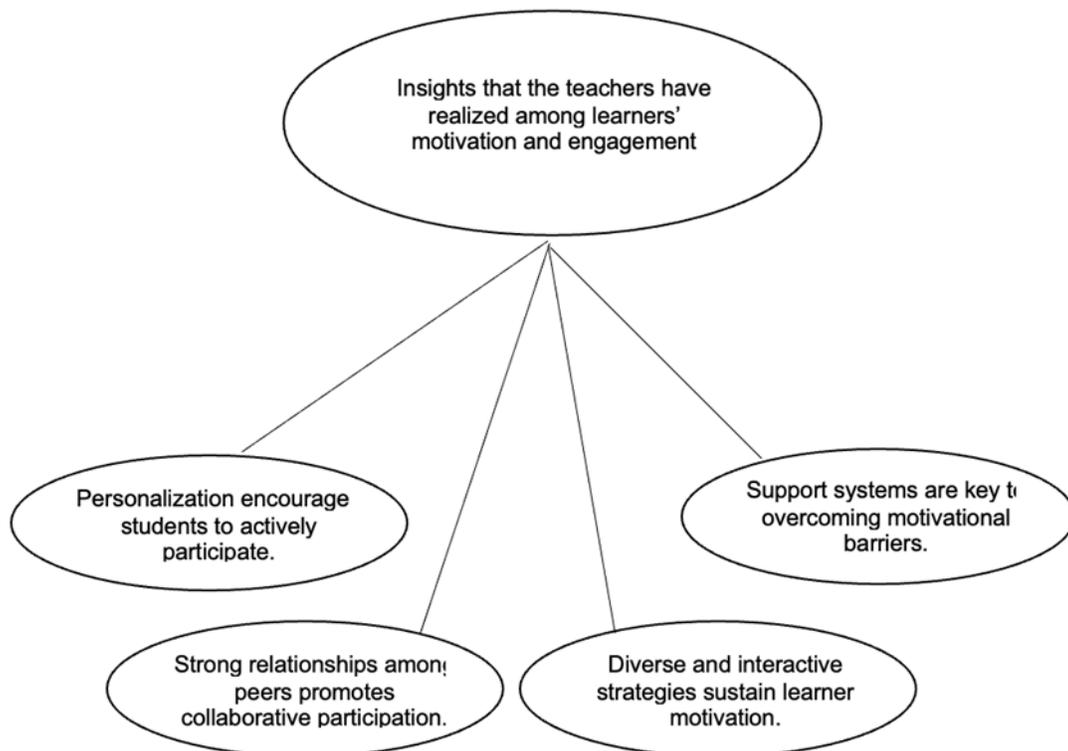
**Figure 3. Emerging Themes On The Experiences Of The Teachers On The Motivation Of Learners In Today's Academic Setting**

The second section described the strategies teachers used to foster collaborative activities that enhanced learners' motivation and engagement. Recognizing the importance of teamwork and interaction, teachers applied various methods to overcome challenges and create inclusive classrooms. Participants' experiences revealed how these strategies were designed and adapted to meet students' diverse needs, making collaboration a meaningful and effective learning tool. Two main themes emerged: cultivating an engaging learning environment and leveraging resources and relationships for effective learning.



**Figure 4. Emerging Themes On Coping Strategies Of Teachers On Fostering Collaborative Activities In Boosting The Learners' Motivation And Engagement In School**

This section presented valuable insights from teachers about factors influencing learners' motivation and engagement. Educators reflected on the challenges, strategies, and outcomes of promoting active participation and sustained interest. These reflections deepened understanding of learner engagement dynamics, highlighting effective practices and areas needing improvement to enhance the educational experience.



**Figure 5. Emerging Themes On The Insights That The Teachers Have Realized Among Learners' Motivation And Engagement**

Teachers faced several challenges in motivating learners, including low enthusiasm, resistance to group work, distractions, large class sizes, and limited parental involvement. To overcome these, they used various strategies such as designing interest-based activities, fostering belonging, integrating educational technology, and enhancing communication with families. Teachers learned that personalizing activities, promoting peer collaboration, and employing diverse teaching methods helped sustain motivation. They also recognized the importance of strong support systems and adaptability to effectively engage students and address motivational barriers.

Based on the results, the challenges in motivating learners highlight the need for systemic support in education. Schools and policymakers should provide professional development for teachers on motivational strategies and classroom management, while also addressing environmental issues like gadget distractions, large class sizes, and limited parental involvement through collaborative efforts and resource allocation.

Teachers' coping strategies emphasize the importance of flexible, student-centered learning environments. Schools should support these efforts by offering diverse teaching resources, technology, and opportunities for collaboration among teachers, parents, and students.

The insights from teachers point to the need for curricula and policies that prioritize individual learner needs, peer collaboration, and personalized approaches. Strong support systems involving families and peers are essential, and investment in empowering teachers to innovate will help create learning communities where students feel valued and motivated.

Future directions call for the Department of Education to provide professional development and resources to reduce class sizes and enhance school-home partnerships, while school leaders support teachers with resources and encourage diverse teaching methods and parental involvement. Teachers are urged to adopt personalized, interactive strategies and collaborate with peers and parents to foster inclusive classrooms, and students are encouraged to engage actively and practice self-discipline, especially with technology. Additionally, future research should explore the effectiveness of specific motivational strategies and the long-term impact of support systems and environmental factors on learner motivation and engagement.

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