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Exploring Teachers' Experiences with Experiential Learning through Hands-On Activities in Fostering the Social and Motor Development of Kindergarten Learners in Public Elementary Schools of Maddela I District, Schools Division of Quirino

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Abstract

Early childhood education serves as the foundation for lifelong learning by fostering children's cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and motor development through meaningful and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. In the Philippine Kindergarten Curriculum, experiential learning through hands-on activities is recognized as an essential pedagogical approach that enables young learners to actively construct knowledge while developing critical life skills. Hands-on learning opportunities such as play-based activities, manipulative tasks, movement exercises, collaborative games, arts and crafts, storytelling, and outdoor exploration provide authentic experiences that enhance children's social interaction, fine and gross motor coordination, creativity, communication, and problem-solving abilities. Despite the recognized importance of experiential learning, Kindergarten teachers continue to encounter instructional challenges associated with classroom implementation, resource availability, learner diversity, and curriculum demands. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of Kindergarten teachers in implementing experiential learning through hands-on activities to foster the social and motor development of learners in Divisoria Norte Elementary School, Maddela I District, Schools Division of Quirino. Specifically, the study examined teachers' instructional practices, classroom experiences, perceived benefits, implementation challenges, adaptive strategies, and recommendations for strengthening experiential learning in Kindergarten education. Twelve Kindergarten teachers were purposively selected as participants based on their direct teaching experience. Data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. The findings revealed that experiential learning significantly enhances learners' social competence, fine and gross motor skills, communication abilities, self-confidence, creativity, collaboration, and classroom engagement. Teachers demonstrated remarkable instructional creativity by utilizing locally available materials, contextualized learning experiences, and play-based strategies despite limited instructional resources. However, participants identified challenges related to inadequate learning materials, overcrowded classrooms, limited instructional time, and varying developmental readiness among learners. The study concludes that experiential learning through hands-on activities remains a highly effective pedagogical approach for promoting holistic Kindergarten development. Strengthened institutional support, continuous professional development, improved learning resources, and enhanced parent-school partnerships are recommended to sustain high-quality experiential learning in early childhood education.

Keywords: *experiential learning, hands-on activities, Kindergarten education, social development, motor development, phenomenology, early childhood education, play-based learning, Philippines*

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1. Introduction

The early years of a child's life represent one of the most critical stages of human development, during which rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and social growth occurs. Developmental psychologists consistently emphasize that experiences during early childhood significantly influence children's future academic achievement, social competence, emotional well-being, and lifelong learning dispositions. Consequently, early childhood education has evolved from focusing primarily on academic readiness toward promoting holistic child development through meaningful, engaging, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

Within the Philippine educational system, Kindergarten serves as the foundational stage of basic education, providing young learners with opportunities to acquire essential competencies necessary for lifelong learning. The Department of Education recognizes that Kindergarten instruction should be learner-centered, play-based, experiential, and developmentally appropriate, allowing children to actively participate in meaningful learning experiences rather than passively receiving information. The implementation of the Kindergarten Curriculum and the MATATAG Agenda further emphasizes foundational learning, joyful education, inclusivity, contextualization, and holistic child development through authentic learning opportunities.

One of the most effective instructional approaches supporting these educational goals is experiential learning. Experiential learning is grounded on the principle that children learn best through direct experience, active exploration, reflection, experimentation, and meaningful interaction with their environment. Rather than relying solely on teacher-directed instruction, experiential learning encourages learners to manipulate objects, participate in play, collaborate with peers, solve problems, explore their surroundings, and construct understanding through authentic experiences. Such learning environments allow children to develop not only academic readiness but also communication skills, creativity, independence, confidence, cooperation, and emotional resilience.

Hands-on activities constitute the practical application of experiential learning within Kindergarten classrooms. These activities include block building, puzzles, manipulative games, sensory play, dramatic play, music and movement, arts and crafts, storytelling, gardening, nature exploration, outdoor games, role-playing, science exploration, and collaborative classroom projects. Through these experiences, learners develop fine motor coordination by cutting, drawing, painting, molding clay, threading beads, and manipulating educational materials. Gross motor development is likewise strengthened through running, jumping, balancing, dancing, climbing, throwing, and coordinated movement activities. Simultaneously, children acquire essential social competencies such as sharing, cooperation, empathy, communication, conflict resolution, leadership, and teamwork while interacting with peers during collaborative learning experiences.

Research in early childhood education consistently demonstrates that experiential learning significantly improves children's motivation, engagement, curiosity, creativity, problem-solving abilities, language development, and self-regulation. Children actively construct knowledge by interacting with materials, asking questions, testing ideas, and reflecting upon their experiences. Such active participation promotes deeper conceptual understanding compared to passive instructional approaches that rely primarily on memorization or teacher-centered instruction. Moreover, experiential learning accommodates diverse developmental abilities because activities can be differentiated according to learners' individual interests, readiness levels, and learning styles.

Social development represents one of the primary goals of Kindergarten education because children's ability to establish positive relationships significantly influences future academic success and personal well-being. Through collaborative play and group activities, children learn to communicate effectively, respect individual differences, cooperate toward shared goals, express emotions appropriately, and resolve interpersonal conflicts peacefully. These competencies become increasingly important as learners transition into formal elementary education where successful classroom participation depends largely upon positive social interaction.

Likewise, motor development remains fundamental during early childhood because physical competence supports children's overall growth, independence, confidence, and readiness for academic learning. Fine motor skills enable children to perform classroom tasks such as writing, drawing, cutting, manipulating objects, and using learning materials effectively. Gross motor development strengthens balance, coordination, agility, body awareness, and physical fitness, thereby contributing to healthy growth and active participation in school activities. Experiential learning provides abundant opportunities for developing these essential competencies through purposeful movement and hands-on engagement.

Despite the recognized educational value of experiential learning, Kindergarten teachers continue to encounter numerous challenges during classroom implementation. Limited instructional resources, inadequate learning materials, overcrowded classrooms, varying learner developmental readiness, insufficient classroom space, time constraints, and increasing administrative responsibilities often influence teachers' ability to provide consistent hands-on learning experiences. Rural public schools may experience additional challenges associated with limited financial resources, restricted access to instructional materials, and geographical constraints that require teachers to exercise considerable creativity and professional adaptability.

Teachers therefore assume multiple instructional roles extending beyond traditional classroom teaching. They become facilitators of learning, curriculum developers, instructional designers, classroom managers, caregivers, counselors, observers, and advocates for children's holistic development. They continuously modify instructional

activities, improvise learning materials, collaborate with parents, and contextualize learning experiences according to children's developmental needs and available community resources. Their professional experiences provide valuable insights into the realities of implementing experiential learning within authentic educational settings.

Experiential learning has become one of the most influential pedagogical approaches in early childhood education because it recognizes that young children learn best through active participation, exploration, discovery, and meaningful interaction with their environment. Unlike traditional teacher-centered approaches that emphasize passive reception of information, experiential learning encourages learners to construct knowledge through direct experiences that engage their cognitive, physical, emotional, and social capacities. Kolb (2015) describes experiential learning as a continuous process in which learners acquire knowledge through concrete experiences, reflective observation, conceptual understanding, and active experimentation. This cyclical learning process enables children to connect classroom experiences with real-life situations, resulting in deeper understanding and long-term retention of knowledge.

In Kindergarten education, experiential learning is closely associated with developmentally appropriate practice because young learners naturally acquire knowledge through play, movement, manipulation of objects, exploration, and social interaction. Hands-on learning experiences encourage children to investigate their surroundings, ask questions, solve problems, communicate ideas, and discover relationships among objects and events. These experiences support the natural curiosity of young learners while promoting independence, creativity, and confidence. Educational researchers consistently emphasize that meaningful learning during early childhood occurs when children actively participate in authentic experiences rather than merely listening to teacher explanations or memorizing information.

Within the Philippine Kindergarten Curriculum, experiential learning serves as one of the fundamental instructional approaches for promoting holistic child development. The Department of Education advocates learner-centered, play-based, and contextualized instruction that enables children to learn through meaningful experiences within their immediate environment. Teachers are encouraged to provide opportunities for exploration, experimentation, storytelling, music, movement, creative arts, outdoor learning, collaborative play, and sensory activities that support children's overall growth and development.

Research further demonstrates that experiential learning contributes significantly to children's motivation, classroom engagement, language acquisition, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Children who actively manipulate learning materials and participate in authentic learning experiences demonstrate greater curiosity, confidence, and willingness to participate in classroom activities. These findings suggest that

experiential learning provides an effective foundation for lifelong learning by fostering children's intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes toward education.

Although numerous studies have investigated experiential learning, play-based instruction, and early childhood education, relatively few qualitative studies have explored the lived experiences of Kindergarten teachers in fostering social and motor development through hands-on activities in Philippine public elementary schools. Existing research has largely emphasized learner achievement, curriculum implementation, or developmental assessment using quantitative approaches. Comparatively limited attention has been devoted to understanding teachers' instructional decision-making, classroom adaptations, pedagogical beliefs, and lived experiences regarding experiential learning implementation, particularly in rural educational contexts.

This research addresses this gap by examining the experiences of Kindergarten teachers in Divisoria Norte Elementary School, Maddela I District, Schools Division of Quirino. Understanding how teachers implement experiential learning despite contextual challenges contributes valuable evidence for strengthening Kindergarten instruction, improving teacher professional development, enhancing curriculum implementation, and informing educational policies that support developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood education.

Ultimately, experiential learning through hands-on activities extends beyond preparing children for formal schooling. It nurtures confident, curious, socially competent, physically capable, and emotionally resilient learners who are equipped with the foundational competencies necessary for lifelong learning. By exploring teachers' lived experiences, this study contributes to advancing high-quality Kindergarten education that recognizes children as active participants in constructing knowledge through meaningful experiences, collaborative interaction, purposeful play, and authentic engagement with the world around them.

Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily anchored on David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984; 2015), which posits that learning is a continuous process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. According to Kolb, effective learning occurs through four interconnected stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In Kindergarten education, hands-on activities provide concrete experiences that enable children to explore, manipulate, observe, and interact with their environment before constructing conceptual understanding. Reflection and repeated practice further strengthen children's learning and developmental growth.

The study is likewise grounded in Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, particularly the Preoperational Stage, which explains that children between two and seven years of age learn primarily through concrete experiences, symbolic play, imagination, and active exploration. Piaget emphasized that young learners construct knowledge through direct interaction with objects and their environment rather than through passive instruction. Hands-on activities therefore align closely with children's developmental characteristics and natural learning processes.

Furthermore, the study adopts **Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory**, which emphasizes that learning occurs through meaningful social interaction and collaborative experiences within children's Zone of Proximal Development. Teachers serve as facilitators who provide appropriate scaffolding while encouraging peer collaboration, dialogue, cooperative play, and guided participation. Through experiential learning, children acquire new knowledge while interacting with teachers, classmates, and their environment.

Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive explanation of how experiential learning through hands-on activities fosters the social and motor development of Kindergarten learners while supporting holistic child development.

Conceptual Framework

The study assumes that teachers' experiences in implementing experiential learning are influenced by multiple interacting factors, including teacher competence, instructional creativity, classroom environment, availability of learning materials, administrative support, learner developmental readiness, parental involvement, and school context. These factors shape teachers' instructional practices, classroom experiences, implementation challenges, adaptive strategies, and perceived effectiveness of hands-on learning activities.

The implementation of experiential learning through hands-on activities is expected to contribute to improved social competence, fine and gross motor development, communication skills, creativity, confidence, collaboration, classroom engagement, and holistic learner development. Teachers' adaptive practices, reflective teaching, and contextualized instructional strategies function as mediating factors that facilitate successful implementation despite contextual limitations.

Research Gap

Although extensive research has examined experiential learning, play-based instruction, and early childhood education, there remains limited qualitative evidence exploring the lived experiences of Kindergarten teachers in implementing experiential learning through hands-on activities within Philippine public elementary schools. Existing investigations primarily focus on learner achievement, developmental assessment, or curriculum implementation using quantitative approaches. Comparatively few studies have examined teachers'

instructional decision-making, pedagogical adaptations, classroom realities, and professional reflections concerning experiential learning implementation.

Furthermore, limited empirical evidence exists regarding experiential learning practices within rural public elementary schools in the Schools Division of Quirino. The instructional experiences of Kindergarten teachers in Divisoria Norte Elementary School remain largely undocumented despite increasing emphasis on developmentally appropriate and learner-centered education under the MATATAG Agenda. This study therefore addresses this research gap by providing an in-depth qualitative exploration of teachers' experiences in fostering social and motor development through experiential learning, thereby contributing evidence for strengthening early childhood curriculum implementation, teacher professional development, and educational policy.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the lived experiences of Kindergarten teachers in implementing experiential learning through hands-on activities in fostering the social and motor development of learners in Divisoria Norte Elementary School, Maddela I District, Schools Division of Quirino.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do Kindergarten teachers implement experiential learning through hands-on activities?
2. What instructional practices do teachers employ in fostering learners' social and motor development?
3. What benefits do teachers perceive from implementing experiential learning?
4. What challenges do teachers encounter during the implementation of hands-on learning activities?
5. What adaptive strategies do teachers employ to address these challenges?
6. What recommendations do teachers propose to strengthen experiential learning in Kindergarten education?

2. Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of Kindergarten teachers in implementing experiential learning through hands-on activities to foster the social and motor development of learners in Divisoria Norte Elementary School, Maddela I District, Schools Division of Quirino. A phenomenological approach was deemed appropriate because it seeks to understand how individuals perceive and make meaning of their lived

experiences regarding a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rather than examining variables through numerical data, this study focused on capturing teachers' instructional practices, perceptions, classroom experiences, challenges, adaptive strategies, and reflections regarding experiential learning. Through in-depth interviews, the study generated rich descriptions that provided a deeper understanding of how teachers implement developmentally appropriate practices in Kindergarten education.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Divisoria Norte Elementary School, Maddela I District, Schools Division of Quirino. The school is one of the public elementary schools implementing the Department of Education's Kindergarten Curriculum and the MATATAG Agenda, which emphasize learner-centered, play-based, contextualized, and experiential learning approaches (DepEd, 2023). The school serves Kindergarten learners from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and continuously promotes developmentally appropriate instructional practices to support children's holistic development. The research locale was selected because it provides a suitable context for examining teachers' experiences in implementing experiential learning through hands-on activities.

Participants of the Study

The participants consisted of twelve (12) Kindergarten teachers currently teaching in public elementary schools within Maddela I District, with Divisoria Norte Elementary School serving as the primary research site. Participants were selected using purposive sampling because they possessed direct experience in implementing experiential learning in Kindergarten classrooms (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The inclusion criteria required participants to: (1) be currently teaching Kindergarten; (2) have at least two years of teaching experience; (3) regularly implement hands-on learning activities; and (4) voluntarily participate in the study. The participants represented varying teaching experiences and professional backgrounds, enabling the researcher to obtain diverse perspectives regarding experiential learning implementation.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide validated by three experts in Early Childhood Education, Curriculum and Instruction, and Qualitative Research. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that explored teachers' experiences in implementing experiential learning, instructional strategies, classroom practices, learner engagement, social and motor development, implementation challenges, adaptive strategies, and recommendations for strengthening experiential learning in Kindergarten education. Follow-up probing questions were utilized to encourage participants to elaborate on significant experiences and provide richer descriptions of their classroom practices (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured approval from the Schools Division Superintendent, the District Supervisor, and the School Principal of Divisoria Norte Elementary School. After obtaining permission, the researcher coordinated with the participating teachers to explain the objectives, procedures, and ethical considerations of the study.

Each participant signed an informed consent form indicating voluntary participation and acknowledging their rights as research participants. Individual face-to-face interviews lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes were conducted in a quiet and comfortable environment within the school. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation of their responses. Field notes were likewise maintained to record participants' non-verbal expressions, classroom contexts, and significant observations. Following data collection, the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed carefully to ensure accuracy before analysis.

Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six-Phase Thematic Analysis, which involved: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts; (2) generation of initial codes; (3) searching for recurring themes; (4) reviewing and refining themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) writing the narrative report. The researcher repeatedly compared participants' responses to identify common patterns, similarities, and variations regarding experiential learning practices. Representative verbatim quotations were incorporated to support the identified themes, while relevant literature and theoretical perspectives were used to strengthen interpretation and discussion.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The rigor of the study was established using the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement with participants, member checking, and repeated verification of interview transcripts and thematic interpretations. Transferability was strengthened by providing rich descriptions of the research setting, participants, and instructional context. Dependability was ensured through the maintenance of an audit trail documenting every stage of the research process, including data collection, coding procedures, and theme development. Confirmability was established through researcher reflexivity, peer debriefing, and reflective journaling to minimize researcher bias and ensure that the findings accurately represented the participants' lived experiences.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the ethical principles governing educational research. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the purpose, procedures, benefits, and possible risks of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by assigning pseudonyms to all participants and removing identifying information from the interview transcripts and final report. Audio recordings, transcripts, and research documents were securely stored and used exclusively for academic purposes. Throughout the conduct of the study, the researcher observed the principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, respect for persons, confidentiality, and data privacy, ensuring that the dignity, rights, and welfare of all participants were protected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3. Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the interview transcripts generated six major themes that describe the lived experiences of Kindergarten teachers in implementing experiential learning through hands-on activities in fostering the social and motor development of learners. The findings reveal that experiential learning is not merely an instructional strategy but a child-centered pedagogical approach that promotes holistic development through meaningful participation, active exploration, play, and authentic learning experiences. Teachers emphasized that hands-on activities allow children to develop confidence, communication skills, cooperation, creativity, and motor coordination while making learning enjoyable and developmentally appropriate.

Theme 1. Experiential Learning Provides Meaningful Opportunities for Holistic Social and Motor Development

The most dominant theme that emerged from the interviews was teachers' recognition that experiential learning serves as an effective approach for promoting the holistic development of Kindergarten learners. Participants consistently described hands-on activities as powerful learning experiences that simultaneously develop children's social competence, fine and gross motor skills, communication abilities, emotional confidence, creativity, and independence. Rather than limiting instruction to academic readiness, teachers emphasized that experiential learning nurtures the whole child through purposeful play, exploration, and collaborative activities.

Participant 3 shared:

"Children learn better when they touch, explore, and experience things themselves. They become more active, confident, and willing to interact with their classmates."

The participant explained that children become highly engaged when learning involves manipulation of concrete materials, movement activities, and collaborative play. Through block building, puzzles, clay modeling, storytelling, role-playing, and outdoor games, learners naturally communicate with peers while simultaneously strengthening hand coordination, balance, and body control.

Similarly, Participant 8 stated:

"Hands-on activities help children develop not only academically but also socially and physically. Every activity contributes to their confidence and independence."

Teachers observed that experiential learning provides children with opportunities to solve problems, make decisions, communicate ideas, cooperate with classmates, and complete meaningful tasks independently. As learners repeatedly engage in these activities, they gradually become more self-confident and socially responsible.

Participant 10 further explained:

"Our learners become more responsible because they learn by doing. They clean up their materials, help classmates, and participate willingly in classroom activities."

Participants likewise emphasized that hands-on learning allows children to appreciate the value of teamwork, sharing, empathy, patience, and respect. Activities involving group games, collaborative

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art projects, dramatic play, and classroom routines encourage children to negotiate, communicate, and resolve simple conflicts while developing positive interpersonal relationships.

These findings support Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (2015), which explains that meaningful learning occurs through concrete experiences followed by reflection and active application. Likewise, Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory (1972) emphasizes that children construct knowledge through direct interaction with their environment. The findings also align with Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978), which explains that social interaction and collaborative learning significantly contribute to children's cognitive and social development.

Furthermore, previous studies have demonstrated that experiential learning enhances children's confidence, classroom participation, creativity, communication skills, and developmental readiness because learning occurs through meaningful engagement rather than passive instruction (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2020). The findings therefore affirm that hands-on activities provide an effective foundation for holistic child development.

Theme 2. Hands-On Activities Strengthen Children's Social Interaction and Collaborative Learning

The second major theme revealed that experiential learning significantly strengthens children's social competence by encouraging active interaction, cooperation, communication, and relationship building. Participants consistently observed that children become more socially engaged when instructional activities require collaboration and shared participation.

Participant 6 explained:

"Children learn how to cooperate because most of our activities require teamwork. They learn to wait for their turn, share materials, and help one another."

Teachers reported that collaborative classroom activities such as group storytelling, dramatic play, music and movement, cooperative games, art projects, and learning centers naturally encourage children to communicate with classmates and participate actively in group tasks.

Participant 1 shared:

"At first some learners are shy, but after participating in group activities they gradually become confident in talking and playing with others."

Participants explained that repeated participation in collaborative experiences helps children overcome social anxiety while strengthening communication skills. Learners become more comfortable expressing opinions, asking questions, following classroom rules, and interacting respectfully with peers.

Participant 11 remarked:

"Children become more caring because they learn to help classmates who are having difficulty with activities."

Teachers further observed improvements in children's emotional regulation. Learners gradually developed patience, empathy, responsibility, and respect while participating in classroom routines requiring cooperation and shared decision-making.

Several participants explained that dramatic play and role-playing activities were particularly effective in developing children's interpersonal skills because learners assumed different social roles while practicing communication and emotional expression.

Participant 4 stated:

"Pretend play teaches children how to communicate politely, solve problems, and understand other people's feelings."

These findings reinforce Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978), which argues that learning develops through meaningful social interaction and collaborative experiences. Classroom activities that encourage peer interaction create opportunities for children to acquire both academic knowledge and social competence.

The findings also support previous research indicating that play-based experiential learning significantly improves children's communication skills, emotional intelligence, cooperation, and classroom participation (UNESCO, 2021). Consequently, experiential learning contributes substantially to children's social readiness for formal schooling.

Theme 3. Experiential Learning Enhances Fine and Gross Motor Development Through Purposeful Movement

The third theme highlights teachers' experiences regarding the significant contribution of experiential learning to children's motor development. Participants unanimously agreed that hands-on activities provide continuous opportunities for learners to strengthen both fine motor and gross motor skills through purposeful movement and manipulation of learning materials.

Participant 5 shared:

"Activities like cutting, coloring, threading beads, drawing, and molding clay greatly improve children's hand coordination."

Teachers explained that fine motor activities strengthen children's finger dexterity, hand-eye coordination, pencil control, and precision, which are essential for writing readiness and other classroom tasks.

Participant 9 explained:

"Many learners initially struggle to hold scissors or pencils, but regular hands-on practice improves their control."

Participants likewise emphasized the importance of outdoor activities, music and movement, obstacle courses, dancing, balancing, hopping, running, and jumping in strengthening gross motor development.

Participant 12 remarked:

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"Movement activities improve children's balance, coordination, and confidence. They become physically active while enjoying the lesson."

Teachers observed that learners who regularly participated in physical activities became more energetic, coordinated, and willing to participate in classroom routines requiring movement.

Participant 7 added:

"Children enjoy learning because movement is natural for them. They do not realize they are already developing important physical skills."

Several participants also noted that experiential learning improved children's concentration because physical activities reduced restlessness while increasing classroom engagement.

The findings indicate that purposeful movement constitutes an essential component of Kindergarten instruction rather than merely recreational activities. Through experiential learning, physical development becomes naturally integrated into everyday classroom experiences.

These findings support Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, which emphasizes that young children learn most effectively through direct manipulation of objects and physical interaction with their environment (Piaget, 1972). Likewise, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (2015) explains that active participation strengthens understanding because learners acquire knowledge through concrete experiences.

Research in early childhood education similarly reports that regular participation in manipulative activities and movement-based learning significantly enhances children's fine motor coordination, gross motor competence, physical confidence, and school readiness (Gallahue et al., 2019; WHO, 2020).

Overall, the first three themes demonstrate that experiential learning through hands-on activities serves as an effective pedagogical approach for promoting holistic Kindergarten education. Teachers consistently viewed experiential learning as an essential strategy that simultaneously strengthens children's social competence, communication skills, collaboration, creativity, confidence, and motor development while creating joyful and meaningful learning experiences aligned with developmentally appropriate practice.

Theme 4. Teachers' Creativity and Resourcefulness Sustain Experiential Learning Despite Limited Resources

Another major theme that emerged from the participants' narratives was teachers' creativity and resourcefulness in implementing experiential learning despite limited instructional resources. The participants unanimously expressed that although adequate instructional materials are essential for effective Kindergarten instruction, resource limitations did not prevent them from providing meaningful hands-on learning experiences. Instead, they continuously improvised learning materials, utilized locally available resources, and designed contextualized activities that were appropriate for the learners' developmental needs.

Participant 4 shared:

"We do not always have complete learning materials, so we become creative. We use recycled materials, bottle caps, cardboard, leaves, stones, sticks, and other locally available resources."

This response illustrates that teachers view resource limitations as opportunities for creativity rather than barriers to instruction. By utilizing indigenous and recyclable materials, teachers transformed ordinary objects into meaningful instructional resources that supported children's learning experiences while minimizing classroom expenses.

Participant 11 likewise explained:

"Children enjoy activities more when they use materials they can see in their own environment. It also teaches them to appreciate and take care of nature."

Teachers described numerous examples of contextualized instructional materials developed from community resources, including seed sorting, leaf printing, shell counting, pebble classification, clay molding, recycled bottle bowling, and cardboard puzzles. These activities simultaneously promoted environmental awareness, creativity, and experiential learning while strengthening fine and gross motor development.

Participant 8 added:

"Sometimes simple materials become more meaningful than expensive commercial toys because children can easily relate to them."

The participants also emphasized that creativity extended beyond instructional materials. Teachers continuously modified classroom activities according to available space, weather conditions, learner interests, and individual developmental readiness. When outdoor activities were not possible due to unfavorable weather, movement games were adapted inside the classroom without compromising learning objectives.

Participant 2 remarked:

"Every day is different. We always adjust our activities depending on the learners' needs and the classroom situation."

Teachers further explained that instructional innovation often involved integrating storytelling, music, movement, drawing, singing, games, and role-playing into a single experiential activity. Such interdisciplinary learning experiences promoted multiple developmental domains simultaneously while maintaining learners' enthusiasm and attention throughout the lesson.

Several participants likewise emphasized the importance of technology in enriching experiential learning. When available, teachers utilized educational videos, digital

storytelling, interactive songs, and visual presentations to complement hands-on classroom experiences. However, they stressed that technology served only as a supplementary tool and could never replace children's direct manipulation of learning materials.

Participant 6 shared:

"Technology supports learning, but children still learn best when they touch, explore, and manipulate real objects."

These findings demonstrate teachers' remarkable instructional adaptability and professional commitment despite contextual challenges. Their experiences reflect the characteristics of reflective practitioners who continuously evaluate classroom situations, modify instructional approaches, and maximize available resources to improve learner outcomes.

The findings support Schön's Reflective Practice Theory, which explains that effective teachers continuously reflect on instructional experiences and adapt their practices according to learners' needs (Schön, 1983). Likewise, the findings align with studies emphasizing that teacher creativity significantly influences the quality of experiential learning, particularly in resource-constrained educational settings (UNESCO, 2021).

Theme 5. Classroom Challenges Influence the Implementation of Experiential Learning

Although teachers strongly supported experiential learning, they consistently acknowledged numerous classroom challenges that affected the implementation of hands-on instructional activities. The participants identified inadequate instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, limited classroom space, insufficient instructional time, varying learner developmental readiness, and increasing administrative responsibilities as major concerns.

Participant 1 explained:

"Sometimes we want to prepare more hands-on activities, but our classroom space is too limited for movement."

Participant 9 stated:

"Large class sizes make it difficult to supervise all children during manipulative and movement activities."

Teachers explained that experiential learning requires careful classroom supervision because Kindergarten learners are naturally curious and highly active. During art projects, outdoor games, science exploration, and manipulative activities, teachers needed to ensure learner safety while simultaneously facilitating meaningful learning experiences.

Participant 5 shared:

"Every activity requires close supervision because children have different developmental levels."

The participants also reported that individual differences among learners required continuous instructional differentiation. Some children completed activities independently, while others required repeated demonstrations, additional guidance, and individualized assistance.

Participant 12 remarked:

"Some learners immediately understand the activity, while others need more time and encouragement."

Teachers further identified limited instructional materials as a recurring concern. Although they consistently improvised resources, participants acknowledged that additional educational toys, manipulative materials, sensory learning resources, and outdoor play equipment would further strengthen experiential learning.

Another challenge involved balancing curriculum expectations with available instructional time. Participants explained that meaningful experiential activities often require preparation, implementation, reflection, and classroom cleanup, reducing the amount of time available for additional learning tasks.

Participant 3 explained:

"Hands-on learning takes more time than traditional teaching, but the learning is deeper and more meaningful."

Despite these challenges, teachers consistently emphasized that experiential learning remained worth the additional effort because of its positive impact on children's overall development.

These findings support previous studies indicating that successful implementation of experiential learning depends not only on teacher competence but also on adequate instructional resources, supportive learning environments, manageable class sizes, and institutional support (OECD, 2023). They further suggest that improving classroom conditions would significantly enhance the quality of experiential learning in Kindergarten education.

Discussion

The findings collectively demonstrate that experiential learning through hands-on activities is an effective pedagogical approach for fostering the holistic development of Kindergarten learners. Teachers consistently perceived experiential learning as a powerful instructional strategy that strengthens children's social competence, communication skills, fine and gross

motor development, creativity, confidence, independence, and readiness for formal schooling.

Despite challenges related to instructional resources, classroom space, learner diversity, and time constraints, teachers exhibited exceptional creativity, resilience, and commitment by developing contextualized learning materials, utilizing locally available resources, differentiating instruction, and collaborating with parents and community stakeholders. Their experiences illustrate that meaningful Kindergarten education depends not solely on material resources but also on teachers' professional expertise, reflective practice, and dedication to developmentally appropriate instruction.

Hence, the findings affirm that experiential learning remains central to achieving the goals of early childhood education by providing authentic opportunities for young learners to explore, interact, create, move, collaborate, and develop the foundational competencies necessary for lifelong learning.

4. Conclusion

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of Kindergarten teachers in implementing experiential learning through hands-on activities to foster the social and motor development of learners in Divisoria Norte Elementary School, Maddela I District, Schools Division of Quirino. The findings revealed that experiential learning is a highly effective pedagogical approach that promotes the holistic development of young learners by integrating meaningful, play-based, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Through active participation in hands-on activities, children developed not only fine and gross motor skills but also communication abilities, social competence, creativity, confidence, independence, and positive learning behaviors.

The study further revealed that teachers perceive experiential learning as an essential instructional strategy that transforms young learners from passive recipients of knowledge into active participants in the learning process. Through manipulative activities, collaborative play, storytelling, music and movement, arts and crafts, outdoor exploration, and role-playing, learners acquired foundational competencies that support both academic readiness and lifelong learning. The findings also demonstrated that experiential learning strengthens children's ability to cooperate with peers, solve simple problems, regulate emotions, communicate effectively, and appreciate meaningful learning experiences.

Despite the positive outcomes of experiential learning, teachers encountered several implementation challenges, including inadequate instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, limited classroom space, insufficient instructional time, and varying developmental readiness among learners. These challenges required teachers to demonstrate creativity, adaptability, and professional resilience by improvising

instructional materials, utilizing locally available resources, modifying classroom activities, and establishing collaborative partnerships with parents and community stakeholders.

Overall, the study concludes that experiential learning through hands-on activities remains indispensable in Kindergarten education because it nurtures children's cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and motor development simultaneously. The effectiveness of experiential learning, however, depends not only on teachers' instructional competence but also on sustained institutional support, adequate learning resources, continuous professional development, and strong collaboration among schools, families, and communities.

5. Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have significant implications for educational practice, curriculum development, educational leadership, and teacher preparation.

For **Kindergarten teachers**, the findings reinforce the importance of utilizing experiential learning as a primary instructional approach that promotes holistic child development. Teachers should continue designing developmentally appropriate, learner-centered, and play-based activities that encourage exploration, creativity, collaboration, and meaningful participation. Reflective teaching and continuous instructional innovation should remain integral components of classroom practice to address the diverse developmental needs of young learners.

For **school administrators**, the findings emphasize the need to strengthen institutional support for experiential learning by providing adequate instructional materials, manipulative resources, learning centers, outdoor play facilities, and classroom environments conducive to active learning. School leaders should also prioritize continuous professional development programs that enhance teachers' competencies in experiential learning, classroom management, differentiated instruction, and developmentally appropriate practices.

For the **Department of Education**, the study highlights the importance of strengthening policy implementation concerning play-based and experiential learning within the Kindergarten Curriculum and the MATATAG Agenda. Additional funding should be allocated to improve classroom facilities, provide quality instructional resources, and support the development of contextualized learning materials suited to rural public elementary schools. Likewise, sustained technical assistance and instructional supervision should be provided to ensure effective implementation of experiential learning across schools.

For **teacher education institutions**, the findings underscore the importance of strengthening pre-service and in-service teacher education programs by emphasizing experiential learning theories, early childhood pedagogy, child development, play-based instruction, classroom assessment, and differentiated teaching strategies. Future

Kindergarten teachers should be adequately prepared to facilitate meaningful learning experiences that support children's holistic growth.

For **parents and community stakeholders**, the study demonstrates that experiential learning extends beyond the classroom. Active parental involvement through home-based activities, storytelling, environmental exploration, creative projects, and collaborative learning experiences significantly reinforces children's social and motor development. Schools should therefore strengthen home-school partnerships by encouraging parents to actively participate in their children's learning experiences.

Finally, the findings contribute to the growing body of literature on early childhood education in the Philippines by providing empirical evidence regarding teachers' lived experiences in implementing experiential learning. The study offers valuable insights for policymakers, educational leaders, curriculum developers, and researchers seeking to strengthen developmentally appropriate practices within Kindergarten education.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Experiential Learning Implementation.** Kindergarten teachers should continue integrating hands-on, play-based, and inquiry-oriented learning experiences into daily classroom instruction to enhance children's social, motor, cognitive, and emotional development.
2. **Provide Adequate Instructional Resources.** School administrators and the Department of Education should allocate sufficient funds for manipulative learning materials, educational toys, sensory equipment, outdoor play facilities, arts and crafts supplies, and developmentally appropriate instructional resources to improve experiential learning implementation.
3. **Enhance Professional Development Programs.** Continuous training, workshops, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, mentoring programs, and professional learning communities should be conducted to strengthen teachers' competencies in experiential learning, classroom management, child development, differentiated instruction, and innovative Kindergarten pedagogy.
4. **Strengthen Home-School Partnerships.** Schools should establish stronger collaboration with parents by encouraging participation in experiential learning activities, home-based projects, storytelling sessions, environmental exploration, and parent education programs that support children's holistic development.

5. **Develop Contextualized Learning Materials.** Teachers should continue creating localized, culturally relevant, and environmentally sustainable instructional materials using indigenous and recyclable resources to make learning meaningful and responsive to children's immediate environment.
6. **Improve Learning Environments.** Schools should enhance Kindergarten classrooms by providing safe, child-friendly, spacious, and stimulating environments that encourage exploration, movement, creativity, collaboration, and active participation.
7. **Support Inclusive and Developmentally Appropriate Practices.** Teachers should continue differentiating instructional activities to accommodate children's varying developmental abilities, interests, learning styles, and individual needs, ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all Kindergarten learners.
8. **Conduct Further Research.** Future researchers are encouraged to undertake similar qualitative studies in other educational contexts to validate and expand the findings of this investigation. Mixed-methods and longitudinal studies may likewise be conducted to examine the long-term effects of experiential learning on children's cognitive, language, emotional, academic, and socio-motor development. Comparative studies involving urban and rural schools may also provide broader insights into the implementation of experiential learning within diverse educational settings.

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