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## Enhancing Upper Elementary Learning Outcomes through Classroom-Based Instructional Strategies: Evidence from Grade 6 Public School Teaching

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**Abstract**

Improving learning outcomes at the upper elementary level is critical for ensuring learners' successful transition to secondary education. In public schools, particularly in resource-constrained contexts, classroom-based instructional strategies play a central role in shaping learners' academic performance and readiness. This study examined how classroom-based instructional strategies influence learning outcomes among Grade 6 learners at San Juan Elementary School, a public elementary school in the Philippines. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured teacher interviews, and document analysis of lesson plans and learner outputs. Thematic analysis revealed four major themes: (1) structured instruction as a foundation for learning consistency, (2) adaptive instructional strategies to address learner diversity, (3) formative assessment and feedback as drivers of learning improvement, and (4) teacher commitment and classroom climate as enablers of learner engagement. Findings indicate that purposeful, classroom-based instructional strategies positively influence learners' cognitive understanding, engagement, and readiness for more advanced academic tasks despite contextual limitations. The study highlights the importance of strengthening classroom-level instructional practices as a practical and context-responsive approach to improving upper elementary learning outcomes in public schools.

**Keywords:** classroom-based instruction, learning outcomes, Grade 6, elementary education, Philippines



## 1. Introduction

Upper elementary education occupies a critical transition point in the basic education continuum, as it bridges the highly scaffolded learning environment of the primary grades and the more autonomous, subject-specialized demands of secondary schooling. At this stage, learners experience a marked shift in academic expectations: tasks become more cognitively complex, learning activities require sustained attention and self-regulation, and assessments increasingly emphasize analysis, application, and synthesis rather than simple recall. Grade 6 learners, in particular, are expected to consolidate foundational competencies in literacy, numeracy, and content areas while simultaneously developing higher-order thinking skills, independent study habits, and a sense of academic self-efficacy. Research indicates that learners' experiences during this transition significantly shape their academic trajectories, influencing not only their readiness for secondary education but also their long-term engagement, persistence, and performance in school.

Given these heightened expectations, instructional practices at the upper elementary level play a decisive role in supporting or constraining learner success. Teachers are tasked with balancing curriculum coverage with meaningful learning, ensuring that instruction remains developmentally appropriate while gradually fostering learner autonomy. Effective instructional strategies at this level are therefore not limited to content delivery; they encompass classroom organization, scaffolding techniques, formative assessment, feedback practices, and the cultivation of a supportive learning climate. When instruction is coherent, responsive, and learner-centered, students are more likely to demonstrate deeper understanding, sustained engagement, and confidence in their academic abilities—factors that are essential for a successful transition to secondary schooling.

In the Philippine public elementary school context, these instructional demands are further shaped by structural and contextual realities. Teachers commonly work in classrooms characterized by large class sizes, heterogeneous learner abilities, multilingual backgrounds, and limited access to instructional materials and technological resources. Socioeconomic disparities among learners also influence readiness levels, learning support at home, and classroom participation. Despite these constraints, classroom-based instructional strategies remain the most immediate, flexible, and powerful means through which teachers can respond to learner needs. Unlike structural reforms that require systemic changes, instructional practices can be adapted daily within the classroom, allowing teachers to mitigate resource limitations through effective planning, differentiation, and intentional interaction with learners.

Existing research consistently underscores the centrality of instructional quality in shaping learner achievement, particularly in the elementary years when teacher-learner relationships are most frequent and formative. Studies have shown that clear instructional goals, structured lesson delivery, timely feedback, and adaptive teaching strategies positively influence learner engagement and academic performance. Moreover, in contexts where material resources are limited, the quality of instruction and classroom interactions often compensates for these limitations, making teacher decision-making and responsiveness critical determinants of learning outcomes. This highlights the importance of examining not only what is taught but how teaching unfolds in everyday classroom practice.

However, while a substantial body of literature has explored instructional strategies and learner achievement, much of this research has focused on early elementary grades, secondary education, or large-scale quantitative analyses. There remains a relative scarcity of studies that examine upper elementary classrooms particularly Grade 6 in public school settings through in-depth qualitative inquiry. Such studies are essential for capturing the nuances of classroom dynamics, teacher reasoning, and contextual adaptations that are often obscured in large datasets. Understanding how teachers



enact instructional strategies in real classroom conditions provides richer insights into the mechanisms through which instruction influences learning.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines classroom-based instructional strategies and their influence on learning outcomes among Grade 6 learners at San Juan Elementary School. By grounding the analysis in actual classroom practices and teacher experiences, the study offers context-specific evidence on how instructional strategies operate within the realities of Philippine public elementary education. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of effective teaching at the upper elementary level and provide empirically grounded insights that may inform instructional improvement, professional development, and policy initiatives aimed at strengthening learner readiness for secondary schooling.

## **2. Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1 Classroom-Based Instructional Strategies**

Classroom-based instructional strategies refer to the pedagogical approaches, techniques, and practices employed by teachers during instruction to facilitate learning (Borich, 2017; Killen, 2016). Research consistently identifies structured instruction, clear explanations, scaffolding, and opportunities for guided practice as effective strategies in elementary classrooms (Rosenshine, 2012; Hattie, 2008). Such practices help learners build conceptual understanding and develop academic skills progressively by reducing cognitive load and supporting gradual mastery of content (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011; Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006).

However, studies also emphasize that effective instructional strategies must be responsive to learners' needs and classroom contexts (Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson et al., 2008). In public schools with limited resources, teachers often adapt instructional strategies by modifying lesson pacing, using local and familiar examples, and providing additional explanations to support learner comprehension (Darling-Hammond, 2010; UNESCO, 2017). These adaptive strategies have been shown to sustain learner engagement and promote learning despite structural constraints (Mulkeen, 2010; Hattie, 2008).

### **2.2 Learning Outcomes in Upper Elementary Education**

Learning outcomes at the upper elementary level encompass cognitive achievement, learner engagement, and readiness for independent learning (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Research indicates that instructional practices during the later elementary years significantly shape learners' academic confidence, problem-solving abilities, and learning behaviors (Zimmerman, 2002; Wentzel, 2010). Learners exposed to consistent instruction and formative feedback tend to demonstrate stronger academic outcomes and smoother transitions to secondary education (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; OECD, 2013).

### **2.3 Instructional Challenges in Public Elementary Schools**

Public elementary schools, particularly in developing contexts, face persistent instructional challenges related to resource limitations, curriculum demands, and learner diversity (UNESCO, 2015; World Bank, 2018). Despite these challenges, evidence suggests that teacher commitment, instructional clarity, and positive classroom climate can mitigate learning gaps and support improved learner outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hamre et al., 2013). These findings underscore the



importance of examining classroom-based strategies as practical levers for learning improvement, especially in contexts where systemic resources are constrained (OECD, 2013; Pianta, 2016).

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful interactions with instructional content, teachers, and peers. Constructivist theory emphasizes the role of scaffolding, guided instruction, and learner engagement in facilitating deeper understanding and sustained learning. From this perspective, classroom-based instructional strategies shape learning outcomes by structuring learning experiences, supporting cognitive development, and fostering learner confidence. The framework assumes that even within constrained contexts, effective instructional practices can enhance learning outcomes when they are purposeful, adaptive, and learner-focused.

### 4. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine classroom-based instructional strategies and learning outcomes within a natural school setting. The research was conducted at San Juan Elementary School, a public elementary school in the Philippines serving learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Participants included Grade 6 teachers who were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in classroom instruction and learner assessment.

Data were collected through classroom observations focusing on instructional strategies and learner engagement, semi-structured interviews with teachers to capture instructional perspectives and experiences, and document analysis of lesson plans, assessment records, and learner outputs. Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach, involving systematic coding, categorization, and theme development through constant comparison across data sources. Ethical protocols were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

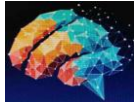
### 5. Results and Findings

Analysis of classroom observations, teacher interviews, and instructional documents yielded four major themes that explain how classroom-based instructional strategies influence learning outcomes among Grade 6 learners. These themes reflect both the pedagogical practices observed in the classroom and the contextual realities of public elementary school teaching.

#### Theme 1: Structured Instruction as a Foundation for Learning Consistency

Findings indicate that teachers consistently relied on structured instructional routines to ensure lesson clarity and continuity. Lessons typically began with clearly stated objectives, followed by step-by-step explanations, guided practice, and brief checks for understanding. Teachers emphasized that structured instruction was particularly important for learners with weak academic foundations, as it minimized confusion and helped learners follow the progression of ideas. Classroom observations showed that when instruction followed a predictable structure, learners were more attentive and better able to complete assigned tasks. One teacher explained, *"If the lesson is organized and explained step by step, the pupils can follow easily, especially those who are struggling."*

The prominence of structured instruction supports research demonstrating that explicit and well-organized teaching practices enhance learning consistency and reduce cognitive overload, especially in



elementary classrooms (Hattie, 2009; Rosenshine, 2012). Studies have shown that structured instruction provides scaffolding that supports learners' gradual acquisition of skills and promotes stable learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In this study, structured routines served as a pedagogical anchor that allowed teachers to maintain instructional coherence despite varying learner abilities.

### **Theme 2: Adaptive Instructional Strategies to Address Learner Diversity**

Beyond structured routines, teachers demonstrated instructional adaptability to respond to learner diversity. Teachers modified pacing, simplified explanations, used local and familiar examples, and provided additional clarification when learners struggled to understand abstract concepts. Observations revealed that teachers frequently adjusted lessons in real time based on learners' responses, repeating explanations or shifting strategies to ensure comprehension. A teacher shared, *"When I see that they are not understanding, I change my examples and explain again using situations they already know."*

This adaptive approach reflects the importance of differentiated and context-responsive instruction in supporting diverse learners. Research indicates that instructional flexibility enables teachers to address varying levels of readiness and promotes equitable learning opportunities (Schweisfurth, 2013). In public school settings, particularly those with limited resources, adaptive strategies allow teachers to compensate for structural constraints and sustain learner participation (Mulkeen, 2010). The findings suggest that adaptability functions as a critical instructional skill that enhances learning outcomes by aligning instruction with learners' actual needs.

### **Theme 3: Formative Assessment and Feedback as Drivers of Learning Improvement**

Formative assessment emerged as a central component of classroom instruction. Teachers regularly employed oral questioning, short written exercises, and immediate feedback to monitor learner understanding. Assessment results were used to identify learning gaps and inform instructional adjustments, such as reteaching specific concepts or providing additional practice. Importantly, feedback was delivered in a supportive and encouraging manner rather than as formal evaluation. One teacher noted, *"I correct them right away, but I explain where they went wrong so they can improve next time."*

These practices align with extensive research highlighting formative assessment as one of the most effective strategies for improving learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Timely and constructive feedback helps learners understand their mistakes, regulate their learning, and develop academic confidence (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In this study, formative assessment functioned not only as a measurement tool but as an instructional strategy that actively guided learning and promoted continuous improvement.

### **Theme 4: Teacher Commitment and Classroom Climate as Enablers of Learner Engagement**

The final theme highlights the role of teacher commitment and positive classroom climate in sustaining learner engagement. Teachers consistently demonstrated concern for learners' academic and emotional needs, providing encouragement, reassurance, and additional support beyond scheduled lessons. Classroom observations revealed respectful interactions, patience, and openness, which



fostered a safe learning environment. A teacher explained, *“When pupils feel that you care, they become more confident and are not afraid to participate.”*

This finding reinforces studies emphasizing the importance of teacher–learner relationships and classroom climate in promoting engagement and motivation (Wentzel, 2012). Research suggests that supportive and caring classroom environments enhance learners’ willingness to participate and persist in learning tasks, particularly in elementary education (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). In this study, teacher commitment acted as a compensatory factor that mitigated contextual limitations and strengthened learners’ engagement and confidence.

### Synthesis of Findings

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that learning outcomes among Grade 6 learners are shaped by a combination of structured instruction, adaptive teaching strategies, formative assessment practices, and supportive classroom relationships. While contextual constraints influenced instructional choices, teachers’ purposeful and responsive practices played a decisive role in sustaining learner engagement and promoting learning consistency. These results affirm the critical importance of classroom-based instructional strategies as practical and effective mechanisms for improving upper elementary learning outcomes in public school contexts.

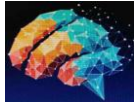
## 6. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that classroom-based instructional strategies play a vital role in enhancing learning outcomes at the upper elementary level (Rosenshine, 2012; Hattie, 2008). Structured instruction provides consistency and cognitive support for learners by clarifying learning intentions, sequencing content, and offering guided practice, which is particularly important as academic demands increase in the upper grades (Rosenshine, 2012; Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011). At the same time, adaptive instructional strategies address learner diversity and contextual constraints by allowing teachers to modify tasks, pacing, and supports based on learners’ readiness and needs (Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson et al., 2008).

These results align with existing research emphasizing the indirect yet powerful influence of instructional practices on learner achievement through engagement, feedback, and instructional clarity (Hattie, 2008; Black & Wiliam, 1998). Effective instructional practices influence achievement not only through content delivery but also by shaping how learners interact with tasks, respond to feedback, and regulate their own learning processes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The study also highlights the importance of teacher responsiveness and classroom climate in sustaining learner motivation (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012; Hamre et al., 2013). Positive teacher–student interactions characterized by emotional support, clear expectations, and instructional sensitivity have been shown to promote learner persistence, engagement, and academic growth (Pianta, 2016; Wentzel, 2010). From a motivational perspective, responsive and supportive classroom environments satisfy learners’ basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which enhances intrinsic motivation and academic performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In public school contexts, where resources may be limited, the quality of classroom interactions and instructional decision-making becomes a key determinant of learning outcomes (OECD, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Research consistently indicates that high-quality teaching practices can mitigate resource constraints by maximizing instructional time, strengthening learner engagement, and fostering supportive learning environments that enable equitable learning opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hamre et al., 2013).



## 7. Conclusion

This study examined classroom-based instructional strategies and their influence on learning outcomes among Grade 6 learners at San Juan Elementary School, providing context-specific insights into upper elementary teaching practices in a public school setting. The findings demonstrate that structured instruction, adaptive teaching strategies, and feedback-oriented instructional practices play a critical role in supporting learners' academic understanding, engagement, and readiness for more advanced learning tasks. Clearly organized lessons, responsive instructional adjustments, and consistent formative feedback enabled learners to navigate academic content more effectively and participate more actively in classroom activities.

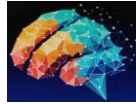
The study further highlights that effective instructional practices can meaningfully enhance learning outcomes even in the presence of contextual constraints, such as limited instructional resources and diverse learner needs. Teachers' ability to implement purposeful classroom-based strategies anchored in clarity, flexibility, and supportive feedback served as a key mechanism for mitigating these challenges. This underscores the importance of viewing classroom instruction as a powerful and immediate lever for educational improvement, particularly in public elementary schools where systemic limitations may persist.

Overall, the findings affirm that improving learning outcomes at the upper elementary level does not solely depend on large-scale structural reforms but can be significantly advanced through intentional and well-supported classroom practices. By prioritizing instructional quality, responsiveness to learner diversity, and formative assessment, teachers can foster meaningful learning experiences that prepare Grade 6 learners for the academic demands of secondary education. The study contributes to the growing body of evidence emphasizing the centrality of classroom-based instruction in strengthening educational outcomes and advancing equity in public elementary education.

## 8. Implications

The findings of this study highlight several important implications for instructional practice, professional development, and educational policy, particularly in the context of public upper elementary classrooms. First, there is a clear need for strengthened and sustained support for classroom-based instructional improvement. Given that learning outcomes were positively influenced by structured instruction, adaptive teaching strategies, and formative assessment practices, schools and education systems should invest in initiatives that directly enhance classroom-level pedagogy. This includes providing teachers with adequate instructional materials, access to learner-centered teaching resources, and structured opportunities for collaborative lesson planning and instructional reflection. Strengthening classroom-based instructional support ensures that effective teaching practices are not dependent solely on individual teacher effort but are reinforced through institutional mechanisms.

Second, the study underscores the importance of targeted professional development focused on formative assessment and learner-centered instructional strategies. Professional learning programs should prioritize practical, classroom-applicable approaches that help teachers design and implement formative assessment techniques, provide meaningful feedback, and differentiate instruction to address learner diversity. Emphasizing formative assessment in professional development can empower teachers to use assessment data to inform instruction, identify learning gaps, and support continuous learner improvement. Additionally, learner-centered strategies that promote engagement, critical thinking, and learner autonomy should be contextualized to fit the realities of public school classrooms, particularly those operating under resource constraints.



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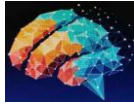
Volume 1 Issue 2- 2026

Finally, the findings point to the need for continued and expanded research on instructional practices in upper elementary classrooms. While this study provides context-specific evidence from a single public school setting, further research employing qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods designs is necessary to deepen understanding of how instructional strategies influence learning outcomes across diverse educational contexts. Longitudinal studies examining the sustained effects of classroom-based instructional practices on learner achievement and readiness for secondary education would be particularly valuable. Expanding the empirical evidence base can inform policy decisions and support the development of context-sensitive instructional frameworks that address the needs of upper elementary learners.

Overall, these implications suggest that improving learning outcomes in upper elementary education requires a coordinated focus on classroom-level instructional support, teacher capacity-building, and evidence-based policymaking. Policymakers and school leaders are therefore encouraged to prioritize instructional support at the classroom level as a practical and effective approach to enhancing learner achievement and ensuring smoother transitions to secondary education.

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