

# Teacher Classroom Management Practices in an Inclusive Virtual Setting

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## Abstract

*The main purpose of this study is to explore the special education teacher's classroom management strategies engagement in an inclusive virtual setting among the selected teachers in Region VII and one City in Region VIII during remote learning. Five respondents from two regions of Visayas were chosen using convenience and purposive sampling techniques. The researchers of this study used Descriptive Qualitative research design following Colaizzi's method in thematic analysis. An online interview questionnaire was distributed to the respondents through Google forms and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The results indicated that teacher classroom management strategies undeniably played a vital role to maximize students' engagement in an inclusive virtual classroom. On this basis, it is recommended that teacher classroom management practices should also investigate the variables that limit students' willingness to participate, as well as the importance of the entire class population in students' engagement. And since our study solely identifies best practices and strategies to maximize student engagement, further study is needed to emphasize assessing teachers' ICT skills, the parental factors, and appropriate assessment methods to give a greater understanding of the nature of why student engagement is declining in this new mode of learning.*

**Keywords—** *Inclusive virtual classroom, student engagement, teacher classroom management, virtual engagement.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Classroom situations differ in many ways. It had been discovered that learning is highly effective inside a class that was friendly and dynamic. However, during the challenging times of the pandemic, it had been found that students' performance was declining. This prompted the researchers to consider what teacher classroom management strategies would be most effective in maximizing virtual classroom engagement.

A convincing way of creating an inclusive virtual classroom was to create a welcoming virtual space. In addition, teachers should remember that they control the virtual learning space. Being aware of the strategies was

helpful to make them have more understanding of how to deal with issues and problems that come with classrooms and students, also to find the solutions, which results in the improvement of the students' performance.

Inclusive Education in the Philippines strives to mainstream students with special needs in a flexible learning environment so that they would generate a high-quality education that would maximize their holistic development potential. For generations, an aim for inclusive education had always been to change to an inclusive education system in which students with special needs were mainstreamed into a regular learning environment with other students.

Multi-grade teachers in some rural elementary schools in the Philippines described that handling multi-grade classes required classroom management, collaborative learning, differentiated instruction, connecting the teaching to real-life situations, integration of technology in teaching using digital tools, and the needs, and flexibility of the teacher. Having proper classroom management leads to better results. They see to it that their situation is under their control.

In Cebu City, Educators had suggested that Social media enables instructors to build connections with students. Using these platforms, learning can occur even without the physical presence of the teacher. In education, the use of social media was dubbed as using innovation. Today's learners consider the use of social media as an innovation because it was not only educational but also engaging.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the special education teachers' classroom management strategies engagement in an inclusive virtual setting among the selected teachers in Cebu province during distance learning. This includes intervention to guarantee that students are actively engaged within the virtual classroom.

## II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

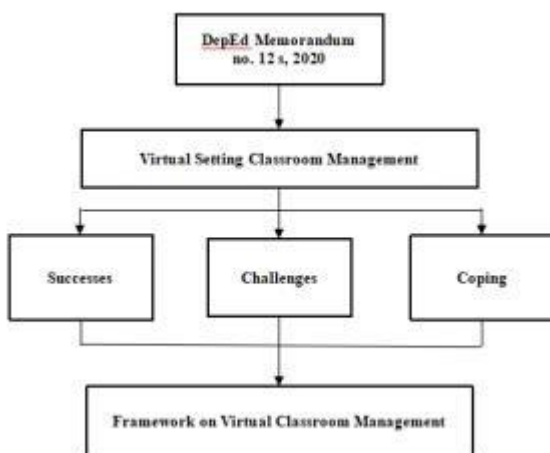


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework

Department of Education (DepEd) memorandum no. 12 s, 2020 was the adoption of the basic education learning continuity plan for the school year 2020-2021 in light of the COVID-19 public health emergency. The COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges to various sectors especially in responding to basic rights. With the physical distancing and community quarantine being among the measures to contain COVID-19, basic education was among the sectors heavily affected as schools and community learning centers were closed for the physical conduct of classes.

The virtual classroom setting is one of the best ways for students to continue their education. The virtual classroom is an online teaching and learning environment in which teachers and students can present course materials, engage and interact with other virtual class members, and collaborate in groups. A virtual classroom is differentiated by the fact that it takes place in a real-time, synchronous setting. While online courses may involve watching pre-record, asynchronous material, virtual classroom settings involve live interaction between instructors and participants (Barron, 2020).

The Special Education teachers' experiences were classified into three categories: successes, challenges, and coping mechanisms. It is undeniable that virtual classrooms eliminate the limitations of time and location, which are common challenges in traditional classrooms. With the removal of these limitations, students will be able to study and complete their coursework whenever and wherever they want.

However, there are still disadvantages to virtual classrooms because they are new to us and possibly due to students' lack of resources. That's why it is the teachers' responsibility to have an intervention so that they can still perform in class to the same level as other students.

The findings have resulted in the creation of the Virtual Classroom Management framework, which will serve as a guide for teachers on how to maximize student engagement in a virtual setting as well as how to provide appropriate intervention for students with disabilities so that they can perform at the same level as other students in class.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The researchers of this study used Descriptive Qualitative research design following Colaizzi's method in thematic analysis. The study took place in various schools of selected cities from Region VII and one (1) city from Region VIII. The research informants were five (5) special education teachers coming from the private schools of the selected locals. The informants were chosen using a purposive sample method by the researchers. In collecting data, the researchers used an interview survey questionnaire; the Interview questionnaires were semi-structured and conducted via Google Forms. It consisted of ten questions that comprised three (3) main parts; the preliminary, development, and wrap-up questions. In analyzing the data the researchers did a thematic analysis following Colaizzi's method mainly because this was one of the most prevalent methods for analyzing qualitative

data. The researchers would first go through the transcripts several times to get a feel of the entire and extract key statements. The meanings of the significant sentences will next be formed, and the formulated meanings will be divided into clusters or themes, which will then be combined into an extensive description. The occurrence core structure is formulated. Finally, for validation, the informants will assess the analysis' conclusion to see if it reflects their original experiences. The researchers were guided by the following guidelines in conducting the study and ethical considerations were taken into account.

#### IV. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter includes the presentation of data from a total of five participants. Analysis and interpretations were also discussed in the presented themes emerging from the data collection of the study. The main purpose of this study was to find teacher classroom management strategies to maximize students' engagement in an inclusive virtual setup. To accomplish this, an interview protocol was made following the research questions in the study which sought to know how the participants described their experiences of teaching students in an inclusive virtual classroom.

Thematic analysis was used to answer the research questions, mainly because this was one of the most prevalent approaches for analyzing qualitative data. In addition, thematic analysis allows a lot of flexibility in interpreting the data and allows you to approach large data sets more easily by sorting them into broad themes.

This chapter presents the categories or themes based on their emergence within and across cases. The four main themes that developed throughout the analysis and would be discussed in this chapter include Teacher classroom management practices, professional development, and collaborative opportunities, Strategies to maximize virtual engagement, and Limitations of students' engagement in a virtual setup.

Table 1: Clustering of Major Themes

Teacher classroom management practices	Professional development and collaborative opportunities	Strategies to maximize virtual engagement	Limitations of students' engagement in a virtual setup
Teacher as the facilitator	Involvement of Educational Stakeholders	Utilizing virtual platforms	Environmental and Physical factors
Approaches to learning styles	Engage in training and workshops	Interactive Activities	Class population
Flexibility of instruction	Establishing Transparent Communication	Integrate virtual reinforcements	Limited learning experience

#### 4.1 Teacher classroom management practices

One Participant highlighted that Classroom management is what makes teachers and students maintain appropriate behavior in any classroom setting, be it physical or virtual. It established an orderly classroom environment (Participant 1). Thus, it is considered that one of the most crucial aspects to be considered in developing a healthy and productive learning environment was teacher classroom management practices. However, the value of classroom management was being called into doubt as a result of this new setup, and whether learning online or in an actual classroom, effective classroom management was crucial in achieving a productive study environment. Classroom management had much to do with managing learning processes when activity was going on because it's about creating peace so pupils can get right down to work (Postholm, 2013).

##### 4.1.1 Teacher as the facilitator

In connection, teachers played the central role in facilitating the classroom, one of the participants emphasized that teachers served as classroom facilitators, they set the mood for the class, communicate expectations, act as role models, and mentored, and nurture each student (Participant 1). They controlled the classroom throughout the instruction to integrate and create interactive and productive learning environments. Teachers had set rules, routines, and guidelines to follow to maintain students' appropriate behavior and keep the class orderly. As you think of integrating active learning strategies into your course, they have considered ways to set clear expectations, design effective evaluation strategies, and provided helpful feedback (Franklin, 2019).

##### 4.1.2 Approaches to learning styles

Teachers took the necessary steps in dealing with different learning styles, and behavior and maintaining student engagement in the learning process at all costs (Participant 2). In addition, Teachers needed to take some measures to manage learners' behavior & sustain a good environment in order to make the learning process productive & more engaging (Participant 5). This implied that even in limited interaction, classroom management practices established an orderly classroom environment as well as maintained the appropriate behavior.

##### 4.1.3 Flexibility of instruction

Participants also suggested that an online teacher needed to play the role of guiding students through one or more online learning experiences (Participant 3); regulating the activities in the virtual class (Participant 4); and a need to ensure that different learning needs, suitable approaches & others related concerns must be considered to meet the

desired learning outcomes (Participant 5). Additionally, For classes of pupils with hearing impairment, it was very important to provide presentations/ video lessons & other activities that are appropriate & suited to their capabilities, levels, learning style & must be accompanied by clear & coherent sign language interpretations for them to fully understand & acquire the expected learning outcomes (Participant 4), Also consider giving remedial class or giving the learner that needs special attention and extra time to tutor. (Participant 5) and lastly, Communicate frequently with parents and families and make teaching videos (Participant 1). Teachers also must learn new approaches in their teaching methodologies and show leadership, creativity, and different learning styles that will enable them to effectively support their students.

#### **4.2 Professional development and collaborative opportunities**

The nature and purpose of schools, as well as the responsibilities of teachers, are evolving. Teachers are also being required to teach in more multicultural classrooms, place a larger emphasis on integrating children with special learning needs, and participate more in planning within evaluative and accountability frameworks. Creating a professional learning community is one way to foster inclusion and avoid feelings of isolation in an educational setting. Teachers nowadays need to turn their attention towards this new trend of teaching virtually, they need to learn new ways of approaching their teaching methodologies, and also learn new practices to be successful at what they do (Participant 1).

##### *4.2.1 Involvement of Educational Stakeholders*

Because they are school leaders' partners in making schools suitable for teaching and learning, educational stakeholders play a critical role in the development of both teachers and students. They are also accountable for ensuring that the learning objectives are met by actively participating in school events, programs, and projects. Participating in training, such as In-service training, would also assist me to enhance my classroom management skills, according to (Participant 1). Sindac (2020) found out that several institutions have started using virtual education to augment their existing resources and enable distance learning. Institutes also use virtual education to manage their teaching-learning resources; it must be emphasized that the success of this platform in the institutional environment is largely dependent on the acceptability of the tool by the faculty since they, in turn, influence the use of virtual education by students.

##### *4.2.2 Engage in training and workshops*

Nowadays teachers are expected to develop more professionally. In order to maintain a high standard of

teaching and retain a high-quality teacher workforce, education systems attempt to provide chances for in-service professional development for teachers. Moreover, coaching/mentoring, collaborative planning and teaching, and the sharing of best practices can all help with professional development. Below are the participants' response to the various workshops and in-trainings they have participated:

*"...my attendance & active participation on webinars/trainings/workshops related to classroom management"*

*"Training, workshops"*

*"Participating in-trainings such as in-service training would help me improve my classroom management skills"*

*"Attends workshops and webinars"*

##### *4.2.3 Establishing Transparent Communication*

The Transparency Initiative removed many of the common barriers to participation in student learning assessment by faculty and instructors, such as resistance, lack of control, lack of expertise, insufficient time, lack of short-term benefits to teaching and learning practices, and privacy concerns (Norman, 2010). It was very important because students were not just listeners & observers but also a partner in making the teaching-learning process more interactive & productive (Participant 4).

#### **4.3 Strategies to maximize virtual engagement**

The most significant advantage of educational technology was that it allows students to extend their learning beyond the classroom, work at their own pace, and at a level appropriate for them. Great teachers know that before their students can learn, they need to build positive relationships and shared understandings about what the purpose of school (or their class) is, and work with students to set realistic personal goals that help them develop and internalize their purpose for being at school. Kern (2020) stated that once these shared expectations and understandings have been established, teachers should be savvy in ensuring they provide purposeful, transparent, and engaging learning opportunities for students.

##### *4.3.1 Utilizing virtual platforms*

Online learning platforms allow all of those things as well as provide tools for students and teachers to keep a record of progress made. Essentially, they allow learners to have more ownership of their learning which helps them learn better. Most of the participants perceived that the use of online platforms was much needed in regular observation through assessments, feedback in collaboration with the students and parents. Some of their responses are:



*“Teachers should monitor their students' performance by giving them Formative assessment*

*and by doing regular observation and interaction with them.”*

*“Teachers should monitor their students regularly online through video call, one by one if possible, informing them of their schedule ahead of time so that they can prepare. Teachers*

*also do follow-ups of their works and tasks.”*

*“Assessment/ outputs... depending on the majority of learners' internet connection Teachers utilized the "Individual Learning Monitoring" considering that their pupils*

*have different learning needs & interventions.”*

*“Checklists and anecdotes in relation to IEP.”*

To monitor students' performance, a teacher must know that their involvement in maximizing students' development process is important. Sardar & Sima (2020) emphasized that teachers contribute a big part to the learners' educational achievements and help them develop their performance by giving encouragement, advice, and imparting knowledge through carefully preparing lessons, and monitoring the performance and accomplishments of their students.

#### 4.3.2 Interactive Activities

To ensure that students participate in the instructional process, knowledge of different approaches, as well as knowing how to use tools as a medium for effective teaching that can maximize active learning in a virtual setting, was the most important factor in improving virtual classroom engagement. As you think of integrating active learning strategies into your course, consider ways to set clear expectations, design effective evaluation strategies, and provide helpful feedback (Franklin, 2019) With the use of different online platforms such as making lessons through videos, provision of concrete and eye-catching visual aids and other virtual presentations and inter activities suited to their needs, students can have an enjoyable learning experience. Here are some possible activities that could enhance student engagement:

*“The use of different interactive games related to the topics discussed, and using online*

*quizzes instead of using paper and pencil. In this way students will get enthusiastic.”*

*“Interactive activities like games, singing a song before starting the topic and energizing.”*

*“I provided some concrete & eye-catching*

*examples with illustrations, introduced*

*interactive plays suited for their levels & interest, gave relevant & doable activities*

*& I even utilized some apps available, easy to access & applicable for my pupils'*

*capabilities & learning style.”*

In light of this, the responses suggest that implementing the learning activities mentioned above may significantly increase student engagement on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive levels, hence positively improving student learning and accomplishment.

#### 4.3.3 Integration of virtual reinforcements

Teachers frequently reach for the prop box when student engagement begins to dwindle. They used unusual movies, time-consuming materials, and overly difficult activities to capture and hold their audience's attention. ‘providing a welcoming ambiance/environment, acknowledging each participant, providing them interactive activities & presentations that are simple & precise following their ability to learn’ (Participant 5). And there was a simple reason why: The students aren't engaged by things; they were engaged by teachers. Below are some of the responses by our participants on what activities they do that can guarantee student engagement using virtual reinforcements?

*“These are routines followed every day. Students are assigned to be the assistant teacher*

*who will facilitate the first 5 minutes of the class.”*

*“Choose a virtual platform that offers a structured classroom environment with two-way*

*communication. Students should be able to mute/unmute themselves, ask questions or*

*initiate a chat during a class.”*

One of the aspects that contribute to social contact and collaboration between students and teachers was student involvement in their learning process so it was important to give rewards such as e-certificate or badges to their submitted works (Participant 3). Or Provide Ongoing Feedback (Participant 5). As we already know, increasing student participation was critical, especially in the virtual setting.

#### 4.4 Limitations of students' engagement in virtual setup

During these virtual days, teachers and students encountered quite a few problems, especially in the transitioning period of the new normal. One Participant emphasized that the biggest difference was the control of

the classroom situation. In virtual classrooms no matter how you try to maintain the best learning atmosphere, there would always be factors that would make it impossible to carry, like connectivity and students' span of attention. Whereas in the face-to-face setting, whenever students get distracted teachers will have a lot of ways to get back their focus (Participant 1).

#### 4.4.1 Environmental and Physical factors

The learning environment dramatically affects the learning outcomes of students. Schools' open space and noise, inappropriate temperature, insufficient light, overcrowded classes, misplaced board and inappropriate classroom layout all make up factors that could be confounding variables distracting students in class (Gilavand, 2021). This was also noted by the participant that the more those learners are staying at home to learn, the more there are distractions and shorter attention span (Participant 3). In this time of distant learning, virtual education was broadly characterized as a form of learning experience where the learner and the instructor are physically separated from each other (not only by place but also by time).

#### 4.4.2 Class population

Online learning had its most promising potential in the high synergy represented by active dialog among the participants, one of the most important sources of learning in a Virtual Classroom. However, in larger classes (20 or more students), the synergy level starts to shift on the learning continuum until it eventually becomes independent study to accommodate the large class. At this point, the dialog was limited as well as interaction among participants and the facilitator. The medium was not being used to its greatest potential. Virtual student engagement strategies also differ on a case-to-case basis depending on various factors like class size, types of learners, etc. (Participant 4).

#### 4.4.3 Limited learning experience

A successful online program requires user-friendly and dependable technology. Even the most advanced technology, however, is not without flaws. Unfortunately, it is not a question of if, but of when; the equipment used in an online program will fail. When everything is going well, technology is meant to be low-key and used as a tool in the learning process. However, breakdowns can occur at any point along with the system. With this, an online teacher needs to play the role of guiding students through one or more online learning experiences (Participant 1). As a facilitator, a need to ensure that diff. Learning needs, suitable approaches & other related concerns must be considered to meet the desired learning outcomes and as a manager, proper planning/ organizing is significant to achieving a productive learning environment (Participant

3).

## V. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is primarily focused on finding teacher classroom management practices to maximize students' engagement in an inclusive virtual classroom among the selected teachers in Region VII and one City from Region VIII during remote learning. In all the effort of the researchers, there were only five participants in this qualitative case study. Limitations of the study are related to the sampling method applied which only accepts participants who meet the criteria set by the researchers. It is also mainly limited to tackling effective practices and strategies that were done by the respondents to maximize virtual engagement in an inclusive classroom setting. This study solely identifies the best strategies and practices to maximize students' engagement, not the solution for the deteriorating engagement in an inclusive virtual classroom setting.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the special education teachers' classroom management strategies engagement in an inclusive virtual setting. Although distance learning can appear impersonal and inaccessible, there are effective approaches to help students feel connected and gain access to academic materials. Teachers have struggled to construct sustainable virtual spaces as education adjusted to the pandemic. It has been found that the major difference is the control over the classroom situation. It is highly probable that in a virtual classroom, no matter how hard a teacher tries to maintain the best learning environment, there will always be factors that make it hard to accomplish such as internet connectivity concerns and students' attention spans. In a face-to-face setting, however, when students become distracted, teachers will have a variety of options for regaining their attention.

The use of different interactive games related to the topics discussed and using online quizzes instead of using paper and pencil are just some of the alternatives teachers can infuse to spur appeal during class discussions. The informants also stated that they have provided some concrete and eye-catching examples with illustrations, introduced interactive plays suited for their levels and interests, provided relevant and doable activities, and even used an app that is readily available, easy to access, and applicable to the students' capabilities and learning style to increase their engagements. For students with hearing impairment, it is critical to provide presentations/video lessons and other activities that are relevant and matched

to their skills, levels, and learning styles, as well as clear and coherent sign language interpretations, for them to fully understand and acquire the anticipated learning outcomes. In addition, the study enables teachers to be informed on how to make a healthy and productive learning environment in this new mode of learning.

## VII. RECOMMENDATION

This study has contributed to the understanding of Teacher Classroom Management Practices in an Inclusive Virtual Setting. The researchers were able to develop a framework for virtual classroom engagement.

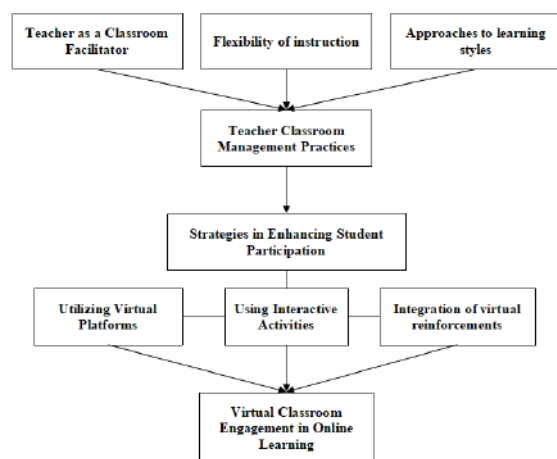


Fig.2: Framework on Visual Classroom Management

As the study progressed, a few areas surfaced as suggested areas for future studies. Further studies into teacher classroom management practices should look into factors as to why students have a short attention span in a virtual setting, as well as the effectiveness of approaches being used by special education teachers to maximize the virtual engagement of students with additional needs. The reduction in cognitive load and the increase of interactivities during online teaching and accommodations appropriate for online learning. The sample size of future studies can also be increased to have a more broad understanding of the teacher's classroom management practices.

Furthermore, it provided the participants the chance to share their perceptions on the effective strategies that can maximize students' engagement in a virtual classroom setting. All results and interpretations of data were based on the original transcript that highlighted the importance of being able to understand the influence of classroom management on students' engagement. These teacher classroom management practices established an orderly classroom environment that engages students to perform better which was essential in their learning process.

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