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INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' STRATEGIES ON PUPILS' ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU EDUCATION ZONE, ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

Egbe, Judith Ekwutosi, Rev. Br. Prof. Osuji, and Gregory Ekene, FMS
Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, Nigeria
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Abstract: This study examined the strategies teachers employ to engage pupils in learning and the extent to which these strategies influence pupils' active participation in classroom activities in primary schools in Enugu Education Zone, Enugu State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, involving a population of 1,471 public primary school teachers. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample of 305 teachers (285 females and 20 males) was selected. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire with a reliability index of 0.87, determined via a trial test in Agbani Education Zone. Data analysis was conducted using mean, standard deviation, and independent sample t-tests at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that teachers employed a range of engagement strategies—including group discussions, inquiry-based learning, storytelling, and the use of real-life scenarios—which significantly promoted pupils' active participation. Classroom management practices also played a pivotal role in enhancing learning outcomes. Based on these findings, the study concludes that while teachers are making efforts to engage pupils, their impact is limited by resource and capacity constraints. It recommends: that increased provision of instructional materials and technology and that regular professional development on modern engagement and classroom management strategies. These interventions aim to enhance teaching quality and improve learning outcomes across primary schools in Enugu Education Zone.

Keywords: Pupil Engagement, Teaching Strategies, Classroom Participation and Primary Education

Introduction

Education remains the cornerstone of national development and personal transformation. It serves as the principal vehicle through which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for effective participation in societal life. Beyond its role in personal advancement, education is a strategic tool for fostering social cohesion, economic productivity, and national progress. At the heart of any educational system, particularly at the foundational level, lies the pivotal role of the teacher. Teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge; they serve as facilitators, motivators, role models, and agents of transformation who shape learners' attitudes and dispositions toward learning and life.

For any educational system to achieve its goals, especially at the primary level, the quality of teaching cannot be overemphasized. This quality is largely determined by the instructional strategies employed by teachers in the classroom. These strategies are the methods, techniques, and approaches that teachers adopt to deliver curriculum content, engage learners, and achieve specific learning outcomes. According to Albon, Barrow, and Hargrave (2016), good teaching strategies promote learner involvement, sustain interest, and support cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. Hence, the role of instructional strategies goes beyond curriculum content delivery to significantly influencing how learners respond, participate, and internalize what is taught.

In Nigeria, the importance of primary education is particularly pronounced. As the first formal level of schooling, it lays the bedrock for all subsequent educational achievements. Pupils at this stage are highly impressionable and require a learning environment that supports their curiosity, encourages active participation, and fosters sustained engagement. However, there has been a growing concern across Nigeria—and particularly in the Enugu Education Zone—about the dwindling levels of pupil engagement in primary schools. This decline is often linked to the ineffectiveness of the teaching strategies in use.

Pupil engagement is a multidimensional construct that encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in the learning process (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2019). Behavioral engagement relates to participation in classroom activities; emotional engagement involves interest, enthusiasm, and a sense of belonging; while cognitive engagement includes the investment of mental effort and willingness to exert strategic thinking. When these dimensions are adequately addressed, pupils are more likely to be attentive, ask questions, collaborate with peers, and demonstrate deeper understanding. Conversely, when pupils are subjected to passive instructional methods such as rote memorization, excessive teacher talk, and one-directional instruction, they may become disengaged—leading to low academic achievement, lack of motivation, and increased dropout rates (Lestari et al., 2020).

Research evidence confirms the positive impact of child-centered strategies—such as demonstration, role-play, storytelling, guided discovery, and collaborative learning—on pupil outcomes in Nigerian classrooms. For instance, a study in the Shomolu region of Lagos found that the use of active learning strategies significantly improved academic performance in foundational subjects (ResearchGate.net). Similarly, innovative instructional models such as problem-based learning, inquiry-driven approaches, and flipped classrooms are proven to foster deeper learning, but these are yet to be widely adopted in Nigerian public schools, particularly due to infrastructural and policy constraints (acjol.org).

Curriculum implementation—the translation of the planned curriculum into dynamic classroom engagement—is a crucial determinant of learning success. As Wilies (2021) points out, this process depends heavily on teachers' ability to select and adapt strategies that align with pupils' needs, classroom realities, and available resources. Teachers, therefore, serve as the primary implementers of the curriculum. Their choices directly influence how the curriculum is experienced by learners.

According to Badiko (2019), effective curriculum delivery requires teachers to interpret content in contextually relevant ways, integrating their knowledge of learners' socio-cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and developmental needs.

However, systemic challenges such as large class sizes, inadequate teaching resources, poor infrastructure, and limited opportunities for professional development often undermine the use of effective strategies. Many teachers lack the requisite training and support to implement innovative instructional models. This results in a persistent reliance on outdated, non-interactive methods. Obanya (2021) notes that the failure to improve the quality of classroom instruction continues to hamper educational development in Nigeria.

One critical but often overlooked factor that influences instructional strategy effectiveness is teacher gender. Studies have demonstrated that male and female teachers tend to bring different interpersonal dynamics into the classroom, which can influence pupil engagement differently. In Ekiti State, for example, research indicated that female teachers' nurturing and empathetic styles often create a more inclusive and emotionally supportive learning environment for girls, whereas male teachers' authoritative and structured approaches may resonate more strongly with boys (ResearchGate.net; tandfonline.com). This dynamic interplay can reinforce or challenge existing gender stereotypes, depending on how it is managed. Within Enugu Education Zone—where traditional gender norms still strongly influence social roles—teachers' awareness of gender-responsive pedagogies is essential for promoting equitable engagement across male and female pupils (Uche & Onyebuchi, 2021; Okoli & Eze, 2020).

Beyond gender, broader systemic issues persist. The reality of overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teaching aids, and outdated training methods restrict the extent to which teachers can adapt to individual pupil needs. In many public schools within Enugu Education Zone, the ideal conditions required to implement learner-centered strategies are far from reality. Consequently, pupils may remain passive recipients of information rather than active participants in their learning journey. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) rightly emphasizes that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. This places enormous responsibility on teacher competence, continuous training, and motivation.

In Enugu specifically, the underperformance of pupils in national assessments such as the National Common Entrance Examination (NCEE) further reveals the need for pedagogical reform. Reports from the State Ministry of Education indicate that many pupils fail to meet basic competency levels in literacy and numeracy, partly due to disengagement during lessons and ineffective teaching methods. According to Ayodele and Adeleke (2020), strategies that fail to incorporate active learning and formative assessment do not promote the reflective and analytical thinking that primary education aims to develop.

Given these factors, there is an urgent need to reassess and improve teaching practices in Nigerian primary schools, especially in regions like Enugu Education Zone. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the influence of teaching strategies on pupils' engagement in primary school classrooms.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers are the key implementers of the curriculum in schools, and their ability to use effective teaching strategies significantly influences pupils' engagement and academic success. However, there is growing evidence that many teachers in primary schools, particularly in the Enugu Education Zone, fail to adopt instructional strategies that foster meaningful pupil engagement. This failure is reflected in the passive learning observed in classrooms, where pupils often exhibit low interest, lack of motivation, and poor participation in academic activities.

The consequences of ineffective teaching strategies are far-reaching. Pupils become reliant on rote learning, memorize facts without understanding, and struggle to apply knowledge to real-world situations. Their self-confidence and problem-solving abilities are undermined, and they often become disengaged from the learning process altogether. This lack of engagement is evident in academic performance, with many pupils failing to meet national benchmarks.

The 2023 National Common Entrance Examination (NCEE) results in Enugu State serve as a stark indicator of this problem. Data from the National Examinations Council (NECO) revealed that a significant proportion of pupils in the state scored below the cut-off mark for secondary school admission. This poor performance suggests serious deficiencies in foundational learning, which can be attributed in part to ineffective teaching strategies.

Another dimension of the problem is the lack of professional development for teachers. Many teachers have not received adequate training on contemporary teaching methods that promote engagement. In addition, systemic issues such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials, and poor infrastructure further hinder the implementation of effective strategies. The result is a learning environment that does not support active participation or deep learning.

Also, cultural perceptions and gender-related biases influence how teachers interact with pupils. Teachers may unknowingly favor pupils of their own gender or fail to recognize and address gender-specific learning needs. This dynamic can exacerbate disparities in engagement and limit the potential of both male and female pupils.

Given the central role of teachers in curriculum implementation and the documented challenges in primary schools across Enugu Education Zone, it is imperative to investigate how teachers' strategies influence pupils' engagement in learning. Understanding this influence will provide insights into the specific practices that promote or hinder engagement and inform interventions aimed at improving teaching quality.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of Teachers' Strategies on Pupils' Engagement in Learning in Primary Schools in Enugu Education Zone, Nigeria. Specifically, the study intended to:

1. Identify the strategies employed by teachers to engage pupils in learning in primary schools in Enugu Education Zone.
2. Examine the extent to which teachers' strategies influence pupils' active participation in classroom activities in primary schools in Enugu Education Zone.

Research Questions

1. What strategies do teachers employ to engage pupils in learning in primary schools in Enugu Education Zone?
2. To what extent do these teaching strategies influence pupils' active participation in classroom activities in primary schools in Enugu Education Zone?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated and would be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on the strategies they employ to engage pupil in learning in primary schools in Enugu Education Zone.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on the extent their strategies influence pupils' active participation in classroom activities

Review of related Literature

Curriculum

The **curriculum** is a comprehensive concept encompassing all intentionally designed learning experiences offered to students within an educational program. Ornstein and Hunkins (2017) define it as a fusion of instructional content, pedagogical strategies, learning objectives, and assessment methods. This sphere of learning encompasses three distinct dimensions:

1. **Formal curriculum**: The structured and officially recorded lessons aligned with educational standards and learning sequences.
2. **Informal curriculum**: The unscripted, incidental encounters—such as peer interactions or chance learning moments—that occur outside planned instruction.
3. **Hidden curriculum**: The implicit social norms and values acquired through the school environment, including institutional culture, implicit teacher expectations, and peer influences (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017; turn0search6).

Collins (2019) further insists that curriculum extends far beyond academic content, including social experiences, co-curricular activities, and relationships that shape students' development. This broader view stresses the role of schools—not just teachers—in integrating and coordinating learning opportunities to reflect both communal needs and educational intentions (NOUN, 2022).

Ornstein and Hunkins also conceptualize various curriculum approaches—behavioral, managerial, systems, academic, reconceptualist, and humanistic (turn0search8). The behavioral approach stresses goal-oriented, measurable outcomes; managerial emphasizes system efficiency; **systems** focuses on procedural integration; academic champions subject-centered learning; the reconceptualist approach

critiques normative curricula; and the humanistic approach centers on students' values and experiences.

Pragmatically, designing curriculum requires clarity about scope (breadth, depth), sequence (logical order), continuity (reinforcement over time), articulation (connections across grades), and balance across domains (cognitive, affective, psychomotor) (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009; turn0search16). Designers must reflect on philosophical assumptions, local needs, and stakeholder roles to create an integrated and purpose-driven learning architecture (turn0search16).

Modern conceptions of curriculum encourage inclusive, culturally responsive design processes. Drawing on community values and multiple perspectives ensures the curriculum fosters equity and relevance within diverse learning environments (turn0search14).

Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation bridges the gap between curricular design and classroom learning outcomes. Wilies (2021) describes this as the transformation of intended curricular goals into daily instructional practices, incorporating teaching strategies, resources, adaptations, and ongoing evaluation (turn0search18). Bondi (2022) frames implementation as a systematized orchestration of instructional elements—materials, tasks, methods, and assessments—to deliver effective learning experiences and ensure alignment with broader educational aims (turn0search18).

Effective implementation requires coordination among multiple actors—including policymakers, administrators, teachers, and communities—each contributing to resource allocation, training, and instructional monitoring. Continuous evaluation and adaptation ensure responsiveness to evolving student needs and educational contexts (Wilies, 2021; Bondi, 2022; turn0search18).

Rutto (2017) emphasizes that implementation is a collective process involving all stakeholders converting curricular intentions into actionable teaching plans and classroom delivery. This includes interpreting standards, customizing lesson sequences, and embedding pedagogical strategies that optimize learning (NOUN, 2020).

In practice, implementation challenges often stem from inadequate materials, teacher training gaps, infrastructure issues, and limited support for differentiated or contextualized instruction. Addressing these constraints requires investment in professional development, collaborative planning, and reflective teaching practices (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018; turn0search14).

Effective implementation transcends textbook lessons. It incorporates school-wide values, technology tools, community connections, and opportunities for informal and hidden learning—ensuring students gain both knowledge and the skills to navigate real-world contexts (turn0search6; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

Teaching Strategies

Teaching strategies are intentional frameworks that guide instructional planning and delivery, tailored to students' cognitive and socio-cultural profiles (Ayua, 2017). They are more than mechanical

routines—they structure the learning environment to be accessible, engaging, and meaningful, blending contemporary theory with practical classroom demands.

Ayua (2017) emphasizes cultural alignment, arguing that teaching approaches must resonate with students' lived experiences to foster relevance and motivation. For instance, linking math problems to local economic scenarios can deepen connection and skill retention.

Research highlights differentiation—adapting content, pacing, and assessment to diverse learners—as a strategy that enhances academic outcomes, motivation, and equity (Flaherty & Hackler, 2010; turn0search5). PMC studies affirm that differentiated instruction improves engagement and achievement by matching instructional complexity to students' individual profiles (turn0search3; turn0search17).

Contemporary frameworks also endorse cooperative learning**,** incorporating group tasks, peer teaching, and discussions to boost achievement, social skills, and engagement (Johnson & Johnson, 2019; turn0search5; turn0search11). Technology-assisted collaboration—such as using digital platforms for group quizzes—further enhances interactivity and participation (turn0academia20).

Active learning**,** which includes inquiry-based tasks, problem-solving, simulations, and role-play, is strongly associated with improved understanding and retention compared to passive lecture formats (Freeman et al., 2014; turn0search1). Empirical studies show that even novice instructors using active learning outperform traditional lecturers (turn0academia22).

Four key strategies—feedback, scaffolding, active learning, and collaboration—have been examined for their impact on engagement. A study from *Sustainability* (Han, 2021) found all are positively linked to engagement and teacher self-concept, with *scaffolding* showing the strongest direct effect on pupil engagement (turn0search19).

Hybrid or teacher-student interactive strategies blend direct instruction with student autonomy (Rutto, 2017; Oluwatoyi et al., 2020). Here, teachers might introduce concepts and then guide student-led explorations, fostering higher-order thinking, generalization of ideas, and ownership of learning.

In summary, modern teaching strategies are evidence-based, flexible, culturally responsive, and geared towards active, differentiated, and collaborative learning pathways that align with curricular goals and support all pupils.

Engagement

Student engagement refers to learners' full participation—behavioral, emotional, cognitive, social, and physical—in educational activities (Reeve, 2012). It is central to academic success and personal growth.

1. **Behavioral engagement** involves active involvement—attendance, participation, task persistence, and compliance with classroom norms (Sinatra et al., 2015; Martin & Torres, 2016).
2. **Emotional engagement** reflects students' sense of belonging, interest, and affective response to school and instruction (Kit et al., 2022; Wang & Fredricks, 2014).
3. **Cognitive engagement** signifies students' investment in learning—deep thinking, strategic planning, and intellectual challenge (Reeve et al., 2006; Kit et al., 2022).

4. **Physical engagement** highlights kinesthetic involvement—movement, hands-on tasks, gestures, which enhance attention and memory in young learners (Cook et al., 2018).
5. **Social engagement** refers to collaboration, peer interactions, and community building through learning activities (Fletcher, 2019).

Strong engagement across these areas correlates with improved academic performance and well-being (Griffin et al., 2017; Corwin et al., 2014). Teachers who encourage autonomy (agentic engagement) and supportive relationships enhance these engagement dimensions (Reeve et al., 2004; turnOsearch13).

Research in Singapore highlights that positive teacher–student relationships—characterized by emotional support and aspirational guidance—boost engagement and academic outcomes (Kit et al., 2022).

Engagement is nurtured through purposeful strategies: flexible grouping, movement breaks, consistent routines, inclusive instruction, and student voice in instruction (Martin & Torres, 2016; Cook et al., 2018).

Depth of engagement is a strong predictor of achievement and resilience. Engaged learners persist, explore, and adapt more readily to challenges. Conversely, disengagement—marked by apathy and minimal effort—leads to poor learning outcomes and school attrition (Bakker et al., 2015).

Specific strategies teachers employ to engage pupils in learning.

The following are the specific strategies teachers employ:

Collaborative Learning Strategy

Collaborative learning is a structured teaching method where students work together in small groups to engage with shared tasks and pursue common learning goals. It involves the active participation of individuals who bring diverse perspectives and capabilities, aiming to achieve collective understanding and improved academic outcomes (Strijbos, 2016; Dewi, Putri, & Yuliana, 2021). Through collaboration, students develop key 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and effective communication (Azar, Ali, & Fadly, 2021).

This method rests on the principle that learning is socially constructed. Students gain deeper understanding when they interact with peers, share knowledge, and refine their thinking through group dialogue (Azar et al., 2021). Collaborative learning reduces isolation and fosters mutual support, enabling learners to feel more engaged and connected in the learning process (Dewi et al., 2021; Warsah, Ali, & Kurniawan, 2021). It has been shown to enhance academic retention and performance, particularly for struggling students, by making learning more meaningful and inclusive (McHugh, Kersh, & Williams, 2020).

Unlike casual group work, collaborative learning is intentionally designed to ensure each member contributes meaningfully. Tasks may be shared among students or distributed individually toward a common objective, often with a mix of skill levels to promote knowledge exchange (Udvari-Solner, 2016). According to Lyon, Yildirim, and Anderson (2021), this method boosts students' creativity,

metacognitive abilities, and interpersonal skills, while also fostering emotional and social development (Warsah et al., 2021).

Students engaged in collaborative learning become more responsible for their learning. They assess each other's reasoning, reflect on their contributions, and take initiative in group outcomes. This responsibility enhances engagement, self-regulation, and academic motivation (Warsah et al., 2021). As Han and Ellis (2021) emphasize, the process cultivates deep learning through the development of critical thinking, reflection, and effective decision-making.

In collaborative learning spaces, students co-create ideas, challenge assumptions, and think critically, while also building empathy and accountability through interaction. These experiences strengthen not only academic skills but also social-emotional growth, leading to adaptability and resilience (Busch, Swedlund, & Mazzarella, 2021; McHugh et al., 2020). Students become more innovative, as metacognitive processes are stimulated through engagement in shared tasks (Dindar, Sahin, & Donmez, 2020; Timonen & Ruokamo, 2021).

The teacher plays a pivotal role in fostering collaborative learning. Rather than acting solely as a knowledge provider, the teacher serves as a facilitator who creates the conditions necessary for successful group work (Garrison, 2022). Teachers must design developmentally appropriate tasks, thoughtfully arrange groups, and ensure alignment with students' goals and needs (Pino-James, 2017; Olivier, Smith, & Turner, 2020).

Teachers support student autonomy by guiding inquiry, encouraging reflection, and helping learners manage their roles in the group (Brannen, Howard, & O'Leary, 2021). With scaffolding, students learn to take initiative, monitor their learning, and reach shared objectives (Jansson, Yates, & Wang, 2021). Educators also adjust tasks as needed to ensure they remain relevant and achievable (Azar et al., 2021). In classrooms where trust and mutual respect are nurtured, students are more willing to share and collaborate effectively (Zhao & Ye, 2020).

Ongoing support from teachers—such as timely feedback, clarification, and mediation—further enhances the collaborative experience. These interventions reduce confusion, ensure task clarity, and help resolve interpersonal challenges (Busch et al., 2021; Makani, Park, & Kim, 2016). Checkpoints throughout the learning process help monitor group dynamics and ensure effective progress (Milman, 2015; Brannen et al., 2021).

When well-facilitated, collaborative learning transforms classrooms into active, student-centered environments. Students engage more deeply, take ownership of their learning, and connect meaningfully with peers. Beyond academics, this strategy nurtures confidence, teamwork, and lifelong learning dispositions.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) Strategy

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a student-centered teaching approach that emphasizes engagement through real-world exploration and interdisciplinary problem-solving. It allows learners to immerse themselves in meaningful tasks, thereby constructing knowledge and developing new skills (Katekina,

Kasyanov, & Makarova, 2019). Unlike traditional methods that rely on rote memorization, PBL places students at the heart of learning by encouraging them to inquire, plan, execute, and reflect within a structured yet flexible learning environment. Wang (2022) emphasized that the inclusion of real-world scenarios in project design significantly enhances students' critical thinking abilities, particularly during the implementation phases when guidance and structure are present to promote effective student-teacher interaction. In addition, motivation and encouragement from both peers and educators were shown to play an important role in students' participation and engagement throughout the project process (Al-Krisha & Mansour, 2021). When students perceive that their academic efforts are aligned with solving practical problems, they find learning more fulfilling and relevant.

The inherent flexibility in PBL allows students of varying abilities to engage in tasks that are significant to them. Evans (2019) argues that projects without rigid, predefined outcomes foster creativity and personal initiative, enabling learners to craft meaningful outcomes and build intrinsic motivation. As students pursue projects they care about, they demonstrate higher levels of commitment and persistence, which correlates positively with academic achievement and long-term learning outcomes (Rodriguez, 2022). Active engagement in authentic tasks leads to deeper understanding and greater knowledge retention, especially when the learning process is collaborative, iterative, and reflective.

Within the PBL framework, the instructional process typically unfolds through several progressive phases. Students first identify a real-world issue or challenge, often inspired by events, articles, or community concerns. They then devise a plan to approach the problem, selecting appropriate strategies, tools, and resources. As they execute their projects, learners engage in research, collaborate with peers, and apply classroom knowledge to develop tangible solutions. Finally, they reflect on their process and evaluate their learning outcomes, thereby reinforcing both academic and life skills. Usmeldi (2018) contends that project-based learning significantly boosts cognitive performance and creative problem-solving by enabling students to actively reflect on their strategies and contributions during each phase of the project. Compared to conventional teaching approaches, PBL leads to more favorable learning outcomes by supporting students in the acquisition of practical, hands-on skills that are transferable to real-life contexts.

In traditional classroom models, students are often passive recipients of knowledge, with limited opportunity for practical application. This limitation hinders the development of real-world competencies. Issa and Khataibeh (2021) note that PBL shifts this paradigm by placing students in active roles where they engage directly in meaningful tasks, thereby strengthening their practical and decision-making skills. Instead of merely studying content, learners in project-based classrooms apply concepts through experimentation and inquiry, gaining firsthand experience in problem resolution and innovation.

PBL also cultivates essential interpersonal and collaborative skills that are crucial for career and civic life. Lau, Liu, and Zhang (2021) emphasize that project-based learning fosters the development of entrepreneurial competencies such as teamwork, goal-setting, and effective communication. These

attributes support not only interpersonal growth but also lifelong learning and professional adaptability. Through cooperative learning structures, students experience the value of shared responsibility, mutual support, and diverse viewpoints, which enriches both the learning process and project outcomes.

For PBL to be effective, educators must adopt a facilitative teaching style that balances support with student autonomy. Krajcik and Adelson (2017) argue that teachers should shift from directive instructors to learning facilitators who empower students to take responsibility for their learning tasks. This pedagogical flexibility promotes deeper engagement and strengthens critical and creative thinking. In well-implemented PBL environments, educators guide students through topic selection, research, and project execution while encouraging independent thinking and collaboration. This involvement is not about controlling the learning process, but rather ensuring that learners remain focused, motivated, and equipped to complete their tasks successfully.

Teachers also play a pivotal role in fostering a collaborative classroom culture. Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2021) assert that when teachers actively promote group work and creative exchanges, students demonstrate greater investment in their learning. Classroom practices such as peer review, team-building exercises, and cooperative planning help create an inclusive and participatory learning environment where students feel safe to share ideas and support one another. These social dimensions enhance the educational experience by promoting empathy, cooperation, and appreciation for diverse perspectives.

Project-Based Learning is a powerful instructional method that transforms passive learning into an active, student-driven experience. It enhances not only cognitive performance and academic outcomes but also practical, interpersonal, and reflective skills that prepare students for complex challenges in the modern world. When thoughtfully implemented, PBL can cultivate lifelong learners who are capable, confident, and deeply engaged in both their education and society.

It encourages students to actively investigate real-world challenges and acquire information and knowledge by following the guidance of teachers (Leming, 2020). The most effective way to empower students in their education is through student-led learning. It encourages students to be logical, creative, imaginative and accepting. It also provides opportunities for active, active involvement of others (Leming, 2020). Problem-based learning can improve 21st-century skills and involve students in practical projects (Han, Zeng, & Zhang, 2015). This method necessitates students to engage actively in the learning process, commencing with a meticulously crafted issue statement that compels them to employ problem-solving strategies. Students are required to ascertain their existing knowledge, determine their informational needs, and discover methods and sources for acquiring new information that may assist in problem-solving. Han et al. (2015) and Kokotsaki, Menzies, & Wiggins, (2016) notice that students build flexible knowledge, proficient problem-solving abilities, intrinsic drive, and ultimately self-directed learning (SDL) skills during the process.

Problem-based learning not only fosters collaboration and conflict resolution, but also cultivates interpersonal, communication, and presenting skills, boosts student engagement, and encourages higher-order thinking. Other skills acquired during this process includes enhanced understanding, heightened critical thinking, motivation, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and the cultivation of social and leadership abilities (Wynn and Mosholder 2016). Educators are pivotal in enabling problem-based learning. They are involved in observing, looking, listening, and stimulating students. Under this approach, teachers need to be supportive and directive by influencing students through scaffolding techniques to ensure they are engaged and contributing to the group (Schneider, 2017).

Inquiry-based learning (IBL) strategy: Inquiry-based learning is a potent approach that fosters 21st-century competencies, authentic relationships, and student autonomy. It is the process of acquiring knowledge by inquiry, investigation, and the analysis of information, transforming facts into valuable insights. Inquiry emphasizes the cultivation of questioning abilities and attitudes that empower individuals to seek knowledge throughout their lives (MacKenzie, 2016). Students participating in inquiry-based learning appreciate classroom activities and maintain comprehension of the concepts acquired. Sahoo and Mohammed (2018) assert that the retention of comprehension following an activity may be associated with students' enhanced capacity for critical thinking after engaging in inquiry-based activities. The students participating in inquiry-based activities asserted that while completing their assignments, they were prompted to think critically, reflect, and pose questions. Students indicated their ability to resolve intricate issues (Sahoo & Mohammed, 2018).

The beneficial results of inquiry-based learning encompass the reinforcement and enhancement of prior knowledge, the facilitation of discourse among participants, and the development of conceptual visualization skills (Nash, Henderson, & Palmer, 2018). Students engaged in inquiry-based learning see their educational experiences more favorably and enjoy the autonomy to craft their own learning journeys through experimentation. Inquiry-based learning focuses on equipping students with the skills to formulate questions and critically analyze their surroundings, fostering self-directed learning rather than merely supplying answers (Wiseman, Tan, & Al-Bakr, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Jean Piaget's Constructivism Learning Theory

Jean Piaget's constructivism learning theory is foundational in understanding how children construct knowledge through experiences. As a Swiss philosopher and natural scientist, Piaget (1967) developed a framework that situates learners at the center of the educational process, asserting that knowledge is actively constructed rather than passively received. His emphasis on the interplay between assimilation and accommodation in cognitive development laid the groundwork for modern constructivist approaches. Assimilation refers to the integration of new information into existing cognitive schemas, while accommodation involves altering those schemas to incorporate new experiences. This dynamic cognitive process is central to Piaget's theory and continues to influence pedagogy today.

Piaget's constructivism promotes active, hands-on learning environments where students explore, experiment, and reflect on their understanding. Rather than viewing learners as empty vessels, Piaget emphasized that they bring prior knowledge, experiences, and cognitive structures that shape their interpretation of new information. As Carey (2015) explains, learning under constructivism involves reconciling existing knowledge with new experiences to create meaningful understanding. This has significant implications for teaching practices: educators must recognize and build upon what students already know, rather than simply transmitting information.

In contemporary classrooms, the relevance of constructivist theory is more pronounced than ever. The traditional teacher-centered approach, which often emphasizes memorization and passive listening, is increasingly seen as inadequate for preparing students to navigate a dynamic, information-rich world. Constructivism, in contrast, encourages problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity—skills vital for success in modern society. By situating learning within real-world contexts and fostering inquiry, this approach cultivates lifelong learners capable of adapting to change.

Constructivist classrooms are characterized by active engagement, collaboration, and reflective thinking. Teachers act as facilitators rather than mere transmitters of knowledge, guiding students through discovery and inquiry-based activities. This approach values the diversity of learners, allowing for differentiated instruction that accommodates various learning styles and abilities. In doing so, it fosters inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Implication of Constructivism Learning Theory to the Study

The application of Piaget's constructivist theory is particularly relevant to studies exploring the impact of teaching strategies on student engagement, such as those conducted in the Enugu Education Zone. By promoting student-centered learning, constructivism provides a framework for enhancing engagement through exploration, collaboration, and problem-solving. Teachers who implement constructivist strategies adapt their instruction to the developmental stages of their students, using age-appropriate tasks such as hands-on activities that align with Piaget’s concrete operational stage.

This approach is also effective in addressing gender disparities in engagement. Since constructivist methods cater to diverse learning preferences, they create inclusive environments where both boys and girls can thrive. The theory redefines the teacher's role from authoritarian figure to guide, which aligns with Nigeria’s educational reforms aimed at fostering critical thinking and autonomy. In regions where resistance to curriculum innovation remains high, constructivism offers a practical and transformative strategy to improve student participation and learning outcomes.

Edward Deci and Richard Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in 1985, is a motivation theory that explores how individuals are driven to act by internal psychological needs rather than external rewards. At the core of SDT are three essential psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), these needs are universal and fundamental to

optimal psychological development, performance, and well-being. When fulfilled, they enhance intrinsic motivation, engagement, and persistence in learning tasks.

Autonomy refers to the need to feel in control of one's own actions and decisions, competence involves the ability to effectively master challenges and tasks, and relatedness is the need to feel connected to others and to be part of a community. SDT posits that when educational environments support these needs, students are more likely to experience deep learning, improved performance, and personal growth. Conversely, controlling or neglectful environments can hinder motivation and diminish the joy of learning.

A key strength of SDT lies in its emphasis on the quality of motivation. Rather than simply increasing the quantity of student effort, SDT advocates for cultivating autonomous forms of motivation where learners engage in tasks because they find them meaningful or personally valuable. In contrast, controlled motivation, which is driven by external pressures such as rewards or punishments, may lead to surface-level engagement or burnout. Teachers who use autonomy-supportive strategies—such as offering choice, acknowledging students' perspectives, and minimizing pressure—can significantly enhance students' intrinsic motivation.

Moreover, SDT includes sub-theories like the Basic Psychological Needs Theory and the Cognitive Evaluation Theory, both of which have implications for education. These theories explain how social and classroom contexts influence students' psychological needs and the development of self-regulated learning behaviors. Betoret and Artiga (2017) argue that meeting these needs not only improves academic achievement but also reduces avoidance behaviors and increases resilience.

Implication of Self-Determination Theory to the Study

In the context of the Enugu Education Zone, SDT offers a robust framework for examining how teacher strategies influence pupil engagement. Many classrooms in the region still operate under rigid, teacher-centered models that can suppress autonomy and limit interaction. However, when teachers adopt SDT principles—supporting autonomy, competence, and relatedness—they create learning environments that are inclusive, motivating, and psychologically supportive.

For instance, encouraging student voice, providing positive feedback, and fostering peer collaboration not only enhance engagement but also address gender disparities. Girls, often socialized to value relationships, may respond positively to environments rich in relatedness, while boys, who may seek achievement and validation, benefit from competence-supportive feedback and goal-setting. SDT aligns with the goals of Nigeria's curriculum reforms by emphasizing learner autonomy and meaningful engagement.

By integrating SDT into teaching practices, educators can transform passive learning into an active, self-driven process, thereby fostering deeper, more sustained engagement across genders. Ultimately, SDT provides a psychological lens to improve teacher strategies and student outcomes in diverse educational settings like Enugu.

Review of Empirical Studies

Specific Strategies Teachers Employ to Engage Pupils in Learning

Numerous studies across diverse contexts have explored the strategies used by educators to actively engage pupils in learning. Adilon and Sabdani (2024) investigated pedagogical strategies used by teachers to improve academic performance in the Talipo District of the Philippines. Using a descriptive-exploratory design and quantitative methodology, they sampled 100 primary school teachers. The study found that instructional strategies, clarification of complex concepts, and activity-based methods were used to evaluate learning outcomes. Although conducted in a different region, the findings offer insights relevant to the present study on teacher strategies within the Enugu Education Zone in Nigeria.

Similarly, Kyle and Walker (2023) conducted research in London, UK, using a mixed-methods approach involving 200 educators. They found that interactive storytelling, project-based learning, collaborative assignments, and inquiry-driven activities enhanced student engagement. While their study focused on schools in London, the present study extends this analysis by examining these strategies within Enugu's educational and cultural context using statistical tools.

In Nigeria, Salman, Saadu, and Alasinrin (2023) explored the impact of problem-based learning on basic science performance in Ilorin West, Kwara State. Their quasi-experimental study showed significant academic gains from this approach. This suggests that student-centered methods, such as problem-based learning, could be useful in promoting engagement in Enugu classrooms as well.

Iwuamadi, Chukwuemeka, and Ngozi (2021) examined the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student engagement in Owerri. Their findings emphasized the positive influence of teacher confidence on pupil motivation and classroom management. While this research focused on mathematics instruction, its implications are applicable across subjects and support the present study's broader focus.

Nkosi and Maseko (2019) studied strategies in under-resourced schools in South Africa and emphasized the need for culturally relevant practices. Their qualitative insights align with the present study's aim of adapting engagement strategies to specific classroom contexts. Meanwhile, Mistry and Sood (2018), studying multicultural classrooms in London, found culturally responsive teaching and peer discussions to be effective. However, their work did not consider curriculum implications, which the present study addresses.

Within the Nigerian context, Uzoechi and Ezeobi (2018) identified visual aids and interactive questioning as effective engagement tools in Enugu classrooms. Unlike their study, which was descriptive, the current study adds inferential analysis to assess the impact of these strategies on curriculum implementation. Overall, these comparative studies enrich the understanding of context-specific strategies for improving engagement and educational outcomes in primary schools.

The Extent Teachers' Strategies Influence Pupils' Active Participation in Classroom Activities

Several studies have measured the impact of specific strategies on pupil engagement. In a longitudinal study in the United States, Johnson and Roberts (2024) assessed the effectiveness of engagement

strategies on pupil involvement. Their research, which involved 1,000 students and 50 teachers in urban schools, employed standardized engagement surveys and classroom observation protocols before and after implementing group work and inquiry-based learning. ANOVA analysis showed that these strategies increased engagement levels by 40%. While their study focused on urban American schools, the present study conducted in Enugu uses t-tests and compares urban and rural settings, providing a more localized understanding of engagement strategies.

Saima and Waseem (2023) explored how classroom management practices influence academic performance among elementary students in Islamabad, Pakistan. Using a descriptive survey design and a sample of 100 teachers, their findings revealed that strategies such as praise, rewards, group work, and communication significantly impacted academic performance. Less frequent strategies like classroom layout and time management had lesser effects. Although their study centered on English subject outcomes, it shares similarities with the present research in assessing instructional influence, while the current study extends across all subjects in Enugu primary schools.

In Ghana, Mensah and Owusu (2021) evaluated the effects of active learning practices such as role-playing and group discussions. With 300 students and 30 teachers participating, the research used pre- and post-tests and paired t-tests to show significant improvement in student involvement. Unlike their focus on urban schools, the current study compares outcomes across rural and urban communities in Enugu, offering insights into contextual influences on learning strategies.

Obioma and Onuoha (2021) conducted quasi-experimental research in Imo State, Nigeria, comparing classrooms with and without engagement strategies. Their study of 150 pupils over eight weeks found significant improvements in attentiveness and participation where interactive strategies were applied. This aligns with the present research's use of pupil engagement rating scales, though it seeks to analyze broader implications for curriculum implementation.

Similarly, Odo and Nwafor (2019) studied multimedia presentations' impact on engagement in Lagos. Their quasi-experimental design with 100 teachers showed that multimedia boosted engagement by 35%. While their study focused on a single strategy, the present research investigates multiple approaches, allowing for a more comprehensive evaluation of their effects on curriculum delivery.

Arsalan (2016) examined how teaching strategies and student engagement influence learning in West Java, Indonesia. The quantitative study involved 200 teachers and 300 pupils and used Pearson correlation to show that active strategies significantly enhanced engagement. It emphasized the role of intrinsic motivation and positive teacher-student relationships in boosting academic success. Although differing in location and methodology, Arsalan's findings reinforce the importance of interactive, student-centered learning, a core theme in the present study.

Overall, evidence from diverse contexts supports the conclusion that teacher strategies significantly influence pupil engagement and learning outcomes. The present study contributes uniquely by comparing engagement effects across urban and rural schools in Enugu and evaluating how these strategies support curriculum implementation.

Research Method

This section described the procedures followed in conducting the study, presented under subheadings including research design, area of the study, population, sampling techniques, instrument development, validation, reliability, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was chosen to capture the opinions of primary school teachers regarding strategies to engage pupils in learning within Enugu Education Zone. Data were collected using a questionnaire to gather structured responses from the participants.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in public primary schools in Enugu Education Zone, which included Enugu North, Enugu East, and Isi-Uzo LGAs. The zone comprised urban and rural communities, with residents engaged in civil service, teaching, trading, and agriculture. The selection of this zone was informed by the prevalence of disengagement among pupils, particularly reflected in poor performance in Common Entrance Examinations.

Population of the Study

The study population comprised 1,471 public primary school teachers (180 male and 1,291 female) across 196 schools in the zone.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A total of 305 teachers (285 female, 20 male) were selected using 30% of the population, determined by the Taro Yamane formula. Twenty schools were sampled using simple random sampling to ensure equal representation and manageability.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument, titled *Questionnaire on Influence of Teachers' Strategies on Pupils' Engagement in Learning* (QITSPEL), consisted of two sections. Section A captured demographic data, while Section B addressed four research focus areas using a four-point Likert scale.

Validation of Instrument

Three experts in curriculum studies, educational management, and measurement and evaluation validated the instrument for clarity, relevance, and adequacy. Their feedback was incorporated into the final draft.

Reliability of the Instrument

Cronbach's alpha was used to test internal consistency. A coefficient of 0.87 confirmed high reliability of the instrument.

Method of Data Collection

Permission was sought and obtained from the heads of selected schools. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires, clarified questions, and collected the completed forms the same day to ensure completeness and data security.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to analyze research questions, while hypotheses were tested using t-tests at a 0.05 significance level. Data were processed using SPSS software to enhance accuracy and interpretation.

Result of Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What strategies do teachers employ to engage pupils in learning in primary schools in Enugu Education Zone?

Table 1:

Mean Responses of Male and Female Teachers on Strategies Teachers employ to engage pupils in learning in primary schools

S/NO	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec
1	I use group discussions to encourage pupil interaction and engagement in class.	3.65	0.49	Agree
2	I frequently use questioning techniques to stimulate critical thinking in pupils.	3.58	0.52	Agree
3	I employ inquiry-based activities to enhance pupil interest in learning.	3.42	0.55	Agree
4	I integrate storytelling into lessons to capture pupils' attention.	3.80	0.44	Agree
5	I use problem-based activities to ensure active participation in lessons.	3.56	0.50	Agree
6	I relate classroom lessons to real-life situations to maintain pupils' focus.	3.78	0.47	Agree
7	I organize class projects to improve pupil collaboration and engagement.	3.60	0.49	Agree
8	I give timely and constructive feedback to motivate pupils to learn.	3.85	0.42	Agree
9	I use differentiated instructional strategies to meet diverse learning needs.	3.47	0.54	Agree
10	I incorporate technology, such as educational apps, to enhance pupil engagement.	3.25	0.62	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**3.60**		

Results on Table 1 show the strategies teachers employ to engage pupils in learning. All ten items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50, indicating agreement. The standard deviations ranged from 0.42 to 0.62, showing that the mean scores clustered closely around their averages. The cluster mean of 3.60

suggests that teachers extensively use various strategies such as group discussions, storytelling, and inquiry-based activities. However, the lower mean score for technology use highlights an area for improvement in integrating modern tools into teaching.

Research Question 2

To what extent do teachers' strategies influence pupils' active participation in classroom activities?

Table 2:

Mean Responses of Male and Female Teachers on the extent teachers' strategies influence pupils' active participation in classroom activities

S/NO	ITEMS	$\bar{X}$	SD	Dec
1	My teaching strategies encourage pupils to ask questions during lessons.	3.62	0.48	High Extent
2	Pupils actively contribute to discussions due to the strategies I employ.	3.58	0.52	High Extent
3	I ensure that every pupil has an opportunity to participate in class activities.	3.70	0.46	High Extent
4	My strategies foster a sense of responsibility in pupils for their learning.	3.50	0.53	High Extent
5	Pupils often initiate group tasks and projects on their own.	3.40	0.56	High Extent
6	My teaching approaches improve pupils' willingness to complete assignments.	3.68	0.47	High Extent
7	I observe increased interaction among pupils during collaborative tasks.	3.63	0.49	High Extent
8	Pupils consistently demonstrate enthusiasm in participating in class activities.	3.75	0.45	High Extent
9	My instructional techniques promote equal participation among pupils.	3.55	0.52	High Extent
10	The strategies I use have significantly improved overall class participation.	3.80	0.44	High Extent
	Cluster Mean	**3.62**		High Extent

Results on Table 2 reveal the extent to which teachers' strategies influence pupils' active participation. All items scored above 2.50, indicating that the strategies were perceived as effective to a high extent. The standard deviations ranged from 0.44 to 0.56, signifying a close clustering of responses around their averages. The cluster mean of 3.62 indicates that teachers' strategies greatly enhance pupils'

participation in classroom activities, particularly in areas such as discussion contribution and enthusiasm.

Hypothesis One

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on the strategies they employ to engage pupils in learning in primary schools in Enugu Education Zone.

Table 5

t-test of significant differences between the mean responses of male and female teachers on the strategies they employ to engage pupils in learning in primary schools in Enugu Education Zone.

Resp.	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Level of Sig.	Decision on Ho1
Female	285	3.70	0.48	303	1.45	1.96	0.05	Not Rejected
Male	20	3.60	0.52					

The independent t-test analysis of the mean difference between the responses of male and female teachers is shown in the table above. The calculated t-value (1.45) is less than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female teachers on the strategies they employ to engage pupils in learning.

Hypothesis Two

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers on the extent their strategies influence pupils' active participation in classroom activities.

Table 6

t-test of significant differences between the mean responses of male and female teachers on the extent their strategies influence pupils' active participation in classroom activities.

Resp.	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Level of Sig.	Decision on Ho2
Female	285	3.65	0.47	303	1.21	1.96	0.05	Not Rejected

Resp.	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Level of Sig.	Decision on Ho2
Male	20	3.58	0.50					

The t-test analysis of the mean difference in responses between male and female teachers is displayed above. The calculated t-value (1.21) is less than the critical t-value (1.96) at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female teachers regarding how their strategies influence pupils' active participation in classroom activities.

Discussion of the Principal Findings from the Study

Strategies Teachers Employ to Engage Pupils in Learning in Primary Schools in Enugu Education Zone

The study findings reveal that teachers utilize a range of strategies to engage pupils, including group discussions, questioning techniques, storytelling, inquiry-based activities, and problem-solving exercises. These approaches are aimed at fostering interaction, critical thinking, and participation in the classroom. For instance, group discussions were frequently used to encourage collaborative learning, which is vital for developing interpersonal skills and boosting pupil confidence. Storytelling emerged as another popular strategy, as it captures the attention of young learners and facilitates the retention of knowledge through relatable narratives. Furthermore, the use of questioning techniques was highlighted for its role in stimulating curiosity and encouraging active engagement during lessons. However, despite these efforts, the findings indicated that certain strategies, such as the use of technology and differentiated instructional methods, were less frequently employed. This aligns with findings from Ayeni (2019), who reported that while traditional methods are widely used, innovative practices such as integrating technology into lessons remain underutilized in many primary schools. Teachers in the Enugu Education Zone cited limited access to technological resources as a barrier to incorporating digital tools into their teaching practices.

The importance of these strategies cannot be overstated. Effective engagement methods not only enhance learning outcomes but also contribute to the holistic development of pupils. For instance, relating lessons to real-life situations helps pupils see the relevance of their education, motivating them to participate actively. Similarly, inquiry-based and problem-solving activities encourage critical thinking and decision-making skills, preparing pupils for future challenges. Nevertheless, the study identified gaps in the consistent application of these strategies. Teachers often faced challenges such as large class sizes and inadequate teaching aids, which limited their ability to implement interactive and personalized approaches effectively. This finding is consistent with Allen (2020), who noted that resource constraints in primary schools often hinder the full adoption of innovative teaching strategies.

Moreover, while teachers demonstrated a willingness to employ various engagement techniques, their effectiveness depended largely on their familiarity and comfort with these methods. Professional development and ongoing training play a crucial role in equipping teachers with the skills and confidence to implement diverse strategies successfully. The study stresses the need for targeted interventions, such as workshops and peer mentoring programs, to support teachers in adopting modern, evidence-based practices.

Extent Teachers' Strategies Influence Pupils' Active Participation in Classroom Activities

The findings of the study indicate that teachers' strategies significantly influence pupils' active participation in classroom activities. Pupils in classrooms where interactive methods were employed demonstrated higher levels of engagement, such as asking questions, contributing to discussions, and participating in collaborative tasks. This aligns with Storey, Smith & Taylor (2019), who emphasized the pivotal role of effective instructional strategies in fostering active involvement among learners.

One of the key observations was that teachers' ability to create an inclusive and stimulating environment positively impacted pupils' willingness to participate. For instance, activities such as group projects and inquiry-based learning provided opportunities for pupils to explore topics collaboratively, fostering teamwork and communication skills. Questioning techniques also played a crucial role in encouraging pupils to express their thoughts and ideas, thereby building their confidence and critical thinking abilities. However, the study also highlighted variability in the extent to which these strategies influenced participation. Factors such as class size, pupil motivation, and availability of resources significantly affected the outcomes. Teachers reported that in larger classes, it was challenging to ensure equal participation among pupils, often resulting in some learners being overlooked. This finding is supported by Ugwu (2020), who noted that classroom size and teacher workload are critical determinants of pupil engagement.

Additionally, the study revealed that the integration of technology into teaching methods had a profound impact on participation levels. Classrooms equipped with digital tools, such as educational apps and multimedia presentations, experienced higher engagement rates as pupils found these methods more interactive and relatable. However, the limited availability of technological resources in many schools within the Enugu Education Zone posed a significant barrier to their widespread use. The findings also stressed the importance of timely and constructive feedback in sustaining pupil engagement. Teachers who provided regular feedback on assignments and class activities observed greater enthusiasm and involvement from their pupils. Feedback not only serves as a motivational tool but also helps pupils understand their progress and areas for improvement, fostering a sense of responsibility for their learning.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified areas for improvement in the consistent application of engagement strategies. Some teachers expressed the need for additional training to enhance their competencies in implementing interactive methods effectively. Professional development

programs focusing on active learning strategies, classroom management, and the use of technology could address these gaps and further improve pupil participation.

Educational Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study suggest key implications for improving teaching strategies and enhancing pupils' active participation in primary schools within the Enugu Education Zone. First, although teachers employed a range of strategies—such as group discussions, storytelling, and problem-based learning—many faced limitations due to insufficient teaching materials and technological resources. This underscores the need for education stakeholders to invest in diverse instructional resources that support inclusive, sensory-based, and technology-enhanced learning.

Secondly, the study revealed that while teachers demonstrated awareness of pupil engagement strategies, their effectiveness was sometimes hindered by limited professional training. This calls for structured professional development programs focused on differentiated instruction, inquiry-based methods, and classroom management. Equipping teachers with these skills will strengthen their capacity to apply engagement strategies more effectively.

Conclusion

The study examined the strategies teachers employed to engage pupils in learning and the extent to which these strategies influenced pupils' active participation in classroom activities in primary schools within the Enugu Education Zone. Findings from the data revealed that teachers utilized a variety of strategies, including group discussions, questioning techniques, storytelling, real-life applications, and feedback, all of which effectively enhanced engagement. However, the use of modern instructional tools such as technology and differentiated learning strategies remained underutilized due to factors like limited resources and large class sizes.

Furthermore, the study demonstrated that these teaching strategies significantly influenced pupils' active participation. Pupils became more engaged in class discussions, took greater initiative in group tasks, and displayed heightened enthusiasm when exposed to interactive teaching methods. Nonetheless, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of instructional materials, and insufficient teacher training limited the consistency and effectiveness of these strategies. The statistical results also indicated no significant difference between male and female teachers in their use of engagement strategies or their influence on pupils' participation, suggesting a uniform adoption of practices across genders.

Ultimately, the study emphasized that while teachers in the Enugu Education Zone were making commendable efforts to implement various engagement strategies, there remained a strong need for targeted interventions, particularly in the areas of technological integration, professional development, and instructional support.

Recommendations

1. **Improve Access to Technological Resources**

The government and school management boards should prioritize the provision of ICT tools and infrastructure in public primary schools. Access to digital learning tools, educational apps, and multimedia content can enhance interactivity and significantly boost pupil engagement, especially when integrated into storytelling, inquiry, and problem-solving activities.

2. **Implement Continuous Teacher Professional Development**
   Regular workshops, seminars, and in-service training should be organized for primary school teachers, focusing on innovative instructional strategies, classroom management, and learner-centered pedagogy. Emphasis should be placed on building teacher capacity in active learning and differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of pupils.
3. **Strengthen Feedback and Learner Support Mechanisms**
   Teachers should be encouraged and trained to give timely and constructive feedback to pupils. Feedback should be used as a motivational and instructional tool to help pupils track their progress, develop self-regulated learning habits, and increase their participation in academic activities.
4. **Reduce Class Sizes and Provide Adequate Teaching Materials**
   To maximize the effectiveness of engagement strategies, especially in group-based and inquiry-led activities, class sizes should be reduced to manageable numbers. Additionally, schools should be equipped with sufficient teaching aids, including visual materials and manipulatives, to support interactive teaching across various subjects.

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