Students' Perceptions of Classroom Activities that Support the Development of Life Skills

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Abstract: *This study explored students' perceptions of classroom activities that support the development of life skills. The study employed a qualitative research design using an exploratory case study approach and was conducted at Butuan City Integrated National High School (BCINHS), which offers Technical Vocational Livelihood Information Technology (TVL-ICT) strands emphasizing hands-on and skills-based learning. Thirteen participants, consisting of five senior high school students, three teachers, and five parents from Grades 11 and 12, were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in experiential learning contexts. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews to capture diverse perspectives on life skills development and real-world learning. All data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly observed throughout the research process. The findings revealed that classroom activities play a significant role in developing students' life skills. Collaborative activities such as group projects, debates, and interactive tasks enhanced communication, cooperation, emotional regulation, and conflict management, while independent tasks, including animation and short film projects, fostered responsibility, perseverance, self-discipline, and time management. Students perceived classroom activities as effective preparation for real-life challenges by developing adaptability, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, a view similarly shared by teachers, who emphasized the value of experiential and collaborative learning in strengthening critical thinking and communication.*

Keywords: *Classroom activities; Experiential learning; Life skills; Real-world learning; Students' perceptions*

INTRODUCTION

Education today must go beyond academic mastery to support the development of essential life skills such as critical thinking, communication, adaptability, leadership, initiative, and problem-solving. While textbooks and content-based instruction remain important, traditional rote learning is often insufficient in preparing learners for real-world demands (Pahilanga, 2023). Students learn life skills more effectively through contextualized and experience-based classroom activities that connect theory to practice and mirror real-life situations. Technology-enhanced and performance-based classroom activities, particularly in TVL and ICT education, have been shown to increase student engagement, cognitive participation, and problem-solving abilities, enabling learners to apply reflective thinking to real-world challenges (Huang et al., 2024; Nagaratnam, 2024). These approaches align with the growing emphasis on holistic education, where learners are equipped not only with knowledge but also with practical skills needed to navigate modern life (Banusing, 2021).

In the Philippine context, life skills development is embedded in the K to 12 curriculum through values formation, contextualized instruction, and work immersion programs (DepEd, 2019). However, gaps remain, particularly in underserved schools where instruction is still largely textbook-driven and access to experiential learning opportunities is limited (Arnado et al., 2025). Studies have also identified challenges such as technology misuse, reduced learner motivation, and disruptions to life skills programs during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fernandez & Magallanes, 2020; Fernando & Bual, 2024). Given these concerns, examining students' perceptions of classroom activities that support the development of life skills is crucial. Understanding how learners experience collaborative, independent, and experiential classroom activities provides valuable insight into how effectively current practices prepare students for life beyond academics and informs efforts to strengthen instructional relevance and real-world readiness.

Theoretical framework

This study was anchored on the Constructivist Learning Theory. This study is anchored in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), developed by David A. Kolb in 1984, which explains learning as a process created through the transformation of experience. According to Kolb, meaningful learning occurs when learners engage in a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This framework directly aligns with the focus on students' perceptions of classroom activities that support the development of life skills, as it emphasizes learning through active participation, reflection, and application rather than

passive, content-based instruction. Classroom activities such as collaborative tasks, independent projects, and real-life simulations provide students with experiential opportunities that foster communication, problem-solving, adaptability, and decision-making skills.Kolb's theory also supports the study's emphasis on examining how classroom activities prepare learners for real-life situations by linking academic learning to authentic experiences. From the students' perspective, experiential classroom activities allow them to reflect on their actions, test ideas, and apply learned skills beyond the classroom setting. Anchoring the study in Experiential Learning Theory highlights the importance of student-centered, experience-based instruction in nurturing essential life skills and provides a strong theoretical foundation for analyzing how classroom practices influence students' readiness to face real-world challenges.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design using an exploratory case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how life skills and real-world learning were perceived and experienced by students, teachers, and parents at Butuan City Integrated National High School (BCINHS). This design was appropriate as it allowed the examination of real-life educational practices within their natural context. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, enabling a rich and holistic exploration of participants' experiences. Data were transcribed and analyzed thematically, with triangulation used to ensure credibility and trustworthiness. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly observed.

The study was conducted at Butuan City Integrated National High School (BCINHS) in Taguibo, Butuan City, Philippines. The school was selected because it offers TVL and ICT strands under the Senior High School program, which emphasize hands-on, experiential, and skills-based learning. Its diverse learner population and implementation of the K to 12 curricula made it an appropriate setting for examining life skills and real-world learning beyond textbook instruction.

Permission and ethical clearance were secured before data collection. Interviews with students were conducted at convenient times and locations, with sessions audio-recorded upon consent. All data were handled with strict confidentiality.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Transcripts were coded, categorized, and organized into emerging themes using manual and digital tools.

Sampling Technique and Sample

The study utilized purposive sampling, a non-probability

technique suitable for qualitative research. Participants were selected based on predefined inclusion criteria: students enrolled in the ICT or TVL strands, teachers handling these subjects with at least three years of teaching experience, and parents with children enrolled in the same strands. This technique ensured that participants were information-rich and directly involved in experiential and real-world learning. The participants consisted of thirteen (13) individuals, including five (5) senior high school students, three (3) teachers, and five (5) parents from the ICT and TVL strands of Grades 11 and 12. Students shared firsthand learning experiences, teachers provided insights into instructional practices, and parents contributed observations on life skills application beyond school. The number of participants was determined through data saturation, ensuring the adequacy and richness of the data.

Data were collected using semi-structured interview guides. These instruments were designed to elicit participants' perspectives on life skills development and real-world learning and were validated by experts to ensure content validity and ethical appropriateness.

Results and Discussions

Classroom Activities Perceived to Best Support the Development of Life Skills

This section presents the classroom activities perceived to best Support the development of life skills. The data in Table 1present classroom activities perceived to best support the development of life skills as perceived by the students. It can be seen that findings reveal three emerging themes, namely: collaborative learning for social skills development, independent tasks for social responsibility, and classroom activities as real-life preparation

Table 1
The thematic analysis of the classroom activities perceived to best support the development of the life skills as perceived by the students

Participants	Code	Category	Theme
S1, S3, S5	Group projects, debates, interactive tasks, and collaboration	Communication, cooperation, conflict management, and respect for others' ideas	Collaborative Learning for Social Skill Development
S2, S4	Individual activities, animation/short film projects, deadline-driven tasks	Responsibility, perseverance, patience, and self-discipline	Independent Tasks for Personal Responsibility

S3, S4, S5	Problem-solving, adaptability, time management, and emotional regulation	Real-life readiness, decision-making, adaptability	Classroom Activities as Real-Life Preparation

Findings show that group-based classroom activities such as group projects, debates, and interactive tasks are perceived as effective in developing essential life skills. These activities provide students with opportunities to exchange ideas, practice cooperation, and enhance communication skills. From gathered interviews, students emphasize the following :

, *"maka allow ako… makashare sa ilahang mga ideas og makalearn pod ko sa uban tao na maka improve pod sa akong communication skills." (S1)*

"mag collaborate, mo communicate o mo take responsibility," (S3)

"dili lang nako ipakita akong emotion kay kailangan namong magtinabangay." (S5)

It can be gleaned that group activities require learners to reflect on how teamwork nurtures interpersonal competence. Managing differences and emotions within groups is also reflected in conflicts; emotional control becomes necessary. This indicates that collaborative tasks mirror real-life social situations where cooperation and emotional regulation are essential. The strong impact of group-based activities on communication, cooperation, emotional regulation, and conflict management implies that teachers should intentionally integrate structured collaborative learning into daily instruction. Group projects, debates, and interactive tasks mirror real-life social situations, enabling learners to practice teamwork, manage emotions, and respect diverse perspectives. This supports the literature which emphasizes that experiential and collaborative strategies, such as project-based learning, role-playing, and group work, effectively cultivate interpersonal skills and social awareness (Zhang et al., 2024; Chen & Huang, 2025). The students' experiences of listening to peers, recognizing better ideas, and resolving differences align with Antony and Tripathi's (2023) assertion that communication, self-awareness, and problem-solving are best developed through reflective and interactive classroom activities.

Another emerging theme is the independent tasks as training for personal responsibility. It can be seen that Individual classroom activities, particularly animation and short film projects, are viewed as important in developing self-discipline, patience, and perseverance. S2 says, *"ikaw ra gyud isa ana kinahanglan gyud humanon para ma meet deadline."* This indicates that working alone requires commitment and responsibility. These tasks push learners to manage their time effectively and remain motivated despite challenges. Patience and perseverance are also evident when S4 states that such activities develop *"patience ug perseverance… kugihan gyud nimu para mahuman ang task."* Their experiences with individual projects reinforced the value of independent work in building confidence and accountability. The findings highlight the importance of individual tasks in fostering responsibility, self-discipline, perseverance, and time management. Activities such as animation and short film projects require learners to work independently, meet deadlines, and sustain motivation despite challenges. This implies that classrooms should balance collaboration with independent, skill-focused tasks that strengthen accountability and confidence. These results reinforce previous studies, which stress that life skills such as patience, resilience, and self-regulation are effectively developed through hands-on, reflective, and problem-solving activities embedded in authentic learning contexts (Durmishi et al., 2024).

Classroom Activities as Preparation for Real-Life Challenges are indicated in both collaborative and individual activities in simulations of real-life situations. Students recognize that classroom tasks prepare them to adapt, solve problems, and interact effectively beyond school. S3 describes these activities as *"murag gyud siya training siya sa real life kay di man tanan sayon so kinahanglan jud ko ma adjust."*

Findings also illustrate that students learn to listen to others, recognize better ideas, and apply these skills in real-life contexts. As S5 shares, *"maminaw sa ilaha sa group members… naa'y mas nindot nga idea, nga maconnect pod nako sa real life situations."* This highlights how classroom experiences foster practical decision-making and social awareness. The role of classroom activities as preparation for real-life challenges suggests that learning tasks should be deliberately designed to simulate real-world conditions. Students' recognition of classroom activities as "training for real life" supports the literature emphasizing real-world grounding of instruction, particularly through simulations, service learning, and applied projects (Anabo, 2025; Swaminathan, 2023). Such approaches help learners adapt to complexity, solve problems, and interact effectively beyond the school setting.

These findings imply that both collaborative and individual classroom activities play complementary roles in developing life skills. Group-based tasks strengthen communication, cooperation, and conflict management, while individual activities cultivate responsibility, perseverance, and self-discipline. Together, these activities function as meaningful preparation for real-life challenges, enabling learners to navigate social interactions, manage responsibilities, and adapt to

complex situations beyond the classroom. These findings imply that teachers play a critical facilitative role in maximizing the life-skill value of classroom activities. By integrating experiential strategies, collaborative inquiry, and reflective practices, teachers help learners connect academic content to practical and social realities. This aligns with studies highlighting that educators who intentionally foster adaptability, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving significantly enhance student engagement and long-term competence development (Jeyapriya & Jayachithra, 2024; Abapo, 2024).

Table 1 presents findings of classroom activities perceived to best support the development of life skills. It can be seen that two emerging themes are revealed. Teachers perceive experiential and collaborative classroom activities as most effective in developing life skills. Activities such as problem-solving tasks, class discussions, community-based projects, and decision-making exercises are highlighted for fostering collaboration, critical thinking, and communication

Conclusions

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that well-designed classroom activities play a crucial role in developing students' life skills. Collaborative learning activities effectively enhance communication, cooperation, emotional regulation, and conflict management, while independent tasks strengthen responsibility, perseverance, self-discipline, and time management. Together, these activities prepare students for real-life challenges by fostering adaptability, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. The study further underscores the important role of teachers in intentionally integrating experiential, collaborative, and independent learning activities to promote holistic life skills development beyond academic learning. Teachers may integrate a balanced combination of collaborative and independent classroom activities to enhance students' life skills, while providing opportunities for reflection and real-life application. Students may actively engage in both group and individual tasks to further develop communication, responsibility, and problem-solving skills. School principals may support these efforts by encouraging life skills–oriented instructional practices, providing professional development, and ensuring adequate resources for experiential learning. Future researchers may conduct related studies in different contexts, with larger samples, or examine the long-term effects of classroom activities on life skills development to strengthen and expand the current findings.

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