



## LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS ON DEPARTMENTALIZED INSTRUCTION IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL

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<https://doi.org/10.69502/cpyc4992>

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**Abstract:** Teachers and administrators in elementary schools have long had a keen interest in how the structure of the classroom influences the growth of the pupils. At the elementary school level, teachers must be experts in every topic, with the most popular subjects being math, science, social studies, English, language arts, and writing. This qualitative study sought to understand how departmentalized elementary teachers in Grades 4, 5, and 6 met the affective needs of their pupils as well as their lived experiences. The primary focus of the study was how elementary school instructors understood departmentalized instruction and described how this organization affected the affective needs of the pupils they taught. The data collected from the interviews was categorized into distinct themes. In this study, qualitative interviewing and data collection methodology was employed. Phenomenology was used as the research design. Using this method of inquiry, researchers record teachers' thoughts on meeting the affective needs of their pupils based on their actual experiences. The data collected helps teachers make judgments about how to organize their classrooms. Respondents emphasize that teaching fewer courses allows teachers to better manage their time, which improves their capacity to design thorough lesson plans and offer insightful feedback. Similarly, it underscores how specialization promotes student-centered instruction by enabling educators to modify their approaches to suit particular needs and learning preferences. Additionally, it shortens the preparation period, which helps teachers better balance their personal and professional lives. The statement highlights how specialization might help instructors achieve a better work-life balance. It implies that educators might expedite their preparation procedures and devote more time to their personal life by specializing in particular courses or fields. Cutting down preparation time can improve wellbeing by reducing stress and workload. It also elaborates on the difficulties associated with transitions, such as coordinating, relationship-building, and transitions, and offers solutions. Building relationships, using strategic planning, and having efficient communication among educators are all necessary to address obstacles during the shift. Additionally, some responders suggest more seminars and training opportunities to improve teachers' abilities and knowledge. The Professional Standards for Teachers (DepEd, 2017) also emphasizes the significance of professional growth. The outcomes of this study may be expanded upon in subsequent investigations into departmentalized classrooms.

**Keywords:** Departmentalized Instruction, Phenomenological study, Olongapo City, Zambales

## INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study looked at how teachers in Grades 4, 5, and 6 who worked in separate departments met the emotional needs of their students and what their lives were like. The main research topic of the study is how elementary school teachers comprehend departmentalized instruction and how this structure affects the emotional needs of their students. We put the information we got from the interviews into several groups based on themes. This study used qualitative interviews and a strategy for collecting data. The study design was based on phenomenology. Researchers use this style of inquiry to write down what teachers think about how to address their students' emotional needs based on what they have seen and done. Studies have emphasized the need for professional development programs that address these gaps, ensuring that educators are not only qualified but also confident and invested in the subjects they teach (Ridder et al., 2021). It has been noted that teachers' attitudes towards their subjects influence their teaching strategies and approaches, with a lack of enthusiasm potentially leading to a monotonous and uninspiring learning environment (Ajjur & Al-Ghamdi, 2021). People who support departmentalization think that having specialized teachers teach in their areas of expertise will make lessons better because they know a lot about them.



Students in a self-contained classroom learn more than they would in any other setting (Chan & Jarman, 2019). Another study by Anderson et al. (2021) discusses lessons learned from an integrated curriculum that highlights the importance of structured educational approaches for implementing diverse content. Ly (2024) emphasizes the role of teachers as facilitators in a learner-centered environment, where they encourage students to engage with peers and take part in collaborative learning experiences. School connection or an environment where students believe that teachers care about their learning and them as people can help kids progress from being self-centered to being part of a community in a departmentalized school. Wang & Eccles (2012) elaborate on how social support from adults significantly influences various dimensions of school engagement. Their longitudinal study illustrates that supportive relationships in middle and high school correlate with higher levels of academic achievement. Furthermore, the pressure from high-stakes accountability systems often intensifies this situation. Research indicates that educators frequently experience tensions between their commitment to address individual student needs through differentiation and the demands associated with standardized testing and performance evaluations (Wang & Eccles, 2012). Sarfraz et al. (2022) articulate that the perception of teachers' self-efficacy is directly related to how well they can control their instructional methods and, consequently, how effectively they can foster an engaging learning environment for students. The goal of the instructional organization is to help with teaching and learning activities, not to set policies or run schools. Ochoa et al. (2019) highlight the importance of students feeling integrated and adjusted within the school environment to achieve academic success, thereby supporting the need for dynamic educational frameworks in which students feel connected and supported. When the curriculum is clearly set out and talked about, it is possible to build an organizational structure that will best support the program's successful delivery and mastery. What preservice teachers think about American elementary school departmentalization. DepEd Order No. 49, s., says that departmentalization is an important way to raise student achievement and the quality of teaching. 2006. It gives primary schools advice on how to do this, stressing how important it is to prepare ahead and train teachers well. The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533), sometimes known as the "K-12 law," aims to improve the basic education system and make it more departmentalized. It stresses how crucial it is for instructors to focus on one thing and how kids are getting better at higher-order thinking. The departmentalized teaching method gets even greater support from Sec. 8 of DepEd Order No. 2015, which includes suggestions for K–12 curriculum subject specialization. It explains what leaders, administrators, and teachers need to do to make sure that it works. DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2016 makes the K–12 program run more smoothly and encourages teachers to try new ways of teaching, such departmentalization, to help students do better. The Department of Education offers a program called departmentalization that lets teachers focus on only one subject area to achieve extra statutory requirements. When grade levels are departmentalized, each subject gets the same amount of attention, which makes better use of time. Because of departmentalization, teachers don't have to spend as much time checking the criteria for each subject. Teachers must tell the students what the standards are for the subject they teach. Furthermore, Murry et al. discuss the influence of departmental management on faculty performance, noting that department chairs can positively affect work outcomes by fostering an effective departmental culture that acknowledges and encourages faculty efforts (Murry et al., 2019). When schools use departmentalization, teachers become more knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. Supporters of departmentalization say that having specialized teachers teach in their areas of expertise will make lessons better because they know so much about them. Additionally, the research conducted by (Wyss & Preston, 2022) illustrates the shift towards departmentalization in upper-elementary education, arguing that this model accommodates improved instructional strategies and enhances opportunities





for student achievement. The study wanted to find out how departmentalized systems affected teacher effectiveness and student performance rates in middle schools. It has been shown that departmentalization lowers things that can lead to teacher burnout, like a heavy workload and emotional weariness. This makes it more likely that schools will keep experienced and highly qualified instructors (Taylor, 2023). Kong & Lai (2022) indicate that teacher development programs can significantly enhance teachers' content knowledge and collaborative engagement, which are crucial factors in student achievement outcomes. Akpalu et al. (2025) discuss how effective leadership and instructional supervision can play a crucial role in supporting teachers and reducing burnout. Opponents of departmentalized education focus on the needs of students, while supporters stress the importance of keeping highly competent teachers to ensure the quality of instruction, which will eventually help students succeed. This study is important because it gives us information about the best departmentalized classroom model for primary schools and whether schools should stop using the traditional classroom layout.

## FRAMEWORK

The study, which was based on Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) and PMBOK (PMI, 2017), shows how important it is for stakeholders to be included and for Zambales local government entities to use standardized project management methods. Similarly, Eskerod & Huemann (2013) discuss the importance of managing stakeholder relationships, suggesting that effective engagement can enhance project progress, particularly when sustainability and diverse interests are considered. The PMBOK framework gives you tools to keep an eye on budgets, timeframes, risks, stakeholders, and quality, which makes projects go more smoothly and stay on track with strategic goals. Zeng et al. (2024) examine harmonious teacher-student relationships and their influence on student performance. Their findings indicate that projects designed to foster these relationships — when aligned with school goals and supported by clear management practices — lead to better academic outcomes. Thus, effective stakeholder engagement emerges as a key factor in the successful implementation of educational initiatives. Draçi and Laska (2023) discuss the significant impact of community involvement in local decision-making processes, advocating for a participatory model that engages various stakeholders and aligns resources with local development goals. They argue that public participation helps ensure effective resource allocation, fostering community support for initiatives and ultimately improving development outcomes in local governance, which echoes Banawa's emphasis on the necessity of aligning local projects with overarching organizational goals. To improve project outcomes and long-term success, Zambales LGUs need to include these best practices in their comprehensive project management frameworks. The Zambales Local Government Unit had challenges with project management. This study looked at those problems and suggested ways to improve planning, execution, and working with service providers. The framework includes ways to design a project, management services, making it easier for local providers to be found, cost estimates, and purchasing tactics to make sure that purchases are made on time and at a good price. Project selection, scoping, resource allocation, scheduling, stakeholder involvement, risk management, and issue resolution are all important parts of enhancing LGU project management in Zambales. The focus is on careful project planning, allocating money, assessing risks, getting stakeholders involved, and making sure that procurement is done quickly and effectively. Also, checking out local suppliers makes it easier for businesses to work together and saves money. To get the best results from procurement and meet project goals in the most cost-effective way, the framework



suggests competitive bidding and performance evaluation. A detailed conceptual framework was used in this study to look at the project management needs of Zambales LGUs. This study found ways to improve project design, execution, and relationships with service providers. The framework helps the Zambales Local Government Unit build things and offer services. Organizations and professionals can use good project management techniques to make sure that everyone is on the same page with strategic goals, that everyone is aware of what's going on, that stakeholders are involved, that resources are used wisely, that risks are reduced, that progress is tracked, and that clear success metrics are set. Companies may handle projects and do well in a variety of situations by being open to numerous points of view. Use research to improve how you manage projects in your area.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The school environment has a big effect on how well kids learn. At this age, the most important thing for students is to feel like they are part of a community with their classmates, teachers, and school. How well students behave and work along in groups is regarded to be a component that affects how well they study in groups. The major goals of this study are to look at how teaching is changing in teachers' cooperative group discussions and how theoretical learning theories relate to new ways of teaching. Learning strategies are the ways of thinking and doing that a student uses to try to change how they store information. A good teacher not only teaches a pupil the material, but also how to study, remember, think, and get oneself going.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

(Dodd et al., 2021) employs qualitative methods to analyze the experiences of community health workers, demonstrating the value of phenomenological research in understanding how individual encounters shape their roles and responses within decentralized health systems in the Philippines. Their findings show that researchers who engage in ongoing reflexive practices are better positioned to produce thoughtful and nuanced interpretations of their data, which leads to richer and more authentic research findings (Kuhlmann & Franzke, 2021). When doing phenomenological study, the researcher follows a strict and organized series of steps. This includes putting aside whatever ideas they already have about the subject of the study before interviewing participants to gather data (Ainscow, 2018). This research employed qualitative design. This method made it possible to look at the teachers' point of view in detail. We picked this specific study method because it demands a full understanding of how the participants felt and what they went through (Smith, 2015; Yin, 2018). This qualitative phenomenological study uses many ways to gather data. An interview guide and a survey that are relevant to the experiences and points of view of the instructor participants are used to collect data. We used a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide to find out what departmentalized public school teachers have to say about how it affects the emotional needs of their students. The interviewer used the planned and ordered interview questions as a guide.

### Research Site

The study conducted on intermediate teachers from regular and SPED for gifted programs at Sergia Soriano Integrated Elementary School SPED Center, located in Kalaklan, Olongapo City.



## Participants

The researcher likes to generalize the results of the study. The sample for this study was called a "accessible" or "available" population, and the researcher realistically solicited participants from this group (Ainscow, 2018). The study's participants were all intermediate teachers (both regular and SPED for talented students) at the Sergia Soriano Integrated Elementary School SPED Center, which was set up like a department. The researcher did not include information regarding how well-qualified the teachers were, how many years of experience they had, how often they showed up to work, or other things that are important for student advancement.

## Instrumentation

The study tool's goal was to get thorough accounts of the participants' training experiences in different departments. The researcher utilized guided questions to get participants to think critically about their own thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and experiences relating to the topic at hand. The tool changed over time until it was a complete representation of the thing being investigated. The researcher employed a lot of different tools, like Messenger, printed surveys, and recording. The researcher got permission to do the study and interview by getting in touch with the principal and assistant superintendent of schools. This guided questionnaire was answered by teachers from the Sergia Soriano Esteban Integrated School SPED Center. Before they filled out the questionnaire, the people who answered it got a short briefing and explanation of the techniques. The briefing will explain what the study is trying to find out and why the questionnaire is being used. The survey will take about twenty to thirty minutes to finish. After the study was approved, the people who answered the questionnaire got it. The researcher was there to see the interview procedure. The goal of this task was to check if the respondents' answers were correct.

## Data Collection

Qualitative research methods were used to give detailed descriptions of complicated events, keep track of unusual or unexpected events, shed light on how people with very different interests and roles experience and interpret events, give voice to people whose opinions are rarely heard, do initial research to come up with theories and even test hypotheses, and move closer to explanations. Qualitative methods can be very useful for health care and health policy research, especially when things are changing quickly and a more integrated theory base and research agenda are being built. The discipline, on the other hand, uses the best practices and traditions of qualitative methods, but it also knows that you need special training and experience to use them. This qualitative phenomenological study uses methods to collect data. An interview guide that is relevant to the experiences and opinions of the instructor participants is used to collect data. We utilized a semi-structured open-ended interview guide to talk to public school teachers about their experiences with departmentalized education and how they think it affects their students' emotional needs. The interviewer used the pre-written and organized questions as a guide. This is a list of questions that cover the topics that should have been talked about. A sample topic is best when you just have one chance to interview. The semi-structured interview guide gave the interviewer clear directions and reliable, comparable qualitative data. The study literature talks with things that have to do with the emotional needs of primary school students and the idea of departmentalized education. The researcher kept a field notebook in addition to the interview guide. In this journal, she wrote down





her thoughts on how the departmentalized classroom affected the children's emotional needs and how the participants acted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The outcomes or findings come from answering research questions or testing hypotheses on a topic that is bigger than the research articles. This knowledge could make teaching more effective and help students learn better. By focusing on one subject, teachers can spend more time planning lessons, developing the curriculum, and coming up with new ways to teach. Students may learn more and have more interesting classes. Departmentalization is possible because professors can teach subjects, they are enthusiastic about. This may make students more interested and involved. A teacher's love for a subject may grab pupils' attention and push them to do well. Departmentalized instruction also encourages teachers to work together. The goal of this qualitative research study was to find out what intermediate elementary school teachers thought about departmentalized classrooms. Principals and other educational leaders can make better decisions about how to organize classrooms if they know how instructors feel about them. The results of the research study's data collecting are in this chapter. These results show what fifteen intermediate elementary school teachers who have worked in departmentalized courses have been through. The researcher got information from these 15 people through guided interviews in person. This method of acquiring data allowed each participant to talk about their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences as a teacher. Saldana (2015) says that coding is important for qualitative data because it helps the researcher fully grasp the data by finding similarities and differences. It was found that there were frequent and consistent occurrences once all the data had been organized into patterns. This method of classification made it possible to group instructors' thoughts about departmentalized classrooms into categories and themes that captured the main points. We came up with the themes by answering the study's principal research question.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to find out what intermediate elementary school instructors think about departmentalized classrooms in terms of how they may help students do better. The teachers who took part in this study will help the reader understand how organizations work, what they think, and what they have been through. People who conducted this survey expressed strong feelings about elementary school courses that were divided into groups. Teachers thought that teachers should only teach in areas where they are experts, that strict teaching is necessary, that getting to know more than one teacher is important, that understanding the child's social and emotional needs is important, and that working with other teachers is important for departmentalization to work. The current study used a qualitative method to answer the research questions. Teacher semi-structured interviews give a more thorough picture of departmentalization, its effects on student growth, and its pros and cons. The information acquired will help teachers decide how to organize their classrooms.

## TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

Research finds that departmentalized forms improve morale, reduce workloads for instructors, and free up more time for them to create engaging lessons, fully understand the requirements of each student, and deeply understand the standards and subject matter. The "trend of highly qualified teachers leaving the field due to burnout" was mentioned, and it was suggested that action could



"ultimately improve student achievement." Supporters of departmentalized education emphasize the value of having highly qualified teachers on staff to assure instructional quality and improve student performance, while opponents argue from a student-centered standpoint.

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