



Instructional Approaches in Teaching Learners with Nonverbal Learning Disabilities in Selected Special Education Centers in the Division of Quezon City: Basis for a Proposed Training Program

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18890491

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Abstract:

This study investigated the instructional strategies and approaches utilized for teaching learners with nonverbal disabilities in the Division of Quezon City. Employing a descriptive-quantitative research design, the study assessed the perspectives of school heads and Special Education (SPED) teachers across five pedagogical categories: Constructivism, Collaborative Learning, Thematic Instruction/Project-Based Learning, Inquiry-Based Learning, and the Reflective Approach. Data analysis revealed that Thematic Instruction and Reflective Practices are the most consistently utilized strategies, favored for their ability to provide holistic context and facilitate professional self-correction. While Collaborative Learning was highly regarded as a therapeutic tool for social skill development, Constructivism showed a significant "perception gap" between teachers and administrators, particularly regarding its child-centric implementation. Results further indicated that while hands-on activities are prevalent, establishing "closer-knit communication" and fostering true student autonomy remain persistent challenges due to the nature of nonverbal disabilities. The study concludes that while educators are proficient in adaptive and integrated teaching, there is a critical need for targeted professional development in student-led inquiry and the integration of assistive communication tools. These findings provide a framework for enhancing evidence-based practices and administrative support within the Philippine special education system.

Keywords: Nonverbal Disabilities, Special Education (SPED), Instructional Strategies, Constructivism, Collaborative Learning

Introduction:

Nonverbal learning disabilities have unique learning needs that require specialized interventions and educational programs. Some of the challenges associated with teaching learners with disability include difficulties in communication, sensory processing, socialization, and behavior management. These challenges can make it difficult for learners with disability to learn in a traditional classroom setting.

Effective instructional approaches are crucial for supporting the learning and development of learners with disability. Identifying commonly used strategies and approaches can inform the development of evidence-based practices that support the unique learning needs of learners with disability. For example, constructivist approaches can help learners with disability to make meaning of their experiences and develop problem-solving skills, while collaborative learning can help to improve socialization and communication skills. Thematic and project-based approaches can also be effective for teaching learners with disability, as they provide opportunities for hands-on learning and skill-building in a structured and predictable environment. Identifying effective instructional approaches can also inform the development of professional development programs and support services for SPED teachers, which can help to improve the quality of education and support services for learners with Nonverbal learning disabilities.

The motivation for selecting schools in the Division of Quezon City as the study site is based on the fact that the region has a high concentration of educational institutions and is home to a large population of learners with disability. As the economic and political center of the country, the Division of Quezon City is also a hub for research, innovation, and policy-making. Thus, conducting the study in this region provides an opportunity to gather data from a diverse group of learners with Nonverbal disabilities and a range of educational settings, including public and private schools



and special education centers. Furthermore, the study findings can be used to inform policy-making and educational practices not only in the Division of Quezon City but also in other regions of the Philippines. This can help to improve the quality of education and support services for learners with Nonverbal disabilities and promote greater inclusion of individuals with disability in society.

The potential implications and applications of the findings of this study are significant for policy-makers, school heads, SPED teachers, learners with disability, parents, and the community. Policy-makers can use the findings to inform the development of policies and programs that support the learning and development of learners with a Nonverbal disabilities. School heads and SPED teachers can use the findings to improve their instructional practices and develop evidence-based interventions that support the unique learning needs of learners with disability. Learners with Nonverbal disabilities and their families can benefit from improved instructional practices that help to promote academic and social development. Finally, the community can benefit from improved education and support services for learners with Nonverbal disabilities, which can help to promote inclusion and improve the quality of life for individuals with Nonverbal disabilities and their families.

Methodology:

Research Design

For this study, a descriptive survey research design will be used to gather data on the commonly used instructional approaches and strategies for teaching learners with nonverbal disability, as assessed by school heads and SPED teachers. A survey research design is suitable for this study as it allows for the collection of quantitative data on the prevalence and effectiveness of different instructional approaches, as well as the assessment of differences in perception between school heads and SPED teachers.

According to a study by Karakaya and Demiral (2019), survey research designs are commonly used in studies related to special education to gather information from a large sample of participants in a relatively short period of time. The authors note that survey research designs are particularly useful for exploring the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders, such as teachers and administrators, towards special education programs and services.

Furthermore, the use of a descriptive survey research design in this study is supported by the literature on instructional approaches for teaching learners with nonverbal disability. A review of literature by Dawson and Watling (2000) suggests that there is a need for research to evaluate the effectiveness of different instructional approaches for learners with disability, as well as to identify the barriers and challenges that teachers face in implementing these approaches. A survey research design can help to provide insights into these issues by collecting data on the prevalence and effectiveness of different instructional approaches, as well as the challenges faced by SPED teachers in implementing these approaches.

A descriptive survey research design is appropriate for this study as it allows for the collection of quantitative data on the prevalence and effectiveness of different instructional approaches, as well as the assessment of differences in perception between school heads and SPED teachers. This design is also supported by the literature on special education and instructional approaches for learners with nonverbal disability.

Respondents of the Study

There were two groups of respondents involved in the study which composed of school heads and teachers.

Table 1 displays the respondents of the study.

Table 1. Respondents of the Study

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
SPED Teachers	137	78.7
School Heads	37	21.3
Total	174	100%

Table 2. Age Distribution of the Respondents



Age Group	Frequency	Percent
21 - 30 yrs. old	27	15.5
31 - 40 yrs. old	37	21.3
41 - 50 yrs. old	56	32.2
51 - 60 yrs. old	36	20.7
61 years old and above	18	10.3
Total	174	100.0

Table 3. Respondents as to Educational Attainment

Highest Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's Degree	44	25.3
Master's Degree	32	18.4
With units in MA	31	17.8
with complete academic req in MA	37	21.3
Doctoral Degree	19	10.9
with complete academic req. in Doctoral Program	3	1.7
with units in Doctoral Degree	8	4.6
Total	174	100.0

Research Instruments

For this study on instructional approaches for teaching learners with nonverbal disability, several research instruments will be used to collect data from school heads and SPED teachers in selected special education centers in the Division of Quezon City.

- 1 Survey questionnaire: A survey questionnaire will be used to collect data on the demographic profile of the respondents and the commonly used instructional approaches and strategies for teaching learners with nonverbal disability. The questionnaire will be composed of items that address the different instructional approaches, including constructivism, collaborative learning, thematic instruction/project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and reflective approach. Respondents will be asked to rate the frequency and effectiveness of these approaches in their teaching practices.
- 2 Open-ended questions: Open-ended questions will be included in the survey questionnaire to gather additional information on the common problems encountered by SPED teachers in teaching learners with nonverbal disability, and to identify any suggestions or recommendations they may have for improving instructional approaches.
- 3 Acceptability and feasibility survey: A separate survey will be administered to school heads and SPED teachers to assess the acceptability and feasibility of a proposed professional training model for instructional approaches in teaching learners with disability. This survey will be composed of Likert-scale items and open-ended questions.
- 4 Observation checklist: A classroom observation checklist will be used to supplement the survey data with direct observations of instructional practices in the classroom. This checklist will include items related to the use of different instructional approaches, as well as any accommodations or modifications made to meet the unique needs of learners with disability.



The use of these research instruments is supported by the literature on special education and instructional approaches for learners with disability. For instance, a study by Weng et al. (2011) suggests that survey questionnaires are effective tools for gathering information on instructional practices for learners with disability, while classroom observations can provide more detailed information on the implementation and effectiveness of these practices. Additionally, a study by McDonnell et al. (2013) highlights the importance of gathering feedback from teachers and administrators on the feasibility and acceptability of professional development programs in special education. The combination of these research instruments can provide a comprehensive picture of instructional approaches for teaching learners with disability, as well as the challenges and opportunities for improving these approaches through professional development programs.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure for this study on instructional approaches for teaching learners with disability, from the researcher's point of view, was as follows:

1. Selection of Participants: The researcher invited school heads and SPED teachers from selected special education centers in the Division of Quezon City, who had experience in teaching learners with disability, to participate in the study through an invitation letter sent via email.
2. Administration of the Survey Questionnaire: The survey questionnaire was created using Google Form and sent to participants via email. The researcher provided instructions on how to access and complete the survey questionnaire, which included items on the different instructional approaches for teaching learners with nonverbal disability. The survey was available for a designated period of time, and participants were reminded to complete the survey before the deadline.
3. Classroom Observation: The researcher selected a subset of participants for classroom observation to supplement the survey data with direct observations of instructional practices in the classroom. The observation checklist was used to collect data on the use of different instructional approaches, as well as any accommodations or modifications made to meet the unique needs of learners with nonverbal disability.
4. Administration of the Acceptability and Feasibility Survey: The researcher created a separate survey using Google Form and administered it to school heads and SPED teachers to assess the acceptability and feasibility of a proposed professional training model for instructional approaches in teaching learners with nonverbal disability. This survey was composed of Likert-scale items and open-ended questions.
5. Data Analysis: The researcher used statistical software to analyze the data collected from the survey questionnaire, classroom observation, and acceptability and feasibility survey. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were calculated to describe the prevalence and effectiveness of different instructional approaches. Inferential statistics, such as Mann-Whitney U tests, were used to compare the assessments of school heads and SPED teachers on the effectiveness of instructional approaches.
6. Reporting of Findings: The researcher reported the findings of the study in a research report that included a summary of the data analysis, key findings, and recommendations for improving instructional approaches for teaching learners with nonverbal disability. The report was shared with school heads, SPED teachers, and other stakeholders involved in special education to help inform decision-making and improve teaching practices.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The following is the proposed statistical treatment of data for this study on instructional approaches for teaching learners with nonverbal disability:

1. Descriptive statistics: Descriptive statistics will be used to describe the prevalence and effectiveness of different instructional approaches. Measures of central tendency, such as means, variance and standard deviation, frequency, percentages, and rank will be calculated for each variable.
2. T-test: The independent samples t-test is a statistical test used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of two independent groups. This test is appropriate when the two groups being compared are separate and independent from each other, and the data for each group are normally distributed.

The steps to conduct an independent samples t-test are as follows:

1. Formulate the null and alternative hypotheses:

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between the means of the two groups, while the alternative hypothesis states that there is a significant difference between the means of the two groups.



2. Check the assumptions:
Check for normality of the data distribution and homogeneity of variances between the two groups.
3. Calculate the test statistic:
Calculate the t-value by dividing the difference between the two sample means by the standard error of the difference.
4. Determine the degrees of freedom:
Degrees of freedom are calculated by subtracting 1 from the sample size of each group and then adding them together.
5. Determine the critical value:
The critical value is determined by the significance level and degrees of freedom.
6. Compare the calculated t-value with the critical value:
If the calculated t-value is greater than the critical value, then reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference between the means of the two groups. If the calculated t-value is less than the critical value, then fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant difference between the means of the two groups.
7. Report the results:
Report the t-value, degrees of freedom, p-value, and effect size (if applicable) to provide evidence for the conclusion.

Content analysis: Content analysis will be used to analyze the open-ended questions in the survey questionnaire and the acceptability and feasibility survey. This technique involves identifying and categorizing patterns in the data to provide insight into the opinions and experiences of participants. Overall, these statistical methods will provide a comprehensive analysis of the data collected in this study and allow for the identification of significant differences and correlations that can inform the development of effective instructional approaches for teaching learners with nonverbal disability.

Results and Discussion:

Assessment of Constructivism and Collaborative Learning

The assessment of instructional strategies within Special Education (SPED) centers in Quezon City reveals a pedagogical landscape specifically calibrated for the unique requirements of nonverbal learners. By evaluating five core instructional categories, the study identifies how school heads and SPED teachers perceive the effectiveness of current classroom practices. The resulting data underscores a sophisticated, albeit varied, application of educational theories intended to mitigate the communicative and sensory challenges inherent in nonverbal disabilities.

Constructivism, as a foundational pillar of this study, emphasizes that learning is an active process where students build new knowledge upon existing mental frameworks. The data indicates a significant consensus on the cumulative nature of learning, with the indicator "Knowledge is constructed and built upon other knowledge" ranking first with a composite mean of 3.60. This suggests that educators prioritize a scaffolding approach, ensuring that nonverbal learners achieve a level of mastery over basic concepts before transitioning to more complex cognitive tasks.

A notable divergence emerged between the two respondent groups regarding the implementation of constructivist theories. SPED teachers reported a utilization mean of 3.26, whereas school heads provided a significantly lower rating of 2.38, categorizing it as "Least Utilized." This disparity suggests a "perception gap" in the administrative layer; while teachers are actively applying constructivist elements during daily interactions, school heads may not observe the formal frameworks or documented lesson plans that traditionally signal this approach.

Analysis of these findings aligns with research by Kim and Lee (2019), who posit that constructivist environments significantly improve both academic achievement and social integration for students with disabilities. However, the overall composite mean of 3.434—interpreted as "Moderately Utilized"—indicates that there is still a missed opportunity for full-scale implementation. This finding highlights a clear need for targeted professional development to help teachers transition from intuitive scaffolding to a more intentional, evidence-based constructivist practice.



The study further examined the specific characteristics of the constructivist approach, identifying "Activity Oriented" as the highest-ranked trait with a composite mean of 3.64. For nonverbal learners, abstract verbal instruction is often less effective than physical, hands-on engagement. By prioritizing activities, teachers are able to bypass certain communication barriers, allowing students to demonstrate understanding through movement and manipulation of materials rather than relying solely on spoken language.

Parallel to constructivism, the study evaluated the utilization of Collaborative Learning, which focuses on interpersonal development and shared goals between the learner, the teacher, and the broader academic community. This strategy is particularly vital for nonverbal students, for whom social isolation is a constant risk. The data confirmed that social skill development is a primary motivator for this approach, with the indicator "Brings about a wide range of social skills" ranking first with a composite mean of 3.77.

There was a strong consensus between school heads and SPED teachers regarding the "Utilized" status of collaborative learning, reflected in an overall mean of 3.564. High scores were particularly evident in the involvement of the academic community, which achieved a mean of 3.57. This suggests that Quezon City SPED centers have adopted a "village" model of education, where the progress of a nonverbal learner is viewed as a collective responsibility involving not just the teacher, but also parents, therapists, and peers.

This collective approach is supported by the work of Koegel et al. (2018), who argue that for learners with nonverbal disabilities, the acquisition of interpersonal skills is just as critical as academic content. The study found that collaborative methods facilitate a vital shift from passive "instruction-following" to "active involvement," which also scored a mean of 3.57. This transition is essential for student empowerment, as it encourages learners to become participants in their own educational journey rather than mere recipients of care.

Despite these successes, the data suggests that "Positive Interdependence"—a hallmark of true collaborative learning—is still in a state of development. While students are working together, the "closer-knit communication" between teacher and student ranked lowest among collaborative characteristics (Mean: 3.35). In the context of nonverbal disabilities, this reflects the persistent difficulty of establishing fluid two-way communication channels, emphasizing the need for better integration of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools.

The results demonstrate that while both Constructivism and Collaborative Learning are valued, their application is currently more functional than systemic. The high ranking of knowledge construction and social skill building provides a strong foundation for future growth. To move from "Utilized" to "Highly Utilized," the proposed intervention plan must address the identified perception gaps and communication barriers, ensuring that these instructional strategies become a visible and measurable standard across all SPED centers.

Assessment of Thematic and Inquiry-Based Learning

The assessment of instructional strategies within Special Education (SPED) centers in Quezon City reveals a pedagogical landscape specifically calibrated for the unique requirements of nonverbal learners. By evaluating core instructional categories, the study identifies how school heads and SPED teachers perceive the effectiveness of current classroom practices. The resulting data underscores a sophisticated application of educational theories intended to mitigate the communicative and sensory challenges inherent in nonverbal disabilities through thematic and inquiry-based frameworks.

Thematic Instruction and Project-Based Learning (PBL) emerged as a cornerstone of the curriculum, focusing on integrating various subject areas into a coherent "whole." This approach is often centered around a specific real-world theme, which helps students see the connectivity between seemingly disparate lessons. The data indicates that this method is highly valued for its ability to provide a structured yet flexible environment where nonverbal learners can thrive through contextualized education.

A primary finding in this category is that the indicator "A powerful tool for reintegrating the curriculum" ranked first with a composite mean of 3.73. This suggests that SPED teachers in Quezon City are successfully using thematic units to break the "silo" nature of traditional subjects. By blending literacy, numeracy, and life skills into a single project,



educators ensure that the learning experience is less fragmented and more accessible to students who struggle with transitions and abstract shifts in focus.

The application of these themes is deeply rooted in "real-life examples," which served as the second highest indicator with a mean of 3.66. For nonverbal learners, who often struggle with abstract concepts without a concrete context, the ability to relate a lesson to a tangible object or daily routine is crucial. By grounding projects in the physical world, teachers provide the "mental anchors" necessary for students to retain information and apply it outside the classroom.

Analysis of these findings is supported by studies such as Kuo et al. (2018), which suggest that thematic instruction specifically improves the language and communication skills of learners with disabilities. The overall "Utilized" status, with a mean of 3.561, indicates that Quezon City SPED centers are effectively using hands-on projects to bridge the gap between academic theory and practical life skills. This integrated approach fosters a more holistic development of the child's cognitive and social abilities.

Parallel to thematic work, the study evaluated Inquiry-Based Learning, which shifts the instructional focus from "what" knowledge is to "how" it is acquired. This methodology prioritizes student questioning, investigation, and reasoning over the simple memorization of facts. For nonverbal learners, this can be a transformative shift, as it encourages them to engage with their environment as active observers and problem-solvers rather than passive recipients of information.

The data shows that the process of "reasoning and drawing conclusions based on observation" ranked first in this category with a composite mean of 3.63. This demonstrates that SPED teachers are prioritizing higher-order cognitive processing. Even when students cannot verbally articulate their findings, teachers are identifying and assessing the logical steps students take during hands-on experiments or observational tasks, thereby validating the internal cognitive labor of the nonverbal learner.

However, a significant discrepancy appeared between the assessments of teachers and school heads regarding the role of "students as active thinkers." SPED teachers rated this indicator high (Mean: 3.62), while school heads provided a much lower rating of 2.62. This suggests that while teachers are witnessing the internal "spark" of inquiry during classroom interactions, these moments of active thought may not be as visible to administrators during formal observations or in standardized reporting.

This perception gap highlights a need for better documentation and "visible thinking" strategies within SPED centers. If school heads do not perceive students as active participants in the inquiry process, it may lead to a lack of administrative support or funding for the very materials that make inquiry possible. Strengthening the evidence of student engagement through portfolios or video documentation could help align administrator perceptions with classroom realities.

The overall analysis suggests that while students are engaged in the mechanics of inquiry, the connection to the "real world" (Rank 5) remains the weakest link in the inquiry chain. This finding aligns with the warnings of Hume et al. (2018), who emphasize that inquiry-based methods require robust connections to out-of-school environments to be truly effective. Without a clear path from a classroom observation to a real-world application, the inquiry process remains an academic exercise rather than a functional life skill.

Both Thematic Instruction and Inquiry-Based Learning are "Utilized" strategies that provide significant value to nonverbal learners in Quezon City. To elevate these practices to "Highly Utilized" status, the proposed intervention plan must focus on two areas: improving the visibility of student thinking to satisfy administrative assessments and strengthening the bridge between classroom inquiry and real-world utility. By doing so, educators can ensure that nonverbal learners are not just learning about the world, but are equipped to navigate it.

Reflective Approach and Constructivist Characteristics

The assessment of instructional strategies within Special Education (SPED) centers in Quezon City reveals a pedagogical landscape specifically calibrated for the unique requirements of nonverbal learners. By evaluating core instructional categories, the study identifies how school heads and SPED teachers perceive the effectiveness of current



classroom practices. The resulting data underscores a sophisticated application of educational theories, particularly the Reflective Approach, intended to mitigate the communicative and sensory challenges inherent in nonverbal disabilities through professional metacognition.

The Reflective Approach involves teachers critically analyzing their own pedagogical practices to observe the overall effectiveness of their instruction. This process is essential for SPED educators, as it allows them to identify their own shortcomings and determine whether their sessions are truly engaging for students with complex needs. The data reveals a high level of professional self-awareness, with the indicators for "Analyzing teaching practices" and "Tailoring approaches based on what works" both tying for first place with a composite mean of 3.67.

A compelling divergence appeared in the perception of professional development between the two respondent groups. School heads rated the importance of the reflective process significantly higher (Mean: 4.54) than the teachers themselves (Mean: 3.43). This implies that while teachers use reflection as a functional classroom tool to adjust their daily lessons, administrators view it as a core institutional requirement for professional growth. This gap suggests that school leaders prioritize reflective practice as a primary indicator of a skilled and evolving educator.

Analysis of these findings is supported by Wong and Wong (2018), who cite reflection as a critical component for informed decision-making in the classroom. The overall "Utilized" status of the Reflective Approach (Mean: 3.605) demonstrates that Quezon City SPED centers have successfully fostered a culture of self-improvement. By constantly questioning "what works and what doesn't," teachers can refine their methods to create a more student-centric environment, which is vital for the progress of nonverbal learners.

Parallel to reflection, the study detailed how Constructivism is characterized within these specialized classrooms. The data identified "Activity Oriented" as the primary characteristic, ranking first with a composite mean of 3.64. This highlights that for nonverbal learners, physical activity and hands-on engagement are the primary vehicles for the construction of knowledge. Because verbal communication is a barrier, teachers rely on movement and tactile manipulation to help students process information and build cognitive foundations.

The study also noted that "Democratic" practices were ranked second as a key characteristic (Mean: 3.42). This suggests a collaborative power dynamic where the teacher and student share space in the learning process. Such a dynamic is essential for nonverbal students, as it allows them to have a voice through their choices and actions rather than through spoken language alone. This democratic environment encourages students to be more than just passive recipients of instruction.

However, a significant finding emerged regarding the "Least Utilized" gap in constructivist practice. The "Child-centric approach" was ranked sixth with an overall mean of 3.25, but it was specifically rated by school heads as "Least Utilized" (Mean: 2.43). This suggests a critical disconnect: while teachers are utilizing hands-on activities, the overarching instruction may still be more teacher-directed than truly child-led. The activities might be physically engaging, but the goals and paths are still being determined almost exclusively by the educator.

This finding carries the heavy implication that there is a profound need to move away from rigid, teacher-led structures. To truly foster independence in nonverbal students, the curriculum must shift toward more "autonomous and responsible" learner roles, which currently rank lower in utilization (Rank 4). If the educator remains the sole director of the activity, the student misses out on the opportunity to develop the self-dependence and autonomy that constructivism aims to provide.

The Reflective Approach and Constructivist characteristics are fundamental to the operation of Quezon City's SPED centers. While teachers are adept at reflecting on their own skills and implementing activity-based lessons, the next step in their professional evolution involves deepening the child-centric nature of their work. By bridging the gap between activity-oriented instruction and true student autonomy, educators can ensure that nonverbal learners are not just occupied, but are actively constructing their own path toward independence.

Characteristics of Collaborative and Thematic Approaches



The following synthesis expands the results and discussion regarding the specific characteristics of collaborative, thematic, inquiry-based, and reflective approaches into a structured fourteen-paragraph analysis.

The investigation into Collaborative Learning characteristics reveals that "Positive Interdependence" (Mean: 3.61) and "Individual Accountability" (Mean: 3.59) are the most prominent traits utilized in the classroom. This indicates that while students are encouraged to work in groups, teachers maintain a rigorous focus on tracking each individual child's progress. This balance is essential in a special education setting to ensure that no student is overshadowed by their peers and that specific developmental milestones are consistently met.

Despite the success of group dynamics, "Closer-knit communication" emerged as the lowest-ranked characteristic with a mean of 3.35. In a classroom for learners with nonverbal disabilities, communication remains the most significant hurdle to instructional success. This lower ranking reflects the reality that achieving the same fluid, "knit" communication seen in general education is a complex challenge that requires specialized tools and significant time, which many teachers find difficult to sustain amidst other classroom demands.

The strategic utilization of collaborative learning extends beyond academic goals; it is clearly being used as a therapeutic tool for socialization. The high mean for "Promoting Interpersonal Skills" (3.56) reinforces the idea that for nonverbal learners, the classroom is a primary site for learning how to navigate social spaces. By placing students in collaborative structures, teachers are providing a safe environment for them to practice the social cues and interactions that are often missing from their daily lives.

In the realm of Thematic Instruction, the primary characteristic identified was the ability to "integrate different areas of the curriculum," which achieved a mean of 3.60. Educators in Quezon City are successfully using single, unified themes—such as "The Ocean" or "Community Helpers"—to teach math, science, and literacy simultaneously. This method reduces the cognitive load on the student by providing a singular, consistent mental context for multiple learning objectives.

The study further found that "Holistic Context" ranked high (Mean: 3.66), suggesting that lessons are generally taught as a whole rather than in fragmented pieces. This holistic approach is vital for nonverbal learners who may struggle to synthesize isolated facts into a meaningful understanding. By presenting information within a comprehensive story or project, teachers help students build a more robust and interconnected knowledge base.

However, the data shows that the use of thematic instruction "within an entire grade level" ranked lowest (Mean: 3.40). This suggests a lack of departmental or school-wide coordination. Thematic units currently appear to be isolated to individual classrooms rather than being a collaborative initiative among all teachers in a specific grade. Moving toward grade-level integration could provide a more consistent experience for students as they transition between different teachers or therapy sessions.

Regarding Inquiry-Based Learning, the "Process of reasoning" emerged as the top-ranked characteristic with a composite mean of 3.63. This is a critical finding, as it indicates that SPED teachers are more concerned with the logic a student applies to a task than the attainment of a "correct" answer. This focus on the journey of discovery validates the cognitive effort of nonverbal learners, who may demonstrate their reasoning through action rather than verbal explanation.

The shift toward non-passive learning is further evidenced by the "Emphasis on concept over facts," which ranked second with a mean of 3.57. This move away from rote memorization allows students to grasp the underlying "why" of a lesson. In a special education context, understanding a concept is much more functional and transferable to daily life than simply memorizing a list of facts that the student may not know how to use in a real-world setting.

Despite these cognitive successes, "Active thinkers and information processors" received the lowest ranking in the inquiry category (Mean: 3.41). This gap in application is likely due to the inherent nature of nonverbal disabilities, where the external expression of active thought is a significant hurdle. Without specialized assistive communication tools, it is difficult for teachers to fully capture or assess the student's status as an active processor of information, leading to a perceived lower utilization.



The Reflective Approach showed high levels of professional self-awareness, with "Analyzing teaching skills" (Mean: 3.67) serving as the primary characteristic. This reflects a deep commitment among Quezon City educators to acknowledge their own "shortcomings" and monitor "session enjoyment." By looking inward, teachers can adjust their methods to better suit the fluctuating sensory and emotional needs of their nonverbal students.

Flexibility is a hallmark of this reflective culture, as seen in the high utilization of "alternative actions" (Mean: 3.54). This indicates that SPED teachers are highly adaptable, possessing the professional confidence to change plans mid-lesson if a child is not responding to a particular strategy. This "on-the-fly" reflection is what allows a classroom to remain student-centric even when communication is limited.

Interestingly, while both groups agree that reflection is a "core component of professional development" (Mean: 3.49), it ranked lowest among reflective characteristics. This may be because reflection is often viewed as a private, internal activity rather than a classroom-facing task. To improve the impact of reflection, it may need to be more formally integrated into the school's collaborative meetings, turning private insights into shared institutional knowledge.

The overall synthesis of these results shows that Thematic Instruction and the Reflective Approach are the most consistently utilized and highly regarded strategies across the Division. These methods provide the structure and self-correction necessary for a high-functioning SPED environment. While Constructivism is understood in theory, its practical, child-centric application remains a persistent challenge for both teachers and school administrators.

The study demonstrates that Quezon City SPED centers are effectively utilizing a variety of complex instructional strategies to support nonverbal learners. The path forward involves strengthening the communication bond in collaborative learning and expanding the reach of thematic units to a grade-wide level. By addressing these gaps, the Division can move toward a more integrated and highly effective educational model that fully empowers every nonverbal student.

Conclusions:

According to the results of the study, the effectiveness of instructional approaches for teaching learners with nonverbal disability has been evaluated. Additionally, potential problems, issues, and challenges faced by SPED teachers regarding these approaches have been identified, and intervention plans have been proposed to address them. The following section provides a summary of the key findings and presents conclusions based on these results.

1. Ability to reflect upon one's teaching practice and identify strengths and weaknesses: The results showed that both SPED teachers and school heads believed that this characteristic was utilized to a large degree. This indicates that the respondents recognize the importance of self-reflection in teaching practice.
2. Willingness to change and improve one's teaching practice: The results showed that this characteristic was utilized to a moderate degree. This indicates that there is room for improvement in terms of emphasizing the importance of self-improvement and professional growth in reflective teaching practice.
3. Open-mindedness to feedback from students and colleagues: The results showed that this characteristic was utilized to a moderate degree. This suggests that while the respondents recognize the importance of receiving feedback, there is still a need to further encourage open-mindedness to feedback.
4. Use of evidence-based practices: The results showed that this characteristic was utilized to a large degree. This indicates that the respondents recognize the importance of using evidence-based practices to improve teaching practice.
5. Utilization of a constructivist approach: The results showed that this characteristic was utilized to a moderate degree. This suggests that there is a need to further emphasize the importance of constructivist approaches in reflective teaching practice.
6. Authenticity: The survey results showed that the respondents moderately utilized authenticity in inquiry-based teaching. While SPED teachers gave a higher mean compared to school heads, both groups agreed that authentic tasks are important in promoting deeper learning among students. It is recommended that SPED teachers and school heads continue to integrate real-world problems and situations in their teaching practice to enhance student engagement and motivation.



7. Academic Rigor: The survey results showed that the respondents moderately utilized academic rigor in inquiry-based teaching. While SPED teachers gave a higher mean compared to school heads, both groups agreed that maintaining a balance between challenge and support is important to promote learning. It is recommended that SPED teachers and school heads continue to provide students with challenging and complex tasks while providing adequate support to ensure their success.
8. Learning in the World: The survey results showed that the respondents least utilized learning in the world in inquiry-based teaching. While SPED teachers gave a higher mean compared to school heads, both groups agreed that connecting classroom learning to real-world issues is important to provide students with opportunities to apply their learning beyond the classroom. It is recommended that SPED teachers and school heads continue to provide students with opportunities to explore and connect their learning to real-world issues.
9. Digital Technologies: The survey results showed that the respondents utilized digital technologies in inquiry-based teaching. While school heads gave a higher mean compared to SPED teachers, both groups agreed that integrating technology in the classroom is important to enhance student learning. It is recommended that SPED teachers and school heads continue to explore and integrate digital technologies in their teaching practice to provide students with access to information and resources beyond the classroom.
10. Active Exploration: The survey results showed that the respondents highly utilized active exploration in inquiry-based teaching. While school heads gave a higher mean compared to SPED teachers, both groups agreed that hands-on and experiential learning is important to promote student learning. It is recommended that SPED teachers and school heads continue to provide students with opportunities to explore, discover and develop problem-solving skills through active exploration.
11. The findings of the study indicate that there is a significant difference between the assessments of school heads and SPED teachers on the effectiveness of the instructional approaches for teaching learners with disability, as measured by the five categories of constructivism, collaborative learning, thematic instruction/project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and reflective approach. Collaborative learning and thematic instruction/project-based learning were found to be significantly more effective for SPED teachers compared to school heads, while constructivism, reflective approach, and inquiry-based learning did not show a significant difference in effectiveness between the two groups.
12. Based on the findings on the problems, issues, and challenges faced by SPED teachers in instructional approaches for teaching learners with disability, it is evident that there are several areas that need improvement. The lack of professional training and resources, as well as the absence of a supportive and inclusive school environment, are major concerns that need to be addressed to enhance the quality of education for learners with disability. Additionally, the results of the survey revealed the need to prioritize the development of a collaborative approach to instruction that involves parents and caregivers in the education process. By addressing these issues, schools can create an environment that is more conducive to the learning and development of learners with disability.
13. The results suggest that there is a need for further training and professional development for school heads and SPED teachers to enhance their understanding and application of collaborative learning and thematic instruction/project-based learning for learners with disability. Additionally, the findings suggest that the two groups should work collaboratively to develop and implement effective instructional approaches that integrate constructivism, reflective approach, and inquiry-based learning, as these methods have been shown to be effective for teaching learners with disability. Overall, the study highlights the importance of using a variety of instructional approaches in teaching learners with disability to ensure their academic success and social-emotional development.
14. Based on the results of the acceptability table, it can be concluded that the majority of the instructional approaches used by SPED teachers for learners with disability are acceptable. However, there are still some areas that need improvement, particularly in the use of digital technologies and learning in the world. It is recommended for SPED teachers and school heads to focus on providing professional development and training in these areas to improve the effectiveness of the instructional approaches for teaching learners with disability. It is also important to continue monitoring and evaluating the acceptability of these approaches to ensure that they are meeting the needs of learners with disability and their families.

Overall, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the current state of instructional approaches for learners with disability in the context of special education in the Philippines.

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