

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF GRADE 3 LEARNERS: INPUTS TO INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT INITIATIVES

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Abstract: This study assessed the developmental needs of Grade 3 learners as perceived by their teachers, focusing on five key domains: cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and moral-ethical development. Teachers, being primary observers of learners' daily classroom behavior and performance, served as the main source of data, with parent/guardian input validating the findings to provide a comprehensive developmental profile. Findings revealed that emotional development was most prominent, indicating learners' needs in building confidence and coping with change. Social development followed, particularly in peer interaction and conflict resolution. Moral-ethical development showed a need for greater reinforcement in values and behavior. Cognitive development highlighted curiosity and engagement but revealed gaps in reasoning and literacy. Physical development scored lowest, suggesting limited participation in physical activities and health routines. The study also found that various factors influence learner development. Cognitive and social growth were positively linked to fathers' educational attainment and family income, while sex and curriculum type (e.g., SSES) influenced cognitive and moral-ethical development. Emotional and social growth were more closely tied to relational and environmental influences than socioeconomic factors. Furthermore, cognitive, emotional, social, and moral-ethical domains were strongly interconnected, while physical development remained relatively distinct. These insights underscore the importance of addressing developmental needs holistically. As a practical outcome, the study proposes the Instructional Support Initiatives for Grade 3 Learners: A Holistic Approach to Development, a classroom-based framework promoting targeted, developmentally appropriate strategies. This initiative empowers teachers and stakeholders to nurture learners' overall growth, bridging gaps and ensuring equitable, lifelong learning foundations.

Keywords: Developmental Needs, cognitive, social, emotional, physical, moral and ethical, instructional support.

I. INTRODUCTION

Key Stage 1, which encompasses Grades 1 to 3, plays a pivotal role in a child's developmental journey. It marks the transition from early childhood education to a more structured learning environment. This period is crucial for laying the foundation for cognitive, socio-emotional, and academic success, which can have lasting effects on a child's future. Teachers, therefore, must consistently assess and observe the developmental needs of these young learners, seeking input from parents to ensure that effective instructional strategies are implemented. The Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklist, designed to assess kindergarten learners' development, is a valuable tool in understanding a child's readiness for school. However, as children progress into Key Stage 1, especially those in Grade 3, their developmental needs shift, necessitating ongoing evaluation and targeted interventions to support their growth.

The ECCD Checklist evaluates developmental progress across several domains, including cognitive, language, motor, and socio-emotional skills. It provides educators and parents with a clear picture of a child's strengths and areas that may need additional support, helping to assess readiness for formal schooling. However, its scope is limited to kindergarten learners, making it essential for teachers to adapt their assessment methods as children transition to higher grade levels. As children enter Grades 1 to 3, they face increased cognitive demands, more complex social interactions, and a greater degree of independence in their learning. Teachers, in collaboration with parents, play a crucial role in identifying these evolving needs and implementing appropriate learning strategies.

The developmental changes that occur as children move from kindergarten to Grade 3 affect their ability to learn effectively. Key areas of development that emerge during this stage include cognitive growth, attention and concentration, socio-emotional adjustment, and the development of literacy and numeracy skills. These areas must be systematically observed and assessed by teachers to ensure that learners receive the appropriate support. Cognitive development in the early years is marked by rapid growth, which allows children to handle more complex tasks, although they still require structured support. Teachers must observe how learners engage with problem-solving tasks, follow instructions, and demonstrate critical thinking skills in order to tailor their lessons effectively.

Attention and concentration are also critical factors in academic success at this stage. Children in Grade 3 often face challenges with sustained attention, and some may exhibit short attention spans typical of younger learners. It is during this period that teachers can identify children who may have attention-related difficulties, such as those associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Teachers can accommodate various attention spans and learning styles through strategies like structured routines and differentiated activities, helping to ensure that each child can thrive. Socio-emotional development is equally important, as children at this stage continue to develop emotional regulation and social skills. Teachers must carefully observe how children manage frustration, resolve conflicts, and interact with peers to address potential difficulties. Integrating socio-emotional learning activities can help foster resilience and cooperation among learners.

The advanced development of literacy and numeracy skills is the central focus during Grade 3. While some children may enter Grade 1 with a strong foundation in these areas, others may require additional support to meet Grade 3 level expectations. Teachers must assess each child's phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, number sense, and problem-solving abilities, identifying any gaps that may need to be addressed. Feedback from parents is also valuable in understanding whether literacy and numeracy challenges observed in school are mirrored at home.

Identifying and addressing the developmental needs of Grade 3 learners requires active collaboration between teachers and parents. Teachers are in a unique position to observe learners' behaviors, academic progress, and social interactions in structured settings, while parents provide valuable insights into their child's development at home. This partnership ensures that any learning gaps are detected early and addressed promptly. Teachers can implement targeted instructional strategies, such as differentiated instruction and scaffolding techniques, to meet individual learners' needs. Moreover, open communication with parents strengthens home-school partnerships and fosters a collaborative approach to supporting learner development. By focusing on both academic and socio-emotional needs, teachers can help learners develop into well-rounded individuals, capable of thriving both in school and beyond.

This collaboration is especially critical as learners approach Grade 4, a pivotal transition point in their educational journey. Research indicates that foundational skills acquired by the end of Grade 3 are essential for success in subsequent grades. The shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" occurs around this stage, and learners who have not solidified their literacy and numeracy skills may struggle with more complex academic content in Grade 4 and beyond. Moreover, the social and emotional challenges that accompany this transition can impact a child's overall development if not properly addressed. Therefore, establishing a strong foundation by Grade 3 is crucial to ensure that learners are prepared to meet the increased academic and social demands of higher grades.

In light of these considerations, the researcher, who is a Grade 3 teacher, is eager to conduct this study with the aim of evaluating not only her own learners but also those in Grades 1 and 2. The goal is to identify their attention and developmental needs at an early stage. By assessing learners from Grade 1 onwards, the researcher aims to ensure that their needs are addressed gradually as they progress through the Key Stage 1 years. This early intervention will allow for their development, ensuring that any cognitive, socio-emotional, and academic challenges are managed progressively across the grades. Through this, the study aims to highlight the importance of timely identification and continuous support to optimize each child's learning experience as they move through the educational stages.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to delve into the developmental needs of Grade 3 learners. Descriptive research, as defined by Creswell (2016), is a method that involves collecting and analyzing data to understand and describe behaviors, phenomena, or attributes as they naturally occur, without altering or manipulating the environment. Shields and Rangarajan (2018) further emphasize that descriptive research provides an accurate, detailed, and systematic portrayal of a population or situation. This approach not only captures essential details but also serves as a reliable foundation for crafting evidence-based decisions and interventions.

This design was deemed highly suitable for the study as it sought to obtain a well-rounded understanding of the learners' profiles, their developmental needs, and the extent of strategies employed to address those needs. Specifically, the descriptive approach allowed the researcher to systematically document the unique characteristics of the learners.

By utilizing this research design, the study was able to present a comprehensive and nuanced picture of the phenomena under investigation. It ensured that the interplay between the learners' development needs and teachers' strategies to address them is accurately captured and interpreted, laying the groundwork for potential recommendations. Through its emphasis on objectivity and precision, the descriptive design proved to be an invaluable tool for achieving the study's objectives, contributing meaningful insights into the field of education.

B. Environment

This study was conducted in Zaragoza Central School in Division of Nueva Ecija, specifically to the Grade 3 teachers and learners. The school is a large-sized elementary school which is composed of a principal, forty-two teachers, and a total population of 1,156 learners for this school year 2024-2025.

C. Respondents

The participants for this study comprised the five Grade 3 teachers of Zaragoza Central School, Schools Division of Nueva Ecija, as evaluators who assessed the developmental needs of 171 Grade 3 learners as participants. The learners' parents/guardians were also asked to validate the observations made by the teachers through unstructured interviews. Total enumeration of all Grade 3 learners and teachers was employed in this study. According to Patton (2020), Total enumeration, also known as complete enumeration or census sampling, is a research method where data is collected from every member of the entire population of interest. Unlike other sampling techniques that select a subset of individuals, total enumeration involves studying all individuals who meet specific criteria, ensuring comprehensive data collection without sampling bias.

Table 1. Distribution of Participants

Sections	Teachers	Learners	Total
SSES	1	34	35
Papua	1	36	37
Santan	1	34	35
Gumamela	1	35	36
Zinnia	1	32	33
Total	5	171	176

D. Instrument

The primary instrument for this study was an Observation Checklist patterned from the instrument of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) entitled "Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8. This instrument covers the interconnectedness of various developmental domains—physical, cognitive, social, and emotional—and emphasizes the importance of supporting each area to foster holistic child development. This was reinforced with unstructured interviews with parents /guardians of the learners. Likewise, the data on the profile of the learners was obtained from the teacher's records. Since the parents will be interviewed, questions related to the instrument were asked in Tagalog so that parents may easily understand the statements asked for in the instrument. A documentary analysis was used to establish the profile of the learners. With the permission of the school heads, the researcher requested the records of the learners from SF1.

E. Data Analysis Plan

The data collected in this study underwent rigorous statistical analysis to ensure accuracy and reliability in interpreting the findings. To examine the learners' profiles, frequency and percentage distributions were used, providing a clear summary of their demographic characteristics.

To assess the learners' developmental needs, the weighted mean was used. This statistical tool enables a precise evaluation of the extent to which learners exhibit these needs, as outlined in the study.

Additionally, Spearman's Rank Correlation was employed to determine the relationship between the learners' profile variables and their developmental needs, offering insights into potential associations.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Profile of Grade 3 Learners

Sex: The gender distribution indicates near-equal representation, suggesting gender parity in the respondent sample. This balance can be important in ensuring that findings drawn from this group can be generalized to both male and female learners.

Curriculum Enrolled In: The distribution of learners by curriculum enrolled in suggests a strong predominance of the regular curriculum over the SSES, which could indicate limited access to or interest in science-specialized education or possible selection criteria that restrict SSES enrolment.

Monthly Family Income: In terms of socio-economic background, the data show that a significant portion of learners come from low- to lower-middle-income families, with the highest concentration in the ₱10,000–₱15,000 range. Only about one-fourth belong to families earning ₱25,000 or more, indicating limited financial resources for the majority.

Parents' Educational Attainment: Parental education, particularly which of the fathers, is concentrated around high school graduation, with a smaller percentage having attained college education. The mothers' educational profile closely mirrors that of the fathers, though slightly more mothers are reported to be college graduates.

2. Developmental Needs of Grade 3 Learners

Developmental Needs	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Cognitive	2.36	Somehow Evident
Social	2.46	Somehow Evident
Emotional	2.54	Evident
Physical	1.99	Somehow Evident
Moral and Ethical	2.42	Somehow Evident

Cognitive: These results reveal that while children demonstrate a healthy level of curiosity, they lack the ability to independently apply logical reasoning and solve problems without support. This cognitive gap suggests the need for structured opportunities to develop higher-order thinking skills.

Social: the data show that many children are in a transitional phase of developing the social competencies necessary for positive peer relationships and cooperative classroom behavior. The most evident need lies in conflict resolution, indicating that children often require adult mediation to navigate disagreements and restore harmony.

Emotional: The results revealed a range of emotional challenges faced by young children, primarily revolving around self-confidence, adaptability, empathy, and self-expression. The most prominent issue is the lack of confidence in approaching new tasks, which may stem from fear of failure or limited experience with success in a supportive setting. This lack of emotional readiness can hinder not only academic risk-taking but also personal growth.

Physical: Findings suggest that most children are developing their physical abilities at a steady pace, with a few areas requiring supportive intervention. The need for increased engagement in physical activity is particularly important, as regular movement contributes not only to physical health but also to cognitive and emotional development.

Moral and Ethical: These results also highlight that while children are developing a sense of morality and ethical conduct, these values are not yet solidified and require ongoing reinforcement through daily interactions and structured learning. The need for frequent reminders to follow rules signals the importance of consistent behavioral expectations and positive discipline strategies.

3. Relationship Between the Profile of the Learners and Their Perceived Developmental Needs

Items	DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS				
	Cognitive	Social	Emotional	Physical	M & E
Sex					
Correlation Coefficient	*0.17	-0.10	-0.09	0.11	-0.15
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.03	0.18	0.23	0.14	0.05
N	171	171	171	171	171
Curriculum Enrolled In	*0.31	*0.20	0.11	0.05	0.06
Correlation Coefficient					
Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0.01	0.15	0.48	0.46
N	171	171	171	171	171
Monthly Family Income					
Correlation Coefficient					
Sig. (2-tailed)	*-0.25	-0.06	-0.09	0.01	-0.08
N	0.01	0.42	0.24	0.88	0.28
	171	171	171	171	171
Highest Educational Attainment (Father)	*-0.27	*-0.23	-0.12	0.04	0.01
Correlation Coefficient					
Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0.11	0.58	0.87
N	171	171	171	171	171
Highest Educational Attainment (Mother)					
Correlation Coefficient	-0.10	-0.07	-0.01	0.14	0.03
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.19	0.34	0.91	0.07	0.75
N	171	171	171	171	171

To summarize the results, it may be said that a father's educational attainment can help shape how a learner thinks and socializes, but may not play a big role in how the learner feels, stays physically active, or learns about right and wrong. Those aspects of development likely come from a wider mix of experiences and relationships in the child's life while a mother's educational level is an important factor in many aspects of a child's life but this study suggests that it does not significantly determine a learner's developmental outcomes in cognitive, social, emotional, physical, or moral areas. Instead, what may matter more is how mothers engage with their children, support them emotionally, and guide their values—regardless of their formal schooling.

4. Interrelationship Among the Variables on the Developmental Needs of Grade 3 Learners

Items	Coefficient	DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS				
		Cognitive	Social	Emotional	Physical	M & E
Cognitive						
Correlation	1	0.34	0.54	*-0.07	0.31	
Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0.33	0	
N	171	171	171	171	171	
Social						
Correlation Coefficient	0.34	1	0.33	*0.01	*0.11	
Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0.91	0.14	
N	171	171	171	171	171	
Emotional						
Correlation Coefficient	0.54	0.33	1	*0.12	0.20	
Sig. (2-tailed)						
N	0	0	0	0.10	0.01	
Physical	171	171	171	171	171	
Correlation Coefficient	*-0.07	*0.01	*0.12	1	0.17	
Sig. (2-tailed)						
N	0.33	0.91	0.10	0	0.02	
Moral and Ethical	171	171	171	171	171	
Correlation Coefficient	0.31	*0.11	0.20	0.17	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)						
N	0	0.14	0.01	0.02	0	
	171	171	171	171	171	

5. Instructional Support Initiatives

Teachers are positioned as facilitators of development, not just content providers. Through simple, doable routines such as “Thinking Games Day,” “Kumusta Ka? Mornings,” “Buddy Ko, Kasama Ko,” “Fun Fridays,” and “Kindness Corner,” teachers are empowered to integrate developmental strategies into everyday instruction. Parents, particularly fathers, as well as school counselors and MAPEH specialists, play vital roles in the success of these efforts.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. There is gender balance among learners but also point to unequal access to enriched programs and disparities in family income that may hinder educational opportunities. Despite modest educational levels, fathers’ involvement appears to positively influence learners' development, emphasizing the importance of parental support regardless of formal education level.
2. Grade 3 learners exhibit emerging strengths in areas such as curiosity, creativity, and emotional awareness; however, they still require structured support in foundational literacy, conflict resolution, emotional regulation, and social cooperation.
3. Learner development is shaped by a mix of factors, but no single one affects all areas. Thinking skills (cognitive development) are influenced by sex, curriculum, family income, and a father’s education. Meanwhile, emotional, physical, and moral development are less affected by these and depend more on relationships, family dynamics, and community support. This shows that children grow through a combination of personal, social, and environmental experiences—not just background or school programs.
4. Learning in young children is connected to many parts of their growth. Their thinking and learning skills are closely linked to their feelings, how they get along with others, and how they know right from wrong. Being aware of and managing emotions helps them do better in school and make friends. In contrast, physical growth—like strength and coordination—develops separately and is mostly influenced by exercise and movement, with only a small link to their values or behavior.
5. The output in this study, Instructional Support Initiatives for Grade 3 Learners: A Holistic Approach to Development, offers a practical and sustainable framework that empowers teachers and stakeholders to foster the holistic development of Grade 3 learners, ensuring a strong foundation for their lifelong learning and well-being.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To reduce educational gaps, schools should strengthen their linkages to support low-income families through free in-school or after-class tutorial services, community-based learning hubs, and parent capacity-building sessions. Schools can collaborate with barangays and PTAs to provide accessible venues and enlist volunteer parent-tutors. Providing these low-cost, community-driven interventions can help bridge resource gaps and foster stronger home-school partnerships that support the overall development of learners.
2. School heads should implement the Integrated Growth and Learning Program (IGLP) by mid-school year, based on the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework. This program will guide teachers in supporting Grade 3 learners’ social-emotional development in preparation for Grade 4, using simple daily routines such as short class check-ins and behavior tracking sheets. Teachers will coordinate with parents to help reinforce these practices at home through regular communication and shared strategies.
3. Schools should strengthen a holistic support system that goes beyond academics. Programs should include values formation, emotional support, and parent engagement activities, especially for families with lower income or less formal education. These may be facilitated by the District Guidance Counselor in cooperation with the teachers. Lastly, parent development seminars focusing on effective parenting, regardless of education level, can help strengthen children’s growth across all areas.
4. The study's finding that physical development has a small but meaningful connection with moral-ethical growth, physical education classes should serve as a valuable platform for teaching values by incorporating games and activities that promote teamwork, fairness, and respect and teachers can reinforce moral lessons through physical movement. To support this, teachers should be trained to intentionally link physical activities and classroom lessons with real-life values and ethical decision-making, helping learners develop both character and competence.

5. The Instructional Support Initiatives for Grade 3 Learners: A Holistic Approach to Development should be initially piloted in selected Grade 3 classes within the school, with regular monitoring and feedback from teachers and learners. Upon validation of its effectiveness, the school should advocate for its adoption across all Grade 3 classes in the district through capacity-building sessions and sharing of best practices. Ultimately, the initiative may be presented to the Schools Division Office for possible integration into the division's developmental programs for early grades, ensuring a system-wide implementation of holistic and inclusive instructional support strategies.

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