# TASK-BASED LEARNING IN MATHEMATICS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF TVL STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to investigate the effects of task-based learning (TBL) on the academic achievement and critical thinking skills of Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) students in mathematics at Compostela National High School. It seeks to determine whether engaging students in real-life, task-oriented activities can improve their mathematical performance and higher-order thinking. TVL students often struggle with abstract concepts, and traditional teaching methods may not effectively engage them. Previous studies have shown that student-centered approaches like TBL promote more profound understanding and enhance critical thinking, particularly among learners in vocational tracks (Creswell, 2009). A one-group pretest-posttest design was used involving Grade 11 TVL students. A teacher-made test assessed academic performance and critical thinking skills before and after the TBL intervention. Data were analyzed using the mean and paired sample t-test. Results showed a significant improvement in posttest scores, suggesting that TBL positively influences students' achievement and thinking skills. The study concludes that TBL enhances academic performance and critical thinking in mathematics. It recommends integrating real-life tasks and problem-solving activities into instruction for TVL students.*

**Keyword: -** *Education, task-based learning, academic achievement, quantitative method*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the heart of honing its learners' skills, talents, and knowledge, which is evident in practical academic courses, particularly the TVL (Technical-Vocational-Livelihood) strand. In the contemporary learning organization, they must develop technical expertise and strong analytical and problem-solving abilities suitable for real-world applications. However, the prevailing practices in teaching mathematics still place their bets on procedural drill and rote memorization, which may not sustain TVL students' attention and responsiveness or equip them with utilitarian mathematical literacy.

The TBL approach offers an alternative to traditional instruction by involving students in active Learning using authentic, meaningful tasks. Task-based Learning contrasts traditional lecturing in fostering student collaboration, hands-on problem-solving, and the self-application of knowledge in authentic contexts. Therefore, through this process, the students have a better understanding of the mathematical concept and how to apply it in meaningful ways, creating more connections between theory and practice.

According to Vale and Barbosa (2023), active participation activities are crucial for promoting students' deep critical thinking and understanding of concepts. Empirical evidence shows that TBL-instructed students outperform students taught using other methods, especially problem-solving and retention. If students are involved in understanding, they are more likely to have a lasting experience of that concept and be more likely to make it happen outside the classroom. It starkly contrasts passive learning techniques, which concentrate on algorithms but not on understanding.

UNESCO (2021) stresses the shift to student-centered approaches to address mathematics learning gaps. Innovative approaches such as TBL are proposed to connect abstract mathematical theory with practical skills, better preparing students for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers and industry demands.
For this researcher, who is currently teaching at Compostela National High School – Senior High School, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is felt in mathematics education. The move to modular Learning in an emergency meant that classes had little interaction with their teachers, and responses to their work were delayed, resulting in vast learning gaps, particularly at the foundation level. Grade 11 learners' performance has increasingly presented the challenge of advanced mathematics due to a lack of foundation skills. The majority of them express difficulty in comprehension, which is due to inconsistent learning exposure during the period of distance learning.

Consequently, the essential cognitive reasoning and problem-solving skills have been adversely affected. National Achievement Test results further reflect students' declining performance in these areas, raising concerns about their preparedness for college and future careers. These learning gaps call for strategic, student-centered interventions that promote higher-order Thinking and address the diverse needs of learners.

Motivated by these challenges, the researcher seeks to identify effective strategies to elevate instruction, improve student engagement, and foster the development of critical skills required for academic success and real-life problem-solving. By transforming instructional methods and integrating purposeful learning experiences, this study aims to create a more dynamic and impactful learning environment.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

### 2.1 Research Design

The researcher used quantitative experimental research, which employs a group pretest-posttest design. This design measures individuals before and after they are involved in some treatment. Pretests allow researchers to quantify changes more precisely by identifying participants' preexisting knowledge or abilities before implementing an instructional technique. A post-test is an evaluation tool that compares test results with pretest data to determine the effectiveness of an instructional intervention (Creswell, 2012).

This study utilized a one-group Pretest-Posttest design to determine the extent of task-based Learning in Mathematics and the academic achievement of Grade 11 Senior High School students at Compostela National High School.

### 2.2 Research Instruments

The study's data was gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire. The researcher used a Likert scale questionnaire to measure students' critical thinking abilities and a pretest and posttest to measure their academic performance.

The students choose the response that best explains their feelings toward the question or statement. A Likert scale was used to help the students rate their critical thinking performance. The 5-point Likert scale of importance reflects degrees of importance in terms of five response alternatives, which encompass items such as problem-solving, logical thinking, decision-making, and analytical Thinking rated from 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Moderately Agree), 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree).

Pre- and post-tests were taken to assess students' academic performance before and after task-based strategies. The pretest was used to measure students' initial level of mathematical knowledge and problem-solving ability, and the post-test revealed the enhancement in the student's performance after the intervention. Such variations across the tests indicated the success of task-based learning in improving students' mathematics knowledge and achievement.
For validity, items were linked to particular learning objectives using a TOS (Table of Specifications). Questions under the TOS were classified as cognitive "domains" adapted from Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001)—remembrance, understanding, application, analyses, evaluations, or creation.
Both internal and external validators reviewed the instrument before it was administered to the respondents. To further ensure its validity, the instrument was tested with 43 students not part of the main study. This helped determine whether the questions effectively measured what they were intended to assess. If any issues were identified during this process, the researcher addressed them and made the necessary revisions to the instrument.

The pretest-posttest was presented with a Table of Specifications (TOS) to ensure proper distribution of the test items. The reliability and validity tests were also checked using the appropriate statistical formula. Before being used, the instrument's validity was assessed by administering a Group Screening test and five pretest and posttest sets of questionnaires. Details of the results are found in the Appendixes. Thus, both instruments were considered reliable before being administered to the study subjects.

**2.3 Research Procedures**

First, the researcher submitted Chapters 1 and 2 to the Ethical Committee for review and approval. After receiving ethical clearance, the researcher asked permission from the Schools Division Superintendent to conduct the study. After the approval, a communication letter was sent to the PSDS and SP asking permission to conduct a study at Compostela National High School.

After being granted permission to conduct the study, a pretest questionnaire was distributed to the respondents in their classroom during class hours. Before giving the questionnaire, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the respondents. Respondents were also free to leave if they were unwilling to answer the questions. Furthermore, the respondents were instructed to answer without leaving any item unanswered.

Checking was made to arrange a convenient schedule since the pretest was administered during class hours. After the questionnaires were collected, the researcher recorded the scores.
During the next class hours, the researcher conducted task-based learning activities for the students. After three weeks of teaching, a posttest was administered. The respondents were instructed to answer without leaving any items unanswered.

Checking was made to arrange a convenient schedule since the posttest was administered during class hours. After the questionnaires were collected, the researcher recorded the scores. The data were treated, analyzed, and interpreted with the statistician's help.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter shows the results derived from the collected and subsequent analyses in a sequence corresponding to the posed problems. Data and initial information were also given as the basis for the computation and interpretation of the results, which were computed using SPSS software.

**Pretest Scores**

Table 1 shows the results of the mastery level of the TVL students.

**Table -1:** Pretest Scores

| Pretest | No. of students | Mean | Class Proficiency | Mastery Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cookery students | 52 | 11.42 | 25.38% | Low Mastery |

The table above shows the level of performance of the cookery students before the study was conducted. Fifty-two students in the Cookery strand were the subjects of the study. The class mean is 11.42, with a class proficiency of 25.38%. According to the DepEd competency level classification, this falls under the low mastery level (DepEd, 2015). Before the intervention, the students demonstrated minimal understanding of the subject matter.

**Posttest Scores**

Table 2 presents the results of the mastery level of the TVL students.

**Table -2:** Posttest Scores

| Pretest | No. of students | Mean | Class Proficiency | Mastery Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cookery students | 52 | 16.67 | 37.04% | Low Mastery |

As shown in Table 2, the posttest has a mean of 16.67, a class proficiency of 37.04%, and a low mastery level. The data suggests that the experimental intervention positively impacted the students' post-test scores. Although their performance still falls within the low mastery level, the results indicate improved overall class proficiency. Moreover, the use of task-based Learning in Mathematics appears to significantly contribute to enhancing students' academic achievement.

**Critical Thinking Skills Result**

Table 3 illustrates the results of the critical thinking skills of the TVL students.

**Table -3:** Critical Thinking Skills

| | ITEM | MEAN | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I was able to visualize, articulate, and straightforward problems. | 3.12 | MA |
| 2 | I am making decisions based on logic, evidence, and the available information. | 3.21 | MA |
| 3 | I apply logical thinking to analyze information and approach problem-solving systematically. | 3.19 | MA |
| 4 | I am designing and testing solutions to the problem. | 3.08 | MA |
| 5 | I can evaluate different approaches to solve a problem and choose the most efficient one. | 3.04 | MA |
| 6 | I can break down a complex problem into smaller, more manageable parts. | 2.88 | MA |
| 7 | I can justify my solutions and explain them to others clearly. | 3 | MA |
| 8 | I am able to identify and correct errors in my problem-solving process. | 3.06 | MA |
| 9 | I am confident in exploring alternative methods when my initial approach does not work. | 3 | MA |
| 10 | I can reflect on my problem-solving process and learn from my mistakes | 3.5 | A |

The table gives an overview of their critical thinking skills. The mean scores and the corresponding descriptors for each ability are ranked on a scale. With the highest mean of 3.5, "I can reflect on my problem-solving process and learn from my mistakes" is classified as "Agree" (A). It reflects that students feel most confident that they can critique their attempts at problem-solving. With the lowest mean of 2.88, "I can break down a complex problem into smaller, more manageable parts" comes under "Moderately Agree" (MA).

Students find this skill more difficult than others. Skills like making decisions based on logic, evidence, and information at hand (3.21) and using logical Thinking to analyze and solve problems systematically (3.19) rated comparatively high, reflecting faith in logical and systematic methods. Most skills are rated as "Moderately Agree," but lower ratings in items like decomposing complex problems (2.88) reflect an area where improvement is required. Students' self-reports of their critical thinking skills are positive but moderately agreed.

**Significant Difference in Pretest and Posttest**

Table 4 displays the results of the paired t-test of the students' pre-test and post-test in Task-Based Learning in Mathematics and Academic Achievement of TVL Students.

**Table -4:** Paired T-Test in Pretest and Posttest

| | Mean | t-value | p-value | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pretest | 11.42 | -8.23 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Posttest | 16.67 | | | |

A paired t-test was conducted to determine whether the pretest and post-test scores differed significantly. The results were mean pretest = 11.42 and mean posttest = 16.67. The t-value is -8.23, and the p-value is 0.000. The analysis found a significant statistical difference between scores. That is, the posttest scores were higher than the pretest scores, which is a sign of the effectiveness of the intervention for TVL students.

**Pretest Scores.** TVL Cookery students in the pretest had scored low in the knowledge of mathematics as indicated by their mean, which corresponded to a low level of competency. Before introducing the TBL approach, the students did not possess the foundational understanding required for mathematical competence. There could be several explanations for this appalling performance—low exposure to traditional teaching methods or the sheer abstraction of mathematics—-all usually familiar challenges faced by students in the vocational learning strata, the TVL track where the emphasis of TVL was supposedly on the practical and experiential aspect of instruction.

These findings emphasize the necessity of adopting more effective educational procedures better suited to the learning levels of these students. Traditional pedagogic methods may not address learners' personal educational needs in VET and cause a learning deficit. However, as a result of the low initial performance of the students, an alternative approach with contextualized task-based learning was proposed to promote better academic achievements and encourage deep learning.

Research has documented that students in vocational programs frequently have difficulties in the mainstream mathematics curriculum, partly due to the disparity between theoretical instruction and the practical orientation in vocational training programs (EDC, 2023). TBL is identified as a promising teaching approach that integrates theoretical concepts with practical execution and thereby facilitates an enhanced understanding and knowledge gain (Zhou et al., 2020).

**Posttest Scores.** Following the implementation of task-based Learning, the post-test results revealed that the student's level of mastery had improved. The student proficiency scores and the mean of the class also increased, thus indicating that students understood and applied mathematical knowledge better. However, they still demonstrated a minimum level of competencies. This growing tendency means that the task-based approach enhanced the students' cognitive engagement and content knowledge awareness. While small, the gain is the next step in the right direction toward showing the potential of TBL as an effective pedagogy in mathematics education. The problem-solving, experience-based character of the TBL likely accounts in part for students' increase in their ability to relate theory-laden mathematical ideas to "real world" applications—a pedagogy that should be especially amenable to vocational-tract learners.

Since this is Task-based instruction, rather than traditional pedagogy, such Learning is made authentic because peers engage in communication, acquire naturally, and utilize that knowledge in work settings (Ellis, 2018). The observed gain is consistent with more engaged and mathematically successful task-based instruction. The mean scores and proficiency were higher, meaning there was a significant improvement in students' understanding and problem-solving skills even if the proficiency level remained in the same category. This increase can be justified by TBL's ability to provide the contexts to the students in learning the mathematical concepts (Nunan,2004). The gain reflects a striking improvement in achievement and suggests there might be further gains among long-term users of TBL.

**Critical Thinking Skills.** "I can reflect on my problem-solving process and learn from my mistakes." It suggests a greater capacity for introspection and growth, consistent with higher-order critical thinking abilities such as metacognition (Flavell, 1979). Most topics (such as logical reasoning, spotting errors, and investigating alternate ways) showed potential for improvement. The lowest score is "I can deconstruct complicated issues into smaller,

easier-to-manage components." One essential element of critical Thinking is analytical Thinking, which may be lacking in this case (Paul and Elder, 2014). Most critical thinking abilities are rated at least "Moderately Agree," suggesting that the intervention has a good effect. Excellent skills in metacognition and introspection suggest that the intervention successfully prompted students to consider how they think. However, specific development is required in areas like decomposing difficult situations. It implies that even if the intervention has generally been helpful, specific gaps may be filled by improving it.

**Significant difference between the Pretest and Posttest scores**. The posttest means scores showed a substantial difference, suggesting that students' academic performance significantly improved with the introduction of task-based Learning (TBL). Even though the students' level of mastery stayed in the low mastery category, the statistical evidence indicates that the intervention resulted in a notable and quantifiable improvement in their mathematical competency. This finding aligns with previous studies demonstrating how effectively TBL facilitates deeper Learning and skill acquisition (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). Task-based Learning has been shown to develop conceptual knowledge, higher-order thinking abilities, and problem-solving skills, particularly in mathematics (Skehan, 1998; Prabhu, 1987).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the study demonstrates that TBL is an effective teaching strategy for increasing student accomplishment, particularly for students enrolled in vocational programs like TVL, where typical classroom instruction might not completely engage or benefit them. Task-based Learning has increased students' comprehension and application of mathematical ideas by making learning more dynamic and applicable to real-life circumstances. It has led to an improvement in test scores (Littlewood, 2004). Research shows that TBL improves student engagement, retention, and problem-solving abilities by emphasizing interactive, student-centered activities (Willis & Willis, 2007; Robinson, 2011). Additionally, it creates a dynamic learning atmosphere where students gain self-assurance and drive to solve mathematical problems (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001).

These results support the idea that task-based Learning is a valuable teaching strategy for enhancing TVL students' mathematical proficiency and must be incorporated into vocational education programs to better prepare students for real-world applications (Ellis, 2009).

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The data presented in the analysis provides information on the scores of the TVL students. The scores in the pretest and posttest showed a significant difference. Therefore, the notable improvement implies that task-based Learning significantly raised TVL students' academic performance. The statistical evidence indicates that the intervention resulted in a significant and quantifiable improvement in the student's proficiency, even if their level of mastery remained in the low mastery category.

The results also show that the intervention had a favorable effect on students' development of critical thinking skills. Students showed excellent reflecting skills, especially when learning from errors, indicating that the intervention successfully promoted metacognitive capabilities.

Task-based instruction is a sustainable teaching method for increasing student performance, particularly for students in vocational courses such as TVL. Task-based Learning has assisted learners in better understanding and using mathematical concepts by making the learning process more interesting and relevant to actual situations, thus improving students' scores, as noted.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researcher expresses her heartfelt gratitude to the Almighty God for the unending guidance, wisdom and encouragement to pursue her master’s education and for making everything possible amidst trials and difficulties.

She wishes to show her sincerest gratitude and appreciation to the following people whose assistance and concerns have helped her greatly in the completion of her study.

Romulo G. Doronio, PhD, her thesis adviser, whose expertise greatly affected the accomplishment of the study. His guidance and advices are greatly appreciated.

Roel P. Villocino, EdD, Dean of Graduate School of Assumption College of Nabunturan, for his undying motivation and support to the masterand.

Delfin J. Enargan MA, and Elizabeth D. Dioso, EdD, the untiring thesis panel members whose constructive suggestions gave clarity and coherence to the thesis.

Dr. Norman G. Jandog, School Principal IV of Compostela National High School whose guidance, support and encouragement paved a way to the researcher's courage to make development on her professional aspect.

Colleagues of Compostela National High School for their untiring motivation and reinforcement towards the researcher in pursuing her master's education. For helping her encourage the students in participating the study.

Assumption College of Nabunturan professors, for inculcating knowledge to the masterand and for providing opportunities to develop her professional aspect.

Learners of Compostela National High School, whose time and knowledge are shared through participating in the thesis amidst the pandemic.

Tatay Jock, whose unwavering support, patience, and encouragement have been her foundation. For believing her and for being her source of strength and constant motivation have been her guiding light, especially during the challenging moments.

Her wonderful daughters Kaely, Xam and Heart, for filling her life with joy and laughter. Your innocence and curiosity have inspired her daily and reminded her daily of the importance of perseverance and love.

Supportive friend, Rhea who has been by her side from the beginning. For always being there to lend an ear and for your insightful discussions that helped shape her ideas.

Maya, Raquel, Jennifer, Venus, Irene, Beverly, and Ellen, the amazing friends whose immeasurable assistance is beyond compare, for helping her in troubled times and for reminding her the goals she had.

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