IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVE FROM TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Implementing Inclusive Education poses different challenges for educators. This qualitative phenomenology study explores the experiences of five teachers from Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School as they navigate new teaching approaches for inclusive classroom environments. The research sheds light on various challenges faced by teachers. Teachers struggle with a lack of expertise in meeting varied student needs, challenges in obtaining appropriate learning approaches, and the need to make adaptations to students with unique behaviors. Teachers share unforgettable experiences including physical aggressiveness, the development of patience and adaptability, and the challenges of accommodating students at different developmental levels. The study highlights significant challenges in inclusive teaching, such as the lack of adequate training, difficulties in developing successful teaching methods for a varied range of students, and the challenging nature of delivering personalized instruction. The research emphasizes the significant influence of these problems on teachers, on their patience, class delivery, and personal growth. Teachers use coping mechanisms including learning sign languages and using diverse activities to address the challenges they face. Recognizing the significance of ongoing support, trained teachers, and ongoing professional development is crucial for successfully managing the complicated nature of Inclusive Education. Despite the challenges, teachers find opportunities for growth and resourcefulness within the inclusive environment, fostering the development of alternative strategies to enhance teaching practices. This study emphasizes the need for school leaders and educational policymakers to consider teachers' experiences and challenges in the implementation of Inclusive Education, affirming the invaluable role of teachers' insights in refining educational programs and adapting to an evolving learning landscape. By acknowledging these challenges and implementing robust interventions, educators can better equip themselves to meet the demands of inclusive classrooms and support students in their academic journeys.

Keyword: - *, inclusive education, experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, insights and realizations, phenomenological research*

1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Education is one of the United Nations' sustainable development goals. It is a component of goal number four, Quality Education, which aims to guarantee inclusive and equitable quality education and encourage opportunities for lifelong learning for all. It entails actual educational chances for traditionally marginalized groups. Students from various backgrounds can study and develop together in an inclusive environment, to everyone's advantage.

The principle of Inclusive Education advocates that all students have the right to a high-quality education, full participation in all facets of school life, and help realize their full potential. While inclusive Education has the potential to benefit all students, it also poses substantial challenges for teachers, who might need access to the required resources, training, or support to adopt inclusive practices in their classrooms successfully. Implementing inclusive Education into practice can be challenging in many ways.

Problems in Inclusive Education have been encountered in the Netherlands; educators must be more open to teaching kids with special needs. Since teaching students with special needs was not sufficiently covered in their

initial teacher training, they generally do not have favorable attitudes toward Inclusive Education. Although changing a teacher's training program is an option, the results will not be felt for several years, according to Pijl (2010).

In the Philippine setting, the practice of inclusion in the different general education contexts is neither questioned nor resisted by the participants, according to Muega's research (2016). They acknowledge, however, that they are still determining if their concept of Inclusive Education complies with generally recognized definitions. Participants are still determining whether their purported methods are compelling enough to meet the demands of high-level Inclusive Education. The results show that the participants' opinions on introducing inclusive Education in the nation were divided. While some participants thought inclusive Education was good, others hesitated to see it in action.

In the local setting, Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School teachers experienced problems with inclusive Education. Teachers of Inclusive Education need more training in handling students with difficulties in a regular classroom. This deficiency in training and expertise significantly adds to the complexities teachers face when attempting to create an inclusive and conducive learning environment.

2. METHODS

This chapter comprehensively outlines the study methods used, ranging from evaluating how appropriate the research design was regarding the research questions considered to carefully selecting areas where the research took place and participants, using a data collection tool, and making ethical considerations while doing this study.

2.1 Research Design

Phenomenology was the research design for this study. It is a qualitative research method that describes and interprets human experiences; Connelly (2010) states that in phenomenology, researchers investigate the features or essence of an experience through conversations, narratives, or observations with those going through it. It is used in this study to comprehend what was essential from the viewpoint of teachers who experienced inclusive classrooms. Phenomenological research seeks to uncover the underlying meanings, structures, and patterns of teachers' challenges rather than only describing them (Bourke, 2007). Scrutinizing participants' experiences concerning their daily lives concerning inclusion issues in pedagogy within their environments can reveal the central meanings of related phenomena. Data from participants in the study will be collected using In-Depth Interviews (IDI) to gain a deep and rich understanding of their life experiences.

2.2 Research Locale

This study was conducted at Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School, Nabunturan, Davao de Oro. Nabunturan is the capital town of Davao de Oro, a province located in the Davao Region of Mindanao, Philippines. It is found on the eastern side of the province with neighboring municipalities such as Montevista on the north Compostela on the east, and Mawab to the south. Nabunturan serves as the key administrative hub of the province, playing an essential part in facilitating political, economic, and cultural activity. The municipality spans roughly 231.30 square kilometers. According to the most recent census, the population of Nabunturan is approximately 84,000. The population consists of different ethnic groups, with the majority being settlers who speak the Visayan language.

Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School (NNCHS) is a public high school situated at Barangay Poblacion, Nabunturan, Davao de Oro. It is said to be one of the top-performing high schools in the province.

Established in 1951, NNCHS offers a complete secondary education program from grades 7-12 with different special program classes, such as the Special Program in Arts (SPA), Special Program in Sports (SPS), Special Program in Journalism (SPJ), and Science Technology Engineering (STE) class.

2.3 Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role in a phenomenological study includes thematizing, designing, interviewing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting (Fink, 2000).

2.4 Research Participants

The participants of this research were selected through purposive sampling. The participants were selected through personal discernment and judgment of the researcher based on who can provide rich and detailed information about their experiences and challenges in inclusive education.

The research participants were the five teachers who handle students with special needs in a mainstream classroom, particularly at Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School.

2.5 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process began by identifying teachers who have taught in an inclusive education setting and were identified using purposeful sampling.

After identifying the participants. The researcher sent the endorsement letter to the school division superintendent with a copy from the Graduate School. Once the researcher received the School Division Superintendent's response letter, she wrote a letter to the school principal. After obtaining a response from the principal, she now goes ahead to obtain informed consent from the participants regarding her study by explaining its purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of being part of such research and confirming that they are willing and understand what they will be doing in this study.

Afterwards, the researcher conducted an interview, which was done through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants. These involved questions about their experiences at schools with open-ended responses. The researcher conducted the interviews through audio recording. This enabled the researcher to capture all data correctly and make it possible for the researcher to listen to them at any time.

2.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis demands careful and systematic processes of gathering, organizing, and analyzing data to understand the meaning and essence of the participants' experiences.

Firstly, interviews were transcribed into text during data analysis. When transcribing has taken place, reading again becomes necessary so that the researcher fully understands what those people involved went through in their lives. At this point, "bracketing" comes in handy for a researcher when she tries not to follow or use personal biases but focus on facts only.

The next step includes identifying major trends and themes within the data. Therefore, coding has taken place so that different sections of text expressing the relevance and core content of participants' experiences can be applied with different labels.

The researcher started grouping the codes into categories that correspond to the central patterns and themes identified after sorting out the data. This entails finding associations or relationships between various codes and categories.

The researcher generated a summary of the main findings and trends arising from the initial classification of the data. The latter contains a synthesis of what happened to the subjects as well as discusses important aspects of those incidents.

2.7 Trustworthiness and Credibility

To ensure that the findings of this study were valid and reliable. The four components of trustworthiness and credibility are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility. The researcher ensured honesty and openness during data collection, analysis, and presentation by avoiding bias or mistakes. One way to enhance the dependability of the findings is through triangulation. Additionally, participants were involved in the research process. Finally, during peer review, other experts in the field will scrutinize its research procedures, data analysis, and conclusions.

Transferability. The researcher provided a broad description of the research environment, participants, and methodology so readers can fully comprehend the study. By contrasting the results with those of other studies in the field and highlighting the similarities and contrasts between the results, the researcher will increase the transferability of the findings.

Dependability. The researcher intended to utilize phenomenology in conducting this study to thoroughly examine the experiences of inclusive education teachers. The researcher also maintains an audit trail that details the whole research process, including all data gathering and analysis steps, from beginning to end.

Confirmability. The researcher approached data collecting methodically and transparently, particularly by explicitly outlining their methodologies and procedures.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

As part of the ethical consideration of this study, the steps in which the researcher took were:

Informed consent. Before starting the study, the researcher got the participant's informed consent. This entails ensuring that the participant comprehends and consents to participate in the study, outlining the goals and methods of the study, and identifying the risks and benefits of participation.

Confidentiality. The researcher ensures that participants' identities and personal information should be kept private and confidential. To do this, identifying information must be removed from the data, and the data must be stored securely.

Voluntary participation. Participants were free to participate in the study without being forced or under duress. Additionally, they were free to stop participating in the study at any moment without repercussions.

Respect for participants. The researcher upholds the privacy, dignity, and autonomy of the participants. This entails treating people respectfully and sensitively and protecting their welfare and rights.

Researcher bias. The researcher was conscious of their prejudices and values and how they could affect the course of the research and its outcomes. She was open and honest about her prejudices and how they might have affected the research.

Research misconduct. The researcher is responsible for ensuring that the study is carried out honestly and transparently and that it is free of errors such as plagiarism, data falsification, and data fabrication.

3. FINDINGS

The findings of this chapter concerned teachers' understanding of inclusive education. The aim was to explore teachers' experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights while working with children with various learning needs within inclusive classrooms. Five teachers from Nabuturan National Comprehensive High School were purposively used, which resulted in different opinions. An in-depth interview was conducted to collect their thoughts, which were then carefully analyzed in search of common themes that illustrated the complexity associated with inclusive education.

To ensure their confidentiality, the researcher employed coding techniques that made it impossible to identify them. The research questions order the results, thereby providing a systematic analysis of how teachers perceive inclusive education. From this perspective, conducting a coherent and all-around examination of several aspects surrounding policy, practice, and daily life situations in an inclusive classroom setting is possible. By analyzing such components as forms of interaction between teachers and students on inclusive education, this chapter contributes towards a better understanding of Inclusive Education.

What are the experiences of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education?

This section contains the outcomes for the main study question: 1.2 What are the experiences of teachers in implementing inclusive education? Two research questions were used to obtain relevant information for this important query. These questions sought to disclose the participants' personal experiences in inclusive education, grasping the difficulties and achievements they encountered. Therefore, the main goal was to allow teachers to share what they deemed realistic elements constituting inclusive settings and other factors affecting their personal experience.

Experiences in an Inclusive Education

The themes presented herein emanated from discussing responses to 'How would you describe your experiences in inclusive education?' Four emerging themes were identified from participants' responses: no expertise in handling, challenges in appropriating learning materials, adjustments made with peculiar behavior, and different treatment of students with special needs.

Unforgettable Experiences as a Teacher in Inclusive Education

This section contains findings under research question 1.2 What are your unforgettable experiences that had an impact on you as a teacher in an inclusive education setting? The responses yielded multiple themes, providing insight into the diverse facets of these influential experiences: Being Attacked with a Pencil by a Student, learning to be more Patient and Flexible, Handling a Child with Late Mental Development, Child Isolating from other Students, Being Confronted by an Attention-seeker Student, Giving Irrelevant Answers to Questions, Dealing with a Student Suffering from Tantrums.

What challenges do teachers encounter in the implementation of inclusive education?

The section mainly focuses on key elements of the inclusive education journey and educators' challenges throughout the implementation process. The main focus here was guided by Major Question 2, which sought a thorough analysis of these issues encountered in establishing inclusive and accessible learning environments. We must look into this part because it will shed light on how teachers define inclusive education while we sail through multiple challenges behind accommodating diverse learning needs. We seek profound knowledge about them to enable further improvement of the continuous development of inclusive methods within educational institutions.

Challenges Encountered in Teaching in Inclusive Classroom

This section majorly looks at the struggles experienced by teachers when carrying out their teaching duties in inclusive classrooms. The primary question underlying our inquiry was 'What challenges did you encounter teaching in an inclusive classroom? From participants' narratives, several themes emerged, thus contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the intricate challenges experienced by teachers in an attempt to promote inclusive education. Challenges include Teaching without Proper Training, Finding Ways for Students to Learn, Keeping One's Patience, and Doing Individualized Teaching a Challenge.

The Impact of Challenges on Teachers in Inclusive Education

This section discusses the implications for teachers and the challenges they face in inclusive classroom settings. Answering the question, 'How did these challenges affect you as a teacher?' The narratives given by participants had distinctive teachings that shaped their lives as educators, among which were Affecting One's Patience, Affecting the Delivery of Lessons, Being Molded as a Person, Becoming More Cautious, and Finding Ways to Teach Children.

What coping mechanism do teachers utilize with the challenges experienced in implementing inclusive education?

This section explores the complex factors that teachers face while implementing inclusive education and describes their coping strategies. It also examines the methods and mental tools teachers apply to overcome difficulties present in inclusive classrooms. The teachers' narratives provide insights into their resilience and

adaptability to overcome such obstacles, thus giving a good understanding of how they manage the intricate problems associated with an inclusive environment.

Coping with Challenges Encountered

This part analyzes how teachers effectively handle the complex difficulties faced while implementing inclusive education. This review examines teachers' strategies to handle problems experienced while implementing inclusivity in schools. "What coping mechanisms do teachers utilize?" is an example of a research question. The emerging themes include Having Difficulty Coping, Adjusting and Empathizing with Students, and shed light on how educators cope with the demands of inclusive education.

Coping Mechanisms Used to Address Challenges

The ideas in this section were obtained from the specific question, "What strategies or coping mechanisms have you used to address the challenges you encountered?' Informants put their views forward, unraveling several significant themes dealing with problems. Study Sign Languages, Unable to Find Ways of Coping, Using the Same Teaching Strategies as Before, Introduce Some Activities, and Use Common Strategies for All Students. These diverse coping mechanisms show how teachers adapt and adjust within the contested terrain of inclusive teaching methodologists.

What insights do teachers have in the implementation of inclusive education?

This section looks at the insights and realizations of these educators as they relate to inclusive education. In response to the research query, "What are your insights and realizations in teaching inclusive education?" participants shared their significant thoughts about diverse challenges and successes experienced in an inclusive classroom. These themes involve profound insights, evolving pedagogies, and fresh views by teachers through their professional experiences. These observations range from managing different learning styles to fostering inclusiveness and support, showing how education practitioners shift from one perspective to another towards enabling a total learning experience for all learners while guaranteeing quality delivery of instructions.

Insights and Realizations in Teaching Inclusive Education

In this section, the study looks at teachers' insights and realizations of an inclusive education. The participants' responses revolve around a focused topic arising from the research question, " What are your insights and realizations in teaching and inclusive education?" Several emerging themes include Separate Sessions with an Expert, Assign Teachers with Expertise, and capacitating teachers with Training and Seminars. This is another theme, underscoring the vital role of continuous professional development in navigating the challenges of inclusive education and Teaching as a Challenging Learning Experience.

Influence of Inclusive Environment on Teaching Practices and Approaches

This section comes from exploring the research question, 'How has teaching in an inclusive environment influenced your teaching practices and approaches? ' Participants share within this framework to bring out two main themes, including Becoming Resourceful, and Able to Think of Other Strategies. This compilation of ideas explains how different aspects of teachers' pedagogical strategies, problem-solving skills, and capacity to develop innovative methods for handling unique challenges and opportunities are modified due to inclusive schooling.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the shared experiences of educators in the context of inclusive education provide valuable insights into notable challenges and noteworthy moments. From problems related to lack of expertise, lesson appropriateness, and coping with deviant behaviors to the different treatment accorded to students with disabilities— these challenges underscore the complicated nature of an inclusive classroom setting. Teachers gave stories ranging from moments such as a physical attack experienced by a student to late mental development handling another one; consequently, isolation, attention-seeking behavior, unrelated answers, and tantrums are some events that they can

never forget. These vivid stories show the everyday struggles and successes towards achieving inclusive learning environments.

Nonetheless, teachers still confessed that they used sign language, maintained consistency during teaching, and incorporated all students into activities. This indicates a need for specialized training, expert support, and capacity building through seminars. The inclusive environment has also resulted in resourcefulness among educators despite its challenges. To summarize these findings, it can be concluded that although inclusive education poses unique problems, it also encourages the development of innovative strategies and transformative educational experiences, leading to a more inclusive and supportive educational landscape.

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