



TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM: BASES FOR ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-qualitative study determined the teachers' experiences in the implementation of self-contained classroom as bases for enhancement program in the Schools District of Nueva Valencia North, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras, during the school year 2024-2025. The participants of this study were the eleven (11) SPED teachers from the schools in the District of Nueva Valencia North and South. The purposive sampling method was used in this study. The method applied in this study was phenomenology. According to the findings, the experiences of SPED teachers were stressful, lack of support, and difficult to adjust. As to their challenges, behavioral problem, lack of learning materials, and lack of learning facilities. For their coping strategies, application of different strategies, strong collaboration, and technical assistance. The recommended enhancement program was based on the findings of the study. It is recommended that DepEd officials, school heads, teachers, and parents take time to reflect on their learners from the time they arrive until the time they leave.

Keywords: *Teachers' Experiences, Implementation, Self-Contained Classroom, Enhancement Program*

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is not limited to policy implementation; rather, it reflects a strong dedication to guaranteeing that every learner, irrespective of ability, has equal opportunities to receive quality education. Within this framework, Special Education (SPED) classrooms play an essential role in meeting the varied and individualized needs of learners with disabilities. Nevertheless, teachers in these settings encounter various challenges that can influence both their teaching effectiveness and the overall learning outcomes of their students.

The evolution of special education in the Philippines has been shaped by key legislative measures that have guided its advancement. Early efforts to safeguard the rights of children with disabilities can be traced to 1935 through Articles 356 and 259 of Commonwealth Act No. 3203, which affirmed every child's right to physical, moral, and intellectual development and underscored the government's duty to protect and promote these rights.

Studies suggest that the success of SPED programs is largely influenced by teachers' professional experience, skill sets, and the level of support they receive. Florian and Spratt (2023) emphasized that inclusive education is most effective when teachers have access to professional development and institutional backing. Similarly, Forlin (2020) pointed out that teachers' attitudes and preparedness greatly influence the success of SPED implementation. Studies by Sharma, Loreman et al, & Forlin (2022) suggest that ongoing training and exposure to inclusive practices boost teachers' confidence and ability to handle diverse learners.

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In the Schools Division of Guimaras, teachers frequently face challenges such as limited specialized training, inadequate instructional materials, and difficulties in managing student behavior. Additionally, they are tasked with developing individualized learning plans to ensure that each student receives support tailored to their specific needs.

The study seeks to examine the experiences of teachers managing SPED classes in selected centers in the Schools Division of Guimaras during the 2024–2025 school year.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter described the research methodology, covering the research design, study participants, data collection procedures, research instruments, and the methods used for data analysis.

Research Method

This chapter outlined the research methodology, detailing the research design, participants, data collection procedures, research instruments, and the techniques employed for data analysis. The study sought to explore the experiences of teachers in implementing self-contained classrooms, with the goal of informing the development of enhancement programs within the Schools Division of Guimaras for the 2024–2025 school year.

Research Design

The study employed a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to research that seeks to explore how individuals perceive and

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interpret the world, emphasizing their subjective experiences. Its goal is to explore how these personal perspectives may differ from commonly held views, providing insight into the meanings individuals assign to their experiences.

Good (2023) defines phenomenology as a research approach that aims to understand the essence of phenomena through individuals' lived experiences. The term "phenomenology" literally means the "study of phenomena" and focuses on exploring the meaning and significance these experiences hold for those who encounter them.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study consisted of chosen elementary school teachers handling SPED classes from designated Special Education (SPED) centers within the Schools Division of Guimaras.

A total of eleven (11) SPED teachers participated as respondents in the study. These educators were actively engaged in implementing SPED programs, adapting instructional strategies, and addressing the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies offered valuable insights into the realities of SPED implementation within the Schools Division of Guimaras.

Sampling Design

This study employed a purposive sampling design.

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According to Nikolopoulos (2023), it refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics that you need in your sample.

Purposive sampling is a technique in which participants, cases, or events are intentionally chosen based on the researcher's judgment to gather the most relevant information for the study's objectives. Commonly used in qualitative and mixed-methods research, this approach is particularly useful for selecting information-rich cases or optimizing limited resources. However, it may also introduce potential biases, including observer bias.

Research Instrument

The study employed a researcher-developed interview questionnaire as its primary instrument. The interview schedule was divided into three sections, with questions crafted to align with the study's objectives. During the in-depth interviews, the researcher recorded sessions using both audio and video devices, subject to the participants' consent, to ensure accurate data collection and documentation.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Prior to validating the interview schedule, the researcher requested feedback from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of experts in research, testing, assessment, and English. These experts evaluated each question to ensure it aligned with the study's objectives, accurately captured the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of SPED teachers, and thoroughly addressed the key components

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of SPED program implementation. Comments, corrections, and suggestions provided by the panel of experts regarding the interview schedule were considered using the appropriate Good and Scates evaluation form.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data collection process for this study was conducted systematically and in accordance with ethical standards to ensure the credibility, accuracy, and depth of the information obtained. Authorization to carry out the research was obtained from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, the Public Schools District Supervisor, the School Heads, and the individual participants.

The researcher conducted the interviews face-to-face, visiting schools, communities, or other locations that were convenient for the participants. An interview guide with open-ended questions was employed to explore different aspects of SPED teachers' experiences in self-contained classrooms. To ensure complete documentation of participants' responses, the in-depth interviews were recorded using both audio and video devices. Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher systematically organized and compiled all data in preparation for analysis.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using a thematic approach, which involves identifying, examining, and reporting patterns or recurring themes within qualitative information.

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According to Maguire & Delahunt, as cited by Lagrante (2023), a thematic analysis aims to identify themes, such as patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue. This involved summarizing, examining, and interpreting the collected data to derive meaningful insights

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study used a qualitative research method, aimed at exploring and comprehending the depth and complexity of human experiences, challenges, and coping strategies.

This approach focused on collecting detailed information about teachers' experiences in implementing self-contained classrooms within the School District of Nueva Valencia North, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras, during the 2024–2025 school year.

The study involved eleven (11) SPED teachers from schools in the Districts of Nueva Valencia North and South as its participants.

The researcher employed purposive sampling to select the participants of the study. This method was used to identify a diverse group of SPED teachers capable of providing rich and varied insights.

The data for this study were collected using a researcher-developed interview guide, which was administered to the participants.

The interview results provided baseline data for identifying the factors, perspectives, experiences, and challenges that guided the creation of the enhancement program.

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The narrative data from the in-depth interviews were analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis.

The study's findings revealed that, based on the in-depth interviews, teachers' experiences in self-contained classrooms were often stressful. This suggests that teaching in such settings is a demanding profession, with specific stressors that can significantly affect teachers' experiences.

For teachers experiences described their day-to-day work in self-contained classrooms as emotionally intense, physically demanding, and pedagogically complex. The framework is stressful.

From the teachers' view, their experiences were a lack of support, limited parental involvement, and a lack of understanding or acceptance from some families, which posed further obstacles.

It can be concluded that teachers' experiences play a vital role in influencing both the quality of education and student outcomes.

As to teachers' experiences in a self-contained classroom, based on the results of the in-depth interview, it was difficult to adjust.

It can be inferred that they frequently dealt with behavioral issues, including aggression, tantrums, and noncompliance, especially from learners with ASD and developmental delays.

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Regarding the challenges faced by teachers, these included managing students' behavioral issues, shortages of learning materials, and insufficient school facilities.

This implies that teachers most pressing challenges faced by SPED teachers revolved around resource shortages, instructional complexity, structural limitations, and gaps in family engagement. Teachers reported a lack of appropriate materials, furniture, and teaching tools, which hindered effective instruction. The instructional burden of managing diverse learning styles, behaviors, and emotional needs within one classroom added to the workload, often leading to stress and exhaustion.

As to how teachers cope with the challenges in a self-contained classroom, they were resourceful in the application of different strategies.

It can be inferred that adapting the general curriculum and assessment methods to meet learners' unique needs is a major ongoing task for SPED teachers.

As to how teachers adjust to the challenges in self-contained classrooms, teachers consistently described how collaboration helped alleviate the burdens of classroom management, instructional planning, and emotional exhaustion.

It can be inferred that the support from colleagues, administrators, specialists, and families is a key coping strategy of SPED teachers.

As to how teachers with the challenges in self-contained classrooms often encounter the need for technical assistance.

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It can be inferred that the SPED teachers were resourceful in addressing shortages in materials, time, and infrastructure. Many teachers explained how they actively seek out solutions through the given training by their division and the guidance from the principal.

Conclusion

This study explored the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of Special Education (SPED) teachers in the implementation of self-contained classrooms in selected centers within the Schools Division of Guimaras. Through in-depth qualitative interviews, the study gathered rich and meaningful insights into the daily realities of teaching learners with special needs, the barriers encountered in practice, and the various strategies employed by teachers to manage and overcome these challenges. From the data gathered and analyzed, three major areas of conclusion were drawn.

SPED teachers' experiences in self-contained classrooms were marked by emotional intensity, physical demands, and pedagogical complexity. Participants frequently encountered behavioral and emotional difficulties, including tantrums, aggression, and communication issues, particularly from learners with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Intellectual Disabilities (ID), and other developmental conditions. Despite these difficulties, many teachers described their work as rewarding and personally transformative.

SPED teachers encountered numerous systemic, instructional, and interpersonal challenges that hindered effective instruction. Teachers also struggled with managing a wide spectrum of learner needs, behaviors, and emotional conditions within a single classroom

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setting. Additionally, many teachers experienced difficulty in fostering parental involvement, citing limited awareness, denial, or lack of communication from some families.

Despite these challenges, SPED teachers demonstrate notable resilience and adaptability by employing a range of coping strategies. Institutionally, teachers employ differentiated strategies tailored to learners' individual needs, alongside positive behavioral supports, structured routines, and clear expectations to manage behavior and promote engagement.

The enhancement program focuses on targeted investments to address the immediate and pressing needs of schools through smaller-scale initiatives, where major new construction projects are not feasible or affordable within the available budget. The school enhancement program does not encompass new construction, as such projects are managed separately under the major works program in relation to the implementation of self-contained classrooms.

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