



**TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES ON HANDLING LEARNERS WITH
SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (LSENS): BASES
FOR AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
INTERVENTION PROGRAM**

GLORENS ICA Q. LAGRADANTE

SPET I

Banate Central Elementary School

glorensia15@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research method using phenomenological research design aimed to formulate an inclusive education intervention program on the experiences of regular teachers assigned to teach learners with special needs. A researcher-made interview guide was used to the five regular teachers assigned to teach learners with special needs. The data gathering instrument was subjected to face and content validation by a panel of experts. Thematic analysis was utilized for descriptive data analysis. Based from the information gathered during the conduct of in-depth interview on the experiences of teachers on handling learners with special needs the following major themes were identified: Difficult to handle and Keep on adjusting.

On the challenges of teachers on handling learners with special needs the following were revealed: Lack of training and Lack of parental support. Regarding how teachers manage or cope with the challenges encountered in handling learners with special needs the analysis arrived at the following conclusions: Seeking help from fellow teachers and Giving extra attention.

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Keywords: *Teachers Experiences, Handling Learners, Special Education Needs, Education Intervention*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The development of contemporary educational principles worldwide has strongly influenced the Philippine education system, this arrived in line with the rapid pace of global development today. Such development poses a challenge for positive changes in the educational field. These endeavour is necessary in ensuring a better life quality as well as serving as the benchmark of broader access to education in the Philippines. Thus, cementing the pursuit of efforts aligned with the people’s needs in an era of competition and modernization (Conrad & Brown, 2011).

Studies showed that special education requires major transformation both at the policy level and implementation stage in schools brought upon by the expansion of the Special Education Integration Program (SEIP). The increasing number of Special Needs Pupils (SNS) requires extensive educational opportunities to be opened for them such as the expansion of the Inclusive Education Integration Special Education Program (IEP) which was gazetted a decade ago (Friend & Cook, 2013).

The role of the teachers is asserted as an integral component in the fruition of Early Childhood Education (ECE). Consequently, they had further grounding in collaboration with peer teachers, teacher assistance teams, multi-disciplinary team and parents. Inversely,

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regular teachers asked training in instructional environment management, adaptive equipment, environmental adaptations, flexible working with individual children, collaboration with specialist teachers and content, process and assessment modification (Majoko, 2017).

The existence of inclusion preparatory programs for educators instills in future teachers valued competencies and skills that meet the full range of their schoolchildren's needs (Cooper, Kurtts, Baber, and Vallecorsa, 2008).

On the other hand, regular teachers entail teaching children with disabilities in regular education settings, it is imperative for teacher preparation programs to be developed in student teachers and inculcate an understanding of characteristics of various disabilities and a positive attitude in working with children with disabilities, their families and other stakeholders (Burstein et al 2004).

Moreover, teacher concerns as barriers to inclusion have not been widely examined within low-and middle-income countries. In order to gain an accurate understanding of whether interventions can lead to inclusion in practice within these matters, their effectiveness must be tested on both teachers self-focused and other-focused concerns about inclusive education (Carew et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, despite these setbacks and even particularly the pandemic, did not wholly impede delivering and providing educational services. As a result, the Department of Education formulated and implemented policies, plans and programs to continue Filipino students' education (Devine & Payan, 2010).

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As a classroom teacher, the researcher found difficulty in this present situation. Minimizing risks, dealing with stress and staying COVID-19 free have become her top recurring concerns. Today, she is further faced with difficult tasks of keeping her abreast including teachers' preparedness on Learners with Special Education Needs in an inclusive education with the latest mandates of the Department of Educationfull face-to-face classes.

The results of the study would be the bases for an inclusive education intervention program in the Schools District of Banate during the school year 2022-2023.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research method, research design, sampling design, the participants of the study, the data gathering procedure, research instruments, validity of research instrument and the data analysis were employed in this study.

Research Method

The research method utilized in the study was a descriptive method using in-depth interview.

According to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspective on a particular idea, progress or situation.

The interviewee during the interview was allowed to sit and to think about the series of questions about a certain issue via face to face. The aim was to get the main or the

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necessary views of the participants in a certain issue in a social context through the responses of the participants to the questions.

Research Design

The study used qualitative research design using phenomenology.

According to Creswell (2009), phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at the description of the nature of the phenomenon.

In a qualitative study, interviews afford interviewees an opportunity to provide their viewpoint, perception and explanation without predetermination by the researcher (Galanes, 2003).

Phenomenologists generally assumed that there is some commonality to how human beings perceive and interpret similar experiences; they seek to identify, understand, and describe these commonalities (Finlay, 2013).

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were the selected regular teachers handling learners with special education needs in five identified SPED Classes/Centers namely: Schools Districts of Banate, Dingle, Lemery, Barotac Nuevo and Barotac Viejo during the school year 2022-2023.

The researcher noted that some of the regular teachers were assigned to handle learners with special needs in schools with SPED center/classes.

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Sampling Design

Purposive sampling design was used in this study. A purposive sampling is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling. The researcher gain some insights into the world of his or her participants and to describe their perceptions and reactions (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007).

Research Instrument

The researcher used a researcher-made interview guide for the in-depth interview to gather information to the SPED teachers with learners on special education needs as basis for program recommendation. The interview guide focused on the purpose of this study. Video recorder was used also for data gathering and documentation depending upon the permission of the participants.

A thematic analysis was used to summarize the results of the study. The findings were supported by the existing literature regarding regular teachers handling learners with special educational needs as bases for inclusive intervention program.

Validity of the Research Instrument

The research instrument for regular teachers handling learners with special education needs were reviewed for face content validity by a panel of jurors who were selected on the basis of their expertise in research and instrumentation. Each item was assessed by the jurors whether to revise reject, or retain. The panel of jurors were composed of experts in the fields of research, tests and measurements, and evaluation.

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Data Gathering Procedures

Upon approval of the Dean of the Graduate School and adviser to conduct the research, the researcher identified the respondents and those specifically involved in this study. A letter of request for the conduct of the study was sent to the school head with SPED Center in five identified Schools Districts in the Schools Division of Iloilo. Upon approval, the researcher personally conducted the interview using the interview guide.

Face to face in-depth interview was used to gather information.

Prior, the researcher required the participants to sign a waiver or permission relative to the conduct of the study.

Using in-depth interview, a voice and voice recorder was provided to completely capture the interviewee's words and responses. The participants comfortably sit together with the researcher to get the responses to the questions. The object was to get the participant's view about the study.

All information and answers were recorded, compiled and analysed. For ethical consideration the data from the conduct of the study was treated with utmost confidentiality and was used only for the purpose of this study.

Data Analyses

The information gathered in the study was properly analysed using thematic approach.

This qualitative analysis technique was used to identify the themes of the regular teachers handling learners with special education needs as bases for inclusive intervention

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program in the selected schools in the Schools Division of Iloilo during the school year 2022-2023.

The researchers conducted a phenomenological study searched for the “essential structure” of a single phenomenon by interviewing, in-depth, a number of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. The researcher extracted what he considered relevant statements from each participant’s description of the phenomenon and then integrates these themes into a narrative description of the phenomenon and then clusters these into themes. He or she then integrates these themes into a narrative description of the phenomenon (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This descriptive qualitative research study using the phenomenological research design aimed to formulate an inclusive education intervention program on the experiences of regular teachers handling learners with special education needs during the school year 2022-2023.

In this study, a descriptive research method employing in-depth interviews was utilized. The interviewer maintained a considerable distance from the participants and took time to formulate questions about a specific issue. The objective was to capture the primary perspectives of the participants within a social context through their responses to the questions. The research design employed phenomenology, a philosophical approach within qualitative research, commonly used in fields like psychology, sociology, and social work.

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Phenomenology involves interviewing subjects to understand their impressions and experiences deeply.

The participants of the study were five regular teachers handling learners with special education needs on the five identified SPED learning centers in the schools districts of the Schools Division of Iloilo namely: Barotac Nuevo, Barotac Viejo, Lemery, Dingle, and Banate.

The research instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-made interview guide. Voice and Video recorder was used for data gathering and documentation depending upon the permission of the participants.

The data gathering instrument was subjected to face and content validation by panel of experts. Thematic analysis was used for descriptive data analysis.

Permits from the participants were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study. The researcher personally went to the school/house/place convenient to the participants to conduct the interview.

Thematic analysis was used to interpret and analyze the narrative result of the in-depth interview.

The following are the findings of the study:

Based from the information gathered during the conduct of in-depth interview on the experiences of teachers onhandling learners with special needs, responses were difficult to handle and keep on adjusting.

On the challenges of teachers on handling learners with special needs, responses were lack of training and lack of parental support.

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On how the teachers manage or cope with the challenges encountered on handling learners with special needs, responses were seeking help from fellow teachers and giving extra attention.

Based on the results of the study the following insights were drawn:

Teaching learners with special needs presents multifaceted challenges for educators. These challenges include managing classroom behaviors, motivating students, communicating effectively with parents, and managing stress. For new teachers entering this field, the learning curve can be steep as they adapt to the unique needs of their students and establish effective teaching practices. This process takes time and requires support from colleagues, mentors, and access to resources to develop the skills necessary to effectively support students with special needs.

Teachers who are trained and willing to teach but are assigned to teach subjects outside their field of expertise. This mismatch between their training and teaching assignments can lead to feelings of inadequacy and frustration. Additionally, being required to attend meetings unrelated to the subjects they teach can further detract from their ability to focus on their core responsibilities.

Furthermore, managing the evaluation of learners' performance in inclusive education adds another layer of complexity. Inclusive education requires teachers to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning needs, which can make evaluating student performance more challenging. Teachers may feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of

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accurately assessing the progress of students with varying abilities and providing appropriate support to ensure their success.

Overall, the importance of providing teachers with the necessary support and resources to effectively meet the demands of inclusive education, including appropriate training, professional development, and opportunities for collaboration with colleagues. Additionally, ensuring that teachers are assigned to teach subjects aligned with their expertise can contribute to better outcomes for both educators and students.

Moreover, the support from school authorities is highlighted as crucial for the success of SPED programs. This support may manifest in various forms, such as providing resources and materials tailored to the needs of learners with special education needs, offering professional development opportunities for teachers, allocating funding for specialized services and interventions, and establishing policies that promote inclusive practices and positive school culture.

In the context of the Schools Division of Iloilo, the collaboration between teachers and school authorities in implementing SPED programs in selected districts underscores the importance of partnership and coordination at the local level. By working together, educators and administrators can ensure that learners with special education needs receive the necessary support and accommodations to thrive academically and socially within the school community. This highlights the value of a holistic approach to inclusive education that prioritizes collaboration, consistency, and support from all stakeholders involved.

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CONCLUSIONS

The Department of Education may help improve teachers' professional development and the strategies by reviewing its goals and objectives focusing on learners with special education needs.

DepEd Officials may motivate teachers to attend trainings on special education to ensure learners with learning disabilities receive instructional materials designed to meet their unique learning needs.

Teachers may need to consider reducing class size, prepare modern teaching materials, improve motivation of teachers, and provide additional support services from the government.

The school may look into the significant help extended by other stakeholders in the school to ensure better implementation of the SPED program.

The study may be replicated in other congressional districts with SPED centers in the Schools Division of Iloilo to verify the results obtained in the present investigation.

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