Transformative Teaching Practices: The Lived Experiences of Educators in the Catch-Up Fridays Program

Rowell O. Pacana, Dr. Abigail M. Cabaguing

Samar State University, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of secondary public school teachers participating in the Catch-Up Fridays program. The initiative, designed to address learning gaps and enhance student outcomes, mandates that teachers dedicate Fridays to improving students' literacy and numeracy. Using Husserlian transcendental phenomenology, the study captures the complexities of teachers' engagement, highlighting both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations behind their participation. Key themes include compliance with educational directives, the role of teachers as catalysts of change, emotional rewards and student engagement, and challenges in execution. Findings reveal that while teachers are driven by professional duty and a commitment to student improvement, they face significant obstacles such as unclear implementation guidelines, lack of prepared materials, and doubts about the program's long-term effectiveness. Despite these challenges, teachers report a deep sense of fulfillment from witnessing student progress and engagement. The study underscores the need for better communication, resource provision, and long-term planning from educational authorities to support teachers effectively. By addressing these issues, the Catch-Up Fridays program can be enhanced to better meet its goals of improving educational outcomes for students. The research contributes valuable insights into the practical realities faced by teachers and the critical factors influencing the success of educational initiatives.
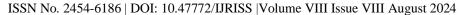
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INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the cornerstone for individual growth and societal advancement. It is a powerful tool that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and the development of essential skills needed to navigate an increasingly complex world. In modern educational landscapes, continuous improvement and adaptation to new challenges are paramount. Various strategies and initiatives are employed globally to ensure that educational systems remain responsive to the evolving needs of students, preparing them to be active and informed citizens.

Teaching has always been considered one of the noblest professions in the world (Mallillin, 2021). A number of authors agree that teaching is more than a profession; it is a vocation (Shaukat, Vishnumolakala, & Bustami, 2019). It is a response to the call to serve the young and the most vulnerable in society, embodying authentic public service by prioritizing students' welfare and sacrificing to provide the best possible education (Gess-Newsome, 2019). The existence of all other professions is possible because there is a teacher to begin with, who, with willingness and dedication, acts as a jack-of-all-trades in the classroom, performing both teaching and teaching-related tasks (Sanchez et al., 2022).

According to Gepila Jr. (2020), teachers are catalysts of national development. They develop learners who

can lead the country toward progress. Teachers' qualities, character, qualifications, and professional competencies are the cornerstones of successful national education (Snoek, Dengerink, & de Wit, 2019). Therefore, it is imperative to focus on developing and improving teachers' competence to transform and enact change in the lives of learners and society at large. While numerous studies describe the attributes of an effective teacher, few have the depth and breadth necessary to fully capture these competencies. Some frameworks narrowly define standards, lacking coherence and practicality; thus, a more suitable set of standards is required.

In this context, teacher leadership (TL) emerges as a critical factor in determining the success of educational reforms. International studies emphasize the transformative role of teachers in the educational system (Miramon, Kilag, Groenewald, & Barayuga, 2024). Teachers' roles are essential in helping and transforming students for future learning and understanding; without it, learners will struggle academically (Acedillo, 2023). Addressing the diverse learning needs of students is paramount for fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments.

The public schools' Catch-Up Fridays initiative is a proactive response to bridging educational gaps and enhancing student learning outcomes. However, the efficacy of such initiatives hinges significantly on the experiences and perspectives of the educators tasked with their implementation. This research delves into the multifaceted experiences of teachers engaged in Catch-Up Fridays. Through detailed exploration, it seeks to illuminate the intricacies of their encounters, shedding light on the challenges, successes, and implications inherent in this educational study.

This study is anchored on the Theory of Experiential Learning, particularly as proposed by David Kolb in 1984. According to Kolb's theory, learning is a continuous process that occurs through concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This theory provides a framework for understanding how teachers' experiences on Catch-Up Fridays contribute to pedagogical development and instructional practices. By applying the Theory of Experiential Learning, the research can explore how teachers' experiences on Catch-Up Fridays contribute to their professional growth, pedagogical development, and instructional effectiveness. Understanding the experiential learning process can inform strategies to optimize teacher learning experiences within the context of catch-up sessions, ultimately enhancing their capacity to support student learning and achievement.

This study holds significance in several ways. Firstly, it contributes to understanding the experiences faced by teachers engaged in Catch-Up Fridays. Secondly, the findings can inform educational institutions and policymakers in developing effective programs to bridge the gap in students' learning. Thirdly, the study can intensify the resilience of the educational system, enabling the development of plans and interventions to address the unique needs of students. Finally, the research aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on providing quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015).

This study explores the experiences of teachers during Catch-Up Fridays. By addressing the research objectives and research questions, the study contributes to the existing literature, informs educational practices, and enhances educational programs.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research method, which investigates the world of participants in their natural setting to grasp the meaning and essence they provide (Sanchez et al., 2022). Using the transcendental phenomenology research design, the study described the lived experiences of secondary public-school

teachers during the conduct of Catch-Up Fridays. Husserlian transcendental phenomenology focuses on describing human experiences by setting aside preconceived ideas and viewing a phenomenon objectively, allowing the true nature of the phenomenon to emerge naturally with and from its background (Moustakas, 1994). Its fundamental intention is to access the consciousness of individuals and capture what this consciousness can reveal regarding the phenomena they have experienced.

Moreover, qualitative research allows the researcher to connect with participants and see the world from their viewpoints (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). This method was deemed most suitable for providing a comprehensive analysis of the lived experiences of teachers during Catch-Up Fridays. By immersing in the participants' perspectives, the researcher aimed to uncover rich, detailed insights that quantitative methods might overlook, ensuring a deep understanding of the phenomena under study. This approach enabled the researcher to delve into the complexities of teachers' experiences, identifying common themes and variations in their narratives. By applying the principles of transcendental phenomenology, the study sought to present an authentic and unbiased account of the teachers' lived experiences, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the impact and effectiveness of Catch-Up Fridays in public schools.

Participants

This research explored and described the lived experiences of teachers participating in the Catch-Up Fridays program. To achieve this, participants with substantial experience with the phenomenon under investigation were selected. The key participants of this study were secondary public school teachers from a specific educational division. The key informants were chosen using purposive sampling, focusing solely on public schools within the division that conduct Catch-Up Fridays. The selection criteria for participants included having at least three years of teaching experience, direct involvement in the Catch-Up Fridays program, and a willingness to share their experiences in detail.

Data Collection

In gathering the pertinent data for the study, a semi-structured interview approach was employed. This method is a widely recognized strategy for collecting qualitative data (Ruslin et al., 2022), allowing the researcher to obtain comprehensive information and ask follow-up questions for clarification and depth. The content of the interview guide was validated by experts in the fields of research and education to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. The researcher used a combination of note-taking and dialogic form interviews to capture and delve deeper into the respondents' responses. This approach facilitated a thorough and rich understanding of the teachers' lived experiences during Catch-Up Fridays.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted using Husserlian transcendental phenomenology. This framework emphasizes describing human experiences by setting aside preconceived ideas and biases, allowing the true nature of the phenomenon to emerge naturally from its background (Moustakas, 1994). The fundamental intention of this approach is to access the consciousness of individuals and capture what this consciousness can reveal regarding the phenomena they have experienced.

The analysis process involved several key steps. Firstly, the researcher engaged in bracketing, which entails suspending personal biases and preconceived notions to approach the data with an open mind. This step is crucial in ensuring that the analysis remains as objective as possible, focusing solely on the participants' experiences. Secondly, the researcher conducted horizontalization, where all data were treated with equal importance. During this phase, significant statements and phrases related to the participants' experiences of Catch-Up Fridays were identified and extracted. Each statement was given equal weight, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the data.

Thirdly, the researcher grouped these significant statements into meaning units or themes. This step involved clustering the statements into common categories that reflected the core aspects of the participants' experiences. These themes were then used to construct a detailed description of the phenomenon. Following this, the researcher developed textural descriptions of the participants' experiences, focusing on what they experienced. This included a thorough description of the events, situations, and contexts that the participants encountered during Catch-Up Fridays, capturing the richness and complexity of their lived experiences.

Lastly, the researcher created structural descriptions that explained how the experiences occurred. This involved interpreting the underlying structures and contexts that influenced the participants' experiences, providing deeper insights into the phenomena. The final step was synthesizing the textural and structural descriptions to develop a composite description of the essence of the phenomenon. This composite description encapsulated the fundamental nature of the teachers' experiences during Catch-Up Fridays, highlighting the shared aspects while acknowledging individual variations. This rigorous and systematic approach ensured that the analysis captured the true essence of the participants' lived experiences, providing valuable insights into the impact and effectiveness of the Catch-Up Fridays program in public schools.

Measures of Trustworthiness

Ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research is paramount to validate the study's findings and conclusions. In this study, several measures were employed to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, aligning with the criteria set by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement and persistent observation. The researcher spent considerable time with the participants to build rapport and gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. This allowed for a thorough exploration of the phenomenon, ensuring that the findings accurately reflected the participants' perspectives. Triangulation was also used, involving multiple data sources and methods, such as interviews and field notes, to corroborate the evidence and provide a comprehensive view of the Catch-Up Fridays program.

To ensure transferability, the researcher provided rich, thick descriptions of the context and participants. Detailed accounts of the setting, the selection criteria for participants, and the nuances of the Catch-Up Fridays program were documented. This level of detail enables other researchers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar contexts. By offering a vivid portrayal of the research environment and participants, the study's findings can be understood and applied in other settings with comparable conditions.

Dependability was addressed through an audit trail. The researcher meticulously documented the research process, including the methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This comprehensive record allows external reviewers to trace the study's steps and assess the consistency and repeatability of the procedures. Regular peer debriefing sessions were also conducted, where the researcher discussed the research process and findings with colleagues to obtain feedback and ensure methodological rigor.

Confirmability was ensured by maintaining a reflexive journal throughout the research process. This journal captured the researcher's reflections, decisions, and potential biases, providing transparency about how personal perspectives may have influenced the study. By acknowledging and documenting these influences, the researcher ensured that the findings were grounded in the participants' experiences rather than the researcher's preconceptions. Additionally, an external audit was conducted, where an independent reviewer examined the research process and findings to verify their accuracy and objectivity.

Member checking was another crucial strategy to enhance trustworthiness. After the initial data analysis, the researcher shared the findings with the participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretations. This process

ensured that the participants' voices were accurately represented and allowed them to provide additional insights or corrections. Member checking not only validated the findings but also strengthened the collaborative relationship between the researcher and the participants.

Finally, triangulation of data sources and methods was employed to reinforce the study's trustworthiness. By comparing and cross-verifying data from different sources, such as interviews and field observations, the researcher could identify patterns and inconsistencies. This multi-faceted approach ensured a more robust and credible understanding of the Catch-Up Fridays program, reinforcing the validity of the study's conclusions.

Through these rigorous measures, the study established a solid foundation of trustworthiness, ensuring that the findings were credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable. This thorough approach enhanced the overall quality and reliability of the research, contributing valuable insights into the experiences of teachers involved in the Catch-Up Fridays program.

Ethical Consideration

This study adhered to stringent ethical guidelines to ensure the protection and respect of all participants involved. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, outlining the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. Participants were assured that their identities would be anonymized using codes instead of names, and all data collected would be securely stored and encrypted to prevent unauthorized access. The researcher also ensured that the interview process was conducted at a time and place convenient for the participants, minimizing any potential disruptions to their professional and personal lives. Additionally, the study complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, emphasizing the secure handling, storage, and eventual deletion of identifiable data to protect participants' privacy. By adhering to these ethical principles, the study maintained the highest standards of integrity and respect for the participants' rights and well-being.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Theme 1 - Compliance with Educational Directives

Theme 1 captures the primary motivations and sentiments expressed by participants regarding their involvement in the Catch-Up Fridays program. This theme is explained through two subthemes: "Teachers' Professional Duty" and "Adherence to Institutional Directives." The analysis highlights the mandatory nature of the program as the key driver for secondary public school teachers' participation.

Subtheme A: Mandated Professional Responsibility

The Catch-Up Fridays initiative mandates that teachers utilize Fridays to enhance students' literacy, numeracy, and overall academic performance. This program underscores teachers' sense of professional duty to comply with educational directives and address learning gaps. By dedicating this time, teachers are expected to provide personalized assistance and reinforce challenging concepts, aiming to improve academic outcomes and support student success (Smith & White, 2020). Participants expressed that their participation is largely driven by their obligation to fulfill these professional responsibilities.

The informants highlighted their sense of obligation in their responses:

1. "Because it is required from the central office, it's the only main reason."

2. "All teachers are required to do that for the students to give intervention and assessment also especially in comprehension."
3. "As a teacher, we are really obliged to do that."

These statements illustrate the intrinsic motivation derived from their professional duty to support student learning, despite the mandated nature of the initiative.

Subtheme B: Adherence to Institutional Directives

Teachers universally acknowledge their participation as a compliance measure with the directives set forth by their educational institution. This subtheme examines how teachers align their practices with institutional requirements, ensuring consistent and faithful participation in catch-up sessions. The analysis reveals that adherence to these directives is a significant factor influencing teachers' engagement in the program (Jones et al., 2019).

Many participants indicated that their participation is compelled by the institutional mandate:

1. "It's a mandate from the education office; as teachers, we are bound to follow the rules and regulations, and orders."
2. "As long as there is still a mandate, definitely I will participate because I have no choice."

These responses highlight the external pressures and constraints that drive teachers' adherence to the program, emphasizing the role of institutional directives in shaping their actions.

Theme 2 - Role as Catalysts of Change

Theme 2 highlights the proactive and transformative role that teachers perceive themselves to play within the Catch-Up Fridays program. This theme is explained through two subthemes: "Motivation from Student Performance" and "Commitment to Student Improvement." The analysis reveals that beyond the mandatory nature of the program, teachers view their participation as a responsibility to address systemic issues highlighted by assessments like PISA and to improve reading and comprehension skills among students.

Subtheme A: Motivation from Student Performance

The low performance of students in various assessments, such as PISA, serves as a significant motivator for teachers to engage in the Catch-Up Fridays program. Teachers are driven by a sense of duty to improve their students' academic skills, utilizing learned pedagogical strategies to enhance comprehension and reading abilities. This subtheme captures the emotional and professional commitment teachers have toward their students' success.

Participants expressed their motivations clearly:

1. "Actually, the first thing is the motivation itself is the low performance of the students."
2. "My motivation is my pity for the students; maybe there's guilt in me as a teacher if I let them pass and let them do whatever they want. You somehow pity them because their grade level is moving up but not their comprehension."
3. "Because of the main problem of the PISA result. The students need help; as teachers, we are catalysts of change."

These statements underscore the teachers' empathy and sense of responsibility towards their students, driving them to participate actively in initiatives aimed at addressing educational deficiencies (Liu & Ball, 2019).

Subtheme B: Commitment to Student Improvement

Teachers' commitment to the Catch-Up Fridays program is also rooted in their belief that it significantly aids in improving student comprehension and reading skills. This subtheme emphasizes the teachers' long-term vision and dedication to fostering academic growth in their students. Teachers hold a firm belief in the positive impact of the program, which motivates their continued participation.

Participants highlighted their commitment through the following statements:

1. "I participated in the Catch-Up Friday because I believe it will target the weakness of the students in reading."
2. "Catch-Up Friday will target the weakness of the students, which is in reading."
3. "Yes! Because this will help the students to enhance their reading comprehension level."

These responses reflect a strong conviction among teachers that their efforts in the program will yield significant educational benefits for their students (Hattie, 2015).

By examining these subthemes, it becomes evident that teachers view themselves as critical agents of change within the educational system. Their participation in Catch-Up Fridays is driven by a combination of professional duty and a deep-seated commitment to improving student outcomes. This dual motivation underscores the importance of teacher involvement in educational reform initiatives and highlights the potential for such programs to effect meaningful change when supported by dedicated educators (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Theme 3 - Emotional Rewards and Student Engagement

Theme 3 highlights the emotional and professional satisfaction teachers derive from participating in the Catch-Up Fridays program. Despite the various challenges they face, including heavy workloads, diverse student needs, and personal matters, teachers find joy and engagement in their roles, primarily due to the positive impact they have on their students. This theme is elucidated through two subthemes: "Learners' Participation and Collaboration" and "Fulfillment and Happiness."

Subtheme A: Learners' Participation and Collaboration

One of the primary concerns for teachers is improving student participation and changing their attitudes towards the program. Teachers find great satisfaction in seeing their students actively engaged and learning, which enhances the effectiveness of the program. This subtheme captures the dynamic interaction between teachers and students, highlighting how participation and collaboration contribute to a meaningful learning experience.

Teachers expressed their observations and feelings:

1. "First, the participation, collaboration of the learners, it's one thing that helped them. Aside from that, the improvement of their knowledge, skills, and particularly attitude."
2. "I observe students are enjoying the activities, and their learning is meaningful because they are engaged and having fun."

However, not all experiences were positive. Some teachers noted initial difficulties in engaging students: 3. "Actually, at first in my experience, I found my students bored because it's only reading. What I did was include games and activities, and spelling too." 4. "Since I'm handling special classes, they are really not motivated to participate because they already have a very good level in comprehension."

These responses indicate that while student engagement is generally high, it requires creativity and adaptation from teachers to maintain interest and participation (Wang & Eccles, 2016).

Subtheme B: Fulfillment and Happiness

Teachers reported a strong sense of fulfillment and happiness from addressing learning gaps and helping students improve. Despite negative feedback and the additional workload, the positive outcomes and the joy of seeing students succeed provided significant emotional rewards. This subtheme emphasizes the intrinsic rewards that teachers experience, reinforcing their commitment to the program.

Teachers shared their feelings of fulfillment:

1. "I feel happy, even though there were lots of negative feedback coming from the teachers, but on the positive side it's quite fulfilling because somehow you can manage the learning gaps."
2. "I was happy because I can see the happy faces of students."
3. "Personally, I am happy; of course, it doubles my work, but I'm happy that I can somehow help the students."

These statements reflect the deep satisfaction teachers derive from their work, even when faced with challenges. The fulfillment they experience from seeing their students grow and succeed underscores their dedication and passion for teaching (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015).

Overall, Theme 3 illustrates the complex emotional landscape of teachers participating in the Catch-Up Fridays program. While they encounter significant challenges, the positive engagement with students and the fulfillment of helping them succeed provide substantial motivation and satisfaction. This theme underscores the importance of recognizing and supporting the emotional well-being of teachers as they navigate their roles as educators and mentors (Day & Gu, 2014).

Theme 4 - Challenges in Execution

Theme 4 outlines the various difficulties teachers encountered while implementing the Catch-Up Fridays program. Despite their enthusiasm and dedication, participants faced significant obstacles in several areas, such as unclear instructions, insufficient resources, doubts about long-term effectiveness, and the need for better preparedness. This theme is discussed through four subthemes: "Unclear Implementation," "Lack of Prepared Materials," "Doubts about Long-Term Effectiveness," and "Need for Preparedness."

Subtheme A: Unclear Implementation

Teachers described the implementation of the Catch-Up Fridays program as abrupt and poorly communicated. The lack of clear guidelines and proper dissemination of information led to confusion and challenges in execution. Many teachers felt they were left to figure out the process on their own, which hindered the effectiveness of the program.

Participants shared their frustrations:

1. "The program is not well implemented; it's abrupt. Shocking to say the least."
2. "We were left thinking where to start, especially with the integration. It was somehow not clear and very challenging."
3. "There are aspects of Catch-Up Fridays that seem vague or unclear."

These statements highlight the need for better communication and clearer guidelines to ensure smooth implementation (Fullan, 2016).

Subtheme B: Lack of Prepared Materials

Participants expected to receive adequate materials and guidance but found the program lacked these essential resources. Teachers anticipated that lesson plans, reading materials, and activities would be provided but were disappointed when these were not available. The insufficiency of resources made it difficult for teachers to effectively conduct the sessions.

Teachers expressed their concerns:

1. "At first, we really thought that everything would be provided, from materials to lesson plans to activities, but that did not happen."
2. "The core function is good; it aims to aid reading comprehension. However, the insufficiency of reading materials makes it really hard to participate in Catch-Up Fridays."
3. "There were no prepared materials."

These challenges indicate a need for more comprehensive support and resource provision to facilitate effective teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Subtheme C: Doubts about Long-Term Effectiveness

There were significant doubts among teachers regarding the program's ability to achieve meaningful improvements in a short time frame. Many believed that substantial progress in students' comprehension levels could not be attained within a year and that the program needed a longer duration to be effective.

Participants voiced their concerns:

1. "Initial expectation was that it would not meet the goal of producing students with the highest level of comprehension in one year. It would take at least three years to test its effectiveness."
2. "The problem is the plan itself. There is no long-term strategy; it was initiated as a short-term solution."

These insights suggest that a longer-term approach is necessary for such programs to have a sustainable impact on student learning (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Subtheme D: Need for Preparedness

Teachers emphasized the importance of proper preparation, resources, and support from the educational authorities for the successful implementation of the program. They pointed out that both teachers and schools need to be adequately prepared to meet the demands of Catch-Up Fridays.

Participants stressed the need for better preparedness:

1. "When implementing a program, the educational authorities need to ensure that teachers, schools, classrooms, materials, and tools are all prepared."
2. "Teachers must be well-prepared and equipped with the necessary resources to carry out the program effectively."

These comments highlight the critical role of preparation and support in the successful execution of educational initiatives (Guskey, 2002).

Overall, Theme 4 sheds light on the significant challenges teachers face in implementing the Catch-Up Fridays program. Addressing these issues through better communication, resource provision, long-term planning, and thorough preparation is essential for the program's success. The insights from this theme can

guide future improvements and ensure that teachers are adequately supported in their efforts to enhance student learning.

Discussion

The first theme, Compliance with Educational Directives, underscores the mandatory nature of the Catch-Up Fridays program, driving teachers' participation primarily out of a sense of professional duty. This finding aligns with the insights from Fullan (2001), who emphasized that educational change often places significant demands on teachers, particularly when directives are not well-aligned with the realities of classroom implementation. Similarly, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) argue that teachers are more likely to comply with directives when they are supported by professional capital—encompassing the necessary skills, collaboration, and decision-making authority.

In the Philippine context, Republic Act No. 10533, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (K-12 Law), provides a legal foundation for such mandates. This law highlights the necessity of professional development and alignment between policy directives and classroom realities. However, the study reveals a gap between institutional requirements and teachers' intrinsic motivations, suggesting that while compliance is achieved, it often comes at the cost of increased workload and stress.

This dissonance between policy and practice emphasizes the urgency of conducting further research to explore how educational directives can be better aligned with teachers' capacities and classroom realities. Such research could inform policy adjustments that support teachers more effectively, enhancing both compliance and overall educational outcomes.

The second theme, Role as Catalysts of Change, reflects teachers' recognition of their pivotal role in addressing systemic educational issues. This finding is consistent with the work of Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008), who highlighted the importance of empowering teachers as change agents within the educational system. Similarly, Timperley (2011) emphasized that when teachers are equipped with the necessary tools and support, they can drive meaningful improvements in student learning outcomes.

Legally, this role is reinforced by DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, which implements the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). The PPST framework underscores the need for continuous professional learning and the empowerment of teachers to effect positive change in the educational system. The Catch-Up Fridays program provides a platform for teachers to fulfill this role, but the study's findings suggest that additional support is needed to fully realize this potential.

Given the critical role that teachers play as catalysts of change, there is an urgent need for research that examines how professional development initiatives, such as Catch-Up Fridays, can be optimized to empower teachers more effectively. This research could help identify the specific tools and resources teachers need to drive systemic improvements, thereby enhancing the program's impact.

The third theme, Emotional Rewards and Student Engagement, reveals the deep satisfaction teachers derive from their interactions with students. This finding is supported by Ryan and Deci (2000), who emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivation in sustaining teachers' commitment and enthusiasm. Hargreaves (2000) also highlighted how positive student-teacher interactions serve as a powerful motivator, helping teachers navigate the challenges they face.

In the context of the Catch-Up Fridays program, these emotional rewards are crucial for maintaining teachers' engagement despite the increased workload. However, the study also suggests that the emotional benefits are sometimes overshadowed by the challenges of the program's execution, pointing to the need for a more supportive work environment.

The emotional rewards of teaching, as highlighted in this study, underscore the importance of fostering a supportive and emotionally rewarding work environment. Research focusing on how to sustain and enhance these emotional rewards, even in the face of programmatic challenges, is urgently needed. Such research could inform strategies to ensure that the positive aspects of programs like Catch-Up Fridays are not undermined by the challenges teachers face.

The final theme, Challenges in Execution, highlights several critical obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of the Catch-Up Fridays program. The findings resonate with Fullan (2001) and Borko (2004), who both emphasize the importance of clear communication, adequate resources, and realistic planning in the successful execution of educational programs. Teachers' reports of unclear implementation guidelines and lack of prepared materials echo these concerns, suggesting that the program's effectiveness is compromised by these challenges.

Legal support for addressing these challenges can be found in Republic Act No. 9155, the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, which emphasizes the need for clear communication and resource allocation in educational management. However, the study's findings suggest that these legal provisions are not always effectively implemented, leading to frustration and doubts about the program's long-term effectiveness.

The identified challenges highlight the urgency of conducting research that delves into the specific obstacles teachers face in implementing programs like Catch-Up Fridays. This research could provide valuable insights into how these challenges can be mitigated through better planning, resource allocation, and communication from educational authorities. Addressing these issues is essential for ensuring that teachers can carry out their roles effectively, without unnecessary stress and confusion.

CONCLUSION

The Catch-Up Fridays program presents both opportunities and challenges for teachers, as illuminated by this study. The findings highlight a significant research gap regarding the alignment of institutional mandates with the practical realities faced by teachers. While teachers are driven by a sense of professional duty and a commitment to improving student outcomes, the lack of clear guidelines, adequate resources, and long-term planning poses substantial obstacles. The essence of this study underscores the need for better communication, resource allocation, and support from educational authorities to bridge this gap. By addressing these challenges, the program's effectiveness can be enhanced, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for students.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of recognizing and supporting the emotional and professional fulfillment that teachers derive from their roles. The positive impact of teacher-student relationships and the intrinsic rewards of witnessing student progress are powerful motivators that sustain teachers' engagement and enthusiasm. Ensuring that teachers feel valued and supported in their roles is crucial for the success of educational initiatives like Catch-Up Fridays. By providing a comprehensive support system that includes clear guidelines, sufficient resources, and ongoing professional development, educational authorities can empower teachers to effectively implement such programs and drive meaningful improvements in student learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To address the challenges of unclear implementation, it is essential to provide detailed and clear guidelines for the Catch-Up Fridays program. Educational authorities should ensure that all teachers receive comprehensive information and training before the program's initiation. Regular updates and support should be provided to address any emerging issues or questions.

2. School administrators should ensure clear communication of program goals, expectations, and guidelines to all teachers. Regular meetings should be held to discuss challenges and share best practices.

3. Schools should organize regular in-service training focused on strategies for addressing literacy and numeracy gaps, tailored to the specific needs of the Catch-Up Fridays program.

4. Ensure that teachers are supplied with sufficient teaching materials, including lesson plans, reading materials, and activities specifically designed for the Catch-Up Fridays program. Providing both digital and physical resources will help teachers effectively prepare and deliver their lessons, thereby enhancing the program's impact.

5. Develop a long-term strategy for the Catch-Up Fridays program that includes periodic evaluations and adjustments based on feedback from teachers and students. This approach will help in assessing the program's effectiveness over time and making necessary modifications to achieve sustained improvements in student learning outcomes.

6. Offer continuous professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills and strategies. This includes workshops, seminars, and training sessions focused on effective teaching techniques, classroom management, and the specific goals of the Catch-Up Fridays program. Empowering teachers through ongoing education will improve their ability to engage students and address learning gaps.

7. Recognize and address the emotional and professional needs of teachers by fostering a supportive work environment. Implement measures to reduce workload stress, provide opportunities for peer collaboration and support, and acknowledge the achievements and efforts of teachers. Ensuring that teachers feel valued and supported will enhance their motivation and effectiveness in implementing the program.

8. The regional office should review the implementation of the Catch-Up Fridays program across various divisions to identify common challenges and successes. Based on this review, policies should be adjusted to better align with the realities faced by teachers.

9. The national office, through the Department of Education, should develop a long-term strategic plan for the Catch-Up Fridays program, ensuring that it is sustainable and aligned with broader educational goals. This plan should include periodic assessments and the flexibility to adapt to evolving educational needs.

10. Increase funding allocation for programs aimed at addressing learning gaps, such as Catch-Up Fridays, to ensure that all schools have the necessary resources to implement the program effectively. This includes digital tools, teaching materials, and professional development opportunities for teachers.

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