

In-Depth Explication of Project EAGLE: A Qualitative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to discuss the prevalent Project EAGLE in relation to looping of the Department of Education Tagum City Division. The participants of the study were administrators and teachers as the project implementers, and parents and learners as the project beneficiaries. Purposive sampling was used in this study to select the participants from the two project implementing schools. The researchers employed a qualitative phenomenological case study design using in-depth interview and focus group discussion to gather information from the participants. Results showed that the project E.A.G.L.E substantiate the pedagogy of the teachers, develop teachers' competence, gain parental support, create teaching innovation, and adapt curricular changes. Findings also suggested continuing the concept of looping and continuing the project E.A.G.L.E implementation. This implied that teachers could take advantage of opportunities in the lesson to consolidate students' learning outcomes holistically. Furthermore, the Department of Education can continue the project through strengthening the support in the teaching and learning process, enhancing transition process per grade level, and designing assessments for learning intended to track students' progress year-round.

Keywords: project EAGLE, looping, phenomenological case study, Tagum City

INTRODUCTION

Policymakers and academics are interested in how the structure of schools and classrooms influences student outcomes. Indeed, some researchers suggest that changing the way schools and classrooms are organized can be much more successful than simply growing school resources per student in improving student outcomes (Wang et al., 2017)

Consequently, the 2018 Philippine PISA results show significant differences in academic achievement between schools and among students (Trinidad, 2020). School administrators started studying and implementing instructional techniques to close the achievement gap (Findley, 2018).

Looping is one technique that deserves further study. Looping is an instructional tool that can be used to improve academic performance and close the achievement gap for students while also fostering strong classroom relationships (Hall, 2021).

Meanwhile in the Department of Education Tagum City Division, there are two recipient schools of the Project EAGLE or Eliminating the Academic Gap of Learners in the Elementary. The program was commenced by the DepEd Region XI Office on the school year 2017-2018. Its mandate is to keep the learners in a looping classroom in the Key Stage 1 or the kindergarten up to Grade Three level and at the same time maximizing the skills of the teachers to bridge the academic gaps

through trainings and post-graduate enrollment.

Educational administrators should consider using certain techniques that demonstrate the capacity to boost students' academic progress. Because looping is a difficult procedure with inconsistent results, school administrators should conduct rigorous study before deciding to employ looping (Findley, 2018). School leaders should thoroughly investigate the benefits and drawbacks of looping, as well as the specific school context in which they want to use looping (Hall, 2021). Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study is to discover and understand the challenges, coping mechanisms and insights of administrators, teachers, parents, and learners in the implementation of the Project EAGLE to address learning gaps.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative design study utilizing a phenomenological single case study approach. Qualitative researchers approach the world from a very different perspective (Dodgson, 2017). This phenomenological qualitative case study investigated the lived experiences and perceived experiences of the supervisor, school heads, teachers, parents, and learners in the implementation of Project E.A.G.L.E. and its impact, their attitude as recipients of the program, their social identity throughout the implementation of the program, the campus climate toward the implementation of the program, and other views on the implementation of the program.

Research Participants

The participants of this study came from the two schools implementing the Project E.A.G.L.E. Purposive sampling was used in this analysis that classified 8 teachers, 6 parents, 6 learners, 2 school heads and 1 supervisor who were the study's participants. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is commonly used and common for identifying and selecting information-rich cases relevant to the event of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers first asked permission from the office of the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) and then to the school heads of the Project Eagle implementing schools. Second, the researchers listed the names of possible participants in the study and approached them if they were willing to participate. Those who voluntarily participated were given informed consent and undergone orientation before the conduct of in-depth interview (IDI) and focus group discussion (FGD).

Third, the researchers conducted an IDI to the five participants which composed teachers, parents, and learners and four groups were subjected to FGD which was composed of 4 teacher participants in a group, 5 learner participants in a group, 6 parent participants in group and 3 participants composed of 2 school heads and 1 supervisor in a group. Research questionnaire guide and voice recorder were used to gather the data and record the interview.

Fourth, the researchers transcribed the data in verbatim and translated it. After that thematic analysis was conducted. Lastly, with the support of related literature, the researchers wrote the results of the study and its implication.

Data Analysis

This study made use of the content and thematic analysis in analyzing the data collected and gathered. Qualitative content analysis (QCA) and thematic analysis (TA) were the two common approaches in data analysis. According Vaismoradi and Snelgrove, (2019) to the researchers who use QCA aim to provide a concise yet comprehensive report on the data's commonalities and discrepancies. In TA, however, the researchers are required to provide a deep and nuanced interpretation of the data as the topic.

Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2013), entails seven steps: transcribing, reading and familiarization, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining, and labeling themes, and concluding the study.

The researchers transcribed the recorded interviews and translated it into written documents. Before the coding and identifying themes, the researchers familiarized the data which happened during the process of transcribing. This helped the researchers to gain an understanding of the data's patterns and linkages.

The researchers started coding the transcripts with the latent codes, and in the process of coding, semantic codes were identified. After the coding, the researchers looked for patterns occurring within the data. Next, the researchers identified themes and sub-themes through the patterns of the data.

Lastly, after the data analysis, the researchers presented the themes and other related data collected through codes in relation to the research questions. The researchers integrated the findings to the theories and literatures of the study. Implications were written based on the findings.

Ethical Considerations

The participants' involvement was entirely voluntary. They had the option to withdraw their participation at any time during the research if they felt uncomfortable. The confidentiality of research participants' information was maintained, as was the anonymity of participants.

The participants were given informed consent and were fully informed about the objectives, methods, and benefits of the research as comprehensively as possible within the framework of the study. The researchers ensured that the participants were physically, emotionally, and socially ready and did not feel any discomfort or awkwardness in answering the research questions.

The researchers properly cited the literatures used in this study. There was no evidence or hint in the research of deliberate misreading of what had been done, no making up of data and outcomes, or purposely putting forward false conclusions.

RESULTS

Experiences of supervisor, school administrators, teachers, parents, and learners in the implementation of the Project E.A.G.L.E.

The key informants revealed their experiences during the conduct of in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. After a thorough categorization of the data, five major themes were created. First theme is substantiating the pedagogy of teachers. The teacher is certain of the activities that best suits the learners. Second theme is developing competence of the teachers. They believe that the 15 to 20-day training was helpful for them to learn especially on early childhood development. Third theme is gaining parental support. Strong positive relationship is observable among the teachers and parents. The fourth theme is hurdling through the difficulties of the implementers. Learning the new curriculum every year is compelling. The last theme is looking into the reading levels of learners. The teacher prioritizes reading skill as a key to eliminating academic gaps. Parents affirm the development of her children's reading abilities.

Coping mechanisms of the supervisor, school administrators, teachers, parents, and learners in the implementation of the Project E.A.G.L.E. Program

After a careful segregation and classification of the responses of the participants in Project E.A.G.L.E, three major themes were demonstrated. First theme is creating innovation in teaching. Teachers conducted online reading as intervention in monitoring students' performance during pandemic. The second theme is adapting to curricular changes. Every school year teachers will have to adapt and study the curriculum embodied in every grade level. Third theme is strengthening support system. Parents support teachers by supplying materials for instructions for teachers to be more advanced in teaching.

Insights of the supervisor, school administrators, teachers, parents, and learners in the implementation of the Project E.A.G.L.E. Program

After scrutinizing the thoughts of the participants about their insights in the Project E.A.G.L.E. Program implementation, four major themes were manifested. First theme is the call for intensifying professional development opportunities for teachers. Teachers suggest intensifying its reading program and providing more seminar and training to improve and develop our skills in teaching the learners. Second theme is establishing a strong foundation of the program. Teachers suggest that there must be clear guidelines in implementing the program. The third theme is continuing the concept of looping. Teachers can easily track students' progress through looping. The last theme is continuing Project E.A.G.L.E. implementation. Parents shared that this program should continue and should be experienced by other school within the Division of Tagum.

DISCUSSION

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1962) created a compassionate and successful environment for learners that will inspire them to stay in the looped classroom. Looped classrooms provide an atmosphere in which everyone, including the teacher and students, contributes to the formation of a sense of community. The strong relationship of teachers and parents provide successful environment in the implementation of the E.A.G.L.E. Program.

Attachment Theory supports the insights of the administrators, teachers, parents, and learners in the program implementation on the attachment development or the growth of children's trust and support from their teachers and classmates in the learning process. Learners expressed their wants to stay with their classmates and with the same teacher to the next grade level.

The looping program is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory as it centered on the idea of satisfying the needs of at-risk kids by forming close-knit groups that would help

kids improve academically and socially. Teachers can easily track students' progress.

Implications for Teaching Practice and Further Research

The teachers can take advantage of opportunities in the lessons to consolidate students' learning outcomes holistically since the looping norm can give complete information upon knowing and understanding the diversity of students for a three-year time span. Teachers had plenty of time for students and can easily monitor students' progress that made all things in the E.A.G.L.E. program efficient and effective.

Content delivery, instructional materials and assessment might be distinct features of the E.A.G.L.E. Program. Exploring these areas might help to improve the implementation of the program and its effectiveness in eliminating learning gaps.

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