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A Brigada Eskwela Journey: A Phenomenological Research on the Life of a Teacher



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ABSTRACT: Quality education commences from the preparation of the school and learning materials during the Brigada eskwela. For it kick started the learning process by proving the learners with a conducive learning environment and adequate learning materials through our teachers and school administrators. This study then described the lived experiences of the teachers in the conduct of the brigada eskwela 2024. Particularly, it focused on their experiences considering the adequacy of resources used and the community involvement. Also it presents the total viewpoint of the teachers on their involvement in the Brigada eskwela. The research used the Phenomenological Approach as it deals with personal experiences of the participants and were analyzed using the methods of thematic analysis. Findings revealed that with the inadequacy of resources that were used, teachers would always resort to themselves when support from the community and the school is not sufficient. Furthermore, the presence of community in the accomplishment of the tasks laid out shows unity and willing help from the people. Also, it found out that with all the hardships they have experienced, the success of Brigada Eskwela 2024 was nothing compared to it. In addition, teachers could not have this success without the eagerness of the community to support in all kinds. Finally, it is recommended that studies on viewpoint of schools bigger group of teachers will be conducted to provide more local based perceptions on the conduct of brigada eskwela.

INTRODUCTION

Commencing with a new school year might be intimidating and makes anyone anxious, it's also a great opportunity for a fresh start. A good academic year depends on being well-prepared as the new school year draws near. Setting it up to get organized, having a neat classroom, desk, and workspace can help you focus and provide a positive learning environment (Blackwood, 2023). Also, lesson planning, daily activity creation, and beginning or continuing training to develop teaching abilities and competency are all examples of preparation for teaching that can take place in the week prior to the start of classes. When combined, these preparation methods can improve teaching philosophies and techniques and increase effectiveness (Indeed Editorial Team, 2024).

In this sense, achievability of quality education will be easily materialized. And this quality education, fourth of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal, have envisioned to build learning and educational facilities where gender, disability, and child-sensitive facilities that offer secure, peaceful, inclusive, and productive learning environments for everyone. In order to prepare them for primary school, make sure that all boys and girls have access to high-quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education by 2030 (The Golabl Goals, n.d.). In order for these visions to be achieved, educators and academic administrators must consider the whole process of learning most specially on the preparations of building, facilities and learning materials that learners will use on the duration of the earning process.

DepEd Memorandum No. o33, s. was published by the Department of Education. 2024 regarding the Brigada Eskwela for the 2024–2025 academic year, which adheres to the related set of rules (Department of Education, 2024). Brigada Eskwela or known as the National Schools Maintenance Week is an annual program held by the Department of Education two weeks before to the official commencement of classrooms. It brings together community members and volunteers to guarantee that schools are clean, disaster-prepared, safe, and conducive to learning. Where teachers and stake holders have Classrooms and other learning spaces should be repaired and painted; school grounds and other facilities should be cleaned; and school supplies, instructional materials, medical and hygiene supplies, and emergency and first aid kits should be donated (City School Division of DasmariÑas Partnerships Hub, n.d.).

In relation, through planning, partnership participation, impact on school performance, resource creation, and bayanihan initiatives, the Brigada Eskwela program was executed to a high degree. Nevertheless, it was discovered that the brigada's conduct was plagued by issues related to a shortage of materials, funding sources, human resource management, and stakeholder collaboration and engagement (Nieva & Lim, 2023).

As a result, this have helped improve schools and maintain community involvement, it is crucial that educators, parents, and community members continue to support and participate in the program. Additionally, Brigada Eskwela can function more effectively when everyone contributes their time, money, and belongings, including instructors, parents, and community members. This makes learning easier and schools more pleasant for pupils (Jr., Osias, & Comon, 2024).

In addition, establishing a supportive learning environment where all students may succeed is the foundation of an effective classroom. Ensuring that the classroom is organized and has all the learners need to set them up for success thus suggest that it function more smoothly and efficient. Moreover, teaching and learning resources should be easily accessible to both the teacher and the learner, without requiring them to navigate cluttered spaces and disarrayed shelves (Cox, 2018). This endeavor was all taken place when teachers prepare their respective classrooms before the start and opening of classes.

Moreover, School administrators overcame obstacles and created coping strategies for the new normal as part of their preparation for the Brigada Eskwela shift. Stakeholders' and private partners' cooperation and partnership initiatives will take care of their training and resource requirements so they can run the school efficiently and enhance student learning results. It is genuinely a community for the new, typical education of the learners (Manila & Decano, 2022).

However, problems like lack of tangible resources occur even when the community makes contributions to enhance educational institutions and the learning environment. despite Brigada Eskwela's operational success. In addition, other problems included ensuring that Brigada Eskwela's laws and regulations were followed successfully and demonstrating that aiding the school had no bearing on one's financial situation because all forms of support are valuable (Garcia, 2021)

In addition to language barriers and logistical difficulties, instructors also face social isolation, armed groups, and inadequate resources. By using the community's and their colleagues' support, adapting their teaching strategies, and utilizing community projects and recycled materials to improve school facilities, educators demonstrate resilience in the face of these challenges (Algones, Calizo, & Bauyot, 2024). Also, due to dwindling funding, school administrators must make tough choices on budgetary expenditures. Outsourcing is becoming more and more common as a way to cut costs, and many public schools have resorted to outside organizations and people asking for assistance in order to offer them more cost-effective and efficient services (Alave & Ancho, 2020).

With all the struggles, our teachers and educators that were present during this preparation time has various thoughts and experiences depending on their individual involvements. Locally, there is a very limited and a very handful of researches regarding the experiences of teachers during the conduct of brigada skwela particularly on their struggles. True to this, giving teachers a chance to express their ideas throughout the school's preparation before the opening or start-up phase is something that administrators should think about (Postholm, 2020) for their inputs are the basis for a better conduct on the next school year.

This research endeavor aims to describe the lived experiences of teachers of Lao-ingen Elementary School during the brigada eskwela 2024. Specifically, it adheres to answer the following questions:

- 1. What is the experiences of teachers during the brigada eskwela particularly on:
 - a. Adequacy of resources used, and
 - b. Community involvement?
- 2. How do the teachers view their involvement in the conduct of the brigada eskwela 2024?

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study's foundational methodology was the descriptive qualitative research design. According to Morrow, Rodiguez, and King (2015), phenomenological qualitative research aims to uncover the essence of any phenomenon being studied—that is, the characteristics that define it as such, rather than something else. Thus, by studying the specifics or instances observed as a lived experience, phenomenological research methodically aims to identify and characterize the inherent meaning structures of lived experience that are intuited or understood (Van Manen, 2017). Specifically, it describe and help in the comprehension of complicated phenomena, such as different facets of the social experience of humans (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022)

Based on their individual and direct experiences, this method brought to light the raw and genuine experiences of the in teachers involved in Brigada Eskwela 2024. Additionally, it described and investigated a particular phenomenon regarding their experiences during the many events and programs planned during Brigade Eskwela's conduct.

2.2 Population of the Study

The participants of the study were the teachers teaching at Lao-ingen Elementary School. The researcher chose the participants because they were the individuals who first handedly experienced the phenomena happened on a brigada eskwela.

2.3 Data Gathering Instrument and Procedure

The main method for gathering the required data was the semi-structured interview. Using Priori Codes that were patterned after the study's issues, the researcher rationally conceived and created the interview questions. The researcher recognized the necessity of conducting the study with ethical considerations in mind. First, the participants gave the researchers their full consent to participate in the study. The purpose and primary objective of the study were explained to them by the researchers. If a participant felt uncomfortable answering a question, they were instructed to skip it or decline. The researchers are the only ones with access to the raw data/information collected because its privacy was preserved.

Additionally, the participants' anonymity was protected. Each participant was given a pseudonym by the researchers. Furthermore, it was not acceptable to force, coerce, or influence the participants' answers. Additionally, significant attention was paid to acknowledging and respecting intellectual property. All the necessary information was gathered from the participants via phone calls and Messenger discussions.

2.4 Data Analysis

The recurrent patterns extracted from the participants' overarching statements were identified, examined, and described using thematic analysis. Moreover, this thematic analysis as basis for analyzing the data, it involves looking for themes that can encapsulate the stories found in the data sets. It entails carefully reviewing and rereading the recorded data to identify themes. Without attempting to fit the themes into an existing coding framework or the researcher's beliefs, the data is coded in an inductive approach (Dawadi, 2020). The data analysis for this study was guided by Colaizzi's (1978) technique. Keeping with the seven steps of the Colaizzi method from reading the entire interview; identify key statements; create meanings; group the meanings into theme clusters; incorporate the theme clusters into an exhaustion description; determine the basic structure of the phenomenon as indicated by a clear statement; and validation of findings (Kumar & Grace, 2023).

DISCUSSION

Upon careful analysis of the participant's responses, it derived two (2) major themes that represents the problems of the study. These themes Inadequate but Resolved through Selflessness and Community Involvement and Valuable Expense Though Unbecomingly Helpful.

Inadequate but Resolved through Selflessness and Community Involvement

With the first major theme for the first problem statement, participants' responses were organized through the themes, (1) 1) Limited Yet Resolved through Selflessness and (2) Community and Unity as Solution.

Limited Yet Resolved through Selflessness

In every undertaking, resources are much needed to be considered before anything else. In the conduct of brigada eskwela, it is inevitable not to picture the limitedness and lacking resources. From the beautification and repair of classrooms and other physical facilities to the learning materials to be used, the needed materials to accomplish these tasks were really limited and insufficient. With these, teachers and the BE coordinator use their own money and donations and help from the community to finance to the things accomplished. True to this, Participant 2 said "With lots of things to be done, the budget allocated was not enough, so we use our own money." The same predicament was also given by Participant 5 stating that "The materials that would suffice that lacks for classroom beautification and repair were out of my own pocket." With the statements, it clearly shows that teachers have problems with budgetary allocation during the conduct of brigada skwela to the extent that even personal budgets were used for the repairs and beautification. True to the statements, the secretary of the Department of Education claims that soliciting is prohibited, but, during Brigada Eskwela, teachers constantly spend their own money, but it is still insufficient to have their classrooms painted (Bautista, 2022).

More so, it was found out that teachers not only use their personal finance for repair and beautification but also for the preparation of the learning materials to be distributed to the learners on the commencement of classes. In relation to the claim, it was reported, that teachers have been complaining to DepEd that they have not been given enough money to prepare for the upcoming school year. Some have apparently paid for these expenses out of their own pockets, while others have appealed for donations on social media (Bernardo, 2020). In connection to the report, Participant 8 stated that "I even use my money to buy the materials needed for the printing and making of my learners." Also, Participant 1 also has the same dilemma, "I know that we were given support, even our school head gave us support out of her extent, but we should not put all our tabs on them, so I use

my own money to suffice the need for the printing my learning materials." Same thought was also stated by Participant 7 regarding this matter, stating that "We were given all the support for the materials needed for our learning materials, but it is still not enough, that is why I also do my fair share and willingly used my own money to finance the needed materials for the printing and repairs in my classroom".

Collectively, it shows that it was unavoidable throughout the conduct of brigada eskwela to make the services, materials, and non-material contributions enough with the school's needs (Manalo, 2019). Meaning, with all the external help that community brought to the school, it was not enough to fulfill the essential requirements needed to make the school ready for the learner on the start of classes. In conclusion, support of any kind was given to teachers but with the insufficiency, teachers were going all out doing their best to provide their learners with better facilities and learning materials. On that note, it is justifiable to tell, that teachers always recourse to themselves to find solutions to the obstacles they were up to during the brigada eskwela.

Community and Unity as Solution

The shared linkage and partnership of the school and community makes the bond of the school personnel to the people of the community. With the help of the people of the community, the tasks of the teachers were accomplished easily. Relatively, the Commonwealth Elementary School community would arrive with joyful spirits during the brigada, eager to return the favor to the school that has been guiding its students to achieve better academically. Private companies would also be present, sharing their resources and the skilled hands and spirits of those who shared their labor (Teach for the Philippines, n.d.). And with this help, fortunately, external partners like the community and other private individuals have helped to answer the insufficiency and donated. Situationally, this is what happened at Lao-ingen Elementary School where parents and other volunteers from the community have helped in the accomplishment of their tasks. "We teachers are very thankful for the parents, learners and members of the community because they have helped us to clean and repair or classrooms" says Participant 3. Same gratitude was also seen in the statement of Participant 2 stating "I am grateful of the parents that have come to our school to help us do the cleaning and organizing our rooms and by repairing simple damages the school".

In addition, teachers are happier upon knowing and seeing the willingness of the community to be involved in the said activity. For the community constantly look forward to collaborating with our partners to create significant impact (Balama, 2024). As seen by participant 6 he observed that "The people of the community who helped during the conduct of brigada eskwela 2024 helped us upon the request of the School Head and I witnessed eager and happy people while working." Participant 3 saw observed the same situation also upon looking at the people who are busily working and helping each other during the activity and said, "While working, I watched the parents, students and members of the community who adhered to the request of our school head, and I cant see a hint of force in their faces for everyone were happy doing their assigned tasks". For it is believed that the main goal of Brigada Eskwela's activities is encouraging the community members to voluntarily donate their time, energy, and resources to improve the learning environment for students at the beginning of the school year (See, 2023).

Consequently, it can be gleaned from the statements that the success on the conduct of the Bigada 2024 was not possible without the help of the willing and eager people of the community. For the help and services rendered by the community, from the printing of learning materials, renovations of classrooms and to the school beautification, the community played a very big important role that fills the needed help to fix school facilities and prepare learning materials. Thus, it was deduced to the idea that everything would be possible when all members of the community will work as one in achieving one common goal.

Valuable Expense Though Unbecomingly Helpful

Treating the response of the participants with in-depth analysis, the themes for the second problem statement were (1) A Worth It Sacrifice for the Learners and (2) Inappropriately Helpful for the School.

A Worth It Sacrifice for the Learners

In the pursuit of giving goodness for greater good, there are things that were taken for granted and given up, but after looking at the result, all hardships are worth it. The Brigada eskwela was the goodness that initially brought our learners to greater good. Teachers' gave up their personal time, exert more effort, and use their own belongings in the preparation of the classrooms and learning materials just to finish the work. And after all the difficulties, the success of the cumulative and collaborative effort was earned. With these, the bittersweet journey of the participants goes with it, just like participant 3 said "at first, I thought we could not do better than last year's brigada, with all the schoolwork's that were not finish and problems on materials needed for brigada, but with the management of our school head and the help from the people who came, it is so relieving and happy that we all did it". Participant 1 also mentioned about the same thinking regarding the struggles and fulfilment afterwards saying, "When I look at my classroom repainted and reorganized, my learning materials all printed and arranged, and with the surroundings clean, I thought to myself that all hard works are worth it". Reflecting the same thought, Participant 7 also mentioned that "I am so

happy that the weeklong preparation was done, this Brigada 2024 seems harder than the previous but looking at what we've accomplished, I am so proud of what we all did".

Thus, the participants' responses clearly implied that teachers could not do all the works by themselves. Visibly, the help that community have rendered have been a great factor in the accomplishment of all the laid out activities on the conduct of the Brigada Skwela 2024.

Inappropriately Helpful for the School

In addition, though teachers and school administrators knew that solicitations for funds and in kind material's for brigada eskwela are prohibited by the Department of Education, most or all of the teachers and administrators would accept donations and assistances from the people of the community greatly helped in most of the insufficiencies such as materials and manpower. In support, Hernando-Malipot (2022) mentioned that during the implementation of Brigada Eskwela, the Department of Education (DepEd) warned school administrators across the country that they are not permitted to collect fees or attract volunteers or stakeholders. For it was presented in the guidelines on the implementation of the brigada eskwela for 2023-2024 that It is entirely forbidden for school administrators, teachers, and other staff members to ask for or collect money from parents or legal guardians, volunteers, partners, and stakeholders in any way, including Brigada Eskwela fees (Department of Education, 2023).

In relation to the claim, participants do not solicit but just ask from willing people they know for some support and agreed the helps afterwards. "We cant think of other way to solve our funding problems, but without our asking for some assistances from the people we know and accepting the manpower srvices from the people who willingly state their intentions, it would be impossible to do all task that was needed by the activity" said by participant 6. Also, another participant said the same thought and eagerly would ask for assistance again saying, "When we were told by our School Head to have Brigada again, I thought of funding, though our School Head pledged for an assistance on funding, I also believed that it was not enough because this activity really needed a lot of work and also with funds, that is why I asked for people I know to give willingly offers either in kind or funds." Participant 4 indicated. Same idea was also revealed by participant 7 saying that "Truly, we are aware of the non-solicitation, but it is really hard to achieve what the national government was requiring without the help of the community, so we ask our closest friends and relatives for some assistance and they willingly provide us, that is why we are very grateful to them for it helped us achieved what the national requires."

Unmistakably, the participants knew of the non-solicitation part of the implementation guidelines of the Brigada eskwela but it is really inevitable not to ask for some support if it is for the betterment of the learners and their academic journey. Seemingly, this act is technically not a solicitation but asking willingly from the friends and relatives.

CONCLUSION

Based on the in-depth analysis of the responses, the following statements were concluded:

- Inadequacy of the materials provided for the school from the community and the education sector, for the conduct of
 the brigada eskwela, selflessness of teachers and helped from the community solved the problem. The following
 statements claimed the analysis:
 - a. There is inadequacy in resources for fixing and renovating the school facilities and also for the printing materials, even with assistances and services offered by the community, but with the pure intentions of the teachers to provide for their learners, they selflessly filled up the lacking on the insufficiencies of the brigada eskwela program; and
 - b. The unity and help that the community provides solved the problem of the teachers and the school in the accomplishment of the activities for the brigada eskwela.
- 2. Teachers go to lengths just to make the conduct of brigada eskwela a success. Their involvement's viewpoint on the subsequent claims explicate that:
 - a. Amidst all of the heavy workloads and life outside of the teaching profession, satisfaction was felt upon looking at the success of the brigada eskwela; and
 - b. There would always be willing people of the community to always offer assistance and render their services in order to accomplish the tasks.

RECOMMENDATION

In the pursuit to gather more perceptions in a local context, it is further recommended the following:

- 1. Conduct a phenomenological research analysis on the perceptions of the school heads and principals to triangulate the perceptions of the teachers during the conduct of the brigada eskwela; and
- 2. As we speak of triangulation, same study will be conducted using the quantitative method to validate the responses of the teachers for the justifications of the claims.

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