

Plight of Teachers in Building a Positive School Culture in Last Mile Schools of Laak North District

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Abstract: This study takes a compassionate look at the everyday challenges and triumphs of dedicated teachers who are striving to build a positive school culture in the last-mile schools of Laak North District, Davao de Oro. Through heartfelt conversations with ten passionate public elementary school teachers, we aimed to uncover the personal stories that fuel their commitment, the coping strategies they lean on, and the creative approaches they use to foster a nurturing environment in their schools. From our enlightening discussions, three main themes emerged that truly highlight their unwavering dedication. First, these teachers shared their heartfelt passion for creating a warm and welcoming school culture. They talked about the value of collaborative learning and ongoing professional growth, revealing how strong relationships with their students can transform the educational experience into something truly special. Yet, they also opened up about the real struggles they face, particularly the limited support from their schools, which makes their demanding roles even more challenging. We learned about the ways they cope. These teachers draw strength from each other, forming a close-knit community that helps them tackle tough times together. They not only advocate for crucial changes in their schools but also stay committed to their own professional development and lifelong learning. Their resilience is incredibly moving; they confront obstacles as a united front rather than in isolation.

Keywords: *Plight of Teachers, Last-Mile Schools, Qualitative-Phenomenological Research, Laak North District.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Creating a positive school culture is essential for fostering an effective learning environment, especially in last-mile schools that face unique challenges. In the Laak North District of Davao de Oro, teachers in public elementary schools are not only dedicated educators; they are also individuals navigating significant hardships that shape their day-to-day experiences. Febbie O. Dacera, MAEM, conducted a study to explore these teachers' struggles as they work tirelessly to build a supportive and uplifting school atmosphere, often in circumstances with limited resources and various systemic obstacles. A vibrant school culture can truly transform the educational experience—it inspires students, improves learning outcomes, and enhances the overall effectiveness of the school community. To genuinely understand the specific experiences, coping strategies, and methods these teachers use in last-mile schools, we need to look deeper into their stories. This understanding is crucial for driving meaningful educational reform and creating support initiatives that resonate with their needs. This research seeks to contribute

to the larger conversation about educational equity, highlighting the necessity for tailored interventions that acknowledge the unique contexts of last-mile schools. By bringing attention to the journeys of these dedicated educators, we can better advocate for the support they truly need and deserve.

II. METHODS

In our study, we had the privilege of talking with ten dedicated public elementary school teachers from the Laak North District. Our goal was to truly understand their experiences, so we took the time to select participants who represented a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. Each conversation was semi-structured, meaning we came in with some guiding questions but were also open to letting the teachers share their thoughts and stories in their own way. To create a comfortable atmosphere, we chose familiar settings for the interviews. This approach really helped the teachers feel at ease and allowed them to share their experiences more openly and honestly. We concentrated on several key themes, such as their efforts to build a positive

school culture, the coping strategies they adopted, and the different methods they used to create a welcoming environment for their students. Once we had gathered all their stories, we carefully transcribed the conversations and analyzed the data. We looked for common themes and patterns that truly captured what these teachers face in their everyday work. Our aim was to reflect the essence of their experiences and better understand how they contribute to their school community.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Teachers' Journey in Creating a Positive School Culture

Teachers shared heartfelt stories underscoring how crucial it is for them to engage in collaborative learning and focus on their own growth. They highlighted the importance of forming strong connections with their students, which helps cultivate a warm and welcoming school atmosphere. However, many teachers expressed feelings of isolation and frustration, often stemming from a lack of support, resources, and recognition from the educational system. This makes their mission feel like an uphill battle at times.

B. Ways Teachers Cope

To navigate these challenges, teachers have developed various coping strategies. Many find comfort and inspiration by working alongside their peers, building a supportive community among educators. They actively advocate for necessary changes within the system and maintain a strong commitment to their professional development. This drive for continuous learning becomes vital, especially in underserved areas where resources are often scarce.

C. Strategies Employed by Teachers

The educators who participated in the study emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence in their teaching practices. This approach not only allows them to connect more deeply with their students but also fosters a nurturing environment. Engaging families and the broader community has become an essential part of building supportive networks that enrich school culture. Recognizing and appreciating teachers' efforts was noted as a key means to boost morale and foster respect within the school community.

Overall, these findings highlight the urgent need for support from educational leaders and policymakers. Teachers need adequate resources and opportunities for professional growth to thrive in their roles. The study aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the significance of collaboration among teachers and the impact of emotional intelligence on creating positive educational environments. Ultimately, it calls for a comprehensive approach to educational policy that prioritizes teachers' needs, recognizing the profound influence they have on shaping the future of education, especially in challenging contexts.

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