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Navigating the Academic Gap: A Phenomenological Inquiry on the Experiences of Teachers in DepEd's Catch-Up Fridays

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the implementation of DepEd Catch-Up Friday, a strategic initiative introduced by the Department of Education in the Philippines to address academic disruptions caused by the pandemic. The study investigates how this initiative has affected teachers' practices, workload, and overall well-being. A qualitative study, particularly phenomenological inquiry, was used. Through purposive sampling, 22 secondary public-school teachers served as participants in this phenomenological study. The results yielded three themes with regard to the experiences in Catch-Up Friday: challenges in the preparation, gaps in educational resources, and barriers in student motivation. Regarding the coping mechanisms of teachers in Catch-Up Fridays, four themes emerged: strategic intervention, diverse expertise, systematic evaluation, and technology-enhanced instruction. Moreover, three themes emerged as the insights of teachers in the implementation of Catch-Up Fridays: an inclusive learning environment, addressing struggling learners, and requiring tailored instructional approaches. Recommendations include strengthening support structures for teachers, promoting student-centered approaches, and implementing structured feedback mechanisms to continuously improve the initiative. The research underscores the need for ongoing evaluation and adjustments to ensure that DepEd Catch-Up Friday effectively supports students and educators, fostering a more resilient and adaptive educational environment.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant and far-reaching impact on the global education system, resulting in disturbances to teaching and learning. The pandemic has resulted in notable disparities in learning. Extended periods of school closures, the transition to online learning, and the unequal availability of educational resources have led to disparate learning outcomes. Saro *et al.* (2024) found that a significant number of students are experiencing academic setbacks due to insufficient resources and support for remote learning. In the Philippines, Bacelonia (2024) reported that the Department of Education (DepEd) has introduced several measures to tackle these difficulties, including the implementation of the "Catch-Up Fridays" program as outlined in DepEd Memorandum No. 001 s. 2024. This program is specifically developed to allocate focused time for teachers and students to tackle academic backlogs, strengthen learning, and guarantee that every student progresses in their educational journey without being left behind.

Furthermore, as stated by Bermudez (2024), the existence of learning gaps has significant consequences for students' academic advancement and future prospects. Students who lag behind in their studies are prone to encountering diminished desire, reduced self-worth, and heightened apprehension regarding their academic achievement. The emotional and psychological consequences can additionally impede their capacity to make progress,

establishing a pattern of academic underperformance. Furthermore, disparities in education can be exacerbated by learning gaps, as students who have access to greater resources and support are more capable of navigating the difficulties of remote learning in comparison to their less privileged counterparts.

Sor and Caraid (2021) posited that over time, disparities in learning can have a detrimental impact on students' future employment opportunities and their ability to move up the socio-economic ladder. An extensive educational basis is essential for obtaining advanced abilities and expertise required for pursuing higher education and succeeding in the work market. Unresolved, these disparities might result in a less proficient labor force, affecting the nation's overall economic growth and competitiveness.

According to Sevillano (2024), Catch-Up Fridays give teachers a structured chance to go over and reinforce important ideas and skills that students may have missed or had trouble with during normal class times. The goal of this project is to improve student success by giving them more time to learn and giving them individualized help. But the success and usefulness of these kinds of programs depend a lot on the thoughts and experiences of the teachers who are in charge of putting them into action.

According to Chi (2024), it is essential to comprehend the experiences of teachers engaged in Catch-Up Fridays for multiple reasons. Teachers' perspectives can offer significant input on the program's efficacy, identifying

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its strengths and areas for enhancement. Furthermore, investigating the experiences of teachers can uncover the difficulties they encounter, including the management of their workload, the availability of resources, and the participation of students. This information can then be used to develop more effective policies and practices. Ultimately, recording these experiences enhances our comprehension of how educational interventions during crises can be maximized to provide optimal support for both educators and learners.

This research aimed to explore the experiences of teachers in DepEd Davao de Oro with regards to the Catch-Up Friday initiative. By employing phenomenological approach, such as interviews and focus group discussions, the study sought to capture the nuanced perspectives of educators, shedding light on the practicalities of program implementation and its impact on teaching and learning. Through this exploration, the research endeavors to provide actionable insights that can guide the enhancement of current and future educational interventions within the DepEd framework.

Research Objectives

This study explored on the experiences of the DepEd teachers with regards to the implementation of Catch-up Fridays, which were thoroughly examined through data collection via in-depth interviews and focus-group discussion. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of the DepEd teachers with regard to the implementation of Catch-up Fridays?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of the DepEd teachers with regard to the implementation of Catch-up Fridays?
3. What are the insights of the DepEd teachers with regard to the implementation of Catch-up Fridays?

Scientific Basis/Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Jerome Bruner's scaffolding theory (1960). It discusses how instructors and other experts help students with their cognitive development. Scaffolding entails offering temporary assistance to students while they learn new skills, with the goal of gradually withdrawing this assistance as students grow more proficient and autonomous. Scaffolding theory, based on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and further developed by Bruner, provides a strong framework for facilitating learners' cognitive development. Scaffolding assists learners in closing the gap between their current abilities and prospective accomplishments by offering contingent, fading support via interactive discussion. Its use in a variety of educational contexts demonstrates its adaptability and efficacy in encouraging active learning, developing independence, supporting diverse learners, and increasing motivation. Scaffolding remains a key instructional approach for effective teaching and learning, bringing students to greater competence and confidence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research study employed a qualitative research design. Particularly, phenomenology approach was employed. According to Creswell (2017), This approach aims to explore and understand human experiences from the first-person perspective, focusing on the meanings that individuals ascribe to their lived experiences. It provides a deep, nuanced understanding of human experiences by focusing on the meanings and essences of those experiences as lived by individuals. By emphasizing the subjective perspective and utilizing methods such as bracketing and in-depth analysis, phenomenological research offers valuable insights into the complex nature of human consciousness and existence.

Further, the selection of DepEd teachers in Davao de Oro were done using purposive sampling techniques, which is a type of non-probability sampling. The selection of participants was determined by their ability to make a comprehensive contribution to the study and enhance our understanding of the examined phenomena (Levinson, *et al.*, 2018). The researchers invited 22 teachers to take part in the research study. A total of eleven participants were included in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), while another eleven people were involved in the In-Depth Interview (IDI). In addition, the researcher utilized an interview guide tool that facilitated the generation of themes as a result of this study. The questions encompassed the experiences of the DepEd teachers in the implementation of Catch-Up Friday.

Moreover, the researcher utilized the Zoom platform for conducting the interview. The objective of this recording is to document the entire duration of the interview in order to facilitate the study of significant issues discussed throughout the interview. This documented the IDI (In-Depth Interview) and FGD (Focus Group Discussion) dialogues. Transcription and theming analysis were conducted based on the recorded data. Each interviewee was provided with a duplicate of the interview transcripts for the purpose of verification. Consequently, the participants signed an informed consent form. The informed consent form contained a detailed explanation of the research significance, purpose, and objectives. Likewise, the researchers employed the Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology in conducting theme analysis. The researcher analyzed the transcribed recorded in-depth interviews and FGDs to identify patterns, fundamental concepts, and themes.

The data collection from the study's participants adhered to established guidelines and procedures to address ethical concerns regarding the evaluation of the reading proficiency levels of students during the implementation of Catch-Up Friday. Specifically, four ethical issues were observed: informed consent, risk of harm, confidentiality and anonymity, and conflict of interest (Zegwaard, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lived Experiences of the DepEd teachers with regards to the implementation of Catch-up Fridays

According to Labad (2024), Catch-Up Fridays have become a common strategy in many educational institutions, designed to help both teachers and students manage the often overwhelming pace of the academic week. For teachers, these days offer a unique set of experiences that balance the challenges and rewards of education in a fast-paced environment. Presented in Table 1 explores the complex experiences of teachers as they engage in the implementation of DepEd's Catch-Up Fridays. The results yielded three themes: challenges in the preparation, gaps in educational resources, and barriers in student motivation.

Table 1: Lived Experiences of the DepEd teachers with regards to the implementation of Catch-up Fridays

THEMES	CODE/CATEGORIES
Challenges in the Preparation	Balancing the Curriculum
	Resource Availability
	Student Engagement
Gaps in Educational Resources	No Instructional Materials
	Inadequate Technological Resources
	Lack of References
Barriers in Student Motivation	Unmotivated Students
	Low Participation from Students
	Uninterested in Activities

Challenges in the Preparation

Catch-Up Fridays, according to the participants, is an approach in which a specific day is set aside for students to catch up on missed classes, assignments, or other educational activities with the purpose of closing learning gaps.

They said that they are having trouble aligning the additional catch-up exercises with the existing curriculum. They stated that it was challenging to ensure that these activities were both relevant and effective in reinforcing the needed competences, especially when the curriculum was already full. Furthermore, they lacked the necessary resources, such as teaching materials, worksheets, and technology, to properly perform catch-up activities. This is particularly difficult in under-resourced schools. Providing tailored instruction to meet the varying needs of learners was similarly difficult without enough resources or support.

In addition, it was challenging to involve learners who may be experiencing difficulties or lack of enthusiasm. Students may see Catch-Up Fridays as additional tasks, which could result in resistance or a lack of engagement. Ensuring consistent attendance on Catch-Up Fridays was a difficulty, especially when students or parents fail to recognize the significance of these sessions.

According to Acita *et al.* (2022), overcoming these difficulties necessitates cooperation among educators, school officials, and the Department of Education (DepEd) to offer the essential assistance, resources, and training. By recognizing and addressing these challenges, the implementation of Catch-Up Fridays can

be enhanced to better close educational disparities and promote student achievement.

Gaps in Educational Resources

When looking at how DepEd (Department of Education) teachers used Catch-Up Fridays, the lack of educational tools is very important. For the people who are taking part, these gaps can make the effort much less useful, since Fridays are set aside to help students make up lessons they missed and fill in learning gaps.

As per the participants, especially those in rural areas, there is a lack of sufficient textbooks or modules for learners. The scarcity compels educators to seek or generate additional resources, a process that can be laborious and anxiety-inducing. Even if materials are accessible, they could be obsolete or not in line with the current curriculum, hence reducing their effectiveness for Catch-Up Fridays. Teachers must also modify or entirely revamp these resources to ensure their relevance, so increasing their burden.

Hence, the inequality in technology access is a prominent concern. Within their educational institutions, there exists a deficiency of laptops, tablets, and dependable internet access, all of which are imperative for the implementation of contemporary instructional techniques. Teachers' capacity to utilize digital platforms, interactive activities, or online resources is restricted on Catch-Up Fridays. Despite the use of technology, there may still be a disparity in the proficiency of teachers and students in utilizing these tools efficiently. The effectiveness of using technology to catch up is diminished without sufficient training or support, hence limiting the potential benefits of these Fridays.

Furthermore, the participants noted that numerous teachers face a shortage of visual aids, manipulatives, or other tangible learning items that can effectively reinforce courses on Catch-Up Fridays. This can provide a significant challenge in topics such as Math and Science, as these tools are crucial for grasping concepts. Meeting the needs of students with diverse learning requirements, such as those with learning disabilities, language hurdles, or differing academic aptitude, necessitates a variety of additional resources. Teachers frequently encounter difficulties in locating or producing these resources, impeding their capacity to effectively assist all students.

Rafanan *et al.* (2024) argued that the lack of educational resources poses substantial obstacles for DepEd teachers when it comes to implementing Catch-Up Fridays. To address these deficiencies, the government, school administrations, and communities must collaborate and guarantee that all schools are equipped with the appropriate materials, technology, infrastructure, and human resources to facilitate successful teaching and learning. In the absence of resolving these deficiencies, the objectives of Catch-Up Fridays, which aim to rectify learning disparities and guarantee that all learners are progressing as expected, remain challenging to accomplish.

Barriers in Student Motivation

When looking at how DepEd teachers used Catch-Up Fridays, it's important to look at the things that kept students from being motivated. Participants said that the goal of this initiative is to help students make up lessons they missed and fill in learning gaps. However, the success of the initiative will depend on how ready the students are to engage and participate.

Participants find it challenging to stay motivated when catching up on missed classes because there are no instant incentives or fulfillment. Students sometimes find it difficult to appreciate the immediate worth of catching up, as the benefits, such as greater grades or better understanding, are typically long-term in nature. Occasionally, the lack of concrete incentives such as grades, recognition, or awards on Catch-Up Fridays can result in decreased student enthusiasm. In the absence of a distinct and immediate advantage, learners may lack the motivation to exert themselves.

Furthermore, it has been noted that students who are already facing difficulties may experience a sense of being overwhelmed by the extra tasks allocated on Catch-Up Fridays. This might result in a feeling of despair, as students see that they are unable to make progress regardless of their efforts, hence reducing their willingness to initiate any action. Students may find it challenging to manage their usual homework alongside the task of catching up on missed work. The additional burden can induce worry and exhaustion, diminishing their inclination to engage in remedial endeavors.

In a study conducted by Labad (2024), it was found that students who have faced persistent difficulties may have a diminished sense of self-efficacy, which refers to their lack of belief in their ability to succeed even when they make an effort. This mentality can greatly impede motivation, since students may not perceive the purpose of engaging if they have the belief that they would always fail. The apprehension of failing to reach anticipated standards, particularly following the provision of further assistance, can also serve as a discouraging element. Students may refrain from completely participating in catch-up activities as a means of safeguarding themselves against the potential disappointment of failure.

Coping Mechanisms of the DepEd Teachers with Regards to the Implementation of Catch-up Fridays

According to Saro *et al.* (2024), Catch-Up Friday represents both an opportunity and a challenge for teachers within DepEd. While it is a valuable tool for addressing learning gaps, it also requires teachers to adopt new strategies and coping mechanisms to manage their workload effectively. Presented in Table 2 explores the coping mechanisms of teachers as they engage in the implementation of DepEd's Catch-Up Fridays. The results yielded four themes: strategic intervention, diverse expertise, systematic evaluation, and technology-enhanced instruction.

Table 2: Coping Mechanisms of the DepEd teachers with regards to the implementation of Catch-up Fridays

THEMES	CODE/CATEGORIES
Strategic Intervention	Positive Reinforcement
	Remedial Resources
	Competency Setting
Diverse Expertise	Specialization-Based Teaching
	Collaboration
	Group Discussions
Systematic Evaluation	Pre- and Post-Assessment
	Post-Reading and Writing tests
	Formative and Summative Test
	Self-Evaluation
Technology-Enhanced Instruction	Digital Learning Platforms
	Technology-Integration
	Interactive Online Platforms

Strategic Intervention

Strategic Intervention plays a crucial role in comprehending the coping strategies that DepEd teachers utilize when implementing Catch-Up Fridays. Participants perceived these interventions as purposeful measures and tactics employed by teachers to tackle the difficulties they have in assisting students in catching up on missed classes and bridging learning disparities.

In order to enhance student motivation, the teachers implement reward mechanisms, such as commendation, certificates, or modest incentives, to acknowledge and encourage active participation and development among students during Catch-Up Fridays. These tactics of positive reinforcement aid in the development of self-assurance and foster a persistent commitment. During catch-up sessions, teachers establish short-term, achievable objectives for students to accomplish. Attaining these objectives enables students to encounter triumph, which might enhance their drive and readiness to participate in subsequent sessions.

In addition, teachers, acknowledging the deficiencies in educational resources, created customized remedial materials to address the specific requirements of their students. These tools are specifically crafted to streamline intricate topics, rendering them more readily comprehensible to students who are encountering difficulties. Teachers incorporate digital tools and internet resources into their teaching methods when they are accessible. Educational tools, interactive exercises, and online tutorials offer supplementary explanations and extra practice for students requiring additional assistance. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to discern the most crucial skills and competencies that learners must acquire and concentrate their endeavors on these domains during Catch-Up Fridays. By focusing on crucial subject matter, educators can guarantee that students establish a strong base that will facilitate their future acquisition

of knowledge. Strategic intervention frequently entails revisiting fundamental skills that students may have overlooked in previous grades. By rectifying these deficiencies, educators assist learners in acquiring the essential knowledge and competencies required to excel in more difficult subjects.

Zabala (2023) argued that strategic intervention is crucial for DepEd teachers as they confront the difficulties of implementing Catch-Up Fridays. Teachers can effectively support their students in bridging learning gaps by implementing focused tactics, such as differentiated instruction, resource creation, positive reinforcement, and adaptive teaching methods. These interventions not only facilitate academic progress for students but also cultivate a more favorable and captivating learning atmosphere, which is essential for sustained student achievement. By implementing strategic intervention, teachers may more effectively handle the intricacies of their jobs and improve the overall efficacy of Catch-Up Fridays.

Diverse Expertise

The participants talked about how teachers' specialized knowledge and skills helped them deal with putting Catch-Up Fridays into place. For them, diverse expertise means using a teacher's deep knowledge of the subject, teaching methods, and students' needs to come up with effective ways to close learning gaps.

Participants noted that specialized remedial teaching teachers have a plethora of solutions tailored specifically to assist learners who are facing difficulties. To assure student development, they employed strategies such as frequent repetition, multi-sensory teaching, and the systematic breakdown of complex activities into smaller, more manageable steps. Expertise-based education encompasses the understanding and application of strategies to effectively address and overcome unique learning disabilities or obstacles. Teachers incorporated targeted interventions for students with dyslexia, ADHD, or other learning disparities, guaranteeing that Catch-Up Fridays are comprehensive and efficient for all students.

In addition, diverse expertise was also modified and frequently entails the dissemination of knowledge among colleagues. Experienced educators provide guidance and support to less experienced instructors, providing effective techniques for implementing Catch-Up Fridays. This partnership improves the overall educational quality inside a school. Experienced educators frequently engage in or take charge of professional learning communities (PLCs) in which they cooperate with peers to address difficulties, exchange materials, and formulate fresh approaches for Catch-Up Fridays. The combined knowledge and skills of the teaching staff as a whole are enhanced by this collective competence, which in turn improves their ability to handle difficult situations.

According to what was mentioned in the interview, expertise-based instruction utilizes sophisticated teaching techniques, including scaffolding, differentiated learning, and formative assessments. Teachers employ these strategies to offer systematic assistance, progressively

guiding students towards self-reliance in their education. Experienced educators possess the ability to promptly modify their instructional approaches in order to cater to the varied requirements of their students. They possess a high level of expertise in identifying instances where a student fails to comprehend a concept and may promptly adapt their teaching method, be it through re-explanation, utilization of varied examples, or integration of visual aids.

Fergusson (2022) posited that concentrating on and exchanging specialized knowledge is an effective coping strategy for DepEd teachers as they confront the difficulties of executing Catch-Up Fridays. Teachers that have extensive expertise in the subject matter, advanced teaching techniques, and a thorough comprehension of students' requirements are more capable of creating and providing impactful remedial lessons. With their knowledge, they are able to design focused, captivating, and supportive learning experiences that assist students in bridging learning deficiencies and attaining academic triumph. By utilizing their specialized knowledge and skills, these educators are able to effectively handle the challenges of Catch-Up Fridays while also improving the overall educational achievements of their students.

Systematic Evaluation

Systematic Evaluation is critical in understanding how DepEd teachers cope with the challenges of implementing Catch-Up Fridays. Participants stated that systematic evaluation involves the ongoing process of assessing the effectiveness of teaching strategies, student progress, and the overall success of the intervention program. This approach helps teachers make informed decisions, adapt their methods, and continuously improve their practices. Some educators employ formal evaluation methods, such as end-of-unit exams or standardized assessments, to gauge the overall effectiveness of Catch-Up Fridays. These assessments offer tangible proof of student comprehension and aid in the preparation of future instructional sessions. Teachers frequently utilize informal observations of student behavior and involvement during catch-up sessions, in addition to official assessments. By observing how students react to various exercises or engage with the material, educators can gain immediate insights that inform instructional adjustments in real-time.

In addition, participants noted that systematic evaluation has a reflective aspect in which teachers evaluate their own performance and the efficacy of their educational approaches. Through introspection on the successes and failures of Catch-Up Fridays, educators can enhance their methods and enhance their efficacy. Teachers may also solicit comments from students regarding the catch-up sessions. Gaining insight into students' perceptions on effective learning methods might offer significant information for adapting teaching practices. The presence of this feedback loop is crucial for the ongoing enhancement of the process.

According to Manis *et al.* (2022), systematic evaluation plays a vital role in helping DepEd teachers effectively conduct Catch-Up Fridays. Through ongoing evaluation of student development, self-reflection on teaching approaches, and collaboration with peers, educators can make well-informed choices that improve the efficacy of their remedial sessions. Systematic assessment guarantees that interventions are based on data and adaptable to the needs of kids, resulting in improved outcomes for both students and teachers. By employing this systematic approach, educators can effectively respond to obstacles, enhance their teaching techniques, and make valuable contributions to the overall achievement of the Catch-Up Fridays program.

Technology-Enhanced Instruction

Technology-Enhanced Instruction is a key part of knowing how DepEd teachers deal with the difficulties of putting Catch-Up Fridays into place. Digital tools, platforms, and resources are used by the users to help and improve the teaching and learning processes. Using technology can be a useful way for DepEd teachers to deal with problems like having a lot of students, different learning needs, and not enough time.

The teachers have access to an extensive range of online resources, such as films, interactive simulations, and digital textbooks. These tools can serve as supplementary materials to traditional education and offer alternative explanations for challenging subjects, so enhancing student engagement in the learning process. Teachers have the ability to exchange information and effective methods with their peers using online platforms and educational networks. This relationship enables them to obtain high-quality resources that may be utilized to improve training during Catch-Up Fridays.

Additionally, the utilization of educational applications and gamification techniques enhanced the level of student engagement in the learning process. By integrating gamification and interactive exercises, educators can effectively engage students in remedial sessions, especially for younger learners, fostering active participation. Teachers can employ multimedia presentations, which integrate text, graphics, audio, and video, to enhance the comprehension of intricate subjects. This multimodal method accommodates various learning styles and enhances students' ability to retain information.

Furthermore, the teachers also employed adaptive learning technologies that customize instructional content according to the specific requirements of each student. These platforms employ adaptive algorithms to modify the level of difficulty of activities according to the performance of students, offering individualized learning experiences that enable students to progress at their own speed. Through the use of data analytics tools, technology enables teachers to monitor the progress of each individual student. This data facilitates the prompt identification of children who are encountering difficulties and require more assistance, so enabling

teachers to deliver focused interventions during Catch-Up Fridays.

Zhang (2022) argued that technology-based instruction is an essential tool for DepEd teachers to effectively conduct Catch-Up Fridays. Through the utilization of digital tools and platforms, educators may deliver tailored, captivating, and effective teaching that caters to the varied requirements of their students. Technology not only improves the quality of education but also enables teachers to overcome obstacles relating to time, resources, and student motivation. By utilizing technology to enhance instruction, teachers from the Department of Education (DepEd) can guarantee the effectiveness of Catch-Up Fridays in bridging learning disparities and promoting student achievement.

Insights of the DepEd teachers with Regards to the Implementation of Catch-up Fridays

Requillo *et al.* (2024) stated that the DepEd Catch-Up Friday has provided valuable insights into the complexities of teaching and learning in a post-pandemic world. Through this initiative, teachers have gained a deeper understanding of their students' needs, their own professional practices, and the broader educational landscape. Table 3 explores the insights of teachers on the implementation of DepEd Catch-Up Fridays. Three themes emerged in this study as the insights of the teachers: an inclusive learning environment, addresses struggling learners, and requires tailored instructional approaches.

Table 3: Insights of the DepEd teachers with regards to the implementation of Catch-up Fridays

THEMES	CODE/CATEGORIES
Needs a Supportive Learning Environment	Supportive Environment
	Support from Family and Peers
	Guidance of More Knowledgeable Others
Addresses Struggling Learners	Bridging the Learning Gap
	Struggling Learners
	Lifelong Learning and Adaptability
Requires Tailored Instructional Approaches	Authentic and Relatable Activities
	Contextualization
	Differentiated Instruction

Needs a Supportive Learning Environment

According to the participants, a supportive learning environment is one where students feel valued, safe, and motivated to learn, and where they have access to the resources and encouragement they need to succeed. For DepEd teachers, creating such an environment during Catch-Up Fridays involves addressing both the emotional and educational needs of students.

Teachers acknowledge the importance of providing students with a secure environment to voice their

concerns and engage in academic challenges. During Catch-Up Fridays, their objective is to establish a nurturing environment that encourages kids to engage actively without any apprehension of criticism or lack of success. An setting that fosters support involves encouraging students to engage in courteous and constructive relationships. Teachers establish explicit behavioral norms and exemplify courteous communication, fostering a cooperative and nurturing classroom environment.

In addition, educators comprehend that children possess a wide range of requirements and varying rates of learning. During Catch-Up Fridays, personalized assistance is provided through one-on-one support or small group instruction, which is customized to address the specific difficulties faced by each student. Through the evaluation of learners' aptitudes and limitations, educators discover individuals who are in need of supplementary assistance and devise focused tactics to aid them in bridging any gaps. This may entail modifying resources, providing more exercises, or presenting alternate clarifications.

Educators should also acknowledge the significance of engaging families in their child's academic pursuits. On Catch-Up Fridays, they engage in communication with parents and caregivers to deliver updates on their child's advancement, exchange techniques for assistance at home, and promote family participation in the educational journey. Teachers can offer parents tools and information to assist them in supporting their child's education outside of school. This may encompass suggestions for supplementary exercises, educational gaming options, or tactics for strengthening learning at home.

Montiero *et al.* (2022) argued that teachers can guarantee the success of all students by establishing a secure, captivating, and well-equipped setting. Implementing personalized approaches, cultivating a conducive ambiance, and engaging families are crucial tactics for establishing a nurturing educational setting. By diligently adhering to these norms, teachers from the Department of Education (DepEd) improve the efficiency of Catch-Up Fridays and actively contribute to a fairer and more prosperous educational journey for their students.

Addresses Struggling Learners

Participants mentioned that Catch-Up Fridays are designed to help students who are lagging behind in their learning catch up with the rest of the class. For DepEd teachers, addressing struggling learners effectively involves a range of strategies and insights tailored to meet the specific needs of these students.

It is crucial to acknowledge that teachers should employ several assessments to identify children who are encountering difficulties. These assessments may encompass formal examinations, quizzes, and casual observations. Through the analysis of these tests, educators can identify the specific areas in which students are encountering challenges and require further assistance. Teachers frequently depend on input from students and observations of classroom conduct to discern difficulties.

For instance, kids who regularly seek assistance or display a lack of interest may require specific attention.

According to the teachers, during Catch-Up Fridays, they should customize their teaching to meet the specific requirements of students who are having difficulty. This may entail deconstructing intricate concepts into more manageable stages, offering further elucidations, or employing alternative pedagogical approaches to elucidate challenging subject. Teachers frequently arrange individual or small group sessions with students who are experiencing difficulties. These sessions offer individualized instruction and enable professors to focus extensively on areas where students want the greatest assistance.

Furthermore, educators should employ scaffolding strategies to assist students who are facing challenges in their learning. This entails offering provisional assistance to learners, enabling them to attain a level of comprehension that they would not be able to achieve on their own. Scaffolding encompasses instructional techniques such as providing guided practice, offering step-by-step directions, and utilizing visual aids. Teachers employ positive reinforcement tactics to promote confidence and motivation. Acknowledging and commemorating little achievements aids in maintaining the motivation and fostering a sense of encouragement among learners who are facing difficulties, so motivating them to persist in their endeavors.

According to Berlinski *et al.* (2023), teachers can establish a conducive environment for struggling learners to succeed by identifying specific obstacles, implementing focused interventions, leveraging resources tailored to individual needs, and giving emotional and motivational support. Teachers use tailored learning plans, include parents, and assess progress to ensure that all students have the chance to achieve and eliminate any gaps in their learning. This targeted strategy not only aids struggling learners in bridging the gap but also cultivates a more inclusive and supportive educational atmosphere.

Requires Tailored Instructional Approaches

To the participants, tailored instructional approaches involve adapting teaching strategies, materials, and methods to meet the diverse needs of students, especially those who require additional support. For DepEd teachers, implementing Catch-Up Fridays effectively requires a nuanced and flexible approach to instruction. The teachers emphasized the need of teachers acknowledging that learners had diverse learning styles, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. During Catch-Up Fridays, they customize their instruction to accommodate these varied types. For example, educators may employ visual aids and movies to cater to the needs of visual learners, while incorporating hands-on activities to engage kinesthetic learners. Content can be given in several formats to ensure understanding. This entails deconstructing intricate concepts into more manageable elements, employing various elucidations, and offering

diverse opportunities for practice to cater to diverse learning requirements.

Therefore, it is advisable for teachers to frequently employ small group instruction in order to offer more targeted assistance. By categorizing learners based on their similar needs, educational institutions may more efficiently tackle specific difficulties and offer focused support. Grouping tactics are adaptable and subject to modification depending on the progress and developing needs of students. Implementing a rotation system enables students to gain advantages from many viewpoints and instructional approaches while also guaranteeing that they receive the necessary assistance.

According to Ng and Lo (2022), teachers employ scaffolding to assist students in navigating difficult material. This entails offering provisional assistance, such as supervised practice or instructions presented in a sequential manner, that are gradually withdrawn as students develop self-assurance and expertise. Adaptations in scaffolding strategies are made according to the specific progress of each learner. Teachers consistently evaluate the level of assistance required by each student and adjust their methods accordingly to promote efficient learning.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of DepEd Catch-Up Friday has emerged as a prominent approach within the Philippine education system. The goal of this strategy is to address the academic interruptions that have been produced by the pandemic and to ensure that students have sufficient time to complete any learning gaps that they may have. The outcomes of the research that was conducted on the experiences that teachers had with this program indicate several important findings that highlight the impact that it has had on educational practices as well as the well-being of instructors.

Catch-Up Friday has brought to light the varied educational requirements of learners, which has enabled educators to better adjust their teaching strategies to meet the needs of different students. It has been recognized by educators that the additional time affords important chances for differentiated instruction and individualized support, both of which are essential for addressing the obstacles faced by individual students and cultivating a learning environment that is more inclusive.

Since the implementation of Catch-Up Friday, educators have been compelled to embrace instructional strategies that are more adaptable and technologically advanced. This time has been employed by educators to experiment with new tactics, such as learning that is enhanced by technology and creative assignment designs. These strategies have not only helped to the improvement of student engagement, but they have also contributed to the professional development of instructors. This modification is a reflection of a larger trend toward teaching techniques that are more dynamic and adaptable in response to the requirements of an ever-changing educational system.

According to the findings of the research, Catch-Up Friday has brought to light underlying systemic difficulties within the educational framework. These challenges include discrepancies in resource access and variable degrees of student preparation. These realizations highlight the significance of tackling systemic challenges in order to improve the overall effectiveness of educational initiatives. Moving forward, it is crucial to take these findings into consideration when developing future educational policies and practices. This will ensure that initiatives such as Catch-Up Friday are implemented in a manner that provides comprehensive assistance to both students and educators.

The Department of Education's Catch-Up Friday is an opportunity to make a significant effort to reduce disruptions to students' learning and to encourage their progress. The program has demonstrated both the possibilities and the constraints of implementing catch-up tactics, which has provided useful insights into the intricacies of teaching in a post-pandemic context because it has demonstrated both of these aspects. The lessons that were acquired during Catch-Up Friday will be extremely helpful in designing educational practices that are more effective and responsive, which will ultimately be to the benefit of all stakeholders as the education system continues to undergo additional changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings regarding the implementation of DepEd Catch-Up Friday, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of this initiative and support both teachers and students more effectively.

It is of the utmost importance to facilitate the provision of additional support mechanisms for educators in order to meet the increased effort and potential stress that is linked with Catch-Up Friday. This involves providing opportunities for professional development that are centered on stress management, time management, and new teaching practices. It is also possible to assist instructors in more effectively managing their obligations by providing them with access to teaching resources, administrative support, and collaborative platforms.

In addition, addressing the gaps in access to resources has the potential to dramatically increase the efficiency of the Catch-Up Friday program. For the purpose of facilitating diversified instruction, schools ought to make certain that educational materials and technological tools are distributed in an equitable manner. Additionally, investing in infrastructure that supports blended learning environments can enhance the overall learning experience and facilitate more successful catch-up sessions.

Additionally, creating an environment that encourages collaboration among educators helps facilitate the exchange of information and best practices for Catch-Up Friday. In order to encourage regular meetings or professional learning communities, schools should make it possible for educators to discuss difficulties, share

tactics that have been effective, and collaborate on the development of novel solutions while working together. Additionally, peer support can assist in the reduction of individual stress and the development of a culture of collaboration within the school.

Furthermore, it is essential to build organized feedback systems that enable teachers to share their experiences, challenges, and suggestions in order to continuously enhance the Catch-Up Friday program. This will allow for the initiative to be improved. This can be accomplished through the use of regular feedback sessions, focus groups, or surveys, which can provide vital insights into the effectiveness of the program and influence any necessary revisions. The incorporation of feedback from teachers into decision-making processes will guarantee that the initiative continues to be responsive to the requirements of the teachers.

It is also possible to more effectively handle the varied requirements of students by promoting the utilization of student-centered techniques during the Catch-Up Friday period. Support should be provided to educators in order to facilitate the creation and execution of personalized learning plans, the utilization of adaptive learning technologies, and the implementation of flexible teaching approaches. These strategies have the potential to increase student engagement and guarantee that catch-up sessions are adapted to the specific educational requirements of each student.

In addition, it is essential for the success of any educational endeavor to make certain that the well-being of educators is taken care of. Some of the measures that should be implemented to support the mental and emotional health of teachers include giving access to counseling services, fostering work-life balance, and acknowledging their efforts and accomplishments. These measures should be implemented by schools and policymakers. One of the factors that will contribute to the continued motivation and effectiveness of teachers is a supportive working environment.

By addressing these recommendations, the DepEd Catch-Up Friday initiative can be more effectively implemented, leading to improved educational outcomes for students and a more supportive and sustainable working environment for teachers.

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