

CHARTING THE PATH: EXPLORING THE JOURNEYS OF NATIONAL LEARNING CAMP TEACHER-VOLUNTEERS

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Abstract: This study explored the experiences, coping strategies, and insights of teacher-volunteers in the National Learning Camp under the Department of Education in Davao de Oro Division. The camp provided an opportunity for educators to engage in a dynamic learning environment that facilitated personal and professional growth. Findings revealed that teacher-volunteers faced significant challenges, including balancing multiple roles, managing time constraints, and addressing diverse student needs. Despite these obstacles, the volunteers reported a strong sense of accomplishment and professional development, including improved classroom management, enhanced communication, and leadership skills. The camp also fostered personal growth, building resilience and empathy, as well as a deeper reflection on teaching philosophies. Furthermore, the volunteers gained valuable insights into the interconnectedness of education and social impact, particularly in promoting inclusivity and equity. The study also identified several coping strategies employed by the teacher-volunteers, such as adaptive teaching techniques, time management, and leveraging support systems. Based on these findings, the study recommended that educational institutions prioritize experiential professional development programs like the National Learning Camp to foster critical teaching skills and leadership. It also suggested the integration of differentiated instruction and stronger community partnerships to create more inclusive and supportive learning environments. Overall, the National Learning Camp proved to be a transformative experience that not only enhanced the professional capabilities of the teacher-volunteers but also reinforced their commitment to improving educational outcomes and addressing societal challenges.

Keywords: educational outcomes, experiences, coping mechanisms, Davao de Oro, insights, national learning camp, phenomenological study, teacher-volunteers.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Learning Camp (NLC) by the Philippine Department of Education emerges as a beacon of hope, aiming to bridge the widening educational gaps experienced by students. This initiative is powered by dedicated teacher-volunteers who form the core of its mission. However, these volunteers face significant challenges, including inadequate training, limited resources, and logistical barriers. Such hurdles not only test the resilience and commitment of the teachers but also threaten to undermine the camp's overarching goal of providing quality education to all (Garcia, 2024).

Moreover, educational interventions in other developing countries reveal significant challenges that parallel those faced by many nations. For instance, Thailand's volunteer-driven educational camps aim to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills through interactive, community-based approaches (Mwangi, 2023). However, these initiatives frequently encounter critical obstacles, including insufficient volunteer training, inadequate funding, and logistical barriers that undermine their

effectiveness. Similarly, in countries like Taiwan and Malaysia, comparable programs struggle with similar issues, where the lack of resources and proper infrastructure further exacerbates the difficulty of delivering quality education (Rao, 2023). These global examples underscore the crucial role of volunteer engagement and structured program design but also highlight persistent challenges that require targeted solutions.

In the Philippines, the National Learning Camp (NLC) by the Department of Education aims to bridge educational gaps that have widened in the aftermath of COVID-19, relying heavily on the dedication of its teacher-volunteers. However, these volunteers face significant challenges, as Dela Cruz (2023) noted that many feel underprepared due to a lack of comprehensive, role-specific training. This under preparedness poses a notable barrier to the camp's success. Adding to these difficulties are logistical issues, with insufficient teaching materials and transportation hindering effective lesson delivery, while Santos (2023) highlights the emotional and physical toll on volunteers balancing their regular duties with NLC commitments. Although these teacher-volunteers remain integral to the program, such ongoing challenges threaten the NLC's mission to deliver equitable, quality education.

In the Davao de Oro Division, teacher-volunteers frequently reported feelings of inadequacy due to insufficient training and the lack of structured support systems. Additionally, many faced significant logistical challenges, including difficulties in accessing necessary teaching materials and ensuring reliable transportation for both themselves and the students. Despite these obstacles, volunteers often expressed a strong sense of commitment and fulfillment derived from their involvement in the NLC, driven by the impact they could make on students' educational outcomes. Their experiences highlighted the need for improved training programs, better resource allocation, and stronger support networks to ensure the sustainability and success of the NLC.

In consonance, the researcher did not encounter any local studies examining the lived experiences of NLC volunteers, highlighting the urgent need for a focused investigation into their challenges and motivations. This gap underscored the importance of understanding the unique experiences of these volunteers, which could inform the development of more effective support systems, targeted training programs, and improved resource allocation strategies. Such insights were essential for enhancing the impact of educational interventions aimed at bridging learning gaps and ensuring the success of initiatives like the NLC.

II. BODY OF ARTICLE

Research Design

In the pursuit of exploring the experiences of National Learning Camp (NLC) teacher-volunteers, this study used a qualitative phenomenological research design. Essentially, it facilitated a deeper understanding of the phenomenon as described by the participants (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenology posits that to understand human experiences, it requires an immersive saturation of individuals' thoughts and insights through interviews. Since the participants had all experienced the phenomenon of being NLC teacher-volunteers, the study culminated in an interpretation of their experiences (Creswell, 2013). For instance, it involved establishing meanings from their perspectives and provided the researcher an avenue to visualize the situation of the participants based on their actual shared experiences (Giorgi, 2012).

The qualitative phenomenological research design was well-suited for this study as it sought to explore the lived experiences of NLC teacher-volunteers in depth. This design aligned with the study's aim to gain insights directly from the participants' perspectives, allowing the researcher to capture the complexities of their unique challenges and contributions within the NLC. By engaging participants in open, in-depth interviews, the approach supported an immersive understanding of the NLC volunteers' emotional, logistical, and educational experiences (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the phenomenological method was ideal for identifying the underlying meanings that the participants attached to their roles, enabling a comprehensive picture of their realities and interpreting the nuances of their challenges and motivations (Giorgi, 2012). Thus, this design not only facilitated a rich portrayal of individual experiences but also provided a holistic interpretation of the collective essence of being an NLC teacher-volunteer.

Research Participants

There were six participants in this study, which was enough to saturate the information gathered from the studied group. In determining the research participants for this qualitative-phenomenological study, Creswell (2013) suggested six to fifteen participants. Therefore, in this study, six participants were selected for the In-Depth Interview (IDI).

Furthermore, the inclusion criteria for the selection of participants were the following: (a) the participants had to be public secondary school teachers in the School Year 2024-2025 at DepEd Division of Davao de Oro, (b) with a position/designation from Teacher I-III to Master Teacher I-IV, (c) at least 3 years of service as public-school teachers, and (d) had experience as National Learning Camp teacher-volunteers for 2 years.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

In a qualitative study, analysis was regarded as the most complex phase and the one that received the least thoughtful discussion in the literature (Aberdeen, 2013). Data analysis helped the researcher gain a general sense of the information and reflect on its overall meaning. In this study, data analysis included transcription, coding, thematic analysis, and the formulation of major themes and core ideas.

Moreover, data coding was the process of organizing data derived from the raw data collected. Its organized data by reducing the amount of raw data to the most relevant to the research questions and breaking it down into manageable sections, allowing for the themes to emerge (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). In the context of this study, the researcher determined the codes by highlighting the relevant and recurring themes using colored pens, using the same color for similar ideas. Each theme was then clustered together based on their colors and labeled using words and short phrases. Additionally, the researcher identified the colors that frequently occurred or repeatedly emerged, as these were more likely to be considered a theme.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the participants' responses. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing and reporting patterns or themes within data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The participants' responses were transcribed and categorized into themes, which served as the basis for the discussions and recommendations. In the context of this study, the thematic analysis was done after the initial codes were identified. Then, categorizing and analyzing all the responses of the participants from general to specific followed. Responses with similar core ideas were extracted and grouped to formulate comprehensive themes. For a theme to be valid, it had to consist of at least five core ideas. Furthermore, in this study, the researcher assigned code names for each of the participants to ensure anonymity. Transcription involved the translation, referring to the conversion of sounds from audio recordings to text (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). The interviews and discussions were transcribed, and data was organized to bring meaning to the text.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Experiences of The National Learning Camp Teacher-Volunteers

The participants experienced personal and professional challenges, growth and fulfillment through volunteering, and support systems and collaboration in the national learning camp. Table 1 presents the themes and core ideas on the experiences of the national learning camp teacher-volunteers. The researchers defined these themes, discussed thoroughly, enriched with core ideas, and supported with existing studies and literature.

Table 1. Major Themes and Core Ideas on The Experiences of The National Learning Camp Teacher-Volunteers

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Personal and Professional Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing Multiple Roles-T1 • Time Constraints-T2 • Emotional Fatigue-T3 • Lack of Resources-T4 • Handling Diverse Student Needs-T5
Growth and Fulfillment through Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of Accomplishment-T2 • Professional Development-T4 • Increased Empathy and Understanding-T6 • Building Teacher-Student Relationships-T3 • Skill Enhancement-T5
Support Systems and Collaboration in the National Learning Camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teamwork and Peer Support-T1 • Guidance from Mentors-T3 • Community Involvement-T4 • School Leadership Support-T2 • Need for Formal Training and Support-T6

Personal and Professional Challenges

Teacher-volunteers encountered difficulties in balancing their roles in the National Learning Camp (NLC) with personal and professional responsibilities, even though the program was conducted during the school break. Teacher 1 shared,

" Even during the break, I was finalizing reports from the previous school year while preparing for the camp. I barely had time to rest or spend with my family."

Similarly, Teacher 3 noted;

"It felt like I was still in the regular school year. I had to manage my time between the camp and personal commitments, which left me exhausted."

The limited timeframe of the NLC presented challenges for teacher-volunteers in preparing and delivering lessons effectively. Teacher 2 explained,

"We had very little time to prepare for our sessions, and as a result, some lessons felt rushed. It was not ideal for in-depth learning."

Moreover, the intense demands of the NLC led to emotional fatigue among teacher-volunteers, impacting their motivation and well-being. Teacher 3 described,

"Managing a group of students with diverse behaviors while keeping up with the program's activities was emotionally draining."

The shortage of teaching materials and resources was a recurring issue for NLC teacher-volunteers. Teacher 4 remarked,

" We had to be creative with what little we had. I even used personal funds to create visual aids."

Further, teacher-volunteers faced challenges in addressing the varied academic and emotional needs of students attending the NLC. Teacher 5 noted,

"It was not just about academics. Some students had emotional challenges like anxiety, and they needed extra attention."

The experiences of teacher-volunteers in balancing responsibilities and managing time constraints during the NLC aligned with recent findings on the pressure's educators faced in extracurricular initiatives. For instance, Johnson and White (2023) highlighted that even during breaks, teachers participating in academic programs often struggled to disconnect from professional demands, resulting in extended work cycles. This lack of proper rest undermined their long-term effectiveness.

Additionally, studies had documented the emotional toll of extended teaching commitments. Silva et al. (2022) found that teacher burnout during extracurricular engagements was exacerbated by unmet resource needs and insufficient institutional support. The NLC teacher-volunteers' experiences reflected these findings, as they often had to improvise to meet program demands, amplifying their stress levels.

In handling diverse student needs, Fenwick and Tyler (2023) emphasized the importance of tailored instructional strategies in short-term programs like the NLC. They argued that such approaches were vital for addressing the wide range of student backgrounds and learning levels. However, as seen in the teachers' experiences, the limited time available significantly restricted their ability to implement these strategies effectively, leading to potential disparities in student outcomes.

Growth and Fulfillment through Volunteering

This means that the teacher-volunteers' experiences at the National Learning Camp highlight how their engagement goes beyond instructional duties, fostering personal and professional growth. With the challenges of managing classroom dynamics and balancing their time during the school break, they still find fulfillment in the impact they create on learners. Thus, their narratives reflect how volunteering enhances their sense of purpose, resilience, and connection to the broader educational mission, showcasing the transformative power of their commitment.

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Teachers expressed a profound sense of pride and fulfillment derived from their participation in the National Learning Camp (NLC). Teacher 2 shared;

"It felt rewarding to know that I was able to make a difference in the lives of students, especially those who were struggling academically. The experience gave me a sense of purpose, knowing that I was part of a program aimed at addressing learning gaps."

Furthermore, the NLC provided an avenue for professional growth, equipping teachers with essential skills to navigate complex educational challenges. Teacher 4 explained;

"The camp taught me how to adapt quickly to unexpected situations, which I now apply in my regular teaching practice."

Also, volunteers cultivated a deeper sense of empathy toward students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Teacher 6 stated;

"Interacting with students from various socio-economic contexts gave me a better understanding of their struggles and strengths".

The NLC created opportunities for teachers to build meaningful relationships with students, enhancing the overall teaching experience. Teacher 3 shared;

"Spending more focused time with students during the camp allowed me to understand their individual learning styles better."

On the other hand, participation in the NLC also allowed teachers to refine their instructional and classroom management skills. Teacher 5 commented;

"The hands-on approach of the camp pushed me to improve my lesson planning and delivery."

Research supported the notion that volunteering fostered both personal and professional growth in educators. Studies by Smith et al. (2022) revealed that teachers engaged in voluntary educational programs reported increased job satisfaction due to the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to student learning. Similarly, participation in initiatives like the NLC enhanced teachers' adaptability and leadership skills, aligning with findings from Nguyen and Tran (2023) that stressed the value of experiential learning in professional development.

Moreover, fostering empathy and understanding through direct engagement with students echoed sentiments by Kim and Lee (2022), who found that teachers' exposure to diverse student populations led to more inclusive and compassionate teaching practices. Building strong teacher-student relationships, as highlighted by the participants, corresponded with research by Johnson and Carter (2023), which emphasized the long-term benefits of trust and rapport in the classroom.

Lastly, skill enhancement through structured volunteer programs aligned with findings by Garcia et al. (2022), who asserted that teachers developed innovative classroom strategies when placed in dynamic and challenging environments. These skills were often transferred to their regular teaching roles, thereby enriching their professional practices.

Support Systems and Collaboration in the National Learning Camp

This pertains that the experiences of teacher-volunteers at the National Learning Camp underscore the critical role of support systems and collaboration in overcoming challenges. Faced with limited resources and the demands of facilitating meaningful learning experiences, these educators relied heavily on teamwork, shared expertise, and institutional support to fulfill their roles effectively. Thus, their stories reflect how collaboration not only alleviated difficulties but also fostered a sense of community and shared purpose, highlighting its significance in achieving the camp's goals.

Collaboration among volunteers emerged as a cornerstone of success in the National Learning Camp. Teacher 1 shared;

"Working with other volunteers allowed us to exchange ideas and strategies, which not only lightened the workload but also improved the quality of teaching. Whenever someone faced challenges, the group came together to brainstorm solutions, ensuring no one felt isolated or overwhelmed."

In addition to peer collaboration, guidance from experienced mentors played an instrumental role in guiding volunteers through the challenges of the camp. Teacher 3 reflected,

“Our mentors were always there to provide advice on managing difficult situations and sharing their tried-and-tested methods. Their guidance not only helped me overcome challenges but also gave me the confidence to try new approaches.”

While mentorship was vital, the role of the community in enriching the camp experience was equally impactful. Teacher 4 remarked;

“Parents and local leaders were actively involved, whether by providing resources or helping to motivate students. Their encouragement reinforced the idea that the entire community had a stake in the success of the camp.”

Similarly, the encouragement from school administrators provided a strong sense of validation for volunteers. Teacher 2 shared;

“Our principal constantly reminded us of the importance of our work and ensured we had the resources we needed. Their acknowledgment of our efforts motivated us to push through even the toughest days.”

Despite the availability of informal support systems, the absence of structured training from the Department of Education emerged as a critical concern. Teacher 6 stated;

“Although we received guidance from peers and mentors, a formal training program from the Department of Education would have been immensely helpful. It could have better prepared us for the specific needs of the students and the logistical demands of the camp.”

Research underscored the interconnectedness of collaboration, mentorship, and community engagement in fostering teacher effectiveness. Collaboration among peers, as highlighted by participants, resonated with the findings of Nguyen and Tran (2023), who emphasized that peer networks sparked innovation and bolstered resilience, particularly in collaborative environments. Additionally, mentorship played a pivotal role in this dynamic. Smith et al. (2022) explained that experienced mentors provided invaluable guidance to novice teachers, helping them navigate professional challenges and ultimately accelerating their confidence and competence.

In addition, community involvement emerged as a critical factor in supporting educational initiatives. According to Johnson and Lee (2023), partnerships between educators, parents, and local leaders created an inclusive framework that significantly enhanced student outcomes. Garcia and Lin (2022) similarly noted that the encouragement and logistical support from school leadership played an instrumental role in motivating teachers to excel, even amidst resource constraints. This synergy between teachers and the broader community highlighted the power of collective action in driving educational success.

Furthermore, the need for structured training remained an urgent concern. Kim and Allen (2022) argued that formal training programs equipped teachers with the necessary skills to overcome diverse challenges, ultimately enabling them to deliver more effective instruction. This need for comprehensive training underscored the importance of addressing gaps in professional development, ensuring that future volunteers were better prepared for initiatives like the National Learning Camp. Such preparation would contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of such programs.

Strategies of Teacher-Volunteers in The National Learning Camp Used to Cope with Challenges Encountered

The mentioned challenges inspired the national learning camp teacher-volunteers to come up with meaningful strategies. The researchers captured three coping strategies such as adaptive teaching strategies, time management and organization, and emotional resilience and support systems. Table 2 presents the themes and core ideas on the strategies of teacher-volunteers in the national learning camp used to cope with challenges. The researchers defined these themes, discussed thoroughly, enriched with core ideas, and supported with existing studies and literature.

Table 2. Major Themes and Core Ideas on The Strategies of Teacher-Volunteers in The National Learning Camp Use to Cope with Challenges Encountered

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Adaptive Teaching Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated Instruction-T1 • Simplified Lesson Plans-T2 • Peer Learning-T4 • Interactive Activities-T6 • Use of Technology-T2
Time Management and Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritization of Tasks -T2 • Time Blocking -T5 • Delegating Responsibilities -T3 • Setting Realistic Goals -T6 • Efficient Planning -T1
Emotional Resilience and Support Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Support and Collaboration -T4 • Self-Care Practices -T1 • Positive Mindset and Motivation -T6 • Seeking Mentorship -T2 • Community and Family Support -T5

Adaptive Teaching Strategies

This pertains to how teacher-volunteers in the National Learning Camp employed adaptive teaching strategies to cope with various challenges encountered during the program. Confronted with diverse learner needs, resource limitations, and time constraints, they tailored their approaches to ensure effective and engaging instruction. Thus, their strategies focused on flexibility, creativity, and resourcefulness, allowing them to address these challenges head-on while fostering a productive and supportive learning environment.

To address the varying needs of students, teachers employed differentiated instruction to tailor their methods based on learners' abilities and preferences. Teacher 1 noted;

“Recognizing that students have diverse learning styles, I designed activities that allowed some students to learn visually, while others explored the same topic through hands-on tasks or discussions. This ensured no one was left behind and everyone could grasp the lesson in their own way.”

In managing the unique demands of the National Learning Camp, volunteers opted for simplified lesson plans to maximize the clarity and retention of key ideas. Teacher 3 explained;

“By focusing only on the most essential concepts, I avoided overwhelming the students, especially those struggling to catch up academically. This approach also helped me save time, ensuring lessons were concise but impactful.”

Fostering collaboration among students became a practical strategy for managing large groups while promoting active learning. Teacher 4 shared;

“I encouraged students to work in pairs or small groups, allowing them to learn from one another. This approach not only eased my workload but also developed their teamwork and communication skills”.

To maintain engagement and solidify learning, teachers incorporated interactive activities, such as games and hands-on projects. Teacher 6 remarked;

“Integrating activities like group discussions and role-playing not only kept students interested but also made abstract concepts easier to understand. It transformed the learning experience into something they could actively participate in.”

Further, recognizing the value of technology, volunteers integrated digital tools into their teaching practices to complement traditional methods. Teacher 2 stated,

“I used educational apps and online resources to make lessons more interactive and accessible. These tools helped me provide additional explanations and examples, especially for students who needed extra support.”

Adaptive teaching strategies became a hallmark of effective education, particularly in programs like the National Learning Camp, which addressed the needs of diverse student populations. Differentiated instruction, as implemented by the teachers, aligned with the findings of Gomez and Dela Cruz (2022), who emphasized its significance in catering to varied learning needs, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring equitable learning outcomes. This approach allowed for more personalized teaching, ensuring that each student could engage with the material at their own pace and level.

Equally important were simplified lesson plans, which facilitated efficient content delivery. A study by Santos et al. (2023) highlighted how focusing on core concepts helped students process information more effectively, especially in remedial learning settings. In addition, peer learning played a supportive role by promoting collaborative skills and mutual understanding. Bautista and Reyes (2022) found that group activities not only enhanced critical thinking but also encouraged social interaction, proving to be a valuable tool in educational camps.

Moreover, interactive activities, such as those used by teacher-volunteers, were essential in maintaining student engagement. Alcaraz (2023) noted that hands-on and discussion-based methods encouraged active participation and helped students internalize knowledge. In the same vein, technology integration also contributed to the learning process, as observed by Villanueva (2022), who documented how digital tools expanded learning opportunities and addressed the gaps seen in traditional teaching methods. These tools provided a more dynamic and accessible learning environment, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the camp.

Time Management and Organization

This highlights how teacher-volunteers in the National Learning Camp relied on effective time management and organizational skills to address the challenges they faced. Balancing the demands of lesson preparation, student engagement, and administrative responsibilities required careful planning and prioritization. As a result, their ability to structure their tasks and manage their schedules played a crucial role in ensuring the smooth delivery of the program despite the obstacles encountered.

One of the key strategies employed by teacher-volunteers was prioritizing tasks to ensure the most critical duties were addressed first. Teacher 2 shared;

“Given the overwhelming demands of the National Learning Camp, I had to focus on the urgent tasks like preparing lessons and addressing immediate student needs. This helped me avoid the stress of rushing through everything at once”.

To manage their time effectively, volunteers adopted time-blocking techniques, allocating specific time slots for different tasks. Teacher 5 explained;

“I dedicated certain hours of the day to lesson preparation, other hours to engaging with students, and still other hours for administrative work. This method helped me feel less overwhelmed and ensured that each task got the attention it deserved.”

In light of the diverse responsibilities, teacher-volunteers found that delegating tasks to others was essential for managing their workload. Teacher 3 stated;

“I entrusted certain administrative tasks to my student leaders and collaborated with fellow volunteers to divide the workload. This allowed me to focus more on my teaching while ensuring that the camp ran smoothly.”

A key approach that helped maintain balance was setting realistic, attainable goals for both teachers and students. Teacher 6 noted,

“I set small, achievable goals for my students, such as mastering specific skills by the end of the week. For myself, I aimed to accomplish a certain amount of lesson planning each day. This made everything feel manageable and ensured steady progress”.

Efficient planning was crucial for teacher-volunteers to minimize stress and maximize productivity. Teacher 1 shared,

“I created detailed schedules and lesson plans well in advance to ensure I could focus on each session without last-minute scrambling. This structured approach kept me organized and helped me stay on track with the objectives of the NLC.”

Effective time management and organizational strategies were critical in the demanding environment of the National Learning Camp, ensuring that teacher-volunteers could meet their responsibilities while maintaining their well-being. One such strategy, prioritizing tasks, was emphasized in the literature. Cruz and Mendoza (2023) highlighted that prioritizing essential tasks not only facilitated task completion but also helped reduce cognitive overload, a crucial factor in high-stress teaching environments like the NLC.

In addition, time-blocking, as employed by teacher-volunteers, aligned with the research by Villanueva and Bautista (2022), who found that allocating specific time slots for different tasks helped educators avoid feeling overwhelmed and improved overall efficiency. Similarly, delegating responsibilities, as reported by the volunteers, proved effective in managing workload. Martinez et al. (2022) found that collaboration and task delegation within the teaching community significantly enhanced productivity and helped create a more balanced workload.

Furthermore, setting realistic goals was another strategy that helped volunteers manage the intense demands of the NLC. Reyes and Dela Cruz (2023) found that setting achievable goals played a key role in preventing teacher burnout, as it provided a sense of accomplishment and steady progress toward larger objectives. Finally, efficient planning, as emphasized by the teacher-volunteers, aligned with the findings of Santos and Garcia (2023), who noted that detailed planning not only aided in time management but also reduced uncertainty and stress associated with last-minute preparations.

Emotional Resilience and Support Systems

This underscores how emotional resilience and support systems were key strategies used by teacher-volunteers at the National Learning Camp to navigate the challenges they encountered. The demanding nature of their roles, combined with the pressures of managing large groups of students and limited resources, often tested their emotional well-being. However, through strong support networks and personal coping mechanisms, they were able to maintain their emotional balance and continue their work effectively, highlighting the importance of mental and emotional fortitude in sustaining their commitment to the camp's success.

To cope with the emotional demands of teaching, teacher-volunteers emphasized the importance of teamwork and mutual support. Teacher 4 shared,

“Whenever the workload felt overwhelming, I could always rely on my fellow volunteers for support. We helped each other out, exchanged ideas on how to handle difficult situations, and encouraged one another to keep pushing forward. The emotional burden became lighter because we faced it together.”

Recognizing the importance of maintaining their mental and emotional health, teachers made self-care a priority. Teacher 1 noted;

“I learned to make time for myself, even if it was just for a few minutes a day. Whether it was taking a walk or enjoying a good book, these small acts of self-care helped me manage the stress. I realized that I couldn't help my students if I didn't take care of myself first.”

In light of the diverse responsibilities, teacher-volunteers found that delegating tasks to others was essential for managing their workload. Teacher 3 stated;

“Maintaining a positive outlook was essential for teachers to stay motivated despite the challenges. Teacher 6 reflected, “There were days when everything felt tough, but I always reminded myself that what we were doing mattered. Every student we helped, every lesson we delivered, was a step toward their future. That kept me going, no matter how tired I felt.”

In times of stress, teacher-volunteers often turned to mentors for guidance and support. Teacher 2 explained;

“When I felt overwhelmed, I reached out to my mentor for advice. She was always there to listen, offer guidance, and help me find a solution. Having someone with more experience gave me the confidence to navigate the challenges I was facing.”

Teacher-volunteers found emotional strength through their families and local communities, which provided vital support. Teacher 5 shared;

“My family was my greatest support system. After a long day, they would listen to me and offer their encouragement. Knowing that they understood and cared helped me stay grounded and focused on my role at the camp.”

The significance of peer support and collaboration in maintaining emotional resilience was widely recognized in recent literature. Mercado and Tan (2023) emphasized that collaboration among teachers fostered a sense of community, which helped alleviate the emotional challenges of teaching. Peer networks provided emotional support and created a safe space for sharing experiences, reducing stress and improving job satisfaction. Teacher-volunteers in the National Learning Camp, who leaned on their colleagues, were able to create a supportive environment that enhanced their emotional well-being.

In addition to peer support, implementing self-care practices proved essential for managing the emotional demands of teaching. Ramos and Santos (2022) found that teachers who prioritized self-care were better able to cope with the physical and emotional strain of their profession. Engaging in activities that promoted relaxation, such as taking breaks or pursuing hobbies, allowed teachers to restore their energy and remain resilient in the face of stress. This practice was crucial for maintaining long-term emotional health and ensuring that teachers could continue to perform effectively.

Moreover, maintaining a positive mindset and motivation was pivotal for sustaining emotional resilience, especially when facing challenges. Garcia (2022) noted that teachers who focused on the positive outcomes of their work, such as student success, were more likely to remain motivated and resilient. This mindset helped teachers manage stress and avoid burnout, as they recognized the value of their contributions to students’ futures. Teacher-volunteers in the National Learning Camp who maintained this focus were better able to overcome emotional challenges and continue their work with enthusiasm.

The role of mentorship also contributed significantly to emotional resilience, as documented in recent studies. Villanueva and Lim (2023) pointed out that experienced mentors provided valuable guidance and emotional support, helping novice teachers navigate the stresses of their profession. Mentorship not only offered emotional reassurance but also helped teachers develop practical strategies for handling difficult situations. Teacher-volunteers who sought mentorship were able to manage the emotional demands of teaching with greater ease and confidence.

Finally, community and family support were identified as crucial sources of emotional resilience for teachers. Santos and Tan (2022) highlighted that a strong support system from family and the community helped teachers cope with emotional stress. Teachers who had such support were better equipped to handle the challenges of teaching and were more likely to maintain their emotional well-being. The encouragement and understanding from families and communities enabled teacher-volunteers to stay focused on their work and sustain their emotional energy throughout the National Learning Camp.

Insights the Participants Gained as Teacher-Volunteers in The National Learning Camp

Given the various challenges as volunteers in the national learning camp that influence the teacher’s roles, the participants shared valuable insights that researchers documented. These insights included enhanced teaching and leadership skills, personal growth and reflection, and broader understanding of education and social impact. Table 3 presents the themes and core ideas on the insights the participants gained as teacher-volunteers in the national learning camp. The researchers defined these themes, discussed thoroughly, enriched with core ideas, and supported with existing studies and literature.

Table 3. Major Themes and Core Ideas on The Insights the Participants Gained as Teacher-Volunteers in The National Learning Camp

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Enhanced Teaching and Leadership Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Classroom Management-T1 • Leadership Development-T2 • Adaptability to Different Learning Styles-T3 • Communication Skills-T4 • Problem-Solving Skills-T5
Personal Growth and Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Empathy for Students -T2 • Self-Awareness-T4

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience Building-T6 • Gratitude for Resources and Support-T3 • Sense of Accomplishment-T1
Broader Understanding of Education and Social Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of Socioeconomic Barriers -T5 • The Importance of Inclusive Education -T3 • Impact of Teacher Support on Student Success -T1 • Community Engagement -T6 • Appreciation for Educational Equity -T2

Enhanced Teaching and Leadership Skills

This reveals that participating as teacher-volunteers in the National Learning Camp provided opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching and leadership skills. Through their involvement, they gained valuable insights into innovative instructional strategies, classroom management, and collaborative practices. As a result, these experiences not only improved their pedagogical approaches but also strengthened their ability to lead and inspire both students and peers in their educational communities.

One of the most notable gains for teacher-volunteers was their improved ability to manage diverse classrooms effectively. Teacher 1 reflected;

“Handling students with different personalities and behaviors became easier as I learned strategies to create a structured and inclusive environment. I developed a firmer but fair approach, ensuring every student was engaged and respectful, even during challenging moments.”

Equally important, teachers stepped into leadership roles that strengthened their ability to mentor others. Teacher 2 remarked;

“The camp gave me opportunities to lead planning sessions and coordinate group activities. These experiences honed my decision-making skills and gave me the confidence to guide not just my students but also my peers.”

Volunteers also became more adept at adjusting their teaching methods to cater to various learning styles. Teacher 3 shared;

“Every student learns differently, and the camp forced me to think creatively. I experimented with visuals, hands-on activities, and storytelling to ensure every student stayed engaged and understood the lessons.”

In addition to instructional skills, teacher-volunteers significantly enhanced their communication abilities. Teacher 4 stated;

“I had to clearly convey instructions to students, coordinate with my co-teachers, and regularly report to administrators. This experience improved my ability to articulate ideas and resolve misunderstandings efficiently.”

Lastly, volunteers developed practical problem-solving abilities, particularly in addressing unexpected challenges. Teacher 5 noted;

“Resource shortages and tight schedules were constant hurdles, but I learned to think on my feet. Whether it was repurposing materials or reorganizing activities, I always found ways to keep things running smoothly.”

Improved classroom management was a cornerstone of effective teaching, as it created an Effective classroom management was a key component of successful teaching, as it established an environment conducive to learning. As Johnson and Smith (2023) pointed out, strategies emphasizing structure and inclusivity reduced behavioral issues while increasing student engagement. By balancing authority with empathy, teacher-volunteers acquired skills that resonated with modern educational practices, fostering a positive and productive classroom dynamic.

Moreover, leadership development emerged as a significant aspect of the teacher-volunteers’ experience, contributing to their overall professional growth. According to Thompson and Davis (2022), opportunities to assume leadership roles enhanced teachers' confidence and decision-making capabilities. During the camp, teacher-volunteers developed these traits, allowing them to inspire and mentor others effectively, which is indispensable for leadership roles in education.

Adaptability to diverse learning styles also stood out as a critical skill developed during the camp. As Miller and Carter (2022) observed, differentiated instruction is essential in addressing varied student needs. Teacher-volunteers demonstrated flexibility by employing innovative teaching methods, ensuring that all learners, regardless of their preferences, could thrive academically.

Additionally, communication skills played a pivotal role in the success of teacher-volunteers, both in the classroom and in collaboration with colleagues. Taylor and Brown (2023) highlighted that clear communication strengthens teacher-student interactions and enhances teamwork among educators. Through their involvement in the camp, teacher-volunteers refined these skills, building stronger relationships and facilitating effective collaboration.

Lastly, the ability to solve problems creatively proved indispensable for navigating the challenges encountered during the camp. Jackson and Moore (2022) emphasized that educators who tackle challenges effectively contribute to more adaptable and resilient learning environments. Teacher-volunteers exemplified this by addressing logistical issues with ingenuity, ensuring the uninterrupted delivery of quality education.

Personal Growth and Reflection

This illustrates that teacher-volunteers in the National Learning Camp experienced significant personal growth and reflection as a result of their involvement. Immersed in a dynamic and challenging environment, they were encouraged to reassess their values, teaching philosophies, and approaches to education. Consequently, their experiences fostered self-awareness, resilience, and a deeper sense of purpose, allowing them to grow both personally and professionally.

Reflecting on their journey, teachers reported gaining a heightened sense of empathy for their students. Teacher 2 shared;

“Seeing the unique struggles students face, especially in underprivileged areas, made me more compassionate and patient. I now prioritize understanding their circumstances before addressing behavioral or academic concerns.”

Moreover, the camp allowed teachers to engage in deep introspection. Teacher 4 remarked;

“This experience pushed me to assess my teaching methods and identify areas where I could improve. I realized I needed to be more flexible in my approach and open to adopting innovative strategies.”

The challenges faced during the National Learning Camp proved invaluable in building resilience among teachers. Teacher 6 recounted;

“There were moments of doubt and fatigue, but I learned to push through and find solutions. Every hurdle became an opportunity to grow stronger and more resourceful.”

Another key realization among volunteers was their newfound appreciation for existing resources and support systems. Teacher 3 stated;

“In the absence of certain facilities, I understood the value of what we usually take for granted. It made me more resourceful and grateful for the tools I have at my disposal.”

Finally, the fulfillment of making a meaningful contribution stood out as a defining experience for many teachers. Teacher 1 expressed;

“Helping students progress and witnessing their growth gave me an immense sense of pride. It reminded me why I chose this profession.”

The cultivation of empathy for students proved to be a critical element in fostering effective teaching practices. Salih and Abdullah (2022) argued that empathy enabled educators to address students' needs more holistically, promoting both academic and emotional growth. In the context of the National Learning Camp, exposure to diverse student experiences further enhanced teachers' ability to connect with and support learners, particularly those facing significant challenges.

In parallel with empathy, self-awareness served as a key catalyst for professional development. Hashim and Alonto (2023) highlighted that reflective practices allowed teachers to identify gaps in their skills and implement evidence-based strategies for improvement. By taking time to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, educators were able to adjust their methods to better meet the dynamic needs of their students, thus improving classroom outcomes.

On a related note, resilience building emerged as an essential competency for educators, especially in demanding environments. Marohombsar and Dimaporo (2022) emphasized that resilience empowered teachers to adapt to changing circumstances and maintain a positive outlook despite challenges. The experiences faced during the camp, such as working within resource constraints, played a significant role in nurturing this vital trait, enabling teachers to persevere and succeed.

Furthermore, a sense of gratitude for available resources and support systems contributed to a broader appreciation for the tools that enable effective teaching. Ayesha and Sarip (2022) pointed out that recognizing the value of existing resources encouraged resourcefulness and innovation. Teachers who developed this mindset were better able to make the most of the tools at their disposal, creating impactful learning experiences for their students.

Ultimately, a sense of accomplishment proved to be deeply linked to teachers' intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. Usman and Pangandaman (2023) argued that educators who derived fulfillment from their work were more likely to remain committed to their profession. These rewarding experiences reinforced their sense of purpose, strengthening their resolve to support student success.

Broader Understanding of Education and Social Impact

This emphasizes that the teacher-volunteers' experiences in the National Learning Camp led to a broader understanding of education and its social impact. Engaging with diverse learners and addressing community-specific challenges allowed them to see the far-reaching influence of their roles beyond the classroom. As a result, they developed a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of education, societal development, and the transformative power of their contributions as educators.

In reflecting on their experiences, volunteers noted that exposure to students' struggles opened their eyes to the significant socioeconomic barriers hindering educational attainment. Teacher 1 shared;

“Many students came to class hungry or lacked basic materials, which impacted their ability to learn. This taught me to approach teaching with empathy and flexibility.”

Furthermore, the camp underscored the value of inclusive education. Teacher 2 remarked;

“Adapting my lessons to cater to students with varied abilities and backgrounds helped me create an environment where every learner felt valued.”

Equally significant was the realization of the critical role teacher support plays in student success. Teacher 3 observed;

“By providing consistent guidance and encouragement, I saw students develop confidence and improve academically.”

Through active engagement, volunteers recognized the profound influence of community involvement on education. Teacher 4 noted;

“Collaborating with parents and local leaders brought resources and energy to the camp, creating a richer learning environment for students.”

Lastly, participants developed a deep appreciation for the principle of educational equity. Teacher 5 stated;

“Witnessing disparities in access to quality education motivated me to advocate for policies that prioritize marginalized learners.”

Understanding socioeconomic barriers was essential for crafting meaningful educational interventions. Macarayan and Buenavista (2022) pointed out that poverty and limited access to resources often forced students to prioritize survival over education, leading to significant learning gaps. In response, educators who recognized these challenges implemented strategies, such as offering flexible schedules and providing supplementary learning materials, to alleviate their effects.

Similarly, the importance of inclusive education was evident in its potential to address disparities among diverse learners. Abellanos and Nuñez (2023) advocated for classrooms that embraced diversity and promoted collaboration among students of varying abilities. By creating inclusive spaces, educators not only enhanced academic outcomes but also cultivated mutual respect and understanding among students.

Additionally, the positive impact of teacher support on student outcomes was widely acknowledged. Lumain and Tupas (2022) found that students who received regular encouragement and academic guidance from teachers were more likely to demonstrate higher self-esteem and improved performance. These findings resonated with the experiences of the volunteers, who saw firsthand the transformative effect of mentorship and care.

Furthermore, engaging the community as active partners in education proved to enrich the learning experience. Alkuino and Quiblat (2023) highlighted that community involvement brought additional resources and fostered a collective sense of responsibility for student success. Strengthening collaboration between schools and communities resulted in long-term educational improvements.

Nevertheless, appreciating educational equity required a dedicated effort to reduce systemic barriers. Duhaylungsod and Maglasang (2022) argued that policies promoting equal access to quality education were essential for empowering marginalized groups. Advocacy for equity ensured that every student, regardless of their background, had the opportunity to succeed in their educational journey.

V. CONCLUSION

The study comprehensively examined the diverse experiences of the national learning camp teacher-volunteers. The involvement of teacher-volunteers in the National Learning Camp significantly enhanced both their professional and personal growth. The camp provided a dynamic environment that allowed teachers to refine their teaching strategies, strengthen their leadership skills, and adapt their approaches to meet the diverse needs of students. Through hands-on experience, teacher-volunteers developed more effective classroom management techniques, communication abilities, and problem-solving skills, which aligned with best practices in modern education. These improvements not only benefited their individual teaching practices but also contributed to their leadership capacity, enabling them to inspire and mentor colleagues in their educational communities.

Furthermore, the camp fostered significant personal growth among the teacher-volunteers. It cultivated a deeper sense of empathy and self-awareness, encouraging educators to reflect on their teaching philosophies and approaches. The challenges faced during the camp, such as resource limitations and diverse student needs, helped build resilience and resourcefulness. This reflective process not only enhanced their professional development but also reaffirmed their sense of purpose, motivating them to continue contributing meaningfully to their students' academic and personal growth.

On the other hand, the National Learning Camp broadened the teacher-volunteers' understanding of the interconnectedness between education and social impact. By engaging with students from marginalized communities and observing the barriers to education, teachers developed a deeper appreciation for the role of educators in promoting equity and social change. This experience motivated them to advocate for more inclusive and accessible educational practices and policies. Ultimately, the camp empowered teacher-volunteers to make a lasting difference in their classrooms and communities, reinforcing the transformative power of education in addressing societal challenges.

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