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A survey on the oplan-baklas operation of elementary teachers in Cebu, Philippines

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Abstract

DepEd Order No. 21, or the Oplan-Baklas Operation, required schools to clear school grounds, classrooms, and walls of “unnecessary artwork, decorations, tarpaulin, and posters.” This study aims to determine the effects of the Oplan-Baklas Operation at elementary levels. The participants are 30 randomly selected elementary teachers in Cebu, Philippines. The results revealed that teachers find the Oplan-Baklas Operation favorable as it lessens expenses, time, and effort in crafting designs. The questionnaire was meticulously crafted to measure various dimensions of the Oplan-Baklas Operation’s impact. Content validity was established through expert reviews to ensure that the items accurately reflected the intended constructs of the teaching-learning process, cultural sensitivity, and educational environment enhancement. This research’s findings strongly support the assessment tool’s content and construct validity, suggesting its appropriateness for assessing stakeholders’ viewpoints on the Oplan-Baklas operation. However, the study did not address reliability testing, which represents a limitation. Thus, future researcher efforts should focus on evaluating the internal consistency to establish the stability and consistency of data gathering and eventually increase the legitimacy and consistency of the findings. More research is also needed in its extended implementation to have in-depth results on the topic.

Keywords: Oplan-Baklas Operation, Elementary Level, DepEd Order No. 21, Teaching-Learning Process, Limitation, Decorations

1. Introduction

Fostering a conducive atmosphere is the initiative of the Oplan-Baklas Operation 2023 to promote functional space. This mandate pertains to the removal of any classroom decorations. Thus, the learning environment is equally important as the lesson being taught. In line with this, the DepEd Philippines (DepEd) issued Order No. 21 series of 2023, enumerating the implementation guidelines for Brigada Eskwela 2023^[11]. According to the Department of Education (2023), the Brigada Eskwela (BE) is a nationwide school maintenance program that engages all education stakeholders to contribute their time, efforts, and resources in ensuring that public schools are conducive enough for students' back-to-school. It is a six-day event highlighting "Bayanihan," or unity, of parents, teachers, students, alumni, and civic groups.

It has been discovered that a class that is friendly and dynamic promotes highly effective learning and classroom situations differ in many ways (Cortes, 2022)^[6]. Case studies by Carter and Hughes (2022)^[4] illustrate how personalized classroom design can enhance motivation and create a positive learning atmosphere by incorporating students' interests and preferences. For example in math importance of learning materials, This process employs memorizing formulas and concepts such as visualizing words in their mind to recall terms, writing the information they need to remember, reading their notes aloud while studying, and representing concepts with symbols such as drawing so that they can remember them, Llagoso, G. T. (2017)^[20]. The learning styles model says that individual differences in learning styles are conditioned by biological and environmental factors. By using teaching and educational materials that suit student learning styles, educators can improve academic performance. A former student of Cebu Normal University cited that “The learning styles model says that individual differences in learning styles are conditioned by biological and environmental factors.

By using teaching and educational materials that suit student learning styles, educators can improve academic performance.” The Oplan-Baklas Operation garnered much attention from teachers, students, and society. Researchers like Fisher et al. (2014) have investigated the potential distractions of excessive classroom decorations. They found that overly cluttered walls with irrelevant decorations can reduce focus and academic performance. A study by Fisher et al. (2014) suggests that students in minimally decorated classrooms demonstrated better on-task behavior and learning outcomes than those in highly decorated classrooms. The fundamental instruments that determine the quality of education given are instructional materials. It aids in simplifying education as well as making learning practical and understandable to the learners (Onyia, 2013) ^[18]. The research of Schultz and Johnson (2019) ^[22] explores the benefits of involving students in the design of their classroom spaces, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning environment. According to Adoniou (2017) ^[1], a comprehensive UK research study found that natural light (but not direct sunlight), good air quality, right-size chairs and desks, and the flexibility to change the layout for different learning activities correlate with high student learning outcomes. On the other hand, the same study found that classrooms with too many displays and colors harm learning outcomes. They also discovered that classrooms with no displays or colors result in poor learning outcomes. Thus, teachers are the ones who can better determine the appropriate tools and the appropriate environment that students need.

In the national context, the teachers have different views and opinions concerning the so-called “Oplan-Baklas Operation” by the Department of Education (DepEd). It is final; the DepEd orders schools to remove everything from classroom walls. The DepEd issued a direct order to remove everything; artwork, ornaments, canvas, and posters are all needless. On Saturday, the Teacher's Dignity Coalition urged school heads and teachers to “not take too literally” the Department of Education's (DepEd) order that prohibits classroom decorations, saying this only pertains to unnecessary posters. In the News article by Job Manahan (2023) ^[13], Benjo Basas, the coalition's national chairperson, said DepEd Order No. 21 did not specify anything aside from the removal of insignificant and oversized posters and tarpaulins in classrooms, some of which might involve ads. According to Wong and Chapman (2022), institutions and learners depend on student satisfaction. In addition to his statement, Basas said, “Teachers should disagree once important visual aids are asked to be removed, most especially those that they believe could greatly benefit students' learning. Research by Secuya and Abadiano (2022) ^[23] supports that the success or failure of attaining learning and teaching objectives in the classroom is mostly dependent on the teacher, who plays a pivotal role. Thus, a teacher's job is not just to instruct, train, and educate pupils; it also involves observing how each student is responding to teachings in the classroom.

In a statement by POA News, Vice President Duterte said that “the order is what it is.” “Take out everything on the wall. Let learners focus on their studies. Classrooms and schools should be clean and functional,” Duterte added. With this order, some teachers do not agree with the fact that they believe that in teaching children, it is essential that they have something to look forward to around the classroom and that it makes the children feel excited to go to their respective

classrooms. They believe that educational platforms on the wall aim for the students to always remember and not forget easily about their lessons. According to Cortes (2022) ^[6], in addition to aiding with memory, materials support the learner's understanding of what is taught mentally. They also improve the comprehension and realism of teaching and learning. On the other hand, some teachers agree with this matter because decorations will only add to their expenses and assume that this will buy them more time; instead of decorating the classroom, they will use this time for other beneficial activities.

The Department of Education should conduct assessments and gather teacher feedback to discover areas for growth and improvement. To close these gaps, sometimes legislative adjustments are required, with coordination among the Department of Education to increase the effectiveness of education initiatives. No published studies state that teachers agree or disagree with the Oplan-Baklas operation. Since this Oplan-Baklas operation is new, existing studies have primarily focused on the legal implications, policy frameworks, and procedures of how this Oplan-Baklas worked. Numerous studies have been presented; however, there is a conspicuous absence of comprehensive studies that investigate the complex perspectives of teachers involved in implementing this operation mandated by DepEd. This study leaves a critical void in understanding how teachers in Cebu City/Consolacion at the elementary grade level view Oplan-Baklas regarding its effectiveness, impact on the educational setting, and educational goals. Hence, this study aims to conduct surveys to assess teachers' perspectives on the “Oplan-Baklas Operation” mandated by the DepEd.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

According to Watson Roger (2015), quantitative research encompasses a range of methods concerned with the systematic investigation of social phenomena by using numerical or statistical data. Moreover, quantitative research involves assuming and measuring that the phenomena from the study can be measured. A quantitative strategy was used for the study. It entailed quantitative data collection techniques to grasp teachers' thoughts about the Oplan-Baklas operation thoroughly. This way, the researchers knew how teachers reacted to that matter.

2.2. Sampling Design, Respondents, and Environments

The voluntary response sample was a type of non-probability sampling in which it was made up of self-chosen participants. The respondents in that study were the teachers in elementary grades, totaling 30 respondents. The researchers asked the elementary teachers in Cebu City/Consolacion Cebu if they would answer the survey questions. The use of voluntary response sampling ensured that teachers in elementary school could provide insightful responses since they were affected by the factors mentioned above.

2.3. Research Instrument

In this study, the researcher employed closed-ended quantitative research using Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) to specify the respondents' level of agreement regarding the Oplan-Baklas Operation. A twenty (30) item researcher-made questionnaire, crafted after a systematic and thorough literature review, was used to evaluate teachers' satisfaction

with implementing the Oplan-Baklas Operation. The statements were comprehensively crafted to measure the effectiveness and gather personal anecdotes from the teachers about the implementation in educational settings and any challenges they may have encountered in elementary school implementation. Using a Likert scale, this evaluated the strength and direction of elementary teacher respondents' sentiments regarding implementing the Oplan-Baklas Operation.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

First, the Research Ethics Committee required approval for the gathering procedure. Second, the researcher formally requested permission from the school principal to survey, following the rules and regulations. Following that, the researchers distributed a survey questionnaire to the teachers. Finally, the researchers compiled the results after responding to the survey questionnaire. The research instrument was a questionnaire that included closed-ended questions about the Oplan-Baklas Operation. A quantitative strategy was used to analyze closed-ended questions, measuring the effectiveness of the Oplan-Baklas Operation at the elementary level.

2.5. Data Analysis

A quantitative strategy was utilized to measure the effectiveness of the Oplan-Baklas Operation at the elementary level by evaluating closed-ended questions. Descriptive statistics were employed as a collection of techniques for summarizing quantitative data. They offer straightforward and transparent overviews of a dataset's essential characteristics, such as measures of central tendency (e.g., mean, median, mode). As a result, the quantitative strategy was used in this research with careful consideration, ensuring the proper interpretation of the findings.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

Ensuring the protection of the respondents was the top

priority in the process. In this research study, several ethical considerations were taken into account. First, all participants were provided with comprehensive and informed consent, emphasizing their voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, the purpose of conducting this research study, the procedures and objectives involved, and their rights and privacy as participants. To protect the privacy of the research participants, all the data gathered was kept confidential, rigorously protected throughout the study, securely stored, and accessible only to the research team. Participants were referred to using pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. In this study, compensation for the participants was included, where the survey respondents were given 20 pesos worth of Gcash for their time and effort in allowing the researcher to conduct research. This acknowledged the extra workload and dedication required for the research project. Furthermore, the research underwent ethical guidelines, reviews, and regulations. The research protocol was submitted for ethical evaluation and approval to the appropriate ethics committee to guarantee adherence to ethical standards and protection of the participant's rights and welfare.

3. Results and Discussions

This chapter of the study presents the analysis and interpretation of data about the survey on the Oplan-Baklas operation of elementary teachers in Cebu, Philippines. The primary purpose of this study is to conduct surveys to assess teachers' perspectives on the "Oplan-Baklas Operation" mandated by the DepEd. The gathered data is shown and analyzed through tables, which highlight three factors: (1) Awareness of the Oplan Baklas Operation, (2) Effectiveness and Impact, and (3) Concerns, Influence, and Support. Descriptive statistics was used to interpret the results in quantitative data, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Awareness of the Oplan Baklas Operation

Statement	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Interpretation
1. I am aware of what the Oplan-Baklas operation entails.	4.8	0.407	4	5	Strongly Agree
2. I understand the objectives and goals of the Oplan-Baklas operation.	4.63	0.556	3	5	Strongly Agree
3. I am aware of the effects and implications of Oplan Baklas on the surrounding area.	4.57	0.626	3	5	Strongly Agree
4. I've had enough training or information about how Oplan Baklas operates for my work as a teacher.	4.2	0.884	2	5	Agree
5. I actively seek out information about the Oplan Baklas operation to stay informed.	4.53	0.571	3	5	Strongly Agree
6. I effectively removed unnecessary classroom decorations	4.63	0.556	3	5	Strongly Agree
7. I aim to ensure a clean and organized classroom environment through the Oplan-Baklas operation	4.6	0.675	3	5	Strongly Agree
8. I implemented the Oplan-Baklas operation to prevent any distractions in the classroom	4.47	0.817	1	5	Strongly Agree
9. I believe that the Oplan-Baklas operation helps learners focus on their academic performance	4.1	0.932	2	5	Agree
10. I recognize that the Oplan-Baklas operation may sometimes hinder students' learning processes	3.77	1.040	1	5	Agree
Overall Mean	4.43	0.71	1	5	Strongly Agree

	Value	Range
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00-1.80
Disagree	2	1.81-2.60
Neither/Nor Agree	3	2.61-3.40
Agree	4	3.41-4.20
Strongly Agree	5	4.21-5.00

The awareness of the Oplan-Baklas Operation offers numerous significant insights shown in the survey findings with the elementary teachers. For the first factor, it is evident that elementary teachers are knowledgeable about the operation "Oplan-Baklas" because of their high mean scores, which show that they know its goals, effects on the environment, and active efforts to learn more. Johnson and Smith (2020) ^[14] found that teachers actively seeking information about a new educational initiative demonstrated greater flexibility and willingness to engage in professional development. Also, Pillane and Jennings (2018) ^[24] highlight the role of teacher leaders in shaping classroom practices and promoting shared goals. There was a wide variety of opinions

on the amount of training or knowledge offered to elementary teachers, with an incredibly high standard deviation. Most respondents agreed with the operations objectives and the significance of keeping classrooms clean and organized. This alignment among teachers is crucial for successfully implementing educational initiatives (Darling-Hammond, 2017) ^[8]. This implies that even though some educators believe they are sufficiently prepared, others can be unsure about their level of training. To implement Oplan-Baklas successfully, educational institutions must address this disparity and ensure that all elementary instructors acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.

Table 2: Effectiveness and Impact

Statement	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Interpretation
1. I recognize the Oplan-Baklas operation that promotes responsibility among students regarding their surroundings.	4.27	0.583	1	5	Strongly Agree
2. I agree that the removal of educational materials like posters during the Oplan-Baklas operation hampers teaching efforts.	3.9	0.923	2	5	Agree
3. I believe Oplan-Baklas operation has a positive impact on the environment by reducing visual clutter, because too much visual clutter can make a space feel messy.	4.37	0.669	3	5	Strongly Agree
4. I agree that Oplan-Baklas by DepEd has negatively affected students' academic performance.	2.9	1.322	1	5	Neither
5. I believe that the resources spent on Oplan Baklas operation could be better allocated to educational needs.	4.07	1.048	2	5	Agree
Overall Mean	3.90	0.91	1	5	Agree

	Value	Range
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00-1.80
Disagree	2	1.81-2.60
Neither/Nor Agree	3	2.61-3.40
Agree	4	3.41-4.20
Strongly Agree	5	4.21-5.00

For the second factor, the effectiveness and influence of the said implementation of the Oplan-Baklas Operation, results showed that teachers often acknowledge and agree with its possible advantages, such as encouraging student accountability and diminishing visual clutter in learning environments. This confirms the findings of Smith et al. (2018) that there is a positive influence between the implementation of organization-focused interventions and teachers' recognition of the potential benefits, such as enhanced student accountability and reduced visual distractions in educational settings. Additionally, Johnson and Brown (2017) found that teachers' support initiatives contribute to a more organized and conducive learning environment. The sentiment echoed by teachers regarding the hindrance posed by the removal of instructional resources aligns with existing literature emphasizing the importance of a conducive learning environment. Numerous studies, including the work of Smith et al. (2018) and Johnson and Brown (2017), have underscored the negative impact of

distractions on student concentration and subsequent learning outcomes. The consensus among educators regarding the potential benefits of interventions like the Oplan-Baklas Operation, such as reducing visual clutter and promoting student accountability, further supports the notion that streamlining classroom resources can contribute to an environment more conducive to effective teaching and improved learning outcomes. This collective body of evidence highlights the significance of considering teachers' perspectives in educational interventions to optimize the learning environment. This implies that valuing the needs of elementary school teachers is crucial, and aligning the educational intervention with their perspective is essential to reinforce a positive focus toward good outcomes. Programs like the Oplan-Baklas Operation, which aims to improve students' responsibility and reduce visual distractions, should be implemented with teachers to ensure their effective contribution to developing a positive and energetic learning environment.

Table 3: Concerns, Influence, and Support

Statement	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Interpretation
1. I am concerned about the potential negative consequences of the Oplan Baklas operation in my community.	3.9	1.062	1	5	Agree
2. I approved that the community members should have a say in the decision-making process of Oplan Baklas operation.	3.8	1.186	1	5	Agree
3. I agree that the Oplan-Baklas operation should prioritize the preservation of public spaces and the environment.	4.33	0.615	3	5	Agree
4. I have environmental concerns about how construction and materials are disposed of since classroom walls should be free from unusual posters	4.2	0.847	1	5	Agree
5. I feel that teachers' opinions are taken into consideration when planning Oplan Baklas operations.	4.2	0.925	1	5	Agree
Overall Mean	4.09	0.93	1	5	Agree

	Value	Range
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00-1.80
Disagree	2	1.81-2.60
Neither/Nor Agree	3	2.61-3.40
Agree	4	3.41-4.20
Strongly Agree	5	4.21-5.00

For the third factor, the survey's results also show a few concerns and influences from educators. Teachers raised worries about potential detrimental effects on their communities, highlighting the necessity of rigorous planning and community engagement. Most teachers concur that the operation should prioritize protecting the environment and public areas, consistent with a broader awareness of environmental issues. Most educators agreed that their input is considered when Oplan-Baklas activities are planned, which indicates good cooperation between educators and community members. Darling-Hammond and Smith (2020)^[9] concur on the role of educators in modeling environmental responsibility for students. Concerns regarding how building materials and waste are disposed of point to the need for more environmentally friendly alternatives. Teachers act as role models for their students. They demonstrate the value of environmental responsibility by engaging in eco-friendly behaviors such as proper waste disposal, recycling, reducing energy use, and using sustainable materials. Teachers may advocate for environmentally friendly practices in their educational institutions and communities. They can work with administrators, local governments, and stakeholders to implement policies encouraging sustainable choices. Teachers and other stakeholders' viewpoints and concerns should be considered when developing educational policies and environmental programs since they are crucial to the success of projects like Oplan-Baklas. This implies that the focus on environmental preservation and community engagement emphasized how important it is to approach educational projects holistically and consider their broader effects.

4. Limitations of the Study

The questionnaire was meticulously crafted to measure the effectiveness of the elementary-level Oplan-Baklas Operation. The development of the 20-item questionnaire was validated using face and content validity. Face validity examines or focuses more on the appropriateness of the construction of the questionnaire than the validity of the actual content or information in the questionnaire. On the other hand, Content Validity is established by an expert who reviewed the questionnaire to ensure that the items accurately

reflected the intended constructs of the teaching-learning process, cultural sensitivity of the differences and similarities of the respondents involved in this study, and educational environment enhancement. The findings of this research study strongly support the assessment tool's content and construct validity, suggesting its appropriateness for assessing stakeholders' viewpoints on the Oplan-Baklas Operation. Although the study meticulously evaluated the validity of the questionnaire design through both face validity and content validity, it did not undergo the examination for reliability. Researchers must be transparent about this limitation to ensure a clear understanding of the study's boundaries or limitations. Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that the study's limitation, as highlighted, is the absence of reliability testing.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Teachers who supported the mandate saw it as a step in the right direction toward improving education in general and valued the emphasis on getting rid of unnecessary decorations on the wall. They support a thorough assessment before the removal of specific resources, emphasizing the importance of open discussion with local communities and educators to resolve any issues that could arise throughout the process. Teachers, in agreement, highlight the initiative's benefits while stressing how crucial it is to preserve each school's distinct identity. Teachers who objected to this mandate raised legitimate worries about the initiative's possible consequences. Their concerns are centered on removing components essential to schools' identities, which could upend established learning settings. The discord reflects a broader call for a more nuanced and context-specific approach, urging the DepEd to consider the diverse backgrounds of schools and the intricate tapestry of their communities. The process sparked concern over the complex process of guaranteeing accurate and inclusive material while still protecting free expression and varied viewpoints. While recognizing the importance of maintaining a secure and conducive learning environment, these educators advocate for a more collaborative dialogue that includes teachers and local communities in decision-making processes. It is recommended that more research study is needed in the more

extended implementation of the Oplan-Baklas Operation to have more in-depth results and reflective responses from the respondents of the said research topic.

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