

# Looking at the no child left behind policy: the implementers' perspectives

## Abstract

This qualitative-phenomenological research aimed to determine the perspectives of the teacher-implementers about the No Child Left Behind Policy in Bato National High School. Participants of the study were three TLE teachers and five teachers from different courses. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling. Using the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, the researchers found out that the teachers had positive and negative perceptions of the policy; it aided low-performing and at-risk students. However, the participants indicated that students became dependent and lazy; also they mentioned that unprepared students passed; hence, the program was unfair. The school administration needs to look into the teachers-implementers view on the NCLB for its improvement.

**Keywords:** NCLB of 2010, teachers, child, implementation, intervention, perception

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## Introduction

No Child Left Behind is a policy about education for all children. This act was adopted by the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines. However, despite of endeavor to educate all children, statistics show that the International Test Standard results consistently show Filipino students lagging way behind practically everybody else in the world.<sup>1</sup> In addition, due to the magnitude of the act, the pressure on teachers has increased to immeasurable proportions.<sup>2</sup> Further, evidence shows that the act has not only negatively affected perceptions of teachers' cooperation but positively affected feelings of classroom control.<sup>3</sup>

The significance behind the No Child Left Behind is to guarantee the protection of a child's fundamental right to quality education. This act seeks to promote compulsory education for children of compulsory school age, providing only for restricted exceptional education, guiding government units, especially at the level of Barangay, to be directly engaged in controlling the education of the children under their jurisdiction, and the Department of Education will provide the required curriculum for the development of compulsory education.<sup>4</sup> Barnhart<sup>5</sup> considers the No Child Left Behind as a powerful, sweeping, and controversial law that addressed many aspects of public education.

The Philippines government's most significant legacy to its people is to provide them with quality education. Hence, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2010.<sup>4</sup> It is an act that ensures every Filipino's constitutional right to quality education is realized. It is proclaimed a state policy to safeguard and encourage citizens' right to quality education and to take adequate measures to make such education available to all.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, this act provides financial assistance to local educational agencies serving areas with high concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs.<sup>7</sup> The act allows every Filipino child a chance to be schooled.<sup>6</sup>

In the mapping conducted among the teachers of Bato National High School, Davao del Sur, The Philippines, the researchers found out that they were already fully aware of the No Child Left Behind Policy of the Philippine government. They reiterated that they needed to implement the policy because the Department of Education had

made it an order. Thus, the Bato National High School was a good locale to conduct this study.

Several researches were already conducted about the No Child Left Behind. Branhart<sup>5</sup> focused on students with disabilities and how the policy is being catered to by academic institutions. Dee and Jacob<sup>8</sup> dealt with how the new accountability systems developed in response to NCLB influenced students' achievement, school finances, and measures of schools and teachers' practices. Conversely, Meier<sup>9</sup> blatantly concluded that the NCLB was not a promising program for the public school system. While Giroux and Schmidt<sup>10</sup> said that NCLB brought unprecedented challenges which concerned more with the imperatives of the marketplace.

This study was conducted to explore the views of the local implementers of the NCLB based on their experiences. The results of the study may serve as an assessment that could give essential insights to the Department of Education for possible improvement of the implementing guidelines of the NCLB.

## Objectives of the study

This study aimed to explore the views of the teacher-implementers of the No Child Left Behind Policy of the Department of Education. Specifically, this study was conducted:

- 1) To describe the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Policy.
- 2) To determine the teachers' views on the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Policy.
- 3) To determine the significant experiences of the teachers-implementers which are worth sharing with others.

## Scope and limitation of the study

This involved study selected teachers who were teaching for at least five years at Bato National High School, Davao del Sur. These teachers were implementers of the NCLB Policy. Due to the limited number of participants in this study, the results could not generalize the entire teachers-implementers of the NCLB. Future researchers

may conduct another research using the quantitative method to corroborate or challenge the findings of this study.

## Methodology

### Research design

This study used the qualitative-phenomenology approach. Marshall and Rossman<sup>11</sup> mentioned that qualitative research is typically used for social sciences-related studies in the realization of the natural world that depend on multifaceted reasoning. Brinkman<sup>12</sup> said that qualitative is appropriate if the study describes personal confessions, opinions, narratives, and reflections of individuals; and San Jose and Mortos<sup>13</sup> pointed out that qualitative is used when the study looked into the participants' suggestions. Moreover, phenomenology is commonly used when researchers wanted to find out about participants' encounters and insights;<sup>14</sup> listened to personal anecdotes;<sup>15</sup> determined the important meaning of the experience;<sup>16,17</sup> explored the individuals' view of their environments;<sup>18</sup> and investigated the worth of the experienced of individuals.<sup>19</sup> This qualitative phenomenology was appropriate to this study because it explored the teachers-implementers' personal views concerning the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Policy.

Additionally, the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used to gather essential information from the teacher-implementers. The teacher-implementers were grouped into four. Each group was composed of two members. Powell et al.<sup>20</sup> pointed out that an FGD should only compose of chosen individuals who can provide comments, opinions, and views, from their personal experiences, about the topic under investigation. All study participants in this study were given chance to time speak and enter-act with the other focus group members and with the researchers.

### Research instrument

A researcher-made and validated interview guide questions were used to obtain the essential information from the teachers. The questions were based on the objectives of the study. DBM and San Jose<sup>13</sup> mentioned that interview guide questions were usually utilized in a focus group to 'cull information' pertinent to the study.

### Research participants

The participants of this study were eight purposely selected teachers from Bato National High School, Davao del Sur. These teachers were chosen because they were implementers of the NCLB for more than five years. They already experiences in dealing with students and they knew the NCLB.

### Gathering of information

First was asking permission. The researchers visited Bato National High School and asked permission from the school principal, as well as from the teachers to conduct a study on NCLB.

The second was the formulation of research questions. The researchers formulated interview-guide questions. Three main questions were formulated and each main question had probe questions. The questions were given to three expert validators for face and internal validity. The evaluation obtained a rating of 4.0 which had a verbal description of very good.

The third was the conduct of a Focus Group Discussion. Before the conduct of the interviews, the researchers observed the interview protocols. Also, the participants were asked to sign the informed consent. Moreover, the teachers were asked to hide their identities

by choosing their pseudonyms. Then, the eight teachers were divided into four focus groups. Each focus group was interviewed separately. This was done to maintain consistency and partiality of the answers.

Finally was the analysis of information. The recorded information gathered from the focus groups was transcribed and given to a data analyst for analysis.

## Results and discussion

The findings of the study were based on the gathered information from the Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The frequency of responses of the teachers was considered General if it obtained 50% and above; Typical if it garnered 21% and above but not more than 49%; while Variant if it obtained less than 20%. Unlike quantitative analysis, the thematic analysis may formulate several themes from one objective of the study. Hence, there may have more themes than the objectives of the study (Table 1).

**Table 1** Thematic analysis and core ideas of the NCLB

Theme	Frequency of response	Core ideas
Procedures in the implementation of NCLB	General	visiting the family of students
	Typical	conducting interventions through remediation monitoring the progress of students
School improvements brought by NCLB	General	changing the image of the school decreasing the number of dropouts
	Variant	increasing enrollees
The benefits of NCLB	Typical	giving extra help to struggling learners
Challenges of NCLB implementation	General	adding burdens to the teachers causing dependency on the part of the students
	Typical	students procrastinate
	Variant	unprepared students are passed
Relevant experiences	Typical	measuring teacher's patience giving students a chance to continue

**Source:** Information analyzed by the data analyst.

### Procedures in the implementation of NCLB

All participants mentioned that they visited those students who had low academic performances. They talked to the parents to inquire about the problem of their child. On the other hand, other teachers conducted interventions for struggling learners. They conducted modular lessons, attendance monitoring, and bilingual teaching. Further, teachers also strictly monitored the progress of each student.

Kilgore<sup>21</sup> mentioned that a home visit is one way to bridge the gap between the school and home for students, families, and teachers. On the other hand, Dela Rosa<sup>22</sup> pointed out that it is also a way for the teacher to visit the student's home in the hope of increasing

connections between school staff and students in their community. Further, the Department of Education is mandating that all public high schools should organize and provide remedial instruction programs to increase the chances that all their students complete high school with sufficient mastery of its coverage.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, Wright and Wright<sup>24</sup> reiterated that No Child Left Behind requires that each child and each group of children (broken out by race, income level, special education status, and English proficiency) have their progress measured every year and the results will be reported to parents for each child and to the public for each group.

### School improvement brought by NCLB

It was very evident that NCLB changed the image of the school. The number of dropouts decreased, and the school personnel became understandable, considerate, and patient in reaching out to students who belonged to Student-At-Risk of Dropping Out (SARDO). Unfortunately, the teachers felt that the quality of education decreased because the level of learning competency was lowered to cater to the struggling students. Variantly, few participants observed that the number of enrollees every school year increased due to the implementation of the NCLB.

The No Child Left Behind law has brought sweeping changes to schools in an attempt to increase the number of students getting tutoring.<sup>25</sup> NCLB also increased the average school district expenditure by nearly \$600 per student. It also supports standards-based education reform to set high standards and establish goals to improve education.<sup>26</sup> Ginicola<sup>27</sup> stated that the re-authorization of NCLB should provide incentives or rewards for schools that meet process and product goals. Moreover, Timbal<sup>28</sup> averred that the number of dropouts was lower in past years, while various groups maintained that one student forced to quit is one too many.

Typically, the teachers mentioned that they gave extra help to those students who had a low academic performance. Constant monitoring of the student's academic performance was observed. Since NCLB became law, every region has upgraded its monitoring of academic performance.<sup>29</sup> In addition, teachers needed opportunities to sit down with their coordinators and altogether look at the student data such as results of standardized tests, grades, teacher reports, and student work to determine the students who needed additional support, and what exactly they needed.<sup>30</sup>

### Complication of NCLB implementation

Generally, the teachers mentioned that the NCLB added a burden and gave additional tasks to them. They also said that they needed to exert extra effort; hence, their time for family was shortened. Moreover, some teachers observed that the NCLB made the students dependent on them. Students procrastinate and were overconfident that they would pass even if they would not participate in class. On the other hand, a few teachers also said that the students would still pass the subject even if they did not deserve to get a passing mark.

Despite the promising concept of the NCLB, it also has its loopholes. Its top priority is to emphasize struggling students; however, these same students show a lack of interest in schooling despite the offer of a positive school climate. Mertler found that NCLB is having negative impacts on instructional and curricular practices, including higher levels of stress for teachers. The pressure of NCLB adversely affected teachers' morale.

Holbein and Ladd<sup>31</sup> pointed out that the NCLB pressures students to show up at school. For Bell and Meinelt<sup>32</sup> the NCLB left students lazy and unprepared for college. Aleph said that the teachers let the

struggling students pass because they wanted to inflate graduation. He reiterated that NCLB has an honorable intention but in the long run, it leaves students unprepared for the modern workplace. The National Taipei Teachers College<sup>6</sup> observed that much of teachers' time is given to those students who were less motivated and less able. According to Wong,<sup>33</sup> the NCLB results in fewer students failing.

### Considerations on significant experiences

Typically, the teachers mentioned that they extended their patience and perseverance in the implementation of the NCLB, especially for those slow and lazy students so that they could make difference in their students' lives. Moreover, the teachers gave students a chance to continue with their studies by letting them comply with the activities that they missed. The teachers also said that reaching out to their struggling students made them feel relevant to the lives of their students. Hence, despite the challenges they encountered, they remained faithful to their oath, to help students achieve their own goals and successes.

Teaching is one of the most complicated jobs today. It demands broad knowledge of the subject matter, curriculum, and standards; enthusiasm, a caring attitude, and a love of learning; knowledge of discipline and classroom management techniques; and a desire to make a difference in the lives of young people. With all these qualities required, it's no wonder that it's hard to find great teachers.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, a good teacher will possess this understanding, and be willing to take the time to reach those students who don't display strong aptitudes in certain subjects. Such a level of concern for the students is an attribute only achieved if a teacher is patient.<sup>35</sup> Kelly<sup>36</sup> said that students' success should be a teacher's number one priority. For some students, success will be getting a good grade. For others, it might mean increased involvement in class. Teachers can help all students attain their full potential, regardless of the way they measure success.

## Summary and conclusion

### Summary

The main objectives of the study were to explore the views of the teachers-implementors of the No Child Left Behind Policy in Bato National High School, Davao del Sur. Based on the analysis and interpretations of the data gathered, the following findings were drawn thematically. The implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), brought changes to the school. In terms of the numbers of enrollees, every school year the enrollees increased and the number of dropouts decreased due to its goal of zero dropouts. The school itself provided interventions to every student who had low performance or the called Student's at Risk of Dropping Out (SARDO) such as home visitation, the teacher visited the parents to inquire about the student's problem; modular lesson; remediation; bilingual teaching; and regularly monitoring the student's progress. The teachers' views about the No Child Left Behind were that it added a burden to them. They also considered it an additional task. In addition, the more considerations and interventions they provided the more the students became dependent. Students were confident that they could pass and move to the next level even if they were unprepared. The significance of teachers' experience was that they needed to extend more of their patience in handling the struggling students. Teachers hold on to their oath of helping each student despite the challenges they encountered.<sup>37</sup>

### Conclusion

The No Child Left Behind policy is about education for all. This law caters to those students who are at risk of dropping from

school. However, despite the policy's good promise, its negative aspects remain to be looked into. It becomes an additional load to the teachers not only in the preparations of the materials but also time and patience. Moreover, the policy makes the students dependent, relaxed, procrastinate, and over-confident because of the attention given to them. It implies that the implementation of the NCLB needs to be revisited and the teachers-implementers views and experiences may be considered. Teachers remain faithful to their oath; however, they too are humans and have limitations. Their views on any implemented programs are worth listening to.

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None.

## Conflicts of interest

The author declares that they have no direct or indirect conflicts.

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