LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN HANDLING MAINSTREAM CLASSES: TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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ABSTRACT

This research determined the lived experiences of Senior High School Teachers handling Mainstream Classes at Babag National High School- Senior High School during the school year 2019-2020 as bases for a proposed teacher development plan. Babag National High School Senior High School Department implemented mainstream classes since the start of the K12 curriculum where teachers have less to no background in handling learners with special educational needs. The implementation of the class is in response to the Department's "Education for All" and observation of inclusions. The respondents were eight (8) Senior High School teachers handling mainstream classes. The study investigated the experiences of the teachers in their classes in terms of lesson planning, delivery of instruction, assessment of learning, and monitoring and coaching. Also, further investigated on challenges, difficulties and best practices of these teachers in handling their mainstream classes. The research employed quantitative-qualitative design where data were treated using Mean Deviation and Thematic Content Analysis. The findings show that teachers provided less independent and guided practice, they modify lessons, but they have difficulties in associating these tasks to their condition, they should explain content of test material first before students perform task, and they have no time for parent's conference for students' progress. Their challenges deal on teaching pedagogies and lack of time. Most respondents' best practices consist of task listing and personalized approach. Thus, teachers have varied lived experiences in handling mainstream class which are challenging for them. It is recommended to implement the proposed teacher development plan addressing areas of concerns in handling mainstream class.

Keywords: Lived Experiences, Mainstream Class, Senior High School

1. Introduction

The new trend of 21st-century education does not focus only on technology-integrated classes. It also focuses on giving access to quality education for all. This includes learners of all types.

The Department of Education Philippines issued a Memorandum No. 32, s. 2017 entitled "Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy" stated the commitment in integrating the concept and rules on gender equality, gender sensitivity, non-discrimination, and human rights leading the way for inclusive education.

Inclusive Education as defined by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2016) means the fundamental right to education, a   process in removing educational barriers, and promoting school reform on culture, policy, and practice to all students (as cited by Schuelka, 2018).

The need for a strong culture of inclusion is a challenge for most learning institutions. There are certain considerations to develop such a vision. Some suggested on whole school community involvement (McMaster, 2013), communicated committed across the school and into the community (Kugelmass, 2006), and changing the lens in terms of policies and practices in describing inclusive education (Maria-Luise Braunsteiner & Susan Mariano-Lapidus, 2014).

1.1 Call for Inclusivity in Senior High School

Throughout the country, numerous special education centers cater to the basic education of learners with special needs. However, they focus mostly on the elementary and junior high school training. However, when the education platform of junior high school added with two more years leading for Senior High School training, the learners with special education needs were lightly considered based on the different academic and technological-vocational, and livelihood (TVL) tracks offered and based also on the teacher qualifications needed for Senior High School Faculty mainly focusing on content and enhancing skills of the learners ready for employment, higher education, entrepreneurship, and skills development.

On the first-year implementation of Senior High School, the school accepted four learners with special educational needs taking skill-related courses. By following the departments' mandate, Education for All, the teachers handle these learners even with limited backgrounds.

The previous scenario involves support from the Special Education Junior High school teachers. They are requested to assist Senior High School teachers in making instructional materials, addressing lesson content, and assessing learner's performance easily without hampering other learners.

Moreover, the school year 2018-2019, becomes a challenging task for senior high school teachers. Great numbers of varied learners with special educational needs are enrolled in different senior high school tracks. These are General Academic Strand (GAS), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), and Technological-Vocational and Livelihood (TVL) majoring in Cookery and Contact Center Servicing where less assistance from the Special Education teachers in the Junior High school because of migration of some teachers abroad. As a result, Senior High school teachers are on full track of these learners under a set-up of inclusion.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to determine the lived experiences of Senior High School Teachers handling Mainstream Classes for the school year 2019-2020. It sought to: 1.) identify the profile of the learners with special education needs and teachers handling mainstream class 2.) determine experiences of these teachers in handling mainstream classes in terms of lesson planning, delivery of instruction, assessment of learning, and monitoring and coaching 3.) describe challenges and difficulties encountered while handling these learners 4.) present best practices in handling mainstream class 5.) proposed teacher development plan.

2. Methods

The study used a mixed-method – qualitative and quantitative research design. The study conducted in Babag National High School, Senior High School Department, Babag 1, Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu Philippines. The study used a Purposive Sampling considering eight identified teachers handling mainstream classes. The instrument used a profile document for the profiles, a researcher-made survey questionnaire for teachers' experiences in identified indicators, an open-ended and structured interview questionnaire for challenges and difficulties, and classroom observation for best practices in handling mainstream classes. The study used Frequency distribution, percentage, standard deviation, and thematic content analysis as statistical tools.

2.1 Results and Discussion

2.1.1 Learners Demographic Profile

The profile of learners with special educational needs was presented in two set of classes observing mainstream class – General Academic Strand (GAS) and Technological-Vocational and Livelihood (TVL) major in Contact Center Servicing

Table 1: Learners Profile

Classes/ Track	Age	Gender	Type of Learners with Special Educational Needs
General Academic Strand (GAS)	18	Female	Visually Impaired
	22	Male	Dwarfism
Contact Center Servicing	18	Male	Immobility

This implied that learners are mostly physically challenged learners that need much attention on their movements where teachers should consider their safety and pacing in producing learning outcomes. To illustrate, one of the teacher respondents observed that during examination her visually impaired student asked for approval in using a cellular phone to record her answers. Thus, teachers must consider familiar learning strategies of the learners so that they will feel comfortable while learning in class.

2.1.2 Teachers Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the public senior high school teachers handling mainstream classes includes gender, teaching position, years of experience, and subject handled.

2.1.2.1 Gender

Table 2: Respondents' Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	3	37.50 %
Female	5	62.50 %

This result revealed that there were more female than male teachers handling mainstream classes. Further, this implies that there are more females hired by the Department of Education than males.

2.1.2.2 Teaching Position

Table 3: Respondents' Position

Teaching Position	Frequency	Percent (%)
Master Teacher 1	3	37.50 %
Teacher III	5	62.50 %

The table showed that most teachers have teacher III positions. The teacher III position is the 3rd status given to qualified teachers in the Department of Education having at least Very Satisfactory Performance for the last three rating periods on her application of promotion plus 18 professional units in Education.

2.1.2.3 Years of Experience

Table 4: Respondents' Teaching Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percent (%)
10 years and above	3	37.50%
8 to 9 years	2	25%
6 to 7 years	1	12.50%
4 to 5 years	1	12.50%
2 to 3 years	1	12.50%
1 year and below	0	0

This revealed that most teachers with high years of teaching experienced were assigned to teach mainstream classes. This also implied that higher teaching experience provides confidence and trust to handle a diverse set of learners.

2.1.2.4 Subject Handled

Table 5: Respondents' Handled Subjects

Subjects Handled	Frequency	Percent (%)
Core subjects	5	62.50%
Applied subjects	1	12.50%
Major subjects	2	25%

The study revealed that teachers are teaching core subjects in the Senior High School department. These core subjects covered mostly general subjects in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies. This implied that there is a need for different teachers in different academic disciplines.

2.1.3 Teachers Experiences in handling mainstream class

The teachers' experience in handling mainstream classes covers experience in lesson planning, delivery of instruction, assessment of learning, and monitoring and coaching.

2.1.3.1 Lesson Planning

Table 6: Respondents' Experiences in handling mainstream class in terms of lesson planning

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Before making my lesson plan, I check the background of my mainstream class from their abilities and learning capacities.	4.25	0.71	Very Highly Relatable
2. My learning objectives are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bounded for both types of students.	4.38	0.52	Very Highly Relatable
3. I list down learning materials that are safe and motivating for both types of students.	4.63	0.52	Very Highly Relatable
4. I write learning activities in my plan that caters diverse learners in mainstream class.	4.25	0.71	Very Highly Relatable
5. I provide in my plan both guided practice and independent practice for my learners with educational needs.	4.13	0.83	Highly Relatable
Overall	4.33	0.65	Very Highly Relatable

Table 6 showed that most teachers make sure that learning materials are safe and motivating for both learners. This implied that they are aware of the diverse learners. Then, they make sure they can address each students' concern. During the interview, one of the teachers explained that his visually impaired students used a laptop provided by the school. So, on his lesson plan, different learning material is prepared for that learner. He also separates materials for the rest of the class. He checked the materials before using them and gave them to the learner. This showed that teachers made an extra effort.

On the other hand, teachers who are having problems writing guided practice in their lesson plans. They have less to no training in handling mainstream class. One of the teachers raised a concern about how the school can help them with lesson planning in mainstream classes since they are used to regular classes. This implied that the school should train the teachers in handling mainstream class, specifically in writing their lesson plans. Possible concepts should cover management, approaches, and plan workflow for mainstream classes.

2.1.3.2 Delivery of Instruction

Table 7: Respondents' Experiences in handling mainstream class in terms of delivery of instruction

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. The pacing of my lesson is in accordance with my students' level, abilities and capacities.	4.25	0.71	Very Highly Relatable
2. I modify my instructions so that students with special needs can understand what I wanted them to do.	4.63	0.52	Very Highly Relatable
3. I am not having problems in the discussion of concepts even if I have students with special needs.	4.13	0.83	Highly Relatable
4. I provide equal opportunities for discussion and interaction for both type of students during group activities.	4.38	0.74	Very Highly Relatable
5. I undertake learning tasks associated with the child's condition without hindering other students.	4.00	0.76	Highly Relatable
Overall	4.28	0.71	Very Highly Relatable

Table 7 presented that teachers made modifications when they are in their classes. During the class observation, most teachers address the instructions in general and later approach the learner with special educational needs to have individualized instruction. In the focus group discussion, most teachers admitted that it delays the pacing of their classes, but they do not mind. One teacher admitted that she repeated the lesson to the learner with special educational needs while others are doing the learning tasks. She further explained that she does not care provided that no child is behind in learning the required competencies. This displayed that most teachers with fewer backgrounds in teaching mainstream classes showed efforts and compassion to all their learners with equal respect and understanding.

On the other hand, the problem of the teachers is associating the task to the learners' condition without losing track of others. It is a challenge for them to fit their lessons and activities to their level while teaching other learners. They give extra tasks to enrich lessons for other learners while they are doing individualized teaching to the learners with special educational needs. This implied that teachers need the technique addressing lesson discussion and activities vis-à-vis to learners' abilities in a mainstream class.

2.1.3.3   Assessment of Learning

Table 8: Respondents' Experiences in handling mainstream class in terms of assessment of learning

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I check the kind of assessment that I give for both learners before I administer it.	4.25	0.71	Very Highly Relatable
2. I use a variety of assessment procedures, methods, and tools in checking learner's understanding of the lesson.	4.25	0.71	Very Highly Relatable
3. I make sure that the level of difficulty of the tasks given to the learners with special needs is appropriate and attainable for them without hindering other learners.	4.25	0.71	Very Highly Relatable
4. I explain the content of the assessment tool to my students through oral/dictation and written in order to address clear instructions to the type of learners I have.	4.63	0.52	Very Highly Relatable
5. After the assessment, I used the result for planning, enhancing or strengthening my lesson.	4.25	0.71	Very Highly Relatable
Overall	4.33	0.67	Very Highly Relatable

Table 8 revealed that teachers provided oral and written instructions for the assessment of the learners. This implied that teachers utilized visual and auditory techniques in evaluating learning. Based on the class observations, teachers used a buddy-buddy system. Top-performing learners paired with learners with educational needs to guide them in performing their class assessment. One of the teachers explained that during her class examinations, her visually impaired is given a recorded version of the examination test, and her buddy will write her answers. If the buddy is not available, the teacher allowed a learner to use a cellular phone in recording her answers. Another teacher also shared her experience while having physical activities like dramatization and games in her mainstream class. She explained that the buddy-buddy system is observed in-class activities and reminds group leaders to involve these learners with respect and understanding. This implied that teachers and learners have a systematic approach to help learners with educational needs.

2.1.3.4   Monitoring and Coaching

Table 9: Respondents' Experiences in handling mainstream class in terms of monitoring and coaching

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I monitor the attendance and check the physical atmosphere of my mainstream classroom if it is safe, clean, and motivating for learning.	5.00	0	Very Highly Relatable
2. I conducted remediation/enrichment program for low performing students including learners with special educational needs.	4.63	0.52	Very Highly Relatable
3. I use peer mentoring or coaching in my mainstream class for academic achievement.	4.50	1.07	Very Highly Relatable
4. I visit or talk to the parents of the learners with special educational needs for academic monitoring/follow up.	3.88	0.99	Highly Relatable
5. I ask other teachers handling the same mainstream class of mine on the ways they did to improve students' academic performance	4.25	0.71	Very Highly Relatable
Overall	4.45	0.66	Very Highly Relatable

Table 9 showed that the teachers have good management of learning. They are good in attendance monitoring and checking the learning environment of the class. During the class observation, most teachers assigned routine activities to some learners before class starts. This implied that teachers in mainstream classes are good managers of learning.

On the other hand, teachers have less time to do follow-ups and conferencing to parents of the learners with special educational needs. One teacher admitted that they have a lack of time to call for home visitations for these learners. Other teachers also explained that monitoring the buddy-buddy system helps them to monitor the progress of these learners. This, implied that the teachers need more time to do conferencing with learners and their parents. Thus, the school administrators should consider adjusting teaching loads in their teaching schedule by having fewer class loads to give enough time for monitoring and coaching for their mainstream classes.

2.1.4   Challenges and Difficulties

Approaches, techniques, and methods are weapons of the teachers to make class plans attainable. However, respondents handling mainstream class consider this as a challenge. When teachers asked about tailoring their teaching pedagogies, they said:

> *There is difficulty to deliver instructions in some activities because of diverse learners which we have less background. It takes a lot of time to have various activities. Moreover, identifying appropriate techniques is indeed a challenge. (K1, K2, K5, K6, K7, K8)*

Hence, there is a need for inputs in tailoring lessons matching the conditions of their learners is an immediate concern not to hamper lesson objectives and time. Mainly, teachers do not have adequate experience and professional background in this area.

Another identified challenge in handling mainstream classes is the lack of time in assessment and monitoring and feedback. Teachers mostly prepare two assessment tools to address diverse learners in class.

> *It takes time for us to assess the learners with special educational needs in the same manner as the other students in the class. Most of the time, we have a separate test for these learners considering their condition. In terms of their monitoring, we have a lot of things to consider aside from these classes. We hardly do feedback to inform their progress. (K2, K5, K8)*

2.1.5   Best Practices

Based on the identified area of concern from lesson planning to monitor, the researcher identified three best practices – task listing, peer coaching and personalized teaching.

In task listing, teachers list down tasks for students to track their progress. In this manner, students become independent and goal-oriented since the teachers gave activities based on their abilities. During the interview, the teachers answered:

> *I made a list of activities in my lesson that the learners with special educational needs could perform. There is a need to plan out in group activities (K1, K4, K6, K7, K8)*

Some teachers conduct a personalized approach to teaching. Still, they believe in the idea on one-on-one. Some do modification of task while others do hands-on. Teachers explained:

> *We do modify activities that suit them because they have things to reconsider. Teachers give differentiated instructions to address each learners' concerns. If there is a need, we guide them personally (K3, K5, K6, K7, K8)*

Simply, it means that teachers still consider that personalizing lessons will help learners more though it takes time and effort. Further, teachers find ways to meet the target objectives.

2.1.6   Proposed Teacher Development Plan

The proposed teacher development plan addressed the areas to consider in handling mainstream classes. The school conducted the training during the summer in-service training of the teachers. The training covers understanding the nature of the mainstream class, setting up a learning environment for mainstream class, techniques in handling learners with special educational needs, and writing activities in designing an instructional plan.

3. Conclusion

Therefore, teachers lived experiences in handling mainstream classes are very challenging since teachers have little to no background in handling both types of learners inside a mainstream class. They understand that the experiences took a lot of time preparing lessons, delivery of instruction, assessment, monitoring, and feedback. Further, Senior High School Teachers are less equipped to have a senior high school mainstream class. The Department of Education should reconsider their hiring qualifications for Senior High School teachers considering this matter.

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