



Lived Experiences of Selected Pioneer Senior High School Teachers in The Philippines

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ABSTRACT: Using a modified Van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994), this study explored and described the lived experiences of the selected pioneer Senior High School teachers in the implementation of the Senior High School program in Surigao City Division, Caraga Region, Philippines. Ten informants were selected using purposive and criterion specifying as pioneer teachers at the senior high school. The emergent themes derived from the study are (1) 21st Century Skills-Based Instruction; (2) Inventiveness and Ingenuity; (3) Beyond Classroom Learning; (4) Competence and Readiness; and (5) Fulfilled Teaching Experience. The emergent themes explained how teachers have viewed the implementation, challenges, and success stories in the senior high school program. Undeniably, teachers' lived experiences in the implementation of the senior high school program are fulfilling with commitment and passion to teach despite the challenges encountered. These challenges along the way have been addressed through the ingenuity and creativity of teachers like being resourceful in providing reference materials to learners. There may be lacking and inadequate learning facilities, but this does not hinder teachers from providing quality services to students.

KEY WORDS: Qualitative Research, K to 12 Curriculum, Department of Education, Curriculum Implementation

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

"It is our goal to ensure that the K to 12 Program empowers you, our dear learners, to become critical thinkers and problem solvers both in the local and global communities" was one of the lines of Leonor Magtolis Briones the former secretary of the Philippine Department of Education as her congratulatory message to the pioneering graduates of senior high school. The message is clear that the Senior High School Program of the Department of Education has produced pioneering graduates of the K-12 Enhanced Basic Education for the School Year 2017-2018. This recounts the historical move for educational reform undertaken in the year 2013. The Republic Act 10533 or also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act which was passed last May 2013 making the pre-university and basic education from 10 to 12 years becomes a reality in the much-needed overhaul of the Philippine basic education system.

Teachers being in the frontline of this gigantic educational reform have crossed milestone challenges and have endured the trail blazing road to the first ever successful implementation of the senior high school program. It is worthy that teachers' efforts are heard and shared as to how and what has transpired based on their experience in the implementation of the senior high school program. The innate lived experiences of teachers are reflected in their day-to-day encounter with the students. This encounter includes the conduct of class discussion following thoroughly the curriculum guides provided in the implementation of the senior high school program. These experiences come in varied forms like classroom undertakings, lectures, extra curricular activities, experiments, work immersion exposure and the implementation of the new K-12 program. It is timely that in the earlier implementation, teachers' lived experiences are taken into consideration and captured like how they find the implemented curriculum, the challenges they have encountered and their ways of coping up, the transition period, success stories and their fulfillment into teaching. The K-12 new learning experience platform empowers schools to create a safe and secure learning environment, engage the entire community, and achieve personalized, competency-based learning to ensure all students have the opportunity to realize their potential.

Moreover, in 2012 the Philippines launched its —K to 12 Program, a comprehensive reform of its basic education. Through this reform, the Philippines is catching up with global standards in secondary education and is attaching a high value to kindergarten. The structure, curricula, and philosophy of the education system are undergoing reform and improvement. The key points of the



new policy are —preparationl for higher education, —eligibilityl for entering domestic and overseas higher educational institutions, and immediate —employability graduating, all leading toward a —holistically developed Filipino. (Okabe, 2013)

In this reform, it is an opportunity to develop an enhanced basic education curriculum. However, there is also a bigger and greater responsibility to teachers in carrying out its objectives of the program. It has become a challenging task for the Department of Education knowing that our program is far behind compared to other countries who have implemented a 12-year education program. Hence, the SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012 cited that the Philippines was the last country in Asia having a 10-year basic education and pre-university program. Worldwide, the Philippines was joined by Djibouti and Angola of Africa having the shortest pre-university education system with other countries having 13 or 14-year cycles (Senate of the Philippines, 2011). The 12 years or more is by international practice as stipulated in the Washington Accord, Bologna Process as well as in the ASEAN and APEC Mutual Recognition and much more.

In addition, SEAMEO INNOTECH (2012), pointed out that the learning goal in the new —K to 12l curriculum is the acquisition of the following 21st century skills; 1) learning and innovation skills, 2) IT and media skills, 3) effective communication skills, and 4) life and career skills. The —K to 12l program aimed at promoting holistic skill development leading to employment and higher education. Furthermore, Lagajino, E. et al. (2017) stressed that the new curriculum intends to alleviate the economic status of the country by providing better job opportunities and wider options for the graduates, as well as to help students choose which programs are relevant to their interests and career choices.

The K to 12 education programs in the Philippines address the defects of the country's basic education curriculum. As claimed by the proponent of the K 12 program, the curriculum is seamless, ensuring the smooth transition between grade levels and continuum competencies. It is also relevant and responsive, enriched and a learner- centered curriculum (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012). With this claim, the researcher would like to trace the transition period in its implementation of the senior high school through the voices of the selected pioneer senior high teachers in the field.

It is within this context that the researcher wanted to find out the lived experiences of selected pioneer senior high school teachers in the initial implementation of the senior high school program. In this way, it is also an avenue to further enhance the program and have it improved with the recommendations presented herewith.

1.2 Research Questions

This study explored and described the lived experiences of selected pioneer senior high school teachers. Specifically, it sought answers to the following:

1. What is the lived experience of selected pioneer teachers in the implementation of senior high school?
2. What insights about the senior high school implementation of teachers can be drawn from these experiences?
3. How do individuals make sense of their experiences as pioneer senior high school teachers?
4. Based on the analyzed data, what themes of being a pioneer senior high school teacher could emerge?

1.3 Literature Review

This portion of the study reviews the literature and studies which have a direct bearing on the present study. The researcher considered presenting the features of the K to 12 and proceeded to track teachers' competence and experiences vital to understanding the very nature of this research.

Key Features of "K to 12" Program

Under the K to 12 Program, the length of basic education has been expanded. Two more years have been added to the existing four years of secondary education, which will extend basic education to 12 years, and one year of kindergarten has been mandated as part of basic education (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012). Also, Okabe, M. (2013) cited in his study "Where Does Philippines Education Go?" that the —K to 12l Program also makes possible seamless continuity of education from kindergarten through elementary school to high school. Graduates will gain a high school diploma, and they can also acquire a Certificate of Competencies or a National Certification showing that they have acquired a mid-level skill in their specialization when going on for higher education or getting a job.

However, the big change in the Philippine educational system under the "K to 12" Program is in secondary education. In the context of educational development studies, the value and role of secondary education has been revisited and reevaluated and is going through significant changes and reform. These changes and reforms are in the structure, curriculum, and assessment. The most



visible change is the lengthening to six years and the division into junior and senior high school. (Lewin and Caillods, 2009)

The —K to 12 Program puts a high value on the —holistically developed Filipino through a combination of education input and curriculum reform. Although on the surface this reform appears to be seeking the Philippines' inherent values, the outcomes it is seeking imply that the —K to 12 programs ultimately are connected to the globalization of education. (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012)

It is very timely that the educational system of the Philippines has catered the change to adopt the 12-year education reform to consider the globalization of education. This is to make way for Filipino learners to be competitive in an international educational platform. This means that —K to 12 programs not only increases the years of schooling, it also transforms the curricula and teaching methods. Simultaneously, this pedagogical transformation has been influenced by the globalization of education.

Pedagogical Issues, Teachers, and Teacher Training

One of the main goals of the —K to 12 Program is to contribute to a —holistically developed Filipino (SEAMEO INNOTECH 2012). The meaning of —holistically is obscure, and developing such a Filipino requires better quality education. Here pedagogical improvement matters. Under the —K to 12 Program, curricula are in the process of being improved, but another basic problem of pedagogy is teaching-related matters. For better pedagogy in schools, teachers play a crucially important role, and to fulfill their role, teachers need adequate teaching facilities, materials and equipment. Thus, classrooms and the other physical resources of school teaching also matter.

However, the success of the new education program will depend on the training and upgrading of teacher skills. According to SEAMEO INNOTECH (2012), there should be no additional load on teachers since the curricula are being decongested. Moreover, the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers provides that teachers should not teach more than six hours a day. If these conditions are fulfilled, the additional time available is expected to be allocated to teacher development.

Furthermore, the rationale of the K-12 Program as explained by the former Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Armin Luistro (2013) that: (a) enhancing the quality of basic education in the Philippines is urgent and critical; (b) the poor quality basic education is reflected in the low achievement scores of Filipino students; (c) International tests results like 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) rank the Philippines 34% out of 38% countries in HS II math and 43% out of 46% in Science, for grade 4, ranked lowest; (d) the congested curriculum partly explains the present state of education; (e) this quality of education is reflected in the inadequate preparation of high school graduates for the world of work or entrepreneurship or higher education; (f) further, most graduates are too young to enter the labor force; (h) the current system also reinforces the misperception that basic education is just a preparation for higher education; and (i) our graduates are not automatically recognized as professional abroad. (The Philosophical Foundation of K- 12, 2013)

Hence, the K to 12 curriculum considers every aspect of the development of the learners so that graduates will be holistically developed, equipped with 21st-century skills and prepared for employment, entrepreneurship, middle-level skills or higher education. In developing the K to 12 curriculum, various philosophical and legal bases were taken into consideration. As a learner-centered curriculum, K to 12 considers the nature and the needs of the learners. Moreover, it responds to local and global needs. The K to 12 curricula likewise affirms the important role that various stakeholders play in education such as administrators in the various levels of DepEd, other government agencies, non-government organizations, the private sector, and the learners' family and community. It also entails curriculum and instructional support.

Lived Experiences of Teachers

The evidence and argument above establish the centrality of high-quality teaching to successful learning and this, in turn, requires skilled and well-educated teachers who continue to grow and develop professionally throughout their careers. Teaching should be recognized as both complex and challenging, requiring high standards of professional competence and commitment. The need for a stronger focus on teacher knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions is a feature of developing thinking across the world. The European Commission, for example, in a 2004 statement (Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, 2004) identifies the need for teachers to have extensive subject knowledge, a good knowledge of pedagogy, the skills and competencies required to guide and support learners, and an understanding of the social and cultural dimension of education.

In this situation, the context is comparable to that of the Department of Education has said principles behind teachers' competences and qualification. Under the DepEd Order No. 3, s.2016, it clearly defines the selection of SHS teachers as well as establishes professional standards and evaluation criteria which will ensure that highly competent individuals with the appropriate



qualifications and specialization are hired to teach in the senior high school.

With this in mind, the Department of Education (DepEd) recognizes that the success of any education system greatly relies on the competence of its teachers. Hence, one of the primary issues the Department aims to address through its comprehensive implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program is the need for highly competent teachers in senior high schools. The program plans to achieve this objective by setting professional standards that will better ensure the teachers hired can significantly contribute to the development of lifelong learners.

In its implementation of the program, teachers have undergone a rigid training tailored to address teachers' competence in handling class of the senior high school. There is greater emphasis on teachers' role in facilitating the class especially in the implementation of the new curriculum program of the Department of Education. However, teachers give every learner an opportunity to receive quality education that is globally competitive based on a pedagogically sound curriculum that is par with international standards; broaden the goals of high school education for college preparation, vocational and technical career opportunities as well as creative arts, sports and entrepreneurial employment in a rapidly changing and increasingly globalized environment; and make education learn-oriented and responsive to the needs, cognitive and cultural capacity, the circumstances and diversity of learners, schools and communities through the appropriate languages of teaching and learning, including mother tongue as a learning resource.

To ensure that the enhanced basic education program meets the demand for quality teachers and school leaders, the DepEd and the CHED, in collaboration with relevant partners in government, academe, industry and nongovernmental organizations, shall conduct teacher education and training programs, as specified: (1) In-service Training on Content and Pedagogy – Current DepEd teachers shall be retrained to meet the content and performance standards of the new K to 12 curriculum; (2) Training to New Teachers – New graduates of the current Teacher Education curriculum shall undergo additional training upon hiring, to upgrade their skills to the content standards of the new curriculum; and (3) Training of School Leadership – Superintendents, principals, subject area coordinators and other instructional school leaders shall likewise undergo workshops and training to enhance their skills on their role as academic, administrative and community leaders. (Official Gazette, <http://www.gov.ph/republic-act--no-10533>)

However, studies under the Fundamental Western philosophical thought offers two distinct attitudes that direct meaning for the term —teacher: (a) the teacher facilitates critical thinking and understanding through a mutually educative and caring relationship between himself and his pupil, and (b) the teacher delivers a set of prescribed mindsets to his student through directed methodologies (McEwan, 2011). The first speaks of a teacher who fosters a relationship with the students and works in collaborative —life situations in which the meaning of facts, ideas, principles, and problems is vitally brought home (Dewey as cited in McEwan, 2011). This definition embodies a moral obligation and a realization that schooling —serves more expansive ends than scores of academic achievement (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2011). Noddings (1991) asserted that nurturing the child's moral fiber is the primary responsibility of teachers. Burant, Chubbuck and Whipp (2007) discussed the teachers' practice in terms of ideas and feelings that reflect a —moral sensibility which connects the selfhood of the teacher with his or her behaviors in the classroom.

The other philosophy describes the teacher engaged in formalized and generalized instructional methods. In this view, the teacher is responsible for the delivery of information via the deployment of an artificial or constructed system; teaching is only the act of —the application of approved techniques and practices (McEwan, 2011). This position asserts that education is for a specific product, rather than to value knowledge and reasoning abilities in and of themselves (Smith, 1996, 2000).

It is understandable that senior high school teachers have command towards the classroom interaction like integrating critical thinking in class activities and considering student's behavior. Teachers, in the context of senior high school, are given the opportunity to develop the full potential of the students. The K to 12 curricula has the ultimate goal of providing „functional literacy“ for everyone in Filipino learners. Functional Literacy is the acquisition of the skills, knowledge, and practices that would make Filipinos globally competitive because they are armed with skills for life-long learning, critical thinking, and creative thinking.

Meanwhile, teacher readiness to implement —K to 12 program refers to some aspects of their comprehension, attitudes, and motivation in implementing the curriculum change. Weiner (2009) puts forward that individual and group readiness in an organization (school) in implementing the change (new curriculum) is influenced by many factors, including their perception, attitude, motivation, and knowledge of the program, and their ability to implement it. In line with this idea, Bandura (2012) states that one's belief and competence to do something, to implement the curriculum known as self-efficacy, may determine the



effectiveness of the implementation of a program.

In addition, technical vocational school which offers skills development integrates —Instructional Theory for Skill Development. The theory for fostering skill development outcomes, as proposed by Romiszowski (2009), can be used for fostering all types of skills. Romiszowski defines skill as —the capacity to perform a given type of task or activity with a given degree of effectiveness, efficiency, speed or other measure of quantity or quality. He distinguishes between intellectual skills (that involve the mind), motor, sensorimotor, or psychomotor skills (that involve the body), personal skills (that involve emotions), and interpersonal skills (that involve interacting with others). Skill is distinct from knowledge, in that it develops with experience and practice, whereas knowledge is something you either have or do not have. According to the theory, skills exist along a continuum of complexity from reproductive to productive. Reproductive skills are those which are focused on applying standard procedures, or automated processes, such as multiplying numbers or typing. Productive skills, on the other hand, involve the application of principles and strategies, such as creative writing or playing chess. Romiszowski indicates that whether a skill is reproductive or productive has much greater influence on the selection and design of instructional strategy than if a skill is intellectual, motor, personal, or interpersonal.

Within this context, it is understandable that teachers in the senior high have come across different and varied experiences in the implementation of the senior high school. It is not easy to say that teachers are not affected by this change but more so, to consider them for what has been their experience in the field. The cited materials are dealing with key features of the K to 12 programs, teachers' competence, and a background of their experience which are of importance in this study. These materials have offered some insights into the phenomenon of senior high school teachers as they have experienced in the implementation of the senior high school program.

Philosophical Underpinnings

This study utilized Moustakas phenomenology to uncover the lived experiences of selected pioneer senior school teachers of varying experience. Phenomenology is founded on the concept that through inquiry, one may move past awareness of things, experiences, or understandings to arrive at the very essence of the thing itself or the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Sokolowski, 2000; Shank, 2002).

Prior to initiating any interviews my own experience was bracketed to identify any preconceived ideas about the mentorship phenomenon. This was accomplished through a bracketing interview. The bracketing procedure is simply an interview in which the investigator discusses his or her own experience about the central phenomenon of the study (Kimmel & Crawford, 2000).

Moustakas' (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenology is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants. In addition, Moustakas focuses on one of Husserl's concepts, epoche (or bracketing), in which investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the Five Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry phenomenon under examination. Hence, —transcendental means —in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas admits that this state is seldom perfectly achieved. However, I see researchers who embrace this idea when they begin a project by describing their own experiences with the phenomenon and bracketing out their views before proceeding with the experiences of others. Besides bracketing, empirical, transcendental phenomenology draws on the Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology (e.g., Giorgi, 1985) and the data analysis procedures of Van Kaam (1966) and Colaizzi (1978). The procedures, illustrated by Moustakas (1994), consist of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one's experiences, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon.

The researcher then analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes. Following that, the researcher develops a textural description of the experiences of the persons (what participants experienced), a structural description of their experiences (how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context), and a combination of the textural and structural descriptions to convey an overall essence of the experience.

II. METHODS

This study used the descriptive phenomenological type of study according to Van Kaam's modified by Moustakas (1994). This qualitative research was used because the purpose of the research was to describe and explain, explore, and interpret, or build a theory (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Furthermore, the use of a phenomenological design was appropriate to accomplish research goals



because describing experiences rather than analyzing or searching for explanations (Moustakas, 1994) revealed a unique way of understanding existing phenomenon teachers' experience on the implementation of the K to 12 Senior High School program. Van Kaam's phenomenological design involved a search for an understanding of wholeness by examining entities from many angles, differing sides, and conflicting perspectives until a theme or common vision of experience emerges (Moustakas, 1994). In a phenomenological investigation, a researcher is connected with the central research problem and has a personal interest in the experience. The findings are communicated via words and narratives. This phenomenological design entails the exploration and description of the lived experiences of the selected pioneer senior high school teachers in the implementation of Senior High School in Surigao City Division, Caraga Region, Philippines.

Using the purposive and criterion sampling, the informants of the study included the selected senior high school teachers who have served the Department of Education in its full-blown implementation of senior high school and being the first batch of teachers as pioneers to handle the new curriculum. Research informant criteria included that informants are specifically involved in the experience or handle classes in Grades 11 and 12. The experiences are the most recent in their lives.

It recruited at least ten informants who have met all the inclusion criteria that include: two years as pioneer Senior high school teachers, teaching his/her field of specialization, pioneer teacher in the senior high being permanent teacher II or III in rank or higher, has undergone training in the Regional or National level for senior high school teachers, with earned units or master's degree holder or NC holder, and adviser/coordinator in the senior high school department. The following strategies were employed to ensure adequate data saturation (Morse 2000): the topics of the study are formulated in such a way as to be sufficiently clear, narrow, and specific. Here, the researcher agreed that careful consideration of participant anonymity is an important aspect of qualitative research.

The main instrument of this study was the in-depth interview where it composed questions that required the informants to describe their lived phenomenal experience. Hence, the in-depth interview asked the informants to describe their experience of being pioneer teachers in the senior high school in the implementation of the K-12 program. However, it encouraged the informants to give a full description of their experience, including their thoughts, feelings, images, sensations, memories, and their stream of consciousness along with a description of the situation in which the experience occurred. So, the research informants participated in a two-hour interview over a period of one month. The interviews focused on the lived experiences, challenges, success stories and fulfillment in gathering information and confirming findings of the essence of the experience. The use of in-depth interview was a qualitative method of analysis, which proceeded as a confidential and secure conversation between an interviewer and the informant. Using a thoroughly composed interview guide, which is approved by the client, the interviewer ensured that the conversation encompassed the topics that are crucial to ask for the sake of the purpose and the issue of the survey. This relates to Boyce's (2006) concept of in-depth interviewing as a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation.

The primary data collection method was that of face-to-face phenomenological interviews in the desired place by both interviewer and interviewee. During the interview, a follow-up question was used for the further description of the detail, without suggesting what the researcher is looking for. Taking down notes and recording, via laptop recorder, the informants' regarding their experiences in the implementation of senior high school was employed. Interviews with the informants were done conversationally, with open-ended questions which motivated the interviewee to share their experiences. These were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Transcripts were reviewed by the researcher while listening and viewing to the laptop recorder to check for accuracy every after the interview and the preliminary analysis of the data was also conducted. To protect the identities of the informants, recorded conversations and transcripts and all other study materials with an identification number known only to the researcher. No informant's name was written on any study document. The ten informants were assigned with code names as follows: I1- Informant 1; I2- Informant 2; I3- Informant 3; I4- Informant 4; I5- Informant 5; I6 – Informant 6; I7 – Informant 7, I8 – Informant 8; I9 – Informant 9, and I10 – Informant 10.

The research data collected were limited to discussions about the experience of the senior high teacher in the implementation of the K-12 senior high program. Data were not sorted into categories or themes until all interviews were completed to avoid bias in directing interview questions toward certain themes. For phenomenological research, broad general questions were initially asked to generate participant response (Moustakas, 1994) evolving to more directional questions to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experience.



After the interview with each of the informants, the preliminary data analysis was made. However, it was only after the completion of ten semi-structured in-depth interviews, that the transcriptions were made including the review of the interviewer notes and observations for the final data analysis. As part of the data gathering and analysis process, the importance of common patterns or themes heard were documented. Moustakas provided his modifications of Van Kaam's (1994) method for data analysis for using the complete transcription of each research participant. Applying the eight steps advocated by Moustakas, using Van Kaam's method by listing and preliminary grouping of data included the preparation of interview transcriptions and notes into general categories. Reduction and elimination removed vague expressions or information not relevant to the study. Clustering and thematizing involved grouping of data into core themes that emerged from participant perceptual experiences. Final identification entailed validating themes against participants' complete transcription. Constructing an individual textural description required documenting each participant's experience based on themes revealed during interviews. The individual structural description—provided a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience, the themes, and qualities that account for how teachers make sense of their lived experiences as senior high school teachers. Constructing a textural-structural description is the final step of the data analysis process. Textural-structural description involved the synthesis of themes and meanings from the data collected from the informants. Hence, Van Kaam's (1966) method as modified by Moustakas (1994) served as the appropriate analysis for the data gathered in the study.

Ethical consideration can be manifested by avoiding any risk of considerably harming the participants unnecessarily. The researcher avoided the use of deception on people participating. Then, it was very advisable to obtain informed consent from all involved in the study. And finally, this was made possible by preserving privacy and confidentiality whenever possible. However, maintaining confidentiality can be challenging in qualitative research due to the detailed descriptions used to illustrate and report the findings. Confidentiality issues must be addressed about individual participants and about sites in which the research is conducted. According to Polit & Tatano (2006), the researcher may need to use pseudonyms and to be selective when describing defining characteristics of participants that could reveal their identities.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After constructing the preliminary textual descriptions, the next task was to construct the structural description of the informants' lived experience as regards to the implementation of the senior high school. The result was a description of the underlying structure regarding how the selected pioneer senior high school teachers experienced what they did. The individual structural description is developed based on the individual textural description, along with the imaginative variation process. In other words, the insights that I used to describe the experience are just imaginative, inspired, inventive, ingenious, and not empirical. For each participant I incorporated into the textual description a structure explaining how the experience occurred. As I wrote the textural description, I reflected on the conditions that precipitated what the selected pioneer senior high school teachers experienced. This process helped me understand "how" the experience occurred. I used—acts of thinking, judging, imagining, and recollecting, in order to arrive at core structure meanings. (Moustakas, 1994)

On the first theme, *Skills-Based Curriculum*, it has been observed by teachers that the senior high school curriculum is anchored on skills-based instruction. Five (5) out of ten informants revealed that based on experience, activities done in school address the expected curriculum outcome is more of skills development and into 21st Century approach to learning. Students are given performance tasks to develop their skills and competence in their desired track. On the other hand, teachers are given orientation to understand the nature of its senior high school curriculum. It is noticeable that most of the informants were able to understand the nature of senior high school when they were exposed to seminars and programs prior to the implementation of the senior high school program. Informant 5 appreciated the efforts of having less extra-curricular activities given to students to give way on skills and mastery on core and specialized subjects. The Department of Education has gained a full support system in its full implementation of the senior high school. This has been cited by Informant 2 that in their school the support system with senior high school coordinator along with teachers is evident.

Lai (2012) cited that educators have long been aware of the importance of critical thinking skills as an outcome of student learning. This means, most of the teachers are aware of the skills acquisition of students and that we only need to re-enforce them to the present situation. In addition, one classic definition of critical thinking developed in the philosophical tradition depicts it as—reflective and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do.

The second theme, *Review on Subjects Offering*, has emerged in the analysis due to problems encountered by teachers. Informant 1 revealed that with regards to subject offering, there are still a lot of things to be done. Five (5) out of ten informants expressed their experience that they were asked by the division to arrange the subjects as to course offerings per semester. There were also experiences of having new subject offerings which need further study by the teacher. In this case, this refers to major subjects offered in the curriculum. There were difficulties encountered as to subject loadings as experienced by Informant 6 that in the beginning of senior high school, it is quite difficult but later on, the teachers understand the curriculum along the way.

McClure (2016) in her article on demonstrated importance and significance of subject matter shared that —we also know that if we want our students to learn, we must somehow engage them in course work and empower them to take responsibility for their learning. We must create conditions that promote intrinsic motivation. This means to say that we also need to recognize the importance of the subject offerings and the relevance of the content. We can stimulate interest by both showing our students the content’s real-world connections and by involving students in activities that inspire creative applications.

The third theme, *Opportunity to Students’ Development* came out as a reflection of teachers’ experiences stating that the implementation is quite good, and students are given the opportunity to develop their skills. There were three (3) informants mentioned that the implemented curriculum has its impact on developing students’ skills and teacher empowerment.

Klopfenstein (2013) mentioned how students’ skills are important to be developed considering that the 21st century is marked with an ever-increasing need to learn new skills and develop new perspectives and understandings. In this age where change is constant, the teacher’s role cannot simply be to fill students with information. Although basic content knowledge is important, there also needs to be a focus on process. As knowledge and skills change from day to day, what is important is to teach students how to learn. By teaching students to reflect on how they learn and by developing their skills to pursue their learning goals, students will be empowered to change from passive recipients of information to active controllers of their learning.

The first three themes answered the questions on how teachers find the implemented senior high school curriculum as shown in the figure below. The first three themes are overarching the core theme “21st Skills-Based Instruction” as shown in Figure 1.

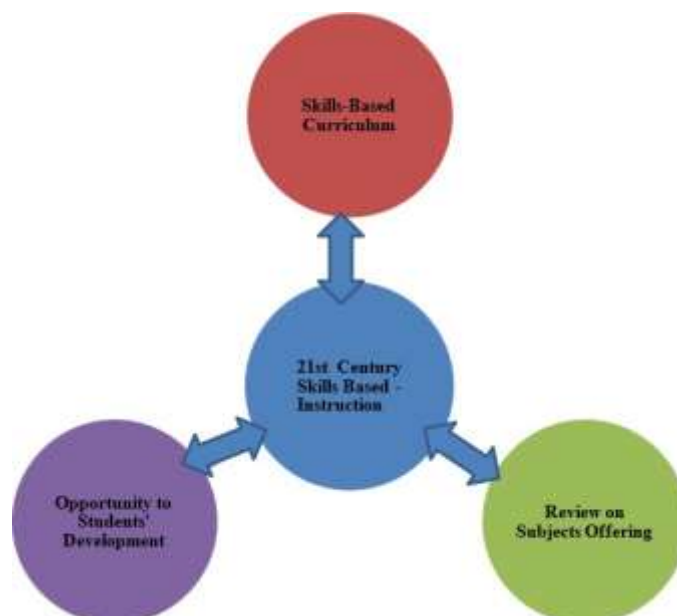


Figure 1. Framework of the Lived Experiences of Senior High Teachers on the Implemented Senior High School Curriculum

The fourth theme, *Inadequacy of Facilities* turned out to be an outlook of what challenges have been encountered by senior high school teachers. This is noted when four (4) informants have noticed the lack of facilities and resources experienced by teachers

in the field. Informant 5 cited that the number one challenge as senior teacher high teacher is the lack of resources provided by the Department of Education. In fact, teachers are the ones to find resources to carry out the expected learning competency. Informant 10 revealed that teachers have very limited access to facilities where students can do laboratory or experimental activity.

Rivera (2017) revealed a study on —importance of having good infrastructure that facilities have something to do with having rooms and learning spaces in good conditions is decisive for students to achieve the expected academic results. In other words, the condition of the schools directly impacts the performance of the students. The fact is that a good school infrastructure, with renewed spaces, makes it possible for children and youths that live in remote areas to study and, in addition, tends to improve the attendance and interest of students and teachers in learning.

The fifth theme, *Fusing Creativity and Initiative* was also considered by informants in their lived experience as senior high teachers. The use of supplemental books and resources were done as an initiative by teachers. They also incorporated the use of blended learning strategy as cited by Informant 2 in conducting practical application classes. It is also observable that teachers' experiences also embraced the idea of using creativity in class when resources are not available.

Creativity in learning is often highlighted as a skill essential for success in the 21st century. Samonte (2016) cited the idea of Pink (2005) that creative thinking is increasingly necessary to accomplish goals in our complex, interconnected world, and education researchers and psychologists tout the social, emotional, cognitive, and professional benefits of possessing creative abilities (Sternberg, 2006). Taking knowledge out of a vacuum and infusing it into an authentic experience ensures that creativity is grounded in relevant learning. All the teachers cited lessons they had taught that had real-world applications. The fact that the teachers viewed "real-world" learning as creative tells us that such teaching moments often feel fresh and bring in novel thinking.

The sixth theme, *Retooling Students' Interest* emerged as one of the themes citing the idea of Informant 7 that there is difficulty as to getting the interest of students in class. However, this has to be reviewed so consider both teacher and students' difficulty in dealing with the subject offering. Three (3) informants expressed the concerns on how students are encouraged to attend classes. Reflective on this theme is to cater a student-centered learning environment so one can address student's interest in class. A study shows that a student-centered learning environment is one where, as teachers, they recognize the role as facilitators of learning and not just repositories of knowledge. Teachers accept that they are not the sole authority on any subject matter.

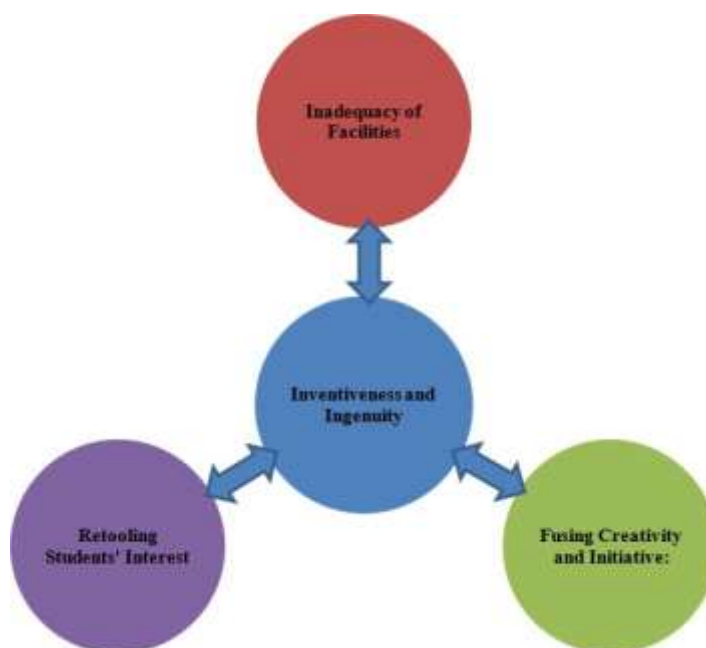


Figure 2. Framework of the Lived Experiences of Senior High Teachers on Challenges Encountered

Figure 2 tells the core theme of the fourth, fifth and sixth themes reflected as “Inventiveness and Ingenuity.” Ang et al. (2001) expressed that teachers' teaching approach moves away from conveying information towards facilitating students' personal



discovery through discussion, consultation, and mentoring. They discourage students from relying on them to give them the —correctl answers all the time; they encourage them instead to come up with answers of their own. Teachers avoid simply trying to cover course content. Instead, they allow our students to uncover our subject matter at their own pace, according to their own aptitude, while providing tools to help them keep pace with the class or raise them to a desired standard. Therefore, the mode of learning in a student-centered learning environment, students are encouraged to learn independently, with the appropriate guidance from the teacher as it becomes necessary.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth themes carried out the question on *what are the challenges encountered by the informants*. The themes Skills-Based Curriculum; Review on Subjects Offering; Opportunity to Students“ Development; Inadequacy of Facilities; Fusing Creativity and Initiative; and Retooling Students“ Interest highlighted the lived experience of the selected pioneer teachers in the implementation of senior high school. These themes were revealed based on informants’ responses to two (2) specific research questions in exploring and describing their experience on the implemented senior high school curriculum and challenges encountered.

The seventh theme ***K-12 Successful Conduct*** came out considering that most of the teachers were given orientation and that they were guided as to what needs to be accomplished. However, it noticed that there are still problems encountered in the implementation of the program. Six (6) out of ten informants confirmed that senior high school implementation was a success having its first graduates for the school year 2017- 2018. This means to say that teachers can go through the usual routine in class. They have conquered the difficulties along the way and have addressed some problems in the implementation. One best factor is that senior high school teachers are qualified and can deliver best in the class.

The DepEd also recognizes that the quality of learning is greatly influenced by the quality of teaching. Therefore, it is imperative for the DepEd to hire good teachers and to support their development in the teaching profession. Organizing professional learning communities will aid teachers in the construction of new knowledge about instruction as well as in revising traditional beliefs and assumptions about education, community, teaching, and learning (Little, 2003) to suit the present needs of learners.

Successful teaching is a result of the systematic use of appropriate strategies for delivering and assessing the learning objectives targeted for each lesson (UNESCO GMR 2014). It is very commendable that teachers now are really putting emphasis on delivering quality education to students.

The eighth theme ***Competence and Readiness in Senior High*** talked about how teachers are trying to work hard and are able to improve students’ competence. Informant 6 expressed that we are still in the process of improving our way of teaching in the senior high school. It is also observable among informants that the senior high school program leads to better benefits and opportunities to learners with the additional two years in senior high school comparable to other ASEAN countries with a 12 years educational system. It is up to the implementers of the program how ready in terms of implementing the new K-12 program. This is for us not to be left behind with other ASEAN countries which have a better educational system.

In the field of education, readiness for reform is often said to be an important predictor of how successfully new policies, programs, or practices will be implemented. If people or groups are ready to embark on the education reform, they are less likely to resist or actively sabotage its implementation; and when they are ready to undertake change, they will do so more energetically and thoughtfully than they might do otherwise.

Readiness is not simply lack of resistance, but instead a more active, engaged willingness, ability, and a transformation of cognition to adopt a new practice. Readiness is thought to be a critical forerunner to successful implementation of the educational reform because the stakeholders are the ones acting on it. When readiness is high, stakeholders are more invested in the change effort, expend greater effort in the change process, and exhibit greater persistence in the face of obstacles or setbacks which contribute to a successful implementation of the new program. (Acosta & Acosta, 2016) Therefore, the successful implementation of the K-12 curriculum rests on the willingness and readiness of the education sector and stakeholders to embrace change.

The seventh and eight themes covered the idea on *what informants can say about the implementation of senior high school*.

The ninth theme ***Progress and Development Program*** was considered due to the fact that senior high school implementation has still room for improvement. There are many things to improve in the senior high school program as evident in the responses of the informants saying that —DepEd is trying their best to address some concerns however, the lack of facilities and resources are observable, Informant 10. There were five (5) informants attested that the senior high school program of DepEd should consider catering the needs of learners in terms of providing adequate resources and functional facilities.

It is noted that the additional two years of senior high school intend to provide time for students to consolidate acquired academic skills and competencies and will equip learners with skills that will better prepare them for the future, whether it be for employment, entrepreneurship, skills development (further Tech-Voc training), and higher education or college. (Acosta & Acosta, 2016)

The tenth theme *Unpacking the Curriculum Guide* turned out to be one of the emerging themes with emphasis to informants' response stating that curriculum guides are ready and available to teachers. There were no problems as to the provisions provided to teachers in curriculum instructions especially on its target competencies. Informant 9 revealed that the curriculum provides life-skills competencies to learners for them to become independent in the future.

Partnership for 21st Century Skills mentioned that curricula are designed to produce deep understanding and authentic application of 21st century skills. This, by definition, will enable the development of 21st century skills; curricula should include models for appropriate learning activities that accomplish 21st century skills outcomes. (http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/p21-stateimp_curriculuminstruction.pdf)

The ninth and tenth themes revealed information on *how teachers rate the transition phase of the senior high school*. The themes K-12 Successful Conduct; Competence and Readiness in Senior High; Progress and Development of the Program; and Unpacking of the Curriculum were drawn from the insights of teachers' experience in the implementation of senior high school. These themes were revealed based on informants' responses to two (2) specific research questions in exploring and describing their experiences on the transition of senior high school program as reflected in Figure 3. The four themes are anchored on the core idea Competence and Readiness of Stakeholders."

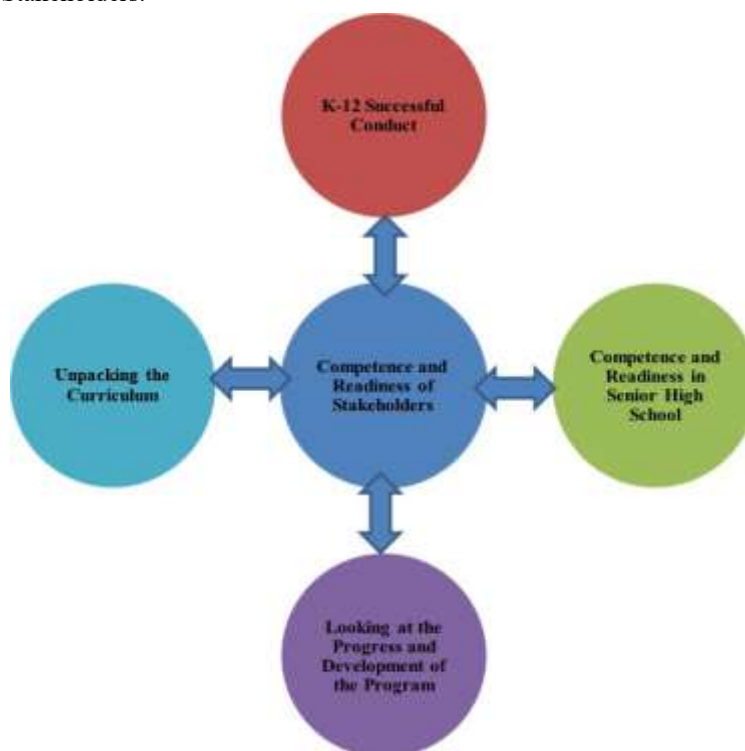


Figure 3. Framework of the Lived Experiences of the Senior High Teachers on Transition SHS Program

The eleventh theme *Reaching Out for Students' Care* emerged from the bases of Informants' responses like extending my world as teacher, mother, and/or adviser to students. Informant 8 expressed students together with her conducted outreach program to less privilege. This kind of activity was part to provide students an opportunity to see the real scenario in the community.

Mayer (2014) expressed her ideas that in the —Project of Scholastic and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundationl about the teachers' overwhelming say they chose the teaching profession in order to make a difference in children's lives. This, along with the desire to help students reach their full potential and to make a difference in their schools' community comprises the central



reason most teachers enter the profession: to make an impact on the world by educating students. Nearly all teachers (99%) see their roles extending beyond academics to include things like reinforcing good citizenship, building resilience, and developing social skills. Eight in 10 (84%) agree that it is teachers who have the greatest impact on student achievement in school. As one teacher from Tennessee said, —I believe teaching is more than just teaching subjects. It changes lives and should be about teaching social skills and respect as well. This means to say that most of the teachers are taking their responsibility beyond the classroom.

The twelfth theme *Exemplar Students Output* was a form of a success story shared by Informants. Informant 2 expressed that the assessment itself is a success because students did their best to pass the National Certificate Assessment of Technical Educational Skills Development Authority (TESDA). This is to ensure that students in senior high school are given the privilege to assess themselves of the desired and expected mastered competencies in TECH-VOC Strand. Informant 10 shared that students are capable of winning in the different events or assessment evaluation.

The idea of using examples as a teaching tool is definitely not a new one.

Foster and Marasco (2008) note that teachers have long been using samples of student work as instructional tools in their classrooms. Examples are examples of student work. Combining rubrics and examples allows students not only to know the assessment criteria for a writing task, but also what a finished piece of writing looks like at the different levels. These exemplars are actually carried out through students' performance task outputs. Performance tasks build on earlier content knowledge, process skills, and work habits and are strategically placed in the lesson or unit to enhance learning as the student —pulls it all together. Such performance tasks are not —add-onsl at the end of instruction. They are both an integral part of the learning and an opportunity to assess the quality of student performance. When the goal of teaching and learning is knowing and using, the performance-based classroom emerges. Performance tasks range from short activities taking only a few minutes to projects culminating in polished products for audiences in and outside of the classroom. In the beginning, most performance tasks should fall on the short end of the continuum. Teachers find that many activities they are already doing can be shaped into performance-learning tasks.

The thirteenth theme *Affirming Knowledge Learned* happened to be a reflection of Informants' responses where students appreciate teachers' effort in class explaining new concepts. Informant 3 shared that his success story is when students understand his lecture and pass the subject and at the same apply their knowledge learned in class. However, teachers find it very important building the student-teacher relationship in the teaching-learning process.

Student-teacher connection is envisioned as having a value beyond these tangible outcomes – a value that arises from the essence of connection itself. The qualities inherent in the essence of connection – knowing, trust, respect and mutuality – create a transformative space in which students are affirmed, gain insight into their potential, and grow toward fulfilling personal and professional capacities: student- teacher connection emerges as a place of possibility (Gillespie, 2005).

The fourteenth theme *Developing the Skills* emerged. Informant 8 shared that she finds it successful if her students exceed the expectations and perform well in class. This also explains why students are able to conquer their fear in public speaking. As teachers, we expect more, and we get better results. High expectations are important for everyone—for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well-motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when instructors hold high expectations for themselves and make extra efforts.

Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (2016) cited that there are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Students rich in hands-on experiences may not do so well with theory. Students need the opportunity to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. They can be pushed to learn in new ways that do not come so easily.

The fifteenth theme *Conquering the Field of Specialization*. Informant 9 revealed that her students achieved competence in their specialization and received NC II certificate from TESDA. Students are given the opportunity to develop their skills through a series of practical applications of the desired competencies. Our current knowledge-based society demands that new information be quickly incorporated into daily practices, thus leading to a better and more equitable society. For universities, this involves preparing students by linking the skills developed through a major's curriculum directly to their application in the labor market (de las Nieves et al., 2017)

Eleventh to Fifteenth Themes theme “Beyond Classroom Teaching Learning Encounter” as shown in Figure 4 revealed information on success stories shared by informants anchored on core.

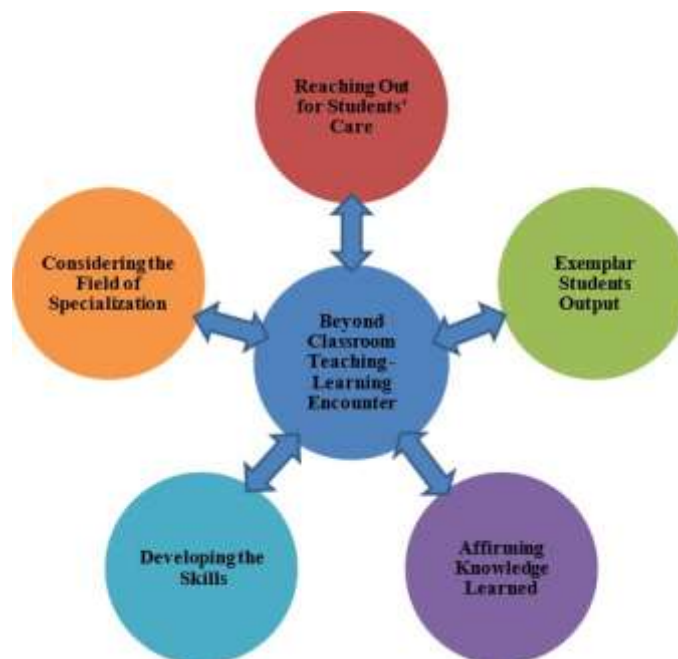


Figure 4. Framework of the Lived Experiences of Senior High Teacher on their Success Stories

The sixteenth theme was *Fulfilled Teaching Experience*. There were eight (8) out of ten (10) who shared their fulfillment as a senior high school teacher. Informant 7 shared that he is fulfilled being able to share and impart new knowledge to students. In addition, Informant 10 revealed his experience that he is fulfilled when students are able to comply with the subject requirements and go beyond expectations in their performance tasks.

Lam (2016) cited that there is nothing more rewarding than knowing and seeing the evidence that you've made an impact on someone's life or multiple lives. As teachers, we should not seek rewards and praise. Sometimes, we cannot physically see the appreciation and impact you've made but just know that it's there.

The seventeenth theme was *An Opportunity to Inspire*. Six (6) out of ten (10) informants have received appreciation from students on how they have touched their lives and that they have done extra efforts to make a meaningful teaching – learning experience for students. Informant 1 shared that she has gained a lot of appreciation from students. She has gained new friends and new family.

Passionate teachers know that it is their role to encourage students for an active learning and concern themselves with promoting students' intellectual and moral development. Teachers with passionate, work with enthusiasm, their dedication and commitment increase, and they believe in the importance of their job. —There are strong empirical grounds for believing that teachers can and do make a difference and that consistent high-quality teaching, supported by strategic professional development, can and does deliver dramatic improvements in student learning! (Rowe, 2003).

Commitment to teaching contributes to teachers' behaviors, attitudes, perceptions, and performances (Thapan, 1986). Committed teachers have a tendency to perform the roles effectively that their job requires and to establish a good teacher-student relationship in accordance with the professional values. This approach facilitates student learning and development of terminal behaviors. However, in the clash of career goals and values, and the goals and values of school, the importance of dedication and commitment increases. Passionate teachers are those who make great changes in our lives. Their beliefs and vigorous actions make us realize our inner values and bewitch us. Passion contributes to teachers' motivation and performance. Passionate teachers have an effect on student achievement.

The eighteenth theme was *Leading Students to Skills Discovery*. Some ideas came out from Informants stating that their experience was more on nurturing the students under their care, leading them to explore knowledge outside the classroom and encounter challenging reactions from colleagues and among students' themselves.

The 21st century, according to Pink (2005), will be dominated by a different way of knowing, being, and doing, and right-brain capacities will come increasingly to the fore. This view is endorsed by Howard Gardner, who highlights —a robust temperament, and a personality that is unafraid of assuming reasonable risks, cognitive and physical as key dispositions that will mark the future creator and must be developed early in life (Gardner, 2010)

To meet 21st century expectations, educators therefore need to depart from the ideas and pedagogies of yesterday and become bold advocates to develop the sorts of learning dispositions needed for our learners and their work futures. This means spending less time explaining through instruction and investing more time in experimental and error-tolerant modes of engagement. Reeves (2004) issued the call for teachers to examine their professional practice and their impact on student achievement and transform educational accountability from —a destructive and unifying force to a constructive and transformative force in education.

The nineteenth theme was **Collaborative Teaching**. It was also experienced among the Informants the camaraderie and collaboration of the members of the faculty towards achieving better teaching – learning encounters with students. Informant 3 shared that they agree on meetings among colleagues and support each other in the implementation of senior high school.

Collaborative teaching, sometimes called cooperative teaching or team teaching, involves educators working in tandem to lead, instruct and mentor groups of students. Collaboration most often occurs among professionals from various disciplines including core subjects, special education, elective courses, library science or guidance programs. On some occasions, teachers from the same department or grade level may team teach to target multiple levels of learning or provide a greater variety of supervised activities for students to practice skills. Collaboration can be implemented across all instructional levels and subject areas (Lam, 2016).

The last theme was **Promoting Best Welfare**. One remarkable response from Informants was that Senior High is a gift to Filipino people especially to the less fortunate or those in poverty line because it will offer a varied opportunity to work or go into business. It is an opportunity to somehow improve the livelihood of the Filipino learners.



Figure 5. Framework of the Lived Experiences of Senior High Teacher on Teaching Fulfillment

First, let's remember that the primary purpose of education is to gain knowledge, and is only secondarily a ticket to finding a job. Its essence lies not in its pragmatic value of having opportunities for, say, career advancement, but in gaining a better understanding of the world. The ultimate goal is to gain wisdom, in which reason prevails over irrationality. When people think rationally, behave civilly, and judge morally, then education has achieved its purpose (Bacarra, 2016).

As shown in Figure 5, the themes Fulfilled Teaching Experience, An Opportunity to Inspire, Leading Students to Skills Discovery, Collaborative Teaching, and Promoting the best welfare were taken on how individuals who experience this phenomenon

make meaning of that experience. These themes were revealed based on informants' responses to two (2) specific research questions in exploring and describing their experiences on success stories and teaching fulfillment.

To make it more concise in the presentation of the Eidetic Framework, the different themes from each framework were consolidated as shown in Figure 6. The five themes are encapsulated into its central theme or overarching theme which is concluded into *Leading by Example: Landmarks of Senior High School Teacher's Experience*. This means that most of the senior high school teachers take the lead in the implementation of the K-12 program. They become the frontlines in the implementation and have gone through the adjustment in the curriculum, school environment and learners.

The five emergent themes together made the diverse or varied experience of Senior High School teachers in the implementation of Senior High School program which also made sense in the way Senior High teachers lead students by example being the pioneers in the implementation of the Senior High School curriculum. The five emergent themes were taken from different frameworks of teachers' lived experiences core themes as reflected from Figure 1 to Figure 5. These core themes have its different themes from the varied experience of teachers in the implementation of the Senior High School curriculum, challenges encountered, transition of SHS Program, success stories, and teaching fulfillment.



Figure 6. Eidetic Framework of the Lived Experiences of Senior High School Teachers

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Undeniably, teachers' lived experience in the implementation of senior high school program is considered to be fulfilling with commitment and passion to teach despite the challenges encountered. These challenges along the way have been addressed through the ingenuity and creativity of teachers like being resourceful in providing reference materials to learners. There may be lacking facilities and inadequate learning facilities, but this does not hinder teachers in providing quality services to students.

Based on findings, it is safe to conclude that the implementation of senior high school has been successful but we have to consider rooms for improvement in providing best learning facilities, laboratories and resources. The best things done in its implementation are reflective on skills-based instruction as an approach to teaching- learning process, empowering students' capabilities, fusing creativity and initiative to address the challenges, and teachers' collaborative efforts to the successful conduct of the new K-12 Senior High School program as a major educational reform of the Department of Education. Hence, the phenomenological study and Van Kaam as modified by Moustakas (1994) method of analysis are applicable while investigating the lived experiences of senior high school teachers in the implementation of senior high school programs.



Moreover, this research has drawn attention to several areas of importance that may have implications for the way teachers' lived experiences in senior high school implementation is viewed by teachers. Specifically, it would: (1) Provide an avenue for deeper discussions or forum of the K-12 curriculum to teachers. In this way, teachers are upgraded and keep posted on changes and development of the program; (2) Remind teachers to employ the 21st century teaching approaches, and use creativity when resources are not available; (3) Continue to reach out to students by making sure that they are nurtured and cared by teachers. This is an opportunity to bring students' knowledge to the community; and (4) Strong support to the K-12 implementation by leading teachers to competence and readiness of stakeholders.

Furthermore, the Department of Education may strengthen discussions, forums, and orientation to teachers and its stakeholders of the K-12 senior high school program. Teachers may consider employing varied approaches to teaching and incorporate the 21st century skills development of students to address mastery of specialization of students' skills. And to consider availability of teaching resources and school facilities like skills and experimental laboratories. There should be a continuous review and evaluation of subject offerings and assess whether expected outcomes are carried out. School authorities may also provide teachers capability building activities to strengthen collaboration among colleagues. Lastly, teachers should be given the opportunity for a benchmarking of best practices across region, national and/or international level.

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