



Lived Experience of Secondary School Teachers in the K to12 Curriculum

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Abstract

This study was conceptualized to investigate the current status of the public secondary school teachers in the implementation of K to 12 curriculum. This study employed the descriptive case study method. The respondents were the ten (10) Secondary School Teachers teaching under the K to12 curriculum chosen through purposive random sampling method. The data gathering tools used was in-depth interviews and semi-structured interviews. Other tools supplementing the main tools were informal conversations, and direct observations. Data were transcribed, analyzed and coded into themes. The researchers developed the themes based on the data gathered. The theory generated from narrative data reveals that despite the burden experienced teaching in the K to 12 curriculum, there remains a sense of eagerness and determinations to provide quality services, which may be attributed to strong influence of Filipino cultural values, norms, and characteristics of being a Filipino teacher. This relational theory manifests itself in teachers' teaching sentiments and in the employment of coping strategies of being initiative and creative which geared towards the exigency of the quality service especially to the transition period of the educational system in the Philippines from content based to outcomes-based education in conformity with the 21st century skills of learners.

Keywords: Coping Strategies; Lived Experience; Secondary School Teachers; Teaching Performance.

Introduction

K to12 curriculum was introduced in the country last 2011 prior to the modernization of the educational system in the Philippines to answer the demands and needs for quality education. The K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum was implemented nationwide in both public and private schools in School Year 2012-2013. The Philippines being the only country in Asia has shifted from 10 year basic education to a 12 year cycle curriculum called the K to 12 education curriculum policy, (Crisol, LG, and Alamillo, JB, 2014).

The good curriculum is open for criticism by the experts in the field in the different learning institutions that can be readily transformed into practice. Accordingly, the curriculum exists at three levels wherein students are put at the center: what is planned for, what is delivered to, and what the students' experience (Prideaux, D., 2003).

By nature curriculum is dynamic in nature hence it is viewed as changing and developing. Traditionalist and progressivist have contrasting views about curriculum development. For the traditionalist, curriculum asserts that it must be performed; learning materials are actualized or put into action and with tangible results. For the progressivist, the curriculum is the embodiment of best elements of experience, culture and the sequence of potential experiences, set up in school for the purpose for children and youth to be disciplined with group ways of acting (Bilbao et al., 2008). Presently, the definition of the curriculum includes all planned learning experiences of any educational institution such as school (Prideaux, D., 2003).

Further, stress is critical issue in any workplace especially those providing social services like teaching profession (Austin et al., 2005). Teachers with limited coping mechanism suffer from stress resulted to emotional and physical health problems which lead to burnout (Austin et al., 2005; Fleishman, J. A., 1984; Johnson, G., Scholes, K. and Whittington, R. 2005). Likewise, coping includes ways of dealing with diverse personality in the given situation. It is a cognitive and behavioral effort to manage specific external and internal demands (Lazarus, Richard S., 1991).

Further, this study aims to find out the common problems experience by the secondary school teachers and on how they cope with under the K to12 curriculum that apparently affects their teaching performance. In addition, teachers are in the dilemma in obtaining teaching strategies and approach that suit to the present outcomes-based education curriculum. It also gives emphasis to the counter-measures of teachers coping with the problems encountered like inadequacy of learning materials and tools to enrich the classroom instruction and how the teachers deliver a balance instruction on heterogeneous group of learners.

Moreover, this study is significant to the curriculum development planners and policy makers to provide baseline information to seek better strategic and workable alternatives to improve curriculum conditions that will redound to quality education of the K to 12 curriculum. Likewise, the knowledge gained from this study may further guide school administrators to develop awareness among school heads to respond to the areas/ aspects of the program leading to the improvement of instruction. Being at the forefront in giving classroom instruction to students, the findings of the study will help teachers to think of better strategies and techniques in facilitating instruction that they could respond effectively to the needs of the students, motivate them to learn for the improvement of students' achievements.

Review of Literature

K to 12 curriculum provides sufficient time for its graduates for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners and to prepare to go into different paths such as for further higher education, employment and entrepreneurship. Academic achievement and development of competencies are the concerns of public school systems which are expected to promote a wide variety of skills and accomplishments in their learners. Included in the development of competencies are creativity, adaptability, and global awareness which are often referred to as 21st century skills (Soland, Hamilton, & Stecher, 2013). The ultimate goal of the K to 12 curriculum is to produce graduates who are globally competitive. With this, the entire school systems faced the increasing pressure with the range of competencies that generates challenges in terms of pedagogy and assessment.

Accordingly, technology integration in the classroom is one of the concerns to be address especially for the pre-service teachers. Guzman & Nussbaum, (2009) identified six domains and competencies such as instrumental/technological, pedagogical/curricular, didactic/methodological, evaluative/investigative, communicational/relational and personal/attitudinal which linked to teacher training propositions for technology integration. Likewise, these domains and competencies serve as bases for creating a technology integration training model.

Piwowar, Thiel, & Ophardt (2013), evaluated the effectiveness of a training program especially for in-service secondary school teachers in classroom management. Results revealed that all participants have better knowledge of classroom management after training. However, hypothesized positive effects on teachers' competencies and increased student engagement occurred only in the intervention group. These findings are supported by participants' reported high subjective validity of the training.

On the other hand, Beghetto (2008) conducted the study to examined the prospective teachers' beliefs about the memorization and imaginative thinking skills play in the K to 12 curriculum. Results revealed that majority of prospective teachers believed that memorization of correct answers of students have given emphasis on elementary grades especially in grade 1 rather than encouragement of students' imaginative thinking. Finally, results of logistic regression analysis indicate that prospective teachers who viewed unexpected student responses as ideal were significantly more likely to believe that it was never appropriate to place more emphasis on memorization.

It was the purpose of the review offer a clear explanation of the concepts, assumptions, and importance are the key variable in the present investigation by describing the common and conflicting views pertaining thereto. This review of related concepts and studies was an attempt to interweave as the problems and coping techniques as related to teaching performance of secondary school teachers teaching in the K to 12 curriculum. The interplay between the conceptual literature and the findings of related studies was mainly aimed for better appreciation and understanding of present study.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to find out the common problems experienced by the secondary school teachers and on how they cope with under the K to12 curriculum. Specifically, this study sought answers the following questions: What common problems are experienced by the secondary school teachers in the K-12 curriculum? How the secondary school teachers cope up the problems in the K-12 curriculum? How the problems in the K-12 curriculum affect their teaching performance?

Research Methodology

The study employed the descriptive case study method as a means of exploring what constitute the teachers realities and modes of being. Accordingly to Creswell, J. (2003) case study explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a

process, or one or more individuals. In addition, interacting with people on site under study is a must for the researchers. The report of the researchers would include patterns or lessons learned based on the data gathered from the field notes which eventually connect with theories (Creswell, JW., 1998).

The respondents or the key informants of the study were the ten (10) Secondary School Teachers in the 3rd Congressional district of Iloilo, Philippines teaching under the K to12 curriculum chosen through purposive random sampling method. The respondents included in the face to face interview were chosen on the basis of the following criteria: those who have 2 years or more teaching experience, those with or without masters' degree or doctorate degree, and those who are teaching in the K to12 curriculum. Since the study relied largely on key informants, in-depth interviews and semi-structured interviews were the main tools utilized for data gathering. Likewise, to validate the gathered data, consultation with the key informants whether the themes developed by the researchers are also the same as what they are wanted to convey in their responses.

Other tools supplementing the main tools were informal conversations, and direct observations. Through the informal and iterative nature of semi-structured interviewing, the researchers obtained detailed information about the live experience of teachers teaching under K to12 curriculum under study. Direct observations allowed the researchers to be immersed in the actual setting of the study, note of their facial expressions, body languages, and other hidden transcripts, to have a better understanding of how people act and interpret things given their social situations. Likewise, data collected focused on the sentiments of the participants about their experiences on the implementation of the K to 12.

The data from the structured interview were transcribed and coded into themes. These key words in the transcript were identified and themes (Robinson J., 2004). Data analysis commence with the intense review of the field notes and verbatim transcript of interviews. In addition, interview guide form was used during interview session and audio taping was necessary. Memos were used by the researchers to record the reflections and possible relationships within the data as recommended (Miles, B., & Huberman, A. M. 1994).

Further, data were analyzed based on the suggested steps outlined by Creswell, JW., (1998) and Stake (1995) as follows: organization of details from the case; categorization of the data; interpretation of single instances; identification of patterns; and synthesis and generalizations: An overall portrait of the case was constructed. In addition, conclusions were drawn from the findings that may have implications beyond the specific case that has been studied (Leedy, P. & Ormrod, J., 2001).

Moreover, the researchers ensured that participation of the participants for interview is voluntary in nature. The purpose of the study was properly explained and assured that their responses were properly protected with utmost confidentiality. In addition, participants' safety was ensured by not revealing their true identity in the entire manuscript. Lastly, for further validation of their participation in the study, informed consent form was signed by the participants.

Findings and Interpretation

In this section, an emergent theme is reported among the public secondary school teachers teaching in the K to12 curriculum. The identified themes and categories are well discussed. Data generated from the research questions were further presented in this section of paper.

Expanding the duration of basic education in the Philippines prior to entry to the University is the major issues among parents and other stakeholders. In addition, kindergarten is compulsory to all school age children prior their entry in grade 1. The K to 12 curriculum helps students to become globally competitive and prepare them with life skills.

The K to12 Curriculum is on its 6th year implementation period. It fosters meaningful and holistic learning to produce globally competitive lifelong learners. The effective roll out of K to12 curriculum is to upgrade the educational system in the country. Ingenuity and resourcefulness is a primary skill to comply the demands of curriculum. A strategic planning and preparation is the important factor to deliver a quality instruction and to foster met cognition among learners. Prior to the implementation of the new curriculum various trainings are conducted every year to teachers per curriculum level. Learner centered strategies, approaches and assessment methods are introduced to teachers for them to be equipped and effective to implement the curriculum.

Preparedness

Preparedness was the emerging topic revealed based from the transcribed data from the interview. Training is very important to teachers to ensure their effectiveness in implementing the curriculum. For enhancement of skills and proper practice of the curriculum, teachers receive training in seminar for them to deliver the complete essence of education of that conforms to the objectives of the curriculum. The institution offering teacher education has been oriented to prepare future teachers more functional and competent in the field (Pantić, N., & Wubbels, T., 2010). It was inevitable for teachers to meet problems in the actual teaching learning process therefore preparation must be concrete and tough to meet the demands and goals of the curriculum, to elicit tangible results of learning, thus, six (6) teachers stressed that:

“The trainings of the teachers are inadequate, so we can’t demand of a high quality, perfect and meaningful education if the preparation of teachers is insufficient. In addition, we encountered many problems, first is the readiness of a teacher... for our readiness, we have only a week of seminar, training seminar, for preparation for the implementation of K to12, so my boss... my department head said that during their time when the curriculum was changed they have training and seminar for 1 month but for us, we only have 5 days or 1 week”.

Likewise, despite trainings, conferences and seminars attended, they are not still confident on how to implement the curriculum. Majority of the teachers are not prepared to implement the new curriculum. The approaches and strategies being introduced to them were vague. They are anticipating problems in the implementation of the curriculum. Thus, majority (7 out of 10) of the respondents stated:

“There are so many problems, one of course the teachers are not prepared. Most probably we will wait 10 years for the best outcome of K to12 curriculum. As of now, teaching materials and the training of all teachers are not enough. So, how can we demand best quality, perfect or meaningful if the preparation is very insufficient?”

Results of the study is in consonance with the findings of Waters, A., & Vilches, M. L. C. (2008) indicated that implementation of basic education curriculum is difficult to achieve in the classroom level because the curriculum design is not compatible with the teaching situation due to lack of instructional materials and professional support.

The effective roll-out of the K to12 curriculum is challenge to the teachers especially in the teaching learning process. Teachers’ readiness is also another factor to consider in the implementation of the K to12 curriculum in the Philippines context. In first 2 years of the teachers in teaching under K to12 curriculum, the teachers encountered many problems such as lack of preparation and insufficient learning facilities. Thus, all teacher respondents agreed and stated:

The first common problem that the teachers encounter in teaching K to 12 curriculum is resources such as book, classroom and some teaching facilities and equipments. Second, the training of the teachers and the last is the lack of preparation considering the large number of students if the K to 12 is fully implemented.

Results of the study agree with the findings of Grossman & Thompson (2008), found that the teachers spent more time on searching for instructional materials for their classes. On the contrary, the author argued that beginning and inspiring teachers need critique and analyze the curriculum materials, during their college days in teacher education and even continuing in the institutions of their more experienced teachers or colleagues.

In addition, results of the study agree with the statement in the written article by Rockland Diane S.Carpinelli, JohnBurr-Alexander, LevelleHirsch, Linda S.Kimmel, Howard, R., Rockland, R., Bloom, D. S., Carpinelli, J., Burr-Alexander, L., Hirsch, L. S., & Kimmel, H. (2010) revealed that majority of the teachers admitted that they have not been trained to integrate relevant STEM topics teaching-learning process. In addition, enhancement of teacher’s professional development, preparing future teachers, and development of curriculum materials for STEM should be addressed to achieve state and national content standards.

On the contrary, Crisol, LG, and Alamillo, JB (2014) conducted the study to determine the attitudes of the major stakeholders of the two rural public elementary schools from Northern Mindanao, Philippines, the results revealed that majority of the respondents have positive attitude towards the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum. They believed that additional 2 years of education will provides graduates with ample knowledge and skills.

Initiative and Creative

Initiative is the persistent theme as based on the answers of teachers during in-depth interview conducted. Initiative is very important to teachers to make new things to comply with the demands of high standard. The K to 12 Basic Education Program aims to produce Filipino graduates who are holistically-developed with 21st century skills prepared for higher education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012).

In 2012, the basic education was successfully changed into K to12 curriculum that is comprised of 12 years, six years in elementary and six years in secondary. Teachers are the key to achieve the vision of K to12 educational program. They must be equipped with the skills and knowledge to mold students to become productive and responsible individuals. Teachers must use strategies that are aligned to a set of learners, thus:

“So, I always believe that everyone is very creative enough to transfer learning from the perspective of K to12 curriculum”.

An effective teacher chooses the most effective strategy fit to the needs and interests of the learners. It is important for the teacher to determine the group of learners and identify what already knew by the children as well what they can do. Often, if one strategy doesn’t work, another will, (DAP, 2009). Despite of the problems encountered in the K to12 curriculum teachers believed that they overcome such problems, as six (6) teachers stated:

“In coping techniques I know that all teachers especially in rubric making as assessment tools are very creative and initiative, we can cope with stress, demands in classroom, demands in administration, so I always believe that each of us is very creative enough to transfer learning. Filipino teachers can cope even if they lack training in K to12 curriculum. Filipinos are creative and innovative, indeed”.

In K to12 curriculum, learners are always put at the center of the learning process. Students use module that contains more activities to foster meaningful learning. Likewise, the focus of the new curriculum is outcomes-based or performance- based education. Teachers are not the sole source of knowledge but rather the facilitator of teaching-learning process.

To cope up with the standards of the K to12 curriculum, teachers are ingenious enough to employ different strategies to elicit holistic learning towards the learners. One of the respondents expressly stated and supported by the rest of the participants, thus:

And during performance, I noticed that my students always need some or more discussion to clarify what they don't fully understand, thus, we need to be creative and employ some initiative for them to understand. So clarification and more discussion are needed so that the students will understand the lesson or what we are emphasizing for them to be learned. Another problem of the K to 12 curriculum is the module, so, during the first two years of the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum, we only have modules for first and second grading in two years of the implementation of the new curriculum.

According to SEAMEO-INNOTECH (2012), the desired learning outcomes of the K to12 are defined in expectancies in the form of content and performance standards. Content standards are what the students should know (facts and information), what they do (process or skills), and what understanding they construct as they process the information. The students are expected not only to understand but also to demonstrate what they learn, as a proof or evidence of learning. With this teachers' commitment and dedication are of great important. While the performance standards are what students do or how they use their learning and understanding in real life situation. The students are expected to produce products and/or performances to prove that they can apply what they learn in real-life situations.

Leithwood, Menzies, & Jantzi (1994) draw on research that considers out-of-school conditions, in-school conditions, and transformational leadership, the article constructs a strategy for building teachers' commitment to change, demonstrating that alterability of variables by facilitators of teacher commitment can positively influence curriculum reform.

The success implementation of the K to12 curriculum could be seen after several years. K to12 curriculum will suits to the needs of the learners concerning in terms of high standard education system. Learners had been taught under the K to12 curriculum which is vertically aligned to the course that they will take on college.

Learner Centered Approach

Reform based curriculum offer a promising avenue to support greater student achievement. Teachers frequently adapt innovative curriculum for the classrooms, (Leithwood, K., Menzies, T., & Jantzi, D.,1994). Learner centered approach is the recurrent theme arises during the conduct of the interview with the teachers. K to12 curriculum targets that every students should master the competencies and gain lifelong learning skills for a productive life. The new curriculum focuses on understanding for mastery that focuses on the optimum development of the learners. The curriculum is centered to learners that use integrity, inquiry based and constructive approaches to develop the competencies of learners. In K to12 curriculum learners is expected to produce product and performances as a proof of tangible results of learning. Teachers serve as facilitators of learning and the learners were thought how to learn were in they become independent and creators of learning, thus the teacher stressed that:

“The learner must be at the center stage rather than the teacher, so that they can explore, analyze and solve their own problems”

K to 12 curriculum focused on learner-centered curriculum rather than teacher-centered which consider the nature and the needs of the learners. In addition, the K to 12 curriculum responds to the local and global needs. Magliaro, J., & Ezeife, A. (2008) stated that beginning teachers need to integrate computer technology in the curriculum especially in the classroom. Teachers teaching style and the application of technology have the potential to change education.

The K to 12 Curriculum is focused on the learner's acquisition of the 21st century skills as follows: learning and innovation skills; information, media, and technology skills; effective communication skills; teaming, collaboration and interpersonal skill; life and career skills, (SEAMEO-INNOTECH, 2012). Thus, public school systems are expected to promote a wide variety of skills and accomplishments in their students, including both academic achievement and the development of broader competencies, such as creativity, adaptability, and global awareness. The latter outcomes, which are often referred to as "21st century skills" or "21st century competencies," have recently taken a more central role in policy discussions, because they are seen as critical components of college and career readiness, (Soland, J., Hamilton, L. S., & Stecher, B. M. 2013).

“K to 12 is learner centered that we always end up with content understanding which we provide to learners plus our own words and wisdom, and that is the beauty of K to 12... Everything should come from the students and the teachers will guide... to improve the learning process curriculum”.

The teaching materials should be adequate enough along the learning process to achieve the absolute outcome of K to 12 curriculum. Accordingly the K to 12 curriculum produce graduates holistically developed, equipped with 21st century skills and prepared them for employment, entrepreneurship, or higher level of education (SEAMEO-INNOTECH, 2012). The real essence of the K to 12 curriculum focuses on the learners and is always put at the limelight. Other participants expressed their feelings and opinions about how to be effective and efficient in teaching the K to 12 curriculum:

“The best techniques in teaching K to 12 curriculum are to invest your time and money here. You have to secure all teaching materials that you needed inside the classroom, giving time to consult your students, assist them, mentor them in order to improve your teaching skills. The learners must be in the center stage rather than the teacher, so that they can explore, analyze and solve their own problem. In this strategy, the learners become independent and enjoy studying”.

Results of the study is in consonance with the study by Fogleman, J., McNeill, K. L., & Krajcik, J. (2011) investigate how teachers’ curricular adaptations (amount of time, level of completion, and activity structures), teacher self-efficacy (teacher comfort and student understanding), and teacher experience enacting the unit influenced student learning. Teachers who had previously taught the inquiry-oriented curriculum had greater student gains. For activity structure, students who completed investigations themselves had greater learning gains compared to students in classrooms who observed their teacher completing the investigations as demonstrations. These findings suggest that it can take time for teachers to effectively use innovative science curriculum. Furthermore, this study provides evidence for the importance of having students actively engaging in inquiry investigations to develop understandings of key science concepts.

Summary of the Findings

The secondary school teachers in this study often discussed the feelings of unpreparedness of teachers and the lack of instructional materials, facilities and equipments. This discussion point was evident and documented by the researchers in the gathered field notes and observations where the central and general phenomenon: “We are not prepared to implement the K to 12 curriculum due to lack of instructional materials, facilities and equipments but we can do our best we could”, emerged among the public secondary school teachers. This central phenomenon is reflected in the experienced difficulty of teachers to teach and implement the K to 12 curriculum, yet they showed their eagerness and determination to do their best they could regardless of their present situation. Theoretically, their strong sense of enthusiasm and determinations despite of the experienced hardship of the participants is attributed to the influence of cultural values, norms, and characteristics of being a Filipino citizen.

Coping strategy which developed and emerged in response to the sentiments of unpreparedness and dedication of teachers also reflect the central phenomenon. Their being initiative and creative reflects to their dedication and commitment as public servant. Trying to do their best as they could in order to help implement the new curriculum where there is no other alternative but to support the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum. Teacher helps them to motivate themselves to answer the call and need of public service for the common good of the educational system in the Philippines.

In addition, teaching performance of teachers was also affected due to the abrupt implementation of the K to 12 curriculum. Learner centered approach was employed in the implementation of K to 12 curriculum because the focus is on outcomes-based or performance-based education. From the content based to outcomes-based education reflect to the central phenomenon as the learner centered approach. Thus, public school teachers expected to promote a wide variety of skills and development of broader competencies such as creativity, adaptability and global competitiveness which anchor on the 21st century skills.

Conclusions

Secondary school teachers are experiencing problems due to the transition of the curriculum most especially in the teaching learning process. They have a problem in preparing various rubrics for authentic assessment, preparing instructional materials; and encourage students to participate in various activities this is because teachers are in the adjustment period. They also respond to the expectations and demands of the educational system in the country - to become a globally competitive. In addition, they were not fully prepared to implement the new curriculum for the reason that the trainings and workshops were insufficient. Teachers were innovative enough to fill the gaps and they were able to handle and cope with the demands of the curriculum. The teachers were using different coping strategies to improve their classroom instruction and to meet the terms and demands of the new curriculum to improve their instructions in order to produce globally competitive life-long learners. They utilized varied classroom management techniques to provide a conducive and quality learning milieu. The teachers also demonstrate in depth knowledge of the subject matter and used different approaches and techniques that suits to the set of learners and to yield the desired outcomes. Teachers exerted more effort to exhibit competitiveness and expertise to overcome the challenges brought about by the reforms in

the educational system. They experienced difficulty in terms of resourcefulness to overcome such problems that come upon and to improve their performance. Learner-centered approach was one of the schemes utilized by the teachers in the K to 12 curriculum.

Recommendations

The government through the Department of Education should conduct additional trainings and workshops to all teachers who are directly affected by the new curriculum. They should address the needs of teachers especially the facilities, equipments, books and instructional materials to be used in day to day activities of teachers.

Curriculum planners should also provide modular instructional guide to teachers, if possible curriculum planners/developers should create a specific teaching strategy and authentic method of assessment for every subject matter.

Teachers should find way to solve problem and should be resourceful to improve their classroom instructions to meet the demands of the curriculum. Teachers should learn techniques in preparing instructional materials to encourage students' participation by making their lessons interesting that suits to a set of learners. They should use varied strategies to provide quality instruction and to produce globally competitive lifelong learners. In addition, they must find some means to grow professionally for advancement for their advantage. They must willingly assess their strengths and weaknesses so that they can maximize their full potentials.

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