



Navigating Distance Learning: The Realities and Hurdles Encountered by Special Education Teachers in Masbate, Philippines Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract - This study investigates the dynamic landscape of distance learning in the context of Special Education (SPED) during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the lived experiences and challenges encountered by SPED teachers in Masbate, Philippines. The transition to remote education posed unique difficulties for this group of educators, and this research seeks to shed light on their experiences, as well as to propose practical solutions to enhance the effectiveness of SPED teaching in the face of unprecedented challenges. The research employed a thematic analysis methodology to extract meaningful insights from the data. Several crucial findings emerged from the analysis and recommendations were given. This research serves as a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, and all stakeholders involved in SPED education, offering insights and actionable recommendations to navigate the challenges of distance learning in the COVID-19 era and beyond.

Keywords – special education, teachers, learners, special educational needs

I. INTRODUCTION

The primary aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic is its impact on public health. It has brought about significant transformations on a global scale, not only in the realm of economics and business but also in the field of education. Many nations have made the decision to shut down educational institutions, including schools, colleges, and universities. In the Philippines, the Department of Education, tasked with the responsibility of ensuring equal educational opportunities and promoting academic excellence throughout the country, has stressed the importance of continuing education during this health crisis. As part of the Department of Education's immediate and long-term strategies, Secretary Leonor M. Briones has introduced the Basic Education – Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP). This plan serves as a framework for the department to deliver high-quality primary education during the COVID-19 pandemic, all while prioritizing the health, safety, and well-being of all DepEd students, educators, and staff.

During the initial Ministerial Policy e-Forum organized by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), Secretary Briones emphasized that the Department of Education (DepEd) is committed to its first and foremost principle, which aligns with the President's directive: safeguarding the safety, health, and overall well-being of students, teachers, and staff while mitigating the spread of COVID-19. This commitment is coupled with the imperative of maintaining educational continuity.

In the face of the ongoing crisis, the Basic Education – Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) has been thoughtfully developed to align with the "new normal" and to remain consistent with the constitutional obligation to uphold every citizen's right to quality education. To address the varying circumstances related to

local health, resource availability, and the learners' specific contexts within schools and communities, educational institutions are given the flexibility to adopt one or a combination of diverse learning delivery methods. This includes Distance Learning, a teaching approach where instructors and students are physically separated during the instructional process. As James and Gardner (1995) noted, Distance Learning is a deliberately structured mode of education, facilitated by an instructor, and characterized by physical and temporal separation between the learners and the educator.

Keegan (1995) presented a comprehensive definition of distance education and training, asserting that these approaches result from the technological separation of the teacher and the learner. This separation liberates the student from the necessity of traveling to a fixed location at a set time to meet with a specific educator for the purpose of receiving instruction. According to these criteria, we observe that space separates the learner and the instructor, but not necessarily time. An example of this is the real-time transmission of compressed video, where live video instruction stands out as the predominant form of contemporary distance learning.

Shuck and Lambert's (2020) paper also highlights three distinct stages in the transition to this altered teaching method for special education teachers: the establishment of initial connections, the creation of routines, and the shift towards academic content. Although this shift may present challenges for both teachers and parents at home, their collaborative support and guidance play a crucial role in facilitating the education of students with special needs.

Nonetheless, the alteration in educational policy presents a significant hurdle for special education (SPED) teachers and learners with specific educational requirements (LSENs) who typically derive advantages from in-person interactions, teacher demonstrations, and physical guidance. In addition, the integration of modern technologies introduces another obstacle, particularly for learners without internet access or the financial means to acquire technological resources. This might explain why many schools in the Philippines, especially in Masbate province, have shown a preference for printed-modular distance learning methods over internet-based instruction.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researchers employed a qualitative research methodology, specifically utilizing a phenomenological approach, to delve into the lived experiences of special education teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach focused on describing and interpreting the significance of these experiences, shedding light on the challenges encountered and the strategies employed by SPED teachers as they navigated the implementation of distance learning methods amid the global health crisis.

The study honed in on the specific challenges faced by special education (SPED) teachers at Jose Zurbito Sr. Elementary School (JZSES) within the Schools Division Office of Masbate City as they tackled the intricacies of delivering instruction, managing learning resources, overseeing the distribution and retrieval processes, and providing support to parents at home.

To collect and analyze the data, the researchers used an unstructured interview questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in accordance with the study's objectives and was reviewed by their experienced research advisor to ensure data accuracy. To maintain transparency and reliability in capturing the experiences of the SPED teachers during the pandemic, the researchers sought consent from the school principal and the SPED faculty through a formal request letter that included the interview questionnaire. Subsequently, the researchers and the respondents scheduled limited face-to-face interviews, during which the researchers recorded the responses.

The interview process consisted of five main questions, each supplemented by four sub-questions. These questions revolved around the following topics: instructional delivery experiences, challenges related to accessing learning resources, the processes of distribution and retrieval, the need for parents to engage in teaching-assisted practices, and the support requirements of the SPED teachers.

The primary methodology employed in this study was phenomenological theory, which aimed to

elucidate the real-life experiences of SPED teachers during the pandemic era. The objective was to collect the personal experiences related to this phenomenon, thereby enhancing the world's comprehension of its significance, akin to gaining a profound understanding of the essence of a subject (van Manen, 1990).

To ensure the accuracy of the analysis, reliability techniques were employed, encompassing the recording of verbatim field notes and the use of a video recorder.

Additionally, Moustakas's (1994) inductive data analysis method was applied, utilizing the unprocessed data to derive themes through interpretations by the researchers. Subsequently, each individual video and transcript underwent multiple viewings and readings to immerse the researchers in the data. All transcripts were revisited to emphasize the pivotal concepts.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Q1A. What distance learning modalities are you utilizing in this new normal? What do you think is the most suited modality for your learners in this time of pandemic?

In the context of the "new normal," special education teachers were questioned about their choice of distance learning modalities and their opinions on the most suitable approach for their learners amidst the pandemic. Among the special education teachers within the Schools Division Office of Masbate City, a prominent theme that emerged was the adoption of blended learning, which encompasses a combination of 'face-to-face instruction along with one or a mix of online distance learning, modular distance learning, and TV/Radio-Based Instruction,' as per the Department of Education's definition for the pandemic era.

According to Hoic-Bozic et al. (2009), blended learning, considered a form of e-learning, has gained increasing popularity, particularly in the transition from traditional educational methods to e-learning. However, the research conducted by Pace and Mellard (2016) suggested that no significant improvements in reading achievement were solely attributable to the use of blended learning in special education groups.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that 60% of the teacher-respondents expressed a preference for blended learning as the most suitable distance learning modality for their students with special educational needs, given the challenges posed by the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis. This viewpoint finds support in the work of Moskal et al. (2013), which cites the growth of blended learning at the University of Central Florida as a model, demonstrating that, with sufficient support and preparation, blended learning may lead to substantial institutional transformation.

Q1B. How do you give instructions to your learners? How do you instruct the parents/caregivers on what to do? Are they of great help in the delivery of lessons?

All of the SPED teachers responded in one theme: the instructions are being given through the use of modern-day devices.

"I give instructions to my students through text, call, and messenger. I utilize almost all forms of communication just to make sure that the instructions/message are understood." (S3)

A statement provided by one of the respondents strengthens the importance of technology in these trying times. Teachers are using all forms of modern communication including phone calls and text messages, and internet-driven devices and applications such as Facebook Messenger and other social media platforms. Through these advanced machines, communicating with students, especially when giving instructions and other related learning tasks, paves a way to make teaching-learning processes during this pandemic become less stressful and easier. As enumerated by Talebian, et al. (2014) that technology has advantages and one of which is it improves group cooperation by allowing students and professors to communicate with one another through chatting, phone and video conferences, interactive TV, and virtual classrooms while also removing physical barriers. Learners are more engaged in learning and interaction activities (Faraj Allahi & Zarif Sanayei, 2009).

"...Instructions given are short and direct to the point to make sure that the desired output/result/objective for the particular activity will be achieved by the learner. In terms of signing, I make sure to first teach the parents on how to sign the images on the LAS so they could teach the child the correct way of signing at home." (S2)

The above-mentioned statement narrates the plight of SPED Teachers in giving instructions to learners with special educational needs (LSENs), especially those who are deaf. Henceforth, only sign language (SL) could assist these groups of students. Thus, in order to deliver the precise instructions to students, teachers would first teach the parents the basic sign languages.

This scenario is not the result of students' hearing losses; it is the result of how and what we teach them. We can only maximize deaf children's educational prospects if we completely comprehend how they learn and what they truly grasp from various communication modalities—as well as the interplay between the two (Marschark, et al., 2005).

Furthermore, all respondents' answers emerged with one single theme: parents, guardians, and caregivers are of great help in the delivery of lessons during this tough time.

"... Since the majority of our parents have participated in the project, which is led by the SPED teachers, we are confident that they will be able to better assist their children." (S5)

The statement presented above emphasizes the vital roles of parents, guardians, and caregivers in aiding the education system in delivering quality education through the implementation of distance learning.

Q1C. How do you know that the lessons and subject disciplines being taught are understood by your learners? Are the learning competencies achieved?

Requesting parents to take photos, and record videos, and other forms of documentation is the emergent theme in the SPED teachers' responses.

"I ask the parents to take a video of their kids while performing the task so that I can evaluate their learning performances and assess if the competencies are achieved." (S1)

This simply implies that teachers can also evaluate the student's learning using modern equipment like cameras and video recorders. It helps them to assess the growth and development of their students through the presented pictures and videos. During this trying time, technology has made its way to help teachers in doing their jobs as educators in tracking the performances of their learners and applying remediation if there is a demand.

Moreover, SPED teachers detailed that if the submitted outputs were answered correctly with the guidance of parents and the learning competencies were achieved, the feeling of satisfaction cloaked them.

Q2A. What learning resources and teaching materials are you using in your class? Why did you decide to use that material?

Materials from Transition Curriculum emerged as the theme in the SPED teachers' responses:

"I refer and base my learning materials from our transition curriculum..." (S2)

Quijano (2007) introduced the Philippine Model of Transition, which focuses on enabling each unique learner to participate in community activities and work. Participants in the program are expected to participate fully, be empowered, and be productive. Daily living skills, personal and social skills, and occupational counseling and preparation are the vital curricular domains in the transition program.

Moreover, another theme emerged:

"Last year I have been using self-learning modules and learning activity sheets which were developed to address the educational needs of the pupils and some of them I got from the internet from the other regions..." (S4)

This theme proves that learning resources vary for every learner with different special educational needs. Thus, some of them utilize self-made learning supplies and at the same time use the modules provided by the Department of Education – Regional Office (Bicol Region).

In the realm of special education, curriculum development is considerably diverse. Because of the nature and demands of special learners, the process must be adaptable to any changes, revisions, or variations in the curriculum (Pawilen, 2018).

This is the very reason why Pawilen, Sibayan, Manuel, and Buhat had proposed a curriculum framework for the Transition Program Curriculum. It consists of five learning areas: (1) Livelihood, (2) Academic, (3) Enrichment, (4) Prevocational, and (5) Care. All of these learning areas are intended to assist and prepare Filipino students. Learners with exceptional needs must be able to engage in business, continue

their education, or live productive lives. This framework may be used to plan and construct a special education curriculum for the Philippines' K to 12 basic education systems.

Q2B. Are the teaching and learning materials available in your school? Is it purchased from you own pocket, or donated by stakeholders or provided by your school? How supportive are your school, parents, and other stakeholders?

60% of the special education teachers confirmed that learning materials and other educational resources are available in their school. However, these are limited. This conforms to the statement given below:

"Yes, the learning materials are available, but it is also limited. For example, we have limited books and resources for FSL so what I do is search online for downloadable pictures and videos. Then I make my own short video for the learner to study." (S2)

This has become the dilemma that most teachers are facing amidst COVID-19 health crisis. Indeed, learning materials are available, yet it cannot hide the fact that these are on its limited copies. Thus, teachers tend to reproduce other copies that would cater to the number of their learners.

In the context of the learning materials needed in the teaching-learning process, the theme emerged is teachers purchase the educational tools from their own pocket.

"Some materials were purchased and provided if we do have available SPED fund/MOOE but in most cases since we are the ones who make the learning materials it also comes from our own pockets..." (S2)

This was proven true through a study conducted by Kaufhold, et.al. (2006) in South Texas schools of Region II, United States of America. According to the findings, respondents who were personally questioned stated that a lack of enough resources, along with the requirement of utilizing out-of-pocket money to complete their teaching obligations, produced a significant level of irritation, leading to burnout in some teachers.

Nonetheless, schools and other stakeholders like the parents, community and local government units are providing them with the required educational supplies and learning resources.

"... and for the community we were able to tap the line agencies of the government like the persons' with disabilities affairs office and they've been helping us since then." (S4)

This strengthens the cooperation and participation of the external stakeholders and the school management team. Also, with their help, it has facilitated the school's development.

Q2C. How did you know if the learning resources are efficient and effective? Do you recommend that to other SPED Teachers?

"If the competencies are met by providing correct answers or completing the tasks in the given activity. Also, if the skill learned is being applied in the day to day routine..." (S2)

Special education teachers reckoned that the efficiency and effectiveness of learning materials can be measured when the learning competencies are met, and lesson objectives are achieved by the learners. They believed that once the skill is learned, and the learner applies it everyday, there is a success in the teaching-learning process and the learning materials are effective and efficient.

This finding is supported by OpenLearn Create. This online educational platform believes Learning resources can help learners achieve greater success by assisting them in their learning. An educational video, for an instance, may bring fresh insights to a student, while an appealing worksheet may provide new opportunities to practice a new skill learned in class. This method facilitates learning by enabling the student to explore the knowledge on their own while also offering repetition. All learning resources, regardless of kind, have a purpose in student learning.

Q3A. What is your scheme in the distribution and retrieval of learning materials and resources?

All special education teachers responded in one theme, the distribution of learning modules and retrieval of answer sheets are being held every Thursday of the week. This is the fixed schedule given to parents for them to get the self-learning modules (SLMs) and to submit the answer sheets.

“The schedule of distribution and retrieval is every Thursday morning. They fill up the distribution/retrieval form, get the LAS, return the previous LAS and they are given instructions for the following week.” (S3)

Based on the Regional Memorandum No. 51 s., 2020 entitled, “Guidelines on the Distribution and Utilization of the Regionally Developed Self-Learning Modules (SLMs)”, paragraph no. 1 states that pursuant to the Department of Education Order No. 12, s. 2020 (Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year 2020-2021 in Light of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency), specifically on the provision of access to appropriate, quality learning resources, DepEd Region 5 through the Curriculum and Learning Management Division (CMLD) initiated the development of contextualized Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) which aim to provide learners with a basic material for continuity of learning.

Q3B. How do you deal with the pandemic since face-to-face class is not allowed?

“I have learned to accept changes, new routines and new set-ups.” (S3)

Special education teachers perceived that accepting change and the things that grow with it should be embraced to move forward and to continuously deliver quality education amidst COVID-19 pandemic. Although this health crisis brought a paradigm shift in the education sector, they strongly believed that teachers should be flexible enough to cope up with the changes it caused. Since face-to-face classes are not yet allowed, SPED teachers become accustomed to the new normal, and become familiar with the distance learning modality.

“Actually since the beginning of the pandemic, it has been a really difficult year for us special education teachers. However, for our students we will try our best to provide what is best for them.” (S5)

The above-mentioned statement is a good manifestation of a committed teacher walking his pledge.

Q3C. What are the challenges and issues you faced in the distribution of learning materials and retrieval of answer sheets?

The emergent theme in this item is the attitude of parents, guardians, and caregivers which is ‘ningas cogon’ mentality.

“Some of the parents practice “ningas cogon” especially in the early months of this school year.” (S1)

The word "ningas cogon" is really a Filipino idiom that defines someone who is only good at the beginning of whatever they are doing. Ningas Cogon is the attitude that begins anything with zeal and passion, then loses interest and abandons it within a short period of time. It is leaving things unfinished.

Moreover, another emergent theme is parents not frequently showing up every distribution and retrieval schedule.

“Well, there are parents who come back 2 weeks after the return of LAS or sometimes not at all.” (S3)

This poses another challenge in the implementation of distance learning under the Basic Education – Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) of the Department of Education in the light of COVID-19 emergency crisis.

Q3D. How do you overcome these challenges? What strategies did you employ along distribution and retrieval phases of distance learning?

“... I do some visitation to parents who haven’t shown up consecutively during distribution...” (S2)

“... we conduct home visitation and interview the parents to determine why they are unable to visit the school to get the modules.” (S5)

The theme that emerged is conducting home visitation when parents were unable to be in the school to get the modules and submit the answer sheets. This has been one of the strategies they employ answering the challenge along distribution and retrieval.

By linking families to programs, supports, and resources, home visiting has long been an important part of meeting the needs of young children. Home visits, who are usually instructors, form bonds that go beyond parenting and child development (Lewy, 2020).

Also, Wright, et. al. (2018), suggested that the school system's teacher home visit program positively impacts students' academic and behavioral functioning in school. Students who have received a teacher home visit through the school system's program had significantly higher academic achievement, as well as motivation, when compared to similar school system students who did not receive a teacher home visit.

Another respondent added:

"(I) communicate with parents or guardians through phone calls and other platforms..." (S1)

To assist student development, teachers attempt to form partnerships with parents. Strong communication between home and school is essential to this relationship and the development of a feeling of community. Teachers must continue to grow and enhance their abilities in order to optimize successful communication with parents in these changing times.

This is supported by Kraft & Dougherty (2013) in their study. They found out that frequent teacher-family communication immediately increased student engagement as measured by homework completion rates, on-task behavior, and class participation.

Q4A. How do you communicate with the parents? How often? How do you ensure that there is learning at home?

Communication is tantamount to education is the theme common among five respondents. It shows that G.G. Brown is correct when he says that: "Communication is transfer of information from one person to another, whether or not it elicits confidence. But the information transferred must be understandable to the receiver." When we are given information and do accordingly then there is learning. The result showed a 100% or five out of five respondents, used text message, call, FB Messenger or video call to communicate to the parents of their LSENs, to make the parents understand and to explain further the activities and instructions of the modules as well as to receive feedback from the parents if their students are doing it correctly and properly.

"I communicate with my parents through text, calls and chat messages or during their time to get the module. We communicate as often as needed." (S2)

"Through online classes and parents taking videos of their children while doing the SLMs. I also conduct home visitation." (S4)

Communication, a humanizing process said George Gerbner in his journal "A Theory of Communication and its Implications for Teaching" which all the teacher-respondents are doing to their LSENs and their parents.

There are teachers teaching learners with difficulty in hearing, in remembering and concentrating while some are teaching children with autism, difficulty in communication, remembering, and concentrating. In constructivist theory, teachers are facilitators of learning, but because of pandemic, an ideal situation occurs wherein the parents/guardians are hands-on in the learning process of their children. It is during this time that you can see and feel the collaboration of teachers and parents for continuity of learning of their children. Here it is not only the teachers who are the facilitators but also the parents as well.

Q4B. How do parents and/or caregivers react with the new normal? Are they fully equipped? What assistance is needed by SPED teachers in the implementation of distance learning modality along the need of parents to have teaching-assisted practice?

Hagger and Mcntyre (2000) explained that "teacher preparedness refers basically to the specific program which helps the teacher in developing quality and effective strategies in teaching and learning process". This kind of program is lacking in parents.

The common theme that presented in the result is the inexperienced of the parents in teaching LSENs which SPED teacher 1 (S1) mentioned. The teacher-respondents understood the plight of the parents that it will be difficult for them to teach their children at home. Teaching students with special educational needs, needs more effort in communicating to the teachers since most parents are not trained or equipped to teach LSENs.

“Some of them (parents) are not prepared but they are willing to assist their children through the guidance that we gave them.” (S1)

However, the researchers also observed that the parents tried their best in delivering the lessons. But still it is a fact that SPED teachers are more experienced in managing LSENs and in their case they have been teaching in SPED school for four to twelve years already. Experience is the best teacher according to Dewey’s Learning by Doing. Dedicated and committed teachers are what we need in this pandemic and these SPED teachers are worthy of emulation.

“Establish the parents-teacher partnership and trainings for the parents on how to control their children.” (S4)

During giving of feedback, the teachers knew that parents are not equipped to manage the learning of LSENs well so SPED teachers give more time and more follow-ups to the parents in elaborating the instructions. Sometimes they teach the parents how to do it properly. In this way they are already educating the parents in an informal setting.

Q4C. How do learners with special educational needs (LSENs) react with the new normal? Have they coped up?

Each teacher is handling different LSENs thus their approach to each student is different. Two themes emerged here: LSENs have coped-up to the new normal; and the difficulty when there is no presence of a teacher.

“Considering the nature of our LSENs I can say that they have coped-up.” (S3)

“They find it difficult to clarify a query because there is no immediate response from the teacher since the teacher is not physically present. They can’t also ask the parents because they do not know, especially in signing (sign language).” (S2)

According to psychology, coping-up or adjustment is the behavioral process by which humans and animals maintain equilibrium among their needs or between their needs and obstacles of their environments. This might be what the students of SPED teacher 2 (S2) is doing since she is handling 7-23 years old LSENs and this is already the second year in adjusting to this new normal. While three out of five said that their LSENs are having difficulty without their teacher. In social learning theory of Albert Bandura, he stated that people learn and imitate behaviors they have observed in other people. Dealing with LSENs is what the teachers are trained to do and LSENs mostly observe and imitate their teachers, especially in sign language.

Q5. What assistance is needed by SPED teachers in the implementation of distance learning modality along: instructional delivery, learning resources, distribution and retrieval phase and teaching-assisted practice to parents?

“Funds for communication expenses.” (S5)

The common theme for instructional delivery is “fund” with a 100% score as what SPED teacher 5 (S5) stated since he is handling children with down-syndrome. Every public school has its MOOE (Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses), thus making special education and internet connection programs, part of the computed budget of MOOE. Since we are in a pandemic era teachers and parents put more budget in connectivity for the learning of their children. Without a good connection and a good gadget there will be a hindrance to learning. It is a given fact that we have a poor internet connection in the province of Masbate. However, we rely so much on internet connectivity and it is our major tool these days to learn. With this reality, the respondents’ result for the theme of learning resources is more references or materials for SPED which got four out of five.

“Additional resources and references to learning materials.” (S2)

“SLMs (self-learning modules)” (S5)

Lastly, for the distribution and retrieval phase the theme is having equipment to comply with the health protocols got three over five, while others chose funds to buy the equipment and to assist the parents.

“Alcohol dispenser” (S5)

“Maybe the financial assistance for the parents when it comes to their fare because there are some instances that could not come because they do not have money.” (S4)

School is part of the community and to show support for the education of the children, stakeholders and school should be partners in raising a young mind to become a better and productive individual in the society. Functionalists say that it is through education that equips people to perform different functional roles in society. The school itself cannot stand alone without its stakeholders. With the fact that the school funds could not cater all the needs of its teachers and learners with special educational needs, it basically requires strong bonds and consistent assistance from stakeholders. Hence, it needs its feet to continue moving forward.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study successfully surfaced the lived experiences, challenges, and strategies employed by special education teachers in Masbate City Division implementing distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic. Upon interviewing 5 SPED teachers, the following are the salient findings: As to the challenges faced, the following are the conclusions drawn: (1) No physical interaction between teacher and student lessens the teaching-learning process. (2) Lacking SPED learning resources and materials forces teachers to purchase such using their own money. (3) Inactive participation of parents during distribution and retrieval schedule hinders the delivery of timely, relevant, and quality instruction to LSENs. (4) Knowledge insufficiency of parents to SPED practices hampers lesson integration.

Moreover, the strategies commonly employed by SPED teachers in implementing distance learning during COVID-19 includes: (1) In the delivery of instruction, SPED teachers conduct orientation every distribution time, and remediation conferences to parents every retrieval. Also, they utilize modern devices to communicate with their learners and parents. (2) To alleviate the burden of lacking SPED learning resources, teachers made their own learning materials; modified others to appropriately suit the needs of learners with special educational needs. (3) SPED teachers conducting home visitations is their answer every time parents tend not to visit the school to get the modules for their students and submit answer sheets during distribution and retrieval timetable. (4) Frequent communication with parents and LSENs helps the parents, guardians, and caregivers to assist the learner with the appropriate SPED learnings and practices that a child needs.

Furthermore, SPED teachers need sufficient fund, adequate supply of localized, contextualized, and indigenized instructional and learning materials addressing difficulties and disabilities of learners, strong support from stakeholders (parents, community, LGU, and school), and frequent and regular capability trainings to parents, guardians, and caregivers (virtual and limited face-to-face).

Thus, in the light of the foregoing findings and conclusions, the researchers recommend that Masbate City Learning Resource and Management System (SDO-LRMS) must develop learning resources on special education (SPED) and prepare instructional materials developmentally appropriate for the learners with special educational needs (LSENs).

With the data gathered, it is further recommended that the Schools Division Office of Masbate City may institutionalize a mechanism in which the teachers' innovative special education strategies, methodologies and crafted learning materials are assessed, monitored, and evaluated for the use of other SPED teachers.

Furthermore, the study recommends that the Curriculum and Implementation Division (CID) may collaborate with the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Masbate City through the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) to develop a training program or webinar to parents, guardians, and caregivers all about special education practices and invite keynote speakers that specializes in psychology and occupational therapy that will help them fully understand their sons' and daughters' behavioral and psychological needs.

Hence, the findings of this research can serve as the baseline for further studies concerning SPED teachers and LSENs. Future studies may also investigate deeper into the lived experiences of each type of learning difficulties and disabilities.

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