

## **THE INFLUENCE OF COLLEGE EXPERIENCES ON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' TEACHING EXPERIENCES: BASIS FOR INTERVENTION**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigated the influence of college experiences to the teaching practices of the selected Senior High School teachers in the subject school. The study employed the phenomenological research design covering 40 teacher-participants to answer the main problem: How have teachers' experiences in college influenced their teaching practices? Two focused group discussions provided a more in-depth approach to the research question. Three major themes emerged from the interview: college experiences, teaching challenges, and assessment of teaching preparation. From the study, it was drawn that college experiences play a very vital role in the development of Senior High School teachers. They gain pedagogical, social, and personal skills in college. It is therefore recommended that college programs align their subjects to the subjects being taught in Senior High School to ensure students are ready when they step into the world of teaching.

**Keywords:** Senior High School, college experiences, teaching practices, teaching challenges

Republic Act 10533, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Curriculum, lays out the new framework of the Philippine educational system which consists of 13 years of basic education beginning from kinder up to two years in senior high school (Official Gazette, 2013). It aims to offer every Filipino learner, especially the poor, an access to quality education which has a sound curriculum and is within international standards (Capistrano, 2015). It is implemented

as the Philippines' response to the ASEAN integration which targets a unified and prosperous Southeast Asian region. To be able to qualify in the standards set by the ASEAN, the Senior High School Program was born.

The Senior High curriculum is composed of core, applied, and specialized subjects. Core subjects are those which are taken up by all students regardless of the track or strand. Applied subjects, on the other hand, are taken by all the students but the content and application of each subject are fitted to the needs and requirements of the track or strand. Specialized subjects are those which are specific to each particular track or strand (Llego, 2015).

Since the Senior High School is a new program, there comes a need to hire new teachers. The Department of Education (DepEd) already hired several new teachers to teach this new level of education. It even convinced some junior high school teachers to teach in the SHS. Also, a number of trainings have already been done and are already lined up for the new teachers. This is in recognition that most of the SHS teachers are new teachers; some of them are even not education graduates, while others are not even exposed to pre-service trainings which can prepare them for the future challenges of teaching (Philstar, 2015).

Teacher education programs are aimed at challenging the beliefs of teaching and learning among teacher aspirants. Each program hopes to create "pedagogical awareness" among students and guide them in their professional search of identity from being a student to being a teacher (Selinger, et al., 2010). Several authors relate various activities related to becoming a teacher such as teacher development (McCart Cramer & Hwang, 2001) professional growth and development (Kagan, 1992), identity development/construction (Gratch, 2000), and learning to teach (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996).

The field of teaching is not a very simple profession. It is highly demanding. This is why teachers experience a number of challenges when they enter the world of teaching. Some teachers experience fear (Safari et al., 2012). Some have instructional challenges which may include lack of knowledge in the delivery of the lesson and handling a diverse set of learners (Vasquez et al., 2016) while others lack subject matter expertise (Tok, 2010). There are also those who encounter difficulty in classroom management. The most common classroom management problems include handling noisy and boisterous students, students physically hurting each other, students cursing each other, and even the teacher, and students always seeking attention (McPhillimy, 1996 as cited in Merç & Subaşı, 2015). Lastly, teachers also experience problems in student-teacher relationship. There are a number of “dilemma boundaries” that teachers need to follow (Autman, 2008).

All these problems really post challenges in the lives of teachers. These challenges either make or break the teachers’ fates. Therefore, they really must be prepared even before entering the profession and one way of doing this is the teachers being exposed to pre-service training.

With this in mind, the researcher wanted to explore the influence of the teachers’ college experience on their teaching experiences. Since Senior High School is a new program, there are a limited number of studies exploring the relationship between the two variables. Hence, the researcher sought to answer the question: How have teachers’ experiences in college influenced their teaching practices?

The findings of this study may be beneficial to teachers and administrators as they may be provided with different insights and information on the influence of college experiences on teaching experiences. Interventions may also be done to ensure that teachers improve their teaching experiences.

## **Scope and Delimitation**

This study involved 40 Senior High School teachers from the target school. Most of them were fresh graduates and were in their first year of teaching. All these teachers agreed to answer the written interview questionnaire. However, only 11 agreed to be part of the focused group discussions.

## **College Experiences and Teaching Experiences**

In a study by Flores and Day (2006), they found out that prior experience of teachers as students serve as one strong pillar they bring when they enter the teaching profession. Former teachers, whether they left positive or negative memories, served as crucial factors in the development of the new teacher. The participants recalled their experiences when they were younger and mentioned both positive and negative experiences. Most of the respondents described the teachers that they admired most and those who influenced them to choose the same profession. Teachers who were flexible, motivating, and fair were the most recurrent characteristics of the influential teachers. These teachers, together with their styles of teaching, became the point of reference among the respondents of the study.

On the other hand, Bigelow and Walker (n.d) stressed that teacher education programs help in the construction of the knowledge base of teachers which help them decide what they need to know and do to make their practice productive, how they learn, and how their knowledge develop as they begin with their profession. But, the nature of the knowledge base of the teachers also is dependent on the context where the teaching takes place. Furthermore, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) differentiated knowledge for practice and knowledge in practice. According to them, knowledge for practice refers to the formal knowledge that a student learns in schools like subject matter content, instructional

strategies, and effective classroom practices. On the other hand, knowledge in practice is that which is experienced in real-life classroom situations. Through this practice in teaching, the student-teacher gets to see “peculiarities of everyday life in schools and classrooms.”

Sleigh and Ritzer (n.d) discussed another aspect of a person being developed in college. They began by saying that teachers develop the knowledge of the students. They also teach critical thinking, communication skills, and even time management. But, very little attention is given to developing the students socially even if the social skills of students can be considered of equal value to other knowledge and skills for the achievement of academic and non-academic success. In the real world of work, interactions are inevitable. Therefore, it really is still the duty of the teachers to develop the professional social skills of the students.

Sleigh and Ritzer (n.d) also defined professional social skills saying that these skills are those that aid in the interactions of individuals or groups. They also laid some possible reasons for the underdevelopment of professional social skills of the students. One reason given is that the skill itself is not given proper emphasis in school. Second, students may have lacked role models of professionalism whether in school or at home. Third, the faculty members may not be used to giving feedback and correcting the misbehaviors of the students. Lastly, some students do not have the intrinsic motivation to develop this skill.

To address these and enhance more the benefits of field experience, it has been recommended that focus should be given to programs within the universities providing authentic classroom experiences. These experiences also need to be integrated continuously and repeatedly in the curriculum and all the activities therein (Putman 2017).

## **Research Design and Participants**

This study used a phenomenological research design to draw out the experiences of teachers in college and, at the same time, reflect on their current teaching practice. A phenomenological approach is categorized under qualitative research. “Qualitative methods are generally supported by the interpretivist (also referred to as constructivist) paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing” (Glesne, 1999 p. 5). According to Glesne (1999), interpretivists regard their research task as coming to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them” (p. 5).

There are 48 full time senior high school teachers in the subject school. However, only 40 agreed to be interviewed and to join the focus group discussions. Out of the 40 SHS teachers, 25 are females while 15 are males. About 63% (25) are aged 20-25, which means majority are fresh graduates. Four are in their 50s while the rest are in their late 20s and early 30s. Twenty-five have been teaching for only a year, 10 for 2-7 years, one for more than 10 years while four for more than 20 years.

## **Instrument**

Since this study aims to understand teachers’ college experiences, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted. An interview protocol served as a guide for the researcher to ask questions. Follow-up questions were asked as needed to further probe into the experiences of teachers. The sources of the data of this study are: (a) audiotaped and transcribed interviews, (2) written answers of teachers to profile questions such as gender, school graduated from, subject load in senior high, course, and among others, aside from written responses to open-ended questions, and (c) students’ evaluation of their teachers (comments only) which served as a baseline in analyzing the needs of the teachers.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission from the target school was sought. Upon approval, the teachers were oriented on the nature and objective of the study. They were given the interview questionnaires and were instructed of what they were to do. They were assured that the data gathered would only be for academic purposes and that they will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Analysis of Data

Prior to initiating the qualitative data analysis, the record was transcribed and reviewed. Qualitative thematic content analysis was the primary approach to the analysis of the interview data. Focused coding was used in the responses of teachers regarding the challenges they experienced. The codes were personal/emotional challenges (Safari et al., 2012), instructional challenges (Vasquez et al., 2016), classroom management (Autman, 2008; Demir, 2009), and student-teacher relationship (Azizi, 2012).

On the other hand, open coding was used for classifying responses that did not fall under challenges like describing their college experiences, the training they received, their preparation to teach, and how well they coped with the challenges. These open codes were used to examine raw data and develop categories for information. Themes and subthemes were created from distinct patterns that came out of exhausting the data gathered.

Results and Discussions

This phenomenological study presents the college experiences of the teachers at the selected senior high school, the influence of these college experiences on their teaching practices, the challenges that they encountered in teaching senior high school, and the interventions they have used to cope with the challenges.

The area of inquiry such as college experience, teaching practices, and teaching challenges was considered as focused codes, while those that emerged from the interviews were added to them. Three themes emerged from the data as presented in Table 1. In theme 1, college experiences were examined, leading to three subthemes: descriptions of college experiences, skills learned, and influence on teaching practice. In theme 2, the teaching challenges were examined, which yielded four subthemes: classroom management, instructional, personal/emotional, and student-teacher relationship. Lastly, theme 3, assessment of college preparation, was divided into the following subthemes: negative evaluations, positive evaluations, and interventions.

Table 1  
Themes Generated From the Interview

Theme 1. College Experience
Subtheme A: Descriptions of College Experiences
Subtheme B: Skills Learned
Subtheme C: Influence on Teaching Practice
Theme 2: Teaching Challenges
Subtheme 1: Personal/Emotional
Subtheme 2: Instructional
Subtheme 3: Classroom Management
Subtheme 4: Student-Teacher Relationship
Theme 3: Assessment of Teaching Preparation
Subtheme 1: Negative Evaluations
Subtheme 2: Positive Evaluations
Subtheme 3: Interventions

Theme 1 is in response to the main research question: How have teachers' experiences in college influenced their teaching practices? Theme 2 is in response to the first sub question: How do teachers describe the challenges they encountered in teaching in the senior high? Theme 3, on the other hand, is in response to the second sub question: What particular intervention program can be designed for teachers given their college experiences, current teaching practices, and challenges they encountered in teaching in the senior high?

### Theme 1: College Experiences

In the first theme, participants described their college experiences in different ways. Several subthemes emerged relating to the answers of the participants. These include descriptions of college experiences, skills learned, and influences of college experience.

**Description of College Experiences.** The teachers' experience in college varied. Some have very positive experiences, some have negative experiences, while some have contradicting experiences.

**Positive experiences.** Thirteen teachers described their college years as fun and unforgettable. R19 who was in his second year of teaching said: "I could say that I had a great college experience. It was great because I was able to surpass the challenges given by my professors and it expanded my horizons. Aside from that, it was unforgettable because I met my awesome friends, without them, college life was nothing." He also suggested that since he enjoyed his college days, he also wished that his students enjoy their Senior High School days. He said: "Because I enjoyed my college years, so, I'm also trying to encourage my students to enjoy it, their Senior High School years, to join extracurricular activities as much as possible because these things might help them or might give them, ahm, how can I say this? Might turn them into lifelong learners." He also

added that he did not want his students to be confined in the four corners of the classroom.

**Negative experiences.** Aside from positive emotions and experiences, the teachers also had negative impressions when they were in college. Twenty-five of them said that they viewed college as challenging. Several factors contribute to this notion of the teachers regarding their college life. Some of these are environment, subjects, teachers, academic requirements, and circumstances (being a working assistant).

R3 who was a BSBA graduate mentioned that it was challenging because of the people and the environment he worked in. He said: "It was challenging because of the environment. There are influences from some of my friends that affect my studies so I should be more focus on my studies [sic]." R11, on the other hand, shared that the subjects and the teachers in her college years were challenging. R9 was also challenged by her subjects, specifically because of the requirements that the teachers asked her to submit. She said: "My college experience is very stressful. I had a lot of sleepless nights because of the projects and I encountered many trials in my life as a student [sic]." Lastly, four teachers found college challenging because they were working students. When R37, who has been teaching for more than 10 years, was asked how she handled the situation, she answered:

*Nag-aaral ako at the same time working, mahirap. Kasi parang yong focus mo sa pag-aaral, di ganon ka 100% kasi syempre pagod ka na after work tsaka ka papasok. (I was studying and working at the same time and it was very difficult. I was not 100% focused with my study because I was already tired after work, then, I had to go to school).*

College may really be challenging for most of the students since it is the time that they accept more responsibilities to themselves. It is a time when they

experience autonomy and independence from the people around them. Since they are already entering young adulthood, they are exposed to more real life situations (Schmidt, 2017).

**Contradicting experiences.** Since college is a preparation for life, it cannot be avoided that those who goes through this phase experience a lot of emotions and feeling. It may be a combination of both positive and negative experiences. This is perfectly captured in the response of R24, a science teacher, when she said that college was like a rollercoaster ride: “My experience when I am is just like a rollercoaster ride. There are times we ask questions on ourselves why we chose this major, Physical Science, which is one of the toughest subjects but it is a great experience. Behind those challenges that we experienced, we graduated to make our parents proud [sic].” Similarly, R17, who is an English major and is on her first year of teaching, described her college as two contradicting feelings. She said: “I would say [college experience was] quite challenging, stressful yet fun and fulfilling. There were good and not so good memories.”

Based on the results of the interview, the teachers’ experiences were a mix of both good and bad experiences. In the case of the teacher-respondents, they experienced different kinds of emotions but they all used the abovementioned emotions as a foundation for their teaching principles. These college experiences can influence teachers’ behaviors in their actual teaching practice. Goodwin (2010) said that college education has a lot of benefits like individuals having good jobs and incomes, liking his/her job, reflecting of college experience as useful in his/her field of work, recalling college moments and feeling satisfied, participating in a number of social, civic, and cultural activities, believing that college has a great impact in one’s knowledge, interpersonal skills, values, and even critical thinking.

**Skills Learned.** Another subtheme which emerged from the interviews was the different sets of skills developed during the college years of the teachers. They were the pedagogical skills, social skills, and personal skills.

**Pedagogical Skills.** Most of the teachers (21) agreed that college helped them prepare for their future by developing their pedagogical skills (involves classroom management, subject matter knowledge, and instructional skills). They said that college prepared them for the teaching profession. R9 and R10 adapted their policies from how they were raised during their college days.

42	9	Samin, sakin naman college <u>experience</u> ko. Okay naman din sya kaya nga lang, samin kasi ang natutunan ko is block section kasi kami mag
43		classmates kami simula first year hanggang fourth year. And then, ang
44		
45		pinakamahigpit talaga samin non ay sa late. Kailangan pumasok talaga kami
46		sa tamang oras, kasi kapag lagpas, di kami pumapasok sa tamang oras, hindi
47		na talaga kami pinapapasok sa classroom. So ngayon naman, parang ayon,
48		isa din sa mga na adopt ko yon sa pagtuturo ko, na talagang kailangan as a
49		teacher, ako yong unang maging example sa mga students, na hindi ako
50		papasok ng late sa klase.

In lines 44-50, R9 described how they were trained in college. It can be clearly seen that her principle on classroom management and classroom policies is hardly based on how she was trained in college. It can also be seen that because of her college experience, she tries to also set an example to her students. This may be because she knows the importance of following the rules that was set to her which she is presently applying to her students.

R10 narrated how she was treated by her college teachers. She related that she had no classmates in college so she was expected to behave very well. With that, she developed a very idealistic view of classroom management. In this case, her classroom management principles are very ideal since that is how she was raised by her teacher. With this, she is assumed to execute ideal classroom management principles which may sometimes cause problems due to the gap between theory and practice. In a study by Flores and Day (2006), one of the problems which was discovered

among teachers was the conflict between theory and practice. Most of the teachers tend to follow the pre-service view of teaching which results in a clash between theory and real-life practice.

Aside from classroom management skills, knowledge base of teachers is also developed during college. This is very evident in the case of R18 who is an English major assigned to teach 21st Century Literature. Based on what R18 narrated, her school prepared her well in terms of the content knowledge that she has to teach. Since the school pays particular attention to the content of the subject, specifically Literature, she in turn is able to apply what she has learned in college in her present teaching scenario. She was able to observe how the subject was taught when she was a student. She confirmed that she is very prepared because of this. This is in line with Bigelow and Walker (n.d) who stated that teacher education programs aid in the formation and development of the knowledge base of teachers which help them decide what they need to know and do to make their practice productive, how they learn, and how do their knowledge develop as they begin their profession.

Another aspect of pedagogical skills which the teacher acquires in college is instructional skills. This can clearly be seen in the response of R29, who is already in her fourth year of teaching when she mentioned the importance of her practice teaching days in developing her instructional skills as a teacher. When asked what event(s) she remembers most in college, she responded: "Practice teaching. It helped me explore and gather new strategies that I was [sic] able to use now that I am a teacher."

It can clearly be seen that the pedagogical skills of the teachers which include their classroom management skills, content knowledge and instructional skills were developed during the college days of the teacher respondents.

**Social Skills.** Aside from pedagogical skills, the social skills of teachers are also developed during their college. R1 was very vocal on the influence of college in her social skills, saying: "The most significant thing that college did to me was to socialize more with other people, to become more expressive with my thoughts and feelings..." R38 who is a Probability and Statistics teacher also had the same experience saying that: "...it served as a transition period from childhood of independence to adulthood of independence that prepared me towards professional life. College life also enabled me to meet different people and friends."

One of the most prevalent responses among the teacher participants in this study is that college gave them the opportunity to have friends. These friends were with them most of the time, experiencing what they were also experiencing. They were there helping each other develop as individuals.

On the other hand, application of the use of social skills can be seen in the response of R18 when she was asked how her college experience helped her, she responded that it helped her deal with students and parents alike.

On the contrary, R10 seemed to lose her social connections because of studying. She related how college affected her time for her family and friends. But still, she mentioned that she regrets nothing of what happened to her.

It's very different attending in High School. When I was in college, I had no choice but to study every day. I have no time to go with my family and friends. But, I never regret that because I learned to work alone and to see my own ratio. Because I am only one, I have no choice but to interact with other courses that's why I'm going school organizations [sic].

Social skills are very important since it helps teachers in developing themselves and addressing the challenges that they encounter. When teachers have good social skills then, it would be easy for them to communicate with other teachers, students, and even parents. Thus, the communication barrier in education is eradicated. Haynie (2010) stressed the importance of teachers communicating with each other. They should help each other by sharing their best practices and the study skills that their students possess.

**Personal Skills.** Another set of skills which were developed by the participants of this study is their set of personal skills. Personal skills refer to their self-confidence and self-esteem, maturation, and independence. R16, who is a Math teacher and had already taught in a school abroad, mentioned that college built her self-confidence and pushed her to her limits: "College gave me knowledge and confidence that a teacher needs. It helps me to push me [sic] in my limit in terms of studying and dealing with different people." Obviously, she was able to use that confidence in facing other people when she went to another country to teach. Her college experiences became a foundation of how she would deal with students. Because her self-confidence was already developed in college, she was able to apply it in real-life situations.

Maturation and understanding were developed in the case of R2. He is an English teacher and a product of the subject school. He also had his practice teaching in the same institution. When asked of the significance of his college experience, he answered: "College has taught me to become a deeper person. It made me discern things. It made me more of a critical thinker and not just passes judgment easily. College literally skinned me and made me a whole new person."

Another essential personal skill developed in college is independence. This is the ability to do work alone and without supervision. In the reflection of R19, his college days

helped him a lot to be more independent. He mentioned: "I learned to be more independent to myself and be responsible to any actions that I do. High sense of accountability to oneself."

**Influences on Teaching Practice.** The last subtheme under college experiences is pertaining to how these experiences influenced the beliefs and teaching practices of the teachers. Four dominant codes were seen in this study: subject matter expertise, teaching styles and strategies, professionalism and concern for student learning.

**Subject Matter Expertise.** As for the participants of this study, they mentioned about their college professors who influenced them in their teaching practices. Nineteen of them talked about their professors who had mastery of the subject matter. An example is R14 who is already a veteran teacher but still could not forget his college professor who only had chalk and eraser in class but still was a master of his subject: "*...chalk at eraser lang ang dala sa classroom, rock and roll na utak namin sa subject n'ya (subject matter expertise).*" (He only brings chalk and eraser but still he rocks our minds.)" Meanwhile, R2 does not only appreciate the subject matter expertise of his college professors, he also made mention of how this professors integrated real-life situations to the classroom discussions: "...they integrate real-life experience in the discussion which makes the discussion easier. You just don't know the concepts when they teach, but you fully understand everything that is being given."

**Teaching styles and strategies.** For teachers to be able to execute their lessons very well, they must think of strategies suitable in the needs of the students. Teachers prefer certain strategies more than the others but what they choose and execute in their classes define the teaching style that they adhere to. R17 was very proud when she admitted that there was this one professor who she admired most to the point that she wanted to be like her. So, she is trying to imitate the strategies that professor used in their classes:

“...as much as possible, I want to be like her (college prof). She is admired by all education students because of her strategies. Though I may not be exactly like her, I do my best in putting into practice all the things she taught me because my goal is to make all my students learn a lot from me.”

Likely, R7 mentioned her admiration for a different college professor but with the same reason which is the effective use of teaching strategies. She even added that this professor based his teaching strategy on the needs of the students. She said: “...he is an effective and efficient teacher. When he teaches, he is always using different strategies that is [sic] to the students.”

In the study of Flores and Day (2006) where they found out that the prior experience of teachers served as a strong foundation that they cling on to when they enter the teaching profession. Former teachers who had good teaching strategies were mostly remembered by teachers. They also tend to replicate the strategies which they think were effective to them while they were students.

**Professionalism.** Aside from mastery of the subject matter and teaching style, another aspect which the respondents paid attention to is professionalism. Professionalism refers to how a teacher responds to situations still considering how properly a teacher should act. Also, it involves being able to adapt and adjust to different situations and circumstances.

An example of how college developed the professionalism of teachers is the answer of R4 when asked how college influenced his teaching practice. It can clearly be seen in the way R4 answered the question that he thinks like a professional. He is not just in the job for the salary but also for the main purpose of teaching. He mentioned: “It helps me become a professional and being a professional for me is not just simply having a job but you have your passion in what you are doing regardless of the salary you get from it.”

Another participant cited professional growth as an after effect of college experiences. R26 recalled how difficult college was and how that helped her to be the teacher that she is now. She even mentioned that those prior experiences honed her patience and perseverance.

College is tough but still my experience taught me to grow as an individual and made me strong to face every challenges [sic] that influenced me to continue my educational practice. These experience [sic] taught me also to be patient and to persevere in teaching my students.

It is highly observable in the responses that teachers attribute their professionalism to their college experiences. This is because one of the main goals of every institution is to develop the students into professionals. The case of the participants is very similar to the characteristics of professionals laid out by Sleight and Ritzer (n.d). Some of the characteristics they enumerated are undeniably present in our participants like being able to monitor own “emotional expressions and responsiveness”, being composed even when faced with challenges, and being respectful and courteous to everyone.

**Concern for students.** One of the most dominant codes which were seen in the study was the teachers concern for student learning. Aside from desiring the students to learn, participants in this study also showed concern for the students. In the case of R12, when asked on his college experience influenced his teaching practice, he said that he always puts into mind how he likes to learn and applies it to how he teaches. But he also emphasized that he is not spoon feeding his students.

*Iniiisip ko ako lagi yong student kung ano gusto ko (pano ko naturuan) yon ang binibigay ko sa student ko...But, as a teacher, di pwedeng spoon feeding. (I'm always*

thinking of how I wanted to learn, that's what I give to my students. But, as a teacher, I don't do spoon feeding.)

Another participant (R13) mentioned how she is able to put herself in the shoes of her students. Since she knows how it feels like to be sitting on the chairs, listening to the teachers, she can easily relate to what her students are feeling.

*Kung magpapakatotoo ako, nalulugar ko yong sarili ko ngayon sa lugar ng mga estudyante na pareho ng sitwasyon ko. Average student ako noon, pero binibigay ko yong best ko kaya mataas grades ko. Ngayon gusto kong marealize ng mga bata na kailangan talaga ng positive attitude para maging successful. (To be honest, I can see myself in the shoes of my students. I was also an average student then but I always gave my best and got good grades. Now, I want them to realize that optimism is really one key to success.)*

Looking at the responses, it can be seen that teachers usually put themselves in the position of their students putting in mind how the students would best learn. Also, by doing this, teachers are able to establish good relationships with their students. A study by Flores and Day (2006) it was found that good student-teacher relationship has a very positive impact in the motivation level of teachers, students, the social outcomes, and even classroom learning.

## Theme 2: Teaching Challenges

The second theme which emerged in the interviews is the different kinds of challenges experienced by the teachers. All of the 40 teacher participants cited some challenges they encountered in teaching Senior High School. The most responses were those which fall under classroom

management, followed by instructional challenges and personal challenges. The least cited were those related to student-teacher relationship.

**Classroom Management.** One of the most essential aspects of teaching and learning is classroom management. Twenty-three respondents have problems regarding students' attitude and behavior and motivation. Age gap also became a source of classroom management problems.

**Student attitude and behavior.** The dynamic of teaching and learning is not a one-way process, it is an interaction between the teachers and the students. They affect each other in a number of ways. Two essential elements that come in between the two are the attitude and behavior of teachers and students. R2, who is in his first year of teaching related how the behavior of his students affect their class discussions. He admitted that 30-45 minutes of the two-hour class is wasted on making the students quiet and listen to him. Since students do not want to listen, he really would not be able to execute his lesson. Same is true with R9 who is also a newbie in the profession and still look very young to be a teacher. She admitted how difficult it is to control her class especially with the soft tone of her voice. She sometimes had to shout just to make the students listen to her.

It can be seen that in both cases, asking the students to keep quiet and behave in class takes up much of their discussion time. When these things happen, the teaching and learning time is undeniably affected. This is not a good sign since both the teacher and the students are affected. Students' learning is impeded because a lot of minutes are wasted in disciplining the class. On the other end, teachers sometimes feel ineffective, stressed and burned out because of these problems. Demir (2009) in his study found that teachers who have regularly misbehaving students have

lesser satisfaction and devotion to the school and the profession. Also, teachers who have frequent classroom management problems become usually ineffective in the classroom and they were usually reported to be experiencing stress and burn out.

***Student motivation and absenteeism.*** Motivation pertains to one's drive in doing things. One's motivation dictates how he/she acts in situations. As in the case of students, motivation is very important. But, in some of the Senior High School students of the subject school, it seems to be missing. Another classroom management problem was mentioned by R37. She said that students are very lax in their studies. They just absent themselves from the class without any valid reason. She even mentioned that they should have been ready for Senior High School since they are supposed to be college students already. Because of her experience as a teacher (she has been teaching for more than 10 years), she tends to compare the students from 10 years ago to the students of today saying that their quality is starting to decline.

R32 also mentioned about the students and their motivation. She knows how important motivation is in learning and as of her observation, some of her students are just lacking that. Same as R37 her students usually are not present in class, some of them even cut classes.

In both cases, it is very evident that some students really lack the motivation to go to school. A number of factors may contribute to that but it is undeniably affecting the teaching and learning situation. Motivation of students involves their values and expectations. Deci and Ryan (1985) as cited in Chung and Fan (2014) defined learning motivation as the "momentum" of the learners in achieving set targets and competencies. It is a mirror of the students' self-determination. Also, it dictates how students act inside and outside of the classroom. If the Senior High School students are not very well motivated, it can be assumed that

they would not be behaving properly in class thus, the beginning of classroom management dilemmas.

***Student-teacher age gap.*** One of the more cited perceived factors in the classroom management issues of the teachers is their age gap. Majority (N=25) of the teachers are aged 20-25 so their age difference with their students is not that small.

Since the students are already in their Senior High School years, most of them are in 16-18 years old while many of the teachers are fresh graduates and are aged 20 and above. One of the teachers, R2, is still 19 years old. With this very small age gap, there seems to be a problem since the Senior High School students' attitude are very different from their teachers, thinking that they are almost of the same age. With this very small age difference, teachers sometimes doubt themselves if they can make the students follow them. R9 and R10 even suggested that their age does not only become an issue in the classroom, it goes beyond the school and is carried out even in seminars. Since they look very young and are still young looking, people cannot believe that they are already teachers. To address this, the teachers wear red lipstick to build confidence and at the same time emit that strong vibe as a teacher. Safari and Azizi (2012) suggested that teachers have to dress up to overcome the doubts that they sometimes have. How they look serves as their first line of defense. They gain confidence when they wear the appropriate dress and make up.

***Instructional Challenges.*** The Senior High School teachers also encounter difficulties in instruction which can be broken down in two major concerns: instructional materials and subject matter alignment.

***Instructional materials.*** Instructional materials (IMs) are those which are utilized by the teachers to make the teaching-learning process easy. They may be in the form of visual aids, graphic organizers, audio-visual materials,

realia, manipulative materials and many more. In pre-service trainings, teachers have a specific subject on instructional materials. But, sometimes, it really is not easy to apply what you learned in school in the field. R18, who is a new teacher, admits that she is not used to using traditional IMs.

R18 started by saying that she has no problems regarding classroom management because she feels that it really is not her fault anymore. She said that she is trying her best to establish routines inside the classroom by doing it every day. Despite of that, still the students are not able to inculcate among themselves the routine. She then went on by saying that IMs really are her problems. Since she was used to making use of power point presentations and LCD projectors in college that is what she is applying in her classes now.

Instructional materials are tools which can be used to improve the learning and teaching process; therefore, a teacher needs to be careful in choosing and using these materials. These materials aid in instruction since they appeal to more senses of the students. When teachers select the appropriate instructional materials, students become more motivated in learning and recall of the lessons becomes so much easier for them (Tok, 2010).

**Subject matter expertise.** The main task of the teacher in the school is to teach the students. They spend four years of studying to prepare themselves in the teaching practice. They choose the subjects which they want to specialize to and spend majority of their years studying their chosen subject matter. But, sometimes, teachers are given teaching loads which are out of their comfort areas. R37, who has been teaching for more than ten years but in the elementary level, narrated how she felt when she was given the subject load: Filipino. She said that she was shocked when she was given the subject since Filipino was not her major. She had to study and search for the technical terms in Filipino. To be able to cope with this challenge, she said that

she asks for the help of other Filipino teachers realizing that she really needed to know what she was about to teach. She even cited an instance when a student asked her a specific question that she could not answer. She said that she told the student that since it was not part of the discussion, the question would serve as her assignment.

Aside from R37, there are other teachers who experience the same difficulty because of subject matter and major alignment. R22 is Science major who is currently teaching Economics. He related that he did not take Economics as a subject in college, so he really found it difficult to teach the subject. He had to exert extra effort in studying the lessons. R35 also had the same scenario. He is an English major teaching Robotics. He said that he believes that Robotics is very far from his major when he was in college.

The abovementioned scenarios happen because the subjects of the Senior High School are new and they are still not offered as major subjects in college. As a result, there are no available teachers to teach the subjects, so the school has to make certain adjustments and one of them is asking teachers, even if they not aligned in the subject, to teach the Senior High School subjects. According to the participants, the school is trying its best to help prepare them for their subjects. This is done by having them attend different seminars related to their subjects.

It has been shown that there is a positive relationship between the subject matter expertise and the performance of students. If a teacher is very knowledgeable of his subject matter, he is more likely to transfer that knowledge to the students. On the other hand, if teachers are not very familiar with their lessons, the confusion may also be handed down to the students. Some teachers may have mastered the basic skills in college, but some of them still do not have a deep conceptual understanding of the subject matter that sometimes they do not know how to answer students' questions. They are also limited and bound to the basics of the lesson. (Darling-Hammond, 2000 in Tok, 2010)

**Personal/Emotional Challenges.** The senior high school teachers showed very prominent personal/emotional concerns: self-doubt and difficulty in handling students.

**Self-doubt.** Doubt can be defined as a feeling of uncertainty or a lack of conviction. It may also mean fear. When one feels doubtful, he/she becomes tentative in what he/she does. Seventeen of the teacher-participants of this study said that they had experienced doubting themselves, questioning the decision of teaching, lacking the motivation to go to school, becoming over emotional and too stressed, and worse, almost reached the peak of depression and quit the profession.

R1, who is a newbie in the profession, was very doubtful during the first week of classes: "I think the challenges that I faced while teaching Senior High School students was more on the personal/emotional challenges because during that time I was doubting myself if I can really handle everything." R2 also had some doubts and even came to a point of questioning his decision of teaching and wondering if he would have been better in another profession. He said: "There are times when I questioned my decision of pushing through Education and becoming a teacher. I wondered [sic] if I'd be more productive if I chose the other field that I wanted to." Lastly, R15 had an experience which really tested her calm and emotions. She had an incident with one section and she found it very difficult to adjust to what happened. She even came to a point that she almost wanted to quit the teaching profession.

I am prepared and excited for the classes during those days. My performance was good at all sections I have except one. I made a mistake during our first discussion and it all start there. I've got intimidated by my students and everything followed. It's just instructional challenges until student and teacher relationship was involved. My classroom management lapse and my emotional stability was distorted. I was at

the peak of my depression, to the point that I want [to] quit teaching until I realize and remember the reason why I am still teaching, and so I go on.

Clearly, it can be seen that when a teacher suffers from emotional challenges, some other problems may follow. Wilson et al. (1997) suggested that fears are predominant in the lives and careers of the teachers. Sometimes teachers find themselves in a nightmare that they walk into a classroom fully prepared only realizing later that the class they entered was not supposed to be the class that they were supposed to be teaching.

**Difficulty in handling students.** Another problem which the teachers consider personal is their difficulty in handling students. R4 related how his students had a number of difficulties relating to their academic behavior mentioning that some of these difficulties are brought about by family problems. She said: "Personal/emotional challenges- some of my students have a lot of difficulties in terms of academic behavior. Some of them [are] facing family problems that lead to several absences."

One of the additional tasks that teachers have to do is to call on the attention of the parents when something happens to the students, whether it be positive or negative. It is an additional duty which sometimes causes additional stress to teachers. Some parents are very accommodating to teachers while some seem not so interested in the whereabouts of their children. This thing also adds to apprehension felt by teachers. Wilson, et. al (1997) suggested a list of fears experienced by teachers and one of them is the fear of meeting parents. They fear of how these parents are going to treat them. They fear that parents might not believe what they would say to them.

**Student-Teacher Relationship.** Among the subthemes under teaching challenges, student-teacher relationship seems the least problematic. Only 7 out the 40

respondents said that they had this kind of problem with the students disrespecting the teachers as their major problem. R29 was very vocal in her observation among the students: "Majority of the students don't know how to properly treat their teachers." This claim is supported by R25 saying: "Some students were not able to give respect to their teachers [sic]."

On the contrary, students have a very good rating for their teachers regarding their relationship with each other. Of the 11 interview respondents, seven had excellent ratings while four had good ratings. Almost all the teachers were rated as approachable and respectful by their students. The more common responses of the students are as follows:

He is respectful although my classmate is not respecting him, he still respect [sic].

*Madali s'yang pakisamahan* (He is easy to be with).

He have [sic] a positive view and aura inside the classroom.

*Napakaapproachable n'ya tuwing may kailangan kami itanong* (He is very approachable especially if we have something to ask)

Kind, always available for consultation, and jolly. Ma'am is open for questions and comments on the subject and answers them accordingly.

It is very evident that teachers do not find it very difficult to establish good student-teacher relationship. One reason could be that of the age difference. Majority of the teachers are fresh graduates and are still in their early 20s. They can still relate to what the students are experiencing and can readily adjust if the situations call so. A study by Flores and Day (2006) found out that teacher respondents viewed teaching as a very positive experience. They found enjoyment in their job especially in the good relationships that they were able to establish with their students and they felt the support of the school community.

### Theme 3: Assessment of Teaching Preparation

The senior high school teachers, since senior high school is a new program and is not a specialization in college, seem not so prepared in teaching the level. Twenty-four respondents said that they are either not well prepared, half ready, or even not prepared at all while 11 said that they are very prepared to teach in senior high school.

**Negative Evaluations.** In the present study, teachers were asked how prepared they were when they started teaching Senior High School. Of the 40 participants, 24 admitted that they are either half ready or not prepared at all. R29, who once taught as a Junior High School teacher for three years, said that she is not prepared at all because of the topics that she had to discuss. She said: "I'm not prepared at all. I was just used of teaching JHS students and the topics were just the basic ones. Unlike here in SHS, the topics were the basic ones from college and I need to exert effort in studying the lessons."

Looking at her answer, it can be seen that the reason for being not prepared at all is the kinds of subjects being taught in Senior High School. These subjects, if not new, are the ones which are usually taught in college. The teachers on the other hand studied the subjects but they were not taught on how to execute the topics of the given subjects.

Aside from R29, more teachers said that they are not well prepared to teach in Senior High School. R32 and R36 explained why they say that they are not very prepared to teach. R36 discussed that same as R29, his major reason for stating that he is not prepared is the subject matter being taught in Senior High School. R32, on the other hand, mentioned that they are still in a culture shock. She even said that they felt like they are "immediately put in a hot pot" thinking that they were new teachers during those times and it was the first year of the implementation of the Senior High School program. They felt much pressured because of the

heavy burden of teaching the first batch of SHS students laid upon their shoulders. The negative experiences of the teachers, though it may sound not that good, can be labeled as natural since last year was the first year of the implementation of the SHS program. This is closely related to what Capistrano (2015) reported about the worries experienced by Davao City teachers. The teachers, according to her article were very much reluctant of the K-12 program because of subject matter expertise. Teachers feel that with the new curriculum, they “will only be a few pages ahead of their students.”

**Positive Evaluations.** If there are negative answers to the question: “How prepared are you in teaching Senior High School?” there are also very positive responses. Eleven Senior High School teachers rated themselves as either 100% prepared or well prepared in teaching the level. R17, who is a fresh graduate, proudly answered that she is very prepared to teach. She has no problem with subject matter, professionalism, strategies, and application. She said: “Very prepared. Saying it with confidence. There may be lapses but it’s not that significant to ruin my career as a teacher. Subject matter, professionalism, strategies and application wise, yes, I’m very prepared.”

Meanwhile, R26 attributed her teaching readiness with how her Alma Mater prepared her in the world of teaching. She related it by saying:

I think I am well prepared when I start teaching in Senior High because of the programs, skills, and trainings that my Alma Mater offered when I was in college. Second, I came across challenges and hurdles to overcome and I can found out easy solutions to them with a little effort using my past experiences. Lastly, none of this is because I am highly intelligent teacher. No, it’s I’m rich in experience [sic].

On the other hand, R22 and R39 realized the importance of preparation in teaching so they equip themselves with all the necessities in teaching. R22, knowing that her students are millennials, try to keep up with the vocabulary of the students. She mentioned: I expect millennial students so that I equip myself of words where they could also relate and learn at the same time.

Based on the interviews done, some of the Senior High School teachers can confidently say that they are well prepared in teaching the level. This, according to them, is a product of their college and personal preparations. In a study by Haynie (2010), one of the most effective teaching practices is proactive planning. It was found that teachers who plan ahead of time were very effective. It was also concluded that if the plan were school wide, then, most teachers will be more effective and new teachers will learn better. Formative assessments were supposed to be planned ahead of time so that it is easier to modify them when necessity arises.

**Interventions.** Since the senior high school teachers experience challenges, there is really a need for them to cope with these challenges. Aside from personal adjustments, the school also has a role in helping the teachers address the challenges that they face.

**Personal adjustments.** For the senior high school teachers to be able to address their pressing concerns, they resort to different ways and avenues. The most common way of addressing challenges encountered is by talking to colleagues. Another thing is by talking to the students and understanding the situation. Lastly is by changing strategies and thinking of other ways on how to find solutions in the problems.

Eight teachers said that they consult their co-teachers when they have concerns. Some of their responses are the following:

I was able to cope up with these challenges through the help of my co-workers because I realize that I'm not alone feeling and experiencing these challenges (R1).

I look for possible solutions to solve those problems with the help of my colleagues (R32).

...through sharing my problems with my friends and reflecting on it (R34)

asking my co-teachers about what they have done to address problems like those before (R35).

In a study by Haynie (2010), it was found that one of the best teaching practices is creating a learning-centered classroom. Teachers who were focused on creating a learning-centered classroom were found to be sharing strategies with each other; they also help each other by sharing the study skills which were utilized by their students, and they also discuss how other teachers may motivate students to study and learn. That is what can be seen with what the Senior high Schools are doing. They share insights with each other so that they would be able to address the challenges that they encounter.

Lastly, some of the teachers examine themselves and change strategies and approaches if possible. R5 and R37 have problems with the availability of projectors so they make use of other visual aids and traditional instructional materials. "Instead of using projectors and power point, I use pen/marker and board (R5). To cope with these challenges, take an alternative solution of using other materials in discussion (R37)."

**School interventions.** Fifteen senior high school teachers view professional development activities like seminars and trainings provided by the school as very helpful to them while 14 finds the qualities of the administration and co teachers as approachable therefore, easy to confide with.

**Professional development.** The Senior High School teachers were very appreciative of the seminars and trainings given to them by the subject school.

I think the school help me cope with these challenges through giving us trainings and seminars which help us/me to become prepared and become more confident (R1).

Satisfactorily. Assistance and supports are always there and seminars and workshops are very helpful (R6).

This (subject school) is my training ground. It gives training for newly hired teachers and seminars for our professional growth and development.

Some institutions provide Teacher Induction Programs (TIP) to their newly hired teachers. It (TIP) is a "systematic, organized plan for support and development of the new teacher in the initial one to three years of service." Most TIPs do not teach about the subject matter knowledge of the teachers but also include the following: "knowledge about learners and learning, knowledge about teaching and the curriculum, and knowledge about contexts and foundations of education" They are not designed to reteach what the teachers have learned in school, instead scaffold their student experiences and bridge them to their professional lives. They take into consideration the teacher differences and the need to answer all these needs. They recognize the strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills of the teachers and make them a foundation of the teachers (Bartell, 2004).

**Supportive administration.** In the case of the Senior High School teachers, they find the administration of the school as very supportive of their personal and professional growth. This can be clearly seen in the answer of R2 when asked how the school helps them cope with the challenges. He said: "They always monitor us and ask us of our challenges. They always recommend intervention activities

which could help us deal with the things we're facing." R5 on the other hand talked about the qualities of the seniors (those who have been in the profession for a longer period of time) when asked the same question. She said: "They help me cope up to these challenges through giving seminars, advices, and tips. And the seniors are very approachable so we can ask questions to them."

Meanwhile, the good qualities of the principal and the coordinators were highlighted in the answer of R15. She said: "My co-teachers are there to give me advices, same with the coordinators and our principal. They openly hearing my/our rants and my cries whenever I am overwhelmed with negative feeling. The healthy relationship within my work area helps me to cope with these struggles."

Based on the responses of the three teachers, the support of the administrators really helps a lot in their development as teachers. Professional is not limited to trainings and seminars provided by the school. It also involves the emotional support that the teachers are receiving. The Teaching and Learning International Survey (2009) cited the characteristics of professional development that institutions should provide to the teachers:

Effective professional development is on-going, includes training, practice and feedback, and provides adequate time and follow-up support. Successful programs involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students, and encourage the development of teachers' learning communities. There is growing interest in developing schools as learning organizations, and in ways for teachers to share their expertise and experience more systematically.

**Suggested interventions.** Aside from personal interventions and school interventions, the teachers also have several suggestions which can help them in their

professions. They can be better categorized in three: professional development, provisions of instructional materials, and additional incentives.

**Professional development.** Though it has been mentioned in the preceding pages that teachers are very satisfied with the seminars and training given to them by the school, they still have several suggestions which they think are the more appropriate to be given to them. R37 admitted that they need more seminars on classroom management. She even suggested that the seminar be given every year or even twice a year if possible. Another training topic was suggested by R22 and R36. They are both asking for subject related seminars. R22 specifically cited his case saying that he is a Science major teaching Economics. Therefore, he really needs help in teaching Economics. On the contrary, R36 was able to attend subject related seminars but he was not able to apply it in teaching because he was assigned in different subjects. So, they are both suggesting that the seminars should be aligned to whatever subject the teacher will be teaching for the semester.

**Provision of instructional materials.** In the instructional challenges part of this study, it was discussed that limited instructional materials really is a big problem among the Senior High School teachers. That is why, when asked how the school can help them in coping with their challenges, one of the most common answer is the addition of instructional materials, specifically the LCD projectors.

**Additional incentives.** Last of the given suggestions by the teachers is the provision of additional incentives. Many of them mentioned about salary. But, that it is not easy to increase it just that, R37 mentioned certain incentives which can be given to them as teachers. She even related that in her previous school, they have recognitions like Perfect Attendance Award to acknowledge the efforts of the teachers. She also wants to have those kinds of awards in her present school.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following were concluded:

College experiences play a very vital role in the development of Senior High School teachers. Aside from the teachers gaining different kinds of experiences, they also learn pedagogical, social, and personal skills in college. Their college experience also exerts great influence in their teaching practices. This can be seen with the teachers paying particular attention in subject matter expertise, teaching styles and strategies, professionalism, and concern for students.

Since Senior High School is a new program, teachers experience different kinds of challenges. The most prevalent challenge encountered by teachers is classroom management.

In the case of the participants, classroom management issues involve students' attitudes and behaviors, student motivation and absenteeism, and student-teacher age gap. There are also teachers who experience instructional challenges. The most common instructional challenges encountered by the Senior High School teachers are instructional materials and subject matter expertise.

Personal/emotional challenge is also experienced by teachers and the most common problem involves the teachers doubting themselves and the teachers experiencing difficulties handling the students.

The least problematic of the challenges encountered by teachers is student-teacher relationship.

Senior High School teachers are mostly half-ready to teach mainly due to the new subject matters that they are

expected to teach. But, there are also those who are very well prepared, attributing their readiness to the trainings that they received in college.

Teachers cope with the challenges they experience with the help of their colleagues and the school administration.

Based from these, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The college programs should align their curriculum to the subjects being taught in Senior High School. There are subjects in the Senior High School curriculum which are not even seen in the Secondary Education program.
2. The administration is advised to look into the attitudes and behaviors of the students as it is very evident that a lot of teachers find difficulties in dealing with students' attitudes and behavior.
3. It is important for the teachers to be given seminars which address their needs like classroom management, guidance and counselling, and subject matter related seminars. This can be done during the summer breaks of semestral breaks so that teachers will be able to apply them immediately upon entering the classrooms.
4. It is also imperative that administrators always diagnose the needs of the teachers. They should always monitor the progress of their teachers. They should guide the teachers in developing strategies and techniques fit for the students.
5. It is recommended that teachers be given subject load related to their majors. If they will be given other loads, they should be given additional assistance in studying the subject.

6. It is also recommended that the school provides additional instructional materials like LCD projectors. Teachers may also be given seminars on construction of instructional materials so that even if no projectors are available, they can still provide visual aids for their lessons.
7. It is recommended that the administration give additional incentives or rewards to the teachers to further motivate them in teaching.

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