

Workplace and Life Experiences of Teachers in Siapar Island

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Abstract- This study explored the experiences of the teachers in Siapar Island. Its specific questions focused on experiences of the teachers in Siapar, how they balance work and home life especially they are crossing the sea everyday, and the proposed type of support, services and assistance for teachers in Siapar Island. The data which are gathered using a semi-structured interview were analyzed and interpreted. The following are the emerged themes and their sub-themes: (1) Everyday Journey, with the sub-themes Crossing the Sea, Climbing the Cliff and Trailing the Farm; (2) The Odds and Ends in the Island School, with the sub-themes Classroom Adjustments, Received Support, and Arrangements and Adaptations; (3) Meeting the Challenges, with the sub-themes Meeting the School Expectation and Coping with School Activities, and Coping with the Family's Needs. Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were drawn: Majority of the teachers' experiences are challenging, adventurous, and enjoyable. They did not feel any regret that they were assigned in Siapar Island as primary/secondary teacher. The teachers noted that their situation made them patient, persistent, flexible and lovable teachers in Siapar. The proposed types of supports, services and assistance to be given to the teachers will greatly help them to ease their burdens, increase their incentives as teachers in risky working station, and educate them in handling any emergency situations.

Keywords- workplace experiences, life experiences, Siapar Island

INTRODUCTION

Anda is an island town in the western Pangasinan. The town inhabits by kind-hearted, hospitable, and God-fearing people. The local government unit initiated effort in improving infrastructure, agriculture and aquaculture to enhance its economic status, and that, made the town recognized as one of the improved municipalities in Pangasinan. The municipality consists of 18 barangays including the island barangay of Siapar. Siapar Island is located in the mid-section of Dolaoan, Awag, Carot (Anda) and Pilar, Bolinao, Pangasinan. According to the Office of the Engineering, as of 2015, Siapar Island has the population of 1,594. Over its thousand population, the people of Siapar used aqua-culture such fish pens, fish ponds and fish preservations as their source of income. The barangay is one of the producers of quality bangus (milkfish) in Anda. People are generous and hospitable that would really make you feel at home when you visit the place. Visitors can walk freely by day and night to relatives safely. Populaces of Siapar include Bolinao, Ilocanos, Tagalogs, Pangasinenses and Bisayas. A large percentage of the people are Catholics,

Methodists, Baptists, Iglesia Kristo and Born Again Christians (SIP, 2015).

Additionally, the barangay officials are working hard to maximize and enhance every aspect in the community to develop the place such peace and order, agriculture, fishery, and education. Education plays a significant role in the society, so the barangay officials of Siapar support and provide funds in promoting education to its citizenry specially the youth. They coordinate and participate in the objectives and goals of the Department of Education (SIP, 2015).

Moreover, as a newly converted Integrated School as of June 26, 2015, Siapar Integrated School is facing a lot of challenges as an island school of Anda district. It is hard to reach, almost all the teachers as well as the school head need to travel by the sea as they are residents in the mainland.

Furthermore, the school is catering 365 pupils and students from Kinder to Grade 10, headed by one School Principal and has eleven teachers holding each advisory class. Presently, Siapar Integrated School has 10 classrooms, 2

makeshift classrooms, one office with computer room and the newly built mini gym. In line with the Department of Education's Vision and Mission to promote quality basic education to the Filipino children, Siapar Integrated School stakeholders' main goal is to enable their highest level of learning within a safe and a positive learning environment. With the support of DepEd, LGU, Barangay officials, teachers, stakeholders and the whole community, the school is now one of the improved schools in the division implementing the K-12 Basic Education Program (SIP, 2015).

Meanwhile, sacrifices pay a lot, a clause and also a battle cry of the teachers in Siapar Integrated School. These teachers cross the sea between Dolaoan (Anda) and Siapar back and forth every day. They take risks just to help the pupils and students of Siapar. But those hardships were diminished seeing the pupils/students improving and learning.

Consequently, teaching is not just a noble profession; it is a mission, it is not salary-driven but rather commitment and dedication-driven. Teaching is the job or profession of a teacher aimed at bringing meaningful learning and intention of facilitating learning. Teaching is never forgetting that for a moment each day you might be the only person who touches someone's life. Teaching involves the giving of oneself to others so that possibly, just possibly, the piece that one gives will blossom in the heart of another and, even more importantly, might cause others unknown to you to blossom. The passion of teaching and calling to be the agents of change, the teachers endure hardship and risks to deliver the quality education to every learner (Passion for Teaching, p.12). Thus, the teachers, parents and stakeholders of Siapar Integrated School are all doing their best to provide better learning environment toward attaining basic quality education. In spite of the many problems or hindrances they encounter on their way, they have prepared strategies/actions/ activities to carry out their desired goals and objectives.

Furthermore, teachers are essential players in promoting quality education, whether in school, college or university. They work as catalyst of change. In this study, the researcher explored the real experiences of the teachers though they experienced struggles going to and

from the island, still they are dedicated and passionate to attain the desired learning outcome and to shape the young minds of the people in Siapar.

It is along this premise that the researcher explored the experiences of seven teachers who are teaching in Siapar Island. The experiences associated with the Siapar teachers in this study served as a framework for discussion. Hence, this research revealed real experiences of the teachers going to and from the Siapar Island.

Moreover, the results of the findings would be beneficial to the teachers, school administrators, Barangay Siapar Officials, parents, DepEd Officials, curriculum planners, and Legislative Council.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of teachers in Siapar Island. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What are the experiences of the teachers in Siapar Island? (2) What are their experiences as they balance work and home life? and (3) What type of support, services and assistance will be proposed for teachers in Siapar Island?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and analyze the experiences of teachers in Siapar Island. A qualitative research is particularly suited for the exploration of an area where research is lacking or when much of the research work has been derived from concepts and theory from another area (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

The use of qualitative research methods provides multiple frameworks for the exploration of phenomena as experienced by individuals. Creswell and Miller (2000) described exploring and acquiring an understanding of social phenomena as experienced by humans as a chief characteristic of the qualitative research method. The exploration of this phenomenon frequently takes place in the participant's setting and is carried out with the use of data collection tools that allow for immersion into the experiences of the participants.

Phenomenological study examines human experiences through the detailed descriptions of

the people being studied; understands the 'lived experiences'; studies a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and the relationship of meanings (Giorgi, 2010). This study explored the phenomenon of preparation as it relates to the experiences of individuals being equipped with being a teacher in the island of Siapar to deliver instructional content to the world of school teaching. Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006) stated that phenomenological studies are designed to describe and interpret an experience by determining the meaning of the experience as perceived by the people who have participated in it. Hence, the phenomenological method was used in this study to build a deeper understanding of experiences of teachers in Siapar Island.

Participants of the Study

A complete enumeration was used in choosing the teachers. All teachers from mainland who travel to and fro in getting to the school in Siapar Island were the participants. One elementary school teacher, five secondary teachers and one principal were the participants for this research study in the island of Siapar. They are current teachers and principal at Siapar Integrated School. These teachers are from the different barangays in Anda. They travel by boat to go to school everyday to inspire the young minds and deliver quality education to the people in Siapar. The participants represented primary and secondary levels of education. The number of years a teacher had been working in a classroom ranged from one year to 10 years. Participants varied in age from 24 to 45 years old. They were all experiencing the same teaching conditions and scenarios in going to and fro the island.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in Siapar Island. Siapar is the only island barangay situated in the northern part of the Municipal island town of Anda. It is around 9 kilometers away from the town proper. The island barangay is composed of the main Siapar Island, and the three adjacent smaller islands namely Narra, Katipan, and Pardama where few barangay people reside. Siapar belongs to the First Congressional District of the province of Pangasinan.

Data Gathering Instrument

Semi- structured interview questionnaire was the main data gathering instrument. Interview questions are valuable tools for allowing participants to tell their stories in their own words (Creswell, 2007). The focus of the interview is on the interviewee's experiences. The questionnaire is divided into three parts. Part I is on background and demographics. The questions in this part describe the participants' teaching profession and teaching career. It includes also a question that determines any cultural or relational issues that surfaced as they determined their reason to become a teacher and also how they prepare themselves for the teaching and learning process.

Part II is on life history. The interview questions in this part showed the significant influences to the teachers in pursuing their teaching career. The questions also describe the cultural and relationship support they did or did not receive in their decision to become a teacher. It also demonstrates their desire to succeed in spite of any negative circumstances that may have occurred. It will note their passion for helping children to learn. It also asked their experiences when their feet actually got into the classroom. What were they feeling and experiencing as they had realized they were fully engaged in the career profession of choice.

Lastly, Part III is on details of the experiences of teaching. In this part the questions elicit answers that described how they feel in teaching in island school. Other questions were designed to understand who exactly mentored the new teachers and some of their advices concerning being a teacher; to describe the students in Siapar Integrated School and to know exactly what the teachers do to solve the problems of their students.

Validation of the Instrument

The questionnaire was validated by four experts. A test for questions validity was done to ensure that questions were framed sufficiently and in a systematic manner with ethical standards. Validation according to set criteria such as relevance to the objectives of the research and clarity of questions were done by three experts along the area.

Content validity is based on the extent to which measurement reflects the specific

intended domain of content (Carmines & Zeller, 1991, p. 20). Content validity is commonly used in evaluating achievement or proficiency test. It determines the extent to which a test adequately represents the subject-matter content or behaviour to be measured. The validity of the questionnaire was described in terms of the following scale values with the corresponding descriptive equivalent:

Point Value	Mean Scale Range	Descriptive Rating
5	4.21-5.00	Very Highly Valid
4	3.41-4.20	Highly Valid
3	2.61-3.40	Moderately Valid
2	1.81-2.60	Not Valid
1	1.00-1.80	Not Valid at All

The validation result was Very Highly Valid with the overall weighted mean of 4.875. This proved that the instruments used in this study were valid.

Research Procedure

The phenomenological method was used in this study to build a deeper understanding of what, why and how the teachers of Siapar Island cope as they travel by land and sea everyday. Teachers' personal experiences and draws out rich descriptions and deep meaning from the participants as they described the nature of their teaching experiences were captured.

Data were generated from the detailed conversation during the individual face to face interviews. Data generation procedures were like zigzag process, one of the basic characteristics: out to the field to gather information, into the office, and so forth (Creswell, 2000). Data generation was done for one month. Below are the phases of the research procedure:

Pre-data Gathering Procedure

The researcher considered preliminary procedures. A letter addressed to the Schools Division Superintendent was prepared asking permission to conduct an interview with the seven teachers. Permission was obtained also from the District Supervisor to conduct the study. Lastly, the researcher asked permission to the School Principal to conduct this study before research was conducted. Upon approved the

researcher personally administered the interview to the teacher-respondents.

Actual Data Generation Procedure

An in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interview was conducted to the teachers to gather more detailed experiences. Participants had the language choice in responding.

The interview was conducted one teacher at a time. All teachers were interviewed using the interview guide. Teachers were interviewed and the interview sessions were audio-taped. The interview was scheduled on the time and place of their convenience. Average running hours of one and a half of interview sessions per teacher was spent for the interview.

Further interviews were determined after analysis of the data. A follow up in-depth interviews were done to explore more detail patterns with regard to their workplace and life experiences.

Post-data Generation Procedure

All interview sessions during the actual data gathering were transcribed, coded, and organized into themes.

The first step of the analysis process was to transcribe the audio recorded files from the interviews to a Word document format. The audio files were carefully listened to repeatedly and each word was written down. This compilation of the material was used for the analysis process.

The figure 1 is the flow of the research process.

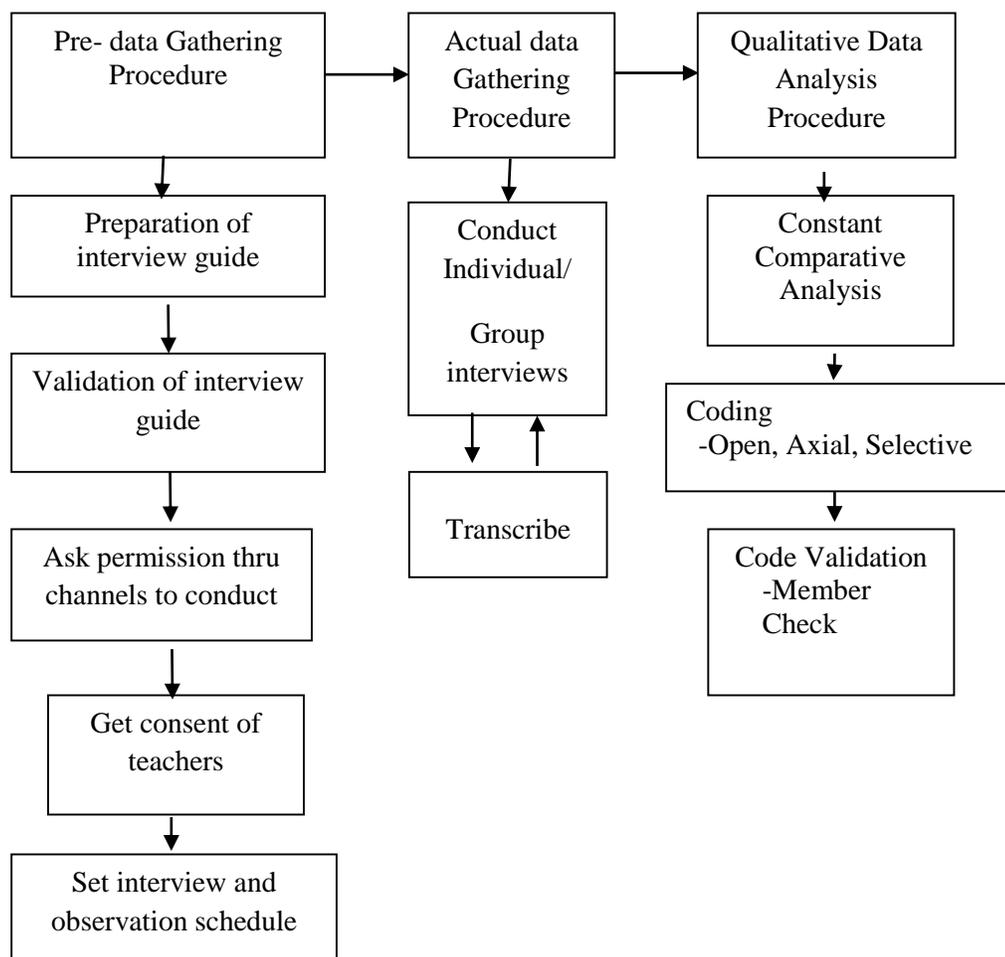


Figure 1. Research Process of a Phenomenological Study on Workplace and Life Experiences of Teachers in Siapar Island

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in the study. To analyze the themes, coding the data was done. The themes emerged from the entire set of data converged and confirmed the resulting themes.

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) describe some flexible guidelines for coding data when engaging in a qualitative analysis. After reading the data several times open coding was done where tentative labels for the data was made. Coding of the transcripts was completed separately as the data were collected. This allowed for the identification of major themes and the emergence of categories related to the intergenerational transfer.

Open Coding is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data. According to Ary et.al (2006) open coding entails close examination of the data, breaking it down into facts, making comparisons and questioning. In the study, initial coding was done by examining the data line by-line for each episode of data gathering. This was followed by focused coding, in which the researcher re-examined both the data and the initial codes and identified significant codes. Once the open coding was completed. The newly created categories were labeled and compared with the independently created categories of textual data.

Axial coding was performed after the open coding. Axial-coding procedures explored how

each of the categories related to one another, which allowed the researcher to transform categories to subcategories and identify broader thematic categories based on the data. This is done by utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences.

The selective coding was used to identify conceptual ideas which are integrated in the existing categories. It is the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development. This is where the main categories were identified.

The codes developed from initial and focused coding helped the researcher form the basis of categories which were developed by the researcher. The process of coding and recoding and further testing of coding is referred to as constant comparison (Marshall and Rossman, 1999) and the researcher sought to reach a saturation point where no other codes or categories can be identified from the data.

The figure on the next section is the thematic map of the experiences of the teachers in Siapar Island.

Member Check

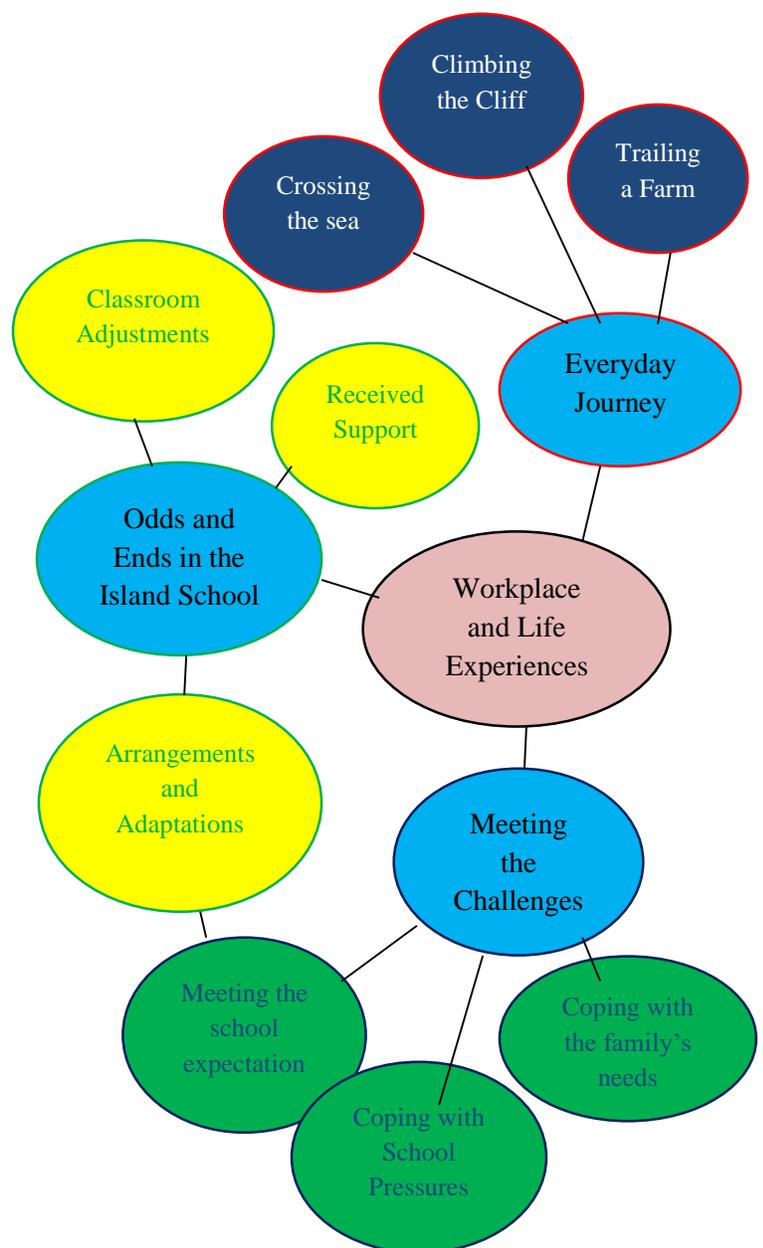
After coding, the themes were established. After the themes were established, they were sent back to participants to read the summarized phrases and themes. They agreed that the information presented to them was true and accurate to the best of their knowledge.

Summary of findings and theory were submitted to the respondents to find out if they could see themselves in the results and if they saw the results resonating with their shared experiences. Moreover, to verify findings, to assure validity as well as meeting the criterion on confirmability, a member check was employed. Member checks were used to establish trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis. Member checks were conducted by teacher participants. They examined the results and agreed the findings were consistent with his

or her experiences.

Member checking was done to establish the validity of the research findings. Draft of the coded data and themes were given to the teacher participants and asked them to comment on the categories check the accuracy of the information. Given no substantial difference between the views of the researcher and the family participants, the categories were viewed as sound. After the participants gave a positive feedback on the accuracy of the paper data, finalization of the paper was done.

Figure 2: Thematic Map of the Experiences of the Teachers in Siapar Island



Ethical Considerations

The setting for the study was in the island of Siapar, which is located in the mid-section of Dolaoan, Awag, Carot (Anda) and Pilar, Bolinao, Pangasinan. The participants were the teachers who are traveling everyday going to the island barangay. Permission was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent, District Supervisor and School Principal to conduct this study before research was conducted.

Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and ask to sign a consent form. The consent form describes the purpose of the study and the procedures for the interviews. The semi-structured interview questions were consisted of three parts: (a) background and demographics, (b) life history, and (c) details of the experiences of teaching. A confidentiality clause informs participants that their names would not be used in the written reports. Participants were informed that the tapes of the interviews were held confidential and only be heard by researcher. The interview took place in a comfortable and confidential environment. Each interview run for about one and half hours. Each session was audio- taped.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As the teachers shared their experiences during the interview, three themes and their sub-themes emerged from the analysis of the data.

As can be gleaned on the table, experiences of teachers in Siapar Island are categorized into three themes: Everyday Journey, The Odds and Ends in the Island School and Meeting the Challenges. Each theme is further discussed in the following sub-themes: Crossing the Sea, Climbing the Cliff, Trailing a Farm and Classroom Adjustments, Received Support and Arrangements and Adaptations, Meeting with the School Expectations, Coping with School Pressures, and Coping with the Family's Needs.

Theme 1: Everyday Journey

This is the first theme emerged from the transcription and interpretation of the data by the researcher. This theme explained the journey of the teachers in crossing the sea, climbing the cliff and trailing a farm to reach the school and cater quality education.

Majority of the teachers came from the different barangays in the mainland. They travel across the sea going to and fro the Siapar Island using motorized banca everyday. The journey of the teachers in Siapar Island refers to the everyday exposure and travel across the sea, cliff and farm. The pictures on the next page show the sea, cliff and the farm.



This is the situation of the teachers while they are crossing the sea during low tide. They used raft to transfer to the shore.



This is the image showing the teachers going down the cliff.



This image shows the teachers' sacrifices in walking along the muddy farm during rainy days.

Hence, the participants sacrifice everything, their time, efforts and patience in going to the island. They really had challenging experience as they crossed the sea. All of the participants show patience and perseverance in teaching in the island school. This supported the research by De Laigle (2016) who stated that this satisfaction of being a teacher and striving to help students reach mastery of the standards demonstrates their willingness to help students succeed. The participants shared that by being prepared and ready at all times help them to adjust and cope up to their risky working station. And above all, the trust to the Lord for keeping them safe in going to and fro the Siapar Island.

Furthermore, as the teachers shared their experiences in crossing the sea, they also spoke of how they reach the school and that is by climbing a cliff and trailing in the farm as the shortcut way in going to school. All of the participants said that challenges like these and the variety of day to day activities make them love the teaching profession. Despite the risks and hardships they encountered in crossing the sea, climbing the cliff and trailing a farm, they are still thankful for having such unique experiences as teachers in the island school. All of them are always prepared and ready at all times. And above all, they seek the guidance of the Lord Almighty to protect and keep them safe everyday as they serve the people of Siapar Island.

Theme 2: Odds and Ends in the Island School

The second theme emerged is Odds and Ends in the Island School that described the classroom adjustment, received support and their arrangements and adaptations of the teachers.

The Siapar Integrated School is trying its best to attain the desired learning outcomes by providing the essential services to its clientele. The Odds and Ends in the Island School refers to the teachers' experiences in the classroom, on their co-teachers and in coping on their activities in school. The second major theme The Odds and Ends in the Island School is further described in the following sub-themes: Classroom Adjustments, Received Support and Arrangements and Adaptations.

Indeed, the participants commit themselves in improving their learners in their full potentials. It is evident the way they prepare themselves in their way of teaching and preparing instructional materials and activities. Teachers should be seen as dynamic coaches who model effective learning and encourage children to ask questions, organize their own knowledge, and then create understandings that are relevant to their world and their lives Hobson, et.al (2015). The statements of the participants show that being a teacher in Siapar Island needs flexible, time-wise, having good relationship with the co-teachers and students, and ready to adapt to their challenging and risky working station.

Theme 3: Meeting the Challenges

There are many challenges facing the teachers as they continue to move forward with educational initiatives. The teachers need strategies on managing stress and coping with problems that they may encounter. In this theme, the teachers spoke about their experiences as teachers within the workplace demand.

Meanwhile, the experiences of the teachers on how they balance work and home life refer on their managing and coping capabilities as Island teachers.

Moreover, the participants expressed their love for education. Many of these individuals had a positive self-image and loved their role as a teacher. Amidst all the work, amidst all the challenges and risks, all of the participants shared that their family life is great because they

were supported by their family. The experiences of the teachers as they balance work and life became a challenged on their part. All of them shared that they really need time management and prioritized the things needed as teachers in Siapar Island. In the end, when all is said and done, it becomes clear that teachers must separate work from family in realizing that the work will never be done and that the family is what it is ultimately all about. All of them had supportive family members and they had the characteristics of being strong and contented of what and where they are right now.

Type of Support, Services, and Assistance That Will Be Proposed For Teachers in Siapar Island

Based from the emerged themes of experiences of the teachers in Siapar Island, the researcher came up with proposed plan of support, services, and assistance. Table 1 on the next sections shows in detail the proposed plan.

SUPPORT/SERVICES /ASSISTANCE	RESOURCES	PURPOSES
1. Free Transportation/Motorized Banca	LGUs can follow the front-loading scheme using their Special Education Fund as collateral and the allocation as amortization.	Teachers are renting their boat and buying gasoline for their day-to-day travel. Its purpose is to lessen their expenses.
2. Medical Services	LGU	Medical examination shows that medical treatment and/or hospitalization is necessary, same shall be provided free by the government to teachers.
3. Training on Giving First Aid/Emergency Disaster Preparation	DepEd, LGU	To equip teachers with the skills needed to handle any emergency situations.
4. Increase of Hazard Pay and Insurance	DepEd	To increase the incentives for the teachers most especially to the hazardous environment in traveling to working station.
5. Free Emergency Preparedness Kit	LGU	For the teacher's safety and amidst the impending threats of natural and manmade hazards and disasters
6. Free Boarding House and Quarters	Barangay Officials	Help the teachers not to travel day-to-day in going to and fro the island. They can stay on the island where they can sleep for a week. It may lessen their fatigue in traveling.
7. Grace Period	School Administrators	Reduces stress and fatigue and unfocussed teachers; Increases employee satisfaction and production. Grace period helps create a happier, more satisfying workplace, too.

In the plan, the researcher identified possible support, services and assistance for the teachers in Siapar Island having in mind that to be a teacher in island school is not easy. They need specialized and additional support, assistance, and services to be able to give quality services to their number one clientele- their students.

CONCLUSIONS

As the participants shared their experiences, the following conclusions are drawn: Majority of the teachers' experiences are challenging, adventurous, and enjoyable. The teacher's reasons in staying in the island are having good relationship with the students, co-teachers and parents, good qualities of the Siapar students/pupils and the joy and satisfaction they felt at the end of the day. They never felt regret as teachers in an island school. In addition, most of the teachers used their time wisely and prioritized the needs to be done to balance their work and family life. Lastly, the proposed types of support, services and assistance to be given to the teachers help the teachers to ease their burdens, increase their incentives as teachers in risky working station, and educate them in handling any emergency situations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the aforementioned findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. The proposed types of support, assistance and services to the teachers should be considered.
2. The Local Government Unit or Barangay Officials should give recognition to the teachers as a tribute to their sacrifices in going to and fro the island school.
3. The Department of Education should increase their hardship allowance and provide them insurance because of their risky working station.
4. There must be a training of survival skills for the teachers.
5. Sustain the positive attitudes developed by the teachers by engaging in the stress management events.
6. The fish pens in Siapar Island should be limited to preserve other marine resources.

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