



Lived Experiences of Secondary Teachers in Teaching the 21st -Century Learners

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Gerlie Codera

Researcher, Mandaue City College, Mandaue City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9954-3131> | gerliecodera123@gmail.com

Cathrine Cyramae C. Diacor

Researcher, Mandaue City College, Mandaue City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1871-731X> | diacorcathrine@gmail.com

Hannah Jane Empacis

Researcher, Mandaue City College, Mandaue City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5383-3336> | hannahempacis88@gmail.com

Mary Antoinette C. Villarias

Researcher, Mandaue City College, Mandaue City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1514-9419> | villariasantoinette@gmail.com

Sheila Mae P. Villila

Researcher, Mandaue City College, Mandaue City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6900-894X> | villilashiellamae@gmail.com

Abstract:

This study delves into the lived experiences of secondary teachers in teaching the 21st-century learners, focusing on challenges and opportunities encountered in the modern educational landscape. The background of the research highlights the changing dynamics in education due to technological advancements and the diverse learning needs of students. The research problem centers on understanding the learning styles of 21st-century learners and effective strategies for teaching them. The aim is to explore the experiences of secondary teachers at Canduman National High School in Mandaue City, Philippines, in handling these learners. The methodology involves a qualitative descriptive phenomenological research design, utilizing non-probability sampling and non-structured guide questions for data collection. The findings reveal key themes such as challenges in dealing with modern learners, the impact of technology on learning, the importance of collaboration, and effective teaching strategies. The implications of the study emphasize the need for teachers to adapt various approaches, leverage technology, and promote equitable education. Recommendations include promoting student-centered approaches, responsible technology use, professional development, and fostering 21st-century skills. Overall, the study contributes to understanding the experiences of teachers in educating modern learners and provides insights for improving educational practices.

Keywords: 21st century learners, secondary teachers, lived experiences

Introduction:

In the progress of the 21st century, a lot of things keep on changing. The field of education has observed significant factors and transformations that have created new challenges and innovations. To assert, teachers must be proficient while ensuring responsible and ethical use of it. Teachers are important when it comes to helping their students discover their way of learning, especially in this modern era of education because every student has a diverse set of learning styles and capabilities. By giving guidance, teachers can help students modify their learning approach effectively. Students can utilize this to concentrate on areas that need progress and create practical objectives. Since students might come across a



variety of difficulties in their attempts to achieve their educational goals, learning can be stressful. Teachers can help students overcome barriers and embrace every opportunity they have. The purpose of this study is to understand the learning styles of the learners that the teachers experienced and use effective strategies in handling 21st century learners. The standard model of teaching management has changed in the twenty-first century, transitioning from content-based to competency-based (Yusop, 2023). Teachers are important figures in schools. Educators throughout the world have been urged to get their students prepared for the 21st century. The necessity to assist students in navigating and making the most of opportunities and resources in an increasingly interconnected social landscape and globalized world has led to the implementation of this (Pires, 2023). To facilitate the transition to advanced instructional approaches and strategies, educators have adopted and executed proficiency-based learning approaches (Toland, 2017). As observed by the researchers, this can help gather information that the teachers experience regarding teaching 21st century skills. It explores what were the lived experiences of secondary teachers in teaching the 21st century learners, what were the methods, strategies, and techniques used by the teachers in encountering different learning styles, its effectiveness for the 21st century learner. Teachers resort to using systems of instruction assessments to measure students' knowledge and competencies. The American University of Leadership (2023) points out that teachers encounter difficulties in educating modern students, who come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Consequently, educators are encouraged to embrace inclusive teaching practices, including tailored instructions and personalized learning approaches that take into account of the student's varied backgrounds. As a result, teachers view these challenges as opportunities to consistently adjust their teaching methods, implementing these tactics to create effective strategies for improving student engagement and participation. This study explores the lived experiences of secondary teachers in teaching 21st century learners. With the development and innovation in this generation, learners come with different approaches to learning and this became one of the challenges the secondary teachers experienced. It exists to find opportunities for growth in instructional methods and educational settings, which will lead to improved student learning outcomes by understanding the teacher experiences, particularly their perspectives about educating the learners. Encourage them to reflect on their teaching approaches and express their hopes for the future of education. As students, in the current generation exhibit a variety of behaviors and learning strategies.

Literature Review:

To avoid biases, the study was not anchored to any theories. It was difficult but not impossible to separate oneself from knowledge bias. It was the researcher's intention not to provide theories to defer beforehand assumptions as to avoid inductive data contamination to make impure and to justify the emergence of themes from the gathered data, which is the essence of qualitative research studies. The study also suspends all the assumptions that could be considered present because the study in nature does not predict the outcomes. In addition, the conduct of a review of related literature and studies has come to suspension since the intention was to get a first-hand result without the aid of the previous dissertations and studies.

Research Method:

This study was qualitative descriptive phenomenology in nature. By exploring personal experiences, principles, and practices, qualitative study seeks to comprehend and analyze social processes. It emphasizes acquiring non-numerical information through observing, conducting interviews, and analyzing texts to comprehend more about the way individuals comprehend and impart significance to their experiences (Tenny et al. 2022). The researchers chose to employ a phenomenological study approach, it is to understand and describing people's lived experiences. A descriptive phenomenological research design collects a complex and detailed account of the informant's experiences through in-depth interviews and observations, that allow the informants to describe their experiences. This study was conducted at Canduman National High School situated at Housing Canduman, Mandaue City. In this research, eight (8) informants are expected to participate from Grade 7 to Grade 10 secondary teachers which consists of two teachers every grade level. The researchers will use non-probability sampling specifically, convenience sampling in selecting the informants of this research. The researchers decided to use this sampling technique, to select possible informants which are the teachers based on their availability and convenient time. The main instrument of the study is a non-structured guide question.

In conducting the research, the researchers formulate first a topic and filled out Form 1 for title approval and Form 2 for the request for an adviser and submitted it afterward. The researchers proceed to make the research manuscript for design hearing. All the recommendations and suggestions from the panelists will be incorporated into the study. A transmittal



letter addressed to the School Division Superintendent will be made by the researchers for the approval to conduct a study. Another letter will be given to the School Principal and to teachers who are the participants of the study. All the process will go through a semi-structured interview and informed consent will be presented to the participants who agreed with all the agreements regarding the consequences of this research and at the same time protecting and prioritizing the confidentiality of their information and identity. Recordings of each interview will be made. This study constantly and critically will compare the transcripts to the recordings to ensure that the transcription is accurate. This will be done to guarantee the veracity and authenticity of the data. After, an inductive and thematic analysis of the data will be performed. The recorded answers of the informants will be transcribed and coded. The researchers will also use the Colaizzi technique, that is commonly used in phenomenological research to analyze and interpret data gathered from interviews or written accounts. In taking part in the informants, trust somehow is essential. Prior to the face to-face recorded interviews, the researchers will openly talk to the informants to reveal the nature of this study and gain the informants' trust. Fellow feeling is hereby accepted and recognized between the interviewer, which is the researchers, and interviewee which are the informants knowing the accuracy of information given by the latter. The researchers abide by means of all requirements needed in conducting the entire study utilizing the school guidelines whereas it will undergo ethical reviews and approval from the school dean and research adviser.

Findings and Discussion:

The feedback from the secondary teachers at Canduman National High School forms a crucial basis for addressing the fundamental areas of investigation. Additionally, the important remarks from the informants are collected thoroughly, and the lived experiences of these secondary teachers are essential in this research. The researchers consolidated all the gathered information from the informants and meticulously transcribed the interviews. The transcribed interviews emphasized the crucial phrases to be utilized, and these significant statements were carefully rephrased. The researchers were able to create a code name called "The Adaptive Teachers" based on the informants' responses. These code names are behavioral, values, comprehension, reward, scaffolding, creative, resilient, and assess.

The findings of this study with regard to the lived experiences of secondary teachers in teaching the 21st-century learners, their challenges, and the strategies, methods, and techniques they reinforced. The researchers identified the central themes and sub-themes that emerged from the collected data by utilizing the method of thematic analysis.

THEME 1: Challenges and difficulties in dealing with 21st century learners

SUB-THEME 1.1: Behavioral Hurdles

Challenges for the entire years in teaching I can say it the behavior of the students – Behavioral (SS 3, Line no.3)

...learners nowadays are becoming increasingly hyperactive and I am trying to do my best to find ways and try to increase my patience to be able to deal with this generation – Values (SS 13, line no. 13)

They turn to misbehave and disrespect sometimes – Reward (SS 31, line no. 33)

Their attitudes, their nonchalant attitudes, laziness, tardiness, absenteeism are the challenges that I have been dealing with, and their willingness to participate in class – Scaffolding (SS 43, line no. 45)

Learners in the 21st century are more bothered by so many things, and less focused on their studies – Resilient (SS 59, line no. 62)

From the results of the interview gained by the researchers from the informants, the researchers identified that most of the challenges encountered by the teachers are the student's behavior, attitude, their will to participate in class, and how they lack of focus during the teaching and learning process. There are factors to be considered that contribute to the behavior of the student. Some students suffer from sadness are more likely to struggle with their issues, which hinders their ability to study and encourages undesirable behaviors in the classroom (Kirkpatrick, 2019).



SUB-THEME 1.2: Distinctive Difficulties

they are quite different from the previous generations that I've handled - Values (SS 15, Line no. 15)

21st century students are a bit challenging because they are vulnerable, they are different from other generations- Scaffolding (SS 42, Line no. 44)

The most challenging task of the teacher is to deal with the behavior of the learners of the new generation - Resilient (SS 59, Line no. 59)

They lack the internal mechanism to be able to judge between right from wrong which could directly generate the willpowers to exercise self-control and good judgment of actions. Students in the twenty first century have a greater need than ever before for character development. The teachers found that the diversity of their students was extremely important in all aspects of teaching and learning, and it presented challenges in the area of character education.

THEME 2: Technology Impact on Students learning and access equality

SUB-THEME 2.1: Advantages of Technology

... they are exposed to different technologies that they will... they can use in terms of their learning and this is a great help for them to assess their learning and to help them more understand their desired topics given by their teachers -Behavioral (SS 5, line no. 5)

Well, the 21st century learners are creative and active and some of them tend to behave in class especially when they have gadgets. They tend to use gadgets well when they are in the class –Reward (SS 31, line no. 33)

Gadgets are nice avenue to use their skills like digital skills when it comes to their activities like research or projects - Reward (SS 34, line no. 36)

Since the learners are quite engaged in technology, we teachers integrate to use of technology in the classroom. We use television to play videos that is aligned with our lesson, also we have a computer which helps them to do their research paper - Reward (SS 35, line no.37)

...they are digitally native-born students – Scaffolding (SS 39, line no. 41)

From the results given by informants, it is visible that teachers adapt to innovation and change in today's society to provide students with digital skills and other skills needed in the 21st century (Carstens et al., 2021). Integrating technology in teaching helps enhance the learning process by utilizing different technological tools such as televisions, smartphones, computers, etc.

SUB-THEME 2.2: Disadvantages of Technology

Currently 21st century is more engaged in technology and sometimes they already rejected studies they do not have very good study habits and sometimes which affects their attendance in school. So, having which if they do not come to school having issues with attendance then what is going to happen is they will fail and it will defeat the purpose of provided them in the public institution, quality education but no students are coming - Comprehension (SS 28, line no. 29)

Some of them tend to mismanage and addicted to using a computer as they play first then doing their activities –Reward (SS 34, line no. 33)

In the classroom, they are not familiar with they are going to use their gadgets and aside from that they are also not open to searching sources to apply that in the classroom - Scaffolding (SS 39, line no. 41)



Most of the student lack interest in studying and then they are distracted with their mobile phones. And, before they go to school, students are not prepared and they do not also like to take down notes. They also lack focus maybe because of the distractions like social media and computer games, and also their lack of sleep. So, the challenges that we faced here in school - Creative (SS 47, line no. 49)

Despite the numerous benefits of technology in the classroom, learners' misuse of it puts teachers in jeopardy (Fox, 2018.) Students focus depart learning activities when they use technology to excessively interact with their environment. It showed that students' poor performance in the classroom is caused by their excessive use of external technology, such as social media (Khodabandelou et al cited from Fox, 2018). When the students' performance becomes low, teachers were more likely to be blamed and discouraged by parents or the administration. Due to the tolerance of technology misuse by students, it limits the teachers from giving their best because of the lack of learning initiative done by the students (Fox, 2018). Students are more focused on social media and computer games and they tend to forget their responsibility as students leading them to be distracted during discussions. Additionally, the over-reliance on students technology hinders their ability to perform and accustomed to performing lowly in class.

SUB-THEME 2.3: Technology Gap

The most difficulty in teaching 21st century is the availability of the use of technology, availability of internet connection. – Comprehension (SS 25, line no. 26)

Think the biggest challenge is the availability of technology because out of 60 students in class not, everyone has access to the internet, and not everyone has the capability to have an internet connection. -Reward (SS 28, line no. 29)

The given statements discussed the accessibility to instructional materials or gadgets that are similarly crucial. Despite the fact that we live in a time where technological devices and equipment are reachable, some learners still do not possess one. According to Casillano (2019) indicated that only a minimum of the students has internet access thus impeding them from accessing the e-learning platform. In another study, poor students do not own laptops and desktop computers and have limited internet connections (Cleofas & Rocha, 2021). The primary problem that 21st century educators face is uneven distribution and availability of technological advances and internet connections despite of the necessity that not all students have access to them.

THEME 3: Importance of Collaboration and Group Activities in the Teaching and Learning Process: Collaboration

I used certain strategies in collaborating with them in a certain group. So that ... because I believe in every student, they also have different styles in acquiring learning so by collaboration they can also give their ideas on the certain topics. Behavioral (SS 6, Line no. 6)

There is collaborative teaching, then, usually collaborative teaching, peer teaching. - Values (SS 17, Line no. 17)

So, it is the role of the teacher to facilitate that learning would be a bit easier, more fun, and more interactive so having group activities is encouraged so that this will also improve teamwork, and camaraderie and at the same time it gives opportunity for learners to learn independently together with their classmates that one good activity or teamwork. Think pair share activity allows them to collaborate still together because my stand or my teaching principle is with collaboration students can learn from one another, they only do not learn from the teacher itself they learn 41 from one another at the same time as they learn from the teacher they also learn from their classmates. - Comprehension (SS 26, Line no 27)

I usually used it in my classroom particularly in group activities. – Scaffolding (SS 41, Line no. 43)

We usually do an activity, group activity, and pair tutoring. So, these are he strategies that we used so that students can have a collaborative effort to achieve the objectives that the teacher wants them to attain. - Creative



(SS 51, Line no. 50) The think-peer-share, collaborative work, and, cooperative learning in mathematics because I am teaching mathematics and I let the student do the board work and explain. – Resilient (SS 57, Line no. 57)

From the result of the interview, the researchers identify that the teachers are interested in interactive and collaborative activities, tactics that highlight the value of cooperation in the learning process, the position of the teacher as a facilitator, and the application of group activities to enhance the capacity of learners to work in teams and independently. Collaborative learning involves students working together in groups to solve problems, complete tasks, or create projects. This approach influences students' ability to think critically, which involves analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information to make informed decisions and solve problems (Warsah, et.al, 2021).

THEME 4: Establishing rules and regulations in the classroom to promote discipline and facilitate effective class discussions: Classroom Management

I need to provide certain rules to your class since these rules will help you set or the students will follow for them to be disciplined and for them to also nurture those rules if they are going to act or act like if it is right or wrong so they need to assess if their actions will hinder the class discussions" I need to provide a certain rule to your class since these rules will help you set or the students will follow for them to be disciplined and for them to also nurture those rules if they will going to act or act like an if it is right or wrong so they need to assess if their actions will hinder the class discussions – Behavioral (SS 1, Line no. 8)

We need to set rules and regulations. especially on day one of your class. - Reward (SS 33, Line no. 35)

I will make sure that I will give my rules so that students will follow and I also make sure that the rules are consistent. - Assess (SS 66, Line no 69)

The given statements demonstrate that the teacher's proactive approach is to establish and uphold regulations to control the classroom atmosphere. In addition to encouraging discipline, this method helps students develop morally as they learn how to evaluate the propriety of their activities. According to Umoren cited by George (2017), the concept of classroom management is broader than the notion of student control and discipline, it includes all the things teachers must do in the classroom to foster students' academic involvement and cooperation in classroom activities to create a conducive learning environment.

THEME 5: Catch-up Friday: Supporting student literacy and math skills

SUB-THEME 5.1: Catch-Up Friday

It is a great help from the DepEd who provides a program or a certain program which is called a catch-up Friday. So, every Friday the students will be given the time to have a peer reading, journal reading, and post-reading so these challenges will help them to read and understand certain topics – Behavioral (SS 9, line no. 9)

The given statement describes the importance of Catch-up Friday to the students in terms of learning where it focuses on reading comprehension and solving mathematical problems that will deepen their understanding of the topics. The Department of Education (DepEd) has initiated the Catch-Up Friday's project. Launched nationwide on January 12, 2024, across elementary and secondary schools and community learning centers (CLCs), this intervention program is designed to maximize learning opportunities. Every Friday throughout the academic year is dedicated to the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) activity, fostering a culture of reading and knowledge acquisition. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to collect data on students' perspectives regarding the implementation of the project, ensuring its effectiveness and relevance in meeting educational objectives on DepEd Memorandum No. 001, series of 2024 (Saro et al., 2024). The goal of the Catch-up Friday program is to improve the academic achievement of learners and deal with issues that arise in the classroom.

SUB-THEME 5.2: Student Comprehension



I am a language teacher so the challenge is students are not able to read a certain text or comprehend a certain text. -Behavioral (SS 9, Line no. 9)

There is a problem with reading comprehension. Especially, in math when there are problem-solving skills it is hard for them to comprehend sometimes. – Comprehension (SS 24, Line no. 25)

The challenges probably, are that students lack the foundation, their vocabulary is not that strong and sometimes some students read in a syllabic way. – Creative (SS 50, Line no. 52)

Some students cannot read even if they are in Grade 10, during examination I will read to them the questions so that they can understand the periodical test. - Assess (SS 67, Line no. 70)

The given statements show that reading comprehension and language interpretation are challenges that many students encounter. Comprehension may be impeded by slow reading and lack of simplicity. According to Husnayaini (2019), they had low reading comprehension for five reasons: first, they had low motivation in learning English as commonly happens in a country where English is a foreign language. Second, they were not comfortable in reading, because reading is not their habit. Third, low facilities that did not support the English learning process. Fourth, they still had difficulties in making inferences, determining main ideas, and locating references. Fifth, they did not understand how to pronounce it in English.

Conclusion:

The lived experiences of secondary teachers in teaching 21st century learners are challenging in dealing with their diverse behavior and the rampant on using technology within the school environment. The experiences of secondary teachers in teaching 21st century learners are truly remarkable. As researchers, listening to their insights during interviews fills us with pride as aspiring educators. The teaching profession is noble, as these teachers face challenges in effectively engaging and educating their students. Despite being often underappreciated, they show remarkable dedication and make invaluable contributions to society. Even in facing the constantly evolving educational landscapes, teachers wholeheartedly embrace change and remain committed to adapting to new challenges. The lived experiences of the secondary teachers in teaching the high school students are significant. These lived experiences shape teachers on how to stand their roles and responsibilities in teaching 21st century learners. This study explores the lived experiences of secondary teachers in teaching the 21st century learners, focusing on five key themes: Challenges and difficulties in dealing with 21st century learners, Technology impact on students learning and access equality, Importance of collaboration and group activities in the teaching and learning process, Establishing rules and regulations in the classroom to promote discipline and facilitate effective class discussions, Catch-up Friday: Supporting student literacy and math skills. By delving into these themes, we gain valuable insights in understanding which emphasizes both challenges and opportunities that teachers faced in the 21st century. Also, the multifaceted nature of modern education that teachers need to adapt to the various teaching approaches, the balance use of technology, and embrace change for effective and equitable education. The implications of these findings shed light on the importance of knowing the challenges and opportunities in teaching the 21st century learners in terms of the different approaches used in facilitating the students and the effectiveness of the assessment. Understanding these implications can inform and benefit teachers, school administrators, students, policymakers, parents and guardians, society, and future researchers. The lived experiences of secondary teachers revealed their dedication to facilitating and adaptability to modern education in teaching students. It is remarkable and the honest responses of the informants in connection with modern education underscored the challenges and opportunities in handling the students, the approaches that the teacher uses in catering to the learning styles and ensuring the effectiveness of the assessment. By recognizing these implications and recommendations outlined in this chapter, this study 53 can continue to empower the teachers and the students which can pave the path of a more promising outlook for education.

Limitations and Further Research:

Based on the findings, the lived experiences of the secondary teachers highlighted the challenges and opportunities in the 21st century. To further improve in understanding the experiences in teaching the students, the following recommendations are suggested: Apply discipline fairly and consistently. To keep students feeling fair and accountable in the classroom, make sure that sanctions for misbehavior are consistent, reasonable, and well-defined; promote



responsible technology use and digital citizenship helps students navigate the digital world safely and ethically to create a supportive and engaging learning environment; provide staff members access to opportunities for professional development that center on embracing technology, and recognizing different learning styles and modern teaching techniques; parents should actively engage with teachers during parent-teacher conferences to understand their child's accomplishments and educational preferences; the community develops projects that give educational institutions the tools they need to introduce technology-driven educational courses; and future researchers are advised to explore additional variables not covered in the current study. Future researchers will conduct a cross-cultural study to understand how teaching experiences vary in different educational contexts.

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