School Discipline Practices: Narratives Of Sirawan National High School Teachers

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Abstract — School discipline and classroom management problems continue to rank at the top of the teacher's headache list. Volumes of books and hundreds of journal articles have been written discussing components of discipline in the classroom. As with any plan in education, the individual school's culture and climate must be considered when implementing a discipline program. This study described the discipline practices of teachers in schools. Qualitative phenomenological approach was employed to 15 teachers in Sirawan National High School in Toril, Davao City. To gather data, in depth interviews were conducted. The results of the interview were transcribed, translated, and coded to produce themes. As regards the experiences of teachers, the following were the themes revealed on their experiences: parental participation and involvement; parental inattention and non-engagement; school-wide adoption of child protection policy; diverse levels of teacher acceptance; teacher inadequacies and inconsistencies; and continued indiscipline of students. Looking upon their challenges in the student discipline practices the following themes were created: parental engagement and collaboration; provision of teacher guidance and support; use of ―positive discipline; diverse levels of teacher acceptance; and use of creative approaches. As to their insights, the following themes were generated: parental involvement is essential to student discipline; schools should be steadfast in the implementation; be positive and constructive; teachers need understanding and support; and discipline should be relevant and pertinent.

Keywords — Discipline, child protection, positive approaches, corporal punishment

I. Introduction

Today, varying kinds of discipline are passed from one generation to another. That is why there are approaches that are traditional and some are the so-called millennial discipline approach. It is true that, way back in the 1940's to 1970's, corporal punishment was used in disciplining a child in school. But gradually it has been abolished because of laws that protect children's rights.

Traditional parents thought that spanking and hitting children were the best way to put up good discipline and some teachers tend to use violence and humiliation for disciplinary actions as part of the educational system (Durrant, 2010; Smenyak & Fleming, 2012). Furthermore, studies show that in the United States even up to now there are 21 states that still practice and utilize corporal punishment as one way of disciplining students in school.

Perhaps the only topic of school discipline that produces a consensus is that students are increasingly out of control (Brookover, 1992). Disruptions hamper lessons for all students, and disruptive students are even more handicapped by their own behavior. A study by Gottfredson (1989) in Charleston, South Carolina concluded that in six middle schools, students lost 7,932 instructional days to in-school and out-of-school suspensions in a single academic year.

School violence and ineffective disciplinary practices have become perennial problems in public schools (Devine, 1996). School violence, (inclusive of disrespect for authority and school procedures) fighting, gang-like behaviors, and bringing weapons or drugs to school, are catalysts to disciplinary actions. Studies indicate that nationwide as many as 8% of boys routinely carry guns to school and in 1997, 20% of high school students had carried a gun to school (Mercy & Rosenberg, 1998). These students' behaviors have placed students, parents, teachers, administrators, and staff in constant fear. Students have impeded the educational process through severe behavior infractions warranting disciplinary responses. In an attempt to rectify the imbalances, the federal government proposed to spend $566 million on safe and drug-free schools during the 1999 fiscal year alone (Federal Assistance Monitor, 1998).

Various research shows that corporal punishment is ineffective in disciplining children of all ages and most often, it produces anger, resentment, and low self-esteem in children. It also teaches the child that violence is an acceptable behavior and is a solution to problems. Corporal punishment perpetuates itself as children imitate the actions of adults (Philippine Senate Bill 1997). More research is needed to know more on the strategies and techniques in the student discipline implementation. The existing research also reveals a lack of qualitative studies in the implementation of student discipline as a whole. Although a great deal of quantitative research has been conducted on student discipline from the perspective of school heads, considerably less qualitative research has been done in the implementation of discipline in varied schools both public and private.

As teachers, we all go through life cycles, and each person has his/her ways of dealing with the implementation of an effective student discipline. As a matter of fact, I have not come across a similar study that dealt with the implementation of an effective student discipline from the teachers' perspective in the local setting. Therefore, in this context, I am interested to know the experiences of these teachers as this can raise concern for the intended beneficiaries of the study, and come up with the implication for educational practice, thus the need to conduct a study.

The purpose of this study was to investigate common threads of school discipline practices as perceived by teachers of students in Sirawan National High School in Toril District, Davao City concerning discipline practices in junior high schools, focusing on grades 7 through 10. Teachers were interviewed and asked open-ended questions using a qualitative design guided by the prepared interview questions.

Concepts on Students Discipline

Every individual is entitled to his/her basic right, regardless of race, religion, origin, status, and ability. This is also true of children but often ignored by some adults. The individual referred to here is a child who may or may not be involved in school discipline problems which are tardiness (delay), vandalism, violence, bullying, disrespect, dropouts, drug abuse, gangs and sexting. There has been a study that adopted zero tolerance policies, and which proposed that students shall be subjected to punishments for violations which have predetermined consequences according to school policies mandate (Federal Assistance Monitor, 1998).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education has ordered the No. 40 series of 2012 also known as ―Policy and Guidelines on Protecting Children In School from Abuse, Violence, Exploitation, Discrimination, Bullying And Other Forms Of Abuse. Some policies that protect children's rights are: DepEd Order No. 55, which supports the implementation of Republic Act No. 10627 otherwise known as the

Anti-Bullying Act of 2013; and DepEd Order No. 18 or the Guidelines and Procedures on the Management of Children-At-Risk and Children in Conflict with the Law (Langan-Fox & Copper, 2011; UNICEF, 2013).

Moreover, it was also described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that the state shall prioritize the well-being of the child and that the child should be free from any form of violence. State Parties are also required to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention. The UNCRC guarantees child rights which are the right to survival and full development of their potential, adequate food, shelter, education, health care, leisure activities, cultural calamities, information, and dignity; the right to be protected from violence, neglect, exploitation and cruelty; the right to be part of making decisions and freedom of expression. They also have the right to associate themselves with other people (Meyers, Platt, & Pawlas, 1989; Durrant, 2013; Lansdown, 2011; Willis, 2007).

To protect the child's well-being, the UNCRC strongly advised that protective measures should include social programs that will effectively give support for the child and for those who have the care of the child. Such protective procedures shall also cover other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, 1991; Education and Inspection Act, 2006).

The World Health Organization (WHO), in the World Report on Violence and Health year 2002, defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a child, by an individual or group, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity. In 2011, about two in three parents of children under 17 said they used corporal punishment.

Spanking the bottom (52%) is considered to be the most prevalent form of corporal punishment used. Children experiencing corporal punishment are most likely to have negative attitudes towards siblings and peers (Duke, 1989; Banerjee, 2011; Gershoff, 2014; Smith & Taylor 2006; Donald & Frank, 2010). Another study conducted advocated for positive discipline. Teachers have immense responsibilities and challenges which include guidance, motivation, nurturing of learners with different family backgrounds, strengths, weaknesses, talents, and skills.

Challenges in Implementation of Student Discipline

Studies cite that poor implementation of school discipline such as leniency with some students or stringency with other students could trigger violence, which eventually leads to corporal punishment. In this regard, classroom management introduced by Dewey is an approach to address the issue of poor administration at school. Dewey believed that with the help of the teacher as a facilitator, children are capable of learning, cooperation, generosity and mindfulness for one another. He believed that instructional management included a natural approach involving direction and guidance and that behavior management included the sequential behavior development of students.

Many teachers practice this technique today as a central component of classroom management (Fisher, Frey & Pumpian 2012; Landau, & Gathercoal 2000; Oludare, 2011; Durrant, 2013; Duffy, 2013). Similarly, another finding explains the teachers' inconsistencies in enforcing classroom discipline. Teachers explain that few of them are well-oriented with all the rules, while many others lack training in classroom management.

For the teachers, despite the inconsistencies in classroom management the most important thing is that they have dealt with the student effectively. An ethnographic study about the moral life of schools included extensive observations in 18 classrooms in elementary schools and high schools. They observed that two main categories capture the moral life in the classroom: moral instruction, which are deliberate attempts to promote moral instruction and to encourage moral behavior. In this regard, teachers explain that following and implementing numerous rules is too challenging for them to enforce effectively (Duke, 1986; Tattum, 1982; Ingersoll, 2001; Jackson, 2011).

Additionally, the inconsistencies of the enforcement of the rules are caused by teachers' being oblivious to the rules, but rather reflect refinements of the rules that most people involved have a common understanding about. Another study about the use of positive discipline in school management showed a statistically significant improvement in the behavior of students in the program schools when compared with the control schools. There are other small-scale studies that prove the positive impact of positive discipline. It has been observed that students' perception as being part of the school community decreases the incidence of socially risky behavior (such as emotional distress and suicidal attempts/ thoughts, cigarette, alcohol and marijuana use; violent

behavior) and increases academic performance (Nelsen, 1979; Osher, 2010; Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin & De Pedro, 2011).

There is also significant evidence that social skills development is vital to a student's success. It is also notable that strengthening such skills promotes a positive behavior among students and they are less likely to be involved in behavioral problems. Finally, four main components have been identified as important for learning: physical and emotional safety, connectedness, challenges, and a positive peer climate. The school who does positive intervention on treating misbehavior and creates policies that reflect these important factors for students may be equally effective in creating an atmosphere more conducive to learning. From some points of view, creative thinking is a catalyst to the accomplishment of goals through the complex, interconnected world; hence, education researchers and psychologists emphasize and push the acquisition of creative abilities for social, emotional, cognitive, and professional benefits (Battistich, Davidovitch & Milgram, 1999; Kellam, 1998; Osher, 2010; Sternberg, 2006).

Corporal punishment is defined in the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involve hitting (smacking, slapping, spanking) children, with the hand or with an implement, a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon. It can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scolding or forced ingestion (Durrant, 2012; Kayode, 1984; Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Non-physical forms of punishment do not align with the advocacy of the Convention as well. Examples of these are punishment that belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares, or ridicules the child.

In the Philippines, Save the Children conducted a study in 2005 which revealed that 85% of children have experienced corporal punishment in their homes and that the most common form is spanking (65%). Majority of the children interviewed (82%) reported that they were hit on different parts of their body (Harper & Row, 1987; Glasser, 2015).

Consequently, effective discipline must be both positive and constructive. Settings of goals and constructive solutions should be met so that challenging situations can be addressed effectively. The School should respect children's developmental levels, their rights to dignity and physical integrity, and their right to participate fully in their learning. The only way to promote effective school discipline is through collective effort of the educators and everyone within the school environment. Definitely, learning follows, prompted by order and civility (Durrant, 2013; School Discipline, 2013; Langan-Fox & Cooper, 2011).

Foregoing views on positive discipline in everyday teaching approach are based on sound pedagogical principles and practice. Positive discipline is Holistic, it applies not only to students' behavior, but to all aspects of their learning and social interactions. It is strength-based, as it identifies and builds on the students' strengths. It is Constructive, aimed at strengthening students'

self-esteem and confidence. It is Inclusive, for it recognizes and respects the diversity of all students. Next, it is Proactive as it identifies the roots of behavioral and learning difficulties and implements strategies promoting success, avoiding conflict, and finally, it is participatory in the learning process and school community (Durrant, 2013; Ingersoll, 2001; Kohn, 2006).

This study is viewed from the lens of Skinner (1999) also known as Skinnerian Model and Gordon's (1989) International Model of Effective Training. The Skinnerian model as a behavior modification paradigm derived from the work of behavioral psychologist Burrhus Frederic Skinner. Skinner has been a major influence behind the adaptation of clinical behavior techniques to classroom settings (Duke & Meckel 1980). He believed that consequences shape an individual's behavior. He focused his approach on reinforcement and reward. Reinforcers are like rewards; if used in a systematic way, they influence an individual's behavior in a desired direction. Skinner made use of terms such as operant behavior, reinforcing stimuli, schedule of reinforcement, successive approximations, positive and negative reinforcements (Charles & Barr, 1989).

Moreover, operant behavior is a purposeful, voluntary action. Reinforcing stimuli are rewards that the individual receives directly after performing an appropriate behavior. Receiving rewards pleases learners; this makes them more likely to repeat a good behavior pattern in the hope of obtaining further rewards.

Schedules of reinforcements occur when reinforcement is produced on an ongoing basis. Positive reinforcement is the process of supplying a reward that the learners favor; all rewards can thus be seen as reinforcement (Van Wyk, 2000). Negative reinforcement means taking away something that the learners like.

The Skinnerian model assumes that behavior is learnt and that reinforcements contribute towards achieving good behavior when reinforcement procedures are used to shape learners' behavior in a desired direction. Educators reward desired behavior with praise and enjoyable prizes; they punish undesirable behavior by withholding all rewards. It is vital that educators who utilize behavior modification consider their own behavior and how it may be used to reinforce good behavior in the classroom environment.

Furthermore, Gordon's (1989) International Model of Effective Training promotes that good classroom discipline involves students developing their own inner sense of self-control. He uses a behavior window, which is a visual device that helps to clarify whether a problem exists and who has the problem. He indicates that there are two feelings, namely a primary feeling, which an individual experience after unacceptable behavior, and a secondary feeling sensed after the resolution of the matter (Van Wyk, 2000).

II. Methodology

This study employed qualitative phenomenology which is believed to be more appropriate for this investigation rather than the quantitative approach, for discipline is a continuous process in developing individual's character and the purpose of this study is to seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created, specifically discipline problems among adolescents (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

As a way of collecting the needed data, this study being qualitative in approach used interviews of the participants as the main tool. The result of the interview was analyzed, coded, and interpreted by the researcher.

The study involved 15 secondary teachers of Sirawan National High School. They were chosen through the following inclusion criteria: secondary teachers of the identified school; had three (3) or more years teaching experience; resident of the locality or nearby locality; willing to participate in the study; and of either sexes.

The researcher used purposive sampling in selecting the participants. Teachers who have encountered disciplinary problems, referred students with discipline problems, and talked to parents with children's disciplinary problems are involved in this study. The participants were all interviewed, their responses were audio recorded (with their permission), and their narratives were coded and analyzed.

The face-to-face interview using guided questions provided the most appropriate instrument to understand the phenomena. Most of the emphasis is on the role of the researcher to elicit and represent an interpretive relationship of the world (Hiller & Di Luzio, 2004). One-on-one interviews in qualitative research have advantages and disadvantages (Rubin & Rubin, 2001). The advantages include reduced time to collect data, greater access to research participants, a commonly accepted protocol for valid qualitative research, ease of replication of the research and observance of protective health protocols.

The disadvantages include the lack of direct contact by the researcher with the research participants, the costs associated with data collection involving recording of interviews and transcription of results, and the generation of a large volume of research data from the transcribed interviews (Cresswell, 2003). Further, the researcher has difficulty in observance of the responses of non-verbal communications exhibited in face-to-face personal interviews because of the worn face masks.

The research strategy utilized in-depth interviews conducted with a purposive sample from each of the represented occupational domains. All the interviews were conducted personally, recorded, and transcribed to ensure accuracy of participant responses.

Kvale (2002) defined qualitative interview as an interview, whose purpose is to gather description of the lifeworld of the interviewee with respect to the interpretation of meaning of the described phenomena. Phenomenological interviews, according to Cassell and Symon (2004), can be very lengthy and the use of semi-structured questions can assist in developing a structure for content analysis to promote generalization of the findings.

The gathered data were treated using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the thorough inspection of themes generated across an extensive assembly of practices in an array of forms such as written words and responses (Jupp, 2006). The process of thematic analysis in this paper involved stages of exploring the data.

The researcher initially transcribed all the individual responses of the participant in one master transcript. The analysis of the raw data identified the relevant codes which were then listed in a separate file. The researcher constantly reviewed these codes to eventually group them according to similarities. Based on the groups of similar codes, the broader categories were developed and structured at the same time to answer the purpose of this research.

Thematic analyses were used to analyze the recorded and transcribed responses of the participants. It requires more involvement and interpretation from the researcher. Thematic analyses move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes. Codes are then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis. Such analyses may or may not include the following: comparing code frequencies, identifying code co-occurrence, and graphically displaying relationships between codes within the data set.

Generally speaking, reliability is of greater concern with thematic analysis than with word-based analyses because more interpretation goes into defining the data items (i.e., codes) as well as applying the codes to chunks of text. This issue is even more pronounced when working in teams with multiple analysts. To maintain rigor, strategies for monitoring and improving inter-coder agreement, and therefore reliability, should be implemented in the analytic process. Despite these few issues related to reliability, we feel that a thematic analysis is still the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set. It is also the most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative research.

Thematic analysis focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behavior. The first step is to collect the data. Audiotapes should be collected to study the talk of a session interview (Spradley, 2009). From the transcribed conversations, patterns of experiences can be listed. These can come from direct quotes or paraphrasing common ideas.

III. Results and Discussion

Experiences of teachers in implementing discipline program

From the data collected on the experiences of the study participants, six *main themes emerged. These themes helped me determine which ideas to* report. These themes are the following: *Parental participation and involvement; Parental inattention and non-engagement; School-wide adoption of child protection policy; Diverse levels of teacher acceptance; Teacher Inadequacies and inconsistencies; and Continued indiscipline of students.*

Teachers addressing the problems in discipline

In support of this research question, three questions were raised during the in-depth interview namely: As a teacher, *what strategies do you use in order to effectively implement student discipline in your class? What coping mechanisms are used to lessen the impact of challenges? How do you treat students who have good classroom behavior?* From the data collected through the questions there were four main themes which emerged from the responses: *Parental engagement and collaboration, Provision of teacher and support, Use of Positive Discipline, and Use of Creative approaches.*

Insights of teachers in discipline practices

Insight 1. Parental Involvement is Essential to student discipline. Parental Involvement is essential to student discipline. Parents are partners of school heads and teachers in honing good conduct and behavior modification of students in school. Working with parents to develop and communicate expectations, creating positive opportunities in school activities and maintaining channels of communication with the parents makes students disciplined to be effective.

Insight 2. Schools should be steadfast in the implementation. Schools should be steadfast in the Implementation. School heads play significance in implementing student discipline.

Insight 3. Teachers must be Positive and Constructive. There are struggles in the implementation of the policy in discipline, still our leaders in schools advocate positivity and constructivism of human perceptions towards child's behavioral modification.

*Insight 4. Teachers need understanding and support. T*eachers as the direct implementer of student discipline, need understanding and support both from administrator and parents. They are merely individuals that commit mistakes too.

*Insight 5. Discipline should be relevant and pertinent. T*he best way to modify behavior was to modify the environment. Many theories supported this phenomenon on student discipline implementation.

Discussion

The investigation on the implementation of student discipline as viewed by the school heads has illuminated the relevance and the essential of such study. As a researcher and educator, I have done my contribution towards the realities behind the implementation of student discipline in my workplace. I do believe that the findings of this study would lead towards school heads realizing the importance of implementing student discipline that is constructive and positive. That it is not rude and motivates students to modify their attitudes that leads them into academic, social, economic, and spiritual excellence which are the various dimensions of life.

The results of this study clearly substantiated the impact of student discipline implementation which depicts that there are children who experienced some sort of negative approach which leads to absenteeism and worst they stop coming to school. The findings have proven that if we do positive and constructive discipline children most likely develop positive results which can be noticed through their attitudes, behavior, and academic representations. Those schools that follow the Child Protection Policy as a basis for implementing student discipline, have an effective learning environment and create well-rounded individuals.

Validation of data revealed two sources: First, the readings on the implementation of student discipline, and second, the in-depth interviews. The contributions of this study lie in making available the experiences, challenges, insights, and perspectives of teachers on the phenomenon of the implementation of student discipline. it brings to fore the advantage of using the qualitative approach in understanding certain experiences.

It has also opened opportunities and ideas for future research as there is a great deal more to be learned about the implementation of student discipline and its gains in the behavioral modification of students to what approaches and strategies were effective. I have validated that by engaging teachers through their ideas and experiences for they were the direct person also who implements student discipline, effective discipline is done through collaborative partnership of school heads, parents, and teachers as well.

As the leader, the school head must be first the implementer of good character. Parents must be involved in various school activities particularly on the amendments of school policy for it will benefit the growth of their child's education. I do hope that school heads should have training and workshops on positive discipline as an integral part in the implementation of student discipline.

It is needed also to strengthen the spiritual aspects of school heads through retreats and fellowships. Secondly, for the teachers, there should be intensive seminars and training on classroom management. There should also be an identification of school heads and teachers who have poor school and classroom management then train them, thereafter, evaluate and assess them if there are improvements on their management. I do hope also for pushing on and keeping the flame burning in the spiritual aspect of the faculty staff and student itself to have values formation as part of the practice for student discipline. he

IV. Conclusion

The head teacher should reflect on the aspects of school practice that, when effective, contribute to improving the quality of student behavior. These are the following: A consistent approach to behavior management; strong school leadership; Classroom management; Rewards and sanctions; Staff development and support; Pupil support systems; Liaison with parents and other agencies; Managing pupil transition; and Organization and facilities.

Positive discipline tools showed a statistically significant improvement in the behavior of students in the program schools when compared to other schools. Where the ideas of Platt were supported by Browning (2000) that with the use of positive discipline, students' perception of being part of the school community (being connected to school) decreases the incidence of socially risky behavior (such as emotional distress and suicidal thoughts / attempts, cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use; violent behavior) and increases academic performance (Goodenow, 2012). Positive discipline teaches parents the skills to be both kind and firm at the same time (Stanley, 2014). Positive discipline aims to work with children and not against them.

Lieberman (2012) pointed out that the use of punishment as a behavioral modification technique was found out to be ineffective. But their ideas were contradicted by Kohn (2006) that says, grades and praise, kills intrinsic motivation and the desire to learn, and this concept is, of course, in opposition to what teachers have always been taught. He states that rewards destroy student's inherent motivation and reduces their natural interest in a subject.

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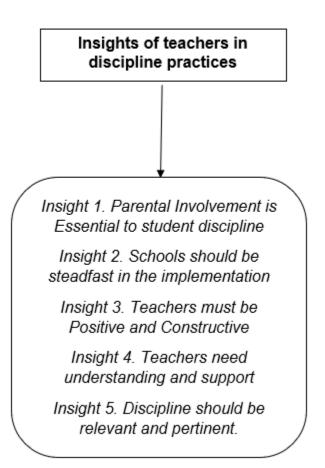[9] UNICEF (2013). Violence in the lives of children and adolescents. Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org

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Appendix

Insights of teachers in
discipline practices

Insight 1. Parental Involvement is
Essential to student discipline

Insight 2. Schools should be
steadfast in the implementation

Insight 3. Teachers must be
Positive and Constructive

Insight 4. Teachers need
understanding and support

Insight 5. Discipline should be
relevant and pertinent.

AUTHOR'S PROFILE

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The author graduated from Notre Dame University, Cotabato City with a degree of Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Mathematics in March, 1991. After graduation, she took the Professional Board Examination for Teachers (PBET) now LET, and successfully passed the examination. In the same year, she also took the Professional CSC Career Service Examination and was blessed to have passed such an exam.

She was hired as a Co-Terminus teacher, city-paid, at Buhangin National High School in September, 1993 and served in such status for six months. Following that year, she became a regular-permanent Secondary School Teacher I in Toril National High School on September 16, 1994. Until this date, she is still serving in this institution which now changed its name to Sirawan National High School.

She is currently taking a Master of Arts in Educational Management at Rizal Memorial Colleges Inc. situated at F. Torres St., Davao City. In her current status as Secondary School Teacher III, she continues to be designated with various roles such as the school's administrative officer, SMEA and W.A.T.C.H. coordinator, SIP/AIP in-charge and is also one among the selected teachers in this division trained by the Local Civil Registrar (CCRO) to process the birth registration of our unregistered learners including residents of the community aside from her teaching loads.