
Teachers' Lived Experiences in Preparing Students With Hearing Impairments For National Assessments

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Abstract — This paper examined the lived experiences of High School teachers managing students with hearing impairments in preparation for the National Assessments in the public schools of the Division of Valenzuela. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, it aimed to understand how teachers deal with challenges in instruction, communication, and assessment while trying to create inclusive classrooms. Guided by the Theory of Teacher Self-Efficacy (TSE), the study shows that teachers' confidence in their own skills greatly affects how they support learners with hearing impairments. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with eight (8) secondary teachers who directly handle students with hearing impairments. They shared their strategies, adjustments, and experiences in preparing students for assessments. The data were then analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step method to identify common patterns and themes. The findings revealed five main themes: (1) curriculum adaptation and instruction, (2) assessment and readiness support, (3) administrative support and policy implementation, (4) teacher workload and professional development needs, and (5) collaboration and stakeholder engagement. These show that teachers constantly adjust their lessons using visuals, scaffolding, and differentiated strategies to meet learners' needs. However, they also face challenges like limited support, heavy workload, and lack of specialized training, especially in sign language and assessment practices. Despite these, teamwork among teachers, school leaders, and stakeholders play a big role in sustaining inclusive education. Based on these findings, the study developed the S.I.G.N.S. Framework, which brings together curriculum adaptation, assessment support, governance, professional

development, and collaboration into one practical guide for inclusive education. The framework itself serves as a practical guide that schools, teachers, and administrators can use to improve inclusive practices. It is designed to help them plan and implement more accessible instruction, provide proper assessment accommodations, strengthen teacher training, and promote collaboration among stakeholders. Through this framework, schools are encouraged to make inclusion more structured, consistent, and responsive to the needs of students with hearing impairments, especially in preparation for national assessments. Overall, the study concludes that stronger support systems, continuous training, and better collaboration are needed to improve how students with hearing impairments are prepared for national assessments.

Keywords: framework, hearing impairment, inclusive education, National Assessments

I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become one of the most important educational movements of our time, seeking to ensure that every student, regardless of ability, has equal access to meaningful learning opportunities. One group that really needs more attention is students with hearing impairments. They have unique ways of communicating and learning, and without the right support, they can easily get left behind. According to the World Health Organization (2021), more than 466 million people worldwide, including 34 million children, live with disabling hearing loss, a figure expected to grow due to aging populations and environmental noise. That is why schools need to rethink how they support these learners, especially in high school, where important decisions about careers, academic paths, and national assessments start to shape their future.

In the Philippine setting, many students with hearing impairments still face daily struggles that make inclusion feel more like an ideal than a reality. A lot of schools don't have enough resources like assistive technology, trained sign language interpreters, or even learning materials that are adapted to their needs. In this regard, the learners often find it harder to keep up in class. However, among all the challenges they face, one of the most critical moments is when they take national assessments, where the lack of support becomes even more obvious. These examinations, while designed to measure knowledge fairly, often pose barriers for students with hearing

impairments. Instructions are usually given out loud, time limits are strict, and very few accommodations are provided. As a result, students with hearing impairments are often put at a disadvantage. As Fernandez and Bautista (2021) point out, these assessments may end up measuring how well students can hear or access spoken information, rather than what they truly know or are capable of doing. Moreover, this is not just a problem in the Philippines; it occurs in many parts of the world. A study by Chisala (2023) on the inclusivity of standardized assessments in lower primary special schools in Zambia supports these concerns. The study found that national assessments often do not reflect the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Because of the lack of accessible and adapted tools, students with hearing impairments are placed at a disadvantage. As a result, they tend to have lower academic performance, which can also limit their future educational and career opportunities.

Furthermore, Lopez et al. (2020) noted that even when inclusive education policies are in place, they are not always fully implemented in real classroom settings. This is often due to limited resources and a lack of formal teacher training. Because of this, many teachers admit they do not feel fully prepared to meet the specific learning needs of students with hearing impairments, especially when preparing them for national assessments. At the same time, there is still a clear gap in research in the Philippine context. There are not enough studies that focus on the lived experiences of teachers working with students with hearing impairments, particularly regarding how they prepare these students for national assessments.

While earlier studies discuss co-teaching, collaborative learning, and various accommodations, only a few examine how these strategies play out during national assessments in Philippine classrooms. Even local studies like those of Bajenio et al. (2023) and Cosmod and Villarente (2025) that discuss the experiences of Filipino teachers don't fully explain how these experiences affect students' readiness for national assessments. Because of this, there is still a gap between what international best practices suggest and what actually happens in Philippine classrooms. A lot of the time, schools end up relying on global strategies that do not always fit the local situation. What works in well-funded schools abroad may not be practical here, where teachers often handle large classes, have limited resources, and support learners with very different needs at the same time.

With this in mind, the main goal of the study was to generate meaningful insights that could help develop a more holistic, context-responsive framework for teachers working in inclusive classrooms. It was based on the real-life experiences of high school teachers handling students with hearing impairments, to bridge the gap between what inclusive education policies require and what actually happens in the classroom.

Theoretical Lens

The Teacher Self-Efficacy (TSE) as its main theoretical framework. The TSE refers to how strongly a teacher believes in their ability to help students learn, stay engaged, and succeed, even those who are unmotivated or considered difficult to teach. This concept is grounded in Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, which explains that people's beliefs about their capabilities strongly influence their actions, effort, and persistence. In this sense, professional development plays a crucial role in strengthening teacher self-efficacy. When teachers receive proper training and continuous learning opportunities, especially in deaf education, their confidence and competence in working with diverse learners significantly improve. Training equips them with practical strategies and experiences they can apply in real classroom situations, making them feel more prepared and capable.

These findings are supported by the study of John Jerrim, Sam Sims, and Mary Oliver (2023). Their findings suggest that professional development strengthens teacher self-efficacy by providing teachers with concrete tools and experiences they can rely on in practice. As a result, teachers become more willing to try visual teaching strategies, adjust their instruction, and persist in overcoming communication barriers. In the context of deaf education, meaningful professional development, such as workshops, coaching, and hands-on training, helps teachers build confidence in applying what they have learned. When high school teachers are trained in Filipino Sign Language, visual instructional strategies, and appropriate assessment accommodations, they are more likely to feel prepared and less overwhelmed. This becomes especially important in situations like preparing students with hearing impairments for national assessments, where effective instruction and accessibility support are critical.

Statement of the Problem

This phenomenological study was to understand the essence of the lived experiences of high school teachers who prepared students with hearing impairments for national assessments.

In particular, the following questions were addressed in this study:

1. How do high school teachers describe their most significant experiences in terms of managing students with hearing impairments in preparation for national assessments?
2. What clustered meanings can be drawn from the significant experiences of the High School Teachers?
3. What themes emerged from the significant statements of the co-participants?
4. Based on the findings, what framework can be developed to support teachers in effectively managing and preparing students with hearing impairments for national assessments within inclusive education settings?

II. METHODOLOGY

The perspective of the high school teachers on managing students with hearing impairment in preparation for the National Assessments was investigated in the study. This study used a qualitative, transcendental-phenomenological research design, which was suitable for the study's purpose. Through this approach, the researcher captured the co-participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges (Creswell & Poth, 2018, as cited in Delante & Dulay, 2025). The themes were not predetermined but were drawn from the participants' actual narratives. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather rich and detailed information about the realities of high school teachers and their experiences. One of the methods used to analyze the interview data was the Colaizzi method, which helped organize and make sense of the participants' responses. This

design offers comprehensive, contextual insights that go beyond basic observations by gathering and examining reflective reflections, personal narratives, and detailed descriptions of classroom and school experiences.

Data Generation and Selection of Implementers

An interview guide was used to structure the discussions while still giving participants the freedom to share their own experiences and insights. The guide was validated by three (3) experts in inclusive education and qualitative research to make sure the questions were clear, relevant, and aligned with the study's objectives. Their feedback was used to refine the questions, thereby strengthening the quality and credibility of the gathered data. After the validation process, the researcher submitted a letter of endorsement to the Schools Division Office to obtain approval to conduct the study. Once approval was given, informed consent was obtained from each participant before the interviews began. This ensured that participation was voluntary and that participants clearly understood the study's purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations.

Each interview was conducted in a safe and comfortable setting, either face-to-face or online, depending on the participants' availability and preference. With the participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy, and the researcher also took notes to capture key observations. Each interview session lasted around 45 to 60 minutes.

The interview data were transcribed verbatim. The researcher carefully reviewed all the transcripts and used thematic analysis to identify recurring ideas, themes, and patterns from the teachers' lived experiences. The study also used Colaizzi's Seven-Step Method of qualitative data analysis to guide the interpretation and organization of the lived experiences of high school teachers working with students with hearing impairments.

To make the findings more trustworthy and accurate, member checking was conducted by sharing the interpreted themes with some participants to confirm their accuracy. Feedback from experts in inclusive education was also sought to improve the validity of the analysis. The researcher also kept a reflective journal during the data collection process. This journal included

thoughts, observations, and possible biases. This helped make the study more transparent and supported its credibility (Vicary, Young & Hicks, 2022).

In this study, purposive sampling was used because it was the most suitable method for selecting participants with the appropriate experience for the topic. Purposive sampling involves selecting people who meet specific criteria related to the research. In this case, eight (8) high school teachers who were teaching students with hearing impairments in inclusive classrooms were selected (Creswell & Poth, 2018, as cited in Delante & Dulay, 2025). The participants came from three (3) public secondary schools under the Schools Division of Valenzuela City. They were chosen because they were directly involved in preparing students with hearing impairments for national assessments. Since they had real classroom experience, they were able to share useful insights about the challenges, adjustments, and strategies used in inclusive teaching.

To be included in the study, the participants needed to have at least two (2) years of experience teaching high school students with hearing impairments, be currently teaching in inclusive classrooms, and be willing to take part in in-depth interviews. These requirements ensured that the participants had enough experience and direct exposure to inclusive education practices. Because of these criteria, the study was able to gather rich and meaningful information based on the real experiences of teachers in handling students with hearing impairments.

Literature Comparison

Literature consistently shows that teachers play a central role in making inclusive education work for students with hearing impairments. They are often described as the "frontliners" who adjust lessons, provide support, and respond to learners' needs in the classroom (Garcia & Ramos, 2021; Martinez & Santos, 2023). However, many teachers still face challenges due to limited training, insufficient preparation, and limited resources. These issues become even more evident during national assessments, where hearing-based instructions and rigid testing systems disadvantage students with hearing impairments (Lopez et al., 2020; Reyes & Aquino, 2022).

A key concept in the literature is Teacher Self-Efficacy (TSE), which refers to teachers' belief in their ability to teach and support students effectively, even in difficult situations (Bandura, 1997; Woodcock & Hardy, 2023). In inclusive classrooms, higher TSE means teachers are more likely to adapt instruction, use alternative communication strategies, and persist in addressing learning barriers. Studies also show that teachers with stronger self-efficacy are more willing to implement inclusive practices despite classroom challenges (Jerrim, Sims, & Oliver, 2023; Woodcock & Hardy, 2023). Professional development plays a direct role in strengthening TSE, especially in teaching students with hearing impairments. Practical training, in sign language, differentiated instruction, and assessment accommodations, helps teachers feel more capable of applying inclusive strategies. Without this kind of support, teachers often rely on trial and error, which can lower their confidence and effectiveness.

Lastly, support structures vary across schools. Some teachers benefit from collaboration with specialists and families, which helps them better support students and prepare them for academic demands, including national assessments (Lopez et al., 2020). In other settings, however, teachers experience limited training and weak institutional support, making inclusive practices harder to implement (Salazar & Aquino, 2023; Fernandez & Bautista, 2021).

Overall, the literature shows that while there are already many studies about inclusive education, teacher experiences, and the challenges faced by students with hearing impairments, there is still a clear gap when it comes to how high school teachers in the Philippines actually handle the preparation of these students for national assessments. Most existing studies examine inclusive practices, teacher training, or assessment barriers separately, but very few connect these issues to teachers' real-life experiences during national assessment preparation.

Summary of Findings

1. The lived experiences of the eight (8) co-participants show that teaching students with hearing impairments takes patience, flexibility, and constant adjustment. Even with varying years of experience, they all ended up relying more on visual aids, written instructions, step-by-step demonstrations, structured routines, and hands-on activities to

help students better understand. Most of them had only basic FSL training from DepEd or NGOs, which helped with simple communication, but they all agreed it was not enough for deeper teaching needs. For national assessments, they highlighted the importance of visual materials, step-by-step guidance, repeated practice, and proper accommodations so students can really show what they know. Overall, their experiences show that while basic training helps, it is not enough on its own. They need more continuous, practical training in sign language, teaching strategies, and assessment adaptation to better support learners with hearing impairments and ensure they have equal opportunities in both learning and assessment.

2. Seven (7) clustered meanings were drawn from the teachers' lived experiences. These show that teaching students with hearing impairments involves a lot of adjusting lessons and instruction to fit their communication and learning needs, as well as making sure classrooms are inclusive and accessible so everyone can participate. Teachers also shared that hands-on, experiential, and engaging strategies really help students better understand lessons. They also highlighted the need to properly prepare students for assessments by using adapted evaluation practices and accommodations. On top of that, they pointed out how important school support and available resources are for inclusive education to work. However, they also mentioned challenges like limited time and heavy workload, which make differentiated instruction more difficult. Lastly, they emphasized that strong support and commitment from parents, school leaders, and other stakeholders are crucial to helping students with hearing impairments succeed.
3. The fourteen (14) subthemes from the study were grouped into five (5) emerging themes that reflect the teachers' lived experiences in managing students with hearing impairments. First, curriculum adaptation and instruction focus on adjusting lessons using simplified and scaffolded materials, visual and multimodal instruction, and hands-on learning strategies to meet learners' needs better. Second, assessment and readiness support highlight the use of formative feedback, assessment accommodations, and fair evaluation practices to help students show their true abilities. Third, administrative support and policy implementation emphasize the role of school leadership and proper enforcement of inclusive education policies. Fourth, teacher workload, professional development, and training needs point to

challenges in time management, limited training opportunities, and the need for continuous professional growth. Lastly, collaboration and stakeholder engagement focus on working with parents, colleagues, and other stakeholders, while also recognizing some challenges in sustaining strong partnerships.

4. Based on these findings, the S.I.G.N.S. Framework was created as a practical guide that turns teachers' real-life experiences into clear and usable strategies. It brings together the five key areas to guide teacher training, classroom instruction, assessment preparation, and school-community collaboration, especially in the context of national assessments. These practices are grouped into five key areas: (1) Strategic Curriculum & Instructional Adaptation, (2) Intervention-Based Assessment Support and Practices, (3) Governance Structures for Inclusive Education Implementation, (4) Nurturing Professional Development and Competence, and (5) Synergy through Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement. With this framework, schools can build more inclusive and supportive learning environments, improve learner outcomes, and strengthen sustainable practices that ensure fair and equal opportunities for students with hearing impairments.

III. CONCLUSION

Based on the narratives of the high school teachers, the following conclusions were:

1. Teaching students with hearing impairments requires a lot of patience, flexibility, and constant adjustment on the part of teachers. They often rely on visual aids, written instructions, step-by-step demonstrations, structured routines, and hands-on activities to help students better understand lessons. However, their basic FSL training is not enough for deeper teaching and assessment needs, so there is a clear need for continuous, more practical training in sign language, teaching strategies, and assessment adaptation to better support learners.
2. It can also be concluded that effective inclusion is not about teaching strategies but also about creating a supportive and accessible learning environment. Teachers highlighted the

importance of engaging activities, proper assessment accommodations, available resources, and strong school support. At the same time, challenges such as heavy workload and limited time affect how well they can implement differentiated instruction, underscoring the need for stronger support from the school and other stakeholders.

3. The study further shows that inclusive education for learners with hearing impairments depends on several interconnected factors, including curriculum adaptation, assessment support, administrative support, teacher professional development, and collaboration with stakeholders. All these need to work together for inclusion to really succeed. While some support is already in place, gaps in training, resources, and coordination remain.
4. The S.I.G.N.S. Framework was developed as a practical guide based on teachers' lived experiences. It organizes key areas like curriculum adaptation, assessment support, governance, professional development, and collaboration into one system. This helps schools improve teaching practices, support student learning, and make education more inclusive and fair, especially in preparing students with hearing impairments for national assessments.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are some suggestions are based on the actual experiences and insights shared by high school teachers and highlight the importance of adopting the S.I.G.N.S. Framework as a practical guide for inclusive education. The recommendations are intended to help teachers, school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders work together in providing appropriate instructional strategies, assessment accommodations, professional support, and collaborative efforts that can promote student success, active participation, and equal learning opportunities for learners with hearing impairments.

1. The adaptation of the S.I.G.N.S. Framework is recommended for the Division of Valenzuela as the primary approach to supporting students with hearing impairments, particularly in preparation for national assessments. The framework provides a structured

and practical guide for teachers, school leaders, and stakeholders to implement inclusive, accessible, and evidence-based strategies across instructional, assessment, administrative, professional development, and collaborative domains.

2. School administrators may consider allocating time, facilities, and resources to conduct regular teacher training on inclusive practices for students with hearing impairments. This can be done through In-Service Training (INSET) or Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions focused on sign language proficiency, differentiated instruction, inclusive assessment practices, and collaborative strategies. With proper support from the school, teachers can become more confident and effective in handling diverse learners, leading to better student outcomes.
3. Teachers are encouraged to use the S.I.G.N.S. Framework to design and implement instructional strategies, assessment accommodations, and interventions tailored to students with hearing impairments. This includes incorporating visual aids, hands-on activities, differentiated instruction, and targeted assessment support to ensure students' academic readiness and meaningful engagement in learning.
4. Schools should strengthen teamwork and collaboration among teachers, parents, school leaders, and community partners. Regular meetings, open communication, and shared planning of interventions can help make sure that students with hearing impairments get consistent support both in school and at home.
5. Lastly, for national assessment implementation, it is really recommended that proctors and test administrators undergo specific training on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) awareness and communication. This will help them better understand the culture, communication needs, and proper accommodations of learners with hearing impairments. With this kind of preparation, proctors will become more aware, sensitive, and better equipped to handle assessment settings that are fair, inclusive, and accessible for all students.

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