

Lived Experiences of Secondary Teachers: Fostering Inclusive Learning Environments for Deaf Learners in Mainstream Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

Teachers globally face challenges in inclusive classrooms with deaf learners, which hinder effective instruction and academic outcomes. These systemic issues highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to enhance support, foster inclusion, and address diverse learning needs. This study explored the experiences and strategies of teachers aimed at cultivating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for deaf learners in mainstream classrooms. Conducted within the Malaybalay City Division during the 2023-2024 school year, it employed a phenomenological research design. Nine receiving teachers were purposively sampled as participants and underwent in-person interviews. This study utilized thematic analysis to examine the interview data. Findings revealed teachers' emphasis on sign language communication, personal milestones, motivation, inspiration, and compassion for deaf learners, along with their fulfillment and continuous personal growth in teaching them—strategies encompassed seeking peer support, employing varied teaching methods, and utilizing multimedia resources. The themes included inclusion, equal treatment, and a diverse learning environment. Despite challenges, teachers embraced innovative pedagogical approaches, including sign language, visual aids, and gestures, to foster a positive learning environment for deaf learners. The researcher highlights the importance of a supportive, inclusive classroom environment for receiving teachers of deaf learners, advocating for visual aids, assistive devices, open communication, and ongoing education on deaf culture. The study advocates for collaborative efforts among school administrators, teachers, parents, and local governments to enhance support for deaf learners through visual aids, assistive technology, tailored instruction, professional development, inclusive policies, and community engagement.

Key words: inclusive education, mainstream classroom, experiences, challenges, coping strategies

INTRODUCTION

Teachers in inclusive classrooms with deaf learners encounter numerous global challenges, including inadequate training, limited resources, and the need to address diverse learning needs. These issues lead to difficulties distinguishing between types of instruction and delivering suitable accommodations, exhausting the management of an inclusive environment. Further, they encounter numerous challenges on a global scale. These challenges encompass a dearth of specialized training, limited availability of resources such as assistive technology, and divergent attitudes and levels of awareness regarding deafness. The absence of proper training frequently results in the emergence of communication and instructional obstacles, which in turn have a detrimental effect on the academic achievements of individuals with hearing impairments. Societal stigmas and misconceptions further impede the successful integration of deaf students into mainstream classrooms, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to tackle these obstacles. Hence, it is imperative to explore the lived experiences of those who have valuable insights to illuminate the everyday challenges of dealing with students with deaf learners in inclusive classrooms and how they manage to overcome and succeed in this noble calling.

Teachers face unique challenges in the Philippines due to restricted access to specialized training and

professional development. The absence of proper training can lead to a deficiency in sign language proficiency and instructional methodologies. The provision of assistive technology and educational materials for deaf students poses a substantial challenge. Without these resources, educators may encounter difficulties establishing an ideal educational setting that fosters academic achievement and overall well-being. Societal attitudes towards deafness and cultural perceptions can influence the acceptance and inclusion of deaf students in mainstream classrooms. This situation aligns with Beltran et al.'s (2025) recommendation to explore strategies for scaling successful practices. They emphasize developing professional development models that equip teachers with the necessary tools to implement inclusive practices, especially in resource-limited settings. Macabenta et al. (2023) further asserted that the increasing dilemmas encountered by instructors, both within and outside the classroom, significantly increased their responsibilities and hindered their ability to provide students with a high-quality education. Therefore, there is still an urgent need to address this problem in inclusive education through research-based solutions.

Research has indicated significant difficulties for teachers instructing deaf students in regular classrooms. Ngadni et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of specialized training and professional growth for creating an inclusive setting. Paramasivam et al. (2021) support a bilingual-bicultural approach integrating sign language and deaf culture into the curriculum. Constantinou et al. (2018) highlighted how resources and assistive technology affect the academic achievement of deaf students. These studies demonstrate the need for specific instruction, bilingual-bicultural methods, and adequate resources to foster an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Educators and policymakers may effectively tackle these obstacles by incorporating these resources and enhancing deaf students' academic achievement and welfare in regular classrooms.

Despite these insights, a substantial research gap remains regarding support and mentoring for teachers of deaf learners. Further study is needed on how ongoing professional development and mentorship impact teachers' ability to meet the diverse learning requirements of deaf students. This study aimed to explore the effects of continuous support and mentorship on mainstream teachers' instruction and classroom management of deaf students. Through interviews and surveys, it gathered teachers' experiences and assessed how sustained assistance influences their professional growth and the academic progress of deaf learners. With this, the study sought to build on existing research to develop comprehensive strategies and frameworks that empower teachers and educational institutions to create inclusive environments for deaf learners. Hence, this study investigated secondary teachers' lived experiences working with deaf learners in mainstream classrooms at a public school in Malaybalay City, Philippines, during the 2023-2024 school year and their teaching strategies to develop and create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for deaf learners in mainstream classrooms.

METHODS

The present investigation utilized a phenomenological research design, a qualitative methodology focused on understanding individuals' lived experiences. This study explores how secondary teachers perceive and interpret inclusion and their interactions with deaf students in mainstream classrooms. By employing this design, the study gathered insights from educators about their experiences teaching deaf students. The participants of this study were secondary school teachers from a public school in Malaybalay City. They were chosen based on their ages, genders, and the specific locale of the research. Nine receiving teachers were identified, and nine individuals were selected for interviews. These educators worked in secondary classrooms catering to deaf students with diverse backgrounds and different levels of expertise in inclusive education. Selection criteria included at least one year of teaching experience, active engagement with deaf learners, and a willingness to share experiences on inclusive education. The participants handle different subject areas, such as English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Vocational Education. Efforts were made to ensure a gender-balanced group, resulting in a good representation of experiences, challenges, and successes encountered by secondary teachers working with deaf learners in mainstream classrooms. The selection of the participants was conducted through a purposive sampling technique. This sampling method was considered because of the limited pool of potential participants. Creswell (2007) suggests interviewing 5 to 25 individuals with similar experiences, aligning with the selection of nine teachers who actively teach deaf learners.

A semi-structured interview guide designed to elicit comprehensive responses was the primary instrument. The interview guide featured open-ended questions targeting teachers' experiences, challenges, and successes in

inclusive education. The guide was organized into parts covering instructional strategies, classroom accommodations, communication approaches, and support systems to facilitate thorough exploration. The research began with preliminary questions to build rapport and create a comfortable environment for natural responses. Probing questions were strategically used to look deeper into specific areas of interest. Experts also validated the interview guide questionnaire to ensure its reliability in capturing the unique insights of the research participants. The study utilized Creswell's (2014) transcendental phenomenological data analysis, following a five-step Data Analysis Spiral, which includes data compilation, data examination, describing and classifying codes, emergent themes and patterns analysis, and data analysis visualization. The researcher requested informed consent from the participants via a letter written to the school. They were told they might choose not to answer questions if they found them intriguing. Furthermore, if participants are uncomfortable with the questions, they can withdraw from the study. Throughout the study, adequate precautions were observed to ensure that all information remained confidential. The researcher used just and fair methods for data collecting and analysis. On all occasions, ethical considerations were observed. The study's results were kept confidential, and the release of this information followed agreed-upon processes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated secondary school teachers' experiences in their interactions with deaf learners within the context of inclusive education. Hence, this study aimed to determine the lived experiences of secondary teachers working with deaf learners in mainstream classrooms and explore teaching strategies that can be developed to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for deaf learners in mainstream classrooms.

Lived experiences of teachers with deaf learners in mainstream classrooms

There are eight themes emerged regarding their experiences, which include the following: (1) practicing sign language communication in mainstream classes, (2) teachers' milestones in teaching deaf learners, (3) teachers' motivation, inspiration, and compassion for deaf learners, (4) providing effective teaching strategies and classroom management, (5) fulfillment in the development and achievement of deaf learners, (6) sense of fulfillment in handling deaf learners, (7) continuous personal growth and fulfillment, and (8) success stories and achievements.

Theme 1: Practicing sign language communication in mainstream classes

Sign language is frequently employed by teachers instructing deaf learners in mainstream classrooms as a means of coping with communication challenges and improving the overall educational experience. Sign language is of utmost importance in establishing an environment that fosters inclusivity, allowing for the active participation of individuals with hearing impairments and those without in-classroom discussions and activities. By integrating sign language into their pedagogical approaches, teachers can enhance the educational experience of deaf learners by facilitating their active engagement in the learning process. This inclusionary practice also fosters a broader understanding and appreciation of diverse modes of communication among hearing learners.

"Through Sign language or if I cannot sign the word, I will just write it. If I will sign it and then they cannot understand my sign I will just write it or finger spell." (P1)

"Despite the obstacles, I made every effort to communicate with my special education students by using basic language and then, with the assistance of kuan, ahhh... what do you call it that they have classmates? Knowing that they have had training, I may use their classmates to assist me communicate with them in writing." (P4)

The utilization of sign language serves as both a medium for interpersonal communication and a tool for fostering empathy, collaboration, and understanding within groups. A key objective is establishing a supportive and respectful classroom environment where diverse communication forms are celebrated. Integrating sign language into educational settings promotes inclusivity and a deeper understanding of diverse communication modes, enhancing the collective learning experience for all participants. Research supports the positive impact of sign language in mainstream classrooms for deaf learners. Yunisari et al. (2021) found that sign language enhances communication and fosters a sense of belonging and inclusivity among learners with hearing impairments. This

dual role of sign language as a communication tool and a catalyst for social interaction is crucial for promoting academic and emotional well-being. Syani and Hartanto (2021) highlighted that sign language's visual and spatial components significantly aid language acquisition and comprehension, leading to improved academic achievements for deaf learners in mainstream environments. This supports the importance of teachers recognizing the challenges faced by deaf learners and adopting appropriate strategies and support.

Theme 2: Teacher's milestones in teaching deaf learners

Teachers' experience is crucial in overcoming communication barriers faced by individuals with hearing impairments. Specifically, for teachers in mainstream classrooms, the accumulation of practical knowledge and skills is of utmost importance in navigating and addressing the challenges that arise in communication. Teachers can develop strategies and techniques to effectively communicate and interact with others by actively engaging in various communication contexts and situations. This experiential learning process enables them to enhance their understanding of different communication modes, such as sign language or written communication, and adapt their communication style accordingly. The findings imply that experience empowers deaf learners as teachers accumulate practical knowledge and experience in their interactions with individuals who are deaf. They develop a heightened sensitivity to the subtleties inherent in sign language and the intricacies of communication within the deaf community. The acquisition of a more profound comprehension enables teachers to customize their instructional approaches to accommodate the wide-ranging requirements of their pupils. Moreover, it is worth noting that seasoned teachers cultivate a heightened sensitivity towards non-verbal cues and visual communication modalities, which play a crucial role in facilitating successful engagement with individuals who are deaf. Individuals acquire the ability to predict and effectively manage potential obstacles to communication proactively, resulting in the establishment of a learning environment that is more inclusive and supportive.

"So I've been teaching for 10 years and then I am handling deaf learners for 5 years with that years in teaching Deaf I have met several challenges one of it, is the communication barrier and then what else I also have difficulty in explaining my topic because at first I do not know sign language but now that I have attended several trainings about SPED I already have maybe an average knowledge about, not expert a little knowledge about sign language." (P1)

"When I initially started working with deaf students, I had a hard time understanding them and communicating with them, especially because I wasn't accustomed to utilizing sign language correctly." (P2)

"However, I am thankful for the training sessions I attended, as they helped me improve my communication skills. The key now is really to practice, practice the techniques I learned from the training. It was really difficult at first because we also didn't know the background of these children with hearing impairment, so it was challenging even with the training. But with the trainings attended, I have learned how to effectively communicate with them and also learned how to use shortcuts for easier communication." (P3)

"I am currently looking for strategies and techniques on how to effectively teach them as it is my first year teaching SPED learners, and it is proving to be very challenging for me." (P5)

This finding corroborates the study of Kelly et al. (2022), who also found that the experience of teachers is a critical factor in effectively addressing and surmounting communication obstacles faced by individuals with hearing impairments. Research has demonstrated that teachers with more experience possess a more remarkable ability to comprehend and effectively navigate the intricate aspects of communication within the deaf community. It was observed that teachers who had acquired significant experience in teaching the deaf exhibited a greater level of proficiency in sign language. Moreover, the significance of teachers' expertise in comprehending the distinct communication requirements of individuals with hearing impairments is underscored in the research conducted by Herring and Woolsey (2020). Their study elucidates how seasoned teachers acquire a more profound understanding of communication's cultural and linguistic dimensions among individuals with hearing impairments. This enhanced awareness enables them to customize their pedagogical approaches to address the heterogeneous requirements of their pupils adequately. The significance of incorporating visual aids, technology, and adaptive teaching strategies to enhance accessibility and engagement for individuals with

hearing impairments has been acknowledged.

Theme 3: Teacher's motivation, inspiration, and compassion for deaf learners

Motivation, inspiration, and compassion are vital for creating an inclusive learning environment in mainstream classrooms. Teachers driven by motivation strive to innovate and ensure equitable access to education for deaf learners. Participant 6 emphasized their motivation derived from witnessing their learners' eagerness to learn and being inspired by their perseverance. Participant 7's compassion towards Special Education (SPED) learners fuels their commitment to providing a supportive environment. Similarly, Participant 8 draws inspiration from SPED learners' determination. At the same time, Participant 9 highlights the importance of motivation in connecting with learners, especially those with special needs, to ensure effective learning without pressure or isolation.

"Number one, ma'am, she's really good at calling and she can be challenging because what we have is just normal/regular." (P6)

"So, one of the challenges I encountered with them is that I don't know how to make them feel that they are on the same pace as the regular learners because it's really different, that's why it's the purpose, right? for them to be included in the mainstream." (P7)

"After gaining experience and attending seminars, I became more confident in teaching deaf learners. Later, when I transferred to BNHS, I continued teaching in an inclusive classroom. Despite not always explicitly labeling them as deaf learners, as teachers, we could observe that they were struggling to keep up with the lessons." (P8)

"Okay, for three years, um, I've been teaching some learners. who belong to the SPED and what I could say is I really enjoyed the class even if there are SPED learners included." (P9)

Teachers' exceptional dedication to deaf learners is often fueled by inspiration. Motivated by the potential and abilities of these learners, teachers explore innovative pedagogical approaches, adaptable technologies, and supplementary support services to ensure their academic success. Compassion is crucial for creating an environment conducive to the growth of deaf learners. Teachers who adopt a compassionate approach demonstrate patience, attentiveness, and a willingness to modify instructional methods to meet diverse needs. Herring and Woolsey (2020) highlight the significance of teacher motivation in fostering an inclusive educational setting for learners with hearing impairments, leading to enhanced academic achievements. Similarly, Correa-Torres et al. (2021) emphasize inspiration's pivotal role in fostering innovative pedagogical methods tailored for individuals with hearing impairments

Theme 4: Providing effective teaching strategies and classroom management for deaf learners

Deaf learners face unique challenges in education, requiring practical pedagogical approaches and classroom management techniques to ensure their academic success. Teachers can create an inclusive learning environment that promotes educational and social development by employing suitable strategies. These strategies enhance academic performance and foster a sense of belonging and confidence among deaf learners. Establishing such an environment is essential for equitable learning and active engagement for all students. In the study, Participant 3 highlighted their motivation to teach Special Education (SPED) learners in mainstream education, driven by compassion towards learners who have faced mistreatment before inclusion. Participant 4 drew inspiration from observing SPED learners' eagerness to learn, particularly during hands-on activities, which motivated the speaker to teach them, knowing their willingness to learn. Participant 5 emphasized the importance of motivation in teaching learners with diverse abilities, expressing a commitment to attending seminars, sharing stories, and connecting with learners, especially those with special needs, ensuring effective learning without pressure or isolation. Participant 7 noted motivation in observing learners' eagerness to learn, including those with special needs, which encourages teaching more advanced topics with appropriate support. These insights reflect the crucial role of motivation and compassion in teaching, particularly in creating an inclusive educational environment that supports the diverse needs of learners, including those who are deaf or have special needs.

“My motivation comes from having compassion for them. It's difficult when you feel like an outcast, so I am motivated to teach them because if we don't teach them, who will help them learn?” (P3)

“Teaching deaf learners in mainstream education has been a deeply motivating experience for me. One of the key factors behind this motivation is the observations I have made while working with Special Education learners. I have noticed that they exhibit a strong willingness to learn, and this has become a significant source of inspiration for me.” (P4)

“You're right, teaching requires a lot of motivation. You really have to motivate yourself. We teach so that our students can learn from our lessons, right? How do you teach a child who is not neurotypical if you don't have that kind of motivation? My motivation is good, I attend seminars and share stories with them.” (P5)

“Okay. One of my motivations, ma'am, is that when I have experience, they are really willing to learn. As I tried to teach them, I can see that they are also willing to learn and understand what the regular learners are taught.” (P7)

The significance of teaching strategies and classroom management for deaf learners cannot be overstated. Effective strategies facilitate access to information and promote active participation, such as utilizing visual aids and sign language interpreters. Along with written instructions and group work, these methods enhance communication and social interaction in classrooms with deaf and hearing learners. Research, like that of Herring and Woolsey (2020), is consistent with the importance of such techniques in fostering equal opportunities and comprehension among deaf learners. Alasim (2019) emphasizes employing visual aids, sign language interpreters, and written instructions for inclusive education. Marschark et al. (2016) highlight the impact of effective classroom management on the well-being of deaf learners, advocating for a nurturing environment. Neild and Clark (2020) demonstrate the role of these strategies in cultivating belonging and self-assurance among deaf learners, promoting academic achievement.

Theme 5: Fulfillment in the development and achievement of deaf learners in a mainstream classroom

In a mainstream classroom, teachers play a crucial role in the development and success of deaf learners. Understanding their needs and employing suitable instructional approaches is key to fostering an inclusive and nurturing atmosphere supporting academic and social growth. Establishing an environment conducive to effective communication is essential, where positive relationships, peer awareness, and collaboration are actively cultivated. Through such strategies, teachers create a supportive and inclusive environment, positively impacting the self-esteem and academic performance of deaf learners. In the study, Participant 8 found teaching deaf learners enjoyable and motivating, learning basic sign language from them, highlighting mutual learning. Participant 9 welcomes all, inspired by their willingness to study despite not choosing their learners. Participant 1 finds it rewarding to witness progress, especially in challenging concepts like integers, indicating improvement in teaching methods and personal development.

“Despite it was challenging, it was really fun because aside from me teaching them, I can also learn from them the way they teach me how to do the basic sign language because again I was not able to learn to know how to communicate with them, aside from the hand signs about the letters. But it really motivated me, the way they teach me how to learn some sign language. Just the basic even snack.” (P8)

“...They are somewhat like an inspiration to each one of us, because, besides from, besides their limitations, they are still willing to study. So, because of that, we would really do our best also.” (P9)

“Usually, during the first period English class, I am not very proficient in sign language. I find it difficult to focus on signing while talking, which makes me feel confused. After the second period, I will be interpreting from the second period until the end of the day, translating instructions given by the teachers. I am also tasked with modifying their activities. During Filipino and Math time, the students I work with will be pulled out. This is our daily routine.” (P1)

This finding is supported by the study of Vacalares et al. (2023) that the research conducted in the field of deaf

education highlights the importance of creating a classroom environment that is both supportive and inclusive for learners who are deaf. Research has shown that teachers who cultivate positive connections with learners who are deaf and foster a sense of peer understanding can promote an educational setting conducive to achieving academic excellence. It has been observed that the implementation of collaborative and inclusive approaches has a positive impact on the academic achievement and overall well-being of deaf learners who are placed in mainstream educational settings. Ensuring equal access to information for deaf learners is of utmost importance, and this can be achieved through various communication methods. These methods include sign language interpreters, speech-to-text services, and captioned videos. By employing these techniques, deaf learners can effectively engage with and comprehend the information. Corroborating this assertion, a study conducted by Schirmer provides evidence of the influence that adequate communication access has on the academic performance and understanding of deaf learners in mainstream educational environments (Alasim, 2019).

Theme 6: Sense of fulfillment in handling deaf learners

Deaf learners encounter unique obstacles in mainstream classrooms, including limited sound access and communication barriers, which can lead to feelings of isolation and frustration. Teachers must adapt by finding alternative communication methods and ensuring equal access to information. Despite these challenges, many teachers find great fulfillment in working with deaf learners, witnessing their growth and success, and developing unique communication strategies. Creating a supportive and inclusive environment benefits all learners and empowers deaf students to thrive academically and beyond. Participant 2 simplified instructions in the study, using visual aids and facilitated communication through group activities. Participant 3 prioritized giving instructions visually and accommodating visual and sign language learners. Participant 8 incorporated sign language demonstrations and tailored quizzes into interactive lessons, fostering an engaging learning experience for deaf learners.

"I also have books that they can read and I also have a PowerPoint. So what I did was I couldn't let them do that because their understanding is different. So I simplified the instructions, gave it to them, and explained because they also have classmates who understand sign language." (P2)

"I conduct classes with a PowerPoint, which is advantageous for me because the deaf students are also visual learners. It's an advantage for me because I create visual content and at the same time, it is beneficial for them as well because that's how I learn, and that's how they learn too." (P3)

"And every time I discuss the lesson, if I know the word and how to do the sign language with the word during the demonstration, I will sign to them and every time I will have a short quiz or any other quizzes. I will give them quizzes that are really for them, say for example word search, but still part of the lesson." (P8)

Working with deaf learners demands a deep understanding of their unique needs and challenges. Teachers must employ alternative communication methods and cultivate an inclusive environment to support their growth and success. A significant obstacle deaf learners face is the lack of access to sound, hindering their participation in classroom activities. To overcome this, teachers should utilize visual aids like sign language interpretation, captioned videos, and written materials to ensure equal access to information. They must also exhibit patience and flexibility when communication barriers arise, investing extra effort to bridge the gap. Despite these challenges, the rewards of working with deaf learners are profound. Witnessing their growth and the development of unique communication strategies can be profoundly fulfilling for teachers. Strong bonds often form between teachers and deaf learners, fostering a sense of pride in their positive impact. Creating a supportive and inclusive environment benefits all learners and generates fulfillment beyond the classroom. This finding aligns with Hidayah's (2023) study, emphasizing the importance of visual literacy and the emotional fulfillment experienced by teachers in working with deaf learners, as highlighted by Alsraisri et al. (2020). Ayaya et al. (2021) looked into the broader impact of inclusive education on teacher fulfillment and school community well-being.

Theme 7: Continuous personal growth and fulfillment in teaching deaf learners

Educating deaf learners in mainstream classrooms presents unique challenges that demand innovative

approaches and firm support. Ensuring effective communication in diverse classroom settings is a primary concern, given the varied communication preferences of deaf learners, including sign language, speechreading, and written communication. Developing effective strategies to enhance communication among deaf learners and their peers is a complex but rewarding endeavor with the potential for substantial benefits. Accommodating various learning styles and providing additional support for deaf learners in mainstream classrooms presents significant challenges. This process requires close collaboration with educational interpreters, speech-language pathologists, and other professionals to create a cohesive and inclusive learning environment. Despite these obstacles, the success of teaching deaf learners in mainstream classes is advantageous. Observing their progress and achievements as they overcome challenges and grow intellectually and personally is deeply fulfilling. The potential to foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity among deaf learners enhances their educational experience and brings teachers personal and professional satisfaction.

“It’s really a challenging but it is a nice experience being a teacher of these learners because you feel like you are part of their learning. Being able to impact their growth and development is truly rewarding. Keep up the great work!” (P2)

“Right now, I can really say that this feeling, it’s really challenging but at the same time I feel very blessed because what do you call it, not all teachers are given the opportunity because actually, this is really an opportunity to encounter these kinds of challenges that ultimately lead to success.” (P4)

Teachers often encounter unique challenges when instructing deaf learners in mainstream settings, necessitating innovative and dedicated support. Research highlights the importance of establishing effective communication channels in inclusive classrooms, particularly for learners with hearing impairments. This involves accommodating diverse communication preferences, including sign language, speechreading, and written communication. For instance, Fobi and Oppong (2018) emphasized the need for strategies to facilitate communication among deaf learners and their peers, a multifaceted but promising endeavor that can create a more inclusive educational environment for all learners. Furthermore, it is essential to incorporate strategies that address various learning styles and provide additional support to meet the diverse needs of deaf learners. Collaborating with educational interpreters, speech-language pathologists, and other professionals is vital for creating a harmonious and inclusive learning environment that supports the academic and personal development of deaf learners. Cheng and Levey (2019) highlight the value of such collaborations, which can generate insights and strategies to support deaf learners in mainstream classrooms effectively.

Theme 8: Success stories and achievements in teaching deaf learners

The inclusion of deaf learners in mainstream classes has yielded a multitude of positive outcomes and notable accomplishments for teachers who have willingly taken on this endeavor. Significant personal and professional growth has been reported by numerous teachers who have engaged in teaching deaf learners. These teachers have found a sense of fulfillment in witnessing the progress and accomplishments achieved by their learners. One frequently observed phenomenon among teachers is the notable progress, both academically and personally, that is observed in deaf learners under their tutelage. Teachers have shared accounts of learners overcoming obstacles and achieving success in their academic endeavors, inspiring others in education. The achievements above underscore the remarkable fortitude and unwavering resolve exhibited by individuals with hearing impairments and the profound influence exerted by efficacious assistance and all-encompassing pedagogical approaches. Teachers have successfully fostered acceptance and integration among hearing-impaired learners in mainstream educational settings. Creating inclusive and supportive environments has empowered deaf learners to participate actively in academic and social activities. These accomplishments have a lasting impact on students and teachers, highlighting the importance of adaptable and comprehensive educational practices.

“Our success story is that we were able to see our students graduate and succeed in their NCII certification. Our success also lies in being able to see them become successful professionals. It’s rewarding to see our students achieve success, just like in show business (laughs)... Well, that’s how rewarding it is to be a teacher.” (P3)

“The success stories are truly inspiring because you can see the progress of the children, even though there

are communication barriers. They are still able to understand and succeed. The real barrier is the lack of communication and materials.” (P7)

“Success, there are plenty of successes. I would define success as the ability of the learners to answer the questions during the discussions. When I let them explain, they were able to do so regardless of how they delivered it, whether through sign language or by writing it on the board. They were able to communicate their understanding effectively.” (P9)

Numerous studies have documented the achievements of teachers dedicated to educating deaf learners in mainstream classrooms. These success stories exemplify the profound influence committed educators can have on their hearing-impaired students' academic and personal growth. For instance, a study by Al-Busaidi and Tuzlukova (2017) investigated teachers who employed innovative strategies to support deaf learners. Their findings revealed significant improvements in academic performance and personal development among deaf students, who benefited from inclusive teaching methods and necessary accommodations, gaining confidence and self-esteem. Similarly, Herring and Woolsey (2020) examined teachers' experiences who successfully fostered a sense of belonging and inclusivity for deaf learners in regular educational settings. Their research highlighted effective strategies for creating supportive environments, which facilitated the active participation of deaf students in both academic and social aspects of the classroom. These achievements demonstrated the students' resilience and dedication and underscored the critical role of inclusive pedagogical approaches.

Teaching strategies in inclusive and supportive learning environment for deaf learners in mainstream classrooms

Eleven themes emerged for the strategies of secondary teachers to provide inclusive and supportive learning environments for deaf learners in mainstream classrooms. These themes include the following: (1) seeking peer support in sign language interpretation, (2) application of varied teaching methods and activities for deaf learners, (3) utilization of multimedia resources in teaching deaf learners in mainstream classes, (4) mainstreaming and inclusion of deaf learners in regular classes, (5) ensuring equal treatment and individualized attention, (6) provision of diverse and welcoming atmosphere for deaf learners in mainstream classes, (7) promoting social development and acceptance among deaf learners, (8) provision of training and resources for deaf learners in mainstream classes, (9) provision of receiving-teacher training and mastery in handling mainstream classes, (10) empowering collaboration among special education teachers and receiving teachers, and (11) emboldening accessibility and flexibility on SPED learners.

Theme 1: Seeking peer support in sign language interpretation

Using peer sign language interpreters has proven invaluable for teachers instructing deaf learners in mainstream classrooms. This approach enhances communication effectiveness and fosters community and inclusiveness within the educational setting. Training hearing peers to participate in sign language interpretation creates a collaborative learning environment, promoting support and engagement among deaf learners. In the study, Participant 2 highlights the reliance on classmates proficient in sign language to interpret instructions, facilitating easier communication. Participant 4 emphasizes the importance of interpreters for effective communication and suggests that written instructions can be a viable alternative when interpreters are unavailable. This indicates a need for multiple communication strategies to ensure deaf learners can fully participate and thrive in mainstream educational settings. Peer support in sign language interpretation offers a valuable opportunity for hearing learners to engage actively in bridging the communication gap and understanding the experiences of their deaf peers. Adopting a collaborative approach in educational settings impacts various classroom dynamics. Encouraging learners to work together and engage in joint problem-solving fosters empathy, respect, and understanding among peers. This, in turn, creates a more inclusive and supportive classroom environment where all learners feel valued and supported in their educational journey.

“Sign language is something I know and there are classmates who interpret for me because sometimes I have two masters here and there's somebody who interprets my instructions, which makes it easy for me.” (P2)

“Although there are barriers, I tried my best to communicate with my special education learners through very

basic means. I would start by saying "good morning" and "abcd," and then with the help of someone, umm... what do you call it when they have classmates who are knowledgeable? So, with the help of their classmates, I am able to communicate with them through written instructions. I have written instructions beforehand." (P4)

Research consistently shows that peer-provided sign language interpretation significantly enhances the engagement and academic pursuits of deaf learners. This approach reinforces their sense of belonging and positively impacts their academic performance. Several studies highlight the importance of peer support in sign language interpretation as a coping mechanism for teachers instructing deaf learners in mainstream classrooms. For instance, a research study by Ubah et al. (2022) emphasized that peer involvement in sign language interpretation facilitates communication and fosters community and collaboration within the educational setting. Their findings underscored the significant role of peer support in enhancing classroom experiences and academic engagement for deaf learners. Vacalares et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative study that explored the experiences of teachers and learners with peer support in sign language interpretation. The study found that hearing peers acting as interpreters effectively bridges the communication gap while fostering a supportive and inclusive learning atmosphere. This peer support is crucial in creating a profound sense of belonging and empowerment among deaf learners.

Theme 2: Application of varied teaching methods and activities for deaf learners

In mainstream classrooms, teachers face the significant responsibility of accommodating the diverse learning needs of their students, including those with hearing impairments. Educators have recognized the importance of employing varied teaching methods and activities to address this challenge. By understanding and implementing these innovative strategies, teachers can create an inclusive and supportive educational environment that meets the unique needs of deaf learners. These strategies encompass various tools and techniques, including visual aids, technology integration, collaborative learning, and multi-sensory approaches. By incorporating diverse teaching methods and engaging learners in multiple activities, teachers can effectively address the educational needs of deaf students, promoting equal access to education and fostering academic achievement. For example, in the study, Participant 3 suggested using sign language, cell phones for typing, and peer interpreters for communication, including group chats. Participant 5 highlighted various types of learning activities, such as group activities, parental involvement, collaborative and cooperative learning, experiential learning, hands-on activities, and problem-solving tasks. Participant 8 emphasized the use of visual aids and written communication as primary methods. By employing these strategies, teachers can ensure that deaf learners are fully included in the educational process, facilitating their active participation and engagement. This approach supports academic success and fosters a sense of belonging and inclusivity within the classroom.

"Group activities, experiential learning, collaborative, cooperative learning, experiential learning, hands on activity, problem solving..." (P5)

"More on visual aids and more on writing." (P8)

When implementing diverse teaching methods and activities, teachers must consider the unique needs and preferences of each deaf learner. Regularly assessing the effectiveness of these approaches is crucial to making necessary adjustments based on learner feedback and progress. Collaborating with special education professionals and actively seeking input from members of the deaf community can provide valuable insights that enhance and broaden innovative pedagogical approaches tailored to the unique requirements of deaf learners. Research indicates that diverse teaching methods and activities significantly influence the learning outcomes and overall academic achievement of individuals with hearing impairments. For instance, Syani and Hartanto (2021) found that a multi-modal instructional approach, incorporating visual aids, gestures, and written materials, enhances comprehension and engagement among learners with hearing impairments. They emphasize the importance of delivering clear and concise instructions through various communication modes to accommodate diverse learning preferences and styles. Alsalamah (2020) discovered that utilizing technology, such as captioned videos and interactive whiteboards, positively impacts information accessibility for individuals with hearing impairments. The study noted that incorporating these technological tools increased the engagement and active involvement of deaf learners in classroom activities. Technology integration supports visual learning and customizes content for unique learning needs. Furthermore, collaborative learning strategies offer significant

benefits, particularly for deaf learners, by facilitating the development of communication skills and promoting social interaction.

Theme 3: Utilization of Multimedia Resources in Teaching Deaf Learners in Mainstream Classes

Within the dynamic realm of education, teachers continually explore innovative methodologies to address the diverse needs of their students. Multimedia resources have emerged as a powerful tool for creating inclusive and effective learning environments, especially for teachers instructing deaf learners in mainstream classrooms. Implementing a variety of multimedia resources, such as visual aids, technology integration, and accessible digital content, has proven essential in meeting the unique needs of individuals with hearing impairments, thereby enhancing their educational experiences. Participant 9 describes the speaker's communication approach in the study, which includes learning basic sign language, using a translation app to convey messages verbally, and occasionally displaying translations on a cellphone for clarity. Participant 8 highlights using an app to assist learners in reading instructions and learning basic sign language. Participant 7 recommends diverse teaching aids and methods, such as PowerPoint presentations, activity sheets, video analysis, group discussions, role-playing, and writing, to engage all learners, including those with special educational needs, and integrate them into regular class activities and projects. These approaches emphasize the importance of leveraging multimedia resources to foster an inclusive classroom environment. By incorporating various tools and techniques, teachers can effectively address the educational needs of deaf learners, promote equal access to education, and create opportunities for academic achievement.

“After studying the basics of sign language, I started using an app that translates what I say so that the students can read along with my explanations. Whenever I explain something on the board, I use the program. After I finish my explanation, I show them the translation of what I said on my cellphone. Most of the time, I use basic sign language as well.” (P9)

“Yeah, so aside from learning the basic in sign language, I use an app to help me, yeah, help the learners read the instructions that I have added.” (P8)

“More on Visual Aids, PowerPoint and further discussion on writing because I am a very traditional teacher to them.” (P7)

Research supports the advantages of using multimedia resources for teachers and learners with hearing impairments in inclusive settings. Weeden and Mason (2020) found that integrating captioned videos and interactive digital platforms improves information accessibility and fosters active engagement among deaf learners. Visual presentations and customized educational software have also been shown to enhance understanding and retention of instructional material for these students. These tailored resources are specifically designed to meet the unique learning needs of individuals with hearing impairments. A study by Wilkens et al. (2021) highlighted the positive impact of captioned videos on enhancing the accessibility of spoken language for deaf learners. Combining visual reinforcement with spoken content not only aids language development but also improves comprehension. Additionally, interactive digital platforms facilitate communication and collaboration among individuals with hearing impairments, creating a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment. Visual presentations and educational software designed according to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles accommodate a wide range of learning styles and preferences. These resources can be customized to present information in various formats, allowing individuals with hearing impairments to select the best mode for their needs. This approach aligns with differentiation theory, which advocates for teachers to adapt their instructional strategies to their students' diverse cognitive and educational needs, including those with hearing impairments (Novak, 2023).

Theme 4: Mainstreaming and inclusion of deaf learners in regular classes

The inclusion of deaf learners in mainstream classrooms is crucial in creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment. Integrating deaf learners provides them with equal access to education while fostering a climate of diversity and mutual understanding among all students. This integration can lead to increased social integration, enhanced communication skills, and improved academic achievements for learners with hearing

impairments. In the study, Participant 1 explains that learners with special needs are integrated into regular classes but are pulled out for Filipino and Math sessions. They are seated at the back to avoid disruption, provided with specialized materials, and given extended task time. Some learners resort to typing on their cell phones for communication when sign language is not understood. Participant 2 emphasizes giving special attention to these learners, ensuring they feel welcomed and supported. Accommodations include scheduling and classroom arrangements adjustments to facilitate easier communication with teachers, prior introductions to teachers, and provision of textbooks. Learners are also supported with interpreters or writing assistance as needed, particularly in their first year when emphasis is placed on writing. Participant 3 highlights a shift from initial hesitation to wholehearted acceptance and equal treatment of learners with special needs. Adjustments in scheduling, classroom arrangements, and instructional methods ensure adequate accommodation, including separate activities when necessary. The participant describes changes in learner responses and the teacher's supportive approach, such as providing encouragement and assistance in interpreting responses. Similarly, Participant 8 notes that learners with special needs are integrated as regular learners, seated in the front, provided with printed materials like word searches, quizzes, and PowerPoint slides, and their responses are recorded in their notebooks due to difficulty with oral recitation.

"The same goes for the regular learners, except during Filipino and Math classes they have a pull-out session. In the classroom setting, they are all seated at the back because it can be disruptive if I sit in front, and it's also respectful to them." (P1)

"As soon as they arrive, they are given special attention and treatment to make them feel loved, dear. The scheduling is the same. In the classroom setting, they are placed in the front to make it easier for them to be seen by their subject teachers, and if they have any questions, they can easily ask." (P2)

"In my case, as a major, there's no problem. In the classroom setting, I make sure to be in front for easy access and transfer of information and instruction." (P3)

"There are also times, especially after a 5-item quiz, that they participate and engage well when they see the PowerPoint. If the regular time for an activity is 5 minutes, they can easily grasp it within that time." (P8)

Research supports the benefits of integrating deaf learners into regular classrooms. A study by Kart and Kart (2021) found that deaf learners in mainstream classes significantly improved language development, social skills, and academic achievement compared to those in segregated settings. A study by Adams et al. (2021) revealed that inclusive settings positively affect hearing peers, enhancing their empathy, social skills, and understanding of diversity. This highlights that integrating deaf learners benefits them and contributes to the holistic development and appreciation of diversity among all students. Further, Dell'Anna et al. (2020) emphasized that inclusive classrooms offer unique opportunities for the comprehensive growth of deaf learners. The inclusion of deaf learners benefits them and plays a crucial role in fostering acceptance of diversity and advancing inclusive education as a fundamental human right.

Theme 5: Ensuring equal treatment and individualized attention

Equal treatment and individualized attention are crucial in fostering inclusive classroom environments for deaf learners within mainstream educational settings. Equal treatment is a fundamental principle that aims to provide all learners, irrespective of their abilities, equitable learning and participation opportunities. Ensuring access to suitable accommodations and resources, including sign language interpreters, captioned videos, and visual aids, is crucial in facilitating the full engagement of deaf learners with the presented material. The concept of individualized attention acknowledges the fact that every learner possesses distinct learning requirements and preferences. For individuals with hearing impairments, it is imperative to provide tailored assistance in fostering their linguistic and communicative abilities and adapting instructional approaches to accommodate their unique learning preferences. One potential strategy for teachers to employ in order to facilitate this outcome is the regular assessment of the individual progress of each learner with hearing impairments. By consistently evaluating the academic development of these learners, teachers can identify areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. Implementing various strategies, such as providing supplementary explanations, utilizing written instructions, or presenting additional practice opportunities, could be considered.

“An inclusive classroom environment should not make it difficult for me to use English because deaf learners are English communicators. When you say ‘inclusive,’ they should not be treated differently; they should be included in every activity. They should not be left behind just because they are deaf. They will be included in all activities, but they should be given additional considerations.” (P1)

“Learners should treat equally and then by giving enough attention to the needs of this learners’ to make them feel that they belong.” (P2)

By implementing equitable practices and personalized approaches, teachers can establish a conducive setting wherein the needs of all learners, including those with hearing impairments, are acknowledged, valued, and bolstered throughout their academic endeavors. Moreover, this methodology cultivates a feeling of membership. It promotes the engaged involvement of individuals with hearing impairments in the educational setting, resulting in a more comprehensive and rewarding academic encounter for all parties involved. Research has consistently demonstrated that providing equal treatment and individualized attention plays a vital role in fostering inclusive classroom environments for learners who are deaf in mainstream educational settings. A study conducted by Jokinen (2018) emphasized the significance of ensuring equitable access to educational materials and resources for learners who are deaf. The research also pointed out that such access promotes their academic achievements and enhances their social and emotional well-being. An additional investigation by Cheng et al. (2020) revealed that providing individualized attention and personalized support to deaf learners resulted in notable enhancements in their language development and overall educational achievements. A comprehensive analysis conducted by Antia et al. (2020) underscored the efficacy of personalized attention in facilitating the academic and social progress of individuals with hearing impairments. The researchers discovered that the provision of personalized assistance and the modification of instructional strategies to accommodate the unique learning requirements of learners were correlated with enhanced academic achievements and heightened involvement in the educational experience. Research has demonstrated that the provision of appropriate accommodations and resources tailored to the specific communication requirements of deaf learners, including sign language interpreters, captioned materials, and assistive technology, leads to a substantial enhancement in their educational outcomes.

Theme 6: Provision of a diverse and welcoming atmosphere for deaf learners in mainstream classes

Establishing a diverse and inclusive atmosphere is crucial for creating supportive classroom environments for learners with hearing impairments integrated into mainstream educational settings. Embracing diversity involves more than just recognizing and accommodating the unique needs of deaf learners; it also means valuing their perspectives and contributions within the educational community. In addition, fostering an inclusive environment requires proactive efforts to promote peer collaboration and build relationships among all students, including those with hearing impairments. By nurturing a culture of empathy and understanding, teachers can facilitate meaningful interactions and friendships among learners. This approach helps reduce social isolation and creates a strong sense of belonging for deaf learners. Incorporating these principles into the classroom ensures that all students feel valued and included, essential for their academic and social development. Teachers play a key role in promoting these values and setting the tone for an inclusive and supportive educational experience for everyone.

“The regular class is like a colorful rainbow compared to the mainstream because the rainbow has 7 colors and even secondary colors. When it comes to welcoming diverse learning and diverse learners, it becomes colorful, challenging, and overwhelming, just like how I see it.” (P3)

“Ahh, an inclusive classroom environment is really what they call conducive for all regular and both regular and special education learners, in a way that their regular classmates are aware of their presence, aware of their ahhh... what do you call it, difficulties, because if their classmates are not aware, they won't understand, they won't know how to handle it, they might misinterpret it, and it's not just their classmates, but also the teachers need to be aware of what they are doing and how to handle deaf learners because some might be scared (laughing...) really, that's the reality now, they might be scared, but I understand them because that's what I felt first, scared (laughing...) especially for those who are not just deaf.” (P4)

Furthermore, implementing platforms that facilitate open communication and feedback can serve as a means to acknowledge the perspectives of deaf learners and seamlessly incorporate their voices within the classroom setting. Facilitating platforms for deaf learners to express their experiences, preferences, and recommendations aims to enhance their educational journey. Deliberately and proactively soliciting input from individuals who are deaf grants them agency in influencing the trajectory of their educational experience, fostering a learning environment that is both inclusive and conducive to personal growth.

The literature highlights the significance of embracing diversity and cultivating inclusive environments for all learners. A study by Lai and King (2020) shows the importance of integrating a range of perspectives and experiences into the educational curriculum to foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment for learners from diverse backgrounds, including those who are deaf. This approach fosters a climate of respect and comprehension and plays a pivotal role in growing empathy and acceptance among the entire learner body. Research by Braun et al. (2018) shows the importance of fostering peer collaboration and meaningful interactions among learners with varying abilities, including individuals who are deaf. Their findings suggest that creating avenues for constructive social interactions and friendships among learners is significant in fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity for deaf learners in mainstream classrooms. Inclusive teaching practices and a supportive classroom environment can promote positive social behaviors and a sense of belonging among all learners.

Theme 7: Promoting social development and acceptance among deaf learners

Social development and acceptance factors heavily influence the promotion of inclusive classroom environments for deaf learners in mainstream classes. Through a deliberate emphasis on social development, teachers can facilitate the cultivation of robust interpersonal skills, bolstered self-assurance, and a profound sense of inclusion among deaf learners within the confines of the classroom community. Likewise, the promotion of collaborative activities, group projects, and facilitated interactions serves as a means to foster an environment where learners are encouraged to engage in cooperative efforts and cultivate significant interpersonal connections. Furthermore, promoting acceptance entails cultivating a cultural environment characterized by comprehension, reverence, and empathy among the entire learner body. Active engagement with misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding deaf individuals is a potential avenue for teachers. By addressing these misconceptions, teachers can promote greater awareness and appreciation of diversity among their learners, creating a more inclusive and accepting learning environment where all learners feel valued and understood. Including conversations about deaf culture, historical context, and notable accomplishments can help foster an inclusive atmosphere that embraces diversity. Moreover, facilitating open dialogue and providing educational opportunities regarding the communication requirements of individuals with hearing impairments can effectively build acceptance and promote inclusion. Disseminating knowledge of sign language and communication strategies among peers can bridge the divide between deaf and hearing individuals, facilitating meaningful interactions and friendships. Implementing strategies encouraging active listening and establishing an inclusive classroom environment where all learners feel heard and understood can significantly contribute to a positive and inclusive classroom culture.

“If they are not integrated, there will be no development. But if they are included in the mainstream, their socialization will improve. Additionally, they have insecurities when they are alone, but if they are included, they feel like they belong, gaining acceptance from their classmates.” (P6)

“Inclusive classroom environment, when we accept not only deaf learners’ ma’am but also other spectrum in the SPED community.” (P8)

Emphasizing social development and acceptance allows teachers to create a more comprehensive and accommodating milieu for learners, enhancing the overall educational experience and fostering a sense of belonging among individuals with hearing impairments. Integrating social development and acceptance into teaching practices is crucial for establishing an inclusive classroom environment that values and respects every learner. Social development is essential for fostering an all-encompassing classroom environment for deaf learners integrated into mainstream educational settings. Research by Vygotsky highlights the importance of social interactions in cognitive development, emphasizing the role of collaborative activities and peer interactions in facilitating learning and social skill acquisition. Utilizing Vygotsky's sociocultural theory,

teachers can create collaborative learning activities that foster interactions and relationships among learners, including those who are deaf. Group projects and peer collaboration can cultivate social development and meaningful relationships, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion within the educational environment (Husadani et al., 2020). Acceptance and understanding are essential for establishing a supportive and inclusive classroom environment. Scholarly discourse on inclusive education emphasizes cultivating a culture of empathy and respect. Teachers can address misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding deaf individuals, fostering an environment of heightened awareness and appreciation for the diverse experiences and perspectives of the deaf community. This approach aligns with the social model of disability, which emphasizes societal factors in creating obstacles and advocates for comprehension and acceptance of differences. Integrating discussions on deaf culture, history, and accomplishments within the curriculum promotes the appreciation of diversity, positively impacting all learners' social and emotional welfare (Sengupta et al., 2019).

Theme 8: Provision of training and resources for deaf learners in mainstream classes

It is vital to provide teachers and support staff with comprehensive training in strategies that address the diverse needs of these learners to facilitate the successful inclusion of special education learners in mainstream classes. This training should encompass a thorough understanding of individualized education plans (IEPs), the implementation of differentiated instruction strategies, and the effective use of assistive technologies to enhance the learning experience. Teachers also need specialized training to establish inclusive classroom environments and foster constructive interactions with special education learners. Providing adequate resources is crucial for meeting the educational requirements of learners with special needs in regular classroom settings. This approach requires specialized educational materials, assistive devices, and easily accessible technological resources to cater to diverse learning styles and needs. Practical strategies for promoting the integration of special education learners into mainstream classrooms include using visual aids, adaptive learning tools, and captioning services. These resources are vital for facilitating inclusion by offering necessary support and accommodations. Specialized educational software and visual aids can significantly enhance the accessibility of information and foster an inclusive learning environment for learners of all abilities. Educators can better support the diverse needs of special education learners by making sure that these resources are readily available and utilized effectively, promoting their successful integration and participation in mainstream classrooms.

"They are provided, SPED learners, with a tablet, trainings and seminars and learners also participated in several trainings and activities for the sped learners." (P1)

"After the seminars conducted and the trainings, my suggestion is that we should create instructional materials for them if we haven't done so. The regional and division FSL training, as well as the teachers' orientation here at our school, still have support." (P2)

Studies demonstrate that comprehensive training programs for teachers and support staff are crucial for the academic success of special education learners in mainstream classrooms. Tristani and Bassett-Gunter (2019) highlighted the significance of cognitive load theory-based training, which equips teachers to handle cognitive load, enhance working memory, and customize instruction to meet the specific needs of learners with IEPs. Dell'Anna et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of specialized resources, such as assistive devices and adaptive learning tools, in fostering engagement, comprehension, and independence among special education learners. Espinosa et al. (2021) highlighted the value of collaborative partnerships among teachers, special education professionals, and families, stressing that consistent communication and cooperation are vital for identifying individual needs and ensuring appropriate accommodations. These findings support the importance of training, resources, and collaboration in creating inclusive learning environments that support the diverse needs of special education learners, ultimately enhancing their academic, social, and emotional growth within mainstream classrooms.

Theme 9: Provision of receiving-teacher training and mastery in handling mainstream classes

The acquisition and maintenance of knowledge and skills through ongoing teacher training and mastery play a pivotal role in guaranteeing that teachers possess the necessary tools to adequately facilitate the academic, social, and emotional growth of deaf learners within mainstream educational settings. It is imperative to comprehend

the distinct requirements and obstacles deaf learners face to tailor instruction to their unique circumstances. This is crucial for fostering an inclusive educational setting. Continuous teacher training programs allow teachers to augment their comprehension of deaf culture, language, and the distinctive communication strategies that enable successful engagement with deaf learners. Teachers' acquisition and proficient utilization of these essential skills empower them to establish a conducive educational setting wherein individuals with hearing impairments experience a sense of comprehension, appreciation, and integration within the pedagogical journey. Teachers' ongoing professional development for educating learners with hearing impairments requires acquiring and applying empirically supported techniques to cater to diverse learning preferences and facilitate language acquisition. Teachers must be proficient in creating visual supports, using assistive technology, and implementing classroom strategies that enhance communication and learning for these learners. Furthermore, expertise in pedagogical techniques necessitates productive partnerships with special education professionals, families, and support personnel to ensure the unique needs of each learner are met, fostering a comprehensive support structure.

“The support that the school provided to me was invaluable, especially the seminar I attended last. It was extremely helpful for me in communicating with my deaf learners and understanding how to reach them and teach them during lessons. It gave me ideas on how to approach them and provided strategies that are suited to special education or deaf learners.” (P5)

“Trainings in the sense that those who are being trained are the ones who will be trained, as if they are identified as special education receiving teachers, so every time there is a training, they are already identified.” (P3)

Continuous professional development is crucial for supporting the academic, social, and emotional development of deaf learners in mainstream classrooms. Musyoka and Gentry (2020) emphasize that training in deaf culture, language, and communication strategies is essential for creating an inclusive learning environment. Herring and Woolsey (2020) highlight the need for teachers to update their skills to accommodate diverse learning styles and support language development. Such programs teach teachers to effectively use visual aids, assistive technology, and instructional strategies that promote communication and learning outcomes for learners with hearing impairments. Collaborative partnerships among teachers, special education professionals, families, and support staff are vital for the success and well-being of deaf learners. Borders et al. (2019) reiterated the importance of teachers' proficiency in collaborative practices to address the unique needs of these learners. Continuous professional development provides teachers the skills to engage in collaborative efforts, establishing a cohesive support system that enhances the academic achievement and well-being of learners with hearing impairments.

Theme 10: Empowering collaboration among special education teachers and receiving teachers

Collaboration with Special Education teachers is of utmost importance in fostering an inclusive classroom environment for learners with hearing impairments who are integrated into mainstream classes. Through collaborative efforts, it is possible for both mainstream teachers and Special Education Teachers to effectively address the unique requirements of deaf learners effectively, thereby promoting understanding and providing appropriate accommodations. Special education teachers possess a wealth of knowledge and skills that are highly valuable when working with learners with a wide range of needs, including those who are deaf. These teachers have undergone specialized training and developed a deep understanding of the unique challenges and requirements of teaching and supporting deaf learners. Moreover, their expertise enables them to effectively address these learners' specific educational, communication, and social-emotional needs, fostering their academic and personal growth. Researchers can offer valuable insights into effective instructional methods, communication tools, and accommodations that can potentially enhance the educational experience of deaf learners in the classroom. Through the process of collaboration with Special Education teachers, mainstream teachers have the opportunity to acquire valuable insights into the unique requirements and challenges faced by deaf learners. This enables them to adapt and customize their teaching strategies to better cater to the individual needs of these learners.

“Collaborate? [Sa mga] SPED Teachers and learners ask them as expert for ask their expertise on how to

handle deaf learners.” (P3)

“Collaborating with teachers, during training, there are expert teachers, for example, special education teachers, who teach how to communicate with learners. I also ask for additional information and knowledge, for example, Mr. Abanador is more knowledgeable than me because he attended national training. So, he also teaches me how to communicate.” (P4)

Collaborating with Special Education teachers to develop individualized education plans (IEPs) is essential for addressing the unique needs and educational goals of deaf learners. Comprehensive strategies, including tailored pedagogical approaches, adequate communication support, and necessary adjustments, facilitate these students' academic success and engagement. Regular communication between mainstream and Special Education teachers ensures continuous progress monitoring, instructional adjustments, and targeted interventions, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Studies such as those by Shoaib et al. (2023) and Rosas (2023) highlight the positive impact of collaboration on the educational outcomes of deaf learners. Shoaib et al. found that collaborative efforts led to more effective instructional strategies and accommodations, while Rosas emphasized the benefits of meticulously crafted IEPs. Espinosa et al. (2021) further underscored the importance of continuous communication and collaborative problem-solving in addressing the challenges faced by deaf learners, ultimately creating a more inclusive educational environment.

Theme 11: Emboldening accessibility and flexibility on sped learners

Accessibility and flexibility are crucial in promoting inclusivity among deaf learners in mainstream classes. For deaf learners, accessibility refers to ensuring that they have equal access to educational resources and materials. This may involve providing sign language interpreters, captioning videos, and using visual aids to support their learning. On the other hand, flexibility consists of adapting teaching methods and assessments to meet the diverse needs of deaf learners. This could include allowing extra time for assignments, providing visual instructions, and using alternative methods of communication, such as written notes or digital tools. By embracing accessibility and flexibility, teachers can create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for deaf learners in mainstream classes.

“Resources. For example, materials and instructional resources. The lessons should be well-suited for students with learning disabilities or special needs. There should be lessons that are tailored to their level of understanding and provided with various materials, such as pictures, that are appropriate for them to follow. It should be inclusive, providing equal opportunity for everyone, regardless of their background or abilities. Additionally, they should have a module where they can answer questions and activities that cater to easy teacher evaluation...” (P5)

“Hmm, I think it would be better if you used modified materials for them, ma'am. It's really difficult for me to figure out how I can make my worksheets understandable to them, ma'am, because their pacing is really different.” (P7)

“So probably the best thing that I would be needing right now is, um, I don't know, maybe more instructional materials. Probably, that we can use. Yeah, that we can use. Kay, unlike in my class, I have to make another instructional material specifically for them, to cater them. So, it would be very helpful if there is already available for us to use.” (P9)

Embracing accessibility and flexibility in mainstream classrooms benefits deaf learners and promotes inclusivity for all students. Educators can cater to various learning styles and abilities by integrating these principles into teaching methods, fostering a supportive environment. Recognizing and accommodating diverse needs cultivates students' sense of belonging and acceptance, enhancing the overall classroom experience. Research indicates that visual aids, sign language interpreters, and flexible assessments significantly contribute to the academic and social development of deaf learners. Ensuring equal access to resources and providing alternative assessment methods are crucial for creating an inclusive learning environment. Prioritizing accessibility and flexibility in teaching practices enhances the educational journey of all students, particularly deaf learners, contributing to their success and well-being in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on understanding the experiences of secondary school educators in handling deaf learners in inclusive education settings. The findings hold significant implications for developing professional development programs, curriculum enhancements, and providing supportive resources. These insights can potentially improve educational experiences and outcomes for deaf learners in mainstream classrooms and contribute to the broader discussion on inclusive education. The investigation revealed themes such as the satisfaction teachers derive from the growth and achievements of deaf learners and the emphasis on personal development and fulfillment among educators. It suggests that teaching deaf learners has a profound and transformative impact on teachers. The findings revealed the importance of peer assistance in interpreting sign language and utilizing diverse instructional approaches for deaf students. Promoting equitable treatment and personalized support for deaf students in inclusive classrooms emerged as a key aspect of teachers' approaches. This study thoroughly explores teachers' experiences and strategies in inclusive education settings, making a significant contribution to existing knowledge and offering valuable insights for educators and policymakers alike.

The study recommends that school administrators create a supportive classroom environment for deaf learners by providing visual aids, assistive devices, and captioned videos and collaborating with support teams like interpreters and speech therapists for personalized accommodations. Open communication with deaf students should be encouraged to foster engagement and inclusivity. Special Education teachers can support deaf or hard-of-hearing students in mainstream classrooms by collaborating with colleagues, regularly adjusting learning plans, connecting with families, and staying updated on teaching strategies through professional development. Teachers should adopt personalized approaches, differentiation, and collaboration with professionals and parents to support deaf learners. School administrators can further assist by offering professional development, specialized staff, and accessible technology while promoting inclusivity through events and outreach. Parents should collaborate with teachers, advocate for their child's rights, and seek resources and support groups. Local Government Units can support teachers through specialized training, partnerships, inclusive education policies, and community awareness campaigns. Future researchers should conduct comprehensive literature reviews, use mixed-methods approaches, and explore deaf learners' perspectives to inform policy development and improve support for educators in mainstream classrooms.

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