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## Experiences of Learning Support Aide (LSA) Teachers in the Department of Education

*Arlene L. Piamonte<sup>a</sup>, Gregg O. Siat<sup>b</sup>*

<sup>a</sup> MAED Elementary Teaching, Biliran Province State University, Naval, Biliran, Philippines

<sup>b</sup> School of Teacher Education, Biliran Province State University, Biliran, 6543, Philippines

### ABSTRACT

This study explores the experiences of Learning Support Aide (LSA) teachers in the Department of Education, focusing on the challenges they encounter, the strategies they use to cope, and their recommendations for improving teaching practices within the LSA program. LSAs were introduced by the Department of Education to support learning continuity, assist classroom teachers, and provide additional guidance to learners who require individualized support. Despite their essential role, limited research has examined their lived experiences, professional needs, and the effectiveness of existing support systems. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires administered to selected LSA teachers across public schools. Thematic analysis will be used to identify recurring patterns related to instructional challenges, workload concerns, role clarity, training needs, collaboration with teachers, and the availability of learning resources. The study also aims to determine how LSAs cope with these challenges and what forms of support they consider essential for improving their teaching practice. Additionally, participants will be asked to propose an appropriate model or intervention that can enhance teaching effectiveness and strengthen the implementation of the LSA program. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based insights that can guide school leaders, program implementers, and policymakers in improving LSA training, supervision, resource allocation, and role alignment within the Department of Education. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to the development of a more responsive and sustainable framework for supporting LSAs and improving learner outcomes.

**Keywords:** Learning Support Aides (LSA); teaching experiences; instructional challenges; coping strategies; Department of Education; teaching effectiveness; educational support personnel; intervention model; BE-LCP.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic created significant disruptions in the Philippine education system, forcing the Department of Education (DepEd) to shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to alternative learning delivery modalities. In response, DepEd implemented the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP), which aimed to ensure that learning would continue despite the challenges brought by the health crisis. The BE-LCP emphasized stronger partnerships among schools, households, and communities, recognizing that many learners required additional guidance at home—especially those who struggled with independent learning or had no available adult to assist them.

To support teachers and address these emerging needs, DepEd introduced the Learning Support Aide (LSA) program through DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2020. LSAs are qualified individuals hired to assist teachers in guiding learners through distance learning modalities, preparing and organizing learning materials, and monitoring learner progress. Their presence became essential in helping students who faced academic difficulties, lacked home supervision, or required specialized support. While teachers remained the primary facilitators of instruction, LSAs provided the necessary supplementary manpower to ease the growing instructional and administrative demands in the new normal.

Despite their vital role, LSAs encountered various challenges as they adjusted to their responsibilities. Many entered the profession with limited training, unclear role expectations, and varying levels of support from schools. Some experienced heavy workloads, resource constraints, and difficulties handling diverse learners' needs. As they continued to collaborate with teachers, LSAs also developed different coping mechanisms and strategies to carry out their duties effectively.

Given these realities, it is important to examine the lived experiences of LSA teachers to understand the issues they face, how they manage these challenges, and what improvements can be made to strengthen the LSA program. By exploring their insights and gathering their recommendations, the study aims to identify an appropriate model or intervention that can enhance teaching effectiveness and contribute to improved learning outcomes.

This study, therefore, seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Learning Support Aides in the Department of Education and to offer evidence-based recommendations that may guide policy refinement, capacity-building initiatives, and program development for LSAs in the future.

### ***Significance of the Study***

According to DepEd Employs Learning Support Aides, (2020)

October 22, 2020- "The implementation of the BE-LCP demands for a holistic approach and a stronger partnership among schools, households, and communities. As such, the need for additional human resource at the school level becomes imperative," Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones said, just days after the official opening of classes for school year (SY) 2020-2021 as DepEd operationalizes the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan in the time of COVID-19 (BE-LCP).

The BE-LCP requires the complementary and broader roles of parents, guardians and other household partners, and members of the community to support the learning process of the students at home, hence, the need for additional manpower in schools. It is for this reason that DepEd shall be engaging the services of Learning Support Aides.

Learning Support Aides (LSAs) are qualified individuals who will work together in collaboration with teachers and contribute to the provision of learning opportunities that promote achievement and progression of learners.

"As education must continue amidst pandemic, our teachers tackle the additional tasks, challenges, new expectations in the new normal, thus, the need for the learning support aides is crucial", Secretary Briones added. Their services at the school level will provide support addressing the need of students who cannot manage independent learning, including those with disabilities and special needs; those who do not have a household member or any responsible adult available to provide instructional support and facilitate distance learning delivery modalities; and households with parents and guardians with full-time jobs who may not be able to monitor and guide the child's learning at home.

The LSAs main duties in collaboration with teachers are:

- 1) guide learners and households on the chosen learning delivery modalities,
- 2) render assistance to the teacher in the lesson preparation and delivery, and
- 3) monitor and track learners' progress and achievement.

LSAs shall report directly to the teacher whom he/she is assisting. This means that the teacher is still the main responsible school personnel in-charge of the teaching-learning process.

"Teachers remain to be the main facilitators of learning. The engagement of LSAs is DepEd's way of ensuring provision of assistance to our teachers in managing learners and in coordination with teachers ensure that learning is taking in different learning modalities" said DepEd Undersecretary for Planning, Human Resource and Organizational Development Jesus L.R. Mateo. Learning Support Aides shall be engaged under Contract of Service or Job Order, subject to Civil Service Commission (CSC), Commission on Audit (COA), and Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Joint Circular No. 1, s. 2017 (Rules and Regulations Governing Contract of Service and Job Order Workers in the Government), as amended by Joint Circular No. 1, s. 2018, and other applicable policies, issuances, rules and regulations. They shall receive remuneration or compensation for services rendered and the amount of which shall not be below the minimum daily wage rates set by the National Wages Productivity Commission per region.

All School Division Offices (SDOs) with identified need to hire LSAs are instructed to offer the position to the existing teacher applicants for SY 2020-2021 who were not given permanent or provisional appointments due to lack of available permanent teaching items.

Other qualified individuals who may apply as LSAs include LET passers in the locality; private school teachers, especially those who were displaced and have lost their livelihood due to the pandemic; and provisional teachers whose contracts were not renewed.

"The hiring of LSAs is another employment opportunity that can boost local community livelihood in this time of pandemic", Usec Mateo added.

The engagement of Learning Support Aides in all public elementary and secondary schools including senior high schools, in school year (SY) 2020-2021 is guided by DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2020 or the Guidelines on the Engagement of Services of Learning Support Aides to Reinforce the Implementation of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) in Time of COVID-19 Pandemic.

### ***Research Questions***

This study had the following questions:

What challenges do LSA teachers encounter in the teaching process?

How do LSA teachers cope with the challenges they experience?

What recommendations can LSA teachers provide to improve teaching practices in the Department of Education?

What appropriate model or intervention can be recommended to enhance teaching effectiveness among LSA teachers?

**Objectives:**

The objectives of the study were:

- To Identify the challenges encountered by LSA Teachers in the teaching process.
- To Determine how LSA Teachers cope with the challenges they experience in teaching
- To gather recommendations from LSA Teachers to improve teaching practice in the Department of Education (DepEd)
- To recommend an appropriate model or intervention that can enhance teaching effectiveness.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the experiences of Learning Support Aide (LSA) teachers in the Department of Education. Specifically, the study aims to identify the challenges that they encounter in the teaching process, examine how they cope with these challenges, and gather their recommendations for improving teaching practices. The study intends to propose an appropriate model or intervention that can enhance the teaching effectiveness of LSA teachers.

According to DepEd Employs Learning Support Aides, (2020), The purpose of significant study in Learning Support Aides (LSA) is qualified individuals who will work together in collaboration with teachers and contribute to the provision of learning opportunities that promote achievement and progression of learners.

**Overview of the Study**

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to the basic education system in the Philippines. As the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP), schools were required to adopt a holistic approach involving stronger collaboration among teachers, households, and communities. With classes shifting to distance and modular learning, the role of parents and guardians in supporting children's learning at home became more demanding. Recognizing that many learners lacked sufficient supervision or struggled with independent learning, DepEd identified the urgent need for additional manpower at the school level to ensure continuous instructional support.

On October 22, 2020, DepEd formally announced the engagement of Learning Support aides (LSAs) to reinforce the implementation of the BE-LCP. LSAs are qualified individuals hired to assist teachers by guiding learners and households in the chosen learning delivery modalities, preparing and delivering lessons, and monitoring learners' progress, teachers remain the primary facilitators of instructions, with LSAs reporting directly to them. The initiative also served as an employment opportunity for LET passers, displaced private school teachers, and other qualified individuals during the pandemic.

Given their expanded roles, LSAs have become crucial contributors to the effectiveness of the learning delivery in the new normal. However, as they take on responsibilities related to learner support, instructional assistance, and progress monitoring, LSAs also face various challenges in carrying out their tasks. These include workload concerns, limited training, shifting expectations, and the complexities of working closely with learners who require greater academic support. This study seeks to explore and understand the overall experiences of Learning support Aide teachers in the Department of Education. It examines the challenges they encounter, the ways they cope with these challenges, their recommendations for improving the LSA program, and the possible models or interventions that may enhance their teaching effectiveness. Through this inquiry, the study aims to provide meaningful insights that can guide policy improvements, strengthen teacher support systems, and optimize the vital role of LSAs in ensuring learning continuity.

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**2. METHODOLOGY****Research Design**

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore and understand the experiences of Learning Support Aide (LSA) teachers in the Department of Education. This design is appropriate because the study seeks to describe the challenges encountered by LSAs, coping their experiences, gathering recommendation to improve teaching practices and appropriate model or intervention that can enhance teaching effectiveness.

**Research Locale**

This study was carried out in the public school within the Division of Biliran. The school's identity is kept confidential to protect the privacy of the institution and its personnel.

**Research Respondents**

The respondents of this study were Learning Support Aides (LSAs) assigned in public school within the Division of Biliran. To maintain ethical standards, the identities of the participants and their institution were kept confidential.

### Research Instrument

The primary instructional instrument used a semi-structured interview guide and open-ended questionnaire. The instrument includes questions aligned with the study objectives, specifically focusing on:

1. Challenges encountered in the teaching process
2. Coping strategies used by LSAs
3. Recommendations to improve teaching practices
4. Suggested models or interventions to enhance LSA teaching effectiveness

### Data Gathering Procedure

Before the gathering of data. First, the researcher writes a letter request for permission to the school head to secure approval for data collection. To ensure the support and cooperation, an explanation was provided to the principal and teachers of the school. Second, the recruitment of participants the qualified LSAs will be invited to participate voluntarily. Third, Administration of participants will answer the open-ended questionnaire and/or participate in an online or face-to-face interview, depending on their availability. Fourth, recording and notes with permission, interview will be audio-recorded. Field notes will also be taken to capture non-verbal insights. Lastly, data consolidation. All responses will be organized for analysis.

### Data Scoring

The table below is the data scoring

Mean Score	Range	Interpretation
5	5	Strongly Agree
4	4.0-4.9	Agree
3	3.0-3.9	Neutral
2	2.0-2.9	Disagree
1	0.1-1.0	Strongly Disagree

### Statistical Treatment of Data

The data gathered in this qualitative study will be analyzed using thematic analysis. All responses from LSA teachers will be carefully read, organized, and coded to identify meaningful statements related to their challenges, coping strategies, and recommendations. Similar codes will be grouped together to form categories, which will then be developed into major themes that reflect the lived experiences of Learning Support Aides in the Department of Education. The analysis will focus on interpreting patterns and insights rather than using numerical or statistical formulas. This approach ensures that the voices and experiences of the participants are understood in depth, allowing the researcher to present a clear and comprehensive description of their perspectives..

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Profile

*Table 1 - Frequencies for AGE*

AGE	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
23	2	20.0	20.0	20.0
24	1	10.0	10.0	30.0
27	2	20.0	20.0	50.0
28	3	30.0	30.0	80.0

*Table 1 - Frequencies for AGE*

AGE	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
29	1	10.0	10.0	90.0
30	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
Missing	0	0.0		
Total	10	100.0		

The majority of the respondents are 28 years old, with a frequency of 3 and a percent of 30%. Second are the respondents aged 23 and 27 years old, with a frequency of 2 and a percent of 20% each. And the last are the respondents 24,27, and 30 years old who got frequency of 1 each and a percent of 10% each.

*Table 2- Frequencies for SEX*

SEX	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
F	9	90.0	90.0	90.0
M	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
Missing	0	0.0		
Total	10	100.0		

Majority of the respondent's sex are female with a frequency of 9 and got 90% of the total population. The remaining 10% goes for male.

*Table 3 - Frequencies for GR. LVL. ASSIGN.*

GR. LVL. ASSIGN.	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	2	20.0	22.2	22.2
3	3	30.0	33.3	55.6
4	2	20.0	22.2	77.8
5	1	10.0	11.1	88.9
6	1	10.0	11.1	100.0
Missing	1	10.0		
Total	10	100.0		

Most of the respondents are in grade 3, with a frequency of 3, or 30% of the total population. Meanwhile, some of the respondents are assigned to Grade 1 and 4 with a frequency of 2 each and a percent of 20% each and lastly some of the respondents were assigned from Grade 5 to 6 earning a frequency of 1 each and a percent of 10% each.

*Table 4 - Frequencies for NO. OF YRS. AS LSA TEACHER*

NO. OF YRS. AS LSA TEACHER	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 1 year	8	80.0	80.0	80.0
1-2 years	1	10.0	10.0	90.0

Table 4 - Frequencies for NO. OF YRS. AS LSA TEACHER

NO. OF YRS. AS LSA TEACHER	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
3-4 years	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
Missing	0	0.0		
Total	10	100.0		

The number of years as an LSA teacher who got the majority is less than 1 year. 1-2 years and 3-4 years tie with a frequency of 1 each and a percent of 10.

Table 5 - Frequencies for SCH. LOC.

SCH. LOC.	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2	10	100.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	0	0.0		
Total	10	100.0		

Both respondents have the same location with a frequency of 10 and a percent of 100.

#### **To Identify the challenges encountered by LSA Teachers in the teaching process.**

Table 6 - Identify the challenges encountered by LSA Teachers in the teaching process

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation	Rank
I handle too many learners at one time.	2.8	1.6	Disagree	4
I lack sufficient teaching materials or resources.	3.2	1.2	Neutral	1
I find it challenging to support learners with diverse learning needs	3.1	1.0	Neutral	2
The workload assigned to me is sometimes overwhelming.	2.9	1.2	Disagree	3
I lack enough training related to my duties as an LSA teacher.	2.8	1.6	Disagre	4

In terms of the challenges encountered by LSA Teachers in the teaching process, it is identified that the rank 1 challenge encountered by LSA teachers is "I lack sufficient teaching materials or resources" with a mean of 3.2, which is interpreted as neutral. It is followed by "I find it challenging to support learners with diverse learning needs," who got a 3.1 mean, which is neutral when interpreted. On rank 3 is "The workload assigned to me is sometimes Overwhelming, which is interpreted as Disagree, with a mean of 2.9. Both statements, "I handle too many learners at one time" and "I lack enough training related to my duties as an LSA teacher," tied in rank 4 with a mean of 2.8, which is interpreted as Disagree.

#### **To Determine how LSA Teachers cope with the challenges they experience in teaching**

Table 7 - Determine how LSA Teachers cope with the challenges they experience in teaching

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
I seek guidance from senior teachers or my mentor.	4	0.8	Agree	4
I create my own strategies to manage learners effectively.	4.6	0.5	Agree	1
I prepare additional learning materials to support students	4.5	1.0	Agree	2
I attend trainings or online webinars to improve my skills.	3.4	1.3	Neutral	5
I collaborate with fellow LSA teachers for ideas and support.	4.5	0.7	Agree	3

In the first rank on how LSA Teachers cope with the challenges they experience in teaching is that teachers create their own strategies to manage learners effectively, and it got the mean of 4.6 and SD of 0.5, which, in its interpretation it is Agree. Second is they both agree that to cope with challenges, they prepare additional learning materials to support students, which gets a mean of 4.5 and SD 1.0. Next is the statement that I collaborate with fellow LSA teachers for ideas and support" which got of Mean of 4.5 and a SD of 0.7, followed by the statement" I seek guidance from senior teachers or my mentor"

with a Mean of 4 and SD of 0.8 which interpreted as agree, and lastly “I attend trainings or online webinars to improve my skills” who got a mean of 3.4 and SD of 1.3 which interpreted Neutral.

***To gather recommendations from LSA Teachers to improve teaching practice in the Department of Education (DepEd)***

Table 8 - Recommendations from LSA Teachers to Improve Teaching Practice in The Department of Education (DepEd)

Support/Resources	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation	Rank
Additional learning materials	4.9	0.3	Agree	1
Professional training/ workshop	4.7	0.7	Agree	2
Mentoring from experienced LSAS	4.1	1.1	Agree	3

The LSA Teachers' recommended first is Additional learning, which got the 1<sup>st</sup> rank with a mean of 4.9 and a standard deviation of 0.3, which is interpreted as they all agree. Next, they recommend having a professional training/workshop, which got the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank with a mean of 4.7, which is interpreted as agree. Then the last one that they make is mentoring from experienced LSAS who got a 4.1 mean and a standard deviation of 1.1, and the interpretation is agrees.

***To recommend an appropriate model or intervention that can enhance teaching effectiveness.***

Table 9 - Recommendations From LSA Teachers to Improve Teaching Practice in The Department of Education (DepEd)

Intervention Type	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation	Rank
Mentorship Program	4.8	0.4	Agree	2
Peer Collaboration/Coaching	4.6	0.5	Agree	3
Blended Learning	4	0.9	Agree	4
Additional Resources	4.9	0.3	Agree	1

The appropriate model or intervention that can enhance teaching effectiveness that the LSA Teachers recommended was the mentorship program, peer collaboration/coaching, blended learning, and additional resources. Rank 1 is the additional resources with a mean of 4.9 and a standard deviation of 0.3, which is interpreted as Agree. Next on the rank is the mentorship program, which got a 4.8 mean and 0.4 standard deviation and is interpreted as agree. Third on the rank is the peer collaboration/coaching, which got a 4.6 mean and a standard deviation of 0.5, which is interpreted as Agree. And last on the rank is blended learning, which got a 4 mean and 0.9 standard deviation and has an interpretation of agree.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### ***Conclusion***

Based on the result, it is concluded the following:

1. In terms of the challenges encountered by LSA Teachers in the teaching process, it is identified that the rank 1 challenge encountered by LSA teachers is “I lack sufficient teaching materials or resources” with a mean of 3.2, which is interpreted as neutral.
2. **In the first rank on** how LSA Teachers cope with the challenges they experience in teaching is that teachers create their own strategies to manage learners effectively, and it got the mean of 4.6 and SD of 0.5, which, in its interpretation it is Agree.
3. **The LSA Teachers' recommended first is Additional learning, which got the 1<sup>st</sup> rank with a mean of 4.9 and a standard deviation of 0.3, which is interpreted as they all agree.**
4. The appropriate model or intervention that can enhance teaching effectiveness that the **LSA Teachers recommended was the mentorship program, peer collaboration/coaching, blended learning, and additional resources. Rank 1 is the additional resources with a mean of 4.9 and a standard deviation of 0.3, which is interpreted as Agree.**

### ***RECOMMENDATIONS***

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Provide Comprehensive and Continuous Training

DepEd should implement regular capacity-building programs for LSAs focusing on classroom management, differentiated instruction, handling diverse learners, and the use of learning materials.

## 2. Clarify Roles and Responsibilities

Schools should develop clear guidelines on the specific duties and limitations of LSAs to avoid role conflicts and ensure effective collaboration between LSAs and teachers.

## 3. Strengthen Support and Mentoring Systems

Assigning LSAs to mentor teachers and creating peer-support groups can help LSAs feel more guided and confident in performing their tasks.

## 4. Improve Provision of Learning Resources

Schools and divisions should supply sufficient instructional materials, devices, and tools that LSAs need to assist learners effectively.

## 5. Enhance Communication and Coordination

Strengthening collaboration between school heads, teachers, LSAs, and parents can lead to smoother teaching processes and better learning outcomes.

## 6. Consider Developing a Standardized Intervention or Model

DepEd may design an LSA Support Framework or Intervention Model that includes structured training, regular evaluation, and clear performance indicators to enhance teaching effectiveness.

## 7. Provide Opportunities for Career Advancement

Offering LSAs pathways to become regular teachers or support staff can increase motivation and strengthen their commitment to the program.

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