Elem TO Biñan Sci-Tech: EXPLORING PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION PROGRAM FOR FRESHMEN OF BCSTHS

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ABSTRACT

The transition from elementary to junior high school is a significant milestone in both students' and parents' life. Due to unfamiliar pupils, school staff, and numerous sets of behavioral and classroom standards and expectations, most students endured some emotional turmoil and social adjustment. By comprehending the participants' transition from elementary to junior science high school, this study was able to analyze how they define a successful transition, review, and reflect on their experiences of their challenges in transitioning and suggested essential supports they need in transitioning. Triangulating the qualitative data gathered from the focus group discussion revealed that all three participant groups agreed that increasing confidence in dealing with workloads was necessary for a student to successfully transition. Social and emotional support from both parents and instructors, as well as extensive advice in transitioning to higher level studies in junior high were the supports that considered to be primarily supplied to learners. This study, if utilized to craft a program suited for the students who would take a new and challenging path, would greatly impact their success academically and socially.

Keywords: *Transition Program, Science High School*

INTRODUCTION

The critical age of 11-13 years old is where students transition from elementary to a new stage of academic learning: Junior High School. Most schools for this age range have transformed into team-based learning centers tailored to the requirements of early adolescents. The idea is to keep adult influence, stress more interdisciplinary learning, and create a "safe landing" in the greater academic community that is the junior high school years (Anthony, 2021).

This transition poses threats to students' academic performance which may be caused by physiological, socio-emotional, and pedagogical factors (Chambers and Coffey, 2013). For some students, especially in the light of the current situation, this can be difficult since it requires broadening their horizons, increasing their independence, and raising their responsibilities and they must experience this all simultaneously with adjustments imposed by the new normal set-up in education.

According to Virtanen, Vasalampi, Torppa, Lerkkanen, and Nurmi, (2019), it is essential to provide support to students not only academically but also with their social and emotional development for them to achieve successful transition from elementary to junior high school.

This can be supported by Republic Act 10410 also known as the "Early Years Act (EYA) of 2013", which promoted children's rights to survival, development, and special protection, with full recognition of the nature of childhood and the need to provide developmentally appropriate experiences to meet their needs; and to support parents in their roles as primary caregivers and their children's first teachers. This implies that there is a need for support to students as they navigate a new set of environments they need to experience as transition of school level happens.

This support mechanism should ensure that students would be well guided in factors such as physiological, socio-emotional, and pedagogical changes they may experience. Therefore, this study was anchored mainly on DepEd Order 12, s. 2020, or the Basic Education – Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) on the principle stated in section 3a which is about protecting the health, safety, and well-being of learners.

Further, this study was also aligned with the Region 4A's Enhanced Basic Education – Learning Continuity Plan key dimension on well-being and protection.

In a focus group discussion (FGD) on Students' and Parents' feedbacks of the First Grading Period of School Year 2021-2022, student participants shared that they were having difficulties in adjusting to workloads given. Answers by students reflects the idea that they have struggled in transitioning from elementary to junior high school.

According to Parker (2009) as cited by Spies (2018), the transition from elementary to junior high school may result to negative impacts on student outcomes. Such outcomes include measures of school academic performance, mental health, self-concept and identity, and a reduction in extra-curricular activity participation.

This was attested in the FGD results. Students also mentioned that the teacher's idea about what student's should do for fun is a little impractical since some students view those "fun" events as an obstacle to their time for rest. This shows that students view additional tasks which can develop their socio-emotional being as an additional burden for them since they are still adjusting with the changes they are introduced with.

On the other hand, Parents/Guardians were concerned on their children's study habits and their children's attitude towards school. They have mentioned that even though 21st Century Skills are taught in the school, they feel like too many of them at the same time can overwhelm their children. They view the class programming to be effective but finds platforms for learning hard because some students might not be able to adapt quickly enough and will result in confusion. Some of them recognizes also that their children were struggling because they are still

adjusting to the demands of a junior science high school.

Meanwhile, teachers were concerned on student's performance and their coping abilities with activities required for a science high school. Teachers were discussing about students' low academic performance in their subjects and viewed these problems to be caused by students transitioning from elementary to a junior science high school.

These emerging challenges were the focus of this study. This study explored life experiences of students as they adjust on transitioning from elementary to junior science high school in the new normal setting. Furthermore, this study also accounted experiences of parents and teachers as they maneuver themselves on the transition of their learners.

From the results of this study, a transitioning program for freshmen students in a new normal setting was crafted. This may greatly be of use in planning for next school year's improvement plans for well-being and protection of learners. School administrators may be provided with a possible activity to implement to guide learners in their adjustment from elementary school to a junior science high school

The idea of this study was to explore perspectives of students, parents/guardians and teachers of a successful transitioning program through their accounts of life experiences in their adjustments from elementary to Junior Science High School.

According to Schlossberg (2012) as cited by Barclay (2017), multiple factors are at play in an individual's ability to effectively manage a transition. He then identifies four sets of factors that influence a person's ability to adapt to a transition: situation, self, support, and strategies. Schlossberg's Transition Theory would be the basis of this research study and where it will be founded in because the transition to middle school is influenced by everyone's situation, self, support, and strategies.

Harvesting data from this study, a proposed plan for a transitioning program would be designed for utilization in the future.

This action research was able to comprehend respondents' perceptions of how their experiences impacted their transition from Elementary to Junior Science High School. It yielded baseline information to craft a Transitioning Program for Freshmen Students of Biñan City Science and Technology High School. This addressed the challenges on students' academic performance which may be caused by physiological, socio-emotional, and pedagogical factors as they transition from elementary to a junior science high school.

The solution this study produced was a training program designed for students, parents/guardians, and teachers for the proper guidance on transitioning from elementary and Junior Science High School of Grade 7 students qualifying to study in Biñan City Science and Technology High School.

METHODOLOGY

The participants for this study were selected Grade 7 students, Parents/Guardians, Teachers and the guidance advocate of Biñan City Science and Technology High School.

Furthermore, participants who provided consent to participate in the study were selected through purposive sampling technique to achieve a balanced representation of gender among them. Criteria were set to be the same as the characteristics of the participants mentioned previously.

To answer the research questions, this study utilized qualitative phenomenological inquiry through and focus group discussion to obtain experiences and gather important data and considerations in crafting or designing a Transition Program for a Junior Science High School Freshmen.

The main instrument for this study were the interview guide, which contains questions to be asked to participants during the focus group discussion. The focus group questions reflected Schlossberg's Transition Theory and the four sets of factors: situation, self, support, and strategies. These factors influence a person's ability to adapt to a transition. The questions were validated by experts in the field

of education and guidance counselling to ensure reliability.

In addition, phenomenological inquiry through focus group discussion to obtain experiences of participants from their frame of reference was utilized. Methods that were used to collect data include collection of written responses by respondents to focus group questions and audio and video recording of focus group session. Focus group sessions were recorded to capture verbatim language, voice inflections and facial shifts. Transcription of focus group sessions took place to ensure quality.

Data were collected from the school guidance advocate through collection of written responses during observation of focus group sessions. In addition, guide questions were provided for school guidance advocate to use during focus group sessions.

To ensure confidentiality, the researchers stored all collected data in a Google Drive Folder. In addition, the researcher saved audio and video recordings and transcripts on a secure password-protected computer and backed them up on a secure external hard drive in the researcher's home office.

Only the researcher has access to the data. This method corresponds directly to phenomenological orientation and qualitative research design and was used to understand respondents' personal experiences of transitioning to Junior Science high school.

To introduce the study to the participants and maintain their confidentiality, the researcher sent e-mail letters to parents/guardians and students. Letters were also sent to teachers and school counselors to introduce the study and present participant rights.

Also, informed consent forms were sent to identified students, their parents/guardians, and teachers, describing the study and asking for parents' signatures if they agreed to allow their child(ren) to participate. The parent letter included an introduction of the researcher, the purpose of the study, description of the importance of the research study, and drew the parent's attention to the consent form. The consent form clarified procedures and explained confidentiality, risks, and benefits of participation in the study. The consent form described any risk to participants and informed parents/guardians of their child(ren)'s option to withdraw from the study at any time. If a child would withdraw in the middle of the study, the child's data would be destroyed. The letter also informed participants of the focus group session date, time, and location/platform.

To analyze the data that were collected from written responses and focus group discussion transcriptions, this study utilized the qualitative data analysis employed by SAGE Publication (2019). Data were manually organized first by the researchers and theme deduction through manual coding followed. Manual coding was by circling, highlighting, bolding, underlining, or coloring rich or significant quotes, cognitive and feelings from the responses.

Once the codes are identified, it was organized into categories and then identifying common themes and making interpretation followed. The researcher attempted to develop the storyline from the common themes that identified from the dataset and linked them to deduce the meaning that participants attach through experiencing the phenomena.

Furthermore, the researcher maintained a reflective journal to address biases and establish appropriate transferability and credibility measures.

The qualitative method that was used in the study were transcribing the written and focus group discussion responses and performing manual coding and deduction of common themes that would emerge.

DISCUSSION

This action research was able to comprehend respondents' perceptions of how their experiences impacted their transition from Elementary to Junior Science High School. It yielded baseline information to craft a Transitioning Program for Freshmen Students of Biñan City Science and

Technology High School. This addressed the challenges on students' academic performance which may be caused by physiological, socio-emotional, and pedagogical factors as they transition from elementary to a junior science high school.

According to Schlossberg (2012), as cited by Barclay (2017), multiple factors influence an individual's ability to manage a transition effectively. He then identifies four categories of factors that influence a person's ability to adapt to a change: situation, self, support, and strategies. Because the transition to middle school is influenced by everyone's situation, self, support, and strategies, Schlossberg's Transition Theory was the foundation of this research study.

After the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), emerging themes were categorized to answer the questions raised in the previous section. The following were the results of the manual coding of participants' responses:

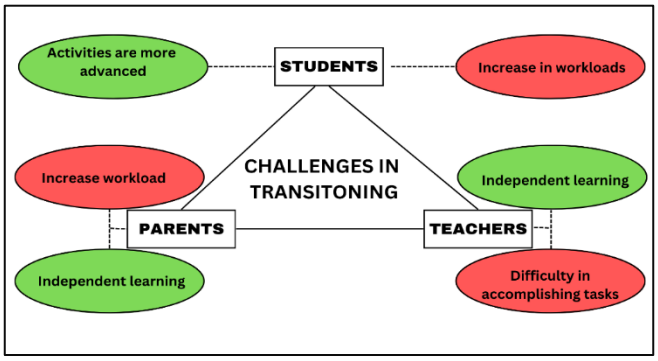

Figure 1. Positive and negative challenges in transitioning as perceived by the participants of the FGD

CHALLENGES IN TRANSITIONING

In terms of the significant experiences or challenges in transitioning from elementary to junior science high school, it was revealed in the analysis of the qualitative data that there were positive and negative challenges encountered by all participants. Figure 1 shows the emerging themes from the coded responses of participants in terms of the challenges in transitioning. Responses were analyzed thematically and can be categorized as Positive (green colored circles) Challenges and Negative (red colored circles) Challenges.

Student participants perceived that one of the main challenges they encountered when transitioning was that the activities were more advanced compared to what they usually encounter during their elementary school. Take example of this extract from a student response below.

> *"If before the lesson was easy, now it is advanced, and I need to be more matured to keep up with the system here at this school."*

For student participants who experienced firsthand the transition, a more relaxed elementary activities were turned into a more complex activities when studying in a junior science high school. This perception of the difficulty among the workloads of the students, however, can still be considered a positive challenge as supported with the parents' perceptions. This can be proven with the extract of a parent response below.

> *"In the transition, my daughter was become more independent in attending the school. Also, the new and high standard of sets of policy especially in reputable and high standard school of Biñan Sci-Tech. But the good news is, my daughter learned advanced education which I like in Biñan Sci-Tech school."*

Parents perceived that the number of workloads increased compared to elementary school workloads, however they view this positively since their children were practiced becoming independent learners. This was reinforced by the perception of the teachers as shown from an extract of a teacher participant below.

> *"The transition from elementary to junior high school is already a critical time for students, so the mere fact that it's a junior science high school there have been an increased academic demand. I observed that they're trying their best to cope with the demands and adjustments from the learning modality. The students have more responsibility in making sure they complete their academic requirements…"*

On the other hand, negative challenges were also perceived by the participants. The red colored circles showed that triangulating the emerging themes of the responses, the

increase in workloads were viewed by participants as a reason why they experienced difficulty in accomplishing tasks. This can be supported by extracts from a student participant's response below.

"Based on my own experiences, Junior high school is more challenging especially for the subjects and there are lot more added activities unlike when I was in my elementary days."

This agreed to the parents' perception of the challenges that can be negative. An extract from a parent's response below mentioned that students spend most of their time completing their workloads and were finding less time for social interactions.

"As a parent I have observed that my child is spending almost all her waking hours with schoolwork even after school hours. Weekends are mostly spent doing schoolwork. She barely has time to bond with her siblings nor could we go places…"

Teacher participant's perception of the negative challenges can relate to this emerging themes of increased workload. Below is an extract from one of the teacher participants.

"I have observed that most of the students cannot study or work on their own and are highly dependent on their parents. They also work on tasks on a very timid manner and often, they were not able to finish their work on time."

Since students still must practice independent learning, increase in workloads made their transitions more challenging. With this, students can be influenced by the situation they were placed into. When students have learnt how a new situation works, they go into the 'moving through' stage of transition (Schlossberg, 1984).

DESCRIPTION OF A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONING

In terms of how participants describe the transitioning from elementary to junior science high school, it was revealed in the analysis of the qualitative data that there were positive and negative descriptions of transitioning by all participants.

The diagram below shows the descriptions of transitioning by the participants during the transitioning from elementary school to a science junior high school. Figure 2 shows the emerging themes from the coded responses of participants in terms of their description of their transitioning as students, parent and teachers. Responses were analyzed thematically and can be categorized as Positive (green colored circles) descriptions and Negative (red colored circles) descriptions.

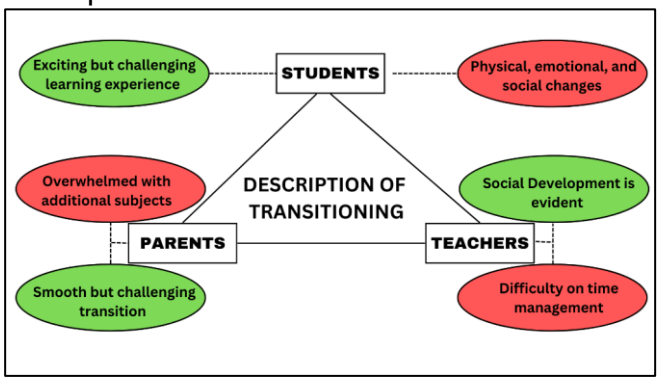

Figure 2. Positive and negative description of transitioning as perceived by the participants of the FGD

Student participants describe their transitioning to be exciting but challenging. As for the parents, they describe the transitioning of their students to be smooth but challenging. This was evident in most of the responses of student participants as shown in the extracts below.

"I was afraid at first because it's a new phase of my life however when I get to experience high school life, I became excited in this journey…"

Teachers perceived this to be part of the evident social development in students.

"They want to grab every opportunity to participate in new activities such as clubs and group presentations."

Most of the student participants perceived their transition to be exciting as they finish their elementary years and enter a junior science school as an honor. This type of transition can be categorized as an anticipated transition (Schlossberg, 2012), where students predicted that such challenging

opportunities provided to them is part of being part of a special curricular program.

Meanwhile, concurrent with their perception of excitement in their coming transition, it was also revealed that students also consider the changes in their physical, emotional, and social self has greatly affect their transition negatively. One extract below evidently supports this.

"… at first, it is not easy because there are a lot of changes that you can notice. Physical, emotional, and social changes. I also developed new friendships and maintaining good self-esteem and confidence…"

Parents would describe their student transition to be an overwhelming experience due to additional workloads compared in the elementary school.

"The long hours in school and take-home tasks gives her less sleep time. There is more pressure than when she was in elementary. Sometimes he gets overwhelmed not only with his lessons but also with the new peers, and more teachers."

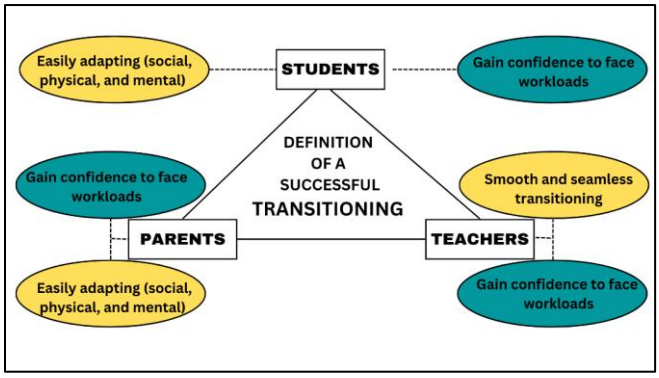

Figure 3. Definition of a successful transitioning as perceived by the participants of the FGD

Consequently, teachers perceived their student's difficulty in transition to be caused by being less mature in handling academic works considering the expected behaviors, intellectual capacity, and responsibility in congruent with their age and learning competencies. However, friendships among them are evident somehow. This can be supported with an extract of a teachers' response below.

"I observed that the transitioning period have been an exciting time for my students. They're a bit anxious yet positive and eager to learn especially as they look forward to increased independence and making new friends."

In another aspect of the participant's perceptions of transitions. They were also asked about their definition of a successful transition. Figure 3 below shows how the participants define a successful transitioning from elementary to junior science high school.

Most of the student participants describe a successful transition to be having the social, physical and mental being strong and adapted to the situation being presented. An extract from one of the student below stated that developing new friendship and maintaining good self-esteem and confidence and showing interest in school and school work would really help on s successful transition.

"Based on my experience i can describe a successful transition from elementary to junior science high school is making new friends, maintaining self-esteem and confidence, and being familiar in the society you're in."

All three groups of participants perceived that gaining confidence in facing the workloads was required for a student to achieve successful transition. A successful transition from elementary to junior high school means that students should have the ability to cope with the new and more challenging tasks of junior high school. It includes not only completion of tasks on time but also enjoying the higher level of academics. Students need not receive the perfect or high scores in the tasks to be called successful but their performance to work independently, to manage their time, to be physically, emotionally and psychologically stable as they journey the life as junior high students.

"For me, a successful transition of a student from elementary to junior science high school is when the student can accomplish all tasks given to him/her on time and without doubting his/her skills and abilities in performing tasks/school activities. It also helps when the student

is comfortable with his/her surroundings, as well as with his/her classmates, schoolmates, and teachers."

Considering the results of the participants' description of a successful transition, activities that promote time-management skills, independent learning, maturity, and careful structuring of workloads must be considered in crafting a transitioning program for freshmen students.

ESSENTIAL SUPPORT FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONING

Transitions, as many educators are aware, can be difficult. Transitions, whether from one activity to the next in an elementary classroom or from elementary to junior science high school, all benefit from planning and preparation of all stakeholders' efforts.

However, the transition from elementary to junior science high school is one of the most difficult for students. Navigating a larger campus, more rigorous academic coursework, and increased autonomy, all contribute to the difficulties many students face during this transition period (McFarland, 2018).

Considering above mentioned challenges and experiences of the participants of the FGD, perceived support to successful transition from elementary to junior science high school were also analyzed.

In terms of the students' responses, most of them perceived that moral support from parents and the educational institution was essential. Moral support for the participants equates to boosting confidence and increases motivation to face heavy workloads.

"I think emotional and moral support from teachers and parents are essential since it can boost the student's confidence and they can have motivation to study and do well in school."

Parents also agreed with this as they perceived that they should always be available whenever their children needed guidance and support during the school year. Proper communication with the children regarding how they are doing in school and the challenges they are facing as they become junior high school students were also dominant in from the responses.

In addition, social and emotional support from both parents and teachers by thorough guidance in adapting to higher level lessons in junior high are some of the supports that the respondent' perceived to be essentially provided to the learners. The adjustment from elementary to a junior science high school was agreed by all of the respondents to not be very simple. However, with the help of the teachers and parents, giving them sufficient time to adjust with the transition would be essential for the learners.

"I think emotional and moral support from teachers and parents are essential since it can boost the student's confidence and they can have motivation to study and do well in school."

Additionally, their assistance makes students feel secure and helping them realize that there would be a communication with them and share their problems with them, to make them feel that they are important.

The extract below gave a suggestion for students experiencing transition from elementary to junior science high school.

"For incoming students in seventh grade or the students who are already in seventh grade, they should not panic, and they should learn to manage their time. They must learn how to enjoy every activity no matter how difficult it is."

All three group of participants perceived this essential support should be the primary inclusion in a program to be initiated by the school. For teacher participants, it would be a great help if they help them to identify their struggles and find their own solutions. Support them in implementing the solutions they have chosen. Also, they ought to foster a feeling of belonging at school for it improves motivation for students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study was able to comprehend the perception of the respondents about transitioning from elementary to junior science high school.

Therefore, a strategic implementation of a program for student transitioning must be implemented.

Throughout their lives, children face numerous stressful transitions. They will make their first transition from home to school, elementary to junior high, junior high to senior high, and high school to college or work. However, the transition from elementary to a junior science high school appears to be more difficult and unique for teenagers that experiences personal changes associated with puberty.

According to the results of the FGD analysis, students' key concerns were roles, expectations, and duties. To make this transition smoother, initiatives like "blocking, shadowing, or pals" should be established the year before junior high school and continue during the first year of transition.

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To God be all the Glory.

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