

Lived Experiences of Newly Hired Teachers: Basis for Policy Recommendations

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study described the lived experiences of newly hired teachers about their journey towards achieving the goal of imparting knowledge among their students and in attaining excellence in their chosen profession. The testimonies of the participants provided bases for policy recommendations. The study was participated by ten (10) teachers who were purposively and randomly sampled among public elementary schools in the Schools Division of Calamba City. The purpose was to obtain participants from the rostrum of teachers with a 5-year length of service. An interview guide question was used during the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The following themes emerged from the experiences shared by the participants: unprepared, under pressure, high expectations, opportunity, errands, culture shock, accountable, confused, tradition, challenging, and unequipped. These and all other challenges in classroom management and instructions, students' behavior and varied abilities, and lack of resources changed the life of newly hired teachers. They coped with all these challenges by doing researches, being updated, asked for technical assistance, and pursuing continuing professional development. Policy recommendations on deployment and handling of newly hired teachers were highlighted: Process

of Assigning Tasks among Newly Hired Teachers, Classroom Management and Discipline, and Diversity of Learners, Interruption of Teaching-Learning Process, and Having a Good Start.

Keywords— newly hired teachers, classroom management and instructions, student behavior, Calamba City, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Studies have found that in many countries high-achieving young people are usually not attracted to the teaching profession because it is perceived to be a career of low social and economic status, with low levels of professionalization and a lack of rewarding career pathways (Park and Byun, 2015; OECD, 2014; UNESCO, 2016). In the Australian context, school-leavers and graduates, they don't see a career path in teaching that gives high status and recognition and high professional standards (Ingvarson, 2015). In many developing countries, teachers' career structures are not sufficiently linked to promotion prospects that recognize and reward teacher effectiveness (UNESCO, 2014).

Quoted from SEAMEO-INNOTECH work, "The teaching profession is definitely not financially rewarding but is very fulfilling. It is also a very gratifying career as the society in general looks at teachers as respectful and trustworthy role models". In this, every teacher has its own experiences as they started to travel the path of becoming an effective teacher. According to Cruickshank, et al. (2010), "along with one's journey of practicing the profession toward success, newly hired teachers should be equipped with the knowledge, values, and skills about teaching strategies."

The process of assigning tasks among Newly Hired Teachers was stipulated in DepEd Order no. 43, series 2017, or "Teacher Induction Program Policy." Conducted by Bilbao et. al. (2013), it was found that "TIP has contributed positively in enhancing teachers' knowledge, skills, values, and commitment to the profession, and in improving the students' learning outcomes.

Ingresol and Strong (2011) posit that support and assistance for newly hired teachers have positive impacts on three sets of outcomes: first, on teacher commitment and retention; second, on teacher's instructional practices; and third, on student achievement (D. O. no. 43, s. 2017).

Therefore in this context, the researcher became interested to know the lived experiences of newly hired teachers in their journey to be an effective teacher and excerpt from their testimonies bases for offering policy recommendations.

FRAMEWORK

This study is hinged from the Social Learning Theory, which focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that people learn from one another; via observation, imitation, and modeling. Among others, Albert Bandura is considered the leading proponent of this theory. Bandura's social learning theory (1977) emphasizes the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Bandura states that learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them on what to do. Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling. From observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action (Achor and Duguryil, 2014).

Aligned with social learning theory is the mutual benefit model developed by Zey (1984), drawn from the social exchange theory. Zey (1984) pointed out that in the university setting, the mentor and mentee enter into a relationship in order to meet certain needs, and the relationship continues for as long as the mentees and mentors continue to benefit from each other.

Another foundation of this study is the concept of lifelong learning. Pastuović (2006) pointed out that lifelong learning is closely linked to the concept of a learning society, and the concept of "knowledge society" further claims that learning must be a lifetime process. Given the fact that enrolling in different school programs is not always possible through a whole lifetime, gaining knowledge and learning has to become available outside the school system per se, and it has to be available to all people regardless of their previous education and business rank. In other words, the concept of lifelong learning has to enable meaningful education harmonized with one's professional and personal life.

Thus, the study was framed within the context of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977); Zey's (1984) Mutual Benefit Model, and Pastuović's (2006) Concept of Lifelong Learning.

As the newly hired teachers observe the teaching of the serving teachers, they can model the teaching strategies of the veteran teacher. This relationship can help the newly hired teacher to be effective. Strategies consistent with social learning theories include mentoring, apprenticeship, on the job training, and internships. Each involves learning in a social situation whereby novice learner's model more experienced teachers or co-workers (Skamp and Mueller, 2001).

Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2009) used the mutual benefit model as a framework for teacher induction and teacher mentoring interchangeably. The model suggested elements to compose a neophyte teacher mentoring program to include orientation sessions, conversations with faculty colleagues, conference meetings with supervisors, capacity building workshops, workload reduction, one-to-one classroom assistance, and mentoring sessions.

To Mansilla and Jackson (2011), effective lifelong learners are self-reliant and acquire higher-order cognitive competencies. By promoting the capacity to learn and grow, learning and innovation skills facilitate the mastery of other 21st century skills such as the capacity to recognize perspectives, communicate ideas, take creative action, and draw on relevant disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise to solve complex problems. Educated workers in the twenty-first century need to be able to understand and work with complex ideas and be able to evaluate information critically. Other vital skills include the ability to discern relationships between existing and new information, and between new contexts and goals, and to locate new knowledge when needed (Gijsbers and van Schoonhoven, 2012).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to describe the lived experiences of teachers given their condition as new in the teaching profession or newly hired as a teacher in a public school. Basically, the researcher attended through the following specific objectives, (1) explore the essence of lived experiences of newly hired teachers, (2) determine the themes emerged from the testimonies shared by the newly hired teachers, and (3) offer policy recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative approach due to its concern with understanding the social phenomenon from the participant's perspective (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Specifically, the study adopted the phenomenological educational research. Through using a phenomenological hermeneutic approach to educational research, the underlying meanings and existential experiences of participants (the 'why'), as well as the strategic thinking, practicalities, hands-on approaches and embodiment (the 'how'), are

accounted for in descriptions, analyses, and interpretations. The processes and procedures of doing this qualitative educational research were orientated to the phenomenological when there is a deliberative holistic attitude to understanding and working with participants and to apprehend their expressions that emerge from internality and thus disclose the nature of their experiences as newly hired teachers in public school.

Participants

The participants of the study were sampled among public elementary schools in the Schools Division of Calamba City. Purposive and random sampling methods were used in the selection of participants. The purpose of the selection is to obtain the lived experiences of newly hired teachers. Therefore, from the rostrum of teachers with a 5-year length of service, 10 participants were randomly selected.

Instrumentation

The researcher prepared an interview guide question as to the main instrument of the study. The researcher asked two of the doctorate degree holder at the same time experts in qualitative research, the Chief of the Curriculum Implementation Division (CID) of SDO Calamba City, and an Education Program Supervisor to validate the instrument.

The following main questions were included in the interview and focus group discussion guide of the participants: (1) Describe yourself by starting with the phrase *“As a newly hired teacher...”* (2) What are the challenges you experience as a newly hired teacher? (3) How have those challenges been addressed?

Data Gathering Procedures

The informed consent of the participants was sought, and they were asked to specify their preferred venues for the interview. The Focus Group Discussion was done in the conference hall of a public elementary school. Permission to audiotape the interviews was obtained, and all discussions were recorded both by audio-recording and note-taking.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout this paper. The informed consent of the school head of each participant was sought by the researcher explaining the importance and significance and objectives of the study.

The data and information gathered were kept in confidentiality. The works of researchers of other authors were properly recognized.

For this study, which intended to look into the experiences of newly hired teachers, no question that may connote insult on the capabilities of the participants was included in the sub-questions. In addition, the sub-questions were constructed in such a way that there is no discrimination or any reference to any specific religion or organization.

At the time of gathering data, the casual talks, and focus group discussion, the researcher, at times, give comments to support the participant's responses. The researcher prevented herself from asking any questions that may offend the respondents. She properly observed sensitiveness on the various experiences by the participants. With due respect to the participants, the researcher used pseudonyms to protect their identities. This was done to establish trust and maintain harmony in the workplace.

Statistical Analysis

For the qualitative method, this study employed what is generally referred to as theme-centered or category-based analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe a specific theme-centered analysis as thematic analysis. One of the advantages of this type of analysis is its theoretical freedom. Thematic analysis is done by coding the data. Coding is done by combining the data for themes, ideas, and categories and making similar passages of text with a code label so it can be retrieved at a later stage for further comparison and analysis. Coding the data makes it easier to search, compare, and identify any pattern (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

During the Focus Group Discussion, the researcher asked the participants to describe themselves by starting with the phrase *"As a newly hired teacher..."* They shared the following responses:

As a newly hired teacher:

"I am unprepared in dealing with behavior problems, especially to deal with extreme behavior."

"I had put myself under pressure, especially on meeting the expectations and the demands of being a public school teacher."

"I have understood how hard it is to be a public servant."

“I entered classrooms today with high expectations for myself and for my students.”

“I was given an opportunity to deal with a bigger world of teaching and a wider scope of experiences.”

“I dealt with different errands, such as having a culture shock in terms of surroundings, new experiences, workloads that I am not used to.”

“I am expected to be “highly qualified” and is held accountable for results in their classroom.”

“I was bombarded with different information, which confused me where to start.”

“I was expected to follow the tradition of assuming all the same responsibilities as more experienced teachers did”

“I was assigned to the most difficult and challenged students.”

“I really didn’t know what I was expected to teach.”

“I am not fully equipped with knowledge of classroom management.”

When asked about the challenges they met as newly hired teachers, they shared the following:

“My first year of teaching is fraught with many challenges. The biggest challenge that I face was classroom management.”

“Classroom management and the behavior of the pupils, especially on the heterogeneous classes. In giving instructions, the level of each pupils’ understanding is not the same.”

“Dealing with paper works which are different (some of it) from the private school I came from is very challenging.”

“I was not given a curriculum guide or materials to work with; there are too many pupils and not enough chairs and books for them.”

“It’s really a challenge to impose discipline. Rules are set to be observed and followed by everyone, but some of them tend to break the rules.”

“What makes it challenging is on dealing with different characteristics of each learner every day.”

“The curriculum itself is a challenge for me as a newly hired teacher.”

“When it comes to instruction, the biggest challenge I encountered is the lack of resources.”

When asked on how they addressed the challenges they encountered, some respondents talked about the following:

“I keep on doing research on what is the best classroom management that suits my class until now.”

: I have to keep myself updated with the groups I am in so that I can download learning materials and teaching guides for classroom delivery.”

“I asked for technical assistance from my immediate superior to address the challenges they encountered in the classroom.”

“I attended different trainings and programs, push myself into continuing professional development to equip myself with proper and relevant teaching-learning process as they enter real classrooms day-by-day.”

The discussions along with the participants with regards to their live experiences as newly hired teachers yielded different themes, like “unprepared,” “under pressure,” “high expectations,” “opportunity,” “errands,” “culture shock,” “accountable,” “confused,” “tradition,” “challenging,” and “unequipped.”

It is not surprising that some traditional practices of “how to treat newly hired teachers” still exist among public schools like doing “different errands,” “workloads,” and “assigned to the most difficult and challenged students.” These and all other challenges in *classroom management and instructions, students’ behavior* and varied abilities, and lack of resources changed the life of newly hired teachers. The adjustment period lasted in two years or so, while some haven’t recovered yet.

As practicing professional teachers, according to (Bilbao et al., 2015), we all go through life cycles, and each person has his/her ways of dealing with their emotional changes. Anent to this, the greatest struggles of a professional teacher as an individual are not fought on battlefields, they are fought not only inside the classroom, but in human hearts, as they struggle with fear, frustration, stress, lack of self-confidence, feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, and the inability to cope with circumstances, not to their liking. While these challenges can defeat everyone, they can also serve as catalysts for improvement in preparation for the favorable development in the cognitive, spiritual, social, personal, as well as in the understanding of one’s own professional opportunities and challenges.

On the other hand, newly hired teachers cannot easily give-up the profession they dreamed of since their childhood. They continue to find ways to cope with all these challenges like doing researches, being updated, asked for technical assistance, and pursuing continuing professional development.

These expanded roles strengthened the profession by enabling teachers to contribute to the development of the school in general and engage in innovative

and effective teaching and learning practices, in turn improving student learning outcomes (Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 2013; Natale et al., 2013). This shift in roles provides teachers with professional learning communities where they are able to work and plan collaboratively with peers (Stoll and Louis, 2007; Stoll et al., 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

The live experiences in school as newly hired teachers were described in the following themes: “unprepared,” “under pressure,” “high expectations,” “opportunity,” “errands,” “culture shock,” “accountable,” “confused,” “tradition,” “challenging,” and “unequipped.” The challenges they encountered are mostly on classroom management and instructions, *students’ behavior* and varied abilities, and lack of resources. The newly hired teachers coped with all these challenges by doing researches, being updated, asked for technical assistance, and pursuing continuing professional development. The study determines the following needs: to review the policy on Teacher Induction Program and to study insertions on moral and psycho-social development of newly hired teachers; to institutionalize a school-based committee that will oversee the interest of newly hired teachers; for the immersion program to be intensified in teacher education; and to include on DepEd’s Research Agenda the study on how institutions can best prepare pre-service teachers not only to learn but also teach effectively on their early years in teaching. The integration of classroom management and discipline in the school LAC Session. Policy recommendations were highlighted with the following: A Framework for Orientation/Briefing of Process of Assigning Tasks among Newly Hired Teachers, and a Local-Based Policy on Handling Diversity of Learners.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The result of the study could be translated through a journal article for international publications, newsletters, radio, social media, and other media for information dissemination and to revisit the institutional policies. Additionally, both the external and internal stakeholders might be able to translate it into a more comprehensive administrative policy and enhanced intervention program that could increase the interest of prospective internal stakeholders and professionals towards further studies. Finally, it can be translated by sharing this with present and future employees to clarify the administrative policies in the workplace.

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