

21st Century Neophyte Teachers' Lived Experiences in Teaching: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract - *The study is intended to divulge the 21st century neophyte teachers' lived experiences in teaching. The phenomenological study was utilized to espouse their experiences. Specifically, a bracketing process was used in order for the researcher to put aside his experiences in order to accurately describe the participants' lived experiences. The data were derived from informal survey questions and in-depth interviews. In executing this method, there were two phases involved (1) the collection of the neophyte teachers lived experiences in teaching; (2) and the emerging themes out of their teaching experiences. The teacher-participants' lived experiences in teaching reveal their collective challenges on classroom management, teacher-parents communication, and the teaching of the RVM Pedagogy. This study hopes to contribute to the collective challenges and experiences of the neophyte teachers in uplifting their morale in teaching. Furthermore, the study points to the need of the institution to strengthen the beginner teachers' aforesaid collective challenges through seminars and trainings.*

Keywords – Neophyte teachers, teaching, lived experience, phenomenological

INTRODUCTION

Teachers have long been touted to play a very crucial role in holistically transforming the mind, body, and spirit of their students. Essentially, the functional competencies of teachers require in-depth knowledge of the subject they are teaching, pedagogical framework in lesson planning, and a variety of teaching skills such as creativity, self-sacrifice for the common good, counseling, and leadership to name a few. These functional competencies must be demonstrated by the teachers themselves as these are solely necessary in educational system. Likely, their indispensable role in education is transcended as a trustee of the educational heritage of the nation.

Putting more emphasis on the above mentioned presupposition, Barberos, Gozalo, and Padayogdog (1) underpinned that teachers as the focal figure in the classroom and the whole educational process must be competent and knowledgeable in order to impart the knowledge they could give to their students. As teaching itself implies personal manner, effective teaching

is concerned to promote the formation of the whole being of a person through teachers' systematic transmission of knowledge and inculcation of values. This is why teachers are referred to as relational genius, (Viernes and de Guzman, 2). This means that teachers see what others do not see. They use what they see to solve a certain problem they have seen in their students to be an essential catalyst of their growth and development.

The whole educational systems in the Philippines regulated by the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and even Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) in partnership with both private and public educational sectors were all endeavoring to provide quality education. To achieve such full realization of their common vision, professional teachers manifesting moral principles, standard, values, and pride in teaching were required to all educational institutions in the country.

Moreover, as the whole educational system in the country has faced a transformation

brought about by the advances of ASEAN Integration, globalization, and internationalization, teachers are keeping themselves updated on the 21st century skills to keep abreast on the advances and on their students' end too, (The Philippines' approach to assessment of 21st century skills, 3).

As response to these emerging demands, Lourdes College known to its tradition of excellence and unwavering commitment to provide quality Christian education puts in place qualified teachers in the field to cope with such demands. Cognizant to this commitment, the selection of highly qualified teachers is given an emphasis. However, despite the effort of the school to really look and put in place experienced teachers in the field, the school at times ended with the selection of neophyte teachers. These teachers are still fresh graduate and still do not have any experience in teaching. Also, these teachers are a product of 21st century learning. Since they are a product of 21st century learning at their own disposal, the probability of their skills in teaching would have been fitted to cope with students' potentials, talents, skills, attributes, and etc. Additionally, as they themselves are beginners in the field, likewise, challenges in teaching are inevitable to them.

Thus, this study explored the lived experiences of beginner teachers in Lourdes College highlighting their first teaching experiences and challenges, adjustments, and encounter of the school's thrust in teaching using the RVM pedagogical framework. The present study will provide a clear-cut baseline data to recommend a necessary adjustment in strengthening neophyte teachers teaching skills.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to divulge the lived experiences of neophyte teachers in Lourdes College, Cagayan de Oro City. Specifically, the study delved to answer the following overarching research questions: (1) describe the neophyte teachers' first teaching experience; and (2) identify the themes emerged out of their lived experiences.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The phenomenological research design was used to generate the neophyte 21st century teacher's narratives stressing their first teaching experience. A phenomenological research study is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a particular situation or phenomenon, (Husserl, 4). Specifically, the type of phenomenological method that was used in this study was the bracketing process. This process was used in order for the researcher to put aside his repertoires of knowledge, beliefs, values and experiences in order to accurately describe the participants' lived experiences (Cresswell, 5). In executing the method used in this study, data in a form of field notes, journal records, and interview transcripts were utilized.

The participants under study were the five (5) Senior High School neophyte teachers of Lourdes College for the S.Y 2017-2018. These participants were purposively selected based on the researcher's predetermined criteria such that they are full-time teachers of the school; they are neophytes in the teaching profession; and that they are not graduates of Lourdes College. These certain predetermined criteria of the researcher helped him substantiate the findings of the study. An interview guide with an open ended questions were used to elicit the participant's lived experiences in teaching.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Teaching Experience

Ideally, every teachers will agree that the first teaching experience is such a daunting task. It demands a lot of time, preparation, and hard work to better support the needs of students prior to learning. In some instance, teachers go beyond to their role as a mere teachers themselves. Hence, the first teaching experience among the 21st century teachers is somehow memorable as they have encountered difficulties along the way. Respondents 1 and 2 disclosed:

"I had such a difficult moment during my first year of teaching. I find it hard to deal with students' absences, tardiness, and low

performances in every activities and quizzes and even term examinations.” R-1

“As for me, I don’t know how to manage the absences of my students. Some of them are incurring a lot of absences in a week. Their reasons at times are valid, however, some of these reasons are repeated. I already told my student about how his absences affect his academics, but still this does not stop him from having absences.” R-2

According to Webster (2018), absenteeism is defined as "chronic absence." In school's set-up, absenteeism is a period of time when a student does not attend school (Teasley, 6). Moreover, it is the habitual intentional or even unintentional failure of the students to attend classes in school. The absences of students become a problem when he/she accumulated several days of missing school's activities. Going to school regularly is crucially important for a student's education and social skills. Chronically absent students are at a disadvantage both socially and academically. They miss out on critical stages of social interaction and development with their peers, while simultaneously limiting their academic progress. This can result in low self-esteem, social isolation, and dissatisfaction that could well have precipitated non-attendance in the first place, (Murcia, 7).

Additionally, Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson, and Kirk, (8) asserted that most teachers believed that absences from school are always parentally condoned. Hence, this entails that it is difficult in the teachers phasing to monitor students' absenteeism because of the many confounding reasons associated with it. Also, students who accumulate a lot of absences will generally be left behind with their classmates in their quest toward academic success. Hence, they have fewer opportunities to learn the materials that will help them to succeed (Epstein & Sheldon, 9).

To minimize such students' absenteeism both parental school involvement and parental

positive reinforcement are recommended, Berlinski, Busso, Dinkelman, and Martinez (10). Further, among the beginner teachers' difficulties in teaching they still find difficulty in communicating with students' parents. Two of the respondents exclaimed:

“Being a moderator is such a difficult one especially if I will make follow-ups to my students' performances to their parents. The school is imposing that the teachers should really be updated. This is why, I really need to inform the parents. Although some of them appreciate the gesture, some of them too misinterpreted the idea.” R-3

“The most difficult part for me in my teaching career is the parent-teacher consultation. Some have questioned me the way I calculated the grade. It seemed also that they are underestimating my subject as it not one of the major subjects such as English, Math, and Science.” R-2

According to Professional Learning Board (11) parents should be made aware of the excess number of classes missed by their child. This can be done by arranging regular meetings and working with parents to plan out strategies best suited for their child. For example, in case of health related issues, the teacher can arrange for an extra class to help the student with the missed out classes. Parents should also be informed of other issues like bullying and poor peer relations, so as to provide the necessary support and encouragement. Given this framework, working to empower and develop equitable relationships for parents and teachers will contribute to each party's understanding of children, teaching, and learning, (Mitchell, Haggerty, Hampton, and Pairman 12).

Thus, parent-teacher consultations could form a central part of this process as opportunities for face-to-face communication where the potential exists for knowledge to be shared, opinions expressed and goals constructed collaboratively, (MacKinnon, 13).

Moreover, two of the respondents deduced that it was classroom management that he found to be difficult as a beginner teacher.

“In my first year of teaching, my most challenging task I encountered was that of dealing with students’ behavior... kanang classroom management jud pud sir. It is hard for me to adjust pa jud kaayo.” R-4

“I really have had a struggle with my classroom management. Specifically, on dealing with students that are so noisy. Every time I discussed, I have seen them not listening in my discussion. However, I still continue with my lesson though some of them are not listening. I want to improve this aspect of classroom management. I am still thinking at present on how I will deal with this.” R-5

Evertson and Weinstein (14) espoused classroom management as "the actions teachers take to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning". This definition concentrates on the responsibility of the teacher and relates the use of classroom management strategies to multiple learning goals for students.

Nonetheless, effective teaching and learning cannot take place in poorly managed classrooms (Jones & Jones, 15; Van de Grift, Van der Wal, & Torenbeek, 16). Therefore, classroom management must be properly established by the teacher himself so as efficiency in teaching the subject will take place.

Apart from the previously presented difficulties of a 21st century teacher’s challenges in teaching, three of the respondents exclaimed that the institution’s framework in teaching is one of their major struggles:

“I find the RVM Pedagogy difficult. I find it hard to relate it to my lesson. Some of its part might be somehow easy to connect, but there are times that I also find it hard. Also, the integration of biblical text is very complicated in the teaching of my subject which is mathematics.” R-4

“I understand the nature of integrating the RVM Pedagogy in my lesson, but I still don’t know the certain process in integrating it, relating it, and reflecting it to my lesson. It is really very hard for me.” R-1

“As to teaching the lesson using the RVM Pedagogy, I still don’t know if I am teaching it well. I mean it’s hard. No one guides me though.” R-2

Accordingly, the RVM Pedagogy is a way in which teachers journey with the learners towards their integral development and growth as productive citizens through interactive learning processes that lead to that realization of learning goals, unfolding of learning standards and eventually demonstration of learning outcomes, (Guillano, 17). Moreover, the integration of the RVM Pedagogical Framework, four-pronged approach in teaching, gives students more opportunities to uncover and discover deeper concepts presented thereby allowing them to be more expressive and reflective, and to gain more meaningful insights and connections that enable them to demonstrate successfully the desired learning outcomes and learning competencies of the course. Likewise, the integration of this framework is a trademark of the school’s thrust into teaching. Hence, if teachers might not able to integrate the key concepts of the said framework, the thrust of the school prior to Christian quality education will be compromised.

2. Emerging themes

Based on the phenomenological analysis of this study, the lived experience of the five (5) neophyte teachers with regard to their challenges in their first year of teaching are summarized through the following identified themes:

2.1 Classroom Management

Classroom management is one of identified themes in the present study. Generally, classroom management refers to the range of how teachers keep their students organized, focused, orderly, and attentive. This is why classroom management is deemed to be crucial in the holistic and value

laden formation of the students. When classroom-management strategies are executed effectively, teachers minimize the behaviors that obstruct learning for both individual students and groups of students, while maximizing the behaviors that facilitate or enhance learning. Generally speaking, Zuhair (18) opined that effective teachers tend to display strong classroom-management skills, while the hallmark of the inexperienced or less effective teacher is a disorderly classroom filled with students who are not working or paying attention. Cognizant to the teacher-participant's experiences in teaching, they are generally having a hard time handling students on their first year. Likely, it can be inferred that some of the student's misbehaviors are, nonetheless, overlooked.

2.2 Teacher-Parents Communication

Teacher-Parents Communication is the second identified theme of the study wherein the teacher-participants are having a difficulty. Teacher-parents communication refers to the conference made by both the subject teachers and/or classroom moderators of students and their parents to talk about the student's performances, progressions, and even behavioral problems. This teacher-parents communication or consultation in the senior high school department happens every end of the mid-term and final-term. This communication supplements the information conveyed by the report cards underscoring the students' specific strengths and weaknesses in individual subjects and generalizing the level of inter-curricular skills and competences. As regards to the neophyte teacher's experience in handling conferences with parents, they are still hesitant on how they are going to establish rapport with them. They may be afraid from the beginning, however, their experience on how they manage communicating their student's performances to their parents are fulfilling.

2.3 RVM Pedagogical Framework Problems

RVM pedagogical framework is one of the teaching approaches that Lourdes College distinct among the other schools in city. This framework in teaching entails the integration of

societal issues and concerns, values, different disciplines, and scriptural text. Teachers across all subjects are obliged to integrate Christ in their lesson so as to achieve school's thrust and identity as Ignacian-Marian evangelizers. The main scope of this framework is to largely form student's academic and spiritual progress. This framework in teaching is indeed socially and realistically helpful in reinforcing the deplorable conditions of human life.

Considering the dynamism of this pedagogical framework, Hahn (19) averred that when students cognized the social realities along with spiritual cognizance in instruction, they are likely to develop their value system that accentuates their civic participation. Relative to the experience of the beginner teacher in integrating the RVM pedagogy in their lessons, they find it foremost difficult. This may be due to the fact that their exposures or orientations in teaching when they were still in their practice teaching is different compared to that of their nature of work as a teacher at the same an evangelizer.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The role of the teachers in reinforcing students' academic and spiritual formation is of paramount importance. Through the emerging themes of the study, the institution has to see the need in training the neophyte teachers so as to achieve high confidence and quality in teaching specifically on the identified areas of classroom management, teacher-parents communication, and the RVM Pedagogical framework in teaching. In the school's effort to produce excellent and humble students, the researcher recommends that neophyte teachers may have a monthly training on classroom management. The school may also have to invite a speaker to talk about handling the teacher-parent communication and/or conference. Also, a monthly training on how to teach with panache the RVM Pedagogical Framework is, thus, recommended. Future researchers may also look upon the other challenges of the beginner teachers that are not covered in the collective themes of this phenomenological study.

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