

The Passion for Teaching: Capturing the Essence of Staying in the Teaching Profession

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Abstract: *Teaching is more than just a profession, it is like a bridge that lets the learners cross from barbarism to a world of awareness and opportunities. Passion is one of the driving forces of teachers' commitment and dedication to the teaching profession. This study used a qualitative approach and it is classified as exploratory-descriptive qualitative. It examined the perspective of elementary teachers for staying in the teaching profession and how their passion fueled them to remain committed and dedicated throughout their teaching careers. Ten key informants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews and were selected using purposive sampling. The key informants have at least fifteen years and above of teaching experience and were awarded a distinction in the field of teaching. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of the study have identified three themes, (1) The description of elementary teachers' passion for staying in the teaching profession, (2) The challenges of elementary teachers in the teaching profession, and the (3) Perceived practices applied by elementary teachers in overcoming the challenges encountered. This study is supported by the theory of the dualistic model of passion, specifically, it focuses on harmonious passion. The researchers would like to recommend the creation of positive working conditions that recognize the role of teaching as a noble profession and the recognition that teachers are engineers of the future. This may possibly lead to the longevity of service of the teachers in the teaching profession.*

Keywords— Elementary teachers, passion, harmonious passion, longevity

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a significant role in our society. Teachers nurture, mold, and guide learners from the formative years through adulthood. Teachers develop young minds by means of imparting the knowledge and skills needed by the child to conquer and be ready to face the world. Teaching is more than just a profession, it is like a bridge that lets the learners cross from barbarism to a world of awareness and opportunities. It is a profession that liberates and empowers. It gives light to the path of learners towards the realization of their dreams. Many teachers enter the teaching profession due to their burning passion, the desire to teach, and willingness to serve. Unfortunately, as their career progresses, some teachers feel that this burning passion gradually loses its spark.

In the 21st-century education system, classroom challenges are inevitable in a teacher's career. There are a lot of difficulties that teachers have to overcome in and out of the classroom. At present, teachers experienced overworking with their workloads that need to be accomplished. In addition, they are also expected to essentially mold and shape the skills, knowledge, and values of students. According to Cox (2020), the role of teachers in the teaching profession has no limits. The major responsibility of a teacher is to teach lessons in the classroom that help the students learn. To do so, teachers must prepare effective and meaningful lessons, grade students' output and provide feedback, manage classroom materials, navigate the curriculum effectively, and collaborate with other staff.

According to Thomas et al. (2017), nine out of ten teachers hired each year tend to replace their colleagues who have left the teaching profession voluntarily and more than two-thirds of teachers leave the profession before their retirement period. In the United States of America, teacher shortages are widespread. The gradual increase in teacher shortages has caught the attention of the nation's K–12 schools. Westervelt (2016), stated the reasons why some parts of every state in America are experiencing teacher shortages, especially in the field of specialization such as Math, Science, Bilingual education, and Special Education. Some of the reasons are the following: the disconnection between training and districts' needs, too much paperwork, and lack of effort provided to improve the training for education teachers. Moreover, a study conducted by Khawary et al. (2015), revealed similar reasons for Afghanistan teachers' turnover in the teaching profession. The factors that are put-up are the lack of teachers' motivation, low salary, workload, communication gap between management and colleagues, and absence of a career path.

Moreover, teachers' burnout and stress level may add up to the reasons for the gradual increase in turnover rates of teachers. Santos (2016), said that teachers encounter long-term stress and burnout due to the multiple responsibilities they faced in the teaching profession. This may cause dissatisfaction due to unrelated workloads, limitation of career development, and anxiety that can affect the retention of teachers in the teaching profession.

In the teaching profession, satisfaction and dissatisfaction may vary in different teaching experiences. The study by Frank (2013), shows that many novice teachers have

found a lack of satisfaction in their teaching experience, which leads them to frustration and disillusionment during their first year in the classroom. According to Kapur (2019), teachers' motivation is a crucial part of the teaching profession. It brings out excellence and improves the teaching methods in the classroom. Motivated teachers are more likely to produce motivated students who can excel academically. Therefore, if a teacher is motivated, a more conducive classroom environment is created for the learners.

“The Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers under Article, IV, Section 1, stated that every teacher shall actively insure that teaching is the noblest profession, and shall manifest genuine enthusiasm and pride in teaching as a noble calling.”

With this statement, teachers must fulfill and possess their duties with extreme interest, passion, and a strong urge to do their job. A teaching profession may be considered a calling or earnestly deep-rooted belief that it is the career that suited someone's desire. It may be influenced by a former teacher, a family, or a mere lifelong passion to inspire students and the interest to teach (Lynch, 2015).

DepEd Memorandum No. 291 s. 2008, declared that teachers shall allot six hours for actual classroom teaching per day and the remaining two hours to be spent in teaching-related activities to comply with the eight-hour workday. With the allotted time given to the teachers, sometimes, teachers' dedication and the effort they give to their work exceeds even up to their home, sacrificing their personal time and ensuring that all the work is being accomplished (Mazey, 2017).

According to Benson & Phelps (2012), maintaining a strong passion and willingness in the teaching profession is one of the factors that needs to be paid attention to at present. Hence, improving the motivation of teachers whether intrinsically or extrinsically has been one of the debated issues in the field of education.

The literature revealed that the majority of the studies reviewed were concerned with the teachers' turnover and dissatisfaction of teachers on their workloads and work assignments. The present study deals with the perceptions of the teachers on staying in the teaching profession. It delves into an in-depth understanding of the passion that fueled the teachers to remain committed and dedicated throughout their teaching careers. It also highlights their reasons, motivations, and the very essence of staying in the teaching profession.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is supported by the theory of the dualistic model of passion. It was developed by Robert J. Vallerand in 2003. This model has two types of passion namely, obsessive passion and harmonious passion. He defined passion as a strong inclination toward a specific activity that one loves, highly values, invests time and energy in, and is part of one's identity.

According to Vallerand (2003), passion is classified into two types: harmonious passion and obsessive passion. He believed that harmonious passion leads to more adaptive results while obsessive passion allows for far less positive and sometimes apparently negative results. Harmonious passion is present when a person participates in an activity where he/she enjoys and feels satisfied both during and after the activity. People are more engaged, can concentrate better, and feel happier when experiencing an activity that brings harmonious passion. On the other hand, obsessive passion is a type of passion that occurs when an overwhelming desire to participate in an endeavor causes stress. It is when a person is compelled to continue participating in the activity and related to less adaptive and at times discordant outcomes.

The present study focuses on harmonious passion which entails that teachers duly adopted and loved the teaching profession such that it becomes part of their identity. Teachers who engage in harmonious passion may experience a flow of energy and enthusiasm throughout their careers. Furthermore, harmonious passion is associated with positive effects like life satisfaction, subjective vitality, and experiencing less depression and anxiety. Harmonious passion is being shown by the elementary teachers through their satisfaction in teaching in spite of low compensation, their enthusiasm in teaching the learners, their vivacity, their persistence, and motivation to stay longer in the teaching profession despite the many challenges that surround the profession.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study examined the perspective of elementary teachers for staying in the teaching profession in the selected public elementary schools in the Division of Pampanga. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. How may the passion of the Elementary Teachers for staying in the teaching profession be described?
2. What are the challenges encountered by the Elementary Teachers in the teaching profession?
3. How do Elementary Teachers overcome the challenges they have encountered?

METHODS

Research Design

This study is classified as qualitative research. According to Bhandari (2020), qualitative research is an approach that involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences.

This study utilized an exploratory-descriptive qualitative. According to Hunter et al., (2018), this design effectively allows researchers to fully understand a given topic

while enabling key informants to contribute to the development of new knowledge. It allows the researchers to formulate a problem for a more clear investigation. This methodology helps to uncover the details of events or experiences and the people involved in them, which then helps researchers in analyzing and interpreting rarely evaluated situations.

The researchers utilized this design due to the suitability to the aim of the study, which is to delve into, explain, and explore the passion of elementary teachers for staying in the teaching profession, their challenges encountered, and how they overcome those challenges.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used in selecting the key informants in this study. It is a non-probability sampling technique that is selected based on the characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Crossman, 2018).

Participants of the Study

Ten (10) elementary teachers were selected as the key informants in this study because the saturation of the responses was reached. Data saturation is the point in the research process when no new information is found and to be added to enrich the findings of the study (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017).

Moreover, the key informants were chosen using the following criteria: (1) elementary teachers who are teaching in any school in the Division of Pampanga, (2) elementary teachers with 15 years and above of teaching experience, and (3) elementary teachers who were awarded with distinction in the field of teaching.

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted in one (1) of the public elementary schools in the Division of Pampanga.

Research Instrument

The researchers utilized interviews as the basis for collecting data from the key informants. A semi-structured interview was used in collecting the data. According to Mannan (2020), a semi-structured interview is used where a researcher asks a standard set of questions to collect data. However, it allows the researchers to ask additional questions if an interesting or new line of inquiry develops during the interview process. This flexibility in asking questions allows the researchers to delve deeper into the topic. In addition, the researchers prepared and developed their own interview guide that was thoroughly examined and validated by three experts in the field.

Ethical Considerations

Permission was secured for the approval of conducting an interview for the school research. The researchers provided a formal letter to the participants and gave a brief explanation of how the data will be collected. Since the key informants are elementary teachers, the researchers only allowed those teachers who are willing to be involved in the study. Sensitivity was shown by the researchers to better establish rapport between them and the key informants. The researchers also informed the key informants that they would be coded in this study and their identities were secured, since they were provided some of their experiences, perspectives, and may be concerned with their personal life.

Data Collection

The researchers wrote a formal letter to the Dean of the College of Education, requesting permission to conduct the study. Then, the researchers asked permission from the school principal where the concerned elementary teachers are teaching. Following that, the researchers asked permission from the concerned elementary teachers by personally sending letters of request to be part of the study. For this purpose, prospective key informants received an overview of the study as outlined in the letter of informed consent before conducting the data collection proper. The researchers conducted interviews with selected key informants in personal interviews and handwritten interviews. During the personal interview, the researchers asked the key informants in settings that are most comfortable and convenient for them; moreover, the researchers recorded the interview proper with the key informants' knowledge and permission. For each of the interviews, no time limit was set to collect the data needed.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis was utilized to make sense of the data collected in the study. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), a thematic analysis aims to find patterns of themes in interview data. It describes a repetitive process for formulating unorganized data into a map of the data's most important themes. Following are the six steps in thematic analysis: (1) Getting to know the data; (2) Adding Codes to the data; (3) Looking for patterns or themes in the codes across multiple interviews; (4) Examine the themes; (5) Themes should be defined and named; (6) Lastly, the report will be produced. Furthermore, the researchers utilized this method since it is suited to the type of research design used, which is an exploratory-descriptive qualitative research design.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the research paper includes the interpretation of the data gathered. This qualitative study examined the perspective of elementary teachers for staying in the teaching profession.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten (10) elementary teachers who are teaching in one of the public elementary schools in the Division of Pampanga with at least fifteen (15) years and above of teaching experience and were awarded a distinction in the field of teaching. The key informants were coded ET, which stands for elementary teachers.

The researchers used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis in analyzing the data gathered. This chapter was organized with respect to each research question. There were three (3) themes that emerged and were identified. These themes revealed the description of elementary teachers' passion for staying in the teaching profession, the challenges of elementary teachers in the teaching profession, and the perceived practices applied by elementary teachers in overcoming the challenges encountered.

1. The Description of Elementary Teachers' Passion for Staying in the Teaching Profession

All the key informants shared their common perspective on the description of their passion for staying in the teaching profession. The description of the key informants when it comes to their passion for teaching is generally rooted in their experiences, their innate burning desire, and their willingness to serve.

1.1 Teaching as a Noble Profession

A teacher requires commitment, empathy, patience, willingness to do the job, and a lot of other characteristics to succeed in the profession. Teachers cultivate the necessary knowledge, skills, and values needed by the learners in order to succeed not only in the academic world but more importantly in the real world. The task of the teacher is not just to educate the minds of the learners but to make them responsible, characterful, and God-fearing individuals. According to Nisnisan (2021), teaching is considered a noble profession as it is the core profession that shapes the heart, and develops the minds and thoughts of every individual. The goal of teaching is to instill values in every learner, such as being competent and productive citizens of the society.

"I took this profession because I believe that it is considered to be the noblest profession." - ET1

"Actually, we knew that teaching is a noble profession, meaning, as a teacher you should be passionate when it comes to teaching and your focus must be on children." - ET3

"A teacher gives the opportunity and privilege of making. I can give the opportunity in shaping the next generations through providing my knowledge to children." - ET6

Nag (2018), stated that teachers have a moral obligation to pave the route for learners to have a brighter future. Nobility is based on the deeds and actions of the profession. The key informants stated that they uphold and manifest teaching as a noble profession.

"I want to teach other people. I want to be able to share my knowledge with them." - ET10

"When you are really passionate about teaching, no matter how much work you have, no matter how hard-headed your students are, they are the ones you still seem to like. Regardless of how long you've been in the service, you still enjoy your job as a teacher." - ET5

1.2 Love for Children and the Exploration of Ways to Assist them

The love and compassion of a teacher show how he/she commits himself/herself to the teaching profession. Becoming a teacher means adopting specific philosophies that define and manifest one's actions. The key informants show their philosophy in action by showing their love for children and the exploration of ways to assist them. As they said:

"My philosophy in teaching is to allow the student to express themselves a room to grow as human beings. I incorporate it by having a good relationship, building a strong foundation of mutual understanding, respect, and trust." - ET6

"Love your profession because you chose it. Teaching is not a profession, it is a vocation, and maybe that's why you are here because it's a calling for you, that children need you as a teacher." - ET4

"A good teacher cannot begin or continue to inspire learning without being a learner. A good teacher must continuously learn what is new in the discipline." - ET9

The willingness of the teachers to assist and explore ways to help their learners is a common trait among elementary teachers. In a study conducted by Dennis (2012), teachers' views toward their professions and the classroom experience in particular influence how students perceive them and how they enjoy their school day. The study also indicated that in order to be a good teacher, love must be felt by learners and displayed in the classroom, and without it, learners are likely to do poorly. Also, as cited by Goswami (2020), teachers create the tone in their classrooms by fostering a positive environment, mentoring and supporting students, and serving as role models.

"I take to heart the principle that every child is uniquely different from others and each one has different needs and abilities. As an educator, I hold in my hands the dreams of

my learners and I carry that certain light that radiates the hope on their path.” - ET1

“My philosophy in teaching is to focus on the learners since as a teacher, your job is to cater to their needs.” - ET8

“When you are a teacher, you should serve as a role model to your pupils. You should demonstrate that you are a role model for them.” - ET3

1.3 Contribution of Teachers to Producing Quality and Successful Individuals in the Future

Teachers’ influence in the lives of every learner transcends the four corners of the classroom. The key informants identified that one of the experiences that drive their passion in the teaching profession is the knowledge that they are contributing in producing quality and successful individuals in the future.

“My fulfilling experiences are when my pupils become successful. On my part, it's like an achievement for me, you have produced a successful person.” - ET2

“It becomes a fulfillment for teachers when their former pupils become successful, have graduated, and even work in their chosen field.” - ET3

“As a teacher, the happiest moment for us is when we see our students learn.” - ET8

According to Terada (2019), as every teacher understands, teachers teach not just their subjects but also a range of skills that students will need as adults. Nishioka (2019), stated that teachers who take the time to get to know each of their students can help children experience a sense of belongingness and connection to the school, which can aid students’ success. The key informants also said that their contribution to fostering the skills of students to navigate the real world makes them feel a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.

“As a teacher, you are influencing the future, you are giving children the skill they need to go out into the world and succeed.” - ET10

“The most fulfilling experience in my 19 years in this profession is to make my pupils a reader at the end of the school year.” - ET7

“It feels good when you see your pupil come out of your classroom, that they have learned something. Money can’t buy that feeling when you see your pupils learn from you.” - ET5

1.4 Inculcation and Development of Positive Attitudes among Learners

Teachers can help learners to have a positive disposition, by providing opportunities that will inculcate and

develop positivity among learners. The key informants mentioned that for more than fifteen years in the teaching profession, they believe that they have created a positive impact in the lives of their learners.

“The main benefit of becoming a teacher is the opportunity to help children become self-aware individuals and instill them with a lifelong love of learning.” - ET10

“The perks people tend to associate with teaching after 15 years of service are: promotion, security of tenure, and lifetime benefits. However, for me, it is the inspiration that we have instilled in the hearts and minds of our learners.” - ET1

“For me, the fact that I can share my experiences with novice teachers and you can share what you have learned for the next generations.” - ET2

According to Nurtureland (2018), a positive attitude is necessary to have a positive life. Negative thinking is common among students since they are easily influenced by their surroundings. Jackson (2016), stated that teachers have a significant influence on student outcomes beyond academic scores, hence, teachers should teach students life skills and promote good attitudes.

1.5 Acquisition of Lifelong Teaching and Learning Skills

Teachers' learning or training is a never-ending process that promotes teachers’ teaching skills wherein they develop a better and newer proficiency, which may contribute to assisting and improving students’ learning. According to Sudhakar (2018), a teacher is a person with educational leadership abilities who must continue to develop and evolve as professionals. The drive to increase one's self-awareness and learning abilities is at the heart of lifelong learning. Teachers who have a lifelong learning perspective will keep discovering new techniques to facilitate learning that may increase student engagement. Additionally, teachers that are devoted to their pupils' academic progress can also be classified as lifelong learners. They usually continue their education in order to enhance their approaches and abilities (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022).

“I think the benefits that a teacher has are endless trainings, workshops, and webinars that we must attend. Also, there are skill-based gatherings which will enhance our potentials.” - ET1

“Once you become a teacher, your growth continues because discovering is part of growing, especially now because of the pandemic. During my time, we only used a typewriter as means of doing our reports, so we had no knowledge of using computers. But because of the pandemic, I have learned to use it, on my part, it helped me, and there is still growth within me.” - ET3

“I learned from my colleagues, even if you say we are all teachers in the same field, we still need to rely on each other, especially if there are things that you don’t know.” - ET4

1.6 Love for the Teaching Profession

The love for the teaching profession entails patience, understanding, perseverance, and sometimes even the whole being of the teacher is being consumed by practicing the profession. The key informants' love for the teaching profession is evident from more than 15 years of experience in the teaching profession. It continuously drives them to maintain the passion for teaching and this is manifested through the following statements.

“The love for teaching is one of the reasons why I stay.” - ET3

“I decided and still deciding to stay in the teaching profession because it is a self-fulfillment calling. Not everyone has the passion and compassion to stay because it requires a long tolerance and patience.” - ET1

“It is self-fulfilling for me. Don’t be discouraged when things are not going as you planned. Just stay positive, if there are hard-headed children, love them and understand them. Just give your best for them, as a teacher, fill all those empty spaces in them.” - ET2

“I will stay as long as I can, although I have a health problem I will still stay because I still want to help the children.” - ET4

According to Villaver (2016), as teachers engage more years in teaching, they are more likely to feel happy and fulfilled. The feeling of gratification and fulfillment prevail for them to stay in their teaching career. They continue because of their unwavering passion, devotion, and love for teaching. Additionally, teachers who are intrinsically motivated are driven by their love for children and aspire to bring a change in the life of learners (Saleem et al., 2021). According to Yanitski (2019), teachers motivate and inspire their pupils on a regular basis. They are open to new ideas, prepared to take chances, and plan lessons for a quickly changing environment while keeping the best interests of their pupils in mind.

2. The Challenges of Elementary Teachers in the Teaching Profession

This theme pertains to the challenges encountered by elementary teachers in the teaching profession which may affect the way they relate to students, handle classroom routines and practices, and ultimately the way they teach. According to the study by Barron et al. (2021), the escalation of challenges encountered by teachers in the teaching profession are the educational reform, workload, and instructional time limitation. Additionally, since teachers do not only interact inside the four corners of the classroom, some

of the few people may also add up to the challenges, these include parents' lack of support and students' behavior.

2.1 Students' Individuality

Teachers undoubtedly take the lead in the classroom, but without the learners, there is no need for teachers. Given the significant value of the learner, every teacher must respect the individuality of learners. Each learner is uniquely different from the rest like intelligence, background, (e. g., cultural, economic, and others), ability, behavior, learning styles, needs and interests, and potential. In light of these differences, accommodating learners' individuality proves useful in fostering students' holistic development.

Kubat (2018), mentioned that it is important for teachers to know variables such as physical characteristics, intelligence, perception, gender, ability, and learning styles, which are individual differences among the learners. An effective and productive learning-teaching process can be planned by taking into account the differences among students. Tadas (2019), also mentioned that understanding the various learning abilities of students is the most difficult challenge for any teacher. Students differ in their grasping, memory, concentration, learning and writing abilities, and interests in various subjects.

“In the teaching profession, you will have pupils that are difficult to associate with others. The behavior is different, as a teacher you need to know the proper strategies to cater to them.” - ET2

“Most or some students are really difficult to discipline especially when they belong to a broken family because they are usually affected by this. As a teacher, it is your duty to find out the reason behind the behavior of the child, then if you have the courage, you can better tell their parents.” - ET4

“The challenges that a teacher faces every day are the variety of learners when it comes to background and status, the idealistic curriculum of the department, and the learning styles of my students. The hardest thing is that you carry in your hearts the burdens of your students including their personal struggles.” - ET1

“The hardest thing about being a teacher are: understanding the different learning challenges among students, student family problems, bullying, and disciplining children.” - ET10

“There are learners who are really difficult to teach and not all of them are able to learn easily.” - ET8

2.2 Enormous Paperwork

Paperwork is part and parcel of the teaching profession but most often it becomes not just a task to

accomplish but a burden on every teacher's shoulder. According to Rodrigues et al. (2020), paperwork causes some stress and depression in public school teachers.

“Honestly, the paperwork is the one that gives a lot of challenges in the teaching profession.” - ET4

“For me, many paperwork lessens my time in remediation.” - ET7

“It is a lot busier now, not unlike when we were still studying, the teachers were really focused on teaching, but now there is a lot of paperwork.” - ET3

“There is a lot of paperwork that needs to be accomplished. Once they gave the assigned reports, they will ask to submit them immediately.” - ET5

Furthermore, Santos (2016), stated that teachers encounter long-term stress and burnout due to the multiple responsibilities they faced in the teaching profession. This may cause dissatisfaction due to unrelated workloads, limitation of career development, and anxiety that can affect the retention of teachers in the teaching profession. In addition, Mingoa & Pitagan (2018), stated that among the top five sources of occupational stress listed is doing too much paperwork.

Nevertheless, the key informants have mentioned that even though they have enormous paperwork, they opted to remain committed and started looking for ways to lessen the impact of paperwork in their teaching career.

“There's a lot of paperwork, but if it's only teaching, we don't have a problem. As long as you teach, it gives enjoyment on our part, especially when you see your pupils are active.” - ET3

“There is a like voice within telling me that behind these lapses and struggles is the call to love this profession even more. If no one will stay, who will?” - ET1

According to the study conducted by Young (2019), it stated that the favorable power of teachers' characteristics is their passion for teaching wherein it serves as an aid in facing the challenges they encountered in the various phases of the teaching profession which helps them to remain committed and engaged.

2.3 Parental Attitude

Many parents are kind, helpful, and willing to collaborate with teachers to ensure that their children receive a quality education. However, some parents are difficult to deal with. Frequent interaction with parents through meetings, assemblies, and other school activities may pave the way to win their favor and consequently be active partners in educating their children.

“In the teaching profession, sometimes you encounter stubborn parents. It's hard to deal with these situations especially when they are not cooperative.” - ET4

“One of our challenges is the parents' behavior. The parents sometimes crossed the line and immediately will start to cause a scene in the school.” - ET4

“Sometimes parents are not helping their children. They all ask the work to the teacher.” - ET6

In the education of a child, both parents and teachers play an important role, they provide critical life and academic skills as well as love and support to help the child to grow. According to Dawson & Wymbs (2016), knowing the parent and teacher relationship is more focused on the behaviors indicative of partnership, cooperation, and alliance between the parent and the teacher. In a study conducted by Dor (2019), teachers had encounters with parental problems and even worry that led them to limit their contact with these parents. Whereas Lekli & Kaloti (2015), stated that determining good communication is central to collaboration and support. As the key informants recognize the role of parents in the education of the learners, they maintain professionalism to avoid possible conflicts among parents. Teachers opted to build a good relationship with the parents. As stated:

“These challenges influence me more to stay. So I communicate well to the parents to help me with their children.” - ET8

3. Perceived Practices Applied by Elementary Teachers in Overcoming the Challenges Encountered

A teacher's will to teach is one of the factors that contribute to their longevity in the teaching profession. A teacher may experience various challenges in the teaching profession, and the teacher's eagerness to surpass these challenges may be reflected in the values he/she upholds. Callisen (2017), stated that teaching is not just a profession, but rather, a vocation. It highlights the dedication and perseverance of teachers in exerting their efforts to continuously cater quality education.

3.1 Possession of a Positive Attitude

A teacher with a positive mindset practices a positive attitude. Patience is one of the positive attitudes that need to be developed by all teachers. As the saying goes “Patience is a virtue.” Patience does wonders, particularly for learners. According to Western Governors University (2020), a teacher's patience is essential in assisting students in overcoming their difficulties. Patience is essential for a good teacher in large classrooms with many students who are all different. Furthermore, demonstrating patience as a teacher is an excellent way to serve as a role model for students.

“Perseverance comes first, you must be passionate and be patient with children. Without it, nothing will happen to the children. You should have the eagerness to teach the children.” - ET3

“I always look on the positive side, because when you think of the negative, it will really affect you.” - ET8

“When it comes to my pupils, as long as I can be patient, I’ll be patient. Inside the classroom, I am their teacher and also their friend, but there should be boundaries. It is also important to have a bond with your pupils to build a strong foundation and relationship with them. When you enter the teaching profession, the love for this profession must be present, because teaching is not just a profession, it is a vocation and a calling.” - ET4

“Integrity, honesty, compassion, and sense of responsibility, are the key points to achieve our greatest desire. I practice self-respect and values formation. When you understand the deep within, you have a purpose to serve, you will keep the fire within you. It’s the light that we shed to the lives of our students until they find their purpose too.” - ET1

3.2 Recognition of the Intrinsic Value of Every Learner

Every learner is valuable. The recognition of the value of every learner is at the heart of the teaching profession. According to White (2019), the teacher's responsibility is to establish a learning atmosphere in which all students feel valued, protected and motivated to learn from one another. Whereas, Page (2020), mentioned that creating a strong connection with students is important, which promotes their interest in learning and staying engaged in the class, as well as their overall social-emotional well-being inside and outside the classroom.

“I think of a strategy that will easily cater to them. You need to do everything and you need to be open from any adjustment.” - ET8

“I observe first the abilities of my pupils, in that case, I will know their capabilities so I can give them an activity that will align with their potential and abilities.” - ET4

“I believe that the best strategy is to find their core where they get their strength to continue. Based on experience, if the student feels that he/she is heard and acknowledged, he/she allows himself/herself to show his/her world to everyone. We must always create a safe space for these young people that their emotions are valid.” - ET1

“Just let them feel that they belong in your classroom so that they can be more comfortable. They should feel at home and even without the presence of their parents, they can feel safe and warm. In every situation, not all strategies are suited to every child, there are different strategies that can be done, depending on the individual differences of a child.” - ET2

SYNTHESIS OF INTERPRETATION

Teachers play a significant role in shaping and empowering the learners. Teachers are “required” to foster the necessary skills needed by the learners. They provide learners the opportunity for a brighter future, and they hold the power to inspire learners and showcase the importance and value of learning. This study examined the perspective of elementary teachers for staying in the teaching profession and how their passion has fueled them to remain committed and dedicated throughout their teaching careers.

The key informants’ descriptions of their passion for staying in the teaching profession, their challenges encountered, and their perceived practices applied in overcoming the challenges encountered have been revealed in this study. Based on the findings of this study, the elementary teachers shared their common perspective on the description of their passion for staying in the teaching profession. Their description of their passion is generally rooted in the following beliefs and perspectives: (1) Teaching as a noble profession, (2) Love for children and the exploration of ways to assist them, (3) Contribution of teachers to producing quality and successful individuals in the future, (4) Inculcation and development of positive attitudes among learners, (5) Acquisition of lifelong teaching and learning skills, and (6) Love for the teaching profession.

The key informants' love for teaching drives them to continue and remain committed to their profession. The elementary teachers have described their profession as a calling, that the teaching profession is not just merely a profession for them, but rather a calling and a vocation. It allows them to willingly serve and show their innate desire to express their enthusiasm and love for teaching.

Elementary teachers’ love for teaching and love for children are the ones that urge them to unleash their passion and be more dedicated. According to Meier (2018), teachers are professionals who possess dedication and commitment to their work. They impart long-lasting influence on students, not just academically, but also emotionally, and socially. Therefore, teachers’ love for the teaching profession signifies their dedication in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. The study revealed that love and passion are the essential recipes for having a successful teaching career. The reasons that drive them to fulfill and continuously improve and provide quality education for the learners.

The teaching profession does not simply rely on accomplishing the job, but it takes a lot of effort, time, and energy to fulfill the task and responsibility of being a teacher. This study revealed the challenges that have been encountered by elementary teachers in the teaching profession. Their common viewpoint has drawn three challenges which include the following: (1) students' individuality (2) enormous paperwork, and (3) parental attitude. For more than 15 years in the teaching profession, the key informants opted to stay in the profession despite the many challenges that surround the

profession. The challenges to students' individuality and diversity are not new in the teaching profession. Being a teacher means being aware of the uniqueness of every learner. With these, the key informants view these challenges as stepping stones to improve their skills and to provide the best instruction, strategies, and practices to learners. The challenges in terms of enormous paperwork have been one of the biggest challenges for elementary teachers at present. The key informants have mentioned that the simultaneous paperwork and workload may sometimes lessen their time in providing necessary drills for learners; nevertheless, they still find time and make an effort in providing quality education for learners as it is their number one priority. In the study, it was also noted that the presence of parental attitude may also add up to the challenges of elementary teachers in the teaching profession, thus, the key informants maintain their professionalism and express their understanding to build a good relationship with the parents.

This study identified the perceived practices applied by elementary teachers in overcoming the challenges they have encountered in the teaching profession. The key informants have shared their common viewpoint on the ways they applied as they battle with the challenges they are facing and to continue the burning passion within them regardless of these challenges. These include the following: (1) possession of a positive attitude, and (2) recognition of the uniqueness of every learner. The elementary teachers' positive mindset and positive attitudes help them to overcome these challenges. Having the purpose to serve is the one of the reasons that keeps them motivated and maintains the flame ignited in their teaching career. In the study conducted by Lavy (2022), it is stated that teachers' sense of meaning is a resource that plays a part in their engagement at work and it can be strengthened intentionally. Therefore, a teacher's will to teach is one of the factors that contribute to their longevity in the teaching profession.

This study is supported by the theory of the dualistic model of passion by Robert J. Vallerand. This model has two types of passion namely, obsessive passion and harmonious passion. Vallerand (2003) defined harmonious passion which leads to more adaptive results and it is present when a person participates in an activity where he/she enjoys and feels satisfied both during and after the activity. People are more engaged, can concentrate better, and feel happier when experiencing an activity that brings harmonious passion. This study focuses on harmonious passion, which means that teachers fully embraced, enjoyed, and loved their profession to the point that it already became part of their identity. In a study conducted by Celik (2017), it is stated that passion is the force that urges teachers to constantly arouse their commitment and dedication to teaching. Along with this, the findings of this study revealed that elementary teachers' passion is described as being dedicated to the profession, showing their love for teaching, and remaining committed as they faced various challenges in the teaching profession.

Furthermore, Vallerand (2003) defined harmonious passion as when people opt to participate in an activity voluntarily rather than being forced to. When a person has this kind of passion, their activity fits comfortably into the rest of their identity and is in harmony and complementing it in a meaningful way. Moreover, as cited by Hakanen et al., (2006), a harmonious passion is different from the idea of work engagement, which is described as a state of mind defined by extreme vigor, dedication, and interest in one's work. Along with this, the findings of this study revealed that harmonious passion is shown by the elementary teachers through their eagerness, commitment, dedication, love for their job, and their willingness to serve despite the challenges they encountered in their teaching career.

Therefore, this study would be beneficial to elementary teachers who are similarly situated like the key informants of the study. The study may give them the insights/knowledge on how to keep their passion burning, despite the difficulties being encountered. The study may propel the elementary teachers to keep looking on the positive aspect of teaching and the possibility of creating better individuals in the future. Furthermore, the study may contribute to the increase of motivation on the teachers to stay in their chosen profession, which is teaching.

CONCLUSIONS

The following are the researchers' conclusions in accordance with the study findings:

1. The passion of the elementary teachers for staying in the teaching profession has been captured through their innate desire, willingness to serve, the ability to instill a love for learning in students, and their undying love for the teaching profession.
2. Teaching for more than 15 years has drawn many challenges that developed the personality and driving force of elementary teachers. It is viewed in the way they cope with the challenges like students' individuality, enormous paperwork, and parental attitude. Additionally, these challenges motivated them further to stay in the teaching profession.
3. The elementary teachers have shared the strategies and interventions they employed as they battled with the challenges arising from their careers and to maintain the flame ignited despite the challenges.
4. The key informants employed a variety of practices in overcoming the challenges encountered such as a positive attitude like patience, dedication, compassion, commitment, and a sense of responsibility.

5. The key informants have pointed out that elementary teachers must have the patience and purpose to serve as they go along in the teaching profession. With or without the challenges, teachers continuously perform their tasks to guide every learner and to be the light needed by learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers would like to recommend the following:

1. The Department of Education may provide many opportunities for professional development of elementary school teachers that are tailored to specific learners or subject areas for the enhancement of their skills and to better implement a quality education for learners.

2. Elementary schools may offer additional seminars/webinars/workshops or training for teachers on the improvement of their strategies, techniques, and approaches in catering to the students' individuality and diversity, which may help them to properly address the needs of learners as well as to boost their potential academically and socially.

3. The principals and school administrators may lessen the workloads given to the teachers and may avoid requiring teachers to complete the task immediately, which may cause teachers to lessen their time in teaching instead maximize their opportunities to attend training and seminars that may enhance their teaching skills.

4. The school, parents, community, and other stakeholders may conduct seminars/meetings/assemblies that may foster camaraderie among parents and teachers. These might enhance a good relationship between school and community, teachers and parents.

5. The elementary teachers may work collaboratively with colleagues, school administrators, principals, and peers to get valuable knowledge and meaningful insights that will help them enhance their teaching practices.

6. The elementary teachers may establish strong professional identities by joining professional organizations and societies that will help in developing their capacities as teachers.

7. The creation of positive working conditions that recognize the role of teaching as a noble profession and the recognition that teachers are engineers of the future. This may possibly lead to the longevity of service of the teachers.

8. This study may serve as a tool for future researchers who want to further explore the topic.

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