

# Untold Stories of Elementary Teachers: Going Extra Mile to Inspire Pupils

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**Abstract:** *Educators play various and complex roles that contribute to the development of a child. Their untiring support and efforts as well as their selfless acts in shaping their pupil's well-being is what makes a teacher exceptional. They continue to inspire their pupils despite the hardships they are facing. This study used qualitative approach and it is classified as narratology. It aims to unfold the inspirational stories of elementary teachers, in which their shared experiences helped their pupils to achieved learning. Six (6) elementary teachers who are under the Division of Pampanga, and received awards in the field of education, participated in the semi-structured interviews. Through the use of thematic analysis, findings revealed that inspiring teachers have distinct positive traits, inspiring practices, and principles. The findings highlighted the constructivist and humanistic approach. The inspirational stories of elementary teachers can be used in contributing to the professional development of teachers. These can also be adapted in their means of teaching. Majority of the teacher-participants prefer to work independently; it is recommended that they should engage more collaborative work with their colleagues for the purpose of gaining new insights about their methods and practices in helping their pupils to achieve success.*

**Keywords**— Elementary teachers, Inspirational stories, Learning, Narratology, Professional development

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching is considered as the noblest profession. Teachers mold the learner's life, thus enhancing their potentials. It creates a lifelong impact on the lives of every child. Educators influence pupils to take the right path and encourage them to become lifelong learners. In the 21st century education, the teacher's role shifted from dispensers of information into facilitators of learning. The role of the teacher is not only focused on the subject they teach but also on being multi-specialists wherein they take the role of a guidance counsellor, a nanny, a prompter, and a friend. Teachers' roles are vital to the academic achievement of all of the pupils they educate. Also, teachers play a dominant role in helping children who are facing academic, behavioural and even financial challenges.

On the other hand, it is mandated by Republic Act No. 4670 also known as "The Magna Carta for Public School Teachers" where under section 13 of the law states that teachers should not exceed more than six hours of actual classroom teaching. Additional compensation of twenty-five percent should be given to the teacher if he/she rendered more than the required amount of time and not exceeding eight hours of service. [1]

Contrary on the stated law, the required working time for the teachers is not being followed. Teachers still extend their time and effort thus bringing their paper works at home. Even though the salary of the teachers increased, it is still not enough for them. The teachers must play the role of becoming their pupil's second parent and provide assistance to the

extent of helping them financially which is not mandated in RA 4670 [2].

Even though they experience these challenges, the fulfillment of the teachers in seeing their pupils become successful in life is rewarding on their part. Teachers play an important role in establishing the learning environment and one of which is to create a setting that increases and maintains students' motivation and keeps them involved in learning [3].

Apart from the studies mentioned, it is stated in the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers, 1997 under article III, section 1 that a teacher is a person who helps children learn and grow. Teachers must attempt to make learning more engaging and interactive so that students can learn and comprehend more effectively and they must be flexible because anything can happen in the classroom, at school, or even at home. Flexibility is a vital trait for any teacher [4].

As well as article VIII section 2 where it indicates that the teacher must prioritize the interest and welfare of learners and "shall handle each learner justly and impartially"; section 3 where the teacher should not be discriminatory against any learners; and lastly, section 9 where one of the duties of the teacher is to find out if his or her students understand the lesson that they are teaching. Teachers should be the one who makes a way to solve the learning gap [4].

Inspiring teaching ignites the imagination by combining intellectual challenge, high standards, and mutual trust between teacher and student to inspire the learner to embark on a journey of discovery with the teacher. Together with the previous sentence, an inspiring teacher is characterized as

learning goal-oriented and has a vast array of teaching methods and strategies [5].

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The researchers aimed to unfold the inspirational stories of elementary teachers in producing successful pupils.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the positive traits of elementary teachers to inspire pupils?
2. What are the perceived inspiring practices of elementary teachers in order to produce successful pupils?
3. What are the principles of elementary teachers in inspiring their pupils to achieve success?
4. How do elementary teachers apply their principles in inspiring pupils?
5. Based on the findings of the study, how do the inspirational stories of the elementary teachers contribute to the professional development of teachers?

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

The researchers used a narratology research approach. It aims to interpret and provide in-depth meanings of the inspirational stories of elementary teachers in inspiring their pupils towards success. The study provided in-depth interviews with open-ended questions to collect data and information from the participants. Narratology aims to create a story about the lives of the participants. Narratological study is described in terms of story theory and a viewpoint from cultural psychology [6].

### 3.2 Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling. According to Crossman (2020), purposive sampling is a non-probability survey that is chosen based on population characteristics and the objectives of the study [7]. It is often referred to as arbitrary, judgmental, or selective sampling. The researchers believed that purposive sampling would be very useful in getting inspirational stories of an elementary teacher that serves as the main target of the study. Researchers employed this sampling strategy for eligible information.

### 3.3 Participants of the Study

The participants of the study are six (6) teachers teaching in public elementary schools were utilized in the study because the saturation of responses were reached. Saunders et al. (2017) stated that saturation indicates that further data collection and/or analysis is unnecessary based on the data that has already been collected or processed [8]. The participants are chosen based on the sample's intent. The researchers have set some restrictions as stated below.

The participants satisfied the following criteria: (1) the participants are public school teachers; (2) the participants are elementary teachers; and (3) the participants have an award in the field of education.

### 3.4 Research Instrument

The researchers used a semi-structured interview in gathering information about the participants. The questionnaires were content validated by experts in the area of study. The participants were expected to respond and answer the series of questions from the interview guide.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

The proper guidelines were observed by the researchers. The participants signed the data privacy letter to affirm their consent to use their data in the study. The researchers also highlighted that the information gathered was only used for the study and it was treated with confidentiality.

### 3.6 Data Collection

The researchers decided to conduct an interview in collecting data. The letters were sent to the principal, informed consent was also sent to the participants. To ensure safety due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the researchers followed the protocol by wearing a face mask and face shield. The participants were reminded that all information gathered was treated with anonymity and confidentiality.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was used for this qualitative research study. Braun and Clarke (2012) defined thematic analysis as a tool for systematically defining, organizing, and providing insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset [9]. Thematic analysis helps the researcher to see and make sense of collective or related meanings and experiences by concentrating on context through a dataset.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study is to unfold the inspirational stories of elementary teachers in producing successful pupils. Utilizing the narratological approach, the researchers were able to discover and identify how elementary teachers inspire their pupils towards success. Analysing the data using Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis [60], four themes emerged. These themes revealed the positive traits of elementary teachers, the perceived inspiring practices, their principles, and lastly, how they apply these principles in producing successful pupils.

### 4.1 Positive Traits of Elementary Teachers in Inspiring Pupils

Teachers are the role models of the learners. They are even considered as their second parent inside the classroom.

The traits of the teachers must be taken into account because as stated by Ulug et al. (2011), the positive characteristics of a teacher significantly impact a learner's personality and life outcomes [10].

#### 4.1.1 Affectionate

The teachers displayed their fondness towards their pupils and inspiring them to be a better person. "Warmth and affection are important aspects of a positive teacher-child relationship in early care and education settings for children's well-being" [11]. Teachers' affectionate responses serve as a model of positive, kind behaviour for children, resulting in more favourable child-to-child interactions [12].

"As a teacher, your pupils are like your own children. You know who is nice, who is naughty, who is smart, who needs help, is weak in class, has annoying behaviour." – ET2

"To the challenged pupils, make a way on how you can encourage them to learn more. Even if it is not class time, you are still thinking about them. Even if you are already at home, sometimes before you go to sleep, you think about what you did all day. You think of your students. Who are smart, who are weak and then you keep thinking about what I can do to help them?" – ET5

"Love your job even though the children are annoying. You'll always be looking for them now when it is not face to face. Their naughtiness, noisiness. In this pandemic today you should be free but no, you still monitor them. That is why I said, I always want to inspire my pupils to learn even if it's not face to face anymore, I should still monitor them." – ET6

#### 4.1.2 Approachable

The participants indicated that being approachable will make the pupils comfortable around their teachers. According to the findings of Jasmi and Hin (2014), it was revealed that a friendly and approachable teacher increases the academic drive of a learner [13]. The acquisition of learning of the pupils will be easier and faster once they feel that their teacher is easy to talk with. Unlike displaying a sense of firmness, it will make the pupils nervous thus, unable to express themselves.

"I am still open on what they want to share in the classroom or what they want to share with me." – ET3

"I am not strict. I am not that kind of a person or a teacher who is strict to my pupils. Because once you become strict, your pupils might feel nervous and not at peace around you. But once they feel that you are easy to talk with, the learning is easier and faster inside the classroom." – ET4

#### 4.1.3 Compassionate

A compassionate teacher shows concern and understanding towards her pupils. This strengthens the bond between the teacher and pupils. This can improve the learning environment and influence their learners in attaining success in all aspects of life. Alrubail (2015) stated that learners will be more open in understanding the world around them as a result from a compassionate teacher [14]. The teachers express their compassion and affection towards their pupils by establishing strong bonds. They also reward their pupils in a small and special way and this leaves a mark to a pupil's life.

"Motherly, for example, if someone is having an LBM, he pooped. I shall stop my discussion. I let my pupils bring an extra t-shirt. What I do is, I will bathe him. When they do something nice, especially when it's their birthday. I'll sing to them. That's what they won't forget about me. I'll sing for them then I'll hug them." – ET1.

"I let them know that I understand their status through submission of their project. I asked them to buy cheap materials only because I know that my learners in public school can't afford expensive materials that much." – ET3

"I enforce the value of giving and sharing. In my room during recess, the top of my table is full of snacks. For example, chuckie, there's juice and others. Then I will look at the kids who don't have any snacks. "Joed, did you give this to me?" "Yes, ma'am." "Can I give this to Troy?" "Yes, ma'am," she says.' – ET1

#### 4.1.4 Creative

The teachers had to be creative in catching the attention of their pupils. A creative teacher brings more than just knowledge to pupils. They are also educated in other fields and can use their experiences in the class [15]. Creativity also improves learning directly by raising inspiration, expanding knowledge, and promoting joy [16]. Furthermore, these also provide amusement to the children which makes it easy for the teachers to attain the objectives of the learners.

"Do you know online when they answer? I have different claps. I'll teach them the beginning and I'll supply "Ma'am Sexy". Until now that I had pupils who are already successful, they greet me "Hello, Ma'am Sexy" – ET1

"Incorporate arts. When they see me use my comics, when they see me use my storybooks which I made myself, my pupils are amazed. "Ma'am are you the one who made it?" – ET3

"When you incorporate singing because I love singing, they are also amazed, which is where I get their attention." – ET5 are also amazed, which is where I get their attention. English is boring because they don't quite understand it." – ET6

#### 4.1.5 Fair

The teachers must be fair in treating their pupils. They must not practice favouritism because it can affect the learners. Showing favouritism to one of the children may have a negative impact on the other because they may lose respect for the instructor and begin to mistrust the teacher's ability to manage a class, making the teacher ineffective [17]. They must establish a culture of respect, fairness and trust in their classroom because learners may hold that for their development. Students who are treated fairly in the classroom are more likely to appreciate and tolerate one another [18].

“Don't practice favouritism. When you praise someone, praise the other one too.” – ET1

“When you don't take sides with your student when you don't have a favourite. I always make sure that I look at each of my students equally so that they will feel that they are all equal in our classroom.” – ET3

“Treat them as unique individuals because no person is alike. You should not practice favouritism. You should treat them equally. You have to be fair.” – ET6

#### 4.1.6 Flexible

The teachers must be flexible in the class since children have individual differences. The teachers must cater to these differences in order for them to achieve the objectives of the children. Working circumstances in the twenty-first century workplace are rapidly evolving. As a result, teachers must not only be resourceful, but also flexible and adaptable to changing conditions and environments, as well as open to new ideas and methods of completing work [19].

“Children have individual differences, as teachers, we are like artists. We should be flexible. You must learn the different characteristics of your pupils. Some of their behaviour is special. Every year you should have a different teaching style. Last year, there was only one bully. In another year, it might be five. You should change your teaching style.” – ET1

“Just simply letting them be able to read and write is already a success so one thing that a teacher should possess is flexibility. Since not all children are the same, for an A-1 class, you can give them challenging activities because they might get bored. But what about those who are at the hem of your class? They also need to be successful in their own way so you will give them activities that are only for them. They have different levels of intelligence that is why you need to be flexible for the both of you to be happy at the end of the day.” – ET5

#### 4.1.7 Innovative

Teachers are increasingly expected to update their practices on a daily basis and to share their newly acquired information or revitalized practice with their peers [20]. The teachers had to innovate activities to make the learning fun and easy for the children. By thinking of alternatives, it can lessen the expenses of the children in making their project and activities that need to be achieved by the class. Children have different behaviours as well as their performance in class, some are excellent and are poor.

“I make a way for what we need to achieve in the classroom without having to spend a lot.” – ET3

“I don't give them hard times in my learning discipline and I am thinking of many ways to make the learning become easy.” – ET4

“You make gimmicks on how you get their attention, that's one way. Then they are also encouraged.” – ET5

“There are stubborn children. When there are children who have been left behind in class, you have to make a way. Do remediation, give more exercises, extra words in the lesson, more drills, more reading materials suited to the level of the pupils.” – ET6

#### 4.1.8 Passionate

Teachers must treat both their job and pupils with love and care. They must be genuine towards teaching their pupils. Teachers that are passionate about their subject make a significant difference in student's lives [21]. Students' achievement is influenced by passionate teachers. Moreover, children can feel the enjoyment of the teacher in teaching thus, making the class excited throughout the session. The teachers will do their best in helping their pupils achieve their goals. Teachers that are passionate about their work can have a good impact on student progress [22].

“Another trait that you should have is genuine love because you cannot fake it. There will be times that you will embarrass them so that their ego will be bent. Even if you did those actions, if the child felt that you loved him/her, he/she would not be destroyed” – ET3

“Children also know when the teacher enjoys the class and then when they feel that the teacher enjoys what he is doing, children will become excited.” – ET5

“Always love what you are doing because you will do your best for your pupils.” – ET6

#### 4.1.9 Truthful

The teachers must be honest at all times. It was stated that a teacher cannot inspire others once they pretend to be someone that they are not. Teachers who don't know



themselves are not capable of knowing their pupils and the subject they teach. It all depends on knowing oneself. By being truthful, the teacher becomes whole and by becoming more real means acknowledging oneself [23]. It was also mentioned that teachers must not pretend to be all-knowing and both teacher and learners are learning simultaneously. A child can feel when their teacher does not know what he teaches which makes the class session pointless.

“For me, the best quality that a teacher should possess is being true to oneself, like we can't inspire others if we are pretending what we are not. Like, we should not pretend that we can do everything, that we know everything. Like what I've said, in the classroom uhm I let my students see that even though I am a teacher, I have weaknesses. I have some things that I still don't know and continuously learning to make sure that I feed them right.” – ET3

“Because you cannot pretend to be someone that you're not. Who you are is who you are. Not all sweet teachers are effective, not all sweet or soft-spoken teachers are effective teachers because sometimes children find it boring. But the key is just being yourself. Children know where you're just running the session with them or the children also feel when a teacher doesn't know what he says.” – ET5

## 5. Perceived inspiring practices of elementary teachers

There is a link between student's growth and achievement to the practices of the teacher [24]. The practices of the teacher are the core of their job and these play an important role in the learning of the pupils [25]. The sub-themes mentioned above are the inspiring practices of the participants that they apply in their classroom that serves as a vehicle in producing successful pupils.

### 5.1 Interaction with pupils

This category covers the ways on how the participants interact with their pupils to deliver teaching and learning in a very interactive manner. However, as the schools are currently closed due to the pandemic, the participants were asked about their interactions with their pupils (a) during face-to-face class and (b) during distance learning, to identify what are the adjustments they made in order to continue the interaction between the teacher and pupils.

#### 5.1.1 During face-to-face classes

##### 5.1.1.1 Accomplishing goals through discipline

The participants noted that it is through discipline that they want their pupils to accomplish a specific goal. Discipline is required for effective school management and the achievement of the school's objectives [26]. In addition, the participants establish classroom rules to teach students

how to behave appropriately and safely in the classroom, hence boosting student learning.

“When I say the instructions, just follow it. No more talking. I develop their oral language. I do that constantly. I won't eat my lunch. Sometimes I eat at one-thirty, sometimes two, two-thirty past the intended lunchtime. Every day during face to face. I am focused on reading because that is where I am challenged.” – ET1

“I'm a disciplinarian. I set rules. I'll meet the parents and then, because I handle section A I am competitive. I'll push your children to do well.” – ET2

“Follow rules and regulations. It is a sin to me if you did not make your assignment. Because, if you will not teach him, when would it be? As early as Grade one, follow the rules.” – ET6

#### 5.1.1.2 Establishing an active learning environment

The teachers indicated that establishing an active learning environment for their pupils ensures their success. Moreover, in an active learning environment, both students and instructors have a greater desire to learn [27].

“During face-to-face class, I can say that our interaction within the class was interactive, you see the participation of the students, and you encouraged them to participate even more in the discussion.” – ET3

“I am a teacher who loves to throw jokes on my pupils. I am a jolly person. When your pupils are comfortable with you and are not afraid then learning will be easy” – ET4

“The children, if you compare them to the old method, they enjoy the new method more. Technology is being applied. It's more interesting, they like it more, they learn easily.” – ET6

#### 5.1.2 During distance learning

##### 5.1.2.1 Supporting and fulfilling the needs of the learners

The teacher is responsible for ensuring that suitable conditions exist for learners' maximal development, as well as providing needed support in preventing or resolving learner problems and challenges [4].

“So, from central I traced them and I found out that they don't have gadgets. They explained that they were jobless, in terms of being fired and didn't have the means. As a teacher, I had to find a way. I held a meeting. I told the concern, who can help? “Ma'am I can help your student. I know someone, he already boarded a ship, and I will tell him about this. The next problems are load, no Wi-Fi, no data. So I have three children, one is a teacher who is already a principal, the other

two are both engineers. I ask them to sponsor the data of my pupils. I'm so happy. I have achieved my goal." – ET1

"Not all of them have a connection to the internet then the others don't have devices to use but, as a teacher, it should not be a hindrance for you to communicate with your students. When they can't follow, I will reprint the activity that I will discuss in our online class through google meet, I will distribute it during the day of the distribution of modules." – ET3

"I have three T's in my life, in my teaching. The first is time. Give time, don't make any excuses. Another T, talent. I explored my talent, facial expressions, I danced, I can sing. Treasure. It's always been a treasure, even if you can inspire a little. Especially to the children with no food? I sponsor them just to be able to attend school. My children paid for the Wi-Fi, so I spent a little." – ET5

### 2.1.2.2 Maintaining connections

Despite the challenges the teachers faced in the current learning modality, they still maintain their connections to their pupils. These are through: (a) Constant reminders to the pupils and parents through 'online kumustahan' for those who have access and gadgets, and through distribution and retrieval of the modules for those parents who don't; and (b) providing consultations to both parents and pupils about the modules and activities. It allows teachers and students to maintain constant interaction outside of the traditional classroom, resulting in new teaching and learning environments through online sites [28].

"Currently in this distance learning, we're modular. Interacting with the learners is quite a problem because not all parents have phones. What we do is, only during the distribution and retrieval of the modules is the time where we can give reminders to those who don't have a phone" – ET3

"During distance learning "Online Kamustahan" is one of the best ways to connect with the learners. This is the time to ask the pupils on how they deal with the modules." – ET4

'I also monitor the pupils' progress and always tap the parent's support. "How are you? Send me your activities". I will send reading materials. Then, parents, you can ask what part are you having a hard time teaching? Then you explain via messenger.' – ET6

## 5.2 Teacher's Practices in Encouraging Pupils

### 5.2.1 Setting a role model

The teachers presented stories from people who had hardships in life and became successful. The teachers used the stories from themselves, parents of pupils, former graduates, and famous people as a means for pupils to idolize. Role

models are those who, in general, give children a positive image and a goal to strive for [29]. Furthermore, role models serve as an example to others thus influencing them to succeed through their perceived characteristics, behaviours, and achievements. They inspire others to strive hard without providing direct guidance and instruction [30].

'Let them start telling stories about what they're doing at home. "Who is your idol?" then I will ask "why?" Then he would say, "My father is great, he is an engineer, and I intend to follow in his footsteps." I will answer "Oh, study hard so that you will be an engineer too.'" – ET1

'I tell them the stories of people who persevered in life even if their situation was so difficult. This is one of the ways to encourage children to be successful. You also give an example that if he can do this, you can do it too. You shouldn't say "I can't do it" – ET3

"Make yourself a good example like when I was studying, we're just poor but I strived harder. Share story about yourself" – ET6

"Giving them a good example. Ah make yourself as a good example like when I was studying, we're just poor but I strive harder. Share story about yourself like I when I am studying, I experienced hardships until I study hard even if I don't have enough money nor snacks I study harder. I worked hard even it was so difficult to study. I studied well, that is why I became a teacher. That is why all of you, must study well even if it is hard. When you have dreams in life, you will get what you want if you study well." – ET6

### 5.2.2 Success and learning are beyond numbers

Teachers impart to pupils that grades do not define their success and what they are capable of. Grades and grade point average (GPA) are not necessarily reliable indicators of learning or cognitive development [31]

"I also share with them the true definition of success. I said, success for me, this is what you did when it inspired people. You have learned or became a good person while you continue to achieve the things you want to happen in life." – ET3

"They are making the numbers as the basis to your teaching but learning is beyond numbers, beyond the statistics of the score. You will find a very hard-headed child. He was also number one in bullying but now, he is so responsible." – ET5

### 5.2.3 Educating pupils about the value of education

Teachers educate their pupils about the importance of education in life. According to Nelson Mandela's 1994 autobiography, it stated that education is the most potent

weapon which can be used to change the world. As stated by the teachers, education is a way to achieve success [32]. A person who lacks education cannot succeed in life whereas those who have adequate education achieve success. Teachers also impart to their pupils that education cannot be stolen by anyone and a well-educated person cannot be easily deceived.

“In this pandemic, I always tell them that this pandemic is not a reason for them to stop studying. Because I have pupils now who seem to be giving up because they are tired of answering their modules as well as their parents who seem to be saying that “Ma'am we can't do it anymore, we've given up” but I'm telling them it would be a waste of time if they stop, the class is nearly ending. I tell them that the pandemic is not a reason for us to stop learning, maybe uhm, maybe this pandemic is God's way for parents to give time to their children.” – ET3

“You have to work hard to attain what is your goal in life. There are lots of trials and if you fail, don't stop, take them as an inspiration, stand up and focus on your goal.” – ET4

“By letting them realize the importance of education. Education is important to be successful in life. It is important to be educated. If you do not study, you do not have a way to be a successful. Education is a big thing and it has been planted in you since then. Education cannot be stolen by anyone that is already in your place. When you are educated, no one can fool you.” – ET6

#### 5.2.4 Applying extrinsic motivation

Teachers stated that giving praises and compliments creates an impact on the learners. It makes the learners become more confident in their craft and well-being because their efforts are appreciated by their teachers. Teachers must use feedback and praise as important teaching techniques in order to increase students' learning and establish a positive teacher-student relationship [33]. It is through praises and compliments where pupils boost their self-confidence and self-esteem and put more effort on their studies and learning. It is essential for educators and students to have a positive relationship, which may be fostered by using effective praise as a primary method for making classrooms more efficient and inspiring learning environments [34].

‘I'm praising them. For example, "Very good". Introduce different kinds of claps. Either online or face to face, you need to praise. Even if the child did only a small thing, praise them. They feel better.’ – ET2

‘Just by simply saying "Good job! That's great! Excellent!” Reinforcements are great. To those children who are weak in class, you then see him sketching, exerting an effort, you will say it is beautiful.’ – ET5

“Very good! Good job! Study more! Keep up the good work!” for them to be inspired and strive even harder in their studies. They will have self-confidence. At least, even if there is no face-to-face class, the pupils study. You are happy they do not neglect their studies’ – ET6

#### 5.3 Teacher's way of helping pupils towards success

##### 5.3.1 Tapping the learner's potential

Teachers claimed that every pupil has potential. It must be discovered, enhanced, and shown to everyone. Teachers let the pupils join different competitions and push the pupils to succeed through training. Students gain confidence in their potential and are empowered to perform better when teachers teach to their strengths, all while fostering a growth attitude [35]. Teachers insisted that it is good that the parents are aware of the class standing of their child so that the teacher will easily find a way on how to explore the potential of the pupils. Teachers are instruments for the pupils to achieve small wins that will serve a big factor in inspiring them to achieve success.

“I will push them. Children are good to train because they are like an empty shell, put this and put that in them. After that, we joined. As I've said, I am competitive. Give them extra time. As for me, I clap my hands. So pushing them and after that explain it to the parents that their child is good at this, I will compete with him on this. Pushing them up to their exceptional talents. Be an instrument for them to become successful.” – ET1

‘By believing in learners' potential. To a child, you should have trust in him. I had a pupil, I always caught him not listening in the discussion. He is not listening and then I will call him, I was surprised he knows the answer. You will give them a test, they will get a perfect score. I said to myself, “what an odd kid.”’ – ET6

##### 5.3.2 Scaffolding

Teachers' scaffolds pupils in such a way they learn according to their capacity and interest. Breaking the lesson into pieces makes the teaching and learning in simplest way. It should be put in mind that learning is one at a time and it is not a one-day process. As students learn new skills, the teacher provides them with resources that build on their previous knowledge and experiences [36]. The teacher monitors how well the students are doing on the prescribed skills or assignments and gradually removes the support. Teachers indicated that learners being able to make a small progress is already a success.

“I will give all the necessary learning in classroom. The first adaptation of learning is at home, school is just a secondary home to them. As a teacher you will give all the possible learnings they need.” – ET4

“Just like what I am saying, you don’t need high grades, achievement. Being able to reach, step forward a little, that’s already a success, the child is already happy.” – ET5

“You need to give them activities that interests them and in their capacity that’s it and then you give them-make them try a more difficult, something that they aren’t interested for them to feel that they can do it because in life, you can’t do what you only want to do or doing only easy task.” – ET5

### 5.3.3 By giving responsibilities to pupils

Teachers give the pupils responsibilities in order to make them independent and responsible to themselves. It is a way of measuring how pupils take their task and how they make action towards this. Developing responsibility in children will help them realize their full potential because it entails making decisions, being trusted, and learning to accept responsibility for one's actions [37]. Being responsible can make children feel important and enable them to contribute to the society.

“For example, the same as responsibility, outside right, you will see each child has parts, their assignment is to clean and beautify this and that. What’s nice is the accountability, there is a leader-it needs to be organized, clean and all. So you need to develop the accountability for them to work themselves and need to have a better performance. That style became very effective because you will see the leaders, though their members can’t come, because the accountability to their responsibility is there. You will see their part, they really clean it and all.” – ET5

“We already had a black sheep in the class, and it was difficult to handle them. Well, there are the bullies in the class, who are both hurtful and loud. Discipline them as much as you can because you as a teacher, do everything what you can do. Give him a task or an obligation every now and then. For example, do this, you are the leader of the boy scouts. Give him responsibility so that he himself realize his worth because sometimes children like them think they are being left behind, as if they are want more attention.” – ET6

## 5.4 Best Practices in Inspiring Pupils in the Classroom

### 5.4.1 Provides moral support

The teachers provide moral support to the pupils based from the answers of the participants. It was shown by teachers through: (A) treating the learners with kindness and affection. Kindness is an activity that fosters positive interpersonal relationships [38]. Having a kind teacher can make pupils feel welcomed, cared for, and loved; and, (B) the teacher’s practice constant follow ups and reminders to the pupils about their studies. Reminding language encourages children to pause and visualize what they should do before responding on the expectation [39].

“Treat anyone with kindness. Kindness. “Eat this” I’ll kiss or hug them, even if my students stink. I told them to bring cologne and powder. At home, they are playing, and when I ask them “What are we going to do at school?” They answered, “We will study our lessons”. Okay, let us study our lessons. My best practice is to tap them and say “It is okay, next time don't do that again. I am here, even you are sick, I am your teacher.” – ET1

“Constant follow up to the pupils. “Read at home” “Stay here for some time” “Let’s study then you read at home”. That’s what I do every day. They have certain work that they need to study at home.” – ET2

### 5.4.2 Creating a positive learning environment

The teachers create a positive learning environment for their pupils which is an important aspect in influencing pupil’s learning. It is crucial for elementary pupils to be able to enjoy, commit mistakes, and learn from those mistakes during their time in school. In addition, making learning fun and engaging encourages pupils to actively participate in class. It also allows them to gain more value from the lesson and become inspired. Furthermore, in a positive learning environment, pupils feel safe and are able to engage and connect to the discussion which also contribute to their academic success [40].

“Be always optimistic. It is important for elementary pupils to let them laugh, let them commit mistakes but make sure that they learn something from their mistakes. They made a mistake but they will make sure from that mistake, they have learned something.” – ET5

“One of my best practices in inspiring my pupils in the classroom is to create a positive learning environment. You will immediately realize that the relationship between the teacher and pupils is really important.” – ET4

### 5.4.3 Striving hard

Teachers must challenge the pupils to strive hard and work for their goal. They must overcome their weakness to make them grow and improve. The characteristic of an inferiority complex is that people are continually attempting to find a circumstance in which they succeed [42]. This motivation stems from their overpowering emotions of inferiority. Teachers let the pupils realize that if they want to succeed, they must be willing to pay attention to their goal and make extra efforts for it. Pupils learn from their mistakes also and it is a factor that makes them have the guts to set a room for improvement and strive more in order to become successful.

“I challenge them to overcome the weaknesses that they can't overcome because when they don't overcome it, they



won't grow. It's like I'm telling them their flaws and their weaknesses so that they can grow & for them to make room for their improvement.” – ET3

“Make them realize and decide for themselves that if they want to become successful they must pay attention to their behaviour and choices, and even sacrifices that led to their success. This behaviour includes hard work, willingness to struggle, and ability to learn from their mistakes.” – ET6

## 6. Principles of Elementary Teachers in inspiring the pupils

Principles are the unwritten rule and norms that the teachers must follow to assure the success of the teaching and learning process. According to the language of Gerard Manley Hopkins, “a principle is a rule for guiding the ship of education so that it will reach the port designated by the philosophy of education; it is a compass by which the path of education is directed.” Principles are the most important guidelines for making teaching and learning more effective and successful [42].

### 6.1 Setting a map to reach the goal

Teachers must be a goal-setter in achieving the success of the pupils. They provide a path wherein pupils will follow. One of the participants insisted that a pupil will not achieve their goal instantly; they must work for it. If the pupil wants to reach a certain profession but the pupil does not put some action towards this goal, it will fail. It is critical for each child to have a goal in life since it will inspire them to do their best and achieve their maximum potential. As a result, when guiding pupils to fulfil their aspirations and support what they learn in school, a teacher plays an important role [43].

“Each pupil should have their goals in life. As a teacher, I believed once you have your goals you strive more to achieve it. “Mercy is in God, man works for it” even if you always pray for it “Oh God help me to become a Doctor” then you're not doing anything do you think you'll become a good Doctor? That's what I always tell them. I always tell them that our generation has more advantages. There is an advantage especially for those people who finish their studies. In all what we are talking about here is the diploma of the pupils.” – ET1

“Before they do anything, they have to make sure that every time they go to school, they know their goal or part of why they go to school, is it just because of allowance? Is it just to see their crush? To play? That kind of thing. That's what I always told them before until now I tell them that they should know what they want, what is the reason for their study.” – ET3

“I make sure that I learn every day. That is what I also advise to my pupils. I advise them also to try that and at least they have something to learn every day.” – ET4

“By giving them informative comments or suggestions on their work performances that they will give them chance to excel and improve more on their studies.” – ET6

### 6.2 Catering learner's individual differences

Knowing the learners' individual differences improves the social skills and academic confidence of the pupils. Teachers must provide different activities to make the learners creative and active in class. Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory states that people are born with different intelligence. It challenged the traditional notion that there is only one type of intelligence which only focuses on the cognitive aspect. The teacher practices different strategies in order to make sure that all of the students can relate to the lesson. The teacher should provide learning materials in a variety of ways, regardless of whatever subject is being taught, “the arts, the sciences, history, or math” [44].

“Each teachers have their own strategies. As they say, giving different activities makes pupils become creative. For example, the activities inside the room like group work. You will give a group work so the children themselves will solve the problem, for them to arrange the questions and they themselves will realize that what they do is right.” – ET4

“Of course, every quarter, the leadership rotates including the membership. They are not always grouped together. Whoever will be the leader of the weak child, poor reader, it's his responsibility to improve that child.” – ET5

### 6.3 Leading pupils to become responsible, accountable, and good decision maker

Teachers must teach the pupils to employ accountability, responsibility, and good decision making. A child needs to learn how to be accountable in order to develop a sense of responsibility [45]. Even now that they are in distance learning, the teacher must encourage the pupils to answer their modules on their own so that this learning modality will make sense. Teachers lead the pupils to the correct direction and let them grow accountable and responsible for everything. Students must learn to take responsibility for their activities, which is a crucial step in being self-disciplined and in order to succeed [46].

“I tell them “Why are you answering modules? Are you sure you're the one answering the modules? What is the reason you need to submit it to me?” I'm telling them that, the reason for answering those modules is for you can learn something, you will know something even if you're just at home. They should make sure that they are the one who answer because if they are not, modular learning in life seems useless. So that you will have a direction or for you to know where you are going.” – ET3

“They are getting direction, they know the reason why they persevere, why they keep studying. I tell them that they should also know the reason why they are studying because when they don't know the reason, they don't know what they are going to do unlike when they know and they really know what they want, there is the direction they are going and they know where they are going.” – ET3

“Despite their young age, they should really follow what their decision will be, thus, they should be also responsible for the decision they have chosen.” – ET4

#### 6.4 Preparing pupils for the reality of life

Teachers prepare the pupils for the reality of life. Teachers do not limit the education and they teach without boundaries so that teachers bring to the learner the fact that in order to achieve their success they must be aware of what world awaits them. Children must be taught that there are numerous life problems to solve, as well as the intellectual and moral habits necessary to do so [47]. Learners can cope up easily and showcase what are the things they have if the teacher lets them feel comfortable in a different environment. In addition, allowing children to face reality helps them to develop resilience, strength, and confidence [48].

“I help my students become successful by teaching them the things they need to know but also the realities of life. I make sure I teach them the lessons that they can apply in their lives. They will learn how to deal with the problems they might face outside the classroom.” – ET3

“Don't limit yourself, as well as your knowledge goes beyond your limitations, go to your boundaries to improve yourself as they grow and become mature enough to face the reality in life.” – ET4

### 7. Application of Principles

#### 7.1 Open communication between teacher and pupils

Teachers establish open communication between the pupils. This is to avoid misunderstandings and rivalry among the learners especially during an activity where rewards are provided. Every child wants to win therefore, as teachers, they must have an open communication between the learners and explain the nature of the activity to avoid unhealthy competitions to the learners. Instructors and students must communicate effectively in order to create a pleasant learning environment, which is sometimes hampered by teachers' failure to engage their pupils. As a result, pupils are compelled to exert undue effort in order to retain their concentration on the subject matter [49].

“Of course, you need open communication. Sometimes, there is danger if there are no group rewards, sometimes there

is rivalry in the class. I noticed that because everyone wants to win, to excel, to be the outstanding group so there is danger in that too. So, you need open communication with each other.” – ET5

“Providing timely feedback is very significant. I believe that positive feedback is one of the keys to developing a sense of confidence, self-worth and motivation among learners. Once a child develops self-confidence, he will trust himself. He will have self-worth, which is a very good foundation for a child.” – ET6

#### 7.2 Creating an active learning environment

Teachers create an active learning environment in the classroom. Constructivism is a theory in which students utilize existing knowledge to make sense of and understand present learning situations, inspired the notion of active learning [50]. The teachers allow the learners to have the freedom to express themselves and share their thoughts and ideas in the class for them to be inspired and do not have hesitations or doubts in expressing themselves.

“There is a time that we have a sharing activity where I can share my experiences and children can also share what they want and their experiences.” – ET3

“An active learning environment, it will always cater to the learners. They can solve certain situations by themselves. Gaining knowledge from peers is also important.” – ET4

“Create a learning environment that has freedom for them, freedom for them to speak, freedom for them to express so that will be inspired to speak and express themselves.” – ET6

#### 7.3 Utilizing the reward system as an initial step to attract pupil's attention

Teachers use rewards to get the attention of their pupils. It is important to use extrinsic rewards properly, especially when pupils are asked to complete tasks that aren't particularly interesting for them [51]. However, giving rewards should not become a habit, at most, extrinsic motivation has only 'short-term benefits [52].

“The games and teamwork. With my own money, I'll buy them candies. Every quarter, I buy medals. I make certificates too. For those who did not receive a medal or certificate, I tell them next time, they can do it too.” – ET1

“By giving rewards. Though others discourage extrinsic motivation but are good. Because you will use this as an initial to fish the children to motivate, to excite them for the activity. To older kids can be a point system. Little by little you will remove that extrinsic motivation and they will be all by themselves.” – ET5

## 8. SYNTHESIS OF INTERPRETATION

Teachers play significant roles in touching the hearts of the children and making a difference. They shape the child's personality and attitude towards education and make them feel special. In the eye of a child, they are their greatest hero, their role model, and their second parent. Despite their busy schedules and mountainous paperworks, they are still able to smile in front of their pupils and inspire these children to succeed. Without a doubt, teachers are hailed as great actors and actresses. They think of the welfare of their pupils and seeing them succeed in their endeavours in life, as mentioned by the participants, is a milestone for a teacher. Indeed, as reflected by these findings, teachers hold both great roles and responsibilities in building up a child.

In fact, the findings indicated that elementary teachers indeed go an extra mile in inspiring their pupils to success. Along with their positive traits, the teachers' passion for teaching and inspiring their pupils are evident in the perceived inspiring practices. The findings suggest that teachers exhibiting these practices to their pupils are commendable because some of the findings are outside the mandated law Republic Act 4670 also known as "The Magna Carta for Public School Teachers" where it was stated that teachers must render services not exceedingly more than six hours [1]. The findings also revealed that teachers render more than the required amount of time thus bringing their work at home. Although many teachers can relate to the previous statement, the findings also revealed that in the current learning modality, teachers support and fulfil the needs of the learners by sponsoring their pupils for them to continue their studies. The researchers saw the selfless acts of the teachers from their inspirational stories and are undeniably commendable as some of the findings are outside the job description of a teacher. Apart from the practices of elementary teachers, their principles were also revealed as Samsujjaman (2017) mentioned in his study the language of Gerard Manley Hopkins, an English poet and a Jesuit priest famous for his poems in the Victorian era, where it is stated that these principles are the compass of the teachers that shows them where the path of education is directed [42]. The principles of the elementary teachers act as a guide for them to inspire their pupils. Open communication as these can make the teaching and learning process become more effective and more efficient.

Moreover, the major findings from the practices and principles of the elementary teachers drawn from the study can be connected to Constructivism Learning Theory which was pioneered by John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. In this theory, pupils create their own knowledge and reflect from their experiences which serves as their path to success rather than passively listening to the teacher. For learning to occur, the role of the teacher is to facilitate and

guide the learners through asking questions and this can be drawn from the first principle that was perceived which is the setting a map to reach the goal. The teachers always remind the pupils about their objectives through questions. The teachers also established and created an active and positive learning environment where pupils are allowed to express themselves, exchange ideas with their peers, and the integration of technology in the teaching and learning process. In addition, the teachers also prepare the pupils for the reality of life by encouraging them to strive hard for them to overcome their weaknesses and through rotating leadership where all pupils have the chance to lead and are given responsibility and accountability. These findings are drawn from the experiential learning of John Dewey in which learners construct their knowledge from their experiences.

Following the first theory, the Humanistic Learning Theory of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow also known as Humanism focuses on the individual abilities of the learners. The findings connect to this theory as it was revealed that teachers cater to the individual differences of their pupils by providing them with differential activities and tapping their potential. The theory also states that learners will produce better outcomes once their needs are met and the findings showed that teachers provide the needs of their learners through moral and financial support. The teachers scaffold their pupils by helping the pupils to begin from smaller steps, providing activities with different levels of difficulties, and utilizing a reward system as an initial step to fish the children. Also, the teachers provide responsibility to the learners as these are the foundations for a child to have self-discipline, self-autonomy, and to succeed.

Furthermore, these findings contribute to the professional development of teachers as they can be adapted. The teachers can utilize the constructivist approach where they can add to their prior knowledge and their pedagogy the findings from this study. Professional development is a well-structured career growth that leads to changes in teacher practices and "improvements in student learning outcomes [53]. "Professional development activities can come in the form of workshops, local and national conferences, college courses, special institutes, and so on" [54]. The purpose of professional development is to improve the learning of both teachers and students [55].

Although the findings are derived from the inspirational stories of teachers, people rely on formal education, apprenticeships or mentoring, training programs, and self-study to master such concrete types of knowledge. However, if well-crafted, stories can be used for inspiration, persuasion, communication, interpretation, and teaching, as well as transferring tacit information and visualizing the invisible [56]. In addition, professional development can also take place in less formal settings, such as conversations among co-workers, individual reading and study, observations of a colleague's work, or other peer-to-peer learning [55].

Additionally, the teachers are required to have a continuing professional development throughout their lives. It does not end by graduating from college and getting a license. Teachers must not stagnate their pedagogy as society is ever-changing. One must be constantly updated in order to effectively teach the learners. As for the practices of the elementary teachers, the findings from this study can be added to their current practices in inspiring their pupils. These practices, as it was mentioned, are effective in the teaching and learning process. By adding these practices, the teachers can improve their instruction which is a requirement for professional development.

Apart from this, the principles and the ways in applying these principles can also contribute to the professional development of the teachers. As stated, the principles of the teachers are the unwritten law which guides the teacher to develop their practices. These can also be added and adapted to the existing principles of the teacher because the findings suggest that these are the foundations for the success of the child and are efficient and effective to the teaching and learning process.

Teachers are the building blocks of society. They link the goals of the learners to the vision and mission of the school and the nation. According to the philosophy of Reconstructionism of Theodore Brameld, "teachers act as agents of change and reforms" [57]. They know the true essence of their profession and foster good attitudes. One must be passionate and dedicated in pursuing this career and must be committed before taking the oath of being a teacher. The teachers in this study showed that they are affectionate as the feelings of their learners are delicate. They are also innovative and creative as they want their pupils to be active. They display truthfulness and fairness because they want to establish a culture of respect and success. These teachers employ different practices for the learners to be able to succeed in their aspirations. They are also keen in making the learning environment fun and provides the freedom for the children to express themselves. They continue to exhibit a sense of excellence in their teaching, genuinely love their pupils and their enjoyment for their job is evident. They show resilience despite the stressful and endless workload that they have just to engage with their pupils and continue to inspire them. More importantly, relating to the current situation, they also showed that the pandemic will never stop them as they continue to provide support for their pupils either morally or financially and enforces the learners about the value of education. Teachers nurture the minds of the learners and mould them into something great. The teachers from this study stated that teacher's greatest achievement is not the awards they received nor their medals but something that is intangible and that is seeing their pupils succeed in their aspirations in life. Their selfless act and genuine love really prove that teaching is the noblest profession.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

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As teachers play an important role in the society where they give children the purpose and lead them to achieve their objectives in life, it is important to understand how they are able to inspire their pupils. By unfolding the inspirational stories of elementary teachers in producing successful pupils using the narratological approach, this study was able to perceive the positive traits, practices, principles, and application of the principles in inspiring the learners. From the findings of the study, it was found out that elementary teachers apply the constructivist and humanistic approach in their teaching. This is through allowing the learners to play an active role in the classroom and accommodating their individual differences. They also foster good attitudes and build positive relationships through open communication with their pupils because these are fundamental in forming trust and active engagement in learning. Moreover, teachers possessing the traits that were perceived are effective in inspiring the pupils which also makes a lasting impression from them. Furthermore, since teachers need to constantly improve their pedagogy by gaining additional knowledge and skills, which is a requirement for their professional development, the findings from the present study can be added and adopted to their instruction. Likewise, the findings from the positive traits, practices, principles, and application of the principles from the inspirational stories of the elementary teachers suggest that these are determining factors in inspiring pupils towards success.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested by the researchers:

1. Teachers might engage in more collaborative work with their colleagues and peers because such ways allow them to learn relevant knowledge, information and exchange insights about themselves and their practices.
2. Teachers could reflect more on their qualities and teaching to identify the barriers and apply new methods in their instruction. This may help them improve their pedagogy which contributes to student's attainment of their goals.
3. Administrators might offer additional seminars/ webinars/ workshops for the betterment of their teacher's personal and professional development since schools play an important role in improving the quality of teaching of their teachers.
4. Future research is recommended to yield more inspiring stories during distance learning.



**11. ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The completion of this study could not have been possible without the participation and assistance of the following: families and friends of the researchers, Don Honorio Ventura State University College of Education Department, people whose names may not all be enumerated, and most of all our Almighty God. Their contributions are sincerely appreciated and gratefully acknowledged.

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