

Unfolding the Stories of the Neophyte Educators in the Bay Schools: A Phenomenological Study

Maria Katrina A. Capili

Ramona S. Trillana High School, Sto. Rosario, Hagonoy, Bulacan, Philippines

arcegakatrina.capili@gmail.com

Abstract: *This qualitative study sought to explore the experiences of the neophyte educators at the Bay schools. The researcher used a phenomenological study to describe individuals' actual occurrences and perspectives in the daily lives of the neophyte educators. The informants of the study were fifteen (15) neophyte educators, selected performing neophyte educators in the Bay Area schools. The study highlighted the neophyte educators' personal and professional characteristics, which delimited the tools such as researcher-made questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, documentation of observed codes and themes, and interview questionnaires among the informants of this study. These themes are (a) teaching experiences; (b) pre-service teaching personal preparations; (c) pre-service training and seminars; (d) teaching-learning difficulties; (e) teaching efficiency; (f) transportation risks; (g) harmonious school community partnership; (h) school support system. The results and findings of the study served as the basis for innovations that can be used to aid teachers, schools, and the department in providing useful support to educators in the Bay Area school community.*

Keywords—Neophyte Educators, Bay Schools, Phenomenological Study

1. INTRODUCTION

In the life of newly employed teachers in the service, whether in public schools or private institutions, the adage "great things start from a humble beginning" holds. Teaching is a great job that calls for a lot of commitment, passion, and effort. The teacher's duties and responsibilities include subject-matter knowledge and mastery, ensuring that classroom environments that conducive to learning, putting into practice successful strategies to foster independent learners, participating in collaborative work that results in positive outcomes, and providing opportunities for students to apply and practice what they have learned. In addition to giving students the things they need to understand, a teacher also acts as a mentor who encourages them to make critical life decisions.

According to (Hogan 2020), the teachers' tasks and responsibilities include producing and disseminating educational materials like notes, tests, and assignments; monitoring classes to ensure that each student is learning in a safe and productive environment; gathering materials and resources for lectures and presentations; providing individualized instruction to each student by encouraging interactive learning; and organizing, planning, and executing educational activities. Lesson plans were made, homework, assignments, and tests graded, and students in all grade levels were taught. They are responsible for distributing homework, marking exams, and keeping track of student progress.

2. RELATED WORKS

To the Department of Education (DepEd)'s Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRFs) for Teacher I- III teachers' obligations and responsibilities include promoting learning at both primary and secondary institutions using effective teaching methods, including functional lesson plans (for new teachers up to three years) and daily activity

logs (for teachers teaching four years and above). Additionally, teachers shall monitor and evaluate students' progress, engage in performance indicator improvement activities, regularly update students' progress, supervise students and maintain daily routine (classroom cleanliness, classroom management, overall physical classroom atmosphere), conduct action plans, support the work of governmental and non-governmental organizations, supporting students/pupils, as carrying out associated tasks, working with parents and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) states that a teacher has four stages: beginning, proficient, highly proficient, and distinguished teacher. This study will focus on the stories of the beginning teachers, and the neophyte teachers in their first, second, and third years of teaching. The first year of a teacher's employment has an impact on how long they remain in the profession. The teacher can be under stress, not have the necessary support, and feel unprepared to deal with behavioral and academic concerns with their kids during this time. They deal with and face their worries throughout their first year in the classroom with the support of their families and more experienced teachers who are willing to guide and understand. New instructors may have poor experiences if they enter the teaching profession with exaggerated notions of what teaching entails. The goal of this study is to comprehend the experiences of a neophyte educator or someone who has just entered the field of education and is teaching for the first time, particularly in the Bay school community.

To help the neophyte teachers, during the first year of their teaching careers, new teachers must complete the Philippine Department of Education's (Department of Education) Teacher Induction Program (TIP). TIP is structured to provide newly hired teachers with an organized and thorough support network so they may quickly adjust to the public education system and promote the value of vocation in teaching. The

purpose of the TIP is to guide new teachers. TIP is also an opportunity for mentor teachers to improve their mentoring skills, as the department recognizes the crucial role mentors play in the development of high-quality DepEd teachers.

Difficulties are frequently a necessary but inevitable component of the learning process. This appears to be especially true for complicated conceptual learning. In educational contexts where teachers are unable to give students timely feedback and help that is tailored to their needs to assist students in overcoming their issues, it is very challenging to identify and respond to challenges in the learning process. Especially in their first year, neophyte educators have to deal with a lot of different problems. Teaching is hard, and it is a little bit harder when going to school is hard, too, like when you have to take a boat to school and have to think about the weather. For professional work, being in a Bay schools area requires a lot more dedication to the task. Getting used to how people in the community live may help the teacher feel more at ease. Teaching in the Bay schools takes a lot more work for the teachers, especially if they are not used to getting around that way. The neophyte educators in the Bay schools emphasized the importance of classroom management training to keep time, maintain order, and enforce discipline. Some of these neophyte educators in the Bay schools decided to resign due to the difficulties they encountered. This pattern indicates that new teachers need comprehensive support at the beginning of their careers if they are to remain in the profession.

The study of the neophyte educators in the Bay schools interviewed about their feelings in the early months, weeks, and days of instruction. Over the fifteen (15) informants, describe what and how they did during the first several months and the years of their educational career. These sentiments include those of anxiety, fear, worry, pressure, and heavy burden. Interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions are just a few of the common methods used in qualitative research. This phenomenological study highlighted the daily challenges and coping strategies faced by neophyte educators in the bay schools within the District of Hagonoy, Bulacan.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The general topic of the study is "How may the stories of the neophyte teachers in the Bay schools for the School Year 2022-2023 be described?"

1. What kind of personal training did the identified new teachers have before they were engaged as new instructors in the Bay school?

2. What impact do these difficulties have on the performance of the inexperienced teachers working at the Bay school?

3.. What problems with getting to and from the Bay School have been identified?

4. What coping mechanisms did the inexperienced teachers use to deal with these issues?

4. METHODOLOGY

This study's design was based on phenomenology, which is a branch of the qualitative research paradigm. Many phenomenologists share the belief that people derive meaning from their experiences to make sense of the world. The neophyte teachers' experiences at those bay schools were recounted by the researcher using the phenomenology study technique. To understand the substance of the incident under investigation, the researcher analyzed the feelings, perceptions, and beliefs of the informants. The phenomenological research design requires the researcher to abandon any preconceived notions about the experience or phenomenon.

Among the fifteen (15) consenting participants/informants of this study that were purposefully and conveniently selected, the following instruments were utilized: a Researcher-Made Questionnaire, a one-on-one interview, documentation of observed codes and themes, and an Interview Questionnaire.

A total of fifteen (15) willing neophyte educators served as the participants/informants of this study who were purposively and conveniently selected in consideration of the criteria for selecting the informants and research ethical considerations. They were all from the Divisions of Paombong and Hagonoy, Bulacan for the school year 2022-2023. The participants were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) had been absorbed in the Bay school with not more than three years of teaching experience; (2); and selected neophyte teachers in District 1 Division of Bulacan. (3) willing to participate.

A letter was written to the school division Superintendent and the principals of the participating schools requesting their consent. After obtaining authorization, the researcher distributed survey questionnaires and conducted interviews with neophyte educators in Bay schools. Ethical considerations were observed, taking into account certain ethical research standards. In addition, the researcher observed the norms of autonomy, beneficence, and confidentiality. The information obtained from the participant was not disclosed in a manner that would identify the participant's results. The study employed confidentiality to protect the respondents' health and employment. The autonomy principle refers to the notion that individuals should be viewed as autonomous agents who decide for themselves whether to engage in a research study. With this idea, an individual recommended as the study's informant has chosen whether to participate. The researcher also sent a letter of communication to the administrators of the selected schools, and with this information, they determined whether to join the study.

After the research interviews, the researcher manually coded the data based on themes and indicators to be examined and interpreted to respond to the study questions provided. In the data analysis, thematic analysis and coding techniques were applied. The responses of the study's participants were

transcribed. According to themes, the transcribed data will be coded and examined. Using Colaizzi's (1978, as mentioned in, 2003) descriptive phenomenology technique, this study's data analysis was conducted. This phenomenological research method emphasizes rigor and reliability to get a conclusion regarding the themes of people's lived experiences (Sanders, 2003).

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Personal Training of New Teachers Before They Were Engaged as New Instructors in the Bay School

This study presented the neophyte educators' teaching and working experiences before being employed as neophytes at the Bay School.

"I taught at a private Catholic school for 4 years as an English teacher, both in junior high and senior high school. There was nothing special since I was already accustomed to a typical teaching and learning environment." (NE-001- 1.)

"I worked at a BPO company for 2 years and 10 months and taught in a private school as a kindergarten and grade 1 teacher. I had to be physically and mentally fit." (NE-002- 1.)

"I was a preschool teacher for four years at a private school. I made sure that I was prepared in all aspects of my life, established my papers, and worked hard for me to get the target score for ranking." (NE-003- 1.)

"I previously taught at St. Mary's Academy of Hagonoy for 3 years as a grade 1 teacher and did some tutorials before entering or before I was assigned to Tibaguin Elementary School in Hagonoy, Bulacan. I taught for 3 years in a private school, and I used my experiences as a guide before I taught in the bay school." (NE-004- 1.)

"I taught for 8 years in a private school, and it helped me become an effective and efficient teacher. I had to prepare myself mentally, physically, and emotionally." (NE-005- 1.)

"I graduated from Bulacan State University Hagonoy Campus with a Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Generalist. I only made easy preparations because I was living here by the bay." (NE-006- 1.)

"I am a licensed teacher with six years of teaching experience at a private school. I was a trained coach in several fields. I was also taking up my master's degree. I applied for and passed the requirements to become a qualified public school teacher, and I prepared myself by doing a tour of the school with the students and asking my friends near the bay school about transportation." (NE-007- 1.)

"I took up my college degree at Bulacan State University and had two years of teaching experience at Santiago Trillana Academy in Hagonoy, Bulacan. I attended seminars and trained in skills like TESDA. I usually update myself through the internet and seminars." (NE-008- 1.)

"I had six years of teaching experience in a private school, and I loved teaching and everything about the profession. I attended some seminars and pieces of training." (NE-009- 1.)

"I had two years of teaching experience at a private school." (NE-0010- 1.)

"I had three years of teaching experience at a private school. I attended some seminars in TESDA to acquire a National Certificate (NC II) to provide some learning for my phase." (NE-0011- 1.)

"I had eight years of teaching experience at a Catholic school. I familiarized myself by browsing the area around the bay school." (NE-0012- 1.)

"I was a licensed teacher with two years of teaching experience in a private school. I prepared for his mental health and possible environmental adjustment." (NE-0013- 1.)

"I had two years of teaching experience in a private school handling senior high school students, and in my third year of teaching at the Polytechnic College, I taught English-related subjects to college students. I had to prepare myself mentally, as it was an unusual place for me to be. My family supported me and helped me accept the fact that I had to travel back and forth by boat." (NE-0014- 1.)

"I taught junior high school students in private schools for 4 years in the urban area. I prepared myself by strengthening my feelings to face the unexpected challenges that I may encounter in an unfamiliar place." (NE-0015- 1.)

Impact of Difficulties on the Performance of the Inexperienced Teachers Working at the Bay School

This study presented the challenges with students and teachers that the informants encountered while serving at the Bay school.

"After almost 2 months of teaching in the bay school, I encountered the learner's inability to read with comprehension. It is quite challenging considering that these students are already in Grade 6, plus the challenge of remediation classes despite the full load and paperwork that need to be done." (NE-001- 2-2.1)

"There are no shortcomings when it comes to learners because, compared to land schools, the number of learners is lower, but with the teachers, the common shortcoming is the coordinators. Since we have a limited labor force, they need to multitask. I took this as a challenge because I knew that I would benefit as well in the long run." (NE-002- 2-2.1)

"I attributed the issues and difficulties to the learners' lack of interest as well as the scarce resources—such as the television, projector, and so on." (NE-003-2-2.1.)

"I don't have any shortcomings in teaching at the bay school because I loved the place and the entire community." (NE-004- 2-2.1)

“The specific issue with the learners is that some of them have difficulty reading and writing, although they are in higher grades. These shortcomings positively affect me because, as a teacher, I want my learners to learn. The shortcoming I encountered in the bay school is that some learners choose to help their parents with their work instead of going to school.” (NE-005- 2-2.1)

“While there are specific issues I encountered in teaching at the Bay School before I didn’t know why the students took absences. I was sad whenever this happened, but when I understood the reason behind it, I became very proud of my learners because they helped their families in terms of their economic status.” (NE-006- 2-2.1.)

“They are different from the learners in the city or land, especially in their behavior and culture. I observed that the learners here are more behaved, but compared to their intellectual ability, it is observable that they are below average. Most of the students belong to the below-average group, which is why it is challenging for teachers to finish the scheduled discussion accordingly.” (NE-007- 2-2.1.)

“I am late to class because time travel is time-consuming, and of my learners, some of them are non-readers. Due to the pandemic, learners face learning gaps, which greatly affect my performance as I adjust the level of my lesson to their capabilities.” (NE-008- 2- 2.1)

“The learners have problems in terms of reading, writing, and mathematical skills. These learning gaps are the challenges I face in delivering my lessons.” (NE-009- 2-2.1)

“Because of the 2-year pandemic, it affects the learning of my students regarding reading and other areas, and they lack some of the means to enable them to study better, like computers and internet connections. In addition to that, the classroom is congested, and sometimes it is submerged in water. Some of the shortcomings that affect my performance are the learning gaps among her learners because there are some instances where she needs to give a lot of strategies to handle the class. I had to adjust their level of perception.” (NE-0010- 2-2.1)

“Some of the learners lack some means to enable them to study better, like a computer and internet connection, but these do not affect my performance as a teacher because I took it as a challenge to be able to improve myself and my teaching profession.” (NE-0011- 2-2.1)

“Lack of conducive classrooms for learning because of high tides; some classrooms are submerged in water.” (NE-0012- 2-2.1)

“Internet connection and the economic status of the learner’s parents are the shortcomings of the learners because there are times when their parents need to bring their child to assist them in work, including drying fish and catching fish in the river, which makes the learners absent from school. These

shortcomings do not affect me because I just need to think of all the alternatives for how my learners should catch up in the lessons.” (NE-0013- 2-2.1)

“The difficulties and/or hindrances with the learners and teachers that I had observed would be the lack of enrollees and attendees in the class. Some of the students are working to be able to go to school. So, some days, they need a day or two to work. I may say that this is a hindrance for me as a new teacher, as I think it is my responsibility to adjust in terms of methodology and pacing to cater to the needs of all my students. I perceived the effect of the mentioned hindrances on my performance would be mostly the added amount of effort I needed to exert to cater to the needs of many students.” (NE-0014- 2- 2.1)

“Unlike other schools, classes here in the bay are usually interrupted due to high tides and strong winds, which directly affect the students and teachers.”(NE-0015- 2-2.1)

The theme of teaching-learning difficulties is about assessing the gap between a child’s learning attainments and where they should be at any given stage in their education. The first step in addressing learning difficulties is to identify exactly where and what those difficulties are, and which students struggle with them. Quizzes are a quick and easy way to formatively assess what students have learned. These can be mini end-of-topic quizzes or even ones covering a few units of a subject.

Problems with Getting to and from the Bay School

The focus is on dangers associated with transportation that might be brought on by various transportation systems. Everyday lives and transportation systems are disrupted as a direct result of the accidents that are caused by the risks that come along with accelerated mobility. This is a concern that neophyte educators face when traveling to and from Bay Area schools. The neophyte educator’s everyday activities are made hazardous by the high winds, undercurrents, and weather disruptions.

“I also struggle to ride a boat, even when it’s raining and there are strong winds and waves because I don’t know how to swim.” (NE-001-2.2)

“Going to and from the bay school is very hazardous, especially when it is raining and there are big waves, and the transportation fare is more expensive compared to land.” (NE-002-2.2)

“The time travel going to and from the bay school is very consuming and tiring.” (NE-003-2.2)

“My shortcoming in teaching at the Bay School is transportation. There are times that I am late for our first-period class, but I do my best to catch the lessons that my learners missed. I also have a problem regarding transportation because most of my salary goes to my travel expenses.” (NE-004-2.2)

“Regarding travel expenses, it consumes a lot of my budget and it is not safe during bad weather.” (NE-005-2.2)

“As regards going to and from the bay school, I take it as a challenge when the weather is not in good condition, especially when the boat is small.” (NE-006-2.2)

“As regards going to and from the bay school, it is more challenging, especially during the rainy season.” (NE-007-2.2)

“The problem with transportation in the bay school is that it is much more costly compared to the land school, and I usually prepare earlier than normal.” (NE-008-2.2)

“With regards to travel to and from bay school, I need to wake up early because of the time that I need to travel from our home to school. I was not comfortable riding on a boat.” (NE-009-2.2)

“The travel time affects the class schedule. The hazard of traveling by boat during bad weather is hard because I feel nervous when I am on my way to school.” (NE-0010-2.2)

“The same was true of my other co-teachers; I was afraid to ride on a boat during bad weather.” (NE-0011-2.2)

“It was a transportation issue.” (NE-0012-2.2)

“About transportation, it is also a challenge for me because of the distance from our home.” (NE-0013-2.2)

“The only problem that I thought about before my first day was the amount that I would have to pay to ride on a boat. I was worried about how much it would cost me since I was just a starting teacher with not enough financial resources at that time.” (NE-0014-2.2)

“Some days the current is strong and heavy rains hinder the ease of travel.” (NE-0015-2.2)

Another theme is health and safety. Occupational health and safety (OHS) is a multidisciplinary discipline that deals with all elements of health and safety in the workplace, with a heavy focus on preventing workplace risks. OHS was established in 1970 and has since grown to become one of the most important industries in the world. The three most important aspects of OHS are lowering the potential for incidents such as accidents or injuries by locating and addressing potential dangers, increased levels of efficiency and productivity as a direct result of fewer people calling out sick or being injured and missing work. Increases in both the morale and relationships of the workforce (a safer work environment is a less stressful work environment). In the past, most of the occupational health and safety measures have generally concentrated on jobs that entail manual or field labor as their target population. Nevertheless, there has been a significant shift in that regard over the past few decades. The establishment of a wholesome and risk-free working environment is the major objective of programs that are designed to promote occupational health and safety.

Coping Mechanisms of Inexperienced Teachers

Offering neophyte teachers in a bay school provides a variety of tools that may aid and support them in better assimilating to their new jobs and school cultures. In general, instructors must evaluate and assess their classroom activities to grow and improve their teaching as educators and change-makers (Morales, 2016).

“In almost 2 months of teaching at the bay school, there have been no major shortcomings that I’ve encountered other than having 2-3 non-readers.” (NE-001-3.1)

“Since I am a neophyte educator, there are instances where I am not aware of the documents that need to be submitted and someone sends me the incorrect one.” (NE-002-3.1)

“Asking another teacher for help or assistance” (NE-003-3.1)

“Maintain emotionally supportive relationships” (NE-004-3.1)

“Practicing relaxation strategies such as deep breathing, meditation, and mindfulness” (NE-005-3.1)

“Being patient helped me cope with this adversity. Make time to teach non-readers how to read and comprehend.” (NE-006-3.1)

“Some failures that I’ve encountered at the Bay School are that most students are dropping out of school because of work and poverty. Be considerate of those students who are studying while working. (NE-007-3.1)

“Due to the learning loss or gap, learners face some academic problems that need to be attended to.” (NE-008-3.1)

“Some of them have a problem with their behavior, reading, and writing skills.” (NE-009-3.1)

“The learnings of the students that I need to develop for them to cope with different learning areas.” (NE-0010-3.1)

“I am having difficulty communicating because of my poor internet connection.” (NE-0011-3.1)

“As a teacher teaching in a bay school with very few enrollees, teachers would have to be assigned to subjects that are not aligned with their majors, in my experience. I’d have to prepare for five subjects that are not related to my specialization in English. With this, I fail to submit my daily lesson log on time, as I still find it hard to prepare and plan for five subjects or academic assignments. (NE-0012-3.1)

“Students are dropping out of school because of poverty or because they choose to work immediately.” (NE-0013-3.1)

“There are students who often skip classes. Sometimes I go to their house to personally check on them.” (NE-0014-3.1)

“The learnings of the students that I need to develop for them to cope with different learning areas.” (NE-0015-3.1)

The school support system, colleagues, and co-teachers were therefore a constant source of help among the neophyte educators. While some of them resorted to colleagues as lifelines, some chose to solve the problems by themselves. They focused on managing time to prepare lessons in advance. It was noteworthy that senior colleagues were a constant source of help for the neophyte teachers in the study. To have a network of individuals who can offer help in either a practical or emotional capacity is what we mean when we talk about having a support system. The neophyte educator's overall

health can be improved with the help of these support systems, which have also been demonstrated to lessen feelings of stress and worry.

There are several issues, including the facilities and welfare of its personnel; therefore, there isn't a perfect and comprehensive agency like there is in the field of education. Here are the neophyte educators' requests to address the Department of Education and the Schools Division of Bulacan.

"I just want them to respond to the needs of the community regarding the electrical problem and water supply, especially after the typhoon." (NE-004-4)

"Give the bay school top priority and pay instructors on a hazard basis." (NE-005-4)

"I'm hopeful that the bay school's risk compensation system should remain." (NE-006-4)

"I hope that the administration will focus more on the needs of both educators and pupils at the Bay school." (NE-007-4)

"We travel in a somewhat unsafe manner here at the bay school; therefore, I wish that hazard pay would return." (NE-008-4)

"Fewer forms to fill out and hazard pay." (NE-009-4)

"Build classrooms that will be more conducive to learning (not flooded) and give hazard pay for the teachers in the bay school area." (NE-0011-4)

"Improve the physical facility" (NE-0012-4)

"Hazard support" (NE-0013-4)

"Teachers already must worry about their safety every day as they travel to work; we shouldn't have to cover those costs (transfer fees for the boat). The Department of Education should investigate whether teachers across the board should be compensated for their efforts and sacrifices with hazard pay." (NE-0014-4)

"NE-001", "NE-002", "NE-003", "NE-009", "NE-0010", and "NE-0015," refused to answer the query.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Given the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The researcher identified 15 neophyte educators in the Bay School in the District of Hagonoy and Paombong in the Division of Bulacan. Even though some of the informants are BSED program graduates, they handled elementary learners. The ages of the neophyte educators ranged from 23 to 30 years old. All the informants were licensed professional teachers and had teaching experiences in private schools and other institutions.

2. As neophyte educators in the Bay Schools, the informants went through the personal preparations of being mentally and physically prepared, as well as being ready in all aspects of their lives. The regular application process included an examination, interview, training, and demonstration of teaching skills, which are components of the rules in compliance with the recruiting process in the Department of Education.

3. Teaching and learning difficulties have been identified among learners because of the pandemic's two years of existence. Basic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic have suffered. The Bay School communities lack material resources, but they are rich in the sense that the learners' parents and other stakeholders are kind and generous. The experiences told by the neophyte educators shed light on the genuine meaning of gratitude and appreciation towards their service and commitment to the Bay Schools. They are easy to get along with, very supportive, and always appreciative of them for taking on the challenges of being their children's teachers.

4. The neophyte educators teaching in the Bay School District expressed their concerns and appealed to the Department of Education that the existing guidelines on the hazard pay benefits for teachers working in the Bay School District be revised and amended. The school facility also needs a lot of improvement, but the most important thing is how our neophyte educators are employing great dedication, love for learners, and resilience. These characteristics are the true meaning of the neophyte teachers in the Bay Area schools.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the conclusions generated from the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Contextualized and localized in-service training programs of DepEd may be aligned to the needs of the neophyte educators in the Bay School through workshops and seminars, rewards, and incentive programs to compensate for the risk they experience in the Bay School.

2. The neophyte teachers who are working in the Bay School District may address their concerns by submitting appeals to the Department of Education, requesting that the existing guidelines on the hazard pay benefits for teachers employed in the Bay School District undergo review and amendment.

3. Since the researcher limited the informants of the study to neophyte educators in the Bay school, future studies may extend the scope to include a more diverse group of teachers to generate comprehensive descriptions of teaching.

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