



Journey of Teachers of Last-Mile Schools: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study was to describe and examine the lived experiences of teachers teaching in Last-Mile Schools. This research attempted to examine the lived experiences of fifteen Last-Mile School Teachers in the East Malungon District in the Division of Sarangani. Using phenomenological research methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, this study found that assigning teachers to last-mile schools or distant locations is difficult not only in East Malungon District but also across the country. The findings revealed that lived experiences of teachers had diverse experiences and there were ten themes created such as accessibility of the school's location, By chance, I'm teaching, Teaching: A Work of Heart, Preparedness in Teaching: The power of preparation and planning, Experience is the best teacher, A potpourri of approaches, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Teaching in a Last-Mile School is more fulfilling, Quality Education is possible, and The Image of 21st Century Teachers of Last-Mile-Schools. To go to school, teachers must ride a motorcycle and walk for kilometers over often slick/muddy terrain. Teachers sacrifice a portion of their pay to purchase classroom resources to support learning. They frequently provide money to youngsters for food and school materials. Teachers in this study are looking forward to a much better assignment in the future, despite having rewarding experiences serving a disadvantaged neighborhood.

Keywords: lived experiences, last mile schools, phenomenological study, qualitative study, in-depth interview/focus grouped discussion, east malungon district, Philippines.

Introduction

1. Rationale

"Teaching in a far-flung area is not easy, especially when you do not know who you are with, the people, kind of pupils you will have, and location of the school. But, I am here today in this field because I am called to touch millions of young minds, though it took miles away from my home, and it sometimes exceeds my expenses. There are instances I visited a lending company to sustain my weekly allowances. Everything is paid off every time my pupils learn from me and when I see some changes in their behaviors."

(-Quejada, A. & Orale R, 2018)

This vignette speaks of the present dilemma that last mile school teachers in society are facing. It is extremely difficult to teach in a remote school. Teachers would be confronted with a wide range of inconvenient modes of transportation. There have been several instances where teachers have not only committed their time but have also made self-sacrifices to fulfill their commitment to the delivery of learning. Teachers in the Philippines are reported to be "overworked" due to a plethora of additional obligations and jobs.

Remote schools in the Philippines still lack teaching services, and teachers in the countryside face persistent difficulties in offering quality basic education. The teachers' perceptions at this school are close to those of many teachers in the country's Geographically Isolated and Depressed Areas (GIDA). Poverty can be seen in the classroom, among the students, and the community as a whole. Teaching and learning programs are urgently needed at the school. The majority of students are unable to read, although others are illiterate. Teachers must ride a motorcycle and walk for kilometers on sometimes slick/muddy trails to get to work. (Quejada and Orale, 2018).

Teaching at a last-mile school/ rural school is a major task. To get to the station, teachers would have to endure a variety of unpleasant modes of transportation, including "banka," "habal-habal," and even the employment of animals such as horses or carabao. Teachers put their life and the lives of their families on the line to pursue their chosen profession (Barcena (2018). Furthermore, teachers have to adjust and gratify themselves, yet they still have pleasant experiences. They've also had a variety of experiences that have helped them grow as people and inspired them to stay and help the poorest families in rural locations. However, teachers were able to cope with the phenomena of her study because of the trusting relationships among their colleagues, which strengthened their willingness and growth, causing them to elect to stay in their particular schools.

Furthermore, according to (Lock, 2016), there is no question that the volunteers were drawn to rural schools because they wanted to make a difference in the lives of the children who reside in these secluded villages. They talked about how much fun it is to take on a new task and how much fun it is to

teach in remote locations. Hence, the key individuals responsible for supervising/facilitating the learning process and activities of the learner are teachers or teaching facilitators (Tout, 2016). Owing to its inaccessibility, schooling in an outlying neighborhood has been difficult to attain, resulting in nonstandard schools, a shortage of basic amenities (Matalang, 2019).

In addition, the Pakistani Constitution mandates that all children aged 5 to 16 receive free and compulsory education to increase adult literacy and standard education at the primary level. The deadline for participants in the Dakar Declaration Education for All (EFA) commitment, including Pakistan, was 2015, but they failed to reach it (Farooq, 2017). Hence, Pakistan's public schools, particularly in rural areas, are beset by a shortage of resources and unprofessional attitudes among teachers rarely trained in physics. Though the instruction is satisfactory, the instruction is often trivial, and the practical activities are a waste of time (Islam, 2017).

In the Division of Sarangani, there are last-mile school implementers in every municipality in the province. This impacted why the investigator is keen and interested in identifying through his plight of the research endeavor. The investigator intends to discover the phenomenological experiences of teachers in the Sarangani division, specifically the East District of Municipality of Malungon. It seeks to advance how teachers in the last-mile school will provide that strong identity as effective and efficient curriculum implementers based on their lived experiences. East District solely has fourteen (14) elementary schools wherein all of the schools are categorized as LastMile program implementers based on the criteria set forth, mainly established by at least 75% of IP learners. It is hoped that an accurate picture of Last-mile teachers will be revealed through the participants' shared experiences. In effect, it is expected that a better understanding of the teachers and the treatment of the problems relative to the experienced phenomenon will be appropriately addressed.

2 Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study aimed to know the challenges and lived experiences of teachers teaching in Last-Mile Schools. In this study, the investigator focused primarily on the perceptions of identity with a group of teachers who had taught for three years and beyond in public schools. It is generally accepted that identity is a multidimensional entity that evolves through a continuous process of negotiating oneself in various settings. As a teacher, the investigator is interested in understanding the processes of teachers' search for self and developing their professional identity as a teacher. It looks deeper into how teachers manage a newly developed curriculum while confronting challenges. The participants of this phenomenological research were the teachers who taught in the implementation of Last Mile Schools.

3. Research Question

1. What are the lived experiences of teachers in Last-Mile School?
2. How do they cope with the challenge of their experiences?
3. What insight can they share?

4. Theoretical Lens

This study is viewed from the lens of Honebein, Mark Bevir, and Albert Bandura of Constructivism, Interpretivism, and Social Learning Theory. A constructivist philosophical paradigm is an approach that claims that humans construct their understanding and knowledge of the universe by experiencing things and reflecting on them. People build or construct much of what they learn via experience, according to the analogy or foundation. As a result, the constructivist believes that creating meaning is the only type of learning available. This nullifies the conventional idea of learning in a "chew, pour, and forget" manner, i.e., learning for the sake of an exam with little or no desire to use what has been learned in real-life situations (Dickson Adom, 2016).

Furthermore, the constructivist teacher might use instructional methods that are learner-centered rather than instructor-centered to drive the teaching and learning processes. Reciprocal Questioning, Jigsaw Classroom, and Structured Controversies are some of the teaching techniques suggested by Woolfolk (2010).

On the other hand, Interpretivism is a philosophy that opposes the objectivist belief that meaning exists outside of the mind in the universe. It is linked to idealism and is used to gather together many perspectives such as social constructivism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. Furthermore, interpretivism research focuses on the meaning and can take several techniques to reflect different aspects of the situation (iNtgrty, 2016).

Education is a process that lasts for life. This begins the day of their birth and finishes the day of their deaths. Present in all cultures, it comes in many forms, ranging from "hard knocks education" or learning by practice to formal institutional learning, from rural to urban environments, and from youth to the elderly. John Dewey's philosophy, "Education is not life-preparedness, but Education is life itself (Deporos, 2015). As a result, effective teaching necessitates teachers possessing the skills and knowledge necessary to engage students in active and meaningful learning experiences and manage well-functioning classrooms in which students can work productively. (Larkin, 2019).

5. Significance of the study

This phenomenological study, which is aimed to describe the teacher's lived experiences in teaching Last-Mile School. This study is expected to provide the figure of realistic exploration on the challenges each is facing. It is intended for a variety of audiences for which the findings are likely to be of interest. The immediate audience is the Department of Education, policymakers, teachers teaching at last-mile schools, school principals, last-mile school coordinators/supervisors, parents, students, investigators, and future investigators.

6. Delimitation and Limitations of the Study

To address the limitation of this study, it will explore the lived experiences of teachers teaching in last-mile school implementers employed in Sarangani Division. A total of fifteen (15) participants will be utilized in the conduct of the study. The participants' real names will not be disclosed regarding their privacy and observance of research protocol protecting them from any harm or prejudice/s.

a. Preparation for Rural Teaching in Initial Teacher Education Programs

To date, some isolated school areas will surely face lacking teacher instructional materials and resources that may not lead to the teachers providing Basic Quality Education. As a result, schools in some isolated areas will produce learners who are slow learners and non-readers to the community (Ronald Orale and Ailyn Quejada, 2018). Hence, Initial Teacher Education (ITE), an Australian standard in Education that aims to provide by giving possible circumstances and challenges to the teachers in an urban school area as pieces of training and preparations for the teachers may be assigned in rural school areas. Several exciting studies stated that the teachers' perceptions of the isolated areas and focused-teacher Education have a strong connection. (Grainger and James, 2018). Practice Teachers assigned to conduct their practicum in some isolated or rural school areas are much good. They could benefit the pre-service teachers to positively perceive the teachers' lived experiences in rural places (Green and Nolan, 2011).

b. Teachers' Roles, Relationships and Challenges in Rural Schools

The teachers in rural places have a tremendous impact and relevance to the local communities because the school and the teachers are the ones who hold local gatherings and other socio-cultural activities of the community. It could develop for the teachers and the parents to have a common goal, purpose, and direction to the local community. (Chance, 2012). Further, Jarzabkowski (2003) identifies that the teachers in an isolated area can have high respect for the community's elders and leaders from molding and guiding their young ones (Clarke 2012).

c. Teachers on the Move

As a result, these and other teaching obstacles at urban institutions may limit students' and teachers' access to effective instruction. Lecturers from the United Nations are assigned to the study area; a far-flung college is generally made up of people who are new to teaching, who are young but passionate, committed, and zealous. They appear at their current assignment as temporary and can eventually be re-assigned to a far higher college. The lived experiences of teacher informants are per alternative teachers' experiences in Geographically Isolated and Depressed space (GIDA) areas of the Philippines. It's characterized by the financial condition of the college itself, lower student competencies, and a destitute community. The poor state of faculty in terms of teaching and learning resources forces lecturers to slice a part of their earnings to support classroom activities in their need to deliver higher education. Lecturers got to ride relatively less-safer modes of transportation and walk kilometers to succeed in their working stations. With committed lecturers, they turn out few achievers. For the teacher-participants, their life as a far-flung teacher is fulfilling, however, is wanting forward to higher assignment nearer to their homes sometime. They dream of the many good things for his or her students and therefore the community as an entire. Larger support for the far-flung colleges, their students, and therefore the communities the college serves is extremely necessary. (Quejada & Orale, 2018).

d. The Indigenous Peoples Curriculum in the Philippines

Through the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS), DepEd created a curriculum in response to the Education for All (EFA) initiative to address aboriginal communities' learning needs and desires and disadvantaged learners. The IP curriculum is applied to IP learners by the ALS group. The curriculum's objective is to achieve functional literacy. The academic skills are derived from the primary and secondary level ALS curriculum. The curriculum's quality is based on the Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA) or RA No. 8371. The IP curriculum represents the main areas of the everyday needs of IPs. Luistro (2010) clarified that the program centers on family life from birth to death, impacting IP's life cycle. This delineates family members' different roles and how they affect the individual and the entire ICC in their respective domains. It also discusses water, sanitation, and safety with traditional hygiene, health, food habits, awareness, and social beliefs. The central field addresses common diseases and health conditions encountered by IPs due to their particular geographical areas and circumstances. Civic consciousness reveals IPs' rich worldview from their ways of life, identity, and history. It is full of people's desires, wishes, and emotions. Economics and revenue relate to how IPs earn a living and care for their communal source of life and livelihood. At the same time, the environment focuses on the communion of IPs with nature. It highlights their close environmental attachment.

e. Status of a Remote School in the Philippines and Its Students

Geographically isolated populations are typically disadvantaged. So many elements are missing from the study area (Reliefweb, 2014) that the majority of the families supported by the school are impoverished, their guardians have a weak educational foundation, and some have not attended class. Daily, many understudies walk for kilometers to get to school. According to studies, hungry persons have a harder time learning. If pupils come from food-insecure families, their learning and growth suffer (Tamiru, 2017). Students are frequently required to bring certain resources to work on during school events. In many situations, teachers try to avoid such activities since they know their students are impoverished and cannot afford them. The school is similarly in bad condition. It lacks the necessary resources for instructors to provide the type of education that the Philippine constitution mandates. The majority of the time, instructors must pay for classroom supplies out of their own pockets. Many children are struggling academically, maybe as a result

of a combination of reasons. Teachers' ongoing commitment and attention to students' welfare and learning is one of the most essential components in the development of love for teaching. Teachers that are passionate about their profession are incredibly inspiring to their pupils (Quejada&Orale, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

This study explains the investigator's design, the participants, instruments, data collection, data analysis sampling, research instruments, procedural rigor, the trustworthiness of the study, validity issues, and ethical considerations of investigations.

1) *Research Design*

In this study, the descriptive phenomenology aims for teachers' pure self-expression with no intervention from the researcher. What matters in this analysis is the experience as presented by the students, not what someone else felt or said about it. As a result, investigating teachers' living experiences is so important that it is a prerequisite of this research. The design describes the lived experiences of teachers teaching last-mile schools, particularly in East Malungon District, Division of Sarangani. The data collected through writing and interview would be substantial in understanding the lived experiences of the teachers.

2) *Role of the Researcher*

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is critical as he or she collects data and performs analysis (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the investigator's role in this study was that of an observer-as-participant. It was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis that collected, coded, and analyzed data from interviews, participant journals, and questionnaires to uncover emerging concepts. Therefore, there is the possibility for bias, which may influence the report's results, making this a tough balancing act for feelings, conclusions, and behaviors being impartial and non-judgmental.

3) *Research Participants*

The study participants are the fifteen (15) teachers residing in Sarangani, East Malungon District. The participants must qualify inclusion criteria: Must be a teacher of the said last-mile school implanters. Must be handling almost 75 % of indigenous people learners. Must have been teaching in the Division of Sarangani and must have a Very Satisfactory performance rating in the past three years of ResultBased Performance Management System- Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (RPMS-IPCRF). The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) were created and nationally verified to support reform activities on teacher quality. The DepEd uses the RPMS to guarantee that work activities are directed toward accomplishing the department's vision, mission, values, and strategic goals in providing excellent educational services to Filipino students.

4) *Research Instruments*

The questions will be framed in English, but there will be a ready, translated version. Moreover, this will ensure that the questions will be well-understood to obtain rich and substantial data. From beginning to end of each interview, the investigator will observe the atmosphere of friendliness with the participant to invite her to share her stories. The investigator will conduct one-on-one interviews with the target participants if they cannot participate in the focus group discussion. Every participant will receive identical, semi-structured open-ended questions, allowing for patterns and themes to emerge from the data. Participants' names and identifying characteristics will be assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality, appropriate reporting, and data analysis.

5) *Research Sampling*

In qualitative research, the type of sampling employed is determined by the methodology selected and the topic under investigation, not by the need to create generalizable findings. The samples or participants in phenomenological research are generally chosen according to what is known as "purposive sampling." Purposive quota sampling will be used for the recruitment of the teacher-participant. This sampling technique is necessary in a qualitative study, particularly in this case (phenomenological), because of the need to get information from those who have lived experiences and expertise in their fields related to the phenomenon under study. This will provide the investigator with an intensive engagement with the participants and the data gathered to describe better and understand the phenomenon. Since the study will make use of purposive quota sampling, the division last-mile school coordinator in coordination with the district last-mile school in charge shall help in the identification of the target participants who will qualify the criteria and, most importantly, who can provide their lived experiences valuable to create a universal picture of the phenomenon being experienced by the teachers teaching in last-mile school implementers.

6) *Data Collection*

Following the procedures in the conduct of a descriptive phenomenological study. This study will begin with the investigator's identification of a research design that fits the study's aim. More so, the semi-structured in-depth interview will be utilized.

7) *Data Analysis*

It will start with the investigator engaging in reading and re-reading each transcript of the interviews taken from the fifteen participants. The investigator will familiarize the data by reviewing it and grasping the essential meanings of teacher participants' experience. In this stage, the investigator will read each transcript from the teacher participant several times to understand the content. During this stage, the investigator will note whatever ideas, thoughts, perceptions, and feelings will be elicited from his previous experience. This will help him explore the phenomenon as experienced by the teacher participants themselves. The investigator will emphasize the statements that seem to be of great importance last-mile school teachers' lived experiences will be extracted from each transcript.

8) *Trustworthiness*

Trustworthiness is the basic concept of paper to produce an effective and reliable research output. It adds a substantial impact to both the researchers and their research works. These criteria are credibility (confidence in the truth of the findings); dependability (showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated); confirmability (a degree of neutrality or extent to which the respondents shape findings of a study and not the researcher bias, motivation, or interest) and transferability (showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts).

9) *Ethical Consideration*

This research was done with a strict commitment to the ethical protocols and guidelines laid down by the Ethics Committee of the University of Mindanao. The researcher religiously sought and received the corresponding approval required to complete this study from key school officials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. MAJOR THEMES ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS IN LAST-MILE SCHOOLS

1.1. *Accessibility of the School's location*

Most of the teachers who took part in the study taught in Last-Mile Schools or were transferred to less appealing locations, such as far-flung schools. Most of them felt struggled and challenged in arriving at the school, knowing they will be assigned to the schools that are really on top of the mountains. This is most certainly the explanation that it is assigned to younger teachers. In addition to that, teachers felt a deeper connection and attachment to the learners, which made them feel the fulfillment of being a teacher, not just simply a teacher, but a teacher to IPs. Participant 2 said,

“Wala na sir na kaayu, oo sige. Ahh, my experience during that time ah I was hired by the DepEd, and assigned, first assignment Nian Integrated School. One of the far flung schools in the east malungon. Ahhh first ahhh... upon going to Danao medyo challenging siya specially sa dalan palang daan then may halo pa gid nga nerbyos tungod sa ahh dangerous terrain kay kung masipyat ka hagbong hagbong tama tama dyud sa imohang sa ubos sa may itsura. Oo kay kining tungod sa kalayo pigado gid ang dalan mostly ang ga agi is kabayo, pero pag abot sa school ahhh daw ma ingon nato, kita nasanay ta sa patag pero pag abot didto, lahi ang sitwasyon, so when I had my first day sa Danao the actual teaching medyo nalisdan ko is because most sa instruction nga ginagamit didto nga maasabtan sa bata is, o medyo kung baga is ang ilahang dialect. Which is blaand taga kaulo, medyo light lang kaayu ang ilahang understanding kung mag tagalog mag English and medyo makabalo man sila ug bisaya, pero ang response sa bata that time ikay kaulo ana kung naa bisaya gagmay lang dyud, kung baga sa first sa imohang pag tudlo wala, perfect teacher ana nga adlaw, so bisag prepared kaayu ka. You have the the preparation and with all the IMs ing ana, pero pag abot sa actual teaching ah maka ingon ka nga medyo dili kaayu sya applicable kay tungod e consider nimo ang kapasidad sa bata, so okay man sya kung visual pero the time nga mag discuss naka didto na mag daug, labi nakung English imong e discuss, muraag mag pito pitok lang ilahang mata, ah mag tando tando lang, mag yes yes ug mag no no. mao lang na ilahang tawag ani? Para maka sabot sila. Pero sapag tudlo nako at first day first week ana. More on transitional Period how to adopt the community and the way the pupil learning capability ana sir.”

For all times, teaching has been regarded as the noblest profession. There will be no other occupation produced if teachers do not exist. In particular, teaching is regarded as the occupation of all occupations. Participant 5 observes that studying in far-flung classrooms is somewhat different from learning in low-lying areas, and that he experiences a profound sense of satisfaction recognizing that he has become a part of the children's learning experience, Participant 5 said.

“Ahh actually, if you are assigned to a far flung school, expected na daana ng distance ang akoh dyud di malimtan about experiences didto unang una lahi ang grown up sa mga bata in terms sa kaning socialization nila kung e compare nimo sya diri sa atoa sa patag. So daghan ka nga mga challenges nga ah kaning about paano nimo sila e handle kay lahi sa atuag naandan sa patag kaysa sa didto sa bukid kay ang mga bata kanang murag layu pa bitaw sila sa sibilisasyon kay na assigned man gud ko sa pinaka na bukid nga school sa kanyugan elementary school dati”

This theme proves that school accessibility: The Philippine government is working to make schools, especially elementary schools, open to all barangays. As a part of this program, about 94.5 percent of school-aged children are enrolled in elementary school (House of Representatives, 2017).

1.2. *By chance, I'm teaching*

Majority among the teacher participants in the study has manifested that Teaching is not their first choice; instead, they fall in love with it once they begin. Participant 6 said,

"Honestly speaking ani nga profession wala dyud nako ni pili a nahutdan lang dyud ko ug kanang choice! Kay ang nabilin nga course nalang is education and agriculture, unya niana man akoang ante nga mambubukid na gani ta agriculture pa dyud imohang pilion. So teacher nalang ka, pero pagka first sem ato sulod ko as a teacher diba pero naa tay choice mag shift ka, pero murag ah sige e career nalang nako ni, kanang sa kadugayan na love nalang pud nimo. Na love nalang pud nimo ang pagiging teacher nga gi continue and then naka graduate and then mao to gi career na dyuy gi accept na nga murag destiny na siguro ni nako siya ang maging teacher."

Some of the teacher-participants manifested that many teachers find that their passion for children attracts them to teaching, or that their own desire for learning draws them to teaching. Any teachers go into teaching because they want to make a difference. Participant 8 said,

"So first is teaching, I want to help people those children like IP learner isa man gud pod ko sa IP learner sa murag nakita naku akoo self mao maka teacher kay there are a lot of IP learner na murag need pod akoo serbisyo to teach them kung un sa pod na knowledge akoo nabal-an I want to share kung un sa para dili pod sila maging like word na "MANGMANG".

Being a teacher should not be seen as a requirement, but rather as an option for a better future for the youth. Teaching becomes more enjoyable as it is accepted as a matter of choice to engage with today's children and instill virtues and educational ideals in them (Silihuri, 2018).

Many who feel compelled to teach, or who perceive teaching to be a deeply significant part of their lives, have a passion for it" (Garrison, Liston, 2004, p.1). "A deep tendency or attraction for an action that one enjoys and feels valuable and in which one spends time and energy," says the dictionary (Carbonneau, Vallerand, Fernet & Guay, 2008, p.978).

1.3. *Teaching: A Work of Heart*

The first reaction of teacher-participants as they are assigned to a Last-Mile School are happiness and exciting because we can't ignore the fact that for some of us, it's our bread and butter, even though the place is too dangerous for them. Participant 1 said,

"Excited na kulba. Excited siya in the sense na new environment for me from private sector tapos musulod kog DepEd which is public. Excited ko sa mga bag o nako na ma meet, bag o na mga system or bag o na mga environment na ma sudlan or ma experience. Then nervous siya in the sense na kay usahay man gud kita tanan na wala kabalo naa jud kulba basta wala ta kabalon sa isa ka butang example na muadto ta sa lugar na wala ta katuod naa jud kulba kay basig masaag so ing ana pud akong nan a feel katong gitagaan kog assignment na wala ko kabalo kulba pud k okay basig asa ni na lugar basig pila ni ka bukid, pila ni ka sapa pero ato ingon gani nila na laban lang."

Schools must keep the best teachers in the classroom because our students' futures are on the table. Alternatively, you should promote them to positions of greater accountability. We will need to recognize and help ineffective teachers (Lisciandrello, 2018).

1.4. *Preparedness in teaching: The power of preparation and planning*

Half of the teacher-participants said that since being employed by the DepEd, they have been preparing and arriving at school ready and trained. Participant 7 said,

"Are you prepared? Yes, prepared ko sa teaching job ahm ngano kay diri naman ako ano ingani naman ako ang insekwelahan so ibig sabihin diri jud akoo ang ahm akoang trabaho. What did I do to prepared myself as a teacher nag bago ko nag in nag skwela ko ulit ug masteral nag kuan ko ug masteral kay gusto naku makuan pa akoo kuan ma enhance pa ang akoo knowledge about teaching ug gusto pa naku ma kuan pa naku kong unsa jud ang pagtudlo sa bata."

Teachers were eventually supplied with new training techniques and other learning capabilities as a result of these services (Hagger and McIntyre, 2000).

Half of the teacher-participants expressed that, despite having a bachelor's degree in education, they are not really ready and prepared for their teaching jobs. In fact, the views, principles, and philosophies taught in school are too far apart in the real world. Participant 4 said,

"Akoang honestly, dili pud ko prepared sa akoang teaching job kay una una bisan gi eskwelahan nako ni, iba naman gud ang set up pag kanang tinuod na, iba man tong set up tong mnaga eskwela pata karun kay tinud anay naman gyud ni, ma ano nako nga dili pako prepared so akoang gihimo is una nako kuan sa balakayo murag ano LSB ata ko, didto nako na ano nga kailangan mangayu ko ug tabang sa mga kauban nako nga teacher kung unsa ang maayu para mas kanang naa gud koy ideakung unsa dapat himuon para mas mapa improve pud nako akoang teaching strategy."

States must ensure that new teachers are properly supported before and after the transition to higher standards. And there's no better way to begin than in teacher training programs, where new teachers practice their trade (Kassondra Granata, 2014).

1.5. *Experience is the best teacher*

Teacher participants expressed that teaching in a last-mile school is difficult, but that you will learn a lot about how to deal with students from various cultures and norms, as participant 11 said.

“Ang mahambal ko nga challenges is no.1 pag abot ko didto kag nagstart ko nagtudlo kay ang gitduluan ko grade2 grade 3 eh tapos may ara gali sang bata nga 18 years old grade 3 sya so syempre as a teacher di ka maghambal nga hala 18 kanaman ngaa ara ka diri nagschool so dili pwede kay education is for all so dawaton mo kung sin u nga bata ang magsulod sa imu tapos ang learning mo lang developmental as a professional teacher medyo magbaba gid kay syempre pag abot mo gali didto ang mga bata mo gali hindi kalitok sang A E I O U tapos magpadirirtso kana pabasa sang CAN na hindi paman gali kabalo maglitok sang A E I O U so dira palang challenge na gyud sya para sa akon nga mag umpisa gid sa umpisa kay ang mga bata kay d man gid kabalo so amo gani to hambal ko ang standard ta as a teacher e level ta gid sa mga bata kay wala gid sila matun an kong ang level ta aton sundon.”

This theme proves that teachers sometimes say that teaching experience has taught them more than coursework. A combination of doing (action) and undergoing (reflection), both personally and in a group, seemed to promote meaningful learning from all forms of teaching experiences. (Schmidt, 2010). “Experience is the greatest teacher,” teachers also claim (Goodlad, 1984).

2. MAJOR THEMES ON THE HOW THE TEACHERS COPE WITH THE CHALLENGE OF THEIR EXPERIENCES

2.1. *A potpourri of approaches*

Teaching in rural areas is very difficult. You will see your students struggling in everyday life to get an education. Walk a kilometer just to get to school and going to school even without food just to learn. Knowing this as a teacher is really hard and seems to tear the heart because we are not just a teacher, we are agents of change. Participant 3 said,

“Ahhh, Ang happy moments nako noh? as a teacher, ipa last lang nako ang basig makahilak ko hehehe, ang happy moments nako is kato nahatag nimo ang best nimo sa mga bata dili lang sya ang knowledge ang imohang na impart naka impart pud ka kanang sa I apil na nimo deretso na nako sya sa sad, kay siyempre sa bukid man gud Makita nimo lack kaayu sila ug mga pagkaon so makaka kuan ka nga ay kani nga mga bata is maka ingon kag luoy, so dili lang knowledge akong gina hatag sa mga bata kundi, labi na pud siguro ang ahn dili sya finansyal gyud nga kuan matagaan pud nimo sila ug mga pagkaon kay syempre kay mga bata man sa bukid is mag adto sila sa school daw dili sila makakao n so kato matagaan nimo sila ug pagkaon bisag sa lang man ka adlaw masudlan ang ilahang mga kuan kanag naga kalang nga sikmura.”

Teachers, on the other hand, double as second parents to their students. They are the ones who correct the students when something goes wrong, just as they do for their children. Teachers have a huge impact on the lives of the students under their charge (Jemi Sudhakar, 2017).

2.2. *Culturally Responsive Teaching*

Multicultural education is not a mission to be completed, nor is it an aim to be reached. Rather, it is a method of teaching that seeks to involve all pupils, encourage cross-cultural learning, and teach positive social skills in a multicultural environment. Participant 10 said,

“Ang happy moments ko didto naa koy matun an mga bag o nga actually hindi lang ako ang nagatudlo sa ila mismo sila nagatudlo man akon actually nga mga words kay syempre tagakaulo man mga tao didto so mismo sila ginatudloan ko nila paano magkaulo ila nga way of living natudloan ko sila which is I'm very happy until na siguro makahambal ka na bisan dien ko magkadto marember marember ko gid ang akon nga experiences didto ang happy moments ko kanang mamalit ko chocolates para sa ilaha tapos dalaon naku didto mag ana sila tamis tamis kasi ang meaning ng tamis para sa kanila masarap daw kada makauli ko sa balay or maka adto kog store mamalit kog chocolates tapos dal on sa ilaha tapos malipay na sila. Ang sad moments kolang is permi gid sya nga mga bata hindi makakadto sa school labi na mag ulan ulan kay magbaktas sila 2-3hours para makaabot sa school tapos wala sila balon mao na.”

It doesn't mean that all students need good teachers, but places like Chicago and New York will still be able to attract people to teach and work there (Elaine Mcardle, 2019).]

2.3. *Teaching in Last-Mile-School is more fulfilling*

The majority of the study's teacher participants reported that teaching in Last-Mile School is more rewarding than teaching in low-land areas. They will make distinctions and they have worked in both low- and high-lying environments. Furthermore, teachers felt a stronger bond and commitment to the IP students, allowing them to experience the satisfaction of becoming a coach, not only a teacher, but a change agent. Teacher 1 said,

“Aside from excited ko mag tudlo sa Farflung School, ang thought pud nako didto is unsa kaya ang environment didto, unsa kaya ang bag o na ma

experience nako didto. Then katong nagtudlo nako didto, ato na experience jud nako na iba, iba siya sa tanang mga natrabahoan nako daghan naman gud ko natrabahoan sa mga private sector and maingon jud nako na iba jud ang DepEd. Naa jud didto ang passion kay iba ra man gud pag ma-touch nimo ang is aka life sa is aka tao and instead na patapon ang kinabuhì nila wala silang objectives sa ilahang kinabuhì, ana gud klase na mga estudyante kanang na abot ka sa ilahang kinabuhì, I believe na naa silay matun an sa atoa og naa pud tay matun an sa ilaha murag vice versa. Dili diay kitang mga teachers dili lang sa atoa tanang learnings sometimes kita pud mga teachers naa pud tay ma learn sa atoang mga estudyante same sa akong giingon ganiha na patapon na ilahang kinabuhì and sometimes matagaan nato sila og motivation, sometimes matagaan nato silang inspiration og matagaan nato sila direksiyon sa ilahang kinabuhì. I think mao na ang pinakalami na feeling as teachers no usahay dili nimo maiwasan na makahilak bisag laki ta. Kanang makita nimo ang grow sa isa ka kinabuhì na from nothing into something and not because of me but because sa tiboog system sa school na mag tinabangay no na ma correct ang bata.”

In a classroom environment, the teacher is the most influential figure. They were how an individual's life in a society could be transformed by schooling. Furthermore, even though they would be sent to far-flung countries or armed war areas, teachers consider the job in the classroom with no regrets (Campos et. al, 2015).

3. MAJOR THEMES ON THE INSIGHTS THE LAST-MILE TEACHERS CAN SHARE WITH THEIR PEERS

3.1. Quality Education is possible

Despite a scarcity of learning resources, teachers are devising new approaches to deliver the education that our students seek. Participant 12 said,

“In all possible ways. I mean giving the fact that some of the resources are not available or limited, we try to innovate things and find some helpful alternative just to deliver this quality education to all learners. Distance is never become a hindrance to us.”

Teachers play an important part in enlightening and educating children so that they can become valuable members of their families. As a result, the state should put in more effort and money to keep teachers safe and well so that they can do their jobs better (Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2014).

3.2. The Image of 21st Century Teachers of Last-Mile-Schools

Even if they are teaching in the far reaches of Sarangani, the teachers of the last mile school ensure that they are eligible to be named 21st century teachers. They are developing a method to use technology in the classroom to educate them. Participant 11 said,

“I think teaching in a 21st century as a teacher maybe kuan, ok as a 21st teacher so naga provide mi technology then not all the technologies were not being used in cities, we are not internet connection so maybe we can adjust and seek the information how to use this technology so as a 21st teacher we need to be more update about how for those technologies that we will use and then itudlo lang sa estudyante kay ang mga basic information lang ang imung mahatag sa ilaha para dili sila mabehind sa mga learnings na dapat nila matun an.”

Many authorities (Robinson & Aronica, 2015) who have drawn parallels between classrooms from yesteryear and today have highlighted the few differences in classroom architecture and management (Anderson et.al, 2018).

4. Implications for Practices

The challenging experiences of last-mile school teachers generated ten themes: Accessibility of the School's location; By chance, I'm teaching; Teaching: A Work of Heart; Preparedness in teaching; The Power of Preparation and Planning; Experience is the Best Teacher; A Potpourri of approaches; Culturally Responsive Teaching; Teaching in Last-Mile-Schools is more Fulfilling; Quality Education is possible; and The Image of 21st Century Teachers of Last-Mile-Schools. These themes may lead to instilling awareness among department heads, division heads, district heads, principals, and even teachers who will all benefit from the findings of this study. This qualitative study, along with previous studies on teachers' lived experiences at Last Mile Schools or in rural places, backs up the premise that providing more assistance to all schools in depressed regions can improve education quality.

4.1. Implications to the teacher

Teachers-participants reported that truly put their lives and the lives of their families on the line to pursue their chosen profession, which is to expand the gift of education wherever and whenever the opportunity arises. Teachers are present in the community not only to educate the students, but also to act as living catalysts for upholding the values, integrity, and rights of all people. Teachers may instill in the minds of their pupils the value of a good education, good values, and the possibility of converting a person into a useful member of society as they educate their pupils. As a result, teaching might be regarded a vocation that demands love and passion to succeed. It is not only the career that everyone wants to pursue to continue living in this world, but it is also a career that only a select few can achieve.

4.2. Implications to Education

Teachers are frequently unprepared for the amount of labor and responsibility that is expected of them when they begin their professions. Teachers in

urban schools have unique difficulties. As a result, several participants felt a loss of efficacy and control, lost enthusiasm to keep pupils to high standards, and became so overwhelmed that they opted to drop out. These and other obstacles to effective teaching in urban schools may limit students' and instructors' access to it. The lived experiences of teacher informants are congruent with those of other teachers in the Philippines' Geographically Isolated and Depressed Areas (GIDA). It is defined by the school's poverty, as well as lesser student skills and a poor community. To provide better education, instructors are forced to cut a portion of their compensation to fund classroom activities due to the poor status of the school in terms of teaching and learning tools. To get to their workstations, teachers must choose a less-safe method of transportation and walk kilometers. They create few achievers with motivated teachers. The life of a far-flung instructor is rewarding for the teacher-participants, but they are hoping for better assignments closer to their homes in the future. They have a lot of hopes for their pupils and the community at large. It is critical to increasing support for last-mile schools, their students, and the communities they serve.

4.3. *Implications to Future Research*

First, further study on the effects of individualized professional development on this endeavour is needed. Further study in this area would aid districts, schools, and educators in providing suitable learning techniques and instructional pedagogies for all instructors.

Second, I have yet to come across studies on gender disparities and gaps in male and female instructors' views, attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge concerning last-mile schools. Further study on gender differences among instructors teaching at last-mile schools might help districts and schools better understand the best practices for last-mile school implementers, as well as how a school or district might adhere to gender-appropriate differences and similarities.

More study in this area is needed to supplement the existing study on reforming schools, which includes last-mile school implementers. Similarly, more study is needed to redefine student participation in light of today's shift in teacher thought.

5. *Concluding Remarks*

The fifteen (15) participants who kindly donated their own time to this study gave me fresh insight into their lived experiences as teachers in a last-mile school setting. This provided me with the chance to confront my preconceived notions about remote school districts. There has been a lot of studies done on the critical factors to consider when a school is located in a rural place or is designated a last-mile school. Teachers assigned to the research locale, far-flung schools, are typically neophytes, but they serve three years to teach in this study. They are young; some of them are old but devoted, engaged, and enthusiastic. They see their present assignment as temporary and expect to be reassigned to a much better school in the future. Teacher-participants' living experiences are compatible with those of other teachers in GIDA areas of the Philippines. It is defined by the school's poverty and poorer student competencies, and poor culture, have quality instruction, teachers are forced to cut a portion of their salaries to fund classroom operations due to the weak condition of the school in terms of teaching and learning services. To get to their workstations, teachers would take a less-safe mode of transportation and walk kilometers.

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