International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Exploring the Work Environment of Novice Teachers and its Challenges

[1]Abance, Juvy A. and [2]Waking, Jacqueline B.

[1,2] University of the Cordilleras, Baguio City, Philippines
DOI: https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.4.423.35943

A B S T R A C T

Teachers play pivotal roles in a nations education system. They are the front runners in the education of the country's young minds and as the world is advancing in terms of technology and information, teachers must keep abreast with the new wave of challenges in the education world.

To Determine and assess the coping mechanism or strategies implemented by the novice teachers to address such challenges. The qualitative study explored the challenges encountered by novice teachers in their work environment through interviews.

This study explored the working environment and the challenges that novice teachers faced in teaching and the coping strategies that they adopted. From interviews with 10 participants showed that the majority of the participants face several challenges, including a significant amount of paperwork that needs to be completed on time, and overburdened with non-teaching obligations. Participants reported coping strategy employed to address these challenges. The results demonstrate various, interrelated challenges novices face and that there is coping strategy teachers use daily and that is the time management.

Keywords: Work Environment, Novice teacher, Challenges

I. Introduction

Teachers play pivotal roles in a nation's education system. They are the front runners in the education of the country's young minds and as the world is advancing in terms of technology and information, teachers must keep abreast with the new wave of challenges in the education world.

In June 2012, the K-12 Basic Education policy was implemented in the Philippines. The *program* replaced the *10-year Basic Education Curriculum*. Through this reform, the Philippines is catching up with global standards in secondary education and is attaching a high value to kindergarten. This resulted in a massive hiring of novice teachers who needed to adjust with all the issues involved in the shift to the K -12 curriculum.

Novice teachers are conceptualized as teachers who are new to the profession and with only a few years of teaching experience (Dishena& Mokoena, 2016). They completed a university-based teacher education program and often referred to as beginning teachers (Kim & Roth, 2011). They could be viewed as strangers in a new land since they are unfamiliar with the school's culture and norms, and they must navigate through planning, teaching, assessing, and an assortment of other responsibilities and demands (Michel, 2013).

The first years of teaching are a crucial period for professional development and career pathways (Voss et al., 2017). Starting to teach can result in a number of positive experiences, professional learning opportunities and positive emotions (Aspfors&Bondas, 2013). At the same time, the beginning phase of teaching can be depicted as challenging as previous researches demonstrated a "reality shock" experienced by novice teachers in their transfer from teacher training into the workplace (Dicke et al., 2015). In a study conducted by Goodwin (2012), most novice teachers are often found struggling with classroom management, curricular freedom, and unsupportive working environment during their first year of teaching.

Studies have shown clearly that work environment can enable or constrain good teaching (Bryk and Schneider 2002; McLaughlin and Talbert 2001; Rosenholtz 1989). Factors such as whether the school building is well equipped, whether colleagues provide helpful assistance, or whether there are good support services for students all mediate what any teacher, however talented or well trained, can accomplish in the classroom. The characteristics of teachers are not fixed nor static. Rather, they are malleable and dynamic within a rich, professional context that encourages learning and growth. Thus, improving work environment of teachers can increase the capacity of schools to serve all students.

Tripathi (2014) defines working environment as the environment in which people work and comprises of physical setting, job profile, market condition and culture. Bushiri (2014) also perceive working environment as the sum of the interrelationship that exists within the employees and the environment in which the employees work. Manu (2016) says that work environment can be identified as the professional and social environment in which a person

interacts and works with a number of people. Nakpodia (2011) avers that work environment is the "totality of conditions under which a person or a group of persons work or perform his or her duties".

Johnson (1990) specified school as a work environment having many features that together create the context for individual teachers' work. These aspects of the work environment are the following: 1) The physical features of buildings, equipment, and resources, which serve as a platform for teachers' work; 2) The organizational structures that define teachers' formal positions and relationships with others in the school, such as lines of authority, workload, autonomy, and supervisory arrangements; 3) The sociological features that shape how teachers experience their work, including their roles, status, and the characteristics of their students and peers; 4) The political features of their organization, such as whether teachers have opportunities to participate in important decisions; 5) The cultural features of the school as a workplace that influence teachers' interpretation of what they do and their commitment, such as values, traditions, and norms; 6) The psychological features of the environment that may sustain or deplete them personally, such as the meaningfulness of what they do day to day or the opportunities they find for learning and growth; 7) The educational features, such as curriculum and testing policies, that may enhance or constrain what teachers can teach.

A supportive working environment is critical for novice teachers in coping with challenges in their initial years. Although all novices strive to survive their first year, how they survive the challenges they face determines the kind of teachers they become in future and the strategies that they employ to cope with their problems usually last throughout their entire teaching career (Feiman-Nemser, 1983).

Coping mechanisms are used as a means for adaptation into a new settlement (Cramer, 1998). It can be understood as individuals' cognitive and behavioral efforts aimed at reducing and overcoming challenges (Chaaban& Du, 2017). Sharplin et al. (2011) found that novice teachers used three categories of coping strategies: (a) direct-action strategies (i.e. stress source elimination, e.g. getting information, seeking assistance from colleagues and establishing work boundaries), (b) palliative strategies (i.e. reducing stress by modifying internal/emotional reactions, e.g. positive self-talk, accepting, establishing psychological boundaries and use of humour), and (c) avoidance (e.g. ignoring, denying and psychological or physical withdrawal). In this study coping mechanisms are defined as means designed by novice teachers to alleviate problems, they experience during their first year of teaching so as to achieve their teaching goals. Cramer (1998) indicates that these coping mechanisms can either be successful or unsuccessful.

One way of coping as a novice teacher involves the direct-action strategy of seeking support from colleagues. However, not all novice teachers seek help from their experienced colleagues since this would be seen as being weak or insufficient. On the other hand, some school administrators do not seem to acknowledge the significance of rendering assistance to novice teachers at their schools. Therefore, some novices are left to formulate coping mechanisms and to grapple with the challenges they encounter on their own in spite of their lack of experience and knowledge.

In the Philippines, only few studies were conducted on the hidden dynamics of the work environment; neither teachers nor non-teaching staffs have been aware of the salient aspects of the workplace conditions, how it affects them and students as well. This is why the present study is very important; it endeavors to identify the challenges novice teachers of Baguio City National High School face in their work environment as well as to explore the various coping mechanisms they employ in surviving such challenges.

II. Methodology

This research aims to determine and asses the coping mechanism or strategies implemented by the novice teachers to address challenges encountered in their work environment. Therefore, a qualitative research design was developed because it provides a deeper understanding and offers insight into teachers' lived experiences (Kvale, 1996; Punch &Oancea, 2014; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

The study was conducted in Baguio City National High School (BCNHS). It is a public secondary school in Baguio City with its main campus situated at Governor Pack Rd., and has several annexes in the city.The participants of the study were 10 novice teachers of BCNHS. The respondents were full-time teachers with at least one to three years teaching experience in the organization.

Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection to capture the lived meanings and experiences of the subjects' everyday world (Kvale, 1996; Kvale& Brinkmann, 2015). The researchers gathered the necessary information from the respondents of this study by administering a face-to-face interview in which several questions were asked. The interviews centered on these novice teachers' work environment and its challenges during their early years of teaching. Every interview was recorded on audio, and they all lasted between 10 and 15 minutes.

In this study, the data analysis was done using a thematic bottom-up approach. The interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis guided by the research questions (Fereday& Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The recorded interviews were manually transcribed and coded to identify the positive and negative aspects that had been experienced by the novice teachers in their work environment, the coping mechanism and strategies, as well as the strategies employed by the administrator to overcome challenges.

III. Findings

1. What positive aspects did you see and encounter in your work environment?

Out of ten teachers, seven teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, and T10) said that the positive aspects that they experienced in their work environment were that teachers help each other, and also known as "The Binnadang Culture", that there was good collaboration on the teaching strategies that were effective in the classroom, and that there was sharing of ideas and workloads for them to have a lighter workload.

Three teachers (T7, T9, and T10) stared that, compared to other work place, our school is equipped. we have enough buildings for the everybody to use, computers and other facilities were also provided for all, the school has an auditorium, gym, medical or dental and other buildings intended for some specific activities.

2. What negative aspects did you see and encountered in your work environment?

 The negative aspects that they encountered includes: a significant amount of paper work that needs to be completed on time, which puts pressure on the teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4, T7, and T10). Four teachers (T3, T5, T6, and T8) also stated that they were overburdened with non-teaching obligations and that in order to prepare for their classes, they had to fulfill other obligations.

3. What strategies did you use to cope up with the challenges encountered?

 According to all ten teachers, the tactics they take to deal with the challenges they face include always performing time management.

4. How did the strategies work? Did it succeed or fail?

Eight teachers (T1, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, and T10) stated that the strategies adopted were successful, whereas two teachers (T2, and T4) stated that it is sometimes successful and sometimes not due to unexpected circumstances.

5. What strategies did the administrator employ to overcome challenges?

According to all ten teachers, the administrator implements strategies to overcome issues by addressing and arranging meetings to resolve concerns and regularly reminding teachers to do important activities to prevent problems.

IV. Discussion

This study explored the working environment and the challenges that novice teachers faced in teaching and the coping strategies that they adopted. Qualitative data from interviews with 10 participants showed that the majority of the participants face several challenges, including a significant amount of paperwork that needs to be completed on time, and overburdened with non-teaching obligations Participants reported coping strategy employed to address these challenges.

Time management was the most common strategy employed by teachers to tackle the challenges they faced. As technique for effective use of time to accomplish the tasks required (Orpen, 1994; Slaven &Totterdell, 1993; Woolfolk & Woolfolk, 1986) for planning and allocating (Francis-Smythe & Robertson, 1999a; Burt & Kemp, 1994) as to be structured and purposive (Sabelis, 2001; Strongman & Burt, 2000; Vodanovich &Seib, 1997; Bond & Feather, 1988) to get insight to use time efficiently to pursue the activities (King et al.,1986) and practices to maximize intellectual productivity (Britton & Tesser,1991).

Time management is straight forwardly defined as the management of time in order to make the most out of it (David, 1999), it refers to all of the practices that individuals follow to make better use of their time (Allen, 2001)

Time management as a strategy is successful for eight teachers because it is the only way they can overcome those challenges; however, two teachers stated that the strategy is not always effective due to unforeseen circumstances such as rushing through requirements and substituting absent teachers.

With these challenges, the administrator employs numerous ways to address problems, such as holding meetings to resolve issues and reminding teachers on a regular basis to avoid unanticipated problems.

Despite the negative aspects being encountered by the novice teachers, there were also positive aspects such as helping one another, sharing ideas, and good collaboration with the teachers and "The Binnadang Culture" which means that the spirit of communal unity, work and cooperation to achieve a particular goal.

V. Conclusion

In summary, the current study aimed to determine and assess the coping mechanism or strategies implemented by the novice teachers to address such challenges. The results demonstrate various, interrelated challenges novices face and that there is coping strategy teachers use daily and that is the time management.

VI. Recommendation

Based on these findings, we provide some recommendations. One option is for the Department of Education to hire more non-teaching staff to conduct paperwork in order to reduce the workload on teachers. Another option is to reduce extracurricular activities that are not related to education in order to provide teachers enough time to prepare their classes. We propose that future studies collect data on novice teachers through survey research with a high sample size. In addition, future research may include opinions from school leaders and experienced teachers.

VII. References

Allen, David. (2001). *Getting things Done: the Art of Stress-Free Productivity*. New York: Viking.

Aspfors, J., &Bondas, T. (2013). Caring about caring: Newly qualified teachers' experiences of their relationships within the school community. Teachers and Teaching, 19(3), 243–259. https://doi. org/10.1080/13540602.2012.754158

Bond, M., & Feather, N. (1988). Some correlates of structure and purpose in the use of time. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *55*, 321-329. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.55.2.321

Britton, B.K., &Tesser, A. (1991). Effects of time-management practices on college grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *83*, 405-410. http://doi.apa.org/journals/edu/83/3/405.pdf

Brinkmann, S., &Kvale, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Sage Publications.

Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2002). Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Burt, C.D.B., & Kemp, S. (1994). Construction of activity duration and time management potential. *Applied CognitivePsychology*,*8*,155-68. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/acp.2350080206

BUSHIRI, C. (2014). The impact of working environment onemployees'performance, the case of Institute of Finance Management in Dar es Salaam. TheOpen University Of Tanzania, Institute Of Finance Management. Tanzania: Semantic Scolar. Retrieved from: https://www.semanticscholar. org/paper/ The-impact-of-working-environment-onemployees%E2%80%99-the-Bushiri/9fae5b81f800870e968f5a91762 9d93499ea82db

Chaaban, Y., & Du, X. (2017). Novice teachers' job satisfaction and coping strategies: Overcoming contextual challenges at Qatari government schools. Teaching and Teacher Education, 67, 340–350. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.07. 002

Cramer, P. (1998). Coping and defence mechanisms: What's the difference: Journal of Personality, 66(6): 919- 946.

Creswell, J. W., & D. L. Miller. Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into practice*, *39*(3), 124-130.

David A. S. (1999). *The Concise Dictionary of Business Management*, Page 175. Taylor & Francis Group, ISBN 9780415188678.

Dicke, T., Elling, J., Schmeck, A., &Leutner, D. (2015). Reducing reality chock: The effects of classroom management skills training on beginning teachers. Teaching and Teacher Education, 48, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.01.013

Feiman-Nemser, S. (1983). Learning to teach. In L. Shulman and G. Sykes (Eds.). Handbook of teaching and policy (pp. 150-170). New York: Longman.

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(1)

Francis-Smythe, J.A., & Robertson, I.T. (1999a). On the relationship between time management and time estimation. *British Journal of Psychology*, *90*, 333-47.

Goodwin, B. (2012). Research says / new teachers face three common challenges. Supporting Beginning Teachers Pages 69(8) 84-85. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may12/vol69/num08/New-Teachers-Face- Three-Common-Challenges.aspx.

Johnson, S.M. (1990) Teachers at work: Achieving success in our schools. Basic Books: New York

Kim, K. A., & Roth, G. L. (2011). Novice teachers and their acquisition of work-related information. *Current issues in Education*, *14*(1).

King, A.C., Winett, R.A., & Lovett, S.B. (1986). Enhancing coping behaviours in at-risk populations: the effects of time-management instruction and social support in women from dual-earner families. *Behaviour Therapy*, *17*, 57-66.

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: an introduction to qualitive research interviewing*. Sage

McLaughlin, M. W., & Talbert, J. E. (2001). Professional Communities and the Work of High School Teaching. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Michel, H. A. (2013). *The First Five Years: Novice Teacher Beliefs, Experiences, and Commitment to the Profession* (Doctoral dissertation, UC SanDiego).

Nakpodia, E.D. (2011). Work environment and productivity among primary school teachers in Nigeria. *International Business Management,5*(5), 232-238.

Orpen, C. (1994). The effect of time-management training on employee attitudes and behaviour: a field experiment. *The Journal of Psychology*, *128*, 393-396. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00223980.1994.9712743

Punch, K. F., &Oancea, A. (2014). *Introduction to research methods in education.* Sage.

Rosenholtz, S. J. (1989). Teachers' workplace: The social organization of schools. New York: Longman.

Sabelis, I. (2001). Time management: paradoxes and   patterns. *Time & Society*, *10*, 387- 400. http://tas.sagepub.com/content/10/2-3/387

Sharplin, E., O'Neill, M., & Chapman, A. (2011). Coping strategies for adaptation to new teacher appointments: Intervention for retention. *Teaching andTeacher Education*,27(1), 136146. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.07.010 [Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]

Slaven, G., &Totterdell, P. (1993). Time management training: does it transfer to the workplace? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *8*, 20-28. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02683949310024432

Strongman, K.T., & Burt, C.D.B. (2000). Taking breaks from work: an exploratory inquiry. *Journal of Psychology*, *134*, 229-242. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00223980009600864

Tripathi, A. (2014). Workplace environment: Consequences on employees. In: retrieved 05/08/2015 http:/www. linkedin. com/pulse.

Vodanovich, S.J., &Seib, H.M. (1997). Relationship between time structure and procrastination. *Psychological Reports*, *80*, 211-215. http://dx.doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1997.80.1.211

Voss, T., Wagner, W., Klusmann, U., Trautwein, U., &Kunter, M. 2017). Changers in beginning teachers' classroom management knowledge and emotional exhaustion during the inductive phase.Contemporary Educational Psychology, 51, 170–184. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych. 2017.08.002

Woolfolk, A.E., & Woolfolk, R.L. (1986). Time management: an experimental investigation. *Journal of SchoolPsychology*, *24*,26775. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0022- 4405(86)90059-2