

Understanding the Lived Experiences of ESSU Guiuan Lecturers

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Abstract

Using a phenomenological qualitative approach, the researchers examined the components and lived experiences of six lecturers who have entered into the educational environment from schools of education with less than eight years of classroom teaching experience as contractual teachers. This study looked at what it means to be a lecturer in the classroom today, the challenges in the profession, how lecturers approach educating students, and the types of professional development, mentoring, or training they believe they need to educate students in the classroom effectively. This research used an in-depth interview strategy for data collection because it allows the participants to reflect on past, current, and relevant experiences in detail for the study. The one-on-one, in-depth interviews sought to engage the participants in conversations that would encourage responses that revealed the meanings of the participant's experiences in the education profession. The discussion summarizes the findings, the emerging themes included (1) the prevailing truths in pursuing a career of teaching, (2) side stories on new days of teaching, (3) transition, interaction, and relationship as perceived components in the journey of teaching, (4) challenges in instruction, student's behavior management, peer-relationship, and working environment, (5) aspiration to meet competence in teaching, (6) overwhelming consequences on the change of role of teachers amidst pandemic. Further, this study offers recommendations and discusses implications on the lived experiences of lecturers in the education profession.

Keywords: Lecturers, Lived Experiences, Teaching Capabilities, Teaching Experiences, Professional Development

1. Introduction

Exploring experience is the very bread and butter of psychology, and interpretative phenomenological analysis offers psychologists the opportunity to learn from the participants' insights [1]. Exploring teachers' lived experiences discover the actual journey in the life of teaching. This study discovers more matchless teaching experience from the lecturers for being novices in teaching, especially to the new graduates and those first-timers in the field of teaching, and being not permanent in their field of work. The lived experiences of non-permanent contract employees influence future career decisions and impact their journey toward being competent and experienced practitioners; conversely, their "life world" is often misunderstood. However, the Model Merit System for Faculty Members of SUCs has been approved by CSC Resolution No. 0510404, dated October 6, 2005, and it outlines the minimum requirements for a position, including education, experience, and training, eligibility for the civil service, and the physical

characteristics and personality traits necessary for carrying out the job or set of duties. For the lecturers to be given a permanent position at the SUC, they must fulfill the requirements.

Similarly to this, the Civil Service Commission offers guidelines on the process of carefully vetting qualified applicants and teachers for particular positions in order to identify the most qualified among them or to rank them according to their qualifications and professional potential. This is done to ensure that qualified teachers are hired, given the importance of their position.

The private and public institutions in the Philippines aim to provide a high-quality education to every student. To achieve this, it is necessary to have a sufficient pool of qualified people who are both willing and able to work as teachers. The organizations that employ teachers are schools, universities, and colleges, which are continuously involved in activities relating to the recruitment and retention of their teaching staff. Schools must work hard to uphold standards for teaching quality while continually hiring bright new teachers and trying to retain their most effective current teachers in the face of a growing population of students in school. Due to inadequate and occasionally diminishing resources, achieving the dual goals of hiring and keeping effective teachers can be challenging. Given the crucial role that teachers play in the educational system, it is crucial that we now turn to trustworthy empirical research to inform the policy community of the benefits and drawbacks of various policies to recruit and retain effective teachers.

The teacher is the most important factor in student performance [2] but the debate over the qualities, skills, and knowledge that characterize and identify good teachers continues [3], [4]. Teacher quality is the single most crucial factor in determining student success [5], [6], [7].

Community colleges need to ensure that faculty have the training to engage in the most effective teaching practices possible. According to Boylan (2002), "the quality of classroom instruction is the single most important contributor to the success of developmental students," as it is for all students in higher education. Instruction refers to the methods by which material is delivered and factors such as the student-teacher relationship, the learning environment, and classroom organization and management.

With the issues raised and concepts on the essential roles, responsibilities, and functions that need to take by the teachers, this boosts the interest of the researchers to get into knowing the different lived experiences of the lecturers in terms of their teaching capabilities, teaching experiences, and challenges in teaching especially in this pandemic. More likely, lecturers are the partner of regular faculty in the academic development and well-being of the students. In this study, the side stories of the participants are heard and get through different lenses of teaching experiences of the participants which serve as an essential aspect in the efficiency of the delivery of quality instruction by the lecturers. This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences in terms of teaching capabilities, experiences, and the different challenges among lecturers of ESSU Guiuan. The research findings could be source data for professional development program to enhance their teaching skills. Hence, the following research questions are formulated to address the need for the conduct of this study.

1. What were the teaching experiences of the lecturers of ESSU Guiuan?
2. What were the challenges faced in teaching?
3. How do lecturers deal with these challenges in teaching?

2. Research Methodology

This qualitative, transcendental phenomenological research study includes an in-depth analysis of reported experiences told to or shared with the researchers in the form of interviews. Transcendental

phenomenology (TPh), largely developed by Husserl, is a philosophical approach to qualitative research methodology seeking to understand human experience [8]. Pure TPh is grounded in the concept and conditioned upon setting aside all preconceived ideas (epoche) to see phenomena through unclouded glasses, thereby allowing the true meaning of phenomena to naturally emerge with and within their own identity [8]. Moreover, qualitative research is also described as an unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the researchers to develop a level of detail from high involvement in the actual experiences [9]. In-depth interviews were used in qualitative research to uncover the underlying motivations and desires. We can make sense of the world, describe and understand the social world, and create explanatory models and theories thanks to qualitative research. It is the primary means by which the theoretical foundations of social sciences may be constructed or re-examined. It is thought that the fact that phenomenology allows the researchers to put forth judgments, prejudices, and assumptions better compared to other qualitative study patterns [10], ensures that the lived experiences in terms of teaching capabilities, teaching experiences, and the different challenges of the lectures of Eastern Samar State University Guiuan are being described more deeply. The concept which is focus of this study is the lecturers' lived experiences in dealing with the challenges in teaching.

The participants of this study are the lecturers of ESSU Guiuan. The lecturers are selected purposively based on the set criteria: a contractual teacher (lecturer) of the Campus; more than two years as a lecturer; handling a teaching load of more than 18 units. The research participants were the six (6) Lecturers handling subjects from the four colleges: COEd, CBMA, CHM, and CAS. This is an adequate sample size for a phenomenological study. In fact, the recommended sample size for phenomenological studies can vary greatly [11].

Generally speaking, the participants, therefore, shared with the researchers their experiences being members of the faculty which will become the basis for the future of faculty development program activities formulation, implementation, and maintenance program.

A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather valuable data and information during the in-depth individual interview on lived experiences in terms of teaching experiences and the different challenges in teaching. The interview guide is divided into three (3) parts of probing questions based on the sequence of the research questions. The first part is composed of seven probing questions to establish lecturers' lived experiences in terms of teaching capabilities and teaching experiences. The second part focused on the problems or challenges in teaching. Lastly, probing questions identify their ways of dealing with the challenges in teaching.

with the intent of extracting useful information to facilitate conclusions.

Since this study is qualitative in nature, the researchers employed thematic analysis using Colaizzi's (1978) strategy and that of Moustakas (1994), [12]. The following seven steps were observed to analyze the data gathered. First, the researchers read and re-read the transcribed data in order to obtain a general sense of the whole content. Second, significant statements that pertain to the phenomenon under study are extracted. Third, meanings are formulated from these significant statements. Fourth, the formulated meanings are sorted into categories of themes, clusters of themes, and themes. Fifth, the findings of the study are integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study. Sixth, the fundamental structure of the phenomenon is described. Seventh, validation of findings sought from the research participants to compare the researcher's descriptive results with their lived experiences.

Bracketing/ Research Reflexivity

In order to ensure the validity of the data collection and analysis process, the researchers put aside first their assumptions, personal biases about the phenomenon, and interpretations of the transcribed responses. Before analyzing the data, the researchers strive to instill in mind that bracketing their personal views and potential biases relative to the phenomenon under study helped surface authentic results and eventually produce a credible and worth-reading research paper. Specifically, the researchers write down or examine their thoughts, feelings, values interests, and perceptions. The honest mental assessment made the researchers frequently aware of their positions and limitations. It allows the researchers to re-examine their positions when issues were raised that affected the data analysis process.

Ethical Consideration

This study is subjected to certain ethical considerations. First, all the research participants were asked to sign consent forms regarding their full participation in this study. These forms assured that the research participants voluntarily participated in this research. Also, they were fully informed regarding the objectives of this research and reassured that this will remain confidential and will be used solely for academic purposes.

3. Research Findings

In observance of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology framework, the following themes emerged. The emerging themes included (1) the prevailing truths in pursuing a career of teaching, (2) side stories on new days of teaching, (3) transition, interaction, and relationship as perceived components in the journey of teaching, (4) challenges in instruction, student's behavior management, peer-relationship, and working environment, (5) aspiration to meet competence in teaching, (6) overwhelming consequences on the change of role of teacher amid pandemic.

Theme 1: Prevailing Truths in Pursuing a Career of Teaching

As a teacher, you'll face a myriad of competing demands but for every challenge you face, there's an equal or greater reward. As you enter a profession that can impact the lives of others, you also take part in a career that is full of meaning. Teachers have differing narratives on why they are inclined to teach especially those non-education graduates. They shared their reasons for pursuing a career in teaching. As they narrated the following sub-themes emerged:

Sub-theme 1: Perceived Stability of Income

Participants viewed teaching as a stable and respectable profession. They perceived that teaching has provided them with a secure job at a respected school. In almost all respects, teaching is a more stable occupation than alternatives in the private sector. As narratives shared by the participants,

“ In teaching as I observed most of the teachers have a stable source of income unlike when I work in a hotel or food service-limited income”. (P1)

“..as well my status in life is a factor to pursue this career” (P6)

Sub-theme 2: Parents as a Guiding Light in Choosing the Career

Parents can play an important role in molding their children's careers. They assist their children to have a clear picture of the course/job and career prospects. Participants shared their stories about why they were inclined to teach. As they said,

“My mother encouraged me to try the field of teaching for stability reasons”. (P1)

“Actually, no plan to be a teacher in the field, but my father who was a great influencer ask me to take the course” (P3)

The finding further explicates that parents have a significant impact on how their children develop their careers and make career decisions. Parents want the best for their kids in life, and one thing that affects happiness and success is career choice. According to research, students are more confident in their ability to research careers and select a career that would be interesting and exciting when they feel loved and supported by their parents [13].

Sub-theme 3: Unexpected Love for the Teaching Profession

Teachers discover that their love of teaching children during their youth draws them into the career of teaching, or that their exposure to teaching leads them to love the profession and makes them passionate about teaching. Teachers enter the profession because they're eager to share their knowledge, their experiences, and they enjoyed it. As they mentioned,

“Actually, I don't have an interest in teaching, I become interested in teaching when I am now in ESSU, and after 6 months of teaching I realize that this kind of field of work can be enjoyed.” (P1)

“I was one of the youth members of the SCYO organization. Wherein, our advocacy is to teach children how to pray....and teaching them good values, and get to know more about God. Maybe these experiences led me to accept teaching as my career.” (P2)

“I took the course and along the way, I finally learn to love it.” (P3)

“I want to share my knowledge and what I have learned in my journey of studying. I love the quote, ‘teacher is a lifetime learner, I love to continue studying.’” (P6)

However, DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) contended that attracting people to education as a career choice is not the problem. Instead, the problem is retaining them in their journey of teaching.

Theme 2: Side Stories on New Days of Teaching

Teachers have different side stories during their new days of teaching. Mostly, they got nervous, less confident to teach, or often hesitant to face their students. As teachers narrated their new days of teaching:

“Challenging, in part that there are students who were older than me, or they have already experienced the kind of work in hotels and food services because some already worked in abroad...I got nervous.” (P1)

“My first day of teaching college was a bit challenging. Of course, I got nervous. I was unsure if I can make it, especially the first-class section I was handling on the first day.” (P2)

“My first day was quite scary and challenging especially since I heard that the classes I'll be handling are composed of not-so-good students in terms of their attitude.” (P3)

“The first day that I had was at first I am hesitant because some students were in my the same age.”(P5)

Based on their narratives, teaching, in general, is a stressful, rigorous, and demanding profession. Teachers often report a feeling of sink or swim when describing their first years in the classroom [15].

Theme 3: Interaction, Relationship, and Transition: Perceived components in the Journey of Teaching

Student-Teacher interactions are very important for the development of the student's academic self-concept and for enhancing their enthusiasm and success. Also, teacher-student relationships impact productively a student's self-esteem and enhance their skills. Teachers shared their narratives on the metaphors of teaching and transition in teaching over the years as significant components in the journey of teaching. As teachers told their narrative experiences:

Sub-theme 1: Metaphors of Teaching

Teachers have different personal definitions of teaching and their important roles as educators. Based on their definitions, teaching is a serious profession, teaching is both a profession and mission in transforming lives, and teaching compared to a water source supplies learning to anyone.

“Teaching for me is a serious profession because you are preparing your students to be what they want in their life. That's why as a teacher we need to do our best to reach our hand to these students and equipped them with knowledge, values, and skills.” (P2)

“Teaching is both a profession and a mission in transforming the lives of young ones. Indeed teaching and learning are mutual between the two elements-teacher and the learner. The learners are very transparent, and for me, it's a very important aspect in determining their level of know-how when it comes to information. But seeing them transformed from a passive one to active one is indeed very fulfilling. All these are possible in a combination of an authoritative and democratic setup inside the classroom with a heart. ” (P3)

“Teaching means to change someone's life not only in academic but as a whole.”(P4)

“I thought it was only instilling learning to the students, sharing or imparting knowledge, and doing what the profession I chose but I realized it has hidden meaning that I discover during my teaching journey. For me, it was the water source supply to anyone or anything who has a life to live long and continue living. Just like teaching, it supplies learning to everyone which can be our tool as we continue our journey. As a teacher, teaching allows me to discover myself and it helps me understand the life of a teacher and how I live this way.” (P6)

Sub-theme 2: Transition in Teaching Over the Years

Teaching transitions observed by the lecturers-participants through how they handle their classes, changes in their perceptions of teaching, improvement of their teaching styles and strategies, time management in meeting deadlines of submission, and their ways of adjusting to different situations in their classes. The professional learning and growth throughout their careers are through their experience and the influence of the faculty roundtable. As they mentioned,

“Over the years, the meaning of teaching has not changed, it was only added ‘heart’ of teaching. Solely, with the pure intention that not only knowledge and intelligence are cultivated in teaching but pure heart and the right attitude in sending and applying fruits in the service of others...” (P3)

“There are already changes, like in coping up with student's behavior, student's attitude...in meeting deadlines of submission, accomplishing the different forms. Also teaching style changed,

I gave more talking-being the only source of information, preparing the learning materials, and doing the discussion. Now, I give the instructions but students are the ones who will discover their learning.” (P1)

“With the adjustment I made I can say, the way of teaching somehow is different from those days when I first taught. I was able to adopt some strategies from the other faculty on how they able to handle classroom problems, especially in work management”. (P2)

“My teaching from then until now has changed, through the learnings I gained from handling classes, with varieties of intelligence, attitudes, and learning styles. Which made me realize how to adjust to different situations in those variations of classes. I also practice excerpting ideas and information from my learners from that I get to know how far they are learning.” (P3)

“Experience teaches me a lot, shall I say my teaching is better now”. (P4)

“It changed a lot, right now it is easy to share my knowledge and skills with my students were in my same age.” (P5)

These findings correlate directly with the result of Huberman, (1992); Klassen & Chiu (2010), a study that indicates that teaching experience is related to specific beliefs. In fact, self-efficacy for classroom management and student engagement was positively related to years of experience.

Theme 4: Challenges in Instruction, Student Behavior Management, Peer-relationship, and Working Environment

Every teacher has their own experiences of challenges in their classroom, peer-relationship, and also in working environment which helped them grow in their profession. Teachers narrated their challenges in deference to being neophytes in the field of teaching. Teachers met challenges with time management in crafting the module, sustaining the skills of the students with this new modality in teaching, school facilities, and multi-media facilities to support this online learning, and learning aid/materials for efficient delivery of lessons. As they said,

“The challenge I had is on the crafting of a compendium- stressful due to time constraints ... limited time to prepare the compendium of assigned subjects. Also, due to the pandemic, I doubt to meet the skills training goals, I think there would be less learning.” (P1)

“The challenges I met as a teacher is on the lack of school facilities. Because in modern teaching we need to integrate technology in our instruction but the problem is not all the classrooms have the TV screen, this may be a simple problem somehow has less effect in their academic achievement.”(P2)

“I have met a lot of challenges as a classroom teacher, adjustment to student performance, teaching strategies, classroom management, and student behavior. In terms of skill development of my students, it is quite challenging sometimes, especially for other students who are indeed still in difficulty, I really need to make some adjustments.” (P6)

“Lack of books, I don’t see if my students really learn their lessons. Compendium of lessons (module) is not enough and I think there would be less learning as well the learning outcomes.” (P1)

“Scarcity of learning aids/materials that are needed in the efficiency of the delivery of lesson”(P3)

“ Teaching subject without references, the course description is a big challenge but I consider it as part of the challenges” (P4)

Also, teachers shared their encountered challenges in student behavior management in their new days of teaching prior to the new normal setup of classes. Student behavior problems are challenging especially to beginner teachers.

“I have difficulty in controlling the behavior of my HRM students considering that they are old enough and independent.” (P1)

“It was challenging yet it was all good. Despite different challenges I face in my daily teaching, I always taught myself that I need to be open and flexible from the environment I work.” (P2)

“So far, no serious challenges as a classroom teacher except If I may say a scenario of a student claiming that he doesn’t deserve the grade I gave him because he is very excellent in verbal communication. In my 6 years of teaching here in my Alma Mater, this was the complaint I was not aware of. Because my superior never brought this up to me not until the day, I was judged at once for being a not competent employee.” (P3)

“The challenges that I’ve met as a classroom teacher was to get the attention of the students and be well mannered during classes.” (P5)

Several studies have shown that classroom management beliefs and practices are related to the level of teacher self-efficacy beliefs, that is, the “teacher’s belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” [18] Further, teachers met challenges in their working environment and peer relationships. However, they take it positively for them to grow professionally with morale. As they perceived, having good peer relationships results in higher emotional engagement and improved social behavior. Also, a healthy working environment improves productivity.

“It is common to a certain group to have misunderstood, not having unity, sometimes toxic, but then it depends on the personality of your officemate, but I can’t trust anybody.” (P1)

“My work environment is very challenging in all aspects. But I guess, it’s way better for us to grow professionally with morale. Training toward working well with others and values formation of all employees is good”. (P3)

“I am amazed every single day, we cannot deny sometimes it’s tough but I think it is part of the journey”. (P4)

“Classroom experience is an experience where learning takes place, while my working environment for me is a workplace where I am productive and efficient to my task. I was set to Manila for a seminar which allow me to manage some events in the school. I am satisfied with the nature and working conditions. The faculties are easy to get along with...”(P5)

The narratives further emphasize that the primary determinants of teacher effectiveness were determined to be the teachers' satisfaction with the nature of their work and their working conditions

Theme 5: Aspiration to Meet Competence in Teaching

Teachers desire to meet the competence in teaching to include the increase of knowledge, enhance skills and develop good values. Likewise, according to the participants, to deal with the challenges in teaching through pursuing graduate studies and attending training. As they shared,

“I am aiming to continue my doctoral to have an edge among co-workers, and to my students”. (P1)

“In my field of profession, is a financial aspect for pursuing higher education. Training towards working well with others and values formation of all employees”. (P3)

“I am not yet a licensed teacher, so I have difficulty in pursuing my master’s degree program”. Also attending seminars and other means that can help me to deal with this. (P6)

The shared experiences accentuate that teaching effectively requires teachers to have the skills and knowledge base to engage their students in active and authentic learning experiences and to manage classrooms that function well where students work productively [19].

Theme 6: Overwhelming Consequences on the Change of Role of Teachers Amidst Pandemic

To deal with challenges in the new normal environment in education, adjustments on the change of role of the lecturers were observed. They have to adjust the set of activities using printed learning materials, online learning, and other strategies just to meet the learning goals. They used video demonstration to demonstrate the skills, creative activities through online classes, or video recording that would boost their confidence and talents. With this, teachers have to be resourceful. As they shared,

“I plan to call them one by one, planning to conduct an interview concerning the topic or subject that we have, I have a copy of their contacts. Apart from that, I’m incorporating actual scenarios in their module, but I’m also requiring them to talk, to sing, to dance, this is not a PE class but I’m relating them to our subject on how creative they are in coming up with an output that would boost their confidence to let out their talents and skills so I’m incorporating a strategy that I can really see them through their videos, I even asking concepts like reporter’s notebook, newscast simulation.” (P3)

“To sustain the skills development, I use video to demonstrate the skills, then students will submit their video of return demo. Those students who don’t have the gadgets for the said activity, I let them borrow from their classmates.” (P1)

“As a teacher, we need to be resourceful. Sometimes we need to get the idea in the traditional way of teaching but there is a twist to make our instruction challenging on the part of students.” (P2)

4. Conclusion

In the light of the findings obtained based on the narratives of the participants and the themes that emerged, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The contractual teachers (Lecturers) have different perspectives and inclinations into the teaching profession, especially that their bachelor’s degree or preparatory profession is not Teacher Education Course; hence lecturers desire to meet competence in teaching through an increase of knowledge, enhance skills, and develop good values.
2. The Lecturers encountered challenges in instruction, student’s behavior management, peer-relationship, and working condition; therefore, capability building and in-service training play a vital role in their professional development; and
3. With the current educational system- ‘the new normal education,’ observed adjustments on teaching-learning environment and process among teachers, students, and parents; therefore, training and seminar on flexible learning will benefit most to them.

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