

Expectations and Lived Experiences of Newly Hired Teachers in Public Elementary Schools of Bataraza, Palawan

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study focuses on the expectations and lived experiences of the newly hired teachers in public elementary schools of Bataraza, Palawan, which was conducted between March to August 2022. The data were gathered through unstructured face-to-face interviews and transcribed using Colaizzi's method. Six (6) participants in their first to third year in service were involved in this study through purposive sampling. The findings revealed that the participants had high and low expectations before they were hired as public school teachers. However, upon entering their working stations as beginning teachers, their experiences somewhat differed from their expectations on school locations, working with colleagues and administrators, relationship with the stakeholders, paperwork, teaching and classroom management, and salary. Therefore, it is recommended that the Department of Education look at the teachers' well-being and strengthen the existing program that supports newly hired teachers.

Keywords: Public School Teachers, Expectations, Lived Experiences, Perspectives, Newly-Hired, Education

1. INTRODUCTION

Newly hired teachers are people who have just got employed in schools. According to the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines, a newly hired teacher is specifically a teacher with zero (0) to three (3) years of experience in the public school system and is further classified as the beginning teacher. For others, it can be described in different duration; nevertheless, a teacher's job entails various roles and responsibilities [1,2]. Siddiqui et al. [3] showed that teachers perform multiple tasks in just an hour inside the classroom alone.

The beginning days of teaching are the most critical part of being a teacher. Their development into an expert is indefinite, but Bartell (1995), as cited by Boakye et al. [4], claimed that it lasts three years. In this period, teachers may experience huge adjustments. Some teachers may adapt quickly, but others may struggle to do so. According to Jomoad et al. [5], newly hired teachers face various difficulties. They are bothered with worries and concerns, bringing negative and positive experiences. Conforming to the study of Lomi et al. [6], new teachers face difficulties adjusting to their professional roles.

Notably, many researchers concluded that the biggest struggles of teachers were classroom management, challenging students' behavior, students' assessment, workloads, low salary, lack of support from their colleagues, working long hours, learning environment, feelings of inadequacy, assignments outside of their specialization, teachers-parents relationship, and balancing time in working and personal matters [7,8,9,10]. Therefore, several programs to help them out are proposed and conducted.

Republic Act 10533 or Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 Section 7 states that education authorities must implement training programs to guarantee that the basic education curriculum fulfills the demand for teachers. Hence, DepEd has a Training Induction Program. Schools commonly use induction programs all around the world to support new teachers in their initial years of teaching by contributing to their well-being and professional growth. The main goal of these support programs is to help teachers become aware and comfortable with the culture of their schools, to assist them with content delivery, assessments, and classroom management, and furnish them with their co-worker's support [11,12,13].

Although novice teachers expect to start the profession equipped to meet the position's requirements and have the potential to make a difference, these teachers are given numerous monthly on-site or off-site professional development workshops that are geared toward their specific needs during their first three years of employment. De Vera [14] suggests that schools should reinforce these programs to provide sufficient opportunities for professional growth and development and would encourage teachers to remain employed in the school.

However, some schools may not implement these programs and mentorship well or sufficiently. Studies revealed that problems were encountered in the implementation of the program, including lack of time, poor planning, and poor communication between parties. Therefore, there is room for improvement in what is included in Teacher Induction Program [15,16,17,18].

Challenges and dissatisfaction are part of being a novice teacher [19]. As they enter the field, they have personal expectations, administrative expectations, professional support expectations, and classroom environment expectations which tend to give negative experiences. These experiences and struggles might lead to teacher stress, and one reason is the inability to manage personal and professional expectations [20]. If unmet, they may either reshape their expectations or leave the profession [21]. Jacobson [9] stated that some teachers quit after only a few years of entering the field of education.

On the other hand, others continue to express their desire for meaningful professional development and recognition of their accomplishments. These challenges become teachers' motivation for retention or staying in service, while unmet expectations may lead to their perspective changes in working as public teachers. Thus, it is meaningful to explore their nature.

Although several researchers revealed the experiences of the newly hired teachers in different schools, both positive and negative, it is crucial to directly explore the experiences of the concerned teachers in this study. Each school and its teachers have different demands, as do their expectations and experiences. This study sought to explore newly hired teachers' expectations and lived experiences in the Municipality of Bataraza, Palawan, Philippines. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the expectations of the participants in the public elementary schools?
2. What are the lived experiences of the participants in the public elementary schools?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This research aimed to explore, determine, and analyze the expectations and lived experiences of newly hired teachers working as public elementary teachers. In that intent, the researchers used a qualitative approach in the form of phenomenological research design.

The phenomenological technique is concerned with the phenomena that have affected a person. Phenomenology's purpose is to define the meaning of this experience, both in terms of what happened and how it happened (Neubauer et al., 2019). Therefore, the researchers used the phenomenological research method in this study by exploring, explaining, and capturing valuable information.

2.2. Research Instruments

The researchers conducted individual interviews with unstructured questions focused on the expectations and lived experiences of newly hired teachers working as public elementary teachers.

2.3. Research Participants

Non-random sampling was utilized to select participants. Purposive sampling is the intended selection of the participants based on their capacity to explain a particular theme, concept, or phenomenon (Robinson, 2014). Hence, the researchers purposively selected the participants using the criteria: (1) must be permanent full-time public teachers, (2) must have one to three years of working experience in a public elementary school, and (3) currently working in any public elementary schools in Bataraza, Palawan.

Table 1 : Profile of the participants shows their sex, assigned school, age, length of service, and life quotes

PARTICIPANTS (Aliases)	Sex	School	Age (in years)	Length of service	Life Quotes
Teacher 1	Female	School 1	26	2 ½ years	"The difference between school and life? In school, you're taught a lesson and then given a test. In life, you're given a test that teaches you a lesson." (Tom Bodett)
Teacher 2	Male	School 2	25	3 years	"No matter how hard it is, never give up and always look up for positive results."
Teacher 3	Female	School 1	25	2 ½ years	"Everything you choose has its own consequences. Choose wisely."
Teacher 4	Female	School 1	36	2 years	"A teacher is like a candle that consumes itself to light the way for others."
Teacher 5	Male	School 3	32	2 ½ years	"Never Give Up" "A teacher is like a candle that consumes itself to light the way for others."
Teacher 6	Female	School 3	27	2 ½ years	"Try and try until you succeed."

2.4. Data Collection Procedures

The researchers visited Lupak Elementary School, Bulalacao Elementary School, and Gotok Elementary School to personally send letters to the head teachers and officers-in-charge to ask permission in conducting interviews among the target participants. Upon approval, letters to the participants were distributed to the newly-hired teachers to personally inform them of this study's objectives. Before the final interview, the researchers first informed the participants regarding the consent form and profiling and had it signed by them. The entire interviews were recorded through audio and video, lasting 30 minutes to an hour each.

The data gathered were transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted to draw a conclusion and recommendations. The study started in March 2022 and was completed in August 2022.

2.5. Data Analysis

Colaizzi's method was utilized in analyzing and interpreting the data. Colaizzi's method of data analysis is a method of interpreting qualitative research data, which is commonly used in social sciences, to identify important information, transcribe, categorize, and validate emerging themes (Gumarang et al., 2021). By using this method, the researchers were allowed to explore, organize the data, cluster themes, and explain the expectations and lived experiences of the newly hired teachers as public elementary teachers.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This phenomenological study aimed to explore the expectations and lived experiences of newly hired teachers working as public elementary teachers in Bataraza, Palawan. Particularly, the study sought to answer the following queries: (1) *What are the expectations of the participants in the public elementary schools?* and (2) *What are the lived experiences of the participants in the public elementary schools?*

Theme 1. Working Station.

The researchers found that the participants had exact expectations about their working stations or school locations before being hired. They expected to be assigned in far-flung or remote areas, specifically mountains or islands. It is because they are single, and some people around them gave them hints about school locations usually assigned for the unmarried newly hired teachers. The participants uttered that:

*Before I was hired, I expected to be assigned to the island or mountain.
(Teacher 6)*

Relatively, these teachers were assigned to a small school, a far-flung area, and on the mainland. However, the researchers figured out that they were not satisfied with the location of their assigned school despite their expectations. Two of them stated that the way of life in the remote area differed from the schools in town proper. Hence, most of them experienced culture shock. Two participants must travel, which is expressed as tiring for them. The location of the assigned school was also described as dangerous for the teachers and students. In addition, the slow to no signal and no electricity made their experience more challenging.

The participants stated:

"The danger and risk of traveling every day was still there. I need to wake up early to get to work and not to be late. It is tiring and exhausting." (Teacher 1)

"One of my experiences is when I was traveling; someone is following me wherever I went, majority of the residents there are in a different religion as mine. I was really scared; I could not explain how I felt. I think that maybe they have their guns with them. They were staring at me, and their gaze was scary. I was praying that I could leave the place peacefully. That's my unforgettable experience." (Teacher 2)

"I experienced culture shock. It was because I stayed in the city for the longest time, then here I am now in the remote area. Sometimes the river gets flooded, and we have no hazard pay. If the river gets flooded, we will cancel classes, so the students do not need to cross the river. It is so risky not only for us but also for the students." (Teacher 4)

Elementary schools are usually located anywhere, including islands and mountains, as long as a community needs education. Therefore, there is a high chance for the beginning teachers, especially the unmarried ones, to be assigned to remote areas. Teachers are prepared for this, but they are hopeful to be assigned to better stations in the future [24].

Theme 2. Working Environment with Colleagues and School Administrators.

The researchers discovered that the participants expected rapport among colleagues or co-teachers and administrators. Out of six participants, four participants anticipated that there would be a good working relationship inside the school; all participants believed in camaraderie and rapport with one another, and most of the participants assumed that the experienced teachers would guide the newcomers to be a better professional and be more productive as a teacher.

I expected to get along with my colleagues so that they would contribute to my personal development, make me a better professional, and be productive as a teacher. I am expecting them that they will help me to be a useful teacher. (Teacher 2)

I expected that there would be the camaraderie that we would develop rapport, or we would have a good ambiance and company while we were inside the school so that the school would succeed in the process (Teacher 4)

The participants' statements revealed that the guidance from experienced colleagues would most likely make the participants more productive and better professionals for the betterment of the schools. The study by Gamborg [25] stated that mentoring colleague helps reduce turnover among new teachers, boost work satisfaction, and enhances student learning results. Mentored first-year teachers are more likely to succeed and return for a second year. It implies that the more help from experienced teachers, the more they become successful, although beginners.

Negative Working Environment. Newly hired teachers experienced a lack of camaraderie among teachers or colleagues inside the school. Five participants stated they experienced no good connection among teachers and were divided because they have different characteristics and personalities. Five participants explained that expert teachers who are longer in service did not guide and help the newcomers. Another two participants experienced favoritism and unfair treatment.

"The times will come that you will know and realize the real attitudes of your co-teacher, and you will consider leaving your profession. (Teacher 1)

"The system is unfair. If you have made mistakes in the task assigned to you, you will have a bad time during the meetings because you will have no evidence to save yourself, and the superior will take their sides because they are buddies. That's why the only thing you can do is to shut up." (Teacher 3)

"Some of us have a group because of age and preferences." (Teacher 5)

Positive Working Environment. On the contrary, one participant experienced camaraderie and had support from experienced teachers.

"Yes! We have a good relationship with each other and rapport." (Teacher 6)

Based on the disclosed statement of the participants, they look forward to good communication or connection with their colleagues and school heads inside the schools and what they can learn from them. In the study of Diaz-Lacy et al. [20], it is affirmed that novice teachers had significant support needs from their colleagues and administrators. In addition, collaboration would help ease the burden of every member [8]. Little support they get tends to increase their stress and dissatisfaction.

Theme 3. Relationship with Stakeholders.

The participants expected good relationships with students and their parents, also known as the school's stakeholders. The participants hoped that even though the students would be stubborn and naughty, they could learn and obey their teachers. While teacher six expected explicitly that the parents would help, cooperate and support not only their children's academics but also the school activities (e.g., participating in "Brigada Eskuwela" and such) in general.

"I am expecting that the parents are responsible to their children." (Teacher 6)

However, some participants expressed disappointment with the students' and parents' behavior. They consider it one of the most challenging experiences that novice teachers would encounter.

"His mother went to the school to confront me about her child. I explained what happened and told her that I respect her decision to transfer her child to another school. But I insist that I never do anything wrong with her child." (Teacher 1)

"As I was hired, my expectation was far from my experienced. When I entered the classroom, there were no greetings from my students; there was no such thing. There is a lot of adjustment I made. And one of my students vandalized the wall "sir R bobo"; this is one of my experiences. So as a teacher, I need to control my emotion because we have corporal punishment in our teaching profession." (Teacher 2)

"The student drops a rank in the top ten, so the parents went to the school right away out of anger. And what's even more annoying is that his parents are both teachers. They know the rules and order about that." (Teacher 3)

In contrast, other participants experienced different situations from the above statements. They shared good relations with the parents.

"The parents told me to discipline their children but in a good way." (Teacher 5)

"Yes, they cooperate with us, and they are responsive" (Pointing to the parents behind her). (Teacher 6)

According to Sozen [26], communication with students and parents is among the issues in the classroom faced by any level of the teacher. In this context, teachers, although novice, are still expected to show competence in times of displeasing situations with the stakeholders. If not, providing training for them can make their jobs easier and help them survive the situation. Besides, the relationship between parents and teachers is important in the school and students' learning. Parents and teachers are the two foremost educators in the students' lives. Parents serve as the main coaches until their child begins school. They continue to substantially influence their children's learning throughout their school years and beyond [27]. When parents and teachers [28] and students and teachers [29] work together, children's work, habits, interests, attitudes about school, and grades improve.

Theme 4. Paperwork.

Most participants expected challenging numbers and a difficult level of paperwork. However, the participants also expected that even though there would be a lot of paperwork, it would easily be complied with because it would be distributed appropriately among the teachers.

"Yeah! I am expecting that because my older brother already told me; he is a teacher also." (Teacher 5)

"Yes! I am expecting lots of paper works because it is the part of being a teacher." (Teacher 6)

It could be seen from the statement of four participants that before the teachers got hired, they already expected heavy paperwork as part of their workload. They were already informed by other teachers while still studying. However, Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 contradict the above statement.

Nevertheless, teachers highlighted their experiences doing a lot of paperwork and no proper turnover of reports, especially in times of pandemic. Big and small schools have the same reports; thus, teachers in schools with fewer employees have a higher chance of getting more tasks. On the other hand, some said that the paperwork is not too complicated since it is well distributed among them.

(Negative Experience of doing Paperwork.)

"It's insane! You cannot focus on the children. The coordinators gave me reports that I should handle. Then they gave me the reports on the feeding program. There were a lot of papers, and at one time, the teacher (the head teacher) left without a proper turnover, and then I had no choice but to comply when the deadline came. There's no proper turnover of papers. If you ask them, they also do not know about it. I just fabricated the papers just to comply with it before the due date; they will force you to finish all the documents needed. So, you have no choice but to fabricate it." (Teacher 3)

(Positive Experience in doing Paperwork.)

"When I became a regular teacher, I gradually learned to manage the paper works. If you are dedicated to your profession, you will learn everything. Most of the time, you need to extend your time just to finish the paperwork given to you by your superior. They will not give paper works they think you cannot handle." (Teacher 2)

Teachers have a lot of paperwork and reports to comply with before the deadline. It is believed that workloads affect teachers' and students' performance and quality of education, which is also observed in the study of Jomuad et al. [5] that work overload contributes to teacher burnout and may result in physical and emotional exhaustion. Factors that cause fatigue include more extended hours of teaching and the demand for optimum working conditions that the school cannot provide. Furthermore, the study by Sasser [30] shows that new teachers appreciate participating in the mentoring program because they believe it will enhance their professional practice as educators, which includes handling paperwork. The statements of the participants imply that paperwork can be stressful and exhausting but can also be managed with proper training and guidance.

Theme 5. Teaching and Classroom management.

The researchers observed that the participants expected effective classroom management. One of the participants stated that the learning and theories learned from schools during college days can be easily applied once they enter the teaching profession, while two of them expected to handle only one section, and there's no multi-grade.

"I thought what I have learned in school, like the demonstration, you can apply here." (Teacher 1)

"I am expecting that teaching is not an easy profession. I also expect that my student will learn from me. Their future relies on the hands of the teacher. In addition, I expect that I can easily handle my students' behavior." (Teacher 2)

However, the researchers found that the newly hired teachers experienced struggles in teaching and classroom management. The participants struggled with using students' mother tongue and assignments in multi-grade classes, which were tiring and challenging, as they stated. In addition, they are frustrated with the student's attendance and hygiene as these affect their school performance; they are always absent and cannot focus on class because of hunger and poverty.

"Some of the students nowadays are difficult to discipline. They are not listening to you. Most students here are indigenous people, so they choose to work rather than study because of hunger and poverty. You need to encourage them to go to school and make them understand that education is their right as a child." (Teacher 1)

"When I first came in, I was assigned to teach a multi-grade class. It is not easy to handle. Your attention will be divided into two grade levels counted in one class. If the hygiene of the student is not good, it affects the attendance; he is always absent. Then, he cannot concentrate in class." (Teacher 4)

The participants revealed many of these pupils failed to develop basic reading and writing skills due to poor attendance. These students would instead work than study,

which is associated with hunger and poverty. The need, poverty, and the preference of students to work rather than attend schools were also observed by Cansino [31] in his work among the Pala'wan learners in Barangay Malis, Salogon, and Samarinana in Brooke's Point, Palawan. In support of this theory, Perez [32] stated that the Palao'an community's economic problems are intertwined with their educational issues. Their children are reluctant to attend school, even at the primary level, because they have a variety of challenges and worries to address. Furthermore, some students speak using their mother tongue, and the teacher struggles to understand the students' way of expressing themselves. This is also evident in the study of Corlet et al. [33], which revealed the challenging use of native dialects in IP schools among teachers.

Despite the challenges, teachers are still trying to provide adequate classroom management. Chandra [34] suggests teachers help children achieve their full potential, while Sardar [35] suggests strengthening students' motivation because it will contribute to their success in the classroom. Indeed, an effective learning environment requires competent classroom management. A well-managed classroom enables meaningful teaching and learning. In support of this statement, de Vera [14] also stated that the quality of the educational experience for students, teachers, and other staff and parent satisfaction with their child's school is influenced by the school climate. If their school is unsafe or interrupted by misbehaving kids, or if there is a lack of cooperation among teachers or between the school and parents, neither teachers nor students can perform at their best.

Theme 6. Salary.

The result shows that the participants expected a reasonable salary when they became full-fledged teachers. All of the participants expected a competitive salary that every teacher deserves to have, as they stated. One participant said she would never get a loan and had a lot of money, and three others expected they could help their parents using their salary.

"When it comes to salary, I thought it will be enough to sustain my needs and help my family." (Teacher 3)

The statement of all participants explained that the newly hired teachers are expected not to get any loans. This implies that the salary of the teachers is enough to support their needs and necessity as teachers and individuals. Teaching is their noblest profession, so a good salary was expected. However, the researchers discovered that these novice teachers' wages are insufficient. They have loans because of their school, personal, and family needs. The participants said their pay was inadequate, so they used their own money.

"When it comes to salary, I received lump sum salary. You will enjoy it every month. When it comes to financial needs, especially when you are a breadwinner, you have no choice but to get a loan. That's the reason why most teachers have loans... Aside from that, you are forced to use your money because our head told us to do that even though we have a budget from MO. Those facemask, tissues and other things (pointing to tissues) if she still our head I am sure we will force to buy it. She told us we could refund it, but it was all a lie. She bought that notebook when she left. We do not know how much money we spend." (Teacher 1)

“Once you become a teacher, you will realize that your salary is insufficient for all your needs. I have no choice but to get a loan when one of the family members gets sick, and you are the only one expected to provide the money because you are the breadwinner... I am a grade 6 teacher, and PSA is one of the requirements needed to comply with by the students. But there is a certain time when the parents cannot afford the expenses; that is why I am forced to use my money just to provide the needed documentation before the deadline.” (Teacher 2)

“Yes, I have two loans. We do not have someone to provide for our family but me and my sister. I have no choice but to get a loan to help my family.” (Teacher 3)

Based on the statements given by the participants, they provide for the necessity of their families and the school's activities, aside from their personal errands, using their salary. This is not new among the teachers in public schools, especially those assigned in remote areas, Orale et al. [24] revealed the same. This implies that the school's and students' needs turn out to be a financial responsibility of the teachers. Hence, insufficient salary.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the study findings, the participants presumed (1) a far-flung working station or school location, (2) a good relationship with colleagues and administrators, (3) rapport with stakeholders, (4) a lot of paperwork, (5) effective teaching and classroom management, (6) and a competitive salary once they get hired in the public schools. It is observed that the newly hired teachers had high and low expectations coming from their previous experiences and observations from the others in the field before they were hired. Their previous teachers, acquaintance teachers, and family members who are teachers were the source of their expectations. However, upon entering their working stations as beginning teachers, their experiences somewhat differed from their expectations, depending on their environment.

Most teachers were prepared to be assigned to remote areas and could adjust despite circumstances. However, the working environment with colleagues and school administrators differs from expected. Mentoring and teamwork are some things to work on between the employees. The same with the teacher's capacity to handle the behavior of the stakeholders – the students and the parents. In addition, the paperwork, although manageable, led to teachers' work overload.

Regarding teaching and classroom management, teachers were challenged by the different circumstances of the students in poor attendance, use of mother tongue, and hygiene, but continue to make efforts to provide quality education. Lastly, the salary is insufficient to compensate for the work done and their needs. The newly hired teachers remained in their posts, hoping for a more remarkable future.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offering Education Programs should investigate further the gap between student-teachers preparedness and the expected teaching environment.

Experienced teachers or co-teachers should be willing to provide guidance and support for newly hired teachers to motivate them and inspire them to be better professional teachers.

Future Research may study (1) the Reasons for the teachers who leave their profession and their current status as individuals for further information and a deeper understanding of the feelings and standpoint of the teacher; (2) to Conduct more studies on the effects of management practices inside the school on the well-being of the newly hired teachers; (3) More research on the effects of socialization on the performance of newly hired teachers; and (4) More research about the effectiveness of the Teacher Induction Program for newly hired teachers.

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