

# THE JOURNEY OF THE TYRO TEACHER IN THE NOW NORMAL ENVIRONMENT: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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## ABSTRACT

The Journey of beginning teachers brought a monumental implication to teachers and to the teaching and learning. This qualitative-narrative research aimed to determine the narratives of beginning teachers of Secondary teachers in the Municipality of Makilala. Results showed that beginning teachers were challenged with adjustment in the new working environment, limited time in accommodating learning concerns on pedagogical practices. In response to these challenges, beginning teachers learn to manage their time properly, have the positive outlook in life, remain steadfast in honing students' capabilities and most importantly seek help from colleagues. Tyro teachers' pieces of advice to other beginning teachers that they must accept their flaws and weaknesses, be humble, they must give importance and love to the teaching profession, love thy profession and be resilient in facing all the aridity in life.

**KEYWORDS:** Now Normal Environment, Narrative, Challenges, Pedagogical Practices, Tyro Teacher & CFCST

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rationale

Teaching is one of the best professions. It is coupled with different challenges yet full of opportunities. As new teachers in the profession, they need the help of their colleagues as well as their school heads. Indeed, they are still learning the process in the Department of Education.

Teachers have long been touted to play a very crucial role in holistically transforming the mind, body, and spirit of their students. Essentially, the functional competencies of teachers require in-depth knowledge of the subject they are teaching, pedagogical framework in lesson planning, and a variety of teaching skills such as creativity, self-sacrifice for the common good, counseling, and leadership to name a few. These functional competencies must be demonstrated by the teachers themselves as these are solely necessary in educational system. Likely, their indispensable role in education is transcended as a trustee of the educational heritage of the nation (Candilas, 2018).

The study of Hobson et al. (2009) revealed that there is a need to mentor beginning teachers. Its purpose is to help them in their workplace and to guide them of the things that they need to do especially in handling their learners. Also, the application of the effective pedagogical skills is shared to them to make them strong and ready.

Furthermore, the gap of this study shows that most of the studies on neophyte teachers are of foreign in origin. Some of which are already conducted 30 years ago (Veenman, 1984). Though there were relative studies relative to the topic, but their focus is on induction and mentoring programs (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) and on their classroom beliefs and actions (Simmons et al., 1999).

Correspondingly, this study provides information on the experiences of the neophyte teachers in the now normal setting. Previously, instructions were normally done in classrooms without any precautionary measures. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, everything has changed. Thus, the foregoing reasons manifested the dire need to conduct the study.

### **1.1.1 Research Questions**

- What challenges do beginning teachers face in the now normal environment?
- How do beginning teachers cope with the challenges in the now normal environment?
- What pieces of advice can they share to other beginning teachers?

### **1.1.2 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

This study was focus on identifying the stories of neophyte teachers in the now normal environment. They were taken from the Municipality of Makilala in the Province of Cotabato during the Second Semester of School Year 2021-2022. However, only those in the secondary level were included. This excluded those in the elementary level.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Research Design**

The researcher was employed the qualitative-phenomenology. Qualitative research deals with the utilization of words in the interpretation of the results (Payne, 2007). It does not deal with the numerical value but on the opinions and views of people. Typically, it is used in Social Sciences such as anthropology, education, sociology, and health sciences (Gerring, 2017).

Initially, phenomenology is defined as the study of experience or unconsciousness. It is the study of occurrence that appear on things or vice versa. This interweaves with ontology, epistemology, logic, and ethics. In addition, it clearly investigates a phenomenon or even by describing and interpreting the lived experiences of the participants from the field (Williams, 2021).

As such, this study was qualitative-phenomenology because it determines the lived experiences of the neophyte teachers in the now normal environment. Their challenges and coping mechanisms were shared by them. And thus, it was the basis for the proposed intervention plan which may help them in the near future.

### **2.2 Informants of the Study**

There were 12 informants who participated in this study. The participants of this study were the neophyte teachers. They were chosen using the purposive sample (Etikan et al., 2016) more specifically the criterion-based sampling. Below are the criteria for the selection:

- A public-school teacher;
- A secondary school teacher;
- Employed since 2020; and
- Currently assigned in the Municipality of Makilala.

### 2.3 Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in the Municipality of Makilala, Province of Cotabato. It is bounded by the City of Kidapawan, Mlang and Tulunan, and Bansalan, Davao Del Sur. I interviewed Neophyte Teachers randomly in different high Schools in the municipality of makilala.

### 2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

As a researcher, I adhered to the following research protocols. I first identified the list of the newly-hired teachers in the secondary level in the Municipality of Makilala, it was done through a formal letter to the District Supervisors. Upon approval I took the list of individuals who will serve as my participants and informants. Likewise, a letter was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent of Cotabato relative to this matter.

During the selection of the participants. Upon setting the criteria. Another, prior to the interview, a consent-to-participate form was given. This explains their rights as participants. During the interview, I had given them an ample time to respond to each question. After which, I thanked them of their time and effort. The sense of reciprocity was also observed by giving a token to them as a kind o gratitude for the time and effort they shared to me.

Correspondingly, I transcribed the recorded audio. This was translated to English and checked by a language expert. The data was sent to the data analyst for the identification of the significant themes. These data will be brought back to the participants for confirmation.

### 2.5 Data Analysis

The informants of the study were interviewed individually where they shared their journey in the now normal environment. Thematic analysis was done where significant themes were extracted based on the narratives of the informants.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 3.1 Challenges of beginning Teachers in the Now Normal Environment Adjustment in the new Working Environment

Table 1 presents the themes and core ideas on the challenges of beginning teachers in the now normal environment. It revealed that one of the challenges is their transition in the new working environment. They have hard time of adapting with the different challenges brought by the new working environment, subject loads, paper works, and dealing with the colleagues. As presented during the interview:

*“As a neophyte teacher, I am having a hard time to work with my new colleagues, new environment and huge adjustments for new responsibilities.” (T1)*

Another beginning teacher shared that:

*“As a neophyte teacher, the main problem I have encounter was to fit in to the new environment. New people, new colleagues, new working place. I was intimidated at first, but I am grateful that they are approachable and easy to work with.” (T6)*

Normally, newly hired teachers have to adjust to their new working environment. They have to deal with the people with different attitudes and personalities. Also, they have to adjust with the bulk of work which is true to the Department of Education. Those who just transferred from the private schools could make a comparison wherein they

generalize the disparity from their previous workplace.

Teachers would not only adjust from their colleagues but also with their learners. Usually, there are those learners who possessed different behavioral problems which is a big challenge for the teachers to handle. It can be added that corporal punishment is not allowed which resulted to the lack of respect of the students (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

### **Limited Time in Accommodating Learning Concerns**

Because of the pandemic, they could have hard time on accommodating the concerns of their learners. It was narrated during the interview that:

*“As a beginning teacher, I was greatly challenged by delivering quality education, students difficulty on independent learning, module distribution and retrieval, assessment of learning, problems on communicating with the students and health risk brought by the pandemic.”* (T7)

It was supported by another participant who said that:

*“My problem that I encounter as a neophyte teacher is the limited time for accommodating all the learning concerns, because we have only a limited time and resources since we don't have an available classroom for grade 7.”* (T11)

The COVID-19 pandemic has been the main concern of the teachers. Face-to-face classes were not allowed. Some of the learners were impossible to reach because of their distance to school. Thus, they cannot really provide the learners with their learning concerns especially in answering their self-learning modules.

Even though limited face-to-face classes are already implemented in the different regions of the Philippines, but this is still not sufficient especially in reaching all their pupils. Though technology has been part of learning, but not all students have an access to it. Thus, teachers cannot fully implement the programs and activities that they want to happen in the class. More importantly, they wanted to immediately give feedback on the progress of their learners (Alda et al., 2020).

### **Concerns on Pedagogical Practices**

Their pedagogical practices have been their concern. They are facing the problems brought by the learning capabilities of their learners. Also, they cannot easily reach out some of the learners because of the pandemic. The interview showed that:

*“I encountered problems like handling subjects which are not related to my expertise.”* (T10)

Face-to-face instructions as compared to modular learning has big difference. It is effective for the learners to grasp the contexts of their lessons if they are able to ask directly their concerns to their teachers. Some of the bodies of knowledge are too difficult for them to immediately grasp. Therefore, teachers can no longer provide the necessary intervention since they too have different ancillary tasks to fulfill.

**Table 1: Themes and Core Ideas on the Challenges of beginning Teachers in the now Normal Environment**

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Adjustment in the new working environment	Typical	They have hard time of adapting with the different challenges brought by the new working environment, subject loads, paper works, and dealing with the colleagues.  They do not have enough time to respond to the needs of their learners.
Limited Time in accommodating learning concerns	Typical	They are facing the problems brought by the learning capabilities of their learners.  They cannot easily reach out some of the learners because of the pandemic.
Concerns on pedagogical practices	General	

Legend:

General 50%

Typical 25-40%

Variant 20%

Face-to-face classes enabled teachers to equally deliver their lessons and prepare instructional materials best suited to the needs of their learners. Aside from this, they could determine who among their learners want close supervision to improve their performance. But with the implementation of the modular learning, some of the students cannot even understand the contents of the lessons. Thus, ended in a total failure (Ulla, 2018).

### 3.2. Coping Strategies of beginning Teachers in the now Normal Environment

Table 2 shares the themes and core ideas on the coping strategies of beginning teachers in the now normal environment.

#### Proper Time Management

Proper time management has been part of the strategies of the teachers. They articulated that:

*“To help me overcome these challenges, I set and manage my time wisely, have positive mindset.”* (T3)

*“I prepare ahead of time all the necessary preparations within the week.”* (T4)

The beginning teachers learned to cope by observing proper time management. In reality, teachers are bombarded with a lot of paper work. It is even made complicated during the implementation of the new normal learning which is the utilization of the self-learning modules. They have to deliver them to their learners and immediately retrieve them. This was the reality of their lives. But with proper time management they excellently fulfilled their duties and responsibilities. They did not fail their learners.

As stated by Barrot et al. (2021) that teachers are known to be the earliest to wake up every day in order to go to school and extend their services to their learners. Before sleeping at night, they have to prepare their lessons and their

instructional materials. But with proper time management teachers were able to incorporate this as their daily practice.

### **Positive Outlook in Life**

Neophyte teachers have the positive outlook in life. They looked the meanings of life in different perspectives and learned to accept the changes and innovations in teaching. Thus, it was shared that:

*“First is to remain positive and to admit when I needed help given the fact that I am new to the job. By asking help I can interact with them and slowly adopt the environment I am right now.”* (T6)

### **Remain Steadfast in Honing Students’ Capabilities**

They remain steadfast in honing students’ capabilities. Through this, they developed their sense of resiliency that amidst the challenges they learned to adopt to the new environment. Indeed, it was supported it by saying that:

*“I did search on YouTube and other resources, I also ask teachers who already had an expertise on these subjects, and ask some of her prepared instructional materials.”* (T10)

Teachers are known to be the role models. Having the positive outlook in life they can see all the possibilities. They turned all the negativities into opportunities to grow and to share the knowledge and skills to their innocent learners. Though they were tested by the pandemic, yet they still see the brighter side of being in the profession. Because for them, teaching is worth it when it is filled with love and compassion.

Positive thinking means that a person turns negativities into an opportunity to grow and foster. They valued the sense of optimism because for them there will be rainbow after the rain. This means that the pandemic will end and that they could enjoy the normal life where they can face their learners with great pride and honor (Talidad&Toquero, 2020).

### **Seek Help from Colleagues**

Furthermore, they sought help from their colleagues. The words of wisdom which seasoned teachers can provide them have a gargantuan effect in enhancing their performance and motivation. Therefore, they said that:

*“By consulting to my co- worker who has already experienced as a teacher, I am convinced to conduct home visitations and reached them out through different platforms.”* (T7)

*“To overcome these challenges, I ask help from my co-teachers about motivation to learn more in the new field of service. These sense of duty drives me to become a better person and a better teacher.”* (T8)

In addition:

*“I overcome those challenges by prayer and I believe that God will not leave me in my life’s endeavor and by asking help from my co-workers, they ready give me good advice.”* (T9)

This theme implies that teachers who are new in the profession should have to reach out seasoned teachers. Their help could have a positive impact on their quest in improving their performance. In this regard, they will be guided properly on the things that they are doing.

The result is in congruence with the idea of Suafor (2000) that peer support in teaching is a must. The guidance which they can be given to the beginning teachers is an essential component in professional development. Furthermore, tyro teachers will have the confidence in doing things especially in the aspects of pedagogy.

**Table 2: Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Strategies of beginning Teachers in the now Normal Environment**

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Proper Time Management	Typical	They learned to manage their time properly in doing their tasks.  They looked the meanings of life in different perspectives and learned to accept the changes and innovations in teaching.  They developed their sense of resiliency that amidst the challenges they learned to adopt to the new environment.  They sought help from seasoned and experienced teachers who guided them of their journey in the DepEd.
Positive Outlook in Life	Variant	
Remain steadfast in honing students' capabilities	Variant	
Seek help from colleagues	General	

Legend:

General 50%

Typical 25-40%

Variant 20%

**3.3 Pieces of Advice to other beginning Teachers**

Table 3 shows the themes and core ideas on the pieces of advice of tyro teachers to other beginning teachers.

**Be Humble**

One of the themes which emerged is that one should be humble. Teachers must have to accept their flaws and weaknesses. During the interview, it was said that:

*“Be humble, if you think you cant do it, you have co teachers that may help you, and also manage your time and don’t for yourself.”* (T1)

Also:

*“Be humble, responsible and resourceful.”* (T8)

Beginning teachers must be humble enough to accept the reality that they have difficulties and other wish-washiness. It is important that they have to refer to those who are experienced in the teaching profession. More so, it would be easy for them to understand the things and they will be guided properly.

Humility is a value that every employee has to instill. As they humble themselves, they understand their limitations and weaknesses, and they view their mistakes as opportunities to grow. With sense of professional humility

would allow them to grow from it and it would be their source of motivation to seek out training and skill development (Willis, 2021).

### Love thy Profession

Similarly, they shared the importance of loving the teaching profession. Because aside from being the bread and butter, it is also where teachers developed the minds of the young citizens. It was mirrored by the statement of the participant:

*“For me the words of wisdom that I can give to other neophyte is they have to love their profession and the people around us.”* (T11)

Teachers who love their profession are the source of inspiration. They have the strength and power to overcome all the challenges. Aside from that they look into the positive results of all the challenges. Loving the teaching profession means loving the learners who rely on them to have the bodies of knowledge which they can use in maintaining excellence.

Teachers encourage and inspire their students on a daily basis. They are open to new ideas, willing to take risks and prepare lessons for a rapidly changing world, all the while keeping their students' best interests at heart. They give unceasingly of their own time and share their successes with their colleagues (Mkumbo, 2012).

## 4. BE RESILIENT

Henceforth, they want that teachers have to be resilient. They have to show that they are strong enough in facing all the challenges may it be in the workplace or at home. This was supported by the narrative of the participants:

*“Enjoy the calling of being a teacher, take it as an inspiration to develop skills.”* (T4)

*“Invest in education, don't stop learning. Learn with your co-worker they can be a good adviser as they already experienced a lot as your senior in the workplace.”* (T5)

Likewise, another participant stated that:

*“When failure takes place, don't give up, stand up and fight. It simply indicates the importance of perseverance.”* (T8)

Being strong amidst the uncertainties enabled teachers to stand again. They know how to fight back and learn how to make things in order. Teachers learned to conquer their fears and motivated themselves that even in the midst of uncertainties they have proven their worth.

**Table 3: Themes and Core Ideas on their Pieces of advice to other beginning Teachers**

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Be humble	Variant	Teachers must accept their flaws and weaknesses.
Love thy profession	Typical	Teachers must give importance and love to the teaching profession. Teachers must have to be strong enough in facing all the aridity in life.
Be resilient	General	



#### Legend

General 50%

Typical 25-40%

Variant 20%

Teachers' resilience or the ability to stand against the natural stressors and setbacks in teaching as a tough profession is of utmost importance in all educational arenas that it can generate numerous positive outcomes. More specifically, resiliency produces job satisfaction, responsiveness, effectiveness, self-efficacy, sense of pride, sense of agency, interpersonal relationships, competency, autonomy, optimism, positive interpersonal emotions, empathy, and emotionally intelligent teachers (Tait, 2008).

#### 4.1 Implications for Practice

Beginning teachers faced a lot of challenges. They have to endure the pain which they never met before. The new teaching environment is surrounded by people with different backgrounds, attitudes, and worldviews. Adjustment is one of the key factors which enabled them to work closely with their colleagues.

In the same vein, beginning teachers faced difficulties in dealing with their learners. With the absence of face-to-face classes because of the COVID-19 pandemic, they are not certain that the modular learning is efficient or sufficient enough to cater the needs of the students to have the profound understanding of their lessons. Unlike before, the presence of students in the class would help teachers to give assessments based on their performance.

Tyro teachers are caught in the middle of where they have to adjust to the new normal environment of teaching. However, they have shown that the essence of coping whereby they looked the positive side of life. Teaching for them is still the noblest profession. Even with though they are not with their learners but they kept on reaching them out to give the quality of learnings they deserve.

Furthermore, beginning teachers learned to become pliant. As they faced the challenges, they flex their arms again and continue with their services to their learners. Above all, being new is not a hindrance since they immediately learn through the help of their colleagues. It is also not bad when they reached them out because they can be the source of learnings which will guide them in reaching their ultimate goal in the teaching profession.

#### 4.2 Implications for Future Research

One of the major implications of this study is to include other teachers from other Division Offices in Region XII. Through the conduct of Focus Group Discussion, I believe that there are still a lot of stories to tell. They can share their journey as beginning teachers who have ups and downs because of the tests of times.

As such, it can be suggested that future researchers will utilize the results of the study as they conduct the same endeavor. Another, a case study will be done to have the in-depth analysis of their experiences especially to schools that are difficult to be reached by any forms of transportation. I know, teachers have more to say if this is the setting of the study.

Likewise, the Department of Education may be able to see the real condition of the teachers in the field. Interventions could be provided for them so that they will not be burned out and anxious in facing all the challenges.

Instead, they will become the symbol of hope and determination wherein they have the strength and vigor to sustain the needs of their learners.

Lastly, this study implies that researchers can conduct the same study using the mixed or quantitative methodologies. Thus, a comparative analysis could provide a better picture of the experiences of beginning teachers in the Department of Education. In the like manner, this entails the importance of motivation as a theoretical structure where studies like this can be anchored.

### 4.3 Concluding Remarks

I knew I was once on the shoes of the participants of my study. Through this, I have so many realizations. Teaching is not an easy task. It is always coupled with a lot of challenges. One has to be strong enough in order that they can succeed in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities.

In addition, being a teacher in this time of the pandemic is the most difficult to sustain. We are bombarded with a lot of paper works from the preparation of the Self-Learning Modules, to distribution, to retrieval, and to checking. We valued their performance; hence we see to it that every effort is worth it. Similarly, beginning teachers are humans too that needed guidance and support by the seasoned teachers in the organization.

Further, their love of the profession is a clear manifestation that they are committed in all facets of life. As they valued their work, they integrated the strong sense of resiliency wherein they learned to withstand from the different condition. Teaching in this now normal environment is the example of how teachers cope with and learned to adopt with it.

Finally, this study integrates my worldviews as a teacher. I need to be strong even though I faced a lot of challenges. It teaches me with lessons to ponder. To those who wants to be with us, you have to think that teaching is not a joke. You should not only think for the benefits, but to always consider that we are destined to shape the future leaders of this country.

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