

In the Name of Authentic Public Service: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study on the Lives of Filipino Teachers in Select Coastal Villages

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Abstract

Aim: This descriptive phenomenological research sought to explore the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in select coastal villages, as well as to utilize the said experiences to better improve the teaching profession.

Methodology: Participants in the study included fifteen (15) basic education teachers (from the elementary and the junior high school levels) in select coastal villages in Central Luzon, Philippines, who were selected via a purposive sampling technique. One-on-one, face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the participants with the aid of a researcher-developed semi-structured, open-ended interview guide. Data gathered were analyzed using the descriptive phenomenological analysis.

Results: Overall findings show two major themes which capture the lived experiences of the participants: (1) 'A Leap of Faith': An Invitation to Transcend Oneself in the Name of Authentic Public Service, and (2) Living and Loving: An Extraordinary and Joyful Experience in the Name of Authentic Public Service.

Conclusion: The study concludes that while teaching in schools in the coastal villages is accompanied by a number of challenges, it also involves a number of reasons to be joyful and to be thankful to the authorities for the teachers having been given the opportunity to truly serve the learners and the school community. Implications of the findings of this study include the call for the government and school stakeholders to reinforce measures to assist teachers assigned in the coastal villages, as well as to craft laws and policies that will consider their welfare and improve the overall educational system.

Keywords: Coastal villages, descriptive phenomenology, Filipino teachers, lived experiences, public service

INTRODUCTION

Teaching has always been considered as one of the noblest professions in the world (Johnson, 2012). In fact, a number of authors are in conformity that more than a profession, teaching is a vocation (Cooling, 2010), a response to the call of the Almighty to serve the people, the young and the most vulnerable in the society, to serve in the name of authentic public service which means thinking more of the welfare of the students and being able to sacrifice so the best possible education can be offered to the latter. One author wrote that the existence of all other professions is possible because there is a teacher, to begin with (Kan, 2015). All other professions exist because, in the first place, there is a teacher who, with all willingness and dedication to serve, acts as a jack-of-all-trades in the classroom performing his/her main tasks in the teaching and learning process and at the same time performing other teaching-related tasks required in the profession (Wang'eri & Okello, 2014).

There are successful leaders today because they had been educated and inculcated with the necessary knowledge and equipped with the right values by their teachers (Chong, Low & Goh, 2011).

Without prejudice to and comparison with the greatest roles and unconditional love and care of biological parents and guardians, it cannot be denied that young people are molded and transformed into better individuals, into the best versions of themselves, by no other than their teachers whose service and dedication to the youth transcend the four corners of the classroom. As McCallum and Price (2010) stated, teachers shape the future by shaping or molding the youth of today. It is in the hands of teachers that the next leaders and nation builders are formed, developed, and nourished (Parvez & Shakir, 2013). Given these important roles and great contributions in the society by teachers, a number of government and non-government organizations and/or agencies usually conduct events or programs to acknowledge, recognize and incentivize the good

deeds and outstanding performance of select teachers (Carbungco, 2019).

These events or programs also serve as an avenue where the teacher-awardees can exhibit to the public their greatest contributions in the field of education for purposes of serving as an inspiration for others and an invitation and a challenge for them to emulate the awardees' outstanding performance (Flora, 2019). Most of these awards or recognitions, however, measure and evaluate teachers' performance through a rigid process which usually requires a lot of documentary requirements/supporting documents which include the development of instructional materials, research outputs, innovations, educational attainment, leadership in organizations, participation in community and civic movements, among other criteria. While there are wisdom and logic in requiring applicants to submit the said supporting documents like the ones being searched for are outstanding public servants and not just anybody else, these awards or recognitions do not reflect the equally outstanding public service of certain teachers who are assigned in schools in remote areas or in coastal villages as in the case of the present study.

Globally, there are only a few organizations who focus on the equally outstanding public service of teachers in remote areas, like in the case of teachers in the coastal villages. This is a global, significant concerns which has to be addressed by authorities and academicians through research. Despite the absence of research, publications, approved and documented innovations and other documents which merit credits or points during an evaluation, the service and dedication of these teachers are beyond question – a service rendered in disadvantaged and deprived (Passy & Ovenden-Hope, 2019) and under-resourced (Kelly, 2010) communities; a service that usually involves the sacrifice of transporting from their residence going to their respective schools in coastal villages, facing the possible dangers during their travel, performing their best teaching strategies with students who are at young ages would already prefer to work (e.g. fishery, farming) than walk certain kilometers just to reach their schools (Porter, et al., 2010) and other similar challenges that other teachers in the urban areas would not even imagine.

Thus, this study was conducted not to call for authorities to bestow certain awards or recognitions to the participants but to simply serve as an eye-opener and an inspiration for others on how they can also authentically serve the public in spite of certain limitations. Through this study on the lived experiences of these teachers in select coastal villages, people, especially the young ones, maybe further inspired to continue pursuing education as a lot of sacrifices, time, efforts and energy, are offered by certain people so that the young minds can be

fully nourished in the name of authentic public service.

While living in the coastal villages may mean a lot of benefits such as the beautiful scenery where the land and the waters can be observed 'marrying' each other, the beautiful sunrise and sunset can be viewed without any distractions, the aesthetic benefit of the ecosystem function can be enjoyed (Fernandez, 2019), and the peaceful life is offered distant from the city noise and pollution, formal education in these places is faced with a lot of challenges (Islam, et al., 2019). Various authors cite insufficient, if not a total absence of, means of transportation, the challenges during rainy seasons and other natural calamities that endanger the lives, properties, and education of residents (Alam & Collins, 2010), the difficulty of the education sector in encouraging students to fully embrace schooling, hunger issues in coastal villages (Kinshella, 2012) and other concerns (Passy & Ovenden-Hope, 2019; Kelly, 2010).

Despite these concerns, however, is the unceasing effort of the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines to deliver quality, relevant, and accessible education for all. True to its mission to liberate the youth from all forms of ignorance, schools are continuously built even in the far-flung, remote areas like in the case of coastal villages. Annually, DepEd reports its continuous efforts to ensure that all cities and municipalities, and even barrios in distant areas, are built with schools which usually cater and serve those living in the nearby areas. For schools in the coastal villages, education which used to be just a dream for the residents becomes possible through the initiatives of the government and the assistance of the private sector.

Objective

This study sought to explore the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in select coastal villages. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of Filipino teachers in select coastal villages?
2. How can the experiences of the participants be utilized to better improve the teaching profession?

METHODS

Research Design

This research utilized the qualitative method. As a qualitative research, it looked into the world of the participants in their natural setting trying to have a grasp of the meaning and essence that the latter provides (Patton, 2005) through fieldwork observations and in-depth face-to-face, open-ended interviews (Mihas, 2019). As a qualitative research, the study emphasized on how the participants perceive their experiences and how these shape their life and the meaning that resides in those

experiences. It is concerned with the in-depth stories of people and how they view themselves as they journey in life. In the present study, the qualitative method is the most suitable method to be used as the study is concerned on the in-depth experiences and journey of the participants as they actually perceived it and as they personally give meaning onto these experiences which in turn will lead them in improving practices, specifically in the profession of teaching in the coastal villages.

This study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design. Using this design, the study aims to explore and investigate human experiences as perceived by human consciousness (Polit & Beck, 2010). This is done through the sincere commitment of the study to inquire into the phenomenon of concern, avoiding and bracketing any forms of biases or prejudices in the process. As Lopez and Willis (2004) stated, descriptive phenomenology aims to enlighten researchers and readers with no other than the experiences as lived by specific individuals. Descriptive phenomenological research is the most suitable design in the present study as the lived experiences of the participants vis-à-vis their situation in the coastal areas and ways to improve the same can only be determined from their personal lenses, inquiring and listening to their day-to-day journey as told and elucidated by them.

Population and Sampling

The participants in this study were composed of all the fifteen (15) basic education teachers (from the elementary and the junior high school levels) coming from three (3) schools in select coastal villages in Central Luzon, Philippines. They were recruited based on their fitness with the set selection criteria as attested by the concerned Public Schools District Supervisor in coordination with the respective School Heads of the participants. There had been five (5) teachers per school who were selected via a purposive sampling technique.

The criteria used in the selection of the participants are as follows: (1) that the participant has been assigned in the school in the coastal area for at least one year as of the time of the conduct of the study so that their sharing or inputs can be considered rich as they have already been immersed in the said situation, (2) that the participant is not a resident in the coastal area and the necessity to travel from his/her residence to the school location, usually by a boat, exists, because being a resident in the said location would not actually represent the challenges of those teachers who needed to travel to reach the destination, and (3) that the participant still has the intents to stay in the same school as can be proven by his/her non-submission of any letter or instrument to effect a transfer to another school, as such intent to stay in the schools in coastal villages would also

mean the intent to improve the situation without abandoning it to begin with.

In view of the confidentiality clause in research, the identities of the participants are not withheld in any part of this study, nor in any fora, academic discussions, or any other avenues where the findings of the study are disseminated. In the Findings and Discussion sections, the identities of the participants are mentioned through the use of pseudonyms or IDs such as P1, meaning 'Participant Number 1', P2, meaning 'Participant Number 2', and so on. The addition of a small letter in the alphabet after a pseudonym or ID refers to the number of statements said or responded by each participant. This means an ID of P1a refers to the first statement of 'Participant Number 1', P1b refers to the second statement of the same participant, and so on

Instrumentation

This study made use of a researcher-developed, semi-structured interview guide in the collection of data during the in-depth interviews with the participants. The said interview guide is anchored on the research questions and was further improved based on existing literature and studies about the present study. This instrument was validated by two sets of validators: (1) three teachers who are considered experts in qualitative research based on their published research articles, their respective areas of specialization and their present positions/designations in their respective institutions/organizations, and (2) two teachers who had personal experiences and journey as teachers in coastal villages. The said validation process was conducted to help the researchers improve their questions and align the same with the method used in the study. The said process was also conducted to ensure that the questions used would be ethically appropriate and sensitive with the situations of the participants who are teachers in the coastal villages.

Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

The study seriously considered all the necessary research protocols, together with all applicable ethics concerns, before, during, and after data collection.

Before data collection, the study ensured that all necessary permits and letters of request were approved by the concerned authorities and were disseminated to proper offices/agencies for appropriate accommodation. Consent of both the teacher-participants and the schools where the study was conducted was also secured. The participants were also provided with information such as, but not limited to, the possible duration of the interviews which actually lasted for 20-45 minutes each and there were instances when the researchers had to go back to the participants for some clarifications, the reason and criteria for their participation or inclusion

in the study, their right to withdraw in the study should they find violations of agreements and the application of the confidentiality of data. Protocols on safety during the travel and actual data collection were also complied with.

The actual data collection took place in the respective schools of the participant-teachers in the coastal villages to be consistent with the principle that the participants can best share their experiences and stories when the information is collected in their natural setting. To ensure that the policy on non-disruption of classes and of work hours as mandated by the Department of Education and the Civil Service Commission (CSC), respectively, the data collection was conducted during the vacant periods of the participants during the second semester of school year 2019-2020. In the collection of data, rapport was first built with the participants while the objectives of the study were being explained to them.

The study also ensured the comfort or convenience of the participants by avoiding any follow-up questions or comments that might be offensive or might irritate the participants given their disadvantaged situation in the coastal areas. With prior permission from the participants, interviews were audio-taped for easier and more accurate transcription and analyses of data. Aside from their words or statements, other sources of data such as the participants' gestures or facial expressions were also noted in adherence to the general principle in qualitative research that all is data. After the data collection, words of gratitude for participating in the study were extended to the participants. They were also informed of the concerns on the proper keeping and would-be disposal of the collected data after a certain period of time.

Data Analysis

Data gathered were analyzed using the descriptive phenomenological analysis of Van Kaam (1966). In this method, analyzing numerous information and large data is possible and appropriate since the method can specify and interpret the verbal statements more accurately (Anderson & Eppard, 1998). It can also highlight the most important parts of the transcripts, thus helping in the easier identification and classification of themes. Manual coding was utilized in the analysis of the data. The audio-taped interviews were first transcribed in verbatim, organized, and reviewed for clarity of thoughts, message, and presentation. This means that aside from transcribing the collected data word-for-word, unclear or confusing responses were clarified with the participants before these are actually analyzed. Responses in the vernacular language of the participants were translated into the English language for purposes of a universal understanding of the interviews. Said translation went through the validation of experts in language so that the essence

of the original responses would not be lost or altered in the process of translation.

For practical purposes, the responses in the original language are no longer presented in the Findings of the study. Similarly, the voluminous verbatim transcripts were also excluded in the presentation and only the codes which were the results of the data analysis are presented in the said Findings. These codes represent the key information or key points that can be deducted from a large verbatim transcript. From the analyzed codes, categories, or patterns were identified and themes and sub-themes were then identified in the final analysis. An example of this can be found in Table 1 (Results of Data Analysis). In the said table, only the codes were presented (the near-death experiences, being tough and strong, the challenging assignment which is only for the committed ones) and the specific, verbatim transcripts from the participants (as shown via IDs) are no longer presented. From the said codes, a sub-theme should emerge like the sub-theme "Near-Death Experiences: A Lesson to Offer One's Best for the Learners". From the combination of various sub-themes, a major theme would exist such as in the example, 'A Leap of Faith': An Invitation to Transcend Oneself in the Name of Authentic Public Service.

For the trustworthiness of the study, the following steps were undertaken: (1) triangulation was made via review of school records and other documents showing the sacrifices of teachers such as letter of intent to continue teaching in the coastal villages, incident reports on the risks on travelling to and from the said schools, letters from students appreciating the works of their teachers, school heads' request to stakeholders for assistance for teachers in the coastal villages, etc., (2) the applicability of the study's findings can be seen with the related experiences and requests of teachers and school heads in other schools in the coastal areas in the same region, and (3) the review of peers or colleagues and other external validators as to the correctness of the data analysis, avoiding researchers' potential biases and prejudices in the study.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

After a thorough analysis of the gathered data, the findings of the study showed two major themes which capture the lived experiences of the participant-teachers in the coastal villages: (1) 'A Leap of Faith': An Invitation to Transcend Oneself in the Name of Authentic Public Service, and (2) Living and Loving: An Extraordinary and Joyful Experience in the Name of Authentic Public Service. For the first major theme, there are two sub-themes: (1.1) Near-Death Experiences: A Lesson to Offer One's Best for the Learners, and (1.2) Criticisms and Discrimination from Others: Opportunities to Better Serve the Learners. For the second major theme, there are three sub-

themes: (2.1) Teaching in Schools in the Coastal Areas: A Blessing in Disguise, (2.2) Teaching in Schools in the Coastal Areas: Mission Possible, and (2.3) Teaching in Schools in the Coastal Areas: To Live and to Love Unconditionally. These themes and their respective sub-themes, together with the codes that resulted from the initial data analysis, are presented in Table 1 for easy reference and presentation.

Table 1
Results of the Analysis

| Codes | Sub-themes | Major Themes |
|--|---|---|
| <p>"Teaching in a school located in a coastal village is quite similar to having near-death experiences, literally and by essence because of the dangers and challenges in this location." - P4a (<i>Related ideas as P2a & P6a</i>)</p> <p>"You need to give your best everyday because you do not know the possible dangers that may come while travelling." - P10a (<i>Related ideas as P1a, P8a, P9a & P15a</i>)</p> | | |
| <p>"Teaching in the coastal areas is very challenging in terms of transportation, pupils' intelligence and the participation of parents and other stakeholders. Sometimes you would want to surrender." - P12a (<i>Related ideas as P2b, P3a, P5a, P6b, P7a, P8b & P14a</i>)</p> | Near-Death Experiences: A Lesson to Offer One's Best for the Learners | 'A Leap of Faith': An Invitation to Transcend Oneself in the Name of Authentic Public Service |
| <p>"Being assigned here is like a death sentence with all the challenges. But you have to face them." - P1b (<i>Related ideas as P4b, P6c, P11a & P12b</i>)</p> | | |
| <p>"Without commitment, you will not last in this school (in the coastal village)." - P14b (<i>Related ideas as P3b, P5b, P8c, P10b, P13a, & P15b</i>)</p> | | |
| <p>"The criticism and discrimination from others when they learned you're teaching in the coastal villages add to the already challenging situation here. So, you really have to be tough for the benefits of the students." - P2c (<i>Related ideas as P4c, P6d, P9b & P14c</i>)</p> | | Criticism and Discrimination from Others: Opportunities to Better Serve the Learners |
| <p>"When others learned you're teaching in a coastal village, they'll murmur that you don't smell good, that you don't know the city ways of life, that you are ignorant that's why you are assigned here. You have to show them you're here to serve the students." - P3c (<i>Related ideas as P1c, P6e, P7b, P10c, P11b, P12c & P13b</i>)</p> | | |
| <p>"Being here is a blessing in disguise. It will teach you a lot like sacrifice, true love for the learners." - P6f (<i>Related ideas as P3d, P4d, P5c, P7c, P8d & P12d</i>)</p> | | |
| <p>"Being assigned here will let you see the beauty of the environment and the nature." - P4e (<i>Related ideas as P5d, P10d & P14d</i>)</p> | | Teaching in Schools in the Coastal Areas: A Blessing in Disguise |
| <p>"You will become a better individual when you are here because you will value sacrifice and service to the people, especially the students." - P1d (<i>Related ideas as P2d & P8e</i>)</p> | | Living and Loving: An Extraordinary and Joyful Experience in the Name of Authentic Public Service |
| <p>"Life in here is not so complicated as in the city. Everything seems to be simple and possible here." - P15c (<i>Related ideas as P3e, P4f, & P8f</i>)</p> | | Teaching in Schools in the Coastal Areas: |

| | |
|--|---|
| "Life here is much easier than in other places where noise, pollution, traffic and crimes are happening. You can live simply here." - P2e (Related ideas as P6g, P7d & P13c) | Mission Possible |
| "Being assigned here will let the mother, the father, the member of a family come out from you. It will make you concerned with the welfare of the students here as if they are your own blood." - P2f (Related ideas as P1e, P9c, P10e & P11c) | Teaching in |
| "Teaching here is a joyful experience. You will feel appreciated for the unconditional love you offer to students." - P2g (Related ideas as P4g, P11d, P12e & P14e) | Schools in the Coastal Areas: To Live and to Love Unconditionally |
| "Serving the most disadvantaged in the community is a vocation and a response to show that we can serve despite difficult circumstances." - P3f (Related ideas as P4h, P5e, P7e, P8g, P10f, P13d & P15d) | |

The first major theme, 'A Leap of Faith': An Invitation to Transcend Oneself in the Name of Authentic Public Service, basically revolves on the various challenges being faced by the participants as teachers in the schools located in the coastal areas. By the phrase 'a leap of faith', said theme recognizes the optimism and strengths of the participants that despite their challenges there is still hope and there is a belief that they can succeed and overcome those challenges, seeing those challenging situations as an opportunity to become selfless and dedicate oneself in the service of the Filipino learners.

This finding is consistent with the study of Lepkowska (2016) who wrote that certain 'coastal challenges' in teaching in these kinds of schools or assignments can produce something better. It is a way of building trust despite its difficulties (Nikolova, Möllering & Reihlen, 2015), believing that in the process, the participants will finally appreciate their respective assignments and will transcend, go beyond themselves and see the need to serve more and to

give more especially for learners in the coastal areas.

As can also be observed in the two sub-themes, despite the 'near-death' experiences and criticisms and discrimination as shared by the participants during the interviews, both situations still point them to do better, to serve better instead of thinking that those occurrences and perceptions about their situation are hindrances for them to do their jobs. This optimism in times of challenging situations is an enabling factor for the teachers to appreciate more their situations and not let these to hamper their mission for the learners (Chang, 2011; Sezgin & Erdogan, 2015).

Their 'near-death experiences' or 'death sentence' which refers to their situations of feeling in-danger for having to travel certain kilometers via boat and the various problems and concerns that they face in the schools in the coastal areas, has served as a lesson for them to offer their best for the learners. In the same manner, their experiences of being criticized and discriminated by others such as being looked down or being addressed as a low performer, ignorant of the city ways, among other criticisms, have also been turned by them into opportunities to show the great mission that they can fulfill in the schools in the coastal villages.

With these premises, it can be observed how teachers in the coastal villages can still be positive in the midst of difficult situations, an attitude worthy of emulation by other teachers who are in related, if not identical, situations (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2010). Besides, educating the youth is never an easy journey (Soccorsi, 2013) as it requires sacrifices, commitment and dedication to fulfill one's mission of providing quality, relevant and accessible education for all (Allen & Wright, 2014; Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012; Noland & Richards, 2015).

Entering the teaching profession necessitates that one is willing to go the extra mile, be selfless, and offer oneself as one of the solutions to eradicate all forms of ignorance and lead the youth to a better life. Those who cannot offer themselves in the name of authentic public service have no place in an organization which commitment and dedication to truly serve is of primordial importance.

On the second major theme, the participants dealt with the joy of teaching in schools in the coastal villages. This 'extraordinary and joyful' experience as shared by the participants during the interviews speaks of their views that being assigned in schools in the coastal villages is a blessing in disguise, that it opens them a possibility to extend more their helping hands to students and the school community even in their own, simple ways, and that their situation is an opportunity to live and love unconditionally especially towards a community that needs it the most. This is a development compared to previous research that mainly emphasized on difficulties or challenges in

teaching in the coastal villages or in rural communities.

While it is true that being assigned in some remote areas to do one's duties may seem a very difficult task for many, other people find happiness and a sense of authentic mission when they are given this opportunity (Lock, et al., 2012). It is a blessing in disguise as it opens a lot of opportunities to learn and to be of service to others especially the poor (ChanLin, Lin & Lu, 2015). It also allows one to become a better person as it attempts to test him/her on how far he/she can be of service to others (Chamundeswari, 2013).

Some participants also mentioned the blessing and opportunity to see the beauty of the environment, nature, as it unfolds its splendor in the coastal villages. Being assigned to schools in the coastal villages also means living a simple life while giving everything in the service to others. It has not to be very complicated or grandiose since people in the coastal villages appreciate the simplicity yet sincerity of an offered initiative. Some participants mentioned their innovative teaching strategies which may not be an innovation per se in some other schools, but are much appreciated and supported in the coastal villages. Without promoting mediocrity, the participants pointed out that it is not the complexity of an innovation that is truly assessed in the end, but the sincerity of the teachers to do something different to help their school community (Holdsworth & Maynes, 2017).

It is an indication that despite their situations in the coastal villages, these teachers are still seen with great enthusiasm to do something innovatively, improve their teaching practices and strategies and embrace the challenges of the fast-changing times (Dizon & Sanchez, 2020). Aside from innovative teaching strategies that do not have to be so complicated, some participants also shared about simplicity in terms of the life itself in the coastal villages, a life distant from noise, pollution, traffic, and crimes in other urban localities.

Most participants also take their situations as an opportunity to live and love unconditionally, to consider, and respond to, the needs of the learners as if they are their children, own siblings, part of their families. In their present assignments, the participants appreciate the fact that they have a lot of opportunities to help their learners and the community by personally assessing what these people have and what they can still achieve as a community. It indicates their capabilities to look at the strengths and areas for improvement of the school community, supporting the call for every teacher to highlight strengths and address development needs in the school setting (Sanchez & Sarmiento, 2020).

On the inquiry on how the participants' experiences as teachers in schools in the coastal villages can be utilized to better improve the teaching

profession, the responses resulted in the following points: (1) instead of being looked down by others, teachers in the coastal villages shall serve as an epitome of true service and a reminder that the teaching profession is only for those who can truly serve and give their best for the learners [P2h, P3g, P4i, P6h, P7f, P9d, P11e, P12f, P14f & P15e], (2) the Department of Education shall continue supporting and prioritizing the needs of schools in the coastal villages as most of the learners there are the most in need of government assistance [P1f, P3h, P4j, P6i & P11f], and (3) for those who would like to enter the teaching profession, the motivation should always be a service that requires sacrifices for the benefits of others and the entire community [P1g, P2i, P5f, P7g, P8h, P10g, P12g & P13e].

These findings also validate the responses of the participants as discussed in the preceding paragraphs through the major themes of the study. They reflect the challenging yet extraordinary and joyful journey of the participants whose mission and service to the learners and the school community do not actually call for concerned government authorities to bestow certain awards or incentives but only invite for continuous support and appreciation of the noble tasks that these teachers do in the name of authentic public service.

Conclusion

While teaching in schools in the coastal villages is accompanied by several challenges, it also involves a number of reasons to be joyful and be thankful to the authorities for the teachers having been allowed to truly serve the learners and the school community. While the participants have been shaken by how their situation can endanger them literally and metaphorically through the various concerns and problems they encounter in the coastal villages, their intents to fulfill their mission of service and unconditional love for the learners stand out and allow them to pursue what is best for the coastal communities.

Anchored on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered: a) The Department of Education (DepEd) and other concerned government agencies in the Philippines has to strengthen their support to teachers assigned in the coastal areas/coastal villages. With adherence to existing laws and policies, the authorities can device more ways and strategies to ensure the safety and welfare of these teachers. More incentives can also be crafted or proposed for the benefits of teachers assigned in the said places; b) DepEd can also encourage more stakeholders to support the cause of the education system, specifically those in the far-flung areas that are usually difficult to be reached by philanthropists and other kind-hearted individuals and/or private partners; c) Awareness and advocacy campaigns and dissemination of the journey of

teachers, learners, and the coastal community school in general, are to be put in place to encourage and enlighten more people on the value of authentic service, specifically on communities in the far-flung areas like in the coastal villages; and d) The teaching profession has to ensure that only those who truly have the heart to authentic public service are recruited since the preparations of the youth through education is a crucial task that has to be delegated only to those who truly qualified. Motivation, willingness to offer oneself in the name of public service, a little sacrifice for the good of the learners, and other parameters may be incorporated in the inquiry to the applicants during teacher recruitment.

Limitations of the Study

While the study dealt with the lived experiences of the participant-teachers in schools in the coastal villages and reported on how these people live and fulfill their journey in the said places and what it is like to be in that situation, its limitations indicate that other sources of data may also be considered by future researchers to dig deeper on the school life in the coastal villages. Emphasis may not just on the teachers but also to other people in the school (learners, non-teaching staff, and other stakeholders) who may likewise contribute to the capturing of the life being lived in schools in the coastal villages. Parental engagement may also be given more emphasis in the next studies as it may be

contributory to teachers' overall experiences. Other methods or approaches in gathering and analyzing data may also be done in the future so that areas of concern may also be discussed with the use of other methods and techniques. Focus group discussions may also be considered involving various school stakeholders.

The results of the study may have similarities with other experiences with the same school setting, thus generalizability is possible at certain extents.

Implications of the Study

Implications of the findings of this study include the call for the government and school stakeholders to reinforce measures to assist teachers assigned in the coastal villages, as well as to craft laws and policies that will consider their welfare and improve the overall educational system.

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