Exploring the First-year Journey of Elementary Education Graduates of the Pandemic Era

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Abstract

One of the most fulfilling jobs that one may consider is teaching. In teaching, one can provide today's youth with the knowledge that would lead them to a better and brighter future. The teacher's potential to influence, change, and push them to give their optimum capacity would be the legacy that they could leave among the learners entrusted to them. The researcher explored on the experiences of the graduates of the Bachelor of Elementary Education program relative to their initial teaching experiences. This is a qualitative paper that employed a descriptive approach in exploring the experiences of the graduates as they have indulged themselves in the teaching profession. Seven (7) informants were involved in the study. These informants were the ones who started their teaching career right after graduation. Interview guide questions were crafted, and informants were given a chance to give their views regarding their initial teaching experiences. Four overarching themes emerged in the course of the study; and these were the descriptions of the informants in their initial teaching experience after graduation, challenges encountered by the informants in their initial teaching experience, coping practices employed by the informants in dealing with these encountered challenges, and insights of the informants on the significance of receiving awards and motivation in their initial teaching experience. The findings of the study will have an impact on the sustainability of the good performance of the program in the college.

Keywords: *Teaching, Descriptive, Initial, Experience.*

INTRODUCTION

The youth of today will always be the hope of the people and the instrument of nation-building. Hence, the delivery of quality education and services must be given to them without reservation to holistically achieve each academic institution's mission and objectives. However, due to the ever-changing demands of this sector and the expectations from teachers, there are a lot of challenges that spur discussions and dialogues when the field of teaching is concerned. It is a big challenge for teachers to deliver quality learning to students because of numerous problems that they are confronted with. For aspiring elementary teachers, their first teaching experience at a school marks a critical turning point in their careers as they mold young people's minds (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Moreover, Navida (2017) noted that colleges and universities have a responsibility to ensure that their graduates have the skills required for employment and can meet the demands of the labor market. One factor that determines an academic institution's performance is the graduates' ability to find a job (Pham et al., 2019). Teacher education students in a State University or College who graduated from a particular program are too eager to be in the field of teaching and practice what they have learned in their profession (Teng et al., 2019). Relative to this, Caingcoy (2020) claimed that it may be a common occurrence for recent graduates to have trouble adjusting to life after graduation. For instance, some may have found employment almost anywhere, but most chose to spend months studying for their licensure examination.

Other college graduates felt forced to start working as soon as they had finished their undergraduate degree. However, they are constrained by the terms and conditions of their positions, which include possessing a license (Devier, 2019). For this reason, it might take them longer to be employed as teachers, although finding jobs a few months after graduation would improve their chances and show that they are employable (Espinoza et al., 2020). From a particular perspective, teaching at the elementary level demands a unique set of skills and adaptability, as educators lay the foundation for students' academic and socio-emotional growth (Kushendar & Mayra, 2021). The transition from teacher preparation programs to the actual classroom setting can be both exhilarating and overwhelming. Donahue-Keegan et al. (2019) highlighted that novice teachers often face diverse classrooms with varying learning needs, cultural backgrounds, and individual challenges. Similarly, the

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first year of being on-the-job must have always been something that everyone looks forward to, but somehow it gives anxiety to the new teachers in the field. Furthermore, there are teachers who believe that the experience of teaching abroad as initial teacher education improved their readiness in areas including class planning and preparation, teaching confidence and flexibility, and working with others on a professional level. The Recently Qualified Teachers (RQTs) attributed these advantages to working closely with peers, course tutors, and teachers as well as the unfamiliar teaching situation and additional teaching experience that the experience offered. By adding the perspectives of RQTs, the study contributes to the increasing literature on teaching abroad and offers more reasons for including such experiences in ITE degree curricula (Moorhouse, 2020).

Ademola et al. (2021) elaborated that teacher who have more experience in the field are more likely to be organized and in control of various classroom management which leads to successful teaching. They are likewise believed to possess competencies relevant to the needs of the learners because of their years of exposure to different academic undertakings. These teachers' strategies and methods of teaching have enormously contributed to making the school environment conducive to learning. In addition, their abilities to prioritize educational activities and other connected tasks are evident among them. In this manner, mechanisms and interventions must be conducted to enable new teachers to be equipped with the possible situations that may arise during their duties. Cognizant of this, it is also imperative to consider the capacities of new teachers and their experiences which may influence students' academic performances (Ewetan & Ewetan, 2015). From a different perspective, Adadu (2017) mentioned that teachers who have been teaching for more than 10 years tend to yield superior outcomes compared to schools with a greater proportion of teachers who have fewer years of teaching experience. It was further explained by Bamidele & Adekola (2017) that there was a notable discrepancy in the academic performance of students instructed by highly qualified teachers compared to those taught by teachers with lower qualifications. This difference was also evident between students taught by trained teachers versus those taught by their counterparts, as well as between students taught by experienced teachers with extensive tenure and those taught by teachers with limited experience.

Common Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Their Beginning Years

Beginning elementary teachers often encounter a variety of challenges as they navigate their new roles and responsibilities in the classroom. Finding a job can be a challenging journey and they may encounter problems along the way, such as competition, location, application process, salary negotiation, and limited opportunities. According to reports, job hunting will be harder for most Filipinos in the next two years as the economy recovers slowly and the influx of new graduates is evident. According to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), unemployment is seen to rise between 7% and 9% through 2022. Graduates of education must be deemed as competent and qualified to teach so that they can hone the competencies needed by each pupil (Sanusi et al., 2020). Since there are a lot of uncertainties, teachers must always be prepared to find possible solutions for education to deteriorate. In preparing future teachers for an uncertain environment, it is crucial to examine how teacher education has changed to accommodate the limitations of interaction and shifted to new modes of teaching and learning. It also raises questions about the nature of teaching and ways to support the learning of student teachers (Flores & Swennen, 2020).

In addition to the following challenges that they encountered, the participants of the study are products of the pandemic teaching and learning context, and it adds to their struggle in finding jobs right after graduation. For instance, the diverse multitude of tasks given to teachers in their beginning years of teaching and the growing stress associated with it seem to be the main reasons for quitting their work early (Sanam et al., 2021). Moreso, the cultural shocks, unprecedented situations, and unsatisfied expectations faced were some of the listed struggles in their initial years of teaching (Lee, 2017). Accordingly, Dayan et al. (2018) stated that heavy workloads, unsupportive colleagues, different student behavior, and simultaneous implementation of pedagogies are the struggles that teachers face that make them unmotivated to pursue things. This was supported by Ahmed et al. (2020), who claimed that the unsupportive disposition of the superior teachers, inadequate pedagogical abilities, intolerable personalities exhibited by the students, and absence of a conducive learning environment posed obstacles for inexperienced educators to effectively carry out their teaching responsibilities.

Moreover, it was determined by Saleem and Muhammad (2020) that problems arise as a result of a pronounced inclination toward anger in some individuals. In contrast, others contend that their lack of seriousness and dismissive attitude toward teaching contribute to the difficulties encountered. There are also associated circumstances regarding limitations on the use of school equipment, classroom facilities, the availability of educational technologies, and the usage of laboratories in some actual and skill-based performances that are needed in the course (Ghavifekr et al., 2020). Subsequently, situations like these hinder both teachers and learners from upscaling meaningful experiences in the delivery of education. Importantly, the implementation of contemporary teaching approaches and methods effectively in the classroom setting is viewed as a global challenge in which new teacher education graduates are not fully equipped with the competence needed in the field of education (Du Plessis, 2020). On this note, newly hired teachers must know how to balance all the workloads being assigned to them.

Coping Practices of Inexperienced Teachers in their First Years of Teaching

A good internship experience could give them a higher possibility of getting a job because of the skills that they acquire during their practice teaching (Lala & Aisha, 2023). During internship, pre-service teachers undergo training for them to develop the competencies needed in any circumstance and any given environment. Pre-service teachers are provided with different strategies needed as soon they practice their profession. Varied activities and different forms of assessment are provided to them. The experience that they gained as student teachers helped them become ready in facilitating a good classroom teaching and environment. As Briones (2021) shared, "We must not only ensure and maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of the teachers but also prepare a new breed of teachers to teach in the post-COVID-19 learning environment." Consequently, internships could purposely mold teachers into becoming more adaptive to uncertain situations. As stated by Wang Yang (2023), schools' and institutions' operations must be redesigned to meet the digital age because of the limited opportunities for having a job. As the students graduate from their program, their ultimate motive is to work to help their families and sustain their financial needs. Experiences that they have acquired during their course in 'The Teaching Profession' would be their fundamental instrument in molding the youth of today. Elementary education graduates provide the foundation of knowledge, which is very crucial. Beginning teachers prefer to be more active and resilient in doing the tasks assigned to them.

It was revealed by Pene et al. (2023) that attending most seminars and workshops related to the subject area is a good practice to fully equip them with the trends in teaching pedagogies. These seminars and workshops can provide additional and complementary know-how that they can apply in their class. To stabilize the ongoing effects of stressful school and classroom jobs, coping strategies have been highlighted as a significant factor in helping educators successfully facilitate and implement learning outcomes. Talidong and Toquerob (2020) noted the engagement of the professional community as an effective coping strategy. Through this, new teachers are given the opportunity to seek information and guidance from their seniors so that they are provided purposeful activities needed for their stay in the school. Although stress is inevitable at work, one must be aware of coping mechanisms to avoid being emotionally and psychologically drained (Lewis & King, 2019). For instance, Cayao and Arenga (2019) mentioned that engagement in using problem-focused, emotional-focused, and appraisal-focused coping is interrelated with knowing the cause of the problems arising. Therefore, having preventive measures before these occur would lead to creating a productive work environment.

Landing a job is of paramount importance for various reasons, and its significance extends beyond just financial considerations. Here are some key reasons why securing a job is crucial: (1) financial stability; (2) personal fulfillment; (3) professional growth; (4) social connection; and (5) career advancement. The college already established a strong linkage to different public and private elementary schools in the region. This is where pre-service teachers are sent during the practicum. As such, majority of the graduates like the informants of the study were given a chance to practice the teaching profession after graduation. This research is anchored on the experiential learning theory of David Kolb. The study followed the stages suggested by Kolb: (1) concrete experience; (2) reflective observation; (3) abstract conceptualization; and (4) active experimentation. This theory is suitable to be used as a guide in conducting the study as it aims to know the specific experiences gained by the graduates. By exploring the first teaching experiences of elementary educators, this research sought to

inform teacher preparation programs, school administrators, and policymakers about the specific needs of novice teachers. Ultimately, the study aimed to contribute to the development of targeted support systems that foster the successful transition of teacher training to effective and confident elementary educators. The input given by the informants provided a basis for finding possible ways to sustain the excellent performance of the elementary education program of the college.

Objective of the Study

The researcher aimed to explore the initial teaching experiences of the newly hired and fresh graduates of the Bachelor of Elementary Education program of a state university in Pampanga. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

How do the informants describe their initial teaching experience after graduation?

What are the challenges encountered by the informants in their initial teaching experience?

What are the coping practices employed by the informants in dealing with these encountered challenges?

How do the informants perceive the significance of receiving awards and motivation in their initial teaching experiences?

METHOD

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research design, particularly the descriptive approach. Qualitative descriptive research generates data that describe the "who, what, and where of events or experiences from a subjective perspective" (Kim et al., 2017, p.23). Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems (Tenny et al., 2022). It gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors to capture the multifaceted experiences of novice elementary teachers.

Sampling Technique and Informants of the Study

Homogeneous purposive sampling was used in determining the informants. They are the pioneer graduates of the new teacher education curriculum Class 2021-2022. Informants were carefully selected, and gender differences were also considered to identify the distinctness of their challenges and their coping practices. They must adhere to the following qualifications as inclusion criteria: (1) graduates of the new curriculum; (2) teaching must be their first job; (3) practicing the teaching profession for a minimum of 6 months onwards; (4) not licensed or have not yet taken the Licensure Examination for Teachers; (5) enrolled in a review center while practicing the teaching profession; and (6) teaching was their first choice. Recruitment of the participants was done through the use of online platforms such as Messenger and Gmail. Seven (7) informants of the study were coded with KI which stands for "Key Informants" in adherence to the principle of confidentiality. They are all graduates of the new curriculum who had their initial teaching experience right after graduation. They are teaching in different private elementary schools handling different grade levels. Crowdsourcing and direct contact with prospective participants was taken into consideration by the researcher. The informants were messaged and emailed by the researcher to know if they are willing to participate after considering all the qualifications set by the researcher. They were carefully selected and gender preferences were also considered. However, male graduates were outnumbered by females and the majority of the male graduates did not practice their profession as they ventured into other careers. As a result, the informants were mostly female. The study looks into the experiences of these graduates as basis for improving the quality of instruction of the College to make its pre-service teachers highly employable.

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted at the College of Education, Don Honorio Ventura State University (DHVSU) Main Campus. The researcher decided to conduct the study to look into the initial teaching experiences gained by the graduates of the elementary education program.

Interview Instrument and Protocol

The researcher employed semi-structured interviews to gather data about the informants' initial experiences in the teaching profession. The researcher constructed sample interview guide questions that were asked to the informants as a basis for the completion of the study. Interview guide questions were given to the selected informants to gather the necessary information. Validation of the tool from different experts was also considered.

Data-Gathering Procedure

The informants were carefully selected following the criteria set by the researcher. After identifying the possible informants of the study, they were interviewed through the use of video conferencing platforms such as Messenger, Google Meet, or Zoom at their available and most convenient times and preferred applications. The researcher asked for their time availability and preferred schedule when to conduct the interview. Focus Group Discussion was employed in doing the interview, and it lasted for less than an hour. A face-to-face interview was also considered but due to the time constraints of the selected informants, the researcher resorted to using online platforms. Informants were informed about the purpose of the interview. They are also free to share their thoughts and ideas relative to their experience in teaching. In the process of conducting the study, the researcher followed and observed the ethical principles of research, which are consent and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data were transcribed and subjected to reflexive thematic analysis by Braun and Clark (2006). This method is an iterative process consisting of six steps: (1) becoming familiar with the data; (2) generating codes; (3) generating themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) writing up. A manual coding process was employed in the analysis of the transcriptions. The researcher looked into their actual experiences in the practice of the teaching profession, thoroughly delved into, carefully read, and took notes of all important details until liquefaction was achieved. Data were categorized until themes emerged. Codes were used in determining the related content across the data.

Ethical Considerations

The entire process of the interview observed the principles of ethics, and it is a key consideration in every step during the conduct of this research. The consent of the participants was obtained before conducting the interview/study. Participants' privacy and anonymity were also ensured and they were given the authority to withdraw at any time. The information that they provided was treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Establishment of Trustworthiness and Rigor

Four criteria—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—were taken into account in the data collection and analysis in accordance with the standards set by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for determining the reliability and rigor of qualitative research. Participant checking was done to verify the accounts' validity in order to establish credibility. In terms of transferability, description was employed as a strategy to achieve external validity. Dependability was attained by seeking a review from a peer expert in the field of study. Feedback from the expert was highly noted by the researcher. Confirmability was achieved by highlighting the detailed description of the steps and procedures until the finalization of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings, after thoroughly employing content analysis, explicated four overarching themes that shed light on the journey of the first-year teaching experiences of elementary education graduates.

Theme 1. Descriptions of the Informants on their Initial Teaching Experience After Graduation

Informants described their initial teaching experience as challenging and full of excitement. The researcher identified two descriptions of the initial teaching experience of the informants after graduation. Two (2) sub-

themes emerged: the emotions and attitudes toward teaching and the transition from college to elementary teaching.

Emotions and Attitudes Toward Teaching

Informants' emotions and attitudes towards teaching were taxing given that it was their first time to be in the field and would handle pupils operating through a face-to-face setup. They mentioned the stress and the adjustment associated with real-life teaching experience. Despite their nervousness, they struggled to surpass it while still having a smile on their faces. Gilani et al. (2020) stated that the first experiences of teachers in the field are associated with difficulties due to adjustments in the culture and environment of the school and the learners. It also brings happiness and enjoyment as they are fulfilling their chosen profession. However, because of unfamiliar situations, the new teachers were likewise acquainted with emotional reactions and responses such as anxiety, tension, and some feelings of insecurity.

"It's actually great but a bit stressful 'coz I am still adjusting with the real-life teaching experiences"- KI1

"Challenging but exciting" - KI3

"It was challenging" - KI5

"The first six months were very hard, but I chose not to give up easily" - KI7.

Subtheme 1.2. The Transition from College to Elementary Teaching

The rapid adaptation of first-time teachers from handling tertiary students to basic education learners is evident as part of their challenging initial experiences. Catering to both different and various needs and the multiple intelligences were observed to be listed among the struggles confronted by the informants. They mentioned the challenge of transitioning from teaching college students to elementary pupils and adapting to the manner of interactions with parents, colleagues, and learners. This was supported by Mehmood & Iqbal (2018) who stated that there is a large disparity between the teachers' expectations and teaching descriptions for college to elementary students such as the delivery of instruction, treatment, and the way they assess their students. The informants of the study accepted the challenge positively and welcomed the possibility of learning new things while practicing the teaching profession.

"It was difficult since I did not have experience teaching in an actual elementary class. I was used to teaching college students. It was really a big adjustment on my part." - KI 4

"Exciting in a way that I will finally be able to teach elementary pupils. However, it is also challenging because I made a big adjustment since our OJT is in college. I also encountered pupils who have ADHD. But luckily, I was able to cope with it." - KI6

Theme 2. Challenges Encountered by the Informants in their Beginning Teaching Experience

The informants may possibly experience different challenges while practicing the teaching profession, these challenges would possibly be their best experience and weapon in becoming an effective and efficient teacher in the future. Two (2) sub-themes emerged and these are the time management and prioritization and sacrifices and trade-offs.

Time Management and Prioritization

Balancing time and effort while teaching is quite challenging. Teachers must know how to give equal opportunity to each work being assigned to them while doing their main task, which is to carry out instruction. Alvarez Sainz, et al. (2019) indicated that unawareness of the lack of control with regard to the prioritization of activities and objectives, and the management of time could lead to a distracted, unorganized, and less systematic teaching process. Therefore, achieving the ultimate goal certainly involves prioritizing different tasks, short-term and long-term planning, identifying skills like focusing on urgent and important tasks instead of tasks that are unimportant, developing a list of decisions, and avoiding procrastination, which is necessary in the teaching profession.

"It's a bit challenging coz you really need to balance your time and exert effort for you be able to achieve your goal" - KI1

"One of the challenges is time management. I need to get to the review center right after my class." - KI3

"I was not able to review every night since I have to do my ppt presentations and check my students' activities and tests. I lack time in reviewing my notes." - KI6

Subtheme 2.2. Sacrifices and Trade-offs

In everything that one does to achieve success, one needs to sacrifice sometimes. Informants of the study explained thoroughly how they sacrificed to achieve satisfaction towards the end. It also involves risk in choosing between teaching and attending review centers. They also stated their sacrifices, such as filing a leave of absence frequently and the possibility of losing a job. Ancho and Bongco (2019) put an emphasis on exploring Filipino teachers' teaching experience, and it was mentioned that due to more workloads, teachers often go beyond the working hours and spend outside regular days just to finish and comply with other related tasks.

"I did not have enough sleep, an exhausted, risking schedule because sometimes review centers have a weekday schedule." - KI2

"I did not have a proper rest. I was sleep deprived most of the time. Travel time also is a constraint since the review center is far from our place." - KI4

"I was not able to review every night since I have so many tasks to do. I also need to file a leave just to attend my review sessions." - KI6

Theme 3. Coping Practices Employed by the Informants in Dealing with These Encountered Challenges

Dealing with different challenges while teaching in the elementary helps them think of ways on how to cope with these. Varied strategies were employed by them that helped them become more motivated to do their task and fulfill all their duties efficiently.

Subtheme 3.1. Organization and Time Management Techniques

Adopting a coping strategy to address the following concerns in the job while giving their best to their pupils is quite challenging. The setting and balance of workloads would be effective if the use of an organized and well-established sequence of activities were followed. Further, the integration and employment of top-listing necessary tasks, and doing them at the right time will lead to a more systematic, effective, and efficient maximization of functions (Adams & Blair, 2019).

"I did time management by organizing the things I need to do" - KI5

"Setting goals and managing the time properly and wisely." - KI3

"Dedication to my job and to my goal to be a licensed teacher. - KI7

Subtheme 3.2. Self-motivation and Positive Mindset

Practicing self-motivation and having a positive mindset are effective weapons for surpassing any challenges in life. The impact of believing in oneself is a great indicator of a positive attitude in the workplace, which makes a solid foundation for building productivity and turning challenges into something beneficial for the development and improvement of professional ethics. Moreso, it became the extent of being an active teacher who influenced both students and fellow teachers (Enberg et al., 2019).

"I always motivate myself to keep going. I just pray and manage my time schedule" - KI2

"It was always my determination to pass the exam, hoping to top it." - KI7

Subtheme 3.3. Seeking Support and Guidance

Assistance and support are necessary to accomplish tasks efficiently. One needs the help of other people to be directed to do tasks effectively. Pietarinen et al. (2021) explicitly indicated that the relevant contributions of teachers' efficacy and their extended services among new teachers in the field are a collective effort to help them become familiar with all the skills required in teaching. Among these, practices such as having peer mentoring sessions, having guided instructions, and providing materials are some of the techniques conducted to facilitate a successful performance at work.

"It's with the help of my co-teachers who've been teaching more than a year and are now licensed professionals. Their experiences and expertise is really a big help to me." - KI1

"We need to become flexible to handle situation and accept new changes that comes to our life" - KI2

Theme 4. Insights of the Informants on the Significance of Receiving Awards and Motivation in their Initial Teaching Experiences

As an individual, we also need some motivation that would keep us happy in doing the tasked being assigned to us. Having a conducive learning environment and receiving recognition would be a great help to them better perform the different workloads given to them.

Subtheme 4.1. Work Environment and Positive Outcome on Performance and Satisfaction

A good learning environment provides each employee with an atmosphere of positivity. Attending their classes and doing all the tasks given to them is very welcoming because they know that each effort is being credited to them. A welcoming kind of environment would help them to keep going and continue what they started. The establishment of discipline and organization at work is influenced by the work environment and the people around them, creating a positive impact on motivating the teachers. Moreover, teachers who are committed to their work develop professionalism and good behavior (Sudja & Yuesti 2017).

"Yes. I'm very happy that all my hard works reflected in my performance as a teacher" KI1

"I feel overwhelmed and it really motivates me to keep going and believe in myself that I can do things." - KI2

"Describes feeling good and "kilig" (excited) when praised by a former principal, which serves as motivation to teach better" - KI4

"I received praises such as creative and energetic. It felt so good that my principal appreciated what I did and made me teach better." - KI5

Subtheme 4.2. Passion and Long-Term Commitment to Teaching

Accepting the challenge to teach is a manifestation of one's willingness to help educate the youth. Passion and commitment are the key factors why teachers continue practicing the profession and always give their due diligence. It is their hearts that dictate them to always give their best. Surahman (2023) greatly extends the solidification of teachers' commitment and passion for teaching by pointing to the efforts and dedication that they are exerting toward their work. It was also emphasized that the development of competence and the acquisition of various skills are some reasons for staying in the profession.

"My heart is in teaching" - KI2

"I will choose to stay in teaching because I enjoy teaching and helping students" - KI3

"This profession made me a better person. It is my calling" KI4

Subtheme 4.3. Fulfillment and Recognition

Teachers, just like students, feel a sense of satisfaction when given praise. Upon receiving any positive comments from peers or superiors, they become more motivated to prove their worth and show people what they could offer to their students. The performance of the teachers and their roles is a parameter of the quality of education they are providing for the learners. This is an indicator of fulfillment in their jobs, especially when

the administrators and school heads are giving recognition to their untiring service (Birhasani & Sulaiman, 2022).

"The love and support given by my students is really unexplainable" - KI1

"Explore and learn new things to expand and develop my skills" KI3

"I love and enjoy what I am doing" - KI4

"I want them to make proud of me" KI7

Teaching, as they say, is the noblest profession. It will neither guarantee money nor security, yet personal fulfillment is achieved through the learner's improvement and development. This somehow reflects Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in which the highest level, self-actualization, is reached. Through this, teachers obtain a certain level of internally-recognized success. Thus, the experiences shared by the informants could be of great utilization in examining the best practices of the program. Their journey is the starting point for developing possible ways and strategies to sustain good program performance. Having a passion for teaching is their best weapon in surpassing all the circumstances that they will be encountering. It is their heart that matters. If they have the heart for teaching, they will be glad and willing to perform their tasks despite how tedious and tiring it is at times.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study aimed to explore the initial teaching experiences of new graduates in the field and to conduct an in-depth analysis of these experiences to document each learning journey. The findings of the study provided a quick look at the initial teaching experiences of the graduates of the new curriculum under the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) program. Their input would be of great aid to future graduates to adapt and possess a positive disposition to impart knowledge to students despite the many hindrances they could encounter.

As stated in the findings of this study, it is recommended that each program under the College of Education must devise advanced ways to deliver quality education to students who can compete in other ASEAN countries nearby. Sustainability of a strong partnerships with other schools and extending it to other regions is far more much better so that graduates will be given more opportunities to land a better job practicing the course of study that they had finished. Enhancing their skills in searching for a job is also important, giving them tips how to be more highly employable is also needed. As the University dreams of becoming one of the top state universities in the country, the experiences of the graduates in the teaching field could be the basis for designing the best methodology, addressing the demands of the times, and thinking of possible ways to make them highly employable after graduation. Crafting guidelines and checking the strategies being employed by the teachers should be emphasized. Constant monitoring is also needed to sustain the good standing of the program and address areas of improvement if any. In conclusion, it is not just having a vision of how to be at the pinnacle but also making feasible measures to step up and enjoy the prestige of being on top without sacrificing the priority which is sustainability and aligning the needs of the students with what they want to become in the future.

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