



## **Casting the Shadows of Doubts: The Perspectives of Teachers in the Employment Process**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to describe the perspectives of teacher applicants in the employment process. Qualitative phenomenological approach was employed to three teacher applicants who belonged to one division and experience the employment process ranged from school year 2016 to 2020. To gather data, in depth interview was conducted. The results of the interview were transcribed, translated and coded to produce themes. As regards the experiences of teacher applicants, two themes were formulated: first, patiently waiting for the future and second is steadiness and sanguinity. Looking on how they cope with the employment process, the following themes were created: support system, welcoming the possibilities and realization overload. As to their insights, the following themes were generated: time tested values and pursuing dreams in the test of time. The hiring process is a battleground. Teacher candidates put forth a lot of effort in their preparation. The eventual conclusion could have a wide range of consequences for each applicant. Teacher candidates use coping methods such as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral comforting and adaption strategies to deal with stressful circumstances, particularly during the hiring process, and to decrease distress. Every teacher applicant has unique experiences, but the learning and character development gained during the process brought them all together; these are the hope for a secure future and a desire to contribute meaningfully to the nation's growth by educating the nation's future. It is not necessarily the pay and benefits that convince people that this is a vocation, but rather the heart.

**Keywords:** Employment Process; Teacher Applicants; Perspectives; Phenomenology; Philippines

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## INTRODUCTION

“Stability is the reason why I want to enter DepEd. My colleagues told me, that being a government employee is a very practical way in achieving it. But along the process, the expenses, effort, time, and criteria to be passed are the challenges that make it hard.” (Cherry).

This quote is taken from an interview of a sub teacher who experienced the Department of Education (DepEd) employment process. These words are one of the common reasons why a certain individual desires to be a government employee. It is the belief of most people that stability is found in government positions. This road is not the less travelled but a track which has taken by many. A government item is like a trophy it requires a lot of work and to pass certain standards in order to get one. Someone who gets it proves that he/she is qualified.

In Japan, the salary of teachers in compulsory education is higher than the salary paid to a general civil servant. It resulted, for more numbers of teacher applicants at the same time, the board of Education became more competitive (Ladd, 2007). Teaching job is an attractive work among young people that is why there is a strict standard when it comes to hiring an educator. The scrutiny reveals the cream of the crop for that position. It is no different in the Philippines. The Hiring Guidelines for Teacher I position is taken from DepEd Order No. 7, s. 2015. The guideline is so ideal that a teacher applicant must undergo the employment process promptly. Unfortunately, it has a lot of flaws. One of it is the volatility, it changes a lot along the way that it causes the applicants to have more expenses and leave them confused and frustrated (Antiojo, 2018).

Candidly, the reason why I applied in government is alike from the above statement. The ranking process of DepEd is quite difficult. In my experience, being included at Registered Qualified Applicant (RQA) does not give you a hundred percent guarantee of getting an item. Most of the time, people who are not qualified, use connections to get the bacon. Honestly it was very disappointing because what's the use of criteria if at the end, a big shot will just pull a string to make a difference.

The transition of newly hired teacher is very challenging. A study showed that those who are new in field of teaching have a tendency to feel the stress and anxiety (Faciolan, 2015). Further, countless studies were conducted regarding teacher's satisfaction and motivation, as well as teaching strategies and coping mechanism. But before getting on that stage, the preceding phase which is the employment process should not be taken lightly. As professional educators, we certainly know that entering Department of Education is not a piece of cake. As a matter of fact, we the researchers did not come across any qualitative study about the perspectives of the teacher applicants in the employment process. This prompted the researchers to conduct this study in order to know the experiences and different processes undergone of these teacher applicants.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the stories told by teacher applicants in their journey towards undergoing the employment process of DepEd. This will involve three teachers from one division who experienced the employment process.

This study will record the experiences of the teacher applicants including the challenges they encounter along, mechanism in handling such, and what learning they got from it. Furthermore, the researchers would try to let participants of the study relive in their minds the experiences they had and listen to the stories they would tell.

Aside from the written statements, the tape recorders will be used during the in-depth interview. The different statements we get will be clustered to group them into themes. These

refer to the participants' experiences in common. Thus, in-depth interview would open them to recall stories which would be utilized and recorded.

This study will be conducted to hear, observe and write the stories narrated by teacher applicants about their experiences; may it be pleasant, joyful, painful or fearful. . Moreover, the stories of support they received from their colleagues and their hopes and dreams as teachers as well as the insights they could share to other teachers.

## **METHOD**

In this research, the descriptive qualitative phenomenological method was employed because the researchers went to a particular setting of interest to collect the data, to describe the natural setting of the direct source of data and the researchers as well was the key instrument. This research technique would be used if the intention of the research was to collect of data, which included interview transcripts, field notes, audio recording, diaries, personal comments, official records and anything else that can convey the actual words or actions of the people concerned in the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2014).

Moreover, this would also be the most suitable research methodology because the major concern of the research is to know how people make sense out of their lives. As researchers, we want to know what the participants thought about their pedagogical journey as teacher applicants and why they think what they do (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). In fact the researchers' focus is likely to be the participants' assumptions, motives, reasons, goals and values about the experiences they encountered during employment process in the Department of Education. The researchers would also try their best to capture the thinking of the participants' perspective as accurately as possible.

The particular descriptive qualitative design employed in this study was the biography and phenomenology. Among the different forms of biographical study that exist the researchers opted to utilize oral histories. Oral histories are where the researcher gathers personal recollections, usually from a variety of individuals. This shows that the researchers focused on describing special or important events as experienced by the teacher applicants participating in their employment process. These experiences of the participants will be recorded whereby the researcher tries to employ the other qualitative research which is the phenomenological study (Bloom and Crabtree, 2015).

In this particular study, aside from collecting the special or important events the teacher applicants experienced in their employment process, the researchers tried to investigate in these experiences various reactions to or perceptions of a particular phenomenon where they hoped to gain some insight into the world of the participants (Tufford and Newmann, 2010). As teacher applicants, they described their perceptions and reactions, through an indepth interviewing. The researchers tried to identify and describe aspects of each participant's individual perceptions and reactions to their experiences in detail.

In fact, as intended in the study, the researchers to gather tried personal recollection of the participants about their experiences encountered various elements will be considered which would bring them to recollect events which may let them recall what made them choose teaching as their profession; people or situations that most likely had influence them; the reactions of their parents and friends about their choice as well as to remember how prepared were they when they decided to take teaching as their profession (Taylor and Francis, 2012).

These recollections might be told like stories of their lives. Stories of inspiration or desperation and they might have written them in their diaries which the researcher would try to

collect and record. Furthermore, stories of their problems encountered and what coping mechanisms they used in order to get through the employment process would also be collected through interviews as well as video tapes. From these, insights might be formulated that could benefit other teachers and teacher applicants. (Giorgi, 2009).

From these experiences, the researchers gathered data where the participants shared whatever advice they could give to those who going to undergo the employment process, coping mechanisms, and insights during employment process.

Their stories would likely include their hopes and dreams as teacher applicants. All of these are oral histories describing the experiences of teacher applicants, where special events are personally recollected by them and were collected and recorded.

Furthermore, Witlis (2015) emphasized that it is through phenomenology where special events that happened could be understood better through lengthy discussions. Mesina (2016) supported these ideas when she stated that in using phenomenological research, the researchers are most interested to know how things happened as experienced by teacher applicants; they interpreted these experiences and found meaning to these experiences.

Relatively, the phenomenological approach is suitable for the different important events found in the recollections of teachers; the commonality of the experiences with the important events would be studied. Bracketing of these common experiences was done as suggested by Taylor and Francis (2012) to minimize presuppositions to prevent potential harmful effects of presumptions that may affect the research process. These would improve the precision of the research study. In this case the researchers would try to be watchful at all times, observant of their own views and pre-existing beliefs on the study, and must be vigilant to set aside their own prior knowledge and experiences to fully capture the experiences of the teacher applicants in their journey in employment process. As researchers, using this particular qualitative research design, they were interested to know how things happened and how people interpret their experiences as well as how they find meaning to these experiences.

Dowling (2012) points out that phenomenological reduction would be employed where the researcher practically decreased the areas from how it is perceived with all prejudice, to a realm of pure phenomena. Thus, the relevance of the phenomenon is allowed to emerge. Like biographies, the researchers motivated participants in a phenomenological study to relive in their minds, the experiences they have had. To do this, the researchers of the study used the notes gathered using interviews, a tape recorded interviews and session. Once accomplished, the researchers searched through every subject and statement for those that were relevant, those that seem to be particularly significant for the subject in describing experiences in relation to the chosen phenomenon. The researchers then clustered these statements into themes, those aspects of the subjects' experiences that they had in common. The researchers attempted to describe the fundamental features of the experience that have been described by most participants in the study. They might be stories of inspiration or stories of despair.

In summary, in as much as the researchers are conducting this phenomenological study, they focused on the essential structure of a single phenomenon (experiences of teacher applicants during employment process), by interviewing in-depth, a number of individuals who served as participants of the study who have experienced this phenomenon. Then, we, as the researchers extracted what we considered to be relevant statements for each subject's description of the phenomenon and then clustered these statements into themes. The researchers then integrated these themes into a narrative description of the phenomenon. We clustered these experiences into inspiration and stories of despair or discouragement.

The journey of employment process is very challenging. There are countless studies conducted regarding teacher's satisfaction and motivation, as well as teaching strategies and coping mechanism. But before getting on that stage, the preceding phase which is the employment process should not be taken lightly.

As public school teachers today, the researchers had been once in a shoe of a teacher applicant. They consider their employment process as a remarkable journey in entering the government. This gave the researchers more meaning and interest to collect experiences of others to discover the ingredients which contributed to ones' success. As Taylor and Francis (2012) stated, employing new staff members is not the only opportunity for administrators to know what a good teacher is. Only few have had the privilege of choosing a complete teaching staff. Most of the time we have to deal with somebody else's decisions and handle supervision, evaluation, as well as remediation. A school's success depends largely on the quality of its teaching staff. When teachers are efficient students will learn well and when teachers are effective, parents will be satisfied. When teachers are good, their principals are also good. These are the reasons why the employment process is a tough process for it demands quality educators.

Inspired by these ideas, the researchers undertook this research and personally made survey teacher applicants who experienced the employment process on one division. Then, the researchers personally gathered the data through in-depths interview where the data gathered will be all related to the sub questions to be asked. The researchers also asked the assistance of some colleagues to help them read and analyse the essence of the data gathered, exhaust the themes as describe in the subtopics stated. After coming up with the findings, referrals to a professional specialist for data analysis and interpretation were sought and thereafter will help us to structure personal insights.

Before the study began, the researchers identified the particular phenomenon they were interested in investigating. The phenomenon of interest here was the employment process of teacher applicants from one division.

The researchers then, tried to identify the participants in the study considering the year 2016 to 2020. It means therefore, that it is expected that these teacher applicants had undergone the employment process for the past three (5) years. These teacher applicants will be chosen through purposive sampling. The purposive sampling procedure was applied wherein according to Fraenkel & Wallen (2014), the researchers do not simply study whoever is available but rather use their judgment to select a sample that they believed in, based on prior information would provide the data needed.

The researchers purposely included at least 3 participants who experienced the employment process. They came from one division in region 12. Upon preparing the list, the researchers prepared as well a letter of permission to the schools where the identified participants were located. The researchers gathered information to confirm whether who among them would qualify for the phenomenon of interest being investigated.

The researchers visited the participants in there school or in their workplace in order to establish good relationship and to gain their trust and confidence. This was the time where they explained the purpose of the study, their important role in the success of the endeavour as well as to address some questions, concerning the review of some ethical considerations and complete the consent form. This was also an opportunity to review them the research questions. It was also the time to give the participants the chance to recall and relive experiences they have had as teacher applicants. This was important because as Davidson & Ryan (2010) stressed, if somebody would conduct qualitative research, establishment of a satisfactory level of rapport

and empathy is critical to developing positive relationship during in-depth interviews and consequently, gain depth of information, particularly in sharing issues on the phenomenon investigated where participants had a personal stake.

Only teacher applicants who had experience the employment process for the last three years was involve. The researchers made sure that they understood what was expected of them to become well prepared and properly oriented with their involvement. During the preliminary meeting, the researchers explained to them that in the actual interviews, during the time of recollection there would be feeling of doubts, pains and joys even fearful moments to be remembered on their journey where they were be suggested to hold negative burst of emotions. The researchers assured them that whatever problems they encountered during their employment process related to school officials, parents, community, pupils and even peers would be held confidential. They saw to it that they would feel comfortable enough to be opened of whatever they wanted to share. Bloom and Crabtree (2015) support this view when they stated that it is very important to provide the participant a safe and comfortable environment for sharing personal experiences. Along with this suggestion, they made sure that during the conduct of the interview it would be held in a quiet room to ensure privacy and away from distraction. If the participants preferred a private office or in the comfort of their homes; then, the interview or the answering of the survey questionnaire would be held there.

Along the way, the researchers emphasized that there might be problems that may be encountered but they assured that telling their stories would help those who will come after them. Teacher applicants clearly understood that the possibility of encountering problems during the employment process was unavoidable but they were comforted with the coping mechanisms the study would share. Their stories might be an inspiration knowing their hopes and dreams as teacher applicants; others might be stories of despair or discouragement.

This study followed certain procedures to collect the data needed. The researchers undergone in-depth interviews with the participants to take down notes

Prior to the conduct of the interview, ethical considerations were observed. Raizer (2012) with Fraenkel and Wallen (2014) pointed out that it should be remembered that the identities of all the participants should always be protected. Care among the participants was taken to ensure that none of the information collected would embarrass the participants; in other words, confidentiality should be observed especially when difficulties narrated could affect their relationship with people who belonged to the administration and their peers or co-workers in the organization. They were also being told of the researcher's interests and given their permission to proceed. They never recorded any conversations using hidden tape recorder or other mechanical apparatus. Furthermore, the researchers did their best to ensure that no physical or psychological harm would come to anyone who participated in the study. In summary, in any research, what should be taken into consideration is whether the participants identified would give their consent and confidentiality.

To observe these ethics, the researchers tried to establish rapport before the interview started to gain the trust and confidence of the participants (Bloom and Crabtree, 2015). It is also very important to provide them safe and comfortable environment in sharing their experiences. To meet these requirements the researchers saw to it that privacy of the place is provided.

In depth interview is one approach undertaken in order to gather information from the study informants. The in-depth interview is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective of the research topic (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, Namey, 2005). It is more than just an approach to understand the participant's experiences but it is going

deeper into their thoughts and behavior, listening to their inner voice to explore new issues. Through the interview process, the researchers listened to the participants' descriptions and then repeatedly reviewed and study the data as they transcribed (Penner and McClement, 2008). This strategy required time and space so that the researchers could draw out portions of experiences and insights from the informants. They made their participants comfortable and conveyed the message that the researchers were interested in what they were going to say. It was important to closely internalize what the informants would share, particularly in the details of the problems encountered and the coping mechanisms they adapt.

Additionally, an in-depth interview was done in the most rigorous ways to ensure reliability and validity (Bashir, Yousif and Mahmoud, 2008; Bricki and Green, 2007) which are important concepts in qualitative researches. In order to do this, the researchers avoided drawing conclusions from the interview but based everything on factual data as described by the participants during the interview, to remove any bias or misconceptions of the results, as well as classify themes of the phenomenon. According to Creswell (2006); Giorgi (2009); Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), in qualitative research such as phenomenology, it is recommended that for in-depth interviews, researchers interview 5-25 participants who had experienced the same phenomenon, if one wants to achieve the goal of representativeness and generalizability as a criterion, from a small number of research participants.

In the process of in-depth interviews, the researchers asked the participants they could write down their answers, in as much as there were survey questionnaires prepared in this special event. During the interviews, there might have been instances that certain details were not adequately expressed or even missed out because the informants were not very articulate or well-equipped in communicating with people. This might have created misconception and ambiguity. To avoid this, the researchers always repeated the question, if necessary (Bloom and Crabtree, 2015) and confirmed with their informants their answers to the questions, to ensure that the researchers were able to grasp correctly the information they provided. In every instance, they needed to be flexible and be able to adjust to the moods of their interviewees. To ensure that all information was documented thoroughly, making sure that no important detail was missed out; note-taking was applied (Mack et al, 2005; Penner and McClement, 2008).

Data were collected through audio recordings of interviews since audio or video recording improved the accuracy of the content shared in the focus group or in-depth interview, as well as the speaker's intonations (InSites, 2007). The participants were in a private setting either in their respective homes or private offices or another neutral site such as a quiet coffee shop or private room. This audio recording of the interview was transcribed verbatim and check by the participants for confirmation if everything was taken as it is. Confidentiality was observed in all sessions and with all informants (Bricki and Green, 2007), consistently addressing them by their pseudonyms to conceal their real identity. To have a continuous flow during the in-depth interview, the researchers prepared their open ended research questions as indicated in the interview guide and also inform them that there would be additional questions not in the interview guide that she might think necessary in providing helpful insights to the study. This also promoted trust and openness with the participants.

In summary, during data collection the researchers saw to it that the principles of listening are observed. It gave the participants freedom to unveil their feelings, especially those who were new in the experiencing the journey of employment process. The researchers tried to show to them that they were with them throughout the time they told their stories of their journey. Of

course, during their revelation there might be some issues they needed to clarify, but they saw to it that when these were asked again it was done with respect to earn the trust she hoped for.

The researchers saw to it that they would sign the certificate of consent and that all the equipment like audio-tapes were used by them with the assurance that everything happened during the interview would be held in anonymity.

To make the trust and confidence stronger, all the tapes were recorded and were played to them to listen and if ever there were issues they wanted to delete, then, it should be. Even the notes recorded were shown to them for scrutiny and affirmation.

With all confidence, and trust, the researchers focused on their field of interest (phenomenon) equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills in conducting interviews, and note taking they believe that the objectives they have in conducting this research would be a success. With the respect, the researchers brought to their participants; the researchers thought they would cooperate and give their full support in this endeavor.

In every data gathered, analysis would follow. This is the time where the researchers tried to breakdown all the information gathered to understand them better so that every element would be placed in its respective order to give due it explanation and meaning. As Hancock et al (2007) points out that analysis of the data in a research study involves summarizing the mass of data collected and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important features. Data were analyzed using a method which included data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2007), adding that qualitative content analysis is “any qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings”.

Data reduction is the abstraction of data from the transcriptions, deleting data which are not important and transforming it into a comprehensible material, easily understood by many (Namey, Guest, Thairu Johnson, 2007; Paul 2006; Suter; 2012). This pairing and shelving of data is often termed as thematic analysis, a form of sorting and categorizing. With data reduction, the researchers will employ the expertise of a professional data analyst for data analysis, who will help them manage the data, particularly with the sorting and organizing large volumes of qualitative data, retrieving and locating words and phrases. The data came out consolidated and manageable after being sorted and categorized. Stories were sorted into stories of inspiration or encouragement and stories of despair or discouragement.

Data display, on the other hand, is the organization of data and showing it in the form of graphic organizers such as: matrices, charts, graphs, that would enable the viewer to draw his conclusion (Suter, 2012). It is one step beyond data reduction, showing the data in an arranged and orderly manner, clearly showing the interrelationships of bits of information, readily available to the viewer. At this stage, other higher order categories could come out beyond those discovered during the first step of data reduction (Namey et al, 2007; Paul, 2006; Sitko, 2013).

Conclusion drawing and verification are the last steps of qualitative analysis. It involved going back to consider what the analyzed data meant and to assess their aftermath for the questions at hand while verification, integrally linked to conclusion drawing, required revisiting the data as many times as necessary to cross-check or verify these emergent conclusions (Paul, 2006). At this point, no definite judgments were made but rather, the data were allowed to “speak for themselves” by the emergence of conceptual categories and descriptive themes. These themes were usually implanted in a structure of interconnected ideas that “make sense”.

The conceptual framework was interpreted with reference to the related literature on the subject in an attempt to explain, with a theory, the phenomenon being studied by the researchers



with the assistance of two independent readers and an analyst who are experts in the field of study to form a triangulation team wherein each examined the data and compared individual findings to obtain a deeper and broader understanding of how each investigator viewed the issue.

Triangulation is used to ensure the validity of the data by using more than one person to collect the data, thereby increasing its reliability (My-Peer Toolkit, 2010; Speziale and Carpenter, 2007). If the findings of the different investigators arrive at the same conclusion, then the researchers would be confident that the result of the research study is reliable. Many different interpretations were considered before the researchers form a rational argument in the most obvious way possible so that others could judge the validity of the study (Sitko, 2013). In making an interpretation of the report, we took into account what data to include and information to dispose of. The way interpretation was written is clear and precise; properly identifying which of the information was factual description or the plain personal view of the researchers (Griffiths and McLeod, 2008). An interesting and readable report “provides sufficient description to allow the reader to understand the basis for an interpretation and sufficient interpretation to allow the reader to understand the description” (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2007).

In other words, as the researchers relived in the minds of their participants, the experiences they had which they tape recorded during the interview sessions, they must search through each subject’s statements for those that are especially relevant, that those that appear particularly meaningful to the participant in describing his or her experience in relation to the phenomenon of interest. Then, the researchers clustered these statements into themes. These are those aspects of the participants’ experiences that they had in common where they attempted to describe the fundamental features of the experiences that were described by most of the participants in the study.

In sum, then, in the analysis of data, the researchers who conducted phenomenological study would search for the “essential structure” of the phenomenon they were investigating about the journey of the teacher applicants, by interviewing in-depth the participants who had experienced this phenomenon. Then, they extracted what they considered to be relevant statements, and then integrated these themes into a narrative description of the phenomenon which was the journey of teacher applicants in the employment process.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### **1. What are the experiences of the teacher applicants in the employment process?**

To facilitate the generation of comprehensive discussion for the above research problem, the following questions were asked during the in-depth interviews: What is the most unforgettable experience you have during employment process? What made you decide to apply in Deped?

From the data collected on the experiences of the study participants, two major themes emerged as presented in Table 2. These themes aided in determining which core ideas to report.

The emergent themes are described as (1) Patiently waiting for the Future and (2) Steadiness and Sanguinity.

## **2. What are your coping mechanisms in order to get through the process?**

The following questions were asked during the in-depth to find out the coping mechanisms of participants in facing the tough process of employment: What are your preparations before undergoing the employment process? After hearing the result of employment process, what did you feel? What are your realizations after the employment process?

From the data collected on the insights of the study participants, three major themes emerged as presented in Table 3. These themes aided in determining which core ideas to report. The emergent themes are described as (1) Support System, (2) Welcoming Possibilities and (3) Realization Overload.

## **3. What are the insights that the teacher applicant can share to other teachers?**

The following questions were asked during the in-depth to find out the realizations and learning of participants as well as the tips they could share to the future aspirants: What are the tips that you can give to the teacher applicants? What are the things that the teacher applicant should not do during and after employment process?

From the data collected on the insights of the study participants, two major themes emerged as presented in Table 4. These themes aided in determining which core ideas to report. The emergent themes are described as (1) Time Tested Values Patiently and (2) Pursuing Dreams in the Test of Time.

Based on the responses of both the in-depth interview informants the following data were gathered:

On the experiences of the participants two themes emerged to describe the circumstances encountered of the Teacher applicants in the employment process of Department of Education. These themes are namely, (a) Patiently waiting for the Future and (b) Steadiness and Sanguinity. In relation to the patience in waiting to the future, the teacher applicants developed the ability to be patient and learn the value of preparation. In dealing with the employment process these attitudes are important to exercise. A teacher must go extra mile in exerting such. Patience is not easy to achieve. Inspiringly, the participants were able to develop it because of the need. Their journey was filled of mixed feelings of excitement and fear but they managed to extend more their patience. In addition, preparation is indeed a vital ingredient in the journey. In order to be totally prepared, sacrifices were needed just like sleepless night and excessive practices in different criteria.

In addition, the participants also sought personal stability and growth as an educator. It showed that they want steadiness in government position. Being stable is the target goal of very employee. That is why the scrutiny in the process is not a piece of cake. Government position gives a hopeful future to an individual; the undeniable lavish benefits from it encourage everyone to toil hard and get the item. Moreover, the drive of being a good generator of learning to the students showed their sanguinity in pursuing Deped. It is true that not all applicants are solely looking for good salary pay but a greener pasture. When we say greener pasture, it also means an environment where an individual may grow and be challenged to improve oneself.

This shows an intrinsic motivation towards professional growth as well achieving the calling of being a teacher as purveyor of truth and light likewise one to improve mankind.

In coping mechanisms of the participants to get through the employment process; three significant themes emerged from it, support system, welcoming the possibilities and realization overload. Applying to the Department of Education with just by yourself is like going into the battle without knowing the battle plan. Participants should seek help and advice to those who are already in the field. They should what kind of preparations they must do so that they will not be clueless about the process of employment. Participants must know the game plan of the employment process and they should put in their mind that it is not the time to fully rely on their self alone. Furthermore, Support-seeking usually involves turning to others for advice, help, or comfort.

Any player who wants to win a game would prepare a lot for it. This is also true in employment process but sometimes there are things that don't go in our way. Teacher applicants prepare a lot. The end result could cause a lot of effects on each applicant. Additionally, participants should welcome every possibility during the employment process. They should anticipate every outcome they will get and prepare a backup plan on how to deal such results, especially not getting accepted. However, whatever the outcome may be, participants are still willing to do better and to improve themselves for they know it is not the end. On the other hand, being optimistic in times of hardships will give them hope and they will be motivated to accept the challenges as they enter the Department of Education.

In the context of realization overload, the informants realized that applying and getting an item in the Department of Education is never an easy task. Every applicant should go through the eye of the storm, it is a costly competition, and it is not about your looks or how good you are but how good you sell yourself to the hiring officials. The self-confidence of many beginning applicants loses when they face the reality of employment process. Unrealistic expectations of what applying is about can yield a negative experience to new applicants. An individual who entered the field of education for the first time in their career can cause high level of stress. However, after those hardships, their efforts will be paid off once they got the item and for those who did not, they can try again because it is worth the wait.

In terms of insights and the realizations of the participants in the employment process; two significant themes emerged from it, time-tested values and pursuing dreams in the test of time. Employment process is a battle. In order to get through it there are values which are time tested and already proven the effectiveness of it. These are the full armour of preparation and being open-minded. When we say full armour of preparation is talks about all the aspects in life. The participants prepared themselves, physically, mentally, and spiritually for this long process of employment. Furthermore, being open-minded is always a good companion while undergoing this quest. When one is open-minded that person won't easily give up for good, for he/she is open to another possibilities and practices to look for the greater picture when things might mess up.

In the context of pursuing dreams in the test of time, the informants showed the ability to go on despite of difficulties. It creates a significant effect to their lives. Staying positive and reminding oneself to trust and be confident are fuels that kept them moving and pursue the dreams which are just waiting. Being constant in optimism indeed spreads a good vibe. They learned that it's ok to get frustrated but never dwell on it. And when things get tough do not be easily get discourage about it but always choose to think positive no matter what. Additionally, having confidence in oneself is both helpful and important. Losing hope and thinking small of

oneself are the enemies of confidence. The participants developed a hopeful attitude towards their abilities. In order to stop the unraveling doubts, they learn not to compare their performances to others for everyone excels in different ways. Lastly, never depend on the opinions of others but always be as you are.

## **Discussion**

This study has clearly indicated its purpose of examining and describing the experiences of Teacher applicants on the employment process. It aims to go deeper into bringing about the feelings and insights of the participants to the surface and to determine what concepts may be gleaned from the findings.

Taking into consideration the nature of this study, we adopted and employed the qualitative research method, specifically the phenomenological approach since it explicates the meaning, structures and essence of the lived experiences of a person or group of people around a specific phenomenon through focusing on a concrete experiential account grounded in everyday life (Langdridge, 2007). Through the interviews conducted, emergence of different themes with respect to the three main questions for the phenomenon being studied was made possible. Three teacher applicants were interviewed through in-depth interview.

### **1. Experiences of the Teacher Applicants in the Employment Process**

Patience Waiting for the Future. The study has shown that the process of employment taught the participants the value of patience and preparation in their journey. The study of Halima and Halima (2009) stated when an applicant searches for a job the person increases the work effort along with a patient attitude. Patience is positively related to work and search effort. It was true with the statement of Deborah (not her real name), that she waited patiently for her turn in the interview and teaching demonstration. Similarly, Esther (pseudonym) experienced the mixed feeling of torment and excitement while waiting in the result of the application for it took three months of waiting. The applicants also prepared a lot in this process. Ruth (not her real name) rendered so much time and effort in preparing. She experienced sleepless night in preparing everything because as a teacher she wanted to display and prove to those who will assess her she's able and capable to be part of Department of Education.

In view of this, Van Huizen (2010) heightened impatient workers exert less work effort and likely lose their jobs. He added that jobs may be considered as experience goods and workers who are impatient may be unwilling to invest time and energy in the job and therefore move from one job to another more frequently without searching intensively. It was evident to the experiences of the applicants. They exerted effort and time in preparation for the employment process. The participants learned to extend their patience and kept up with the situations patiently for they have goals in mind and future to look up to.

Steadiness and Sanguinity. In Japan the salary of teachers in compulsory education is higher than the salary paid to a general civil servant. It resulted, for more numbers of teacher applicants at the same time, the board of Education became more competitive (Ladd, 2007). In the same manner, controlling the workers characteristics enables to directly test theories of efficiency wages and fairness. It was figured out that high-quality workers continue to be associated with good outcomes. High-wage strategies are also associated with better won-lost performance and higher attendance figures (DeBrock et al, 2004). The participants were honest to their

statements that stability and salary were major factors in applying for DepEd. Esther (not her real name) candidly said that her main purpose for applying was for stability of the future. In addition Deborah (pseudonym) decided to apply because of her family that wants her to have a regular/ permanent job.

There were also participants with responses that based on intrinsic motivation. They want to grow and contribute meaningfully to the lives of learners. Ruth (not her real name) stated that it was not all about salary for it can never compensate the role, job and the responsibility in the field but it was about the desire to help and to teach the future leaders and enables the youth. Likewise, Deborah (not her real name) was also prompted to apply because she believed that it will put her to a place where she can really grow professionally. The responses of the participants were not solely associated on the external factors but the characteristics and outlook of the participants within.

The study of Rode et al. (2008) examined the effects of ability and personality on extrinsic and intrinsic indicators of career success. The researchers found out in the regression analysis indicated that gender, extroversion and agreeableness were the strongest predictors of salary. Emotional stability and proactive personality predicted perceived job success, while extroversion was significantly related to perceived career success. Further, Msanya et al. (2016) concluded that teacher applicants who planned to be teachers show that the teacher applicants love their profession and wanted to have a stable life.

## **2. Coping Mechanisms in Order To Get Through The Employment Process**

Relative to the experiences of the participants to deal the challenges brought by the employment process, professed their coping mechanisms toward the phenomenon. Support system, Welcoming the possibilities and Realization overload appeared to be the main three themes.

Support System. The has shown that educational institutions can very well facilitate the employment of its graduates by being informed on how teacher applicants are evaluated by prospective employers not only in public schools also in private institutions (Mancao, 2012). Applying in the Department of Education with just yourself is like going into the battle without knowing the battle plan. It is true with the statement of Deborah (not her real name), that she asked a help from a teacher who is expert in making a lesson plan. Similarly, Ruth (not her real name), stated that she had some advices from the School Head of the certain school that help her to prepare in teaching demonstration. Moreover, any player who wants to win a game would prepare a lot for it. This is also true in employment process. Preparation is one of the key factors why an applicant will be appointed for a certain position. Esther (not her real name) made sure to prepare her all documents that she needed during the employment process.

Welcoming the possibilities. Versatility is very essential for being an educator. It is an important factor when a person wants to serve as a public school teacher. A teacher will adjust according to the norms of the workplace and the learners (Harris et al., 2010). The participants were right to their statement that there is a great joy upon entering the teaching profession but there were also challenges and responsibilities that awaits them. Relatively, (Harris et al., 2010) discovered that principals prefer an “individual mix” of personal and professional qualities. They also create an “organizational mix,” hiring teachers who differ from those already in the school in terms of race, gender, experience, and skills, in which teachers have similar work habits and a high propensity to remain with the school over time. On the other hand,

(Welbourne et al., 2007) stated that strategies in problem-focused coping include action-oriented methods or decision-making activities to resolve stressful situations, such taking control of the stressor by analyzing its source and directly modifying it. Also included in this dimension of coping are mechanisms aimed at adjusting one's perspective of the stressful situation, referred to as cognitive restructuring. This statement was linked to Deborah's experience during the employment process; she did not make it but it did not stop her to try again and make herself better.

**Realization Overload.** Undeniably, experience is still one of the best teachers. Employment process is a competition, and having long years of teaching experience gives edge to a teacher. Many studies show on how experience could influence teaching. Researchers found out that unrealistic expectations of what teaching is about can yield a negative experience to new educators (Coutler et al., 2007). The same group of researchers stated that an individual who entered the field of education for the first time in their career can cause high level of stress. The less preparation a teacher has received prior to entering the field, the more likely this will lead to a rate of two to three times as high of attrition than with candidates who finished their preparation program before teaching. It is true in the statement of the participants that applying and getting an item in the Department of Education is never an easy thing to do and it is like going through the eye of the needle. Further, Korthagen and Wubbles (2000) concluded that employment process is indeed a battlefield. Teacher applicants prepare a lot. The end result could cause a lot of effects on each applicant. In order to deal with stressful events, especially during employment process, and to alleviate feelings of distress, teacher applicants use means of coping that include cognitive, emotional and behavioral strategies of comforting and adaptation to the stressful situation.

### **3. Insights that the Teacher Applicant Can Share to other Teachers**

Relative to the experiences and the coping mechanisms of the participants to deal the challenges brought by the employment process, professed their insights and learning toward the phenomenon. Time-tested values and Pursuing Dreams in the Test of Time appeared to be the main two themes.

**Time-Tested Values.** Preparing Education graduates for successful employment starts when students begin the freshman year. With the appropriate college degree, graduates should have polished indispensable communication skills, have matured with confidence, maintained physical and mental health, and exuded ingenuity and potential (Mancao, 2012). The teacher applicants knew the significance of preparation for it was taught at school.

There is no surprised when Deborah (pseudonym) emphasized that preparing physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually before the employment process were a given tasks because the journey demanded it. Relatively, Howley (2012) defined preparation as the stage when individual or individuals plan to adopt the new program and undertake change in the immediate future. In this stage, people have considered the rationale, processes, and anticipated outcomes of the reform and made a definite decision to engage in change. Moreover, it was also important to be open-minded at all times. Ruth (not her real name) shared that it's advantageous to be open-minded and flexible to any circumstances or twist of events that may happen. It can make a person practice to look for the greater picture when things might mess up. And for Esther (pseudonym) not giving up, trusting in ability and believing in oneself were important values to

ponder always. However, Riggs (2010) defended that open-mindedness is primarily an attitude toward oneself as a believer, rather than toward any particular belief. To be open-minded is to be aware of one's fallibility as a believer, and to acknowledge the possibility that anytime one believes something, one could be wrong.

**Pursuing Dreams in the Test of Time.** Positivity and confidence are always correlated with each other. It was true to the perspective of Deborah (not her real name); for her getting frustrated because of unflavored result was just ok, as long as you don't dwell on it. In addition, Esther (pseudonym) suggested that along the process the discouragement will not help you but thinking positively. According to Orkibi and Brandt (2015) positive characteristics help people juggle their work and personal roles and experience greater job satisfaction. The result indicated that positive orientation serves as an adaptive personal resource that can facilitate employees' ability to balance work and non-work demands and hence can foster job satisfaction.

Moreover, the role of confidence impacted the responses of the participants. Bénabou and Tirole (2002) analyzed the value placed by rational agents on self-confidence, and the strategies employed in its pursuit. Confidence in one's abilities generally enhances motivation, making it a valuable asset for individuals with imperfect willpower. Ruth (pseudonym) managed to surpass the employment process by telling her self not to lose hope and never doubt her abilities. She also shared that everyone excels in different ways and so no need to compare yourself to others. It was also true to the statement of Deborah (not her real name), it was important to trust in your ability and do not depend on the opinions of others if they tend to talk about your failure.

### **Implications for Practice**

Based on the findings, the following implications for practice are offered:

**On the Patiently Waiting for the Future.** The informants described their unforgettable experiences to be challenging. The employment process was really tough that applicants needed to be prepared and embodied the virtue of patience in order to cope with the situation. This indicated that patience and preparation may bring advantages in employment process.

**On the Steadiness and Sanguinity.** Being a government employee gives a lot of benefits to anyone. It is not surprising that most applicants aiming that permanent position. The participants saw that DepEd could give personal stability and security for their future. They believed that the agency can give them a greener pasture as well as a professional growth on their chosen career. Additionally, Using a General Social Service, job security may still be the strongest attraction of government, but high income and opportunity to be useful to society also attracts some employees to the public service (Lewis & Frank, 2002).

**On Support System.** Going through the employment process prompted every applicant to look for an avenue that could help him/her in the journey. Seeking for help and support may appear to be very important. The help and advices from those who are expert may give great advantages to the applicants. Given the difficult situation of employment process, support system is really needed as Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model predicts that individuals will make use of several types of coping strategies as to cognitive, emotional and behavioural to deal with any given stressful event (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987).

**On welcoming Possibilities.** Participants may not know the outcome of the process; they still accepted it as their stepping stone on their next journey. They ready themselves to the frustration of disappointment and how to accept it. Additionally, showing optimism amidst of pressure brought excitement to the informants.

On Realization Overload. Employment process in the Department of Education is far way different than applying in the private sector. There may be similarities but applying in the DepEd is not a piece of cake because it will cost you physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially. Frank and Lewis (2004) found out to their study that government may offer different extrinsic and intrinsic reward. Government jobs offer interesting work and opportunities. An aspirant may expect a hard road ahead.

On Time-tested Values. Employment process is a battle. In order to get through it there are values that are time-tested and already proven the effectiveness of it. Being prepared in all aspects at all times ceases the emergent of worry. Moreover, Open-mindedness gives a room to every possibility in the process. These are essential values and characters may be needed in the field. Kumar (2013) stated that teacher's character and quality competence are the most significant factors which influence the education quality and its contribution to national development.

On Pursuing dreams in the test of time. The ability to go on despite of difficulty creates a significant effect to oneself. Staying positive and reminding oneself to trust and be confident may fuel a person to keep moving and pursue the dreams which are just waiting. Constant positivity is like a mantra which reminds that all will be well. On the other hand, confidence in oneself is a cheer in order to trust and believe on the abilities that one possesses.

### **Implications for Future Research**

In as much as this study is limited to only three participants, the following future researches are recommended.

Since the findings of this study are not generalizable beyond the three (3) participants, future research may be conducted with more number of participants in different divisions in the region. In addition, it could be conducted with the use of in-depth- interview and the focus group discussion (FGD).

Another future research may be undertaken to determine whether the views and perceptions of the previous participants have changed or not over a period of time by interviewing them again. Also, further research may be carried out to investigate similar phenomenon but for this time among the teacher applicant in different regions.

The findings of this study were viewed from the lens of the teacher applicant in the same division. Further research may be conducted to determine the school administrators and hiring personnel's views and perspectives on the employment process of the Department of Education to substantiate the findings of this study.

### **CONCLUSION**

"I'm a teacher, a purveyor of truth and light  
I'm a teacher; I was born to improve mankind;  
It's my duty to enlighten the world and guide the young to the path of the Lord.

The song expresses the calling for every teacher. A teacher's path is not a bed of roses and so from the findings of the study, we have concluded that the employment process in Department of Education is difficult. Government position and item carries a lot of advantages just like security, stability, salary, professional growth in short a greener pasture. In process of



conducting this study the researchers themselves were learning from the informants. We realized that the participants spoke what were in our hearts. Truly, every teacher applicant has different experiences but the learning and the character development acquired in the quest made it all parallel; these are the hope for stable future and a desire to contribute meaningfully in building the nation through educating the future of this nation. It is not always the salary and benefits but the heart to justify that this profession is a calling.

In order to get through the employment process, people around the teacher applicants saw the determination and effort exerted. This journey of employment has two possibilities. First, you may fail and learn; second is you may succeed and continue to explore. But both possibilities give same opportunity; the privilege to grow from all the experiences. And that growth may be extended through sharing it to other aspirants. That growth is like a teacher and anyone can learn from it. Finally, every teacher applicant may fail once, twice and thrice still it won't erase that desire within to thrive more for that goal. And when that bacon of being part of this family is granted to you, we will welcome you in the DepEd family and together we sing these ending lyrics...In a mountain or in a city, on an island where I may be. I shall keep on bringing the light and live as teacher until I die I'll live as teacher until I die.

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