



I Stay Long: A Phenomenological Study of Faculty Members Serving Many Years in A Private Educational Institution

Christian Clyde Z. Ching¹ & Bemia Snooky A. Beboso² & Genesis B. Naparan³

^{1,2,3} Saint Columban College, Pagadian City, Philippines

Correspondence: Christian Clyde Z. Ching, Saint Columban College, Pagadian City, Philippines

Email: clyde.02@sccpag.edu.ph

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Abstract

Private schools have suffered from frequent faculty turnovers. After spending some years in private schools, teachers transferred to public schools for greener pastures. However, some teachers preferred to serve private schools for many years. This research explored why teachers continue working in private schools. Using Transcendental phenomenology, the researchers interviewed nine teachers who have taught in a private school for more than ten years. These teachers shared their reasons for working in private schools and spending more years in the school. They also shared how school administrators can retain more teachers in the future. Based on the results, contentment with the work, having a healthy working environment, good pay and benefits, passion for Teaching, and engaging in further studies while serving the school was the reasons for continuous years of teaching in the private schools. Thus, the institution must encourage teachers to stay teaching in private schools.

Keywords: Commitment To Work, Passion For Teaching, Private Institution

Introduction

Teaching in small private educational institutions in the Philippines is less attractive to teachers due to low compensation than in public schools (Aduna et al., 2020). This situation results in a higher turnover of teachers in private schools. Teachers looked for new teaching environments due to job security (Faremi, 2017). They can provide more for their family when they receive good pay.

Aside from salary considerations, other factors cause private school teachers to leave and transfer to another school environment. Private school teachers leave their posts due to workload and job stress (Khan et al., 2017). Other teachers leave due to managerial influences (Kotze et al., 2020) and school disadvantages (Allen et al., 2018).

Private schools became a training ground for teachers. After earning years of teaching experience and further studies, teachers leave private schools for better

remuneration and benefits (Aduna et al., 2020). They look for a new working environment with greener pastures to provide for the financial needs of their family (Cruz et al., 2022; Reyes et al., 2019). Private schools become a disadvantage as they need to look for new teachers and train them to be better in their profession.

To prevent teachers from leaving private schools, administrators need to find ways to keep their commitment to the private schools. Some strategies can be the formulation of more teacher-friendly policies, programs on work-life balance, and safeguarding employee engagement (Kaur, 2020). Teachers will cultivate their organizational commitment when there is an emphasis on flexibility, concern for people, and sensitivity in the community (Batugal & Tindowen, 2019). When the organization has good leadership, teachers also will choose to stay rather than go somewhere to work (De La Peña, 2018).

In some cases, there were still teachers who chose to stay working in private schools. They made these working environments their home. Accordingly, private school teachers found a good working environment (Cruz et al., 2022). Like in many Catholic educational institutions, the teacher feels respected, efficient, and effective and has opportunities for professional growth (Tindowen, 2019). Thus, their passion and desire to continue working as private school teachers became evident. These teachers contributed to the success of the private schools in delivering quality education to students (Madrigal & Oracion, 2019). The teachers helped develop the student's academic skills to prepare them for their chosen careers (Karbownik, 2020).

The researchers found it relevant to explore teachers' experiences in staying longer in private schools. The study is anchored on the "push-pull" theory of work commitment (McAulay et al., 2006). The theory claims that job insecurity pushes employees away from their organizational commitment. To pull employees toward organizational commitment, they need to have a good perception of professionalization. This perception is attainable through forming healthy relationships within the working community. The construction of social networks can help employees to stay in the organization. In this study, the researchers explored the teachers' reasons for choosing the institution as their workplace and their reasons for continuing to work there for many years. Moreover, the study also explored the suggestions of the faculty members for the school to lessen faculty turnover in the future.

Method

This research employed the Transcendental Phenomenological Design of qualitative research to explore the reasons for choosing and staying the faculty members in a private educational institution (Moustakas, 1994). The researchers explored the teachers' experiences in their stay in the private school that made them decide to stay teaching in the same school.

The research took place in one of the private educational institutions in Zamboanga

Del Sur, Philippines. The school has usually experienced frequent teacher turnovers. After spending some years in the institutions, many teachers transferred to public schools for greener pastures. Nevertheless, some teachers in the school chose to stay for many years.

There were nine research participants in this study. The research participants were purposively chosen to participate in the study. They were faculty members who served the school for at least ten years. These research participants have engaged in further studies and have continued serving the school.

The primary instruments of the study were the researchers. They interviewed this group of faculty members who served the school for many years. Their interview centered on the reasons for choosing the school and their reasons for staying to serve the school for many years. Lastly, the interview also dealt with how the administrators can help encourage teachers to stay in the school.

After asking for permission from the institution's president, the researchers sought the permission of the Dean of the faculty members involved in the study. Once approved, they individually approached the research participants orienting them on the study and their target participation. Once they voluntarily committed to join as research participants, the researchers scheduled an individual interview with them. The interview took place in the faculty room during their break time. The data analysis followed the method of Moustakas (1994). From the interview transcripts, the researchers generated themes based on their significance to the study's objectives.

The researchers uphold different ethical principles in doing research. First, they secured informed consent from the research participants. They interviewed those teachers who voluntarily participated in the study. Second, the researchers observed the research participants' anonymity and the data's confidentiality. The researchers ensured that the research participants' names were not revealed in the study. They used the codes T1 to T9 to refer to the participants in the study.

Furthermore, they made sure that whatever information shared by the researchers was used for the research purpose only. Lastly, the researchers assumed that the research would bring something good to the participants and not harm them. Because of their participation, the school can have ideas on how to help them stay in the school. Thus, this study will bring many good things to them as the research participants.

Results And Discussion

Reasons for Choosing the School for Work

The faculty members who rendered more years of service in the school have different reasons for choosing the school as their workplace. According to them, these are the reasons for working at this institution; valuing the employees, needing the services of

the employees, and being a Catholic Institution.

Valuing the employees. Many faculty members who chose to stay in the school for many years felt that they were valued. This theme is manifested through sending the employees for Board Examination Review and offering an environment of belongingness. The participants narrated:

The institution sent me to a review center for Certified Public Accountant board examination. – P5

The institution takes care of her employees. – P1

I was rejected in the previous company that I had applied for a job. – P2

As a Catholic higher educational institution, the school aims to show servant leadership to the employees. Valuing the employees is the foundation of servant leadership (McNeff, & Irving, 2017). Valuing the employees also includes valuing emotional intelligence that leads to collaboration and cooperation among members of an institution (Nena et al., 2021).

Needing the services of the employee. Faculty members chose this institution as their workplace since their services were needed in the institution. The school needed the expertise of these faculty members to teach the students. Supporting this theme, the participants narrated:

The school hired me. I did not apply for the job. I enjoyed the job – P4

The school hired me while I was still a working student. I started working in the treasurer's office as student on grant, paid P180 per month. – P5

The institution was hiring back then, and I applied, hoping to establish a professional career. – P9

The faculty members' careers in this institution usually started with the need for their expertise. Because of the need for a workforce, the school hired target individuals qualified to do the job. Moreover, as they stay more in the institution and have further studies, they become more qualified for their job (Begna, 2017).

Being a Catholic Institution. The identity also of the school attracts individuals to be part of its working force. As a catholic institution, the school also serves as a venue to nurture the spirituality of the teachers.

I decided to choose this school because it is a Catholic School. It has an image in public, and it has a name. Aside from being an employer, it became my religious shelter. – P3

Faculty members who are firm believers of their Catholic religion were attracted to teach in Catholic Higher educational institutions. Catholic Institutions promised holistic self-actualization and a wholesome social environment (Milian & Rizk, 2018). In working

in the Catholic Institution, faculty members also, in one way or another, carry with them Catholic social tradition (Brigham & Soltis, 2018).

Reasons for Staying in the Private School

The research participants mentioned different reasons for staying in a private higher educational institution. The following themes manifest their continuous stay in the school: Contentment with the work, having a healthy working environment, having good pay and benefits, passion for teaching, and engaging in further studies while serving the School.

Contentment with the work. Faculty members who chose to stay at the private school claimed they were contented with their work. They like to teach the minds of the youths. According to them:

I am contented and happy with the job. There is freedom of your time working in the institution. At the same time, you have the freedom to manage the class. P4

I cannot point out specific reasons why I stayed for forty years. I am also not used to transfer from one job to another. I learn to be contented in the organization. Maybe I am not ambitious. I am not also a problem escaper. Maybe God has put me into this work. There were many opportunities offered, but I chose to stay. I do not see myself working for another company that separates me from my family physically. – P6

No pressure. Enjoying. Easy transactions. The job is very convenient. We are paid for convenience. P7

Those faculty members who stayed many years at private schools highlighted contentment in work as a primary reason to spend many years in the institution. They liked what they did in School. These contented faculty members usually excelled in their teaching performance and research (Celesio, 2020). On the other hand, emotional jobs tend to result in teachers' anxiety and depression (Yin et al., 2018).

Having a healthy working environment. Another theme that came out when the participants were asked why they chose to stay at the school is about the kind of working environment they experienced in the school. They described the working environment as healthy for the employees. The research participants narrated:

I stayed in the job because of the people, and I could easily express myself in the circle. - P4

I love the organization because there is no professional jealousy. There is no pressure. There is a good working environment. There is no competition. - P5

It has a healthy working environment. There is an established friendship and camaraderie. It became my second home, and the work was easy. P8

As experienced by the faculty members, the school finds ways to promote

camaraderie among employees. The participants describe private school as a healthy working environment. When individual differences are addressed, there will be efficient and happy employees (Agha, 2017; Iradel et al., 2021). The trust among colleagues is associated with the self-efficacy and well-being of teachers (Huang et al., 2019).

Having good pay and benefits. The faculty members who chose to serve more years at the private claimed that the institution offers them good pay and benefits. Through their salary, they were able to support their families. These faculty members also believed that the school takes care of them well. According to the participants:

I stayed for economic reasons. The salary for me is enough to support my family and as a mother – P2

The institution has good pay, good salary, and good benefits – P8

I chose to stay because I believe employees were taken care of properly. P1

Faculty members who stayed at private school for many years claimed that the school provides them with good pay and benefits. As they served in the school, they were also capable of providing for their families. Paying a competitive salary to faculty members leads to their commitment to the institution (Ekwunife et al., 2019).

Passion for Teaching. Some faculty members chose to stay at the private school because of their passion for teaching. They found teaching in college as their vocation. They enjoyed teaching the young ones. The participants narrated:

I like working here because I figured out that teaching is my passion. I also found love in what I do. P1

I love the job. I love teaching. That is why I stayed longer in the institution – P2

The nature of my work is good. I love my work. – P9

Those passionate teachers can create an effective learning environment to hone the students' skills (Altun, 2017). The teachers chose to stay at the private school because they love their work. They wanted to share with the youth their academic skills and experiences. *Engaging in further studies while serving the school.* Some teachers also served the school for many years because they can also engage in further studies while teaching in the school. They have the opportunity for professional development. The participants said:

The school hired me. I did not apply for the job. I enjoyed the job, and I was able to do further studies – P3

I pursued further studies like earning my Master's Degree in Cebu City since I faced another transition in life – P9

When teachers strive for further studies, they are also finding ways to improve their practices in the classroom. They can learn new things that are beneficial for their students. Quality improvement is essential to promote student development (Egert et al.,

2018).

Things That Administrators Can Do to Encourage Employees to Stay in the Private School

For the faculty members to stay in private school, there are things that they recommended that the school administrators must do to encourage faculty members to serve long years. According to them, the administrators must observe Transparency, consistency, and fairness of administrators, provide Increased compensation and benefits and more financial opportunities, Strengthen the bond of the employees, and promote more innovations from the management.

Transparency, consistency, and fairness of administrators. As the faculty members aspire for a healthy working environment, they recommended that to obtain this kind of environment, there is a need for Transparency, consistency, and fairness from the administrators. According to the research participants:

Maybe the management should also look into the concerns of the employees. Maybe they will study why some employees are leaving, and from that, they can provide or strengthen their current systems. – P2

Proper treatment from the management must be improved. – P3

Administrators sometimes are not consistent. – P5

The management has to be transparent in many ways, especially the systems. For example, being here in the Buenavista Campus, they must provide us sound transportation system. They also have to be consistent in their specific instructions. They also have to listen to the rank and file's concerns because if not, it will create an informal environment. They must provide an atmosphere where employees will feel a friendly environment without a threat. People should be treated equally. An hour with the Administration will also do wherein a particular department with the administrators spend time to create a quality circle. P8

The kind of leadership affects the performance of the faculty members. When the faculty members witness the Transparency, consistency, and fairness of the administrators, they will also be committed to their work. Since leadership affects faculty performance, it must be improved to obtain cooperation from the faculty members to achieve the institution's goal (Rahardja et al., 2018).

Increased compensation and benefits and more financial opportunities. The faculty members emphasized the importance of increased compensation and benefits and more financial opportunities to promote more years of stay in the school. A common reason for leaving the school is the search for greener pasture in other workplaces. Highlighting the demand for increased compensation and benefits and more financial opportunities, the participants narrated:

I believe higher salary packages can be a great start. - P1

Maybe the management must also improve compensation for sustainable salary.

Other monetary benefits must also be improved. - P3

Administrators can increase the salaries and benefits of the employees like annual differentials and maybe strengthen retirement plans. - P4

The management must improve the salary scheme, provide more benefits and strengthen the working environment. - P5

The only problem I see in the institution is only the compensation I think. Anyway, imperfections are normal to supplement us. "God will provide, anyway". For me I think, the organization must secure the compensation and benefits. - P6

Maybe the management must provide more residential opportunities, and improve faculty funds and investments. - P7

The faculty members still aspired for increased compensation and benefits as they serve the school. They also aim for more financial opportunities. When they receive a competitive salary, their commitment to the school also will flourish (Ekwunife et al., 2019; Reyes, 2017).

Strengthening the bond of the employees. One faculty member saw the need for a strengthened bond for the employees. This research participant narrated:

The organization must have a relationship like a family. Management should connect to the employees and listen to their concerns. They must check the employees' problems. Management must build and strengthen the relationship of the school community. - P9

As the institution is composed of many individuals, there are also corresponding differences that go along with it. It is essential to establish a bond among employees to make employees stay committed to the institution. Significant differences among faculty members must be appropriately managed to create a balanced working environment (Agha, 2017). This action can promote employee engagement that is vital to enhance the academic structure and improve the quality of education (Bongalonta, 2022; Salam & Ponnampalam, 2021).

More innovations from the management. To encourage the employees to stay in the private school, one participant proposed more innovations from the management. The innovations are geared toward professional growth among employees. The research participant narrated:

The management must be innovative and creative. The organization must be a fertile ground for professional growth. It should not be static and traditional but has to have other linkages. The generation gap is high, and I think there is a conflict of interest, for example (digital age). - P7

The organization that continues to evolve allows the faculty members to stay and experience the innovations. The employees' readiness for change is influenced by leadership behavior, organizational commitment, and personal career success (Al-Hussami et al., 2018).

Implications of the Study

The study's findings are relevant to the "push-pull" theory of work commitment (McAuley et al., 2006). The research participants shared their commitment to teaching in private schools. They also shared the ways that the administrators can do to encourage more faculty members to stay. One best thing to do is consistently cultivate a healthy working environment in the institution. When the employees feel the school's welcoming environment, they would be motivated to stay and perform their respective tasks.

The name of the school also attracts good employees. People choose the institution to work at because they know it has a good reputation. Thus, private schools must perform well and preserve the quality of their names to serve their clients well and attract good employees.

Employees who feel satisfaction with their work choose to stay in the institution. Just like the research participants in this study, after having their further studies, they have many opportunities in other institutions. However, they chose to stay in the private school because it is in there that they belong to them.

Conclusion

Even though faculty turnover is typical in private educational institutions, faculty members still have served the private HEIs for many years. The school's identity is one of the primary reasons they chose it as their workplace. They served the school for many years because they were contented with the work they were having. Moreover, they still want improvement in the services that the school offers to them. Furthermore, other researchers can explore the experiences of former employees who left the school and compare their experiences in and outside the private school.

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