



Short Paper  
**Teachers' Lived Experiences:  
Unveiling the Factors in Career Development**

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### **Abstract**

This research described the lived experiences of eight public school teachers whose current positions remained stagnant for 10 years or more and the factors influencing their intentions for career development. This study used interviews to examine the varied viewpoints of the teachers while utilizing qualitative research design. Responses concluded that teachers commonly perceive rigid requirements, limited opportunities, and intense competition in their career development experiences. Teachers find promotion guidelines and requirements stringent, hindering their advancement due to lacking additional qualifications. The DepEd's Merit Selection Plan and Open Ranking System intensify competition among teachers, making promotion more challenging. In addition, school principals and administrators are seen as crucial in providing opportunities for teachers to fulfill career advancement requirements. Furthermore, various factors impede teachers from pursuing career development, including family responsibilities, financial constraints, job burnout, and personal career decisions. Family obligations often take precedence, while financial limitations restrict career advancement. Job burnout resulting from the demands of teaching deter further career development. Some teachers simply choose not to pursue career advancement due to disinterest in furthering their careers. Despite the challenges, teachers expressed contentment, appreciation, and satisfaction with their current positions. Teachers face obstacles such



as rigid requirements, limited opportunities, and personal constraints in their career development journeys, but many are ultimately satisfied with their roles as teachers. While many teachers are content with their current positions, there's still a need to address systemic barriers and provide opportunities for those seeking career advancement.

Keywords - career development, promotion, constraints, opportunities, job burnout

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## INTRODUCTION

Teachers play significant roles in creating the future by developing the minds of the next generation. As educational landscapes change and educational systems transform, teachers encounter new problems and opportunities in their professional journey. A teacher's participation in career development plans (CDPs), which serve as road maps for increasing skills, knowledge, and instructional effectiveness, is critical to their professional development. Teachers who complete professional development plans demonstrate proficiency in instructional planning, delivery, subject matter understanding, student rapport, and classroom management skills (Padillo, et al. 2021). Thus, understanding teachers' lived experiences with career development plans is critical for improving educational practices and assisting educators in their professional development efforts.

Career development plans are planned and strategic initiatives to support teachers through their career paths. These plans include a variety of components such as professional development opportunities, skill enhancement programs, mentorship initiatives, and possibilities for leadership roles in the school system. A variety of factors influence teachers' experiences with these plans, including personal goals, institutional support, and the larger sociocultural milieu.

Baluch (2023) defined a career development plan as a roadmap for the future of your career. It is a document that outlines an employee's career objectives and the steps you will take to accomplish them. In her article, she stated Four Tips for an Effective Career Development Plan which are (1) not to get discouraged, (2) celebrate wins, (3) build and foster a network, and (4) invest in learning opportunities.

Section 5 of Article XIV of the Constitution supports CDP which states that the state shall strengthen teachers' rights to professional advancement and ensure that teaching will attract and retain its rightful share of the best available talents through adequate remuneration and other means of job satisfaction and fulfillment. In support of this, the Philippines also established Republic Act 4670, also known as the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers, an act that recognizes that educational advancement is dependent on the qualifications and ability of the teaching staff, and declares it a state policy to

promote and improve the social and economic status of public school teachers, their terms of employment, and career prospects to attract and retain more individuals with proper qualifications.

The Department of Education Data Bits revealed that the overall number of public school teachers in all levels of basic education was 876,842 in SY 2020-2021. The total number of teachers by position title in all three levels is summarized with 43 instructors, 808,528 teachers, 59,972 master teachers, and 4,882 SPED teachers. The figures imply that the master teacher positions (MT I to MT IV) are only 7.41% of the total teachers in public schools. Compared to the data from SY 2019-2020, where the total number of master teachers is 59,972, it can be further concluded that only 3,797 (6.33%) teachers were promoted after one school year nationwide. The data is just living proof of today's promotion path in DepEd.

On the other hand, the majority of public school teachers also deviate from pursuing higher positions due to the rigorous standards and strenuous qualifications of the promotion system. The guidelines on ranking and appointment of Master Teachers are stipulated in MEC Order No. 10, s. 1979 (Implementing Rules and Regulations for the System of Career Progression for Public School Teachers) and Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) Order No. 57, s. 1997 (Further Implementation of the Career Progression System for Master Teachers). The applicants (Teacher I to Teacher III) will be rated based on Performance Rating, Leadership Potential, and Accomplishments which include Innovation, Coordinator, Chairmanship, Research, Community Involvement, INSET, Meritorious Awards, Authorship, and Demonstration Teaching. For the Master Teacher II position, the applicant should present accomplishments for all categories to be eligible (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1979; Department of Education, Culture and Sports, 1997).

The landscape of teaching in the Philippines is undergoing significant shifts, with educators often facing career stagnation that compels them to seek opportunities abroad or transition into different professions. Over the years, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) has noted a steady deployment of Filipino teachers to various countries, averaging around 1,500 annually. This demand stems from their expertise in teaching English, preschool education, music, and physical education, making them sought-after assets internationally.

Recognizing the challenge, the Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented initiatives to address the issue. One such program is "Sa Pilipinas Ikaw ang Ma'am and Sir (SPIMS)," which reserves 2,000 teaching positions for returning Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to continue their careers in the Philippines. Additionally, Executive Order No. 174, series of 2022 (Philippine Government, 2022), signed by former President Rodrigo Duterte, introduced the RCTQ-assisted DepEd Expanded Career Progression System. This system aims to facilitate the professional growth of public school teachers through two distinct career paths: classroom teaching and school administration.

Under this system, educators can progress through various stages, from Master Teacher 1 to Master Teacher 5 in the classroom teaching career line, or from School Principal 1 to School Principal 4 in the school administration career line. Advancement along these paths is contingent upon meeting the minimum qualifications set by the Civil Service Commission and demonstrating proficiency levels outlined in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) and the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), both of which were developed with the assistance of RCTQ. However, this is not yet being fully implemented in most of the regions which includes Pangasinan, where the researchers currently work as teachers.

Hence, there is a need to explore the lived experiences of career advancement plans of public school teachers whose current positions remained stagnant for 10 or more years. This study targets the schools that are not yet implementing the RCTQ to understand and explore the occurrence, challenges, and difficulties they encountered along recruitment and selection, professional development, or maybe personal reasons in their career development.

This study aims to investigate the numerous components of teachers' lived experiences with career development, and the various factors that affect their career development plans as teachers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study aimed to describe the lived experiences of teachers on career development. In view of the current study, the following are the related studies and literature that the researchers used as solid bases for the planning, and implementation.

### ***Professional Development***

Teachers' professional development (PD) is critical for enhancing student outcomes. It has a complex structure that evolves over a teacher's professional life. Tantawy (2020) emphasized the importance of professional development for teachers and noted that teachers' commitment to such activities is not influenced by their career stage. This implies that regardless of their position or tenure, teachers recognize the value of ongoing professional growth. The main impediment to teachers' professional development was a lack of programming or substance for successful professional development (Sancar, et al. 2021). Hence, there is a need to explore why some teachers do not pursue professional development plans or programs despite their commitment to professional development.

## **Career Stagnation**

Teacher's career stagnation is a state in which the teacher feels confident where she is, and hence doesn't feel the need to advance. This state of stagnation may stem from a low self-esteem, lack of feeling empowered by his organization, or a lack of professional development opportunities that hinder his ability to rise in the system (Zamir, 2018). Similarly, Pagayanan (2021) highlighted the phenomenon of career stagnation among public school teachers in Tacloban City, citing factors such as financial constraints, low educational qualifications, and limited support as barriers to professional growth. These findings suggest a need for intervention and enhancement programs to address these barriers and promote career development among public school teachers. The current study aimed to describe other factors that hinder teachers' career development plans, which are not yet indicated.

## **School Leadership**

School leadership remains the primary driving force, ensuring the school's improved or ongoing effectiveness and improvement, including teachers (Leithwood, et al. 2020). School leadership has a considerable impact on the characteristics of the school organization, which improves the quality of teaching and learning. Karacabey (2021) highlighted the role of school principals in facilitating professional development opportunities for teachers. Principals play a crucial role in identifying teachers' needs, organizing relevant training programs, and fostering a supportive school culture conducive to career advancement. Organizational support is also cited as one of the factors in career development (Pagayanan, 2021).

In summary, these studies underscore the complexity of factors influencing career development among public school teachers. Challenges such as career stagnation and the need for professional development and effective and supportive school leadership are essential for addressing these challenges and promoting the professional growth and development of public-school teachers. Thus, the present study delves into the deeper analysis of the teachers' lived experiences in career development.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study described the lived experiences of public-school teachers in Pangasinan on career development plan to provide insights on certain patterns appearing as themes from the investigations.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of the teacher-respondents on career development plan?

2. What are the factors that affect the teacher-respondents in career development on their personal and professional growth over the course of their careers?

## **METHODOLOGY**

Methods and techniques used in this study were detailed in this section. This includes the study's research design, population, data collection procedures, and treatment of data.

### ***Research Design***

The researchers conducted a qualitative research design using the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA). IPA is a research approach used to investigate persons' lived experiences through thorough reports (Smith et al., 2009.). This is deemed appropriate since the study explored teachers' lived experiences in career development and the factors that contribute to stagnation in their careers. The study used in-depth interviews where teachers were able to share their lived experiences in detail.

### ***Participants and Sampling***

The participants of this study were the 2 public elementary school teachers of the Division of Pangasinan II, 4 public high school teachers of Urdaneta City Division, and 2 public high school teachers of Pangasinan I for the S.Y. 2023 – 2024. The study used purposive sampling in the selection of participants. The study used purposive sampling since the respondents are those teachers whose current teaching positions remained stagnant for 10 years and above. The data on the teachers' number of years in teaching was first requested from the School Human Resource Management (SHRM) of the three pre-identified schools and the researchers screened the participants based on the highest number of years in a position. Overall, the study had eight teacher-respondents coming from the three different divisions in Pangasinan.

### ***Data Collection Procedure***

The researchers obtained permission from the school heads and teachers and teacher-respondents were oriented before the interview was conducted. A semi-structured interview was formulated from an interview guide. The researchers were guided by an Interview Consent Form and an Interview Guide. These are sample interview questions raised during the data collection:

1. What are your personal lived experiences on career development along the following:

- a. recruitment and selection;
  - b. professional development; and
  - c. personal reasons?
2. What discourage/s you from pursuing higher career development which made your current position stagnant for more than 10 years?
  3. From your own experience, what are the other factors for a teacher not to pursue career development? How did you overcome this?

### ***Data Analysis***

The researchers used the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) in the data analysis. The data analysis process began with organizing and preparing the data, primarily consisting of transcripts from the interviews. Subsequently, each participant's interview was carefully reviewed to formulate general ideas, followed by coding, and grouping the data into sections based on shared responses. Categories were then generated from thematic analysis of the transcripts, leading to the development of a narrative elucidating similarities across participants' lived experiences. Through iterative coding and thematic identification, recurring patterns emerged, allowing for the determination of how each theme would be addressed within the study. Ultimately, the collected data were interpreted and analyzed to derive meaningful insights in response to the research question.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

The researchers undertook the steps to ensure that the study was ethical. Before conducting the study, the researchers obtained permission from the school head and SHRM to determine the teachers' number of years of teaching within a particular position. The researchers also oriented the teacher-participants to make sure that they knew about the study's intentions. Afterward, the participants signed a consent form before the conduct of the interview. Throughout the study, each participant was treated respectfully.

### **RESULTS**

The participants were interviewed and their significant responses from the research questions on their lived experiences in career development were themed and summarized as follows:

## ***Themes on the Lived Experiences of Public School Teachers on Career Development***

**Rigid Requirements.** Requirements are the needed papers to present in the screening process which will be rated based on the guidelines and points system aligned with MEC Order No. 10, s. 1979 and DECS Order no. 57, s. 1997.

In terms of educational qualifications, all the respondents finished the academic requirements in Masteral Degree but chose to discontinue due to many factors. The very reason why they enrolled and accumulated the academic units is because that was one of the requirements to be promoted from Teacher I to Teacher III through reclassification via Equivalent Record Form (ERF). However, one of the eight respondents remained as Teacher I because according to him, it takes time to wait in their division. “I just finished my degree a recent years ago because pursuing education takes time, money, and effort” (Teacher A).

On the other hand, in terms of professional development, one participant claimed that she tried to apply for an open position as Head Teacher once since she already obtained the minimum qualifications required. Unfortunately, she failed to get promoted because she lacked requirements in research and publication. However, she never had promotion anxiety or disappointment for she knows that the screening process is fair and purely paper-based.

**Wide Selection.** DepEd Order No. 019 s. 2022 known as ‘The Department of Education Merit Selection Plan’ is a policy on the department’s principles of merit, competence, fitness, and equality, and that employee selection and promotion where teacher-applicants are rated based on their relative qualifications and competence to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position. Relevant to this, schools now adhere to the open ranking system for the teacher’s promotion to ensure transparency in the recruitment process among all the schools in the division (Department of Education, 2023).

One respondent mentioned that promotion in a position is no longer school-based but division-wide which caused more difficulty due to wider selection, especially for those aiming for a higher position. In effect, other applicants from large schools find it difficult to be selected as compared to the applicants coming from small schools because large schools are expected to have a wider range of competitors, making opportunities less. One respondent from Pangasinan insisted that it took years for them to obtain the result from ERF due to the large volume of applicants.

**Less Opportunities.** Opportunity is defined as a set of circumstances that human resource management, including school heads, can provide to teachers that make it possible for teachers to do something worthy and essential, specifically a chance for



promotion for teachers. One respondent said that she has been stationary for more than 10 years due to a lack of clear options for career progress. “The fact that only senior teachers have been granted the opportunity by our superiors, has deferred me from pursuing my higher career growth” (Teacher E). It’s only now that she already aged when she was given opportunities to attend conferences and take part in trainings or seminars which linked her to a network of people who assist and guide her as she renewed her mindset on promotion.

### ***Themes on the Factors that Affect the Teachers to Pursue Career Development***

The participants enumerated four factors that hinder them from pursuing career development. These include the following:

**Family Values.** HRSA defines a family as a group of two or more persons who live together and are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Strong family values are the foundation of a happy and loving household. These shared beliefs influence a family's values, priorities, structures, and traditions (Anderson, 2022).

All respondents included family as their main reason for career stagnation. They believe that family sets other responsibilities that should always be the number one priority. For them, time with the family is still the most important thing. Pursuing career development will take a large amount of time to fill in the rigid and strenuous requirements needed to be qualified. Also, they all believe that once you are already in a position, it means spending less time with yourself and your family especially when you spend a lot of time working due to the quantity and demand of the work. One participant said that she is a family-centered person and a hands-on parent and believes that the higher the position, the greater the responsibility. “This would rob my family of my precious time for them. I do not bring my work at home” (Teacher D). “I assume that a higher or bigger position also corresponds to having a strong impact, that if you want to make a larger contribution, then it is necessary to a position of greater responsibility”, Teacher G also added.

**Financial Constraint.** Financial constraint considers money as something that limits or controls a teacher from doing something for her career development plans.

Money is also on the list of the primary reasons why the respondents opted to become stationary. For them, pursuing career development requires financial resources especially when you enroll in graduate studies, attend seminars or trainings, and conduct research and community projects using personal funds. They rather spend it on personal and family needs. “I prioritized the education of my children and the needs of my family because I have already my own family when I applied and entered DepEd”, Teacher G

mentioned. “Even if you are willing to improve but you don’t have enough financial capability, it will be a hindrance to your success” (Teacher B).

**Job Burnout.** Job burnout is a type of stress linked to work, especially in teaching. It includes being worn out physically or emotionally due to the nature of the work of teachers. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), burnout is defined as a state of vital exhaustion.

The respondents specified that the demands of the work of teachers also impacted their decision not to pursue further career development. For them, the shifting of the curriculum from Basic Education to K -12 became the gateway for teachers to make various workloads aside from teaching plus the different programs, projects, and activities being mandated from the national level, regional level, division level, down to school level. With this, they sometimes experience job burnout, which leads them disinterested in pursuing further and just teaching. “Teachers are overworked but underpaid. Also, the discipline and attitude of students add to the stressful work of teachers” (Teacher B). “So much or bulk of paper works makes me sad, unlike before, much of our time than was devoted to teaching”, Teacher H added.

**Career Decisions.** Career decision in its operational meaning refers to the teachers’ choice whether to advance in their career in teaching or not. One respondent claimed that it was her choice and decision not to pursue career development anymore. For her, it never entered her mind because she is not interested and is already happy with her current state. She also added that it was only because of her friends and colleagues who forced her to take masteral units that made her promoted from Teacher 1 to Teacher 3 back then. “I just learned to appreciate what I have right now. I understand that it can’t make me rich, but I can make a positive impact to the society that’s why I am still here, teaching as T-I for 10 years” (Teacher A). One of the participants also mentioned that it was his decision from the start not to apply for promotion due to fear, low motivation, and self-doubt.

Despite the circumstances, all the respondents affirmed that they are now satisfied, happy, and content with their current position. “...although sometimes, there are “what ifs” at the back of their mind, especially when salary and opportunities are the reasons, but I do not wish to have and become more” (Teacher F). ‘It gives me great satisfaction to see students overcome obstacles and realize their goals. “Despite the difficulties that we, teachers are facing every day, it is the love and compassion for students that push me even more, with or without recognition” (Teacher D).

## DISCUSSION

### *Teachers' Lived Experiences on Career Development*

The themes coded from the general responses of the participants on their lived experiences in career development are rigid requirements, wide selection, and fewer opportunities.

**Rigid Requirements.** In terms of rigid requirements, teachers find the promotion guidelines and requirements rigid and strenuous inhibiting them from applying or getting promoted because they lack other important requirements such as innovation and publication. This aligns with the result of the study of Pagayanan (2021) where it was found that teachers experienced career stagnation due to low educational credentials.

**Wide Selection.** With the implementation of The Department of Education Merit Selection Plan and Open Ranking System, teachers find greater difficulty in getting promoted because of tight competition among other teachers across the division.

**Less Opportunities.** Also, the respondents believe that the school principals and administrators play a significant role in providing opportunities for the teachers, for them to obtain the requirements for career advancement. The results are congruent with the study of Tantawy (2020) which revealed that teachers value professional development, and a positive and supportive school culture can promote teachers' inclination toward professional development. Similarly, Karacabey (2021) affirmed that school principals create and organize professional learning activities based on the needs of students and teachers to support teachers' professional development.

### *Factors that Affect Teachers' Career Development*

The research findings also shed light on the factors that affect teachers from pursuing career development which are family values, financial constraints, job burnout, and career decisions.

**Family Values.** One significant factor identified is the influence of family values, which prioritize familial responsibilities over career advancement. This suggests that societal and cultural norms play a crucial role in shaping individuals' career decisions, particularly in contexts where family obligations are highly valued.

**Financial Constraints.** Financial constraints emerge as another major obstacle, aligning with Pagayanan's (2021) findings on career stagnation due to limited financial resources. The requirement for financial investment in career development, such as further education or certification programs, presents a barrier for teachers, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Job Burnout.** The phenomenon of job burnout among teachers further exacerbates the reluctance to pursue career development. The demanding nature of teaching, coupled with administrative pressures and workload, can lead to emotional exhaustion and diminished motivation to engage in additional professional endeavors.

**Career Decisions.** Additionally, individual career decisions and preferences play a pivotal role in shaping teachers' attitudes toward career development. Disinterest or lack of alignment between personal career aspirations and available opportunities deterred teachers from actively seeking advancement.

Despite these challenges, the research highlights that teachers derive intrinsic satisfaction from their roles, finding fulfillment in witnessing students' success and making a positive impact on their lives. This intrinsic motivation serves as a resilient factor against external barriers to career development. Making a positive impact on the students' lives is already a solid base that with or without promotion, they are performing their best abilities as teachers with a smile. As Delos Reyes, R. & Delos Reyes, M. (2023) mentioned in their study, a smile influences how people interpret events that make them happy, and it shapes the ambiance in different roles that define social interaction whenever they smile.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Rigid requirements, wide selection, and less opportunities are the general responses from the teachers when asked about their lived experiences on career development. Other factors that hinder the teachers from pursuing career development include family values, financial constraints, job burnout, and career decisions. Overall, they are happily contented, appreciative, and satisfied with their current teaching positions, promoted or not. As recommendations, the Department of Education should continue to devise ways to improve the fair and objective ranking system for the teachers from the filing of the requirements, until the selection process. To realize this, DepEd should now fully implement its Expanded Career Progression under Executive Order No. 174 where years in service is already part of the qualifications to advance in position. Also, the School Human Resource Management (SHRM), as part of its human resource management functions, should motivate and encourage teachers to pursue career development. As testified from the participants of the study, school principals and administrators also play a pivotal role in providing opportunities for the teachers to grow professionally.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Teachers' lived experiences with career development reveal a complex mix of factors influencing their decisions. This suggests a need for a more flexible and inclusive approach to advancement within education. Leadership support from school principals is

crucial for fostering professional growth. Additionally, addressing personal barriers like family responsibilities and burnout is essential for holistic support. While many teachers are content with their current positions, there's still a need to address systemic barriers and provide opportunities for those seeking career advancement.

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## **DECLARATIONS**

### ***Conflict of Interest***

All authors declared that they have no conflict of interest.

### ***Informed Consent***

All authors declare that this study is covered by the exceptions in the need for informed consent as no personal details are obtained.

### ***Ethics Approval***

No ethics approval is necessary for this piece of work as the research does not involve living human participants and does not utilize any personal data.

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