

MANAGING RESPONSIBILITIES: TEACHER-IN-CHARGE PERSONNEL'S LIVED EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Public school leaders face enormous tasks, and managing these responsibilities can be challenging. This study explored the lived experiences of Teacher In-Charge (TIC) personnel in managing a school, its contexts, and their future views of themselves.

Utilizing transcendental phenomenology and thematic analysis, findings revealed various relevant themes. For their personal lived experiences, there are (6) relevant themes such as (1) Diverse Pathways to TIC Appointment, (2) TIC for Several Years, (3) Motivated by Growth, (4) TIC Across Multiple Schools, (5) Finds Joy in Community Approval, Teacher's Growth, Earned Autonomy, and Challenged in Resource, Demand, and Responsibility, and (6) Managing Responsibilities through Strategic Time Management and Personal Sacrifices. For the contexts of their lived experiences, there are five (5) relevant themes such as (1) a Diverse Timeline in the Current Station, (2) a Positive and Supportive Environment, (3) Deep Sense of Satisfaction Derived from Interactions with Colleagues and Students, (4) Fulfillment, Gratitude, and Service (5) Collaborative and Facilitative Management Approach. For their future views of themselves, there are two (2) emerging themes such as (1) Aspiration for School Administration, and (2) Pursuit of Educational Leadership Roles and Professional Development.

These findings show that TIC personnel face various challenges and opportunities in managing a school. Across multiple themes, a blend of experiences emerges, highlighting the complexity of TIC roles and the significance of addressing both personal and professional aspects in overcoming the challenges of educational administration.

Keywords: TIC Personnel, Lived Experiences, Context, Future Views, Educational Administration, Dual Responsibility.

Introduction

In education, leadership is critical to ensuring that operations run smoothly at all levels (Areadne). School leaders are important in improving education and linking different elements of education, families, work, and the local community. They effectively manage various people's interests and work to attain educational objectives.

Accordingly, educational management entails carefully planning, organizing, and directing activities to use people and material resources best (Chuaungo, 2015). A survey found that principal leadership is very important in schools after having good teachers (Gcu, 2012). Yet, principal positions remain unfilled due to a lack of full-fledged principals, leading to the appointment of Teachers-In-Charge (TIC) personnel (DO 42, s. 2007). These personnel handle administrative tasks in schools in the absence of principals (Llego, 2019a). Nonetheless, their challenges, aspirations, and stories remain unexplored.

Thus, understanding the unique experiences and roles of TIC personnel is essential for a more comprehensive understanding of leadership in education. Hence, in this study, TIC personnel's stories of challenges and achievements were revealed, contributing to a deeper understanding of educational leadership and administration.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of TIC personnel in educational administration?
2. What are the contexts of the lived experiences of TIC personnel in educational administration?
3. How do TIC personnel view themselves in the future?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed transcendental phenomenology (TPh). Phenomenology looks into the complexities of human experiences to find hidden elements within them (Matua et al., 2015). Utilizing this research design will provide a strong framework to explore TIC personnel's subjective experiences, perceptions, and strategies in the educational administration.

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The TPh has been employed in various studies (Bingco et al., 2022; Bugnos et al., 2022; Felongco et al., 2022; Protacio, 2021b; Protacio, 2022; Protacio, 2021a; Sonza et al., 2022; Tacogue et al., 2022).

Research Locale and Participants

This study was conducted in Norala District, focusing on elementary schools in Norala, South Cotabato province. This location ensured a sufficient pool of potential participants because it has many schools managed by TIC personnel who provided significant insights into the experiences and challenges encountered in educational administration.

Research Instrument

The study primarily used an interview guide questionnaire preceded by an exhaustive literature review. Interviews focused on the TIC personnel's lived experiences in educational administration, including how they balance instructional and administrative responsibilities and the impact on their professional development, work satisfaction, and leadership effectiveness.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study follows eight stages. Firstly, the researcher introduced the study and responded to inquiries from participants. Second, official permission was acquired by confirming ethical compliance. Third was the validation process. Phase four includes trial interviews, followed by obtaining permission in phase five. In phase six, in-depth interviews were conducted. Phase seven includes classroom observations with participant consent. Finally, transcription and analysis occurred in phase eight, focusing on discovering patterns and themes.

Data Analysis Methods

Thematic analysis was used in this study. In 2006, Braun and Clarke initiated it as a core qualitative research approach, enabling researchers to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data (Maguire et al., 2017). Their six-step process includes familiarizing with data, establishing codes, deriving themes, reviewing, defining, and providing examples [Gasán et al., 2023; Protacio, 2023; Sanda et al., 2023].

Results and Discussion

Relevant Themes on Live Experiences of Teacher-in-Charge Personnel in School Management

Six (6) relevant themes were articulated through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation. They were all synthesized from 30 formulated meanings and 7 initial themes. For their personal lived experiences, relevant themes are diverse pathways to TIC appointment, TIC for several years, motivated by growth, TIC across multiple schools,

finds joy in community approval, teacher's growth, earned autonomy and challenged in resource, demand, and responsibilities, and managing responsibilities through strategic time management and personal sacrifices.

Theme 1: Diverse Pathways to TIC Appointment

This theme describes the varied pathways to becoming Teacher-In-Charge (TIC) within the Department of Education (DepEd). It highlights a blend of formal application processes, recommendations from supervisors, and informal recognition of leadership qualities by colleagues. This underscores the importance of adhering to competency-based selection plans [7], ensuring merit-based appointments aligned with competence, fairness, and transparency principles. The participants said:

"...I applied to become a TIC... undergo a process, submitted requirements and interviewed to be qualified..." (S1.1-2)

"I was appointed and recommended by the District Supervisor when one principal retires, so vacancy arises..." (S1.1-3)

"...I didn't apply for the position formally, but school administrators and colleagues recognized me for my dedication and leadership skills." (S1.1-4)

Theme 2: TIC for Several Years

This theme examines the duration of service as TIC. It presents a scale ranging from short tenures to extended periods of leadership. The variation prompts investigation into factors influencing sustained engagement in TIC roles, including motivators, challenges, and opportunities for professional growth (Van Niekerk, 2012). The participants said:

"...2 yrs and 4 months only." (S1.2-1)

"I have been a TIC for 9 years..." (S1.2-2)

"I have been a TIC for the past three years." (S1.2-3)

"I have been a TIC for almost 6 years." (S1.2-4)

Theme 3: Motivated By Growth

This theme highlights the intrinsic motivation of TIC personnel, driven by a desire for continuous learning, career advancement, and impact in education. Participants are committed to student welfare, teacher support, and personal development. This aligns with the view that intrinsic motivation is fundamental to learning and development (Ng, 2018). The participants said:

"...I want to seek professional development in my teaching career". (S1.3-1)

"...I wanted to make a positive difference in education. The TIC role seemed like a great opportunity to use my teaching experience and leadership skills to help students and support teachers." (S1.3-4)

Theme 4: TIC Across Multiple Schools

This theme explores the multiple schools TIC personnel manage, revealing varying exposure to this practice. These findings highlight the need to further examine the challenges and opportunities of managing responsibilities across diverse educational settings. The participants said:

"I have been into four schools. (S1.4-3)"
"I have been a TIC of three public Elementary Schools." (S1.4-5)

Theme 5: Find joy in Community Approval, Teacher's Growth, Earned Autonomy, and Challenged in Resource, Demand, and Responsibilities

The theme underscores the multifaceted nature of the TIC role, emphasizing their joys and the need for effective resource management and resilience in overcoming challenges. The participants said:

"...my sources of joy are the approval and satisfaction of the community towards your performance as a school head... Second, is seeing my teachers grow and develop professionally... The challenge in my role as a TIC is certainly managing the resources." (S1.5-1)
"...I have freedom of my time. I have ample time to do what I want, and I enjoy most the respect given to me ... Challenges are the limited number of teachers, so if one is absent, as a TIC, I take over the class. Next is handling the money of the school..." (S1.5-2)
"...Challenges are in managing the school needs, the demand of the teachers and stakeholders." (S1.5-3)
"...Balancing paperwork and administrative tasks can be hard." (S1.5-4)

Theme 6: Managing Responsibilities Through Strategic Time Management and Personal Sacrifices

The theme reveals that managing the TIC personnel's responsibilities, such as managing supervisory and administrative duties, necessitates strategic time allocation and boundary-setting to maintain work-life balance. This theme highlights the ongoing challenge of reconciling professional obligations with personal well-being in educational leadership roles. This supports the Border and Boundary Theory, which suggests that setting boundaries is pivotal in achieving work-life balance

and increasing job performance (Johari et al., 2018). The participants said:

"...One way I do this is by dividing my day into specific blocks of time for supervisory and administrative work... I also use technology and organizational tools to make administrative tasks easier... Additionally, I share responsibilities with my colleagues... (S1.6-3)
"Despite my best efforts, there are times when work spills over into my personal life... To prevent burnout, I make sure to set aside time for myself... I also communicate my boundaries to my colleagues and supervisors to ensure a healthy work-life balance for everyone." (S1.6-4)

Relevant Themes on Contexts of Teacher-in-Charge Personnel' Lived Experiences in School Management

Through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation, five (5) relevant themes were articulated for the context of their lived experiences. They were all synthesized from 25 formulated meanings and 7 initial themes. These themes are a Diverse Timeline in the Current Station, a Positive and Supportive Environment, a Deep Sense of Satisfaction Derived from Interactions with Colleagues and Students, Fulfillment, Gratitude, Service, and a Collaborative and Facilitative Management Approach.

Theme 1: Diverse Timeline in Current Station

The theme shows that the context involves many events or developments occurring within a specific period or context. This implies the need to consider multiple factors and their interplay within the current setting to comprehensively understand the situation being studied. The participants said:

"I am here for 2 years and 4 months." (S2.1-1)
"I have been here for more than a year now." (S2.1-2)
"I have been here for three years now." (S2.1-3)
"Almost 8 months." (S2.1-4)
"I have been serving my current station for 6 months." (S2.1-5)

Theme 2: Positive and Supportive Environment

This theme describes a school atmosphere that fosters inspiration, motivation, and collaboration among teachers and stakeholders. It emphasizes mutual respect, cooperation, and active participation within the school community. Accordingly, a positive school atmosphere positively affects teachers' and students' productivity, morale, and satisfaction (Farisi, 2019). The participants said:

"My school's working environment...I will describe it as inspiring and motivating..." (S2.2-1)

"...stakeholders are active and participative in all school's activities." (S2.2-3)

"...Aside from the annual MOOE of the school, the Provincial Government did not fail to support the school financially." (S2.2-5)

Theme 3: Deep Sense of Satisfaction Derived from Interactions with Colleagues and Students

This theme highlights the joy and sense of accomplishment experienced by TIC personnel derived from positive interactions with colleagues and students within the school environment, particularly when they feel supported and appreciated in their roles and witness the impact of their efforts on students' lives. Job satisfaction was elaborated as promoting feelings of relaxation, peace, and security in employees, enabling them to effectively fulfill their duties and contribute to the organization's economic and developmental goals (Sahito et al., 2017). Despite challenges, meaningful connections within the school community contribute to satisfaction and fulfillment. The participants said:

"...I was so satisfied and fulfilled with my leadership journey... (S2.3-1)

"...I am happy with my co-teachers, not with my job. Knowing that I can help my teachers by being a considerate TIC makes me happy. It is also fulfilling that when I go home I realize that I made a mark on the life of my learners and co-teachers." (S2.3-2)

"...I feel happy and fulfilled when I see students doing well and when I get to try new things in teaching." (S2.3-4)

Theme 4: Fulfillment, Gratitude, and Service

The theme reveals that the predominant thoughts of individuals serving as TIC revolve around fulfillment in realizing childhood dreams, gratitude for experiences, and a commitment to giving back to the community through dedicated service. The focus is on making the school a conducive environment for learning, ensuring the success and well-being of students and colleagues, and leaving a positive impact despite the short duration of their tenure. Responsibilities include supporting student learning, fostering collaboration among staff, managing administrative tasks, and strengthening community partnerships. The participants said:

"...My thoughts as a leader are always centered on the well-being of the people under my leadership. First to the learners as the center of the educational system and second to the teachers. Our collective effort

fuels the system to attain its vision through delivering quality education." (S2.4-5)

"...first, I am living a dream as this was my childhood dream. Second, I am so blessed for all the experiences I have been experiencing so far. Lastly, I must give back by serving this community so well as they let me experience my first leadership journey nearer to perfection." (S2.4-1)

"...As a Teacher in Charge (TIC), my mind is constantly occupied with thoughts related to my responsibilities and the well-being of the school community." S2.4-4)

Theme 5: Collaborative and Facilitative Management Approach

This theme highlights a management style that focuses on working closely with teachers and learners to guide and support them in their roles. It emphasizes partnership, communication, and shared decision-making to foster a positive and inclusive school culture. Facilitative leadership aims to empower followers to make decisions and promote better team communication and productivity (Shonk, 2024). The approach values input from all stakeholders and prioritizes the well-being and growth of students and staff. The participants said:

"...I just wanted to manage the school in a manner that I will be the guide on the side of my teachers as well as learners." (S2.5-1)

"...I only manage the school by the orders of the top management and with a good attitude, of course." (S2.5-3)

"...As a Teacher in Charge (TIC), my approach to managing the school is rooted in collaboration, communication, and student-centered leadership." (S2.5-4)

Relevant Themes on the Teacher In-Charge Personnel's View of Themselves in the Future

Through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation, two (2) relevant themes were articulated for TIC personnel's future views of themselves. They were all synthesized from 10 formulated meanings and 4 initial themes. The relevant themes are the Aspiration for School Administration and the Pursuit of Educational Leadership Roles and Professional Development.

Theme 1: Aspiration for School Administration

This theme reveals that educators strongly desire to pursue school leadership roles, motivated by personal fulfillment, childhood dreams, and the opportunity to serve a larger community. While they enjoy their current roles as TIC, they aspire to become school administrators to contribute to positive change and development within the school community. This reflects a commitment to professional growth and a sense of responsibility for

serving learners and educators. It underscores the significance of educators' desires to contribute to school improvement through leadership roles (Avidov-Ungar et al., 2019). The participants said:

"Definitely yes! This is an opportunity for me to serve more people while living my childhood dream..." (S3.1-1)

"Yes, I still want to be a school administrator because I enjoy my role..." (S3.1-2)

"Yes, I still aspire to be an administrator. Despite the challenges and responsibilities that come with being a school leader, being an administrator allows me to contribute to positive change and drive the development of the school community." (S3.1-4)

"Yes, I still want to be an administrator. In fact, I have applied for NQESH to qualify myself to become a full-fledged administrator..." (S3.1-4)

Theme 2: Pursuit of Educational Leadership Roles and Professional Development

The theme encompasses that participants are dedicated to advancing their careers and enhancing their leadership skills within the educational field. They express aspirations to attain higher positions, such as becoming a principal, and emphasize the importance of continuous learning, professional development, and leadership responsibilities to contribute effectively to student success and school improvement initiatives. This interpretation aligns with the assertion regarding the indispensability of trained and dedicated educators and effective principals (Bush, 2009), thereby emphasizing the imperative nature of leadership development in the context of school improvement initiatives. The participants said:

"...I want to become a full-fledged principal and to achieve it, I am reviewing now for the principal's test." (S3.2-2)

"My professional aspirations center on becoming a more effective educational leader, dedicated to fostering student success and enhancing school communities... I plan to pursue advanced education through professional development opportunities..." (S3.2-4)

"...I have decided to pursue my postgraduate study and am yet to complete my academic requirement. I am also about to take the National Qualifying Exam for School Heads." (S3.2-3)

Conclusion

The Teacher-in-Charge (TIC) dual roles are complex and entail addressing various challenges and opportunities within educational administration.

Across various themes, diverse experiences emerge. The lived experiences of TIC personnel and the context of it revealed contextual themes that collectively offer insight into the challenges and rewards associated with TIC roles. Looking ahead, TIC personnel express aspirations for school administration and interest in educational leadership roles and professional development, reflecting a dedication to continuous improvement and positive contribution to the academic setting.

Therefore, these findings emphasize the complexity of TIC dual responsibility and underscore the importance of addressing both personal and professional dimensions in handling the challenges of educational administration. By acknowledging and supporting TIC personnel's diverse needs and aspirations, educational institutions can cultivate an environment conducive to leadership development and enhancing academic practices.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest in the conduct of this research.

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