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## PRIVATE SCHOOL TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES AND TEACHING PRACTICES: BASES FOR SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

**RECHIE S. BRAÑA  
PRINCIPAL**

Children's Integrated School of Alta Tierra Inc.  
branarechie@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences and teaching practices of private school teachers as bases for a proposed sustainability program. The participants were nine (9) teachers who had been teaching for five or more years in a private school in the Division of Iloilo City. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews to capture their personal and professional experiences within the institution. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data. Findings revealed that teachers' positive experiences were characterized by a supportive working environment, opportunities for professional and personal growth, availability of teaching materials, and responsive and nurturing leadership. These positive experiences compensated for financial limitations as salary is perceived as non-competitive. In terms of teaching practices, participants highlighted the use of individualized instruction, strong emphasis on character and values formation, and the application of innovative and flexible teaching strategies to address diverse learner needs. The findings provided the basis for the development of a sustainability program.

**Keywords:** *Private School Teachers, Lived Experiences, Teaching Practices, Sustainability Program.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Teachers greatly influence the development of the academic foundation, values, and holistic development of learners. In private schools, teachers are often expected not only to deliver quality instruction but also to uphold institutional values, foster student engagement, and meet the expectations of parents and administrators. Their lived experiences, both positive and challenging, significantly influence the way they teach, interact with students, and respond to the expectations of the profession. Understanding these experiences provides a deeper insight into the teaching situations in private school settings and highlights the areas where intervention is most needed.

Studies have shown that teachers' professional growth, job satisfaction, and morale are affected by various factors such as the work environment, availability of resources, administrative support, parental involvement, and compensation (Rollo, 2024). Positive experiences such as supportive leadership, opportunities for training, and recognition of efforts tend to enhance teachers' motivation and instructional effectiveness. Conversely, challenges like workload pressures, limited resources, or lack of institutional support may hinder their teaching practices and affect student learning outcomes. These realities suggest that teachers' lived experiences are directly connected to their teaching strategies and overall classroom performance.

In the Philippine context, private school teachers face unique conditions compared to their counterparts in government schools. While some benefit from smaller class sizes, closer relationships with parents, and supportive leadership, others experience lower salaries, limited

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benefits, and fewer to no opportunities for professional advancement. These disparities highlight the importance of structured support networks that can respond to not only instructional concerns but also the broader aspects of teachers' professional and personal well-being.

Teaching practices, which include instructional strategies, classroom management, use of technology, and student engagement, are shaped by the realities that teachers face every day. Effective practices often emerge when teachers feel supported, motivated, and equipped with the necessary skills and resources. Meanwhile, ineffective practices may lead to anxiety, exhaustion, or insufficient professional development. Thus, exploring the link between teachers lived experiences and their teaching practices become essential in identifying factors that are to be sustained to help teachers enjoy and stay in private schools.

There has been a growing trend of new teachers beginning their careers in private schools but eventually transitioning to public institutions. This trend raises concerns about the retention of educators in private schools and the factors influencing their decisions to leave. Understanding the experiences, challenges, and teaching practices of private school teachers is crucial for addressing this issue and promoting teacher retention in private education.

This study draws from the idea that teachers' experiences are not isolated events but part of a broader system that affects their instructional approaches and professional identity. By examining private school teachers' lived experiences and teaching practices, this research seeks to identify their needs and challenges and, consequently, develop an intervention program. Such a program aims to enhance professional development, promote teacher well-

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being, strengthen institutional support, and ultimately raise the standard of education in private schools.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This section includes the research method, research design, participants of the study, data-gathering procedures, research instrument, validity of the research instrument and data analysis. The purpose of the study was to look into the lived experiences and teaching practices of teachers in private schools: bases for a sustainability program.

### Research Method

The method used in this study was descriptive-qualitative. The descriptive-qualitative method explores the characteristics and qualities of a phenomenon. The primary aim of descriptive-qualitative research is to give a detailed and accurate portrayal of the phenomenon under study. In this case, the research focused on describing the lived experiences and teaching practices of private school teachers, capturing the intricacies of their daily work, challenges, motivations, and coping strategies. In the context of this study, this approach specifically suitable because it allows deep exploration of the subjective experiences of teachers, which are essential for making policy recommendations.

Data were gathered through methods such as in-depth interviews, observations, or documentation. For this study, in-depth interviews with private school teachers who were teaching in private schools for five years or more were a central method, allowing them to

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share their stories, challenges, and practices in their own words. This sought to uncover how private school teachers experience their professional roles, how they perceive their work environment, and elements influencing their satisfaction and decisions to stay or leave their jobs.

## Research Design

The research design used was phenomenological approach.

This approach was used to identify the lived experiences and teaching practices of private school teachers.

Phenomenology is an approach widely used in qualitative research and is concerned with the study of lived experiences. Phenomenology, as described by Creswell and Poth (2024), is a study that gives meaning to the lived experiences of an individual on a certain phenomenon. The central aim of phenomenology is to look into and describe the lived experiences of individuals. It seeks to capture phenomena from the perspectives of individuals who experience them, capturing the essence of how they perceive and make sense of their world.

In phenomenology, it is assumed that all participants may have common patterns in their experience of a phenomenon, and that the information to be described and interpreted solely comes from the participants' specific statements. A sample size of one to ten key informants is considered enough to provide detailed information on their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

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The research design is appropriate to the study since it explores the lived experiences and teaching practices of the teachers teaching for five years or more in the private schools in the Division of Iloilo City. The said phenomenon is the concern of the study.

### Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were nine (9) private school teachers from the Division of Iloilo City who had been teaching for five (5) years or more in the institution.

The study utilized purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method commonly used in qualitative research. Participants were chosen based on the following inclusion criteria:

Must be a full-time private school teacher; Must have rendered at least five (5) years of continuous service in the institution; Must agree to participate and provide their experiences.

The five-year minimum teaching experience verified that participants had substantial involvement to the school's leadership practices, work environment, instructional systems, and welfare programs. This allowed the researcher to gather information-rich data relevant to the research objectives.

The study applied a purposive sampling technique to select the recommended number of key informants, aiming for near-complete representation of themes in an interview-based descriptive qualitative study. This sampling method, also known as judgment sampling, includes the researcher on purpose choosing key informants based on specific criteria. The researcher determined the necessary information and recruited individuals with relevant

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knowledge or experience. Tajik et al. (2024) endorsed this approach, emphasizing that a purposive strategy is necessary when certain individuals possess unique and valuable perspectives relevant to the study's aims and objectives, making their inclusion in the sample essential.

It is the researcher's prerogative to determine the sample size in qualitative research, which should be considered adequate. A fixed, objective rule is not required to influence the decision of researchers in defining the number of key informants, though estimates serve as useful guides in designing a qualitative sampling plan. For a descriptive qualitative study, the suggested range is one to twenty informants. Various factors will be considered before finalizing the sample size, including the depth of information required and the nature of the inquiry (Subedi, 2021).

This study adopted a sample size based on an investigation concerning the sufficiency of small qualitative samples. According to Young and Casey (2018), themes are significantly covered with a minimum sample size of six to nine when interviews are used as the data collection method, indicating that theme saturation is achieved ("hearing it all"). Furthermore, responses from seven to ten informants provide substantial completion of themes, implying that knowledge saturation is achieved ("understanding it all"). A sample size of nine is considered sufficient to achieve near-complete representation of themes in an interview-based descriptive qualitative study, and this was employed in the study.

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In case any key informant chooses to remove themselves from the study, their decision will be honored, and all data related to them will be deleted from the study. The researcher will consider another key informant as long as he/she meets the requirements set by the researcher.

## Research Instrument

This study was carried out using the researcher-made interview questions that were grounded in the central question to acquire the data needed. The questions are open-ended since each participant has different experiences and has employed different practices while staying in a private school. The questions centered on the experiences of teachers teaching in the private school for five years or more.

The format of the interview allows for free-flowing discussion for participants to express their emotions and describe their perceptions while remaining within the scope of the guide question. The interview was conducted face-to-face. The researcher used an audio/video recorder and field notes to capture all the undertakings and recorded the data elicited from the participants. The process was conducted with the informants' knowledge and consent.

## Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher sent a letter addressed to the School Heads of ten identified private schools under the jurisdiction of the Schools Division of Iloilo City, informing them of the nature of the study and requesting

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their authorization to undertake the study in their area. After giving their approval, the researcher requested information about their teachers who had more than five years of classroom teaching experience in private schools. Specifically, the information collected were the participant's name, contact information, and length of teaching experience in private schools.

The teacher with the longest teaching experience in each school was selected to be part of the ten key informants. In the event when the school does not have a teacher that meets the criteria, the researcher will choose another key informant from another school with a comparatively larger student population.

Once the key informants were identified, the researcher sent them a letter of invitation to participate in the study. They were presented with the abstract of the study for an overview. Three days were allotted to gather their written consent form and selected demographic data, including name, age, sex, email, school affiliation, and number of years teaching in a private school. The written informed consent included the following: introduction, purpose, informant selection, voluntary participation, procedures, duration, risks, benefits, and reimbursement. It contained procedures for maintaining

confidentiality and anonymity, sharing the findings, option to decline or withdraw from the study, and contact information of the researcher for any queries and concerns.

As soon as the written consent was secured, the researcher sent a physical copy of the questionnaire to the key informants, as well as a digital copy through their provided email

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address. The key informants were then asked for their most convenient time from the given time frame for the in-depth interview. The place was determined by the researcher, but with the approval of the informants. It was a conducive place for an interview, free of destruction, and was convenient to the informants.

For data handling, the key informants' responses in the interview were stored in a secure Google Drive, restricted to the researcher and the adviser. The devices used to access this data were encrypted with passwords, ensuring that only the researcher can open them. Hard copies or raw copies of the research manuscript, questionnaire, or any printed data were stored in a file organizer and placed in a locked locker, with only the researcher holding the key. The data were retained for no less than two years post-study completion. Upon finishing the study, the researcher permanently deleted the shared drive and the folders containing the data. Any printed versions of the collected data were shredded adequately.

### Validity of the Research Instrument

A set of questions was formulated prior to the interview and was evaluated by professionals in the field. All their feedback and recommendations on the validation of the interview questions were considered and integrated. Their expert knowledge and knowledge led to the improvement of and credibility of the research questions to obtain essential information for the study.

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## Data Analyses

Thematic analysis is a method used to analyze qualitative data by identifying patterns within a data set, reporting them, and then analyzing their underlying significance (Liebenberg et al., 2020; Xu & Zammit, 2020).

The collected data were analyzed using the Six-Phase Thematic Analysis Framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis was adopted for its flexibility and systematic process of identifying patterns and themes in qualitative data.

The analysis followed the six phases outlined below:

### Phase 1: Familiarization with the Data

The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim and repeatedly read the transcripts to become deeply familiar with the content. Initial observations and reflections were noted during this stage.

### Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Meaningful segments of data were systematically coded.

Codes were assigned to significant statements related to teachers' experiences, leadership support, professional growth, welfare benefits, instructional practices, and institutional culture.

### Phase 3: Searching for Themes

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The codes were organized into broader categories by identifying similarities and patterns. Related codes were clustered to form potential themes representing recurring ideas in the data set.

#### Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

The preliminary themes were reviewed to ensure coherence and consistency. The researcher examined whether the themes accurately reflected the coded extracts and the entire data set. Themes were refined, merged, or modified as necessary.

#### Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Each theme was clearly defined and named to capture its central meaning. The final themes included good working environment, professional and personal growth, availability of teaching materials, supportive parents, responsive and nurturing leadership, benefits, individualized instruction, innovative and flexible teaching practices, integration and use of technology and character and values formation.

#### Phase 6: Producing the Report

The final phase involved synthesizing the themes into a comprehensive narrative. Direct excerpts from participants were integrated to support each theme. The findings were then linked to relevant literature and theoretical frameworks to inform the development of the proposed sustainability program.

#### Trustworthiness of the Study

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To ensure rigor and credibility, the study employed the following strategies:

**Credibility:** Member checking was conducted to verify the accuracy of participants' statements and interpretations.

**Dependability:** A clear audit trail of procedures, coding processes, and theme development was maintained.

**Confirmability:** Peer debriefing was utilized to review and validate emerging themes.

**Transferability:** Thick descriptions of participants' experiences were provided to allow readers to determine applicability to similar contexts.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. They were informed of the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms, and all collected data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This qualitative phenomenological study entitled “Lived Experiences and Teaching Practices of Private School Teachers as Bases for Sustainability Program” aimed to explore the lived experiences and teaching practices of private school teachers as bases for a proposed sustainability program. The participants were nine (9) teachers who had been teaching for five (5) years or more in a private school in the Division of Iloilo City. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework.

The research instrument utilized in this study was a researcher-made interview schedule.

A panel of experts validated the interview guide. All comments and suggestions relative to the validation of the tool were considered.

The findings of the study revealed several interrelated themes that describe the lived experiences and teaching practices of private school teachers. First, teachers experienced a supportive working environment characterized as nurturing, collaborative, and family-oriented. They described positive collegial relationships, mutual respect, and a strong sense of belonging within the institution. This atmosphere of support extended beyond internal relationships to include supportive parents who actively communicated with teachers, participated in school activities, and reinforced learning at home. Teachers shared that cooperative and appreciative parents strengthened their motivation and made their work more meaningful. The supportive school community—composed of administrators, colleagues, and

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parents—significantly contributed to their commitment to remain in the institution. Moreover, collaboration was enhanced through the integration of technology, such as digital communication platforms and online learning systems, which facilitated efficient parent-teacher interaction and instructional coordination. In terms of professional and personal growth, participants highlighted the availability of professional development programs, mentoring systems, leadership guidance, and financial assistance for pursuing graduate studies. These opportunities enhanced their instructional competence, confidence, and overall career satisfaction. Teachers expressed that continued learning, including training on technology integration and innovative pedagogies, enabled them to remain responsive to evolving educational demands.

The availability of teaching materials further supported their instructional effectiveness. Teachers emphasized that access to adequate instructional resources, including printed materials, digital content, and educational technologies, allowed them to implement diverse teaching strategies and address the varied needs of learners. Administrative support in securing these materials reinforced their sense of being valued and supported by the institution.

Another significant theme was responsive and nurturing leadership. School administrators were perceived as approachable, understanding, and considerate of teachers' concerns. Leadership practices promoted open communication, trust, and participative decision-making. Teachers felt encouraged and empowered, which strengthened their organizational commitment and professional dedication.

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Regarding teaching practices, participants emphasized the consistent use of individualized instruction, flexible methodologies, values-based education, and creative approaches taking advantage of smaller class size to accommodate students' diverse abilities and learning styles. Technology integration played a vital role in enhancing these practices, as teachers utilized multimedia presentations, online learning platforms, and interactive tools to make lessons more engaging and accessible. These strategies demonstrated their commitment to learner-centered and adaptive instruction.

Teachers also underscored the importance of character and values formation in their instructional practices. They intentionally integrated moral values, discipline, responsibility, and respect into daily lessons, aligning their teaching with the school's mission of holistic education. This integration of academic content and values education reinforced the institution's identity and purpose.

Finally, although salary was perceived as non-competitive, teachers expressed strong appreciation for teacher welfare and institutional benefits. Non-monetary benefits such as free tuition for their children, financial assistance for master's degree programs, and all-expense-paid year-end retreats significantly enhanced their job satisfaction and loyalty. These benefits reduced financial burdens, supported career advancement, and promoted work-life balance.

Collectively, these findings highlight that teacher retention and commitment in the private school are strongly influenced by supportive relationships, professional growth

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opportunities, adequate resources, effective leadership, innovative teaching practices, values formation, technology integration, and sustained welfare benefits. These themes served as the foundation for the development of the proposed TEACH-Sustain Program aimed at strengthening teacher retention and ensuring long-term institutional sustainability.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following insights were drawn:

Teacher retention in the private school is strongly influenced by non-monetary factors. A supportive working environment, opportunities for professional growth, responsive and nurturing leadership, and sustained institutional welfare benefits play a significant role in encouraging teachers to remain in the institution. Although competitive salary continues to be a challenge in private school settings, intrinsic motivators such as personal fulfillment, sense of belonging, and professional advancement, together with strong organizational support, substantially contribute to long-term teacher commitment.

The study further revealed that transformational and nurturing leadership practices foster trust, collaboration, and organizational stability. When school leaders demonstrate approachability, empathy, and participative decision-making, teachers feel valued and motivated, which strengthens their loyalty to the institution. Continuous professional development and access to adequate instructional resources, including technology-enhanced materials, enhance teachers' instructional effectiveness and overall job satisfaction. Moreover, the consistent integration of individualized instruction and character formation not only

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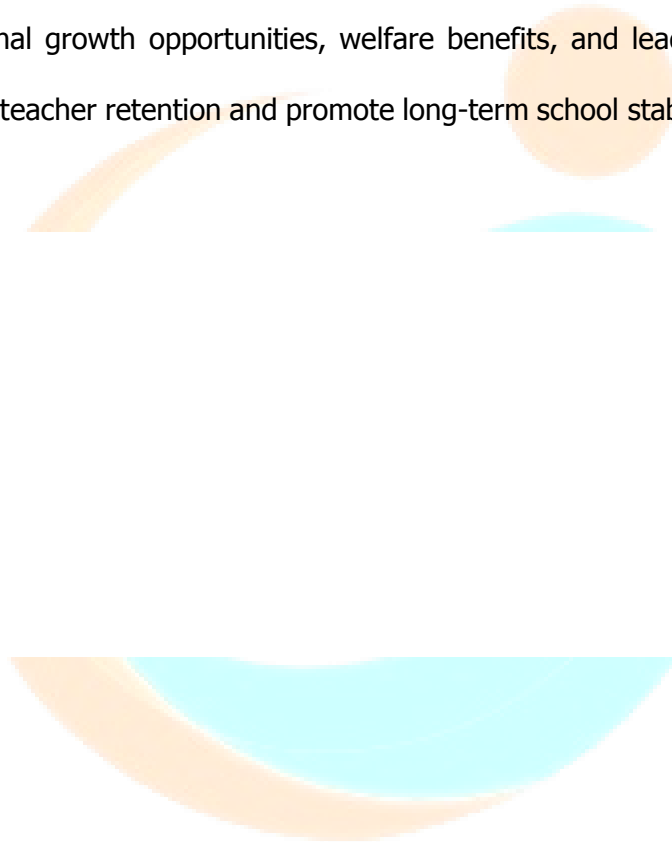
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promotes meaningful student learning but also reinforces teachers' sense of purpose and the institution's identity as a provider of holistic education.

Overall, the findings affirm that a structured and institutionalized sustainability program is essential to preserve and strengthen these contributing factors. Such a program ensures the continuity of supportive systems, professional growth opportunities, welfare benefits, and leadership practices that collectively sustain teacher retention and promote long-term school stability.



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