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## Research Article

### Retirement: Keeping the Zeal for Teaching Aflame

Sherwin M. Parinas\*

College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, Bulacan State University (Main Campus), Philippines

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#### \*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

[sherwin.parinas@bulsu.edu.ph](mailto:sherwin.parinas@bulsu.edu.ph)

#### ABSTRACT

This phenomenological inquiry intended to unearth the lived experiences of the retired faculty members on post retirement career. Previous studies had linked retirement with leisure, relaxation and benefit. However, this current study viewed it as an avenue to pursue a career as evidenced by twenty-one (21) retired teachers from basic to tertiary education in both public and private institutions. The salient findings revealed that the preference to work after tenure was anchored from economic reasons, defying age, loss and fear of insignificance. As they were nearing the twilight, working for them meant making every tick count. Economic reason was also a factor as they found their pension too minimal an amount to purchase not only basic commodities but hospitalization and maintenance medicine as years went by. But seasoned as they were, they managed to jump over the hurdles by being optimistic and maintaining circle as support system like family and friends, above all, imploring the Divine Providence. To lighten the plight, it was suggested that institutions may implement policies like seminars and training that could provide a better retirement preparation and transition to probable retirees.

**Keywords:** Retirement, Teaching Aflame

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#### Introduction

Teaching has been regarded as a vehicle of change. As tabula rasa is metamorphosed into an intellectual being (from ignorance to intelligence). It is both a science and an art (Eisner, 2003). Like an artist, a good teacher makes decisions from both a technical and creative perspectives. As a science, it is developed by using carefully planned, fine-tuned lessons that reflect an understanding of many different teaching techniques. A teacher is destined, consequently esteemed to guarantee that her students upon

staying inside the classroom will acquire the expected skills and competencies about the subject. Teaching as a profession is deemed tasking, crucial responsibility and taxing. It calls for an unceasing dedication to concretize the very essence of education, that is, learning. It further necessitates that the teacher manifests an optimal degree of determination to secure that the teaching-learning process occurs. It is realized through teaching approaches manifested via strategies and techniques appropriate and satisfying the learning styles of the students. It is at

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this point that the challenge is at its peak, for the teacher must discern which approach is apt to the situation.

The work-a-day-world of a teacher is not confined in the classroom. A teacher is a teacher not only within the premises of a learning institution but even goes out of bounds. Her duties are carried out even to her doorsteps adding up to the domestic responsibilities, a parent to her children, and a second parent to pupils and students. Not to mention the colossal duties she needs to perform as part of her chosen profession. More than the classroom function are the deliverables that must be realized should there are undertakings assigned by immediate superior like an office or by simply running errands for the good of the academic community in general. It is at this point that teacher's responsibilities seem enormous to bear, yet never a tumultuous a scene for she seamlessly manages tasks.

Teachers serve boundlessly giving their all to be catalysts of change in the society (Geronimo, 2018). Their dedication to the profession is rendered on an official time basis with task too burdensome to bear. But everything is transcended through the love and meaning teachers put into it. Teachers and professors ranked second with the most overtime (Buckland, 2011). It is a fact, for the obligations more frequent than not are brought home as it is construed as the extension of the classroom. These add up to the complexities of her life after work as she attends to the household responsibilities, making ends meet, vis-à-vis her role as a parent or head of the family. Hence, it has consumed much of her life. Dedication is an understatement. It is common among teachers to manifest a high degree of commitment. They normally show a strong sense of ardour and a mindset that they owe it to their pupils and students. However, no matter how much time, talent, expertise and meaning are poured forth, cliché as it may seem, everything has an end.

Life is full of paradoxes. A commencement is headed towards an end while an end is seen as an opportunity of a new beginning. Such is the truth of life. There is a constant struggle of opposites and conflict of elements that pave the way for a an event, an episode or an experience. It is dependent on how one perceives it. Such is a reality that an individual has to bear and no

employee is exempt. A teacher as an employee either in public or private after rendering years in service is faced with an inevitability, that is, retirement. It is commonly viewed as an end of tenure. A time when a teacher hangs her school uniform and embraces a different phase of life. It may be voluntary or forced. The former is a teacher's decision to leave a workplace regardless of the number of years rendered while the latter has reached the mandatory retireable age of 65 (Chad, 2015; Cook, 2017).

In a world of constant flux, where change is an unavoidable occurrence, teachers have to be mindful of its impacts on their lives (Ryser & Wernli, 2017). It is a pre-requisite to growth as a phase that must be undergone to allow for development. It could be favourable or otherwise. This spells the difference between and among individuals faced with inevitabilities, specifically retirement. Is it dusk? Is it dawn? Does retirement mean a twilight of what was once an energetic and full of enthusiasm employee? Or does it mean a commencement of something novel?

But is it dawn or a sunup of a new undertaking? The common impression about retirement is technically characterized by the end of the employer-employee relationship. As aforementioned, it is either voluntary or forced. The retirement rate among teachers is quite unpredictable for there is no dataset annually collected (Schultz, 2016). However in the 2009 data by the National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey (NCESSASS), around 75,004 teachers retired that year that is 2.2 percent of the 3.4 million teachers all over the country. Most of the previous studies conducted have intended to surface the experiences of retirees in terms of struggles, coping, recreational activities and health issues as predicate of retirement (Matthijs Bal & Visser, 2011; McConatha et al., 2009; McManus et al., 2007). However there is a dearth on zeroing-in on the possibilities of retired teachers who instead of discontinuing had been motivated for a career pursuit (may be similar or different) (Missinne, 2000). It is a cliché that age does not matter, it may be true to love but it is also applicable to career opportunities (Osborne, 2012). It knows no age and as an individual full of potentials and possibilities, retirement does not limit one in pursuing and maximizing self growth (Peng et

al., 2016). The idea is how one is determined to make the most of life, not to be restricted by age nor any other stereotypical label and fixation which may retirees find it so difficult to break (Perera et al., 2013; Petters & Asuquo, 2008).

As one reaches the pinnacle of career marked by retirement, it does not mean life ends as well. Post retirement career is a possibility that a retiree can consider (Reeuwijk et al., 2013). It may be true that it is a phase in which one savors the fruits of labor by travelling the world, engaging in leisure and recreational activities, attending the needs of grand children and sipping a cup of coffee in a veranda while enjoying the breeze as the morning breaks (Ryser & Wernli, 2017). But as the sun rests in the west, the desire to be of value and the zeal of worth still lingers in the abyss of one's thought and person (Salami, 2010).

A retiree discerns retirement. Be it optional or mandatory, there is always this seed of anticipation on possibilities ahead. Though retirement is apparently unpredictable, it is highlighted with a temporary rest, a pit stop just like in any race (Schultz & Wang, 2011; Smith et al., 2010). A time when he can strategize and look into his preparation to enhance his readiness on the volatility of tomorrow. It provides him a period when he can look back on the yesteryears and cherish the mementos, laurels including setbacks could-have-beens (Smith, 2015; Smith et al., 2011; Stockdale, 2014). Eventually, being brought back to reality to accept things that can be changed, particularly retirement.

Every retiree has the intention to live up to the ideals of retirement. The pay and benefits, the sense of freedom, the end of stress and pressure in giving deliverables. The promising digits of retirement pay has become an enticing factor in anticipating retirement (Topa & Alcover, 2015; Harper, 2005). Consequently, this is where everything is dependent as retirees manage their finances to plan future undertakings. It is also highlighted by a sense of freedom for there are no routinery schedules and the physical presence needs not to be subject to biometric system. Hence, owning one's time is an ideal privilege a retiree enjoys. More so, liberating oneself from the stress and pressure in meeting deadlines and other pertinent activities relative

to teaching both the expected outcomes and exigency of service. However, these ideals are shattered once they are exposed to the reality of the phenomenon (Keough, 2008). There is a big discrepancy between expectation and reality. Thus leading to a number of realizations and realistically embrace the world of retirement.

Retirees nowadays defy the stereotypical notion of retirement. Instead of picturing it as a walk-in-the-park or a bath-under-the-sun in a clear water under a clear sky, it has metamorphosed into an active image where the seasoned employees still putting their hearts out with a renewed passion in a new found career. There is a firm desire to remain a relevant piece in the social strata (Approaches to Retain Existing Employees Considering Retirement, -). It is also an avenue for retooling and resharpening of one's faculty and capabilities to avoid stagnation and being dragged into dullness and mediocrity. Moreover, it is a seeming last-full show, a last hooray, where being active would mean an opportunity to showcase the endowments. Not to mention, that opting to work after retirement is also a possible means for self-sustenance like food on the plate, bills, and may include maintenance medicine (Pamintuan, 2017). Consequently, retirement like any other phase of human development is no exempt from challenges. It is not milk and honey, nor an impeccable stage where a retiree can just sit relaxed. Struggles do come their way from the onset of retirement to the here and now.

This study aimed primarily on determining how do retired teachers lead their lives after they have found a renewed profession in retirement. Specifically, it sought answers to the following foreshadowed questions: (1) What makes the retirees discern retirement? (2) How do retired faculty members view the world of retirement? (3) What motivates them to pursue and engage in a career after retirement? (4) What are the challenges encountered by retirees in pursuit of post retirement career? (5) How do retirees cope with the difficulties in pursuit of post retirement career? (6) In what grounds do retirees feel the help of their institution as they embark the world of retirement? The findings of the study could provide inspiration and motivation especially for those who had been searching

for meaning and satisfy the zeal to remain a significant piece in the society.

### Research Method

The research design is phenomenological in nature. The purpose of this is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they were perceived by the participants in a situation and in the human sphere this normally translated into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participants' observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participants. Phenomenology attempts to free itself from unexamined presuppositions, to avoid causal and other explanations, to utilize a method that allows it to describe that which appears and to intuit or decipher essential meanings (Wang & Shi, 2014).

Moreover, purposive sampling was the technique employed by the researcher. Consequently, the informants of the current study were twenty one (21) retired faculty members. They were selected as they were found purposively fit as informants for they were perceived as having direct experiences relating to the phenomenon.

The primordial concern in any research undertaking is to uphold that ethical considerations are guaranteed. Thus the consent of each informant was secured. They were informed of the nature and purpose of the research and their participation would shed light on the gray areas on the phenomenon the researcher had posited. More so, they were advised that they had all the right to stop should they think they no longer want to participate in the study. Most importantly, the informants were ascertained that all information shared were treated with utmost confidentiality and no part of the interview was disclosed to malign and jeopardize the reputation and identity of the informants.

This was in a form of agreement which the informants signed as their understanding on the nitty-gritty of the conduct of study. Accordingly, an unstructured in-depth interview was utilized to gain insights. Interviews were recorded to secure that the appreciation of the informants to the phenomenon was noted to the

fullest. Furthermore, the exemplars (informant's response) were presented using pseudonyms. They were named RT (retired teacher) and numerical assignment was given by order of them being interviewed.

Focus group discussions (FGD) was also utilized for a communal appreciation of the phenomenon. The researcher recognized the possibility that some ideas may only emerge if an informant is with other informants. Furthermore, FGD may yield for a deeper understanding of retirement and implicitly may be deemed helpful for the welfare of the population. Their consent was sought to ensure voluntarism and no force nor coercion was employed just to generate data from the informants.

Since the current study was by nature phenomenological, the researcher employed the purposive sampling technique. It was a non-probability method where the researcher relied on his sound subjective judgment; hence, intentionally preselected the composition of his population. It was deliberately done, since the researcher deemed the informants were in the best disposition to unearth data to yield deeper understanding of the phenomenon called retirement. The informants of the study were twenty one (21) retired faculty members who after having served an academic institution decided to pursue a post-retirement career. The researcher decided to dwell both the nature of retirement; mandatory retirement and voluntary retirement. The latter was optional as it depended on the discernment of the informant (Article 287 of the Labor Code as amended by Republic Act 7641) while the former had reached the compulsory retirement age of sixty-five (65) and sixty (60) public and private sectors respectively. The researcher intended to consider retirees from different levels ranging from basic education (elementary and secondary) to tertiary level provided that they had pursued a post-retirement career.

The informants were ascertained of the confidentiality of the proceedings and that no force nor threat was employed to induce participation. Consent and volition were secured prior to the conduct of the activity. A letter was sent to the informants to inform them of the nature of the study being conducted. Attached

therewith was a consent form where they affixed their signatures as a proof that they willingly submitted themselves to undergo the procedure.

The researcher utilized qualitative analytic method. Specifically thematic analysis was employed to probe the data of retired academicians' experiences anent their post retirement career pursuit. Its primary concern was to identify the emergent themes from the data at hand through carefully reading and re-reading the data (Phenomenology and Narrative Analysis, 2016). As there were a number of methods to analyze data, the researcher adopted the explication process of (Renner & Taylor-Powell, 2003), namely: (1) Bracketing and phenomenological reduction, (2) Delineating units of meaning (3) Clustering of units of meaning to form themes, (4) Summarizing each interview, validating it and (5) Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary. The responses of the informants were subjected to the afore mentioned procedure leading to the formulated salient themes.

## Results and Discussion

With the thrust to disclose the lived experiences of the retired teachers in leading their lives as they found a renewed professional career in retirement, the following were the salient findings of the study.

### ***What motivates them to pursue and engage in a career after retirement?***

The retired teachers had all the reasons not to engage in a post retirement career. On the contrary, they opted to remain in the work force and continue to do what they loved to do. Corollary to this, they found themselves in work place with renewed enthusiasm actively contributing to the society. Motivated not solely by economic reasons or salary but to remain active doing what they were accustomed to do, for better health and to fight loneliness. Another factor that pushed them to work was for self improvement. They claimed that their current job was an avenue to keep learning new things necessary to have themselves enhanced. In addition, one factor that motivated them to pursue a post retirement career was to make

the most of what was left. Nearing the twilight propelled them to have fun and find joy through their work. Lastly, economic reason was a propeller to some due to the status of their health. Their pension was not enough to purchase medicine. Thus, work was an option to consider, with a hope of adding years to life and life to years.

### ***What are the challenges encountered?***

Like any other stage of human existence, the retirement years are still plagued with struggles which indeed are difficult and challenging to address by retired teachers due to their current status, their age. Moreover, their and physical limitations are added salt to the wounds. This included intrapersonal issues haunting them thereby affecting the manner they perform their tasks at the work place. They are also greatly affected by health deterioration. No matter how strong-willed they are, the body seems to have a mind of its own trudging them down, lessening productivity. Lastly, the work-related stresses continuously hamper them to go further.

### ***How do retirees cope with the difficulties in pursuit of post retirement career?***

The informants utilized different coping mechanisms in solving the aforementioned predicaments. Being positive is one of the means they use to understand their current state of being. Another scheme is maintaining circles. Certainly, it is really lonely to live a retired life but it makes more sense having pals and friends as company. The family serves as fortress, a source of refuge. Heavy-shoulder-moments were being lighten up by the sight of grandchildren and kids. Most of all, they viewed imploring the Divine Providence as the most effective armor and shield at times they feel their weakest. Keeping deep faith makes them live a life with grace.

### ***In what grounds do retirees feel the help of their institution as they embark in the world of retirement?***

The informants had disclosed their thoughts on how their institution could help them lessen the burden they bear. For them, they are not being demanding but a gesture of

appreciation for their sound services when they were active. The legacy and achievements they had to add laurels to the school was something they wanted to remember. It could be in a form of policies by still being considered to be part of the academic community as part-time teacher or doing consultancy. The retired teachers admitted that things could be different if seminars were conducted to provide a sense of direction to their retirement route. More so, testimonials and tributes would be appreciated as a way of saying thank you to the years that were and a feeling that the gates of the academic institution would always be open for them for visits and other functions.

### Conclusion

Albeit retirement is commonly associated with leisure and other relaxing activities, instead of enjoying they preferred to be still active members of the workforce due to the following considerations: a) zeal to be active; b) need to be relevant; c) sharpening one's saw d) making every tick count and e) sustaining one's need. Consequently, in the conduct of their renewed career path, they do meet struggles from health deterioration, to work related stresses. But they managed to with positive mindset, through circles, family support and above all imploring the aid of Divine Providence.

The researcher modestly casts his recommendations to provide direction for future scholarly endeavours in reference to addressing the needs of the retired teachers pursuing post-retirement career. It follows: (1) Future researchers may conduct a longitudinal study on employees with regard to their retirement preparations and intentions; (2) Since the study intends to suggest institutional policies and programs for future retirees, hence, it is recommended that an academic institution may devise a paced retirement scheme. The retirees may enjoy privileges in terms of loading assignments. They may be deloaded yet enjoy a regular salary. Like, instead of the regular 18 units, they may be required to render 12 units. The same goes with the basic education, the nature of their profession needs not be actual teaching but relegated to other school

functions; (3) It is high time that academic institutions implement policies addressing the welfare of teachers nearing retirement. It may be claimed that each individual has his/her own retirement but it will create a big difference should there be a program where they can enrol for a year. It can take a form of series of seminar/workshop that will cater various aspects of retirement preparations. This includes, physical, psychological, emotional, religious, financial, future trends and other retirement related realities; (4) Furthermore, institutional tributes may be awarded to retirees. They should be revered as gems of the institutions. Their contribution not only to the school but to the country en toto must not be discounted. Instead, deserving of jubilation more than simple banquet. It will also allow them to cherish a lasting memory in the institution of their retirement; (5) Lastly, once retired, they may still be tapped if able, to act as consultant to certain activity or program.

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