

From Vision Casting to Overhauling: How Workplace Experience Reshaped the Personal Philosophies of Retired Faculty

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ABSTRACT

The workplace is more than an occupational arena; it is a dynamic environment that interacts with, and progressively reshapes the personal philosophies of those who inhabit it over extended periods. Drawing on a phenomenological research design, this study examined how the workplace experiences of retired faculty members in a Philippine state university campus reshaped their personal philosophies over careers spanning 35 to 38 years. Four retired faculty members, selected through purposive sampling and justified on grounds of sample homogeneity and information power, participated in iterative semi-structured interviews conducted to the point of documented thematic saturation. Data were analyzed through Groenewald's (2004) five-phase explication process, supported by repertory grid analysis, cool warm analytical lenses, an audit by an external qualitative consultant, and sustained reflexive bracketing of the researcher's insider position. Three overarching themes emerged: (1) *Vision Casting*, describing how institutional leadership structures realigned participants' professional purpose; (2) *Tempering Ground*, capturing the workplace as a crucible of adversity that sharpened, challenged, and at times destabilized participants' belief systems; and (3) *Overhauling Escapades*, illustrating the iterative, reflective process through which participants restructured their personal philosophies toward deeper understanding, resilience, and service. A conceptual model integrating the three themes is proposed. Findings indicate that workplace spirituality, as mediated by leadership style, collegial relationships, and institutional culture, constitutes a significant though not exclusive vector of philosophical transformation for long-serving educators, operating alongside family, faith, culture, and broader life experience. The study contributes a processual, career-arc account of philosophical transformation to phenomenological workplace research, with practical implications for administrator appointment, faculty well-being policy, and institutional development in Philippine higher education.

Keywords: personal philosophy; workplace spirituality; organizational change; leadership; retired faculty; belief systems

INTRODUCTION

How do the environments in which people work across the long course of their careers shape not only their professional identities but their most fundamental personal philosophies, their beliefs about life, purpose, justice, and human nature? This question has attracted growing attention at the intersection of organizational behavior, workplace spirituality, and phenomenological inquiry (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Milliman et al., 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). The literature on organizational socialization, psychological contracts, and professional identity formation documents the adaptive effects of workplace environments on individual attitudes and values. Comparatively, little phenomenological work, however, has attended to the cumulative philosophical dimensions of these transformations across the full arc of a teaching career, particularly in non-Western educational contexts (Chen & Lee, 2008; Fanggidae et al., 2016; Tepper, 2007).

The Philippine higher education landscape offers an instructive context for this inquiry. State universities in the Philippines are governed by overlapping administrative structures national agencies, local government units, and university systems that create conditions of institutional flux and occasional structural conflict. These conditions subject faculty members to serial encounters with contrasting leadership styles, shifting institutional cultures, and competing organizational values. When an institution undergoes a decades-long transition from one supervising agency to another, as in the present study context, the accumulated effects on faculty belief systems may be profound and lasting (House et al., 2004; Wright, 2005; Chen & Lee, 2008).

The concept of workplace spirituality, the recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work conducted in the context of community (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000) provides a generative framework for investigating these transformations. It encompasses individual meaning derived from work, a sense of community with colleagues, and alignment between personal values and organizational purpose (Milliman et al., 2003). When any of these dimensions is disrupted through moral failures of leadership, dysfunctional management, or institutional identity crises, employees' philosophical foundations may be shaken or, alternatively, strengthened through reflective resistance (Gull & Doh, 2004; Salarzahi et al., 2011).

The study was conceptualized in response to observed phenomena in one campus of a state university in the Cordillera Administrative Region of the Philippines. Decades of administrative transition had generated a pattern of philosophical commentary among faculty articulations suggesting that their core beliefs, professional purpose, and personal values had been progressively reshaped by workplace experience. The researcher, herself embedded in this institutional context, recognized in these narratives a phenomenon worthy of systematic inquiry; her insider position, and its methodological implications, are examined.

This study employed a phenomenological approach to explore the lived workplace experiences of four retired faculty members who had served the institution for a minimum of 35 years across multiple administrative transitions. The central research question was: How do retired faculty members in a Philippine state university campus view the workplace as a ground for reshaping personal philosophy? The findings contribute empirical depth to scholarship on workplace spirituality, organizational change, and the philosophical dimensions of long-term professional experience, with implications for higher education governance, leadership development, and faculty well-being policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personal philosophy denotes the coherent set of beliefs, values, and commitments through which an individual orients himself or herself in the world assessing phenomena, making choices, and interpreting experience (Webb et al., 2015). Within the advocacy coalition framework, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) distinguish deep core beliefs fundamental normative commitments presumed highly resistant to change from secondary beliefs that are more context-sensitive; deep core beliefs function as cognitive filters on perception and choice (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014).

Despite their presumed stability, belief systems are demonstrably permeable to context. Social Information Processing theory posits that individuals continuously shape their attitudes and values in accordance with cues in their social environments (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978, as cited in Öge et al., 2018), positioning the workplace as a persistent philosophical influence. Rousseau (1995) makes the relationship bidirectional through the psychological contract: individual beliefs are dynamically shaped by organizational terms of exchange. Emergent change theory characterizes such change not as a discrete event but as a continuous, iterative process of realignment (Chia, 2013), a framing consonant with the gradual philosophical reshaping examined here. Critically for this study's design, such transformation is rarely visible in real time; it is recognized retrospectively, through reflection on shifts in practice and disposition (Mihaela & Bota, 2015; Wasieleski,



2015). This retrospective legibility of belief change is what renders retired faculty an epistemically privileged population for the present inquiry.

Workplace spirituality is a multi-dimensional construct encompassing the search for purpose in work, meaningful connection with coworkers, and alignment between personal values and organizational mission (Mitroff & Denton, 1999, as cited in Milliman et al., 2003). Milliman et al. (2003) specify three dimensions relevant here: meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment with organizational values. These dimensions operate interactively: when leadership supports purposeful, value-aligned work within a cohesive community, workplace spirituality is reinforced; when leadership is perceived as morally compromised or incoherent, the same dimensions become vectors of disillusionment and belief disruption (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Fanggidae et al., 2016). Spiritually supportive workplaces produce measurable gains in satisfaction, creativity, and commitment (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003); spiritually deficient ones marked by abuse of authority and relational toxicity generate resentment, withdrawal, and detachment from occupational purpose (Tepper, 2007; Wright, 2005).

The literature consistently identifies leadership as the primary mediator of these dynamics (Cheng et al., 2011; House et al., 2004; Chen & Lee, 2008). The GLOBE study demonstrates that culturally embedded leadership expectations shape how followers interpret and internalize leadership behavior (House et al., 2004) a finding directly relevant to the Philippine context, where paternalistic and hierarchical leadership norms historically predominate (Li et al., 2011). Paternalistic authority exercised with virtue creates lasting philosophical imprints on followers; exercised with moral inconsistency, it generates cognitive dissonance that subordinates struggle to reconcile with their trust in institutional authority (Cheng et al., 2011; Öge et al., 2018). Tepper (2007) documents the psychosocial sequelae of abusive supervision as a catalyst of withdrawal and disorientation, while Wilcock (2000) identifies the converse: principled leadership articulated core values, trust-building, and context-sensitive guidance creates conditions under which professional philosophy is nurtured and aligned with organizational mission.

Phenomenological inquiry, grounded in Husserlian principles of intentionality, attends to the essential structures of meaning that characterize a phenomenon as lived (Polkinghorne, 2005; Creswell, 1998). A synthesis of prior phenomenological and qualitative work on educators yields three findings that frame the present study. First, studies of teacher identity show that professional identity is not a stable possession but an ongoing negotiation between self and context, continually renegotiated at moments of institutional change (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Second, research on pedagogical belief change finds that while core beliefs resist rapid or coerced change, sustained exposure to contrasting values, relationships, and organizational experiences produces gradual, cumulative restructuring that becomes legible primarily in retrospect (Mihaela & Bota, 2015; Pajares, 1992; Weible, 2008; Henry, 2009). Third, workplace-spirituality studies in educational and public-sector settings demonstrate that institutional transition and leadership quality condition employees' experience of meaning at work (Fanggidae et al., 2016; Somayeh et al., 2013).

This body of work exhibits three limitations that the present study addresses. Existing phenomenological studies of educators concentrate on early-career identity formation or discrete transitional episodes rather than the full career arc; they address professional identity and pedagogical beliefs rather than the broader personal philosophy beliefs about life, morality, and purpose that a career may reshape; and they are situated predominantly in Western institutional contexts. Little is known, phenomenologically, about how educators in non-Western state institutions retrospectively understand an entire career's influence on who they have become as persons, not merely as professionals.



Taken together, the literature establishes that belief systems are context-permeable, that the workplace's philosophical influence is mediated principally by leadership and institutional culture, and that such influence is best apprehended retrospectively. What remains missing is a phenomenological account of the whole process formation, testing, and reconstruction of personal philosophy across a complete teaching career in a non-Western higher education setting. The present study addresses this gap by asking how retired faculty of a Philippine state university campus, who lived through decades of administrative transition, view the workplace as a ground for reshaping personal philosophy.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological research design, selected for its capacity to elicit rich, first-person accounts of lived experience and to articulate the essential structures of meaning embedded in those accounts (Patton, 1990; Creswell, 1998). Phenomenology is epistemologically appropriate because the phenomenon under investigation, the reshaping of personal philosophy through workplace experience is irreducibly subjective, processual, and experiential; it cannot be adequately captured through survey instruments or frequency counts (Polkinghorne, 2005; Groenewald, 2004). The study proceeded on the assumption that, while participants' experiences are individually unique, shared essences of the workplace philosophy relationship can be identified through systematic bracketing, comparative analysis, and composite summary construction (Patton, 1990).

Research Context

The study was conducted in one campus of a state university in the Cordillera Administrative Region of the Philippines. Founded in 1972 under the supervision of the Department of Education, the campus was fully integrated into its parent state university system in 2016, following a contested institutional identity spanning more than a decade. This history generated a distinctive organizational environment: faculty members were exposed to markedly contrasting administrative cultures, leadership philosophies, and governance structures across their careers, creating conditions uniquely suited to the study's central inquiry.

Participants and Justification of Sample Adequacy

Four retired faculty members participated in the study. All had served at the campus for a minimum of 35 years, encompassing multiple administrative transitions across both the pre-integration to post-integration to university governance periods. Participants were selected through purposive sampling (Patton, 1990; Schwandt, 1997) on the criterion of having directly experienced the phenomenon under investigation, an approach affirmed as most appropriate for phenomenological studies requiring information-rich participants (Welman & Kruger, 1999).

The adequacy of a four-participant sample warrants explicit justification rather than appeal to disciplinary convention alone. Three considerations support it. First, the sample falls within the range recommended for phenomenological research, where depth of engagement with each account takes precedence over breadth: Dukes (1984) recommends studying three to ten participants, and Creswell (1998) similarly endorses small samples where prolonged engagement is possible. Second, the sample carries high *information power* (Malterud et al., 2016): the study aim is narrow (one phenomenon, one institution); the participants are exceptionally specific to that aim (each accumulated 35–38 years of tenure at the same campus and lived through the same administrative transitions, an experiential profile shared by very few living individuals); interview dialogue was strong, conducted iteratively in participants' preferred languages by an interviewer with deep contextual literacy; and the analysis was an in-depth cross-case explication rather than a surface



description. Under these conditions, a small sample holds more analytic value than a larger, less specific one. Third, the homogeneity of the participants' institutional exposure, same campus, same succession of administrations, overlapping decades of service meant that the phenomenon was approached from four deeply comparable vantage points, strengthening the identification of shared essences (Patton, 1990).

Data Collection and Determination of Thematic Saturation

Initial contact was made via messenger application, and willingness to participate was confirmed prior to scheduling. All four participants were residing abroad at the time of the study, and interviews were conducted via video call. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews guided by an a priori interview guide developed from the study's three conceptual domains: personal philosophy, workplace experience, and change in belief systems. The a priori codes served to orient the protocol without constraining expression; in practice, the interviews assumed a conversational quality, allowing participants to narrate in their own linguistic registers, including their native or indigenous languages, which were subsequently translated and transcribed into English. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded (Arkley & Knight, 1999; Bailey, 1996) and assigned unique coding identifiers.

Rather than asserting saturation, the study operationalized it. Interviews proceeded iteratively, with each participant engaged in an initial interview and follow-up sessions to probe emergent meanings. After each session, delineated units of meaning were entered into a cumulative code matrix and compared against previously logged units, following the logic of saturation assessment described by Guest et al. (2006). New meaning-unit categories accrued rapidly across the first two participants' interviews, slowed markedly during the third, and by the fourth participant's sessions no substantively new categories emerged: the fourth account elaborated, illustrated, and occasionally nuanced existing categories but did not extend them. Follow-up probes deliberately sought disconfirming or divergent perspectives, and their absence at this stage was taken as the criterion that thematic saturation had been reached with respect to this bounded, homogeneous population. Saturation is therefore claimed for the phenomenon as experienced within this campus context, not for retired faculty in general. Member-checking was subsequently employed to verify transcription accuracy and interpretive alignment, with participants confirming the fidelity of transcribed accounts via electronic correspondence (Creswell et al., 2007).

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Groenewald's (2004) five-phase explication process: (1) bracketing and phenomenological reduction; (2) delineation of units of meaning; (3) clustering of meaning units into themes; (4) summarization, validation, and modification of individual interview analyses; and (5) construction of general and unique themes across interviews into a composite summary. This framework was selected for its explicit attention to the bracketing of researcher subjectivity and its systematic movement from raw experiential data to thematic essences. To supplement the explication process, a repertory grid, originally developed by Kelly (1955) for the systematic assessment of personal constructs (Fransella et al., 2006) was employed to plot and compare participant responses across the research question domains. Cool analysis (objective, structural examination of content) and warm analysis (empathic, experiential engagement with narrative meaning) were applied in a complementary dialectic. The analytical process was reviewed by a third-party qualitative research consultant to support the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the thematic findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Reflexivity and Researcher Positionality

The researcher is a faculty member of the institution in which the study was conducted and was professionally acquainted with all four participants prior to their retirement. This insider position carried genuine advantages:



established rapport, contextual literacy that enabled recognition of institutional references and unspoken meanings, and access to a hard-to-reach population but it also constituted the study's most significant methodological risk, and bracketing alone cannot be presumed to neutralize it (Finlay, 2002; Berger, 2015).

Three specific channels of potential bias were identified and actively managed. First, in data collection, shared institutional history risked leading questions and tacit invitations to confirm narratives the researcher herself found plausible, and participants' familiarity with the researcher risked socially desirable accounts. To mitigate this, the interview guide was reviewed by the external qualitative consultant before use; questions were phrased to elicit description before evaluation; and probes deliberately invited experiences that ran counter to emerging patterns. Second, in interpretation, the researcher's own experience of the institution's administrative transitions created preconceptions about which leadership regimes were formative and in what direction. A reflexive journal was maintained across the study, with bracketing memos written before and after each interview and each analysis phase, recording the researcher's assumptions, emotional responses, and moments at which her reading diverged from or converged with participants' words. Third, in theme development, the risk that themes would reflect the researcher's institutional narrative rather than participants' meanings was addressed through member-checking of transcripts and interpretive summaries, through the external consultant's audit of the movement from meaning units to themes, and by anchoring every theme in verbatim excerpts from multiple participants.

These procedures reduce, but do not eliminate, the interpretive imprint of an embedded researcher. The account presented here is best understood as a co-construction between participants' narratives and a contextually situated interpreter, and the findings should be read with that positionality in view.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the four participants' narratives yielded three overarching themes that collectively capture the phenomenological structure of workplace-mediated philosophical transformation across long-serving educational careers: (1) *Vision Casting*, (2) *Tempering Ground*, and (3) *Overhauling Escapades*. The themes are presented below with representative participant excerpts and theoretical substantiation, followed by a consideration of alternative influences on philosophical development, an account of the findings' theoretical distinctiveness, and a conceptual model integrating the themes. Interpretations are advanced as grounded readings of participants' accounts rather than as claims that the data compel a single conclusion.

Theme One: Vision Casting

Vision casting emerged as the foundational theme describing how participants' initial professional philosophies were formed and refined through their earliest encounters with institutional leadership. In the phenomenological tradition, the first encounter with a professional environment constitutes a formative horizon of meaning against which subsequent experience is interpreted (Husserl, 1970; Creswell, 1998). Participants consistently reported that their initial visions and professional purposes were articulated in direct response to the leadership culture they encountered on entering the workplace, supporting Wilcock's (2000) conceptualization of the workplace as a ground for professional philosophical formation.

All four participants recalled entering teaching with pronounced idealism, purpose, and values-alignment, a pattern consistent with Milliman et al.'s (2003) dimension of alignment with organizational values. Teacher A described an initial philosophy of seizing opportunity, attributed to supervisors who consistently encouraged competitive excellence. Teacher B entered teaching with a philosophy of educational uplift as social mobility, shaped by the prestige attached to public education in the community. Teacher C expressed a philosophy of perfectionism and alignment, drawing on the high-competence institutional culture of their early career.



Teacher D entered the profession primarily for economic sustenance but reported that an encouraging leadership culture rapidly enriched this instrumental purpose with passion and student-centered commitment.

A representative excerpt from Teacher A captures the essence of vision casting:

...my superiors always remind me not to waste any chance, they pushed us up to go beyond because we were competitive then... I give this attribute to Mr. D, the principal then who encouraged me to simplify every formula for the learners to understand real application of theories to practical application. Likewise, he consistently encouraged me to pursue further studies.

This pattern is consistent with Cheng et al.'s (2011) finding that leaders who combine benevolent authority with genuine interest in subordinates' growth create enduring philosophical imprints. The mechanism through which vision casting operates is declarative and relational: leaders verbalize belief in subordinates' capacities, and subordinates internalize and cascade this belief through their own pedagogical relationships with students. This administrator-to-teacher-to-student cascade illustrates Wilcock's (2000) characterization of the workplace as the ground through which professional philosophy is both formed and transmitted. The alignment between early workplace culture and participants' philosophies also reflects the dimension of meaningful work (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000): when daily work was experienced as purposeful and institutionally valued, philosophical foundations were reinforced rather than destabilized underscoring the stakes of leadership quality during faculty members' formative professional years.

Theme Two: Tempering Ground

The second theme was conceptualized through the metaphor of machine-shop tempering as emphasized by one participant. Tempering is a metallurgical process in which steel is subjected to extreme heat to increase its resistance to stress. The metaphor captures participants' retrospective framing of the workplace as a transformative crucible: an environment that subjected them to intense relational, moral, and institutional pressures that, rather than destroying their philosophical foundations, ultimately sharpened and deepened them though not without significant cost. Three sub-themes of workplace-mediated pressure emerged: (a) the moral transgressions of administrators; (b) interpersonal oppression and injustice; and (c) the philosophical dissonance generated by transitions between contrasting leadership regimes.

All four participants referenced the moral conduct of a particular administrator as a significant source of philosophical disturbance. The administrator was described as highly competent, organized, and strict in leadership style, a figure whose professional conduct participants admired. His moral transgression introduced cognitive dissonance. Participants' accounts suggest they resolved this dissonance through a form of philosophical compartmentalization, evaluating leadership performance and moral conduct as distinct dimensions while resisting the normalization of the transgression as a workplace value.

My disposition towards the head of office and colleagues affected my view of workplace; one wrong act of a head of the system can make or expose you into an 'unwandered' place, but I just keep doing what is right.
(Teacher A)

This finding aligns with Tepper's (2007) framework of abusive supervision and with Aquino et al.'s (2001) research on workplace offenses, which finds that subordinates with strong moral foundations are less likely to respond retributively to leadership misconduct, opting instead for principled withdrawal or forgiving detachment. The act of forgiving a morally compromised superior identified by Teacher A as a philosophical imperative for personal liberation resonates with Russell's (2007) account of the integration of faith, meaning, and leadership, and illustrates the philosophical agency participants exercised within structurally constraining contexts.



The transition of administrative regimes from various leadership styles emerged as a second significant tempering force. Participants expressed ambivalence toward the leadership styles, ultimately identifying the militaristic regime as the more philosophically affirming despite its interpersonal rigidity, because its organizational coherence provided conditions for meaningful and purposeful work. The shift to democratic leadership with weaker systemic discipline was described as a period of philosophical wandering, a loss of the structural scaffolding through which professional purpose had been constructed.

My last five years were spent in wandering and wondering; It feels like being lost on the path because for almost two decades, I was used to doing my job seriously with strict monitoring and ensuring accuracy with the strict observance of time, or else I would receive a memo after failing to do one task on time...(Teacher D)

This disorientation supports Wright's (2005) contention that unsupportive working conditions produce psychological withdrawal, and extends that framework by revealing the philosophical dimensions of such withdrawal; leadership inconsistency disrupted the spiritual and motivational infrastructure of professional commitment (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). The tempering metaphor is theoretically resonant beyond its heuristic appeal: it captures the non-linear, iterative character of emergent change (Chia, 2013; Weick, 2009), in which the philosophical self is neither destroyed nor preserved intact by workplace adversity but progressively transformed through endurance, reflection, and cultivated resilience. Workplace spirituality, in this framing, is not only a product of supportive environments but is also forged through the navigation of difficult ones.

Theme Three: Overhauling Escapades

The third theme draws on the automotive metaphor of engine overhaul, a complete disassembly and reassembly to restore or improve function. Unlike mere adjustment or repair, overhaul implies a thoroughgoing examination and reconstitution of fundamental structures; applied to personal philosophy, it describes the process through which participants, reflecting on the cumulative arc of their workplace experiences, arrived at philosophical positions substantially richer, more nuanced, and more resilient than those with which they had entered the profession.

All four participants expressed a form of retrospective philosophical reconciliation: a recognition that the adversities, disappointments, moral confusions, and relational wounds of the workplace had, in their own retrospective judgment, contributed to philosophical growth rather than destruction. Teacher D articulated an evolution from teaching-as-livelihood, through teaching-as-passion-and-commitment, to a transcendent philosophy of teaching as accountability beyond time, space, and culture, a trajectory reflecting the integrative deepening theorized by Wilcock (2000) and Gull and Doh (2004) as the fullest expression of workplace spirituality.

Teaching is beyond earning a living. It is done with passion, commitment and accountability. It ages beyond time space and culture. (Teacher D)

Teacher B's philosophical evolution from idealism through realism to what he termed 'elasticity,' or resilience, maps closely onto Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory: disorienting dilemmas precipitate critical reflection, producing revised frames of reference marked by greater comprehensiveness and flexibility. The emotional rawness of his account, 'those tears were somehow very manly' testifies to the affective depth of the transformation. Teacher C's identification of a 'dual person' as a product of workplace-induced complexity is theoretically significant: it describes the experience of holding in tension a socially adaptive workplace persona and an internally protected authentic philosophical core, consonant with

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical sociology and with research on professional identity negotiation (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Teacher C's conclusion that the workplace ultimately served as a means of fulfilment affirms the redemptive possibility of workplace spirituality even under prolonged adversity.

A notable cross-cutting finding is the role of deliberate philosophical focus, the conscious choice to concentrate on one's work rather than on the conduct of others as a protective and generative strategy. This finding has direct implications for faculty well-being interventions and professional development programming in institutions characterized by administrative instability or relational conflict.

Table 1. Summary of Themes, Conceptual Anchors, and Theoretical Correspondences

Theme	Phenomenological Description	Key Participant Metaphor	Theoretical Anchor
Vision Casting	How institutional leadership realigned participants' professional purpose and initial personal philosophy	Cascading encouragement from superior to teacher to student	Milliman et al. (2003); Wilcock (2000); Cheng et al. (2011)
Tempering Ground	Workplace as crucible of adversity: moral transgressions, oppression, and leadership transitions that challenged and reshaped belief systems	Machine-shop tempering: steel made sharper under heat	Tepper (2007); Wright (2005); Chia (2013); Rousseau (1995)
Overhauling Escapades	Retrospective philosophical integration: iterative reconstruction of personal philosophy through reflection, resilience, and renewed purposiveness	Engine overhaul: complete disassembly and reconstitution	Gull & Doh (2004); Mezirow (1991); Giacalone & Jurkiewicz (2003)

Note. Themes were inductively derived through Groenewald's (2004) explication process applied to semi-structured interview data with four retired faculty members ($n = 4$) from a Philippine state university campus.

The themes above foreground the workplace because the research question directed attention there; they should not be read as a claim that the workplace was the sole, or in every respect the dominant, architect of participants' philosophies. Personal philosophy develops within a wider ecology of influences, and traces of that ecology were visible throughout the interviews. Participants' language of forgiveness, service, and accountability carries an unmistakable religious and moral resonance that predates and exceeds their institutional lives; their formative valuations of education as social uplift were rooted in family circumstance and community regard for teachers rather than in any employer; and their sense of relational obligation reflects the cultural values of the Cordilleran communities in which they were raised. Major life events outside the institution: marriage, child-rearing, and, for all four participants, post-retirement migration abroad, plausibly contributed to the reflective distance from which their retrospective accounts were composed.

The appropriate interpretive claim is therefore conditional: within participants' own retrospective accounts, workplace experience particularly as mediated by leadership was narrated as a salient and recurring reshaper of personal philosophy, operating upon foundations laid by family, faith, and culture and alongside the ordinary philosophical work of a long life. Because the interview protocol did not systematically probe these non-workplace influences, the study cannot apportion relative weight among them; it can establish that the workplace was experienced as a genuine ground of philosophical reshaping, not that it was the primary one. Future research incorporating life-history methods could map the interaction between workplace and extra-workplace influences more completely.

Theoretical Distinctiveness of the Findings

It is reasonable to ask what the three themes add to existing theory. Three distinctions delineate the study's contribution. First, relative to professional identity development scholarship (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), the object of transformation documented here is broader: participants described change not merely in their identities as teachers: their roles, self-images, and pedagogical stances, but in their *personal philosophies*: beliefs about morality, forgiveness, purpose, and how a life should be lived. Vision Casting, Tempering Ground, and Overhauling Escapades describe the workplace reaching through the professional self into the whole person, a reach that identity frameworks register only partially.

Second, relative to workplace spirituality theory (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Milliman et al., 2003), which predominantly treats spirituality as a condition of the workplace or an outcome variable measured cross-sectionally, the present findings supply a *processual, career-arc account*: a sequenced description of how spiritual-philosophical experience at work is formed (Vision Casting), stressed (Tempering Ground), and reconstructed (Overhauling Escapades) over decades. In particular, the Tempering Ground findings extend the framework by showing that adversity, moral dissonance, and even spiritually deficient leadership can be generative of deepened philosophy when met with reflection and deliberate focus, a possibility largely invisible in a literature oriented toward supportive conditions and their benefits.

Third, relative to transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991), with which the findings are consonant, the study extends the unit of analysis from discrete disorienting dilemmas and their resolution to a cumulative, institution-scale, career-long transformation apprehended retrospectively, and situates that process in a non-Western, collectivist higher education context where paternalistic leadership norms condition how dilemmas are experienced and resolved (Cheng et al., 2011; House et al., 2004). The study's distinctive contribution is thus a phenomenologically grounded process model of workplace-mediated philosophical transformation across the full arc of an academic career.

A Conceptual Model of Workplace-Mediated Philosophical Transformation

Figure 1 integrates the three themes into a conceptual model of the process described by participants. Personal philosophy moves through three phases: formation (Vision Casting), testing (Tempering Ground), and reconstruction (Overhauling Escapades), each conditioned by the workplace mediators identified in the analysis: leadership style and moral conduct, collegial community, and institutional culture across administrative transitions. The dashed return path represents the iterative, reflective character of the process: reconstruction is not terminal but repeatedly revisits and reinterprets earlier philosophical horizons, consistent with emergent change theory (Chia, 2013). The dashed outer frame situates the entire process within the wider ecology of influences signaling that workplace-mediated transformation operates upon, and alongside, philosophical foundations laid by family, faith, culture, and life experience.

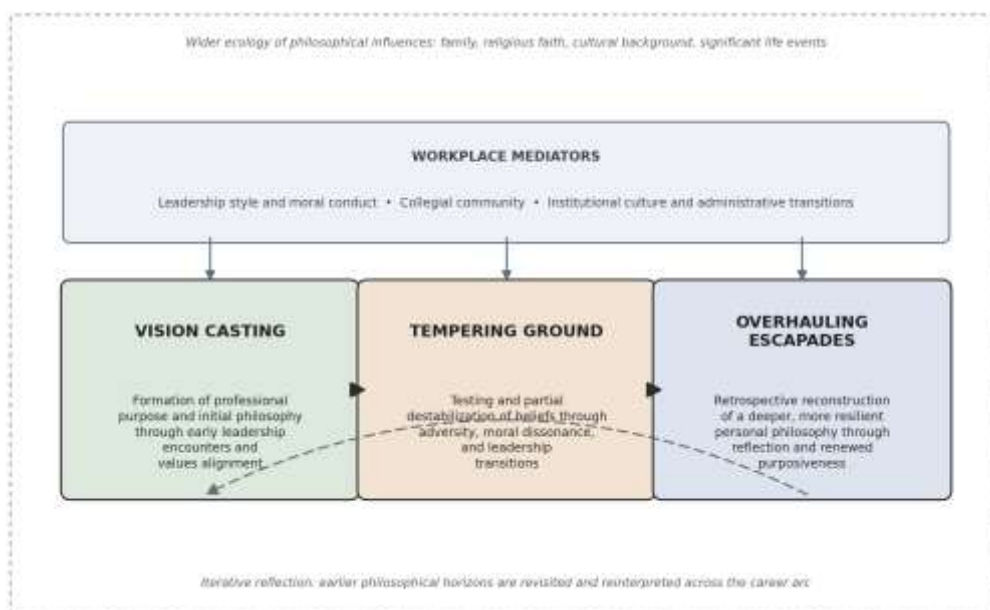


Figure 1. Conceptual model of workplace-mediated reshaping of personal philosophy among long-serving faculty, integrating the themes of Vision Casting, Tempering Ground, and Overhauling Escapades.

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological inquiry found that the workplace particularly as mediated by the leadership styles, moral conduct, and institutional culture of administrators was experienced by long-serving educators in a Philippine state university campus as a profound ground for the reshaping of personal philosophy. The themes of Vision Casting, Tempering Ground, and Overhauling Escapades, integrated in the conceptual model of Figure 1, describe a phenomenological arc: initial philosophical formation through inspiring leadership; philosophical testing and partial destabilization through adversity, moral inconsistency, and institutional turbulence; and retrospective integration into a more resilient, compassionate, and purpose-grounded orientation toward work and life.

Theoretically, the study extends the workplace spirituality framework (Milliman et al., 2003; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000) by demonstrating that spirituality in the workplace is not only a product of supportive, values-aligned environments but can also be forged through the navigation of adversity, dissonance, and moral complexity. Within participants' accounts, the quality of leadership, its moral coherence, structural intentionality, and investment in subordinates' development emerged as the most salient workplace variable in determining whether workplace experience became philosophically enriching or corrosive, while it cautions that workplace influence operated within, not in place of, the broader philosophical contributions of family, faith, culture, and life experience.

Practically, the findings carry implications for higher education governance. Appointing institutional administrators without systematic attention to their philosophical alignment with institutional mission, moral exemplarity, and capacity for vision-casting leadership leaves faculty philosophical well-being contingent on administrative accident rather than institutional design. The study accordingly recommends that leadership selection criteria in Philippine state universities incorporate assessment of leadership philosophy, moral integrity, and values-based management competency alongside administrative experience and technical qualifications. For faculty developers, the finding that deliberate occupational focus serves as a protective philosophical strategy suggests concrete responses: reflective practice programs, mentorship structures for mid-career faculty, and institutional platforms through which experienced educators can articulate and transmit philosophical wisdom to newer colleagues.



The study's limitations frame the reach of these conclusions. The four-participant sample, while justified on grounds of information power and homogeneity, and the single-campus design constrain transferability; the findings characterize a bounded institutional world and are offered for analytic, not statistical, generalization. The researcher's insider position, though managed through the reflexive procedures, leaves an interpretive imprint that co-constitutes the account. The retrospective design privileges meaning-making over real-time observation, and the workplace-focused protocol did not systematically weigh alternative philosophical influences. Future research should employ multi-site phenomenological designs across contrasting institutional environments, incorporate current faculty alongside retired counterparts to capture developmental trajectories in real time, integrate life-history methods to situate workplace influence within the fuller ecology of philosophical development, and examine gender as a potential moderating variable in the experience of workplace-mediated philosophical change.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical Approval: Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Data were anonymized and handled in accordance with ethical standards for qualitative research involving human participants.

Data Availability: Data are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request, subject to participant confidentiality constraints.

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