

# Life is a Journey, Not a Destination

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## Reminiscing Childhood

When I opened my eyes the very first time, I found living in the sleepy town. The place is quite far from the town proper where my parents used to live with their farming activities as the main source of living. Although my father came from a middle-class family, he was unfortunate to have decent job compared to the rest of his siblings who were all professionals. Despite being a farmer as my father's source of income, we were still sent to public school during elementary years and in private schools during high school. I spent most of my childhood days in the barrio, mingling with my childhood friends and classmates in school.

During my grade school days, I was taught by my mother to be obedient and low profile. However, my father was so strict. I was not even allowed to play with my playmates of the same age. He used to call me every time he saw me playing from children of my age. He wanted that at 6:00 o'clock all of us should be inside the house. That upbringing made me timid in school and deprived to join and play with children of my age.

Despite that training, I excelled in school. I was a consistent honors pupil from grade 1 to grade 6 where my mother was so proud of me. I remembered, during recognition, I went up on stage to receive an academic award without anything new like shirts, pants or even shoes as other awardees had. But I understood because my parents can't afford them.

During my high school, I was sent to a private school as an academic scholar. I was a recipient of the COCFED scholarship all throughout my high school years. I was so lucky enough to be one of those students in the private


school and able to maintain my scholarship up to my graduation in high school and graduated with flying colors.

### **On my College Days**

After graduation from high school, I took a one-year clerical course in the belief that I can look for a job and help my family. My one-year college days were worth remembering as I was able to mingle with a new circle of friends. When I graduated from 1-year program, I worked in the local government office for a while. But since I was not eligible then, my job did not last for long. I went to Manila to look for a job but unfortunately there was no right job for me. I was forced to work with my cousin in a handicraft store as a salesman. After a year, I decided to go back home and convinced my parents to continue my schooling again even though I knew that it was hard for my parents to sustain my studies due to lack of resources.

With the grit and determination of my parents, I was able to go back to school and took a four-year degree program. The first two years of my study were smooth sailing and I survived despite difficulty in meeting my daily needs as a college student. I really appreciated the hardship that my late mother did for me to survive on my day-to-day expenses in school. I can't really forget it all and I owe all what I have now to my mother who used to sell "kakanin", make "pawid" for sale, and raise hogs for sale just to make both ends meet. Unfortunately, when I was in my 3rd year of my BSE program, my mother was diagnosed to have stage 3 cancer of the throat. I was then taking summer classes when she passed away that made me feel almost the end of the world.

The passing away of my mother made me become more independent and stronger. I learned to be responsible for myself and decide everything for myself. Through God's help, I was able to solve my personal problems without asking any help from other people except from my immediate family. I gained



a sense of responsibility and the value of love and the importance of strong family ties. With grit and determination, perseverance and the support of my father, I was able to survive the remaining years of my schooling and graduated a BSE course in 1991 despite difficulties that came along my way.


My four years of stay in the college has never been so exciting and interesting, I never had a happy moment even going out with friends. I used to have routine activities such as school, house, and vice-versa. But then, it was a great memory to treasure that can never be forgotten as I learned to become more independent.

### **My Career Journey**

In 1991, after graduating from college, I went back to Manila to look for my future and better opportunities. At first, it was too difficult for me to adjust since I have to stay with my cousin and relatives just to survive. I need to be more cooperative so that my relatives have nothing to say against me. Looking for a job needs one to be competitive. To compete with those jobs available, knowledge and skills are not only a mere factor. It needs to have guts and perseverance. At first, I became a waiter for some time, marketing clerk, and finally found a stable job in the government service at the National Statistics Office (NSO) after passing the Professional Board Examination for Teachers (PBET) in 1992.

### ***... Government service Journey***

November 1991 when I entered the Philippines National Statistics Office as an emergency employee. Not in my wildest dream to work in a statistical organization totally irrelevant to my profession. What came into my mind that day was just to have job whatever available just to make ends meet. When I passed the Professional Board Examination for Teachers in 1993, I




was promoted and rose from the ranks. With dedication and hard work, promotion came my way every 2 years.

Working in the government service is a prestige since you cannot be counted if you do not have an eligibility. Throughout 16 years, my career rose from the ranks from an Emergency Employee, Statistician Aide, Assistant Statistician, Human Resource Management Officer I, II, and an Administrative Officer IV up to my early retirement in 2007 due to job opportunity overseas.

As a government employee, my time was spent in the office from 8-5pm doing daily routine work that made me bored and stagnant. However, it was very challenging as I mingled with a lot of people from all walks of life. NSO and its statistical activities became a part of my life's journey for so many years. My job at NSO was considered interesting and challenging. I was able to go around the Philippines free of charge to supervise major activities of NSO on its censuses and surveys. It was a great experience to be sent in a place where remote areas of Muslim Mindanao, where most people are afraid to go with.

In 1993, while working at NSO, I enrolled in master's program at the Philippine Normal University. I went back to school and took up Master of Arts in Teaching after two years. Attending master's program made my skills and knowledge in the field of teaching enhanced and updated. Being a teacher by profession, teaching as a career is what I am longing for. I tried teaching in the college as a part time English instructor in 1995 at Access Computer College. My teaching career was able to utilize during those years and continued teaching up to 2007 at the Technological Institute of the Philippines and Manila Central University respectively as an Associate Professor 3. In 1997, I finished MAT in 4 years' time. It was the greatest accomplishment on my part.




In 2005, I was lucky to be selected for foreign scholarship in New Delhi, India to further my skills in human resource development. At the National Statistics Office (NSO), career development is functional as part of the HR functions. October 8, 2005 was my first foreign trip in the incredible country India. It was a professional trip where I took a one-year diploma program on “Manpower Research” at the Institute of Applied Manpower Research, an attached agency of the Planning Commission sponsored by the Technical Cooperation Scheme of the Colombo Plan. The program was leading to Master’s in applied Manpower Research, a 2-year graduate program, offered by the same institute under the Indrapathra University.

After my foreign training, I went back to school for my PhD program in 2000. Since teaching career is utilized as my part time career, I decided to continue the peak of my profession which was stopped in 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of 2005 due to my foreign trip.

*“If you think education is expensive, try ignorance”*. This saying served as my guiding principle in my quest for life-long learning. Everyone is aiming to finish a high-level degree, as this will serve as his/her weapon to compete in the global community in seeking better opportunities. Many are satisfied with attaining a bachelor’s degree. For them earning such is already considered an accomplishment. Some of them are just content in hanging his/her diploma on the wall.

For a career-oriented individual, a bachelor’s degree is not enough. If one has an aim to rise from the ranks, he must continue learning and educate himself in preparation for a greater responsibility. Going to graduate school takes much of your time. It needs prioritization of your time in the workplace, family, studies and even personal life. When I finished my bachelor’s degree, I thought that I still need to learn more. The knowledge and skills that I earned are not enough to be competent in some other way. This notion prompted





me to enroll in the graduate program. I took a master's degree aligned to my undergraduate course although the field of work I had does not perfectly match my profession.

Master's degree gave light on my career. It counts a lot in terms of my promotion. It was also an added factor in my teaching job as I used to be a part time lecturer. When I finished my masters, I thought education would end there. Since I was used to the Saturday habit of going to school, I was again convinced to continue schooling and took the peak of my profession, the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.). Taking a doctoral program was not an easy task. It needs much attention and concentration as well as money to finance the school-related expenses. After finishing the major subjects for years, here comes the terminal course: the comprehensive examination, and the dissertation writing. Many doctoral students do not continue up to this stage because of financial reasons and time constraint.

There came a closed preparation on my paper, doing research work, encoding, and some preparation that consumed much attention and time. To have a prefix Dr. to your name is a status symbol. This is one of the accomplishments that one must be proud of. A feeling of tears and joy was felt while marching on the aisle with my wife along with me. Being watched by the audience during the hood and cap ceremony and receiving a diploma was something worth remembering. This can only happen once in a lifetime.

I want to thank those who have been part of this accomplishment: My office mates who have been understanding while doing my paper during office hours, the NSO for my easy access on office equipment, a friend who helped me financially, my wife, and my family who has been there for their moral support.

### *...A lifelong Commitment*

After being bored of my daily routine, I decided to get married in 1999. Being a married man changed my whole routine. Going out with selected friends was no longer done as I had a home to park on. Adjustment period being a married man has never been a problem. We became so close and able to adjust to each other when it comes to our likes and dislikes. I believe that successful marriage is difficult to attain for many. On our part, we talked about the consequences before the problem arises. We never let the day pass without talking to each other, especially if we have misunderstanding. This is one of the practices that we learned from joining the Couples for Christ in 2002.

Like other couples, we dreamed to build a family...a family with a child that will complete the whole picture. It took years before I was able to build my own family. At this point, the center of my life's purpose is for my family. I am very thankful because we have grown him to be loving and kind-hearted and low profile. To be away to my family as an OFW is a big factor during the time that my son needs a father figure at home. But God knows how I miss him during my absence. He knew that later, he would come to realize that I did this just because I wanted them feel the comfort of life which I never experienced during my childhood days.

### *...A Journey of Sacrifice*

After 16 long years of continuous service in the government, I never thought that I will be one of the thousands of Filipinos to work in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Jeddah. Due to burn out and tired of the daily routines plus the fact that the income earned was not enough to support the growing needs of my family, I decided to work abroad. After several applications sent to various employment agencies through e-mails, Al Assal was the one that lined me up into Human Resources position. After passing the interview with

the employer. medical examinations took place with the assurance from the agency that I can leave the country within a month after complying with all the needed requirements. Three months later, I never expected that I could leave because there was no information or feedback from the agency after the series of interviews.

November 6, 2007 when the agency informed me that my flight was already confirmed the following day bound to Jeddah, KSA. Without any hesitations, I prepared for the said flight. My family was surprised because I never informed them that I had an application overseas. Within that day, I filed an early retirement at the National Statistics Office. A resignation was also filed at the Technological Institute of the Philippines and Manila Central University where I was then a part-time University professor.

November 7, 2007, when I and my colleagues arrived late in the evening at the city of Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia via Brunei. My first day at the HR Department was not even challenging. I was expecting that the HR department that I must join is a department that is fully functional and has a direction but it's beyond what I am expecting. The HR department was a newly put-up department where the newly appointed staff should be the one to assist the HR manager in implementing the HR functions.

At first working at AIC is pressure free. Since it must be attuned with the existing practices, all its plans must be aligned to the present practice where the Admin Department is the one doing the function prior to the HR existence. But as time goes by, working with AIC is getting easier.

The AIC is a multi-national steel structures company. It has a large project dealing with structural steel products where its major clients are found outside the kingdom. It was composed of more than 2,000 employees from a mixed race: Jordanian, Palestinian, Indians, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Filipino,



Sudanese, Nigerian, Egyptian, and of course Saudis in both Jeddah, Dubai, and Egypt branches.

There were about 300 Filipinos like engineers, fabricators, welders, erectors, and those in the corporate office. Their salaries vary depending upon the position.

Life at AIC was sorrowful. Roaming around Jeddah is not safe. You need to have your resident card (iqama) every time you go out of the workplace to avoid being caught by the religious police (mutawa). Although Jeddah is a semi-open city, there were still many restrictions then.

But still despite of that restriction, life must go on...otherwise you will always feel homesick and depressed. Hearing the word “kabayan” from a Filipino overseas served as a bridge to connect the hearts of all Filipino OFWs anywhere in the world. It sounds fine to hear this word from our fellow OFWs because it made you feel that you belong to one race.

Working away from home is a sacrifice. I struggled a lot with the feeling of homesickness. I had no choice but to move on just because I wanted to see my family living in their own comfort. There are only 2 reasons for OFWs to be happy. One is knowing that their family is away from any harm and dangers and seeing them happy living life comfortably out of the remittances they receive.

Working as an expatriate in Saudi Arabia was really a great experience and a challenge. I can never forget the days I spent there that made me stronger on whatever life ahead.

The biggest hurdle facing an expatriate working in Saudi Arabia is the position title stated in the iqama. It is rare to find people having aligned profession on the position stated their iqama. What is good about working in Gulf countries is the tax-free salaries and wages. If you want to earn money, work in Saudi Arabia, where everything is free and provided like food and

accommodation. In November 2009, my career with AIC ended as a Training Specialist as I decided to have my final exit.

### *... APICORP Journey*

After AIC, I got an offer from one of the prestigious petroleum companies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia located in Dammam, KSA. I was offered a Senior Training and Development Specialist post to assist the HR Director in planning and implementing the company's training and development programs. It was a great opportunity as the position is next in rank with the HR Director.

My job requires assisting the HR Director in planning and implementation of the department's training plans and coordinating with the training institutions and industries where APICORP staff need to attend outside the kingdom. Part of my duties is to assist those On-the-job trainees as to where they will be assigned for the actual immersion in the company.

It was a great experience to work with the prestigious company wherein its employees receive a competitive remuneration with all the benefits including: housing, transportation, and educational and medical assistance for the immediate family members. However, my career with APICORP did not last for long. My one year contract was not even finish due to administrative issue of my line manager. Since I was hired directly by the HR director, my position was politicized and abolished which need me to leave the post. The company paid my unfinished contract and led me to go for final exit.

My short stay with APICORP was also impressive but it was not so easy in terms of personal adjustment as I was living alone in the fully furnished accomodation provided by the company. However, it was a great experience as once in my life time, I was given an oppurtunity to work in a prestigious oil company.

### *... TIP Journey*

Working for almost two years, in Saudi Arabia, as OFW has never been so easy. Coming back for good to my home country was always a desire of an OFW. When I came back in 2009, TIP still opened its door for me to be one of its staff in the College of Arts. It was so fruitful to be part of the TIP family wherein all policies are laid down and implemented transparently. Among all the private sectors where I joined, this is the organization that I found to have a well-organized structure and provides intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to its employees both teaching and non-teaching. After Saudi Arabia, I fortunately worked in this prestigious ABET accredited engineering college that offers engineering, IT, business, and arts programs. I worked in this institution for almost seven years from 2009- 2010 and from 2010- 2014 as a full-time faculty member with Associate Professor 2 rank including 3 years as a part-time faculty since 2004- 2007. My stay with TIP was very fruitful and meaningful. I gained a lot of experiences and explored my knowledge and skills in teaching various courses apart from my specialization. It also helped me a lot in terms of financial aspects as the remuneration was also competitive.

As faculty member in the College of Arts, I was tasked to teach language courses. Teaching diverse courses to engineering, IT and business students was very challenging as most students were intelligent, especially in the engineering and business programs. You can find a lot of university scholars in these programs that made me read a lot to be ready all the time. Working with TIP doesn't only limit to pure teaching. It provides you an opportunity to work outside of your cup of tea, like academic advising and working with students on their co-curricular activities.

TIP provides professional development to its staff. During my stay, I was able to have an opportunity to attend in-house training and workshops that enhanced my teaching know-how. The College of Arts where I belong

conducts professional development at every end of the semester to help improve our current skills and keep us updated. This professional development helped me build my academic profile.

When the full implementation of the K-12, my teaching career with TIP turned grey. All those who were about to be regularized were converted into part-time. There were only two options for those who were affected: one was to stay as a part-timer or leave the institution and get all the benefits accrued as per TIP policy. I opted to leave TIP a year before the K-12 implementation. In November 2014, my career with TIP ended and made me thought of working overseas again.

Luckily, I was given an offer as an English lecturer overseas and immediately in the same year, I decided to grab the opportunity, though it was so sad to leave TIP where I found as the most organized and fair institution I ever had.

### *... MCU Journey*

Side by side, while working at TIP, I managed to work part-time in the Manila Central University (MCU) graduate school in 2007 to 2009 with the rank of Associate Professor 3. I was given an opportunity to teach on its graduate program teaching educational management, Financial Administration in educational institution and Test and Measurement for PhD students. It was a great experience and my first time to handle graduate students and found it relaxing as teacher was just a facilitator of learning. Due to overseas work opportunity, I decided to end my career in 2010.

### *... My Leadership Journey*

St. Vincent Learning Center of Manila (SVLCM) opened its door for me to become a school pinicpal. This opportunity did not come right away. I

started as the school's consultant in the preparation of various documents required by the Department of Education (DepEd) in acquiring permit to operate and recognition of curricular programs.

From then on, my service as a consultant was called as needed. When the school grew and offered grade school curriculum, one of the requirements was to have a school principal to manage its academic activities. The school owner, didn't have the hesitation to offer me the principalship despite the fact that I was connected in other institution. For the sake of friendship, I accepted the offer with internal arrangement as to number of hours I need to spent per week to perform my duties without sacrificing my primary job. This agreement had been in full force from 2006 to 2007, 2010 to 2014. From 2014 onwards, I served again as a consultant advising the school administrator in terms of academic matters.

Working as pinicipal in this institution gave me opportunity to widen my horizon in educational management and tested my leadership skill. Managing people is not that easy as the staff you are line managing have diverse personality, skills, and attitudes. For several years to be with this institution, I learned a lot from the school's stakeholders. I came to realise that a school doesn't only cater students who want quality education butl also it caters parents whose behaviour and attitudes towards teaching and learning is away from the teachers' perspective.

Truly, being a school principal was not an easy responsibility. As school head, you need to be responsible for teachers and students. You have to ensure that students will receive the quality education they deserve and teachers need to deliver the subject matter in accordance with the learning outcomes.

A school which is supervised and recognised by DepEd has a lot of paper works to be done. From the beginning to the end of the school year,



the school has to submit accurate data and information. The needed information has to be in accordance with the school's activities conducted for the whole school year. All these are under the school principal's shoulder.

### ... *My Ongoing Journey*

After my TIP career in 2014, Gulf College's door opened me a teaching opportunity overseas. During my job hunting overseas, fortunately, I received three great offers namely: English lecturer at Jubail University College in Jubail, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Senior Coordinator for Career Development & Succession Planning at Weatherford (Precision Energy Services) Company in Dahrán, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and English Lecturer at Gulf Collge (GC) in the Sultante of Oman in Muscat.

Of all the offers, I decided to grab the opportunity offered by Gulf College as Saudi Arabia was no longer my priority place to work overseas. IREKRUT was the one facilitated all the requirements for my entry to Oman. At first, I was not given a working visa . Instead, I was instructed to go through an express visa which lasted for 30 days. There were so many formalities in the airport that need to answer. Fortunately, I was able to fly via Gulf Air and landed the Sultanate of Oman in November 2014.

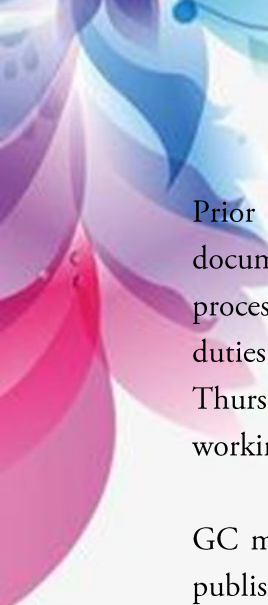
Currently, GC is affiliated with Cardif Metropolitan University in United Kingdom (UK). It offers Business Management, and Computing Science programmes qaulity assured by CardifMet except its GFP programe which is monitored by the Ministry of Higher Education. At first, life in GC was not so easy. On my first day, there was no proper orientation as I used to expeirence in joining the new company. On the first day, I was given a teaching load and instructed to proceed to my room assignment and started teaching. It was really disgusting and an unforgetablle experience as I had to face my arabic students whose level of English is zero and yet you are teaching

them general English language. It took time for me to internalise the practices of the college to adapt the system day by day.

The worst experience is to handle the students' engagement in the class. Only few are participating as most of them have low level of English language proficiency. Teaching English for speakers of other language is so challenging. You have to teach them the basics in such a way that they will master the skills in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Students' proficiency in English language is assessed on an IELTS-based type of test. At the end of the semester, the students are expected to get a mark of 40% equivalent to IELTS 5.0. Around 20% of the class can speak using the target language with some grammar errors. However, almost 95% of them failed in listening, reading and writing. This gap remains the main problem of GC students even pushing them to go to the undergraduate program.

Working at Faculty of Foundation Studies (FFS) was so amazing. I learned a lot of things and explored my knowledge and skills not only in the field of teaching but also in the field of research. I also able to work with people from all walks of life with different personalities. This department had the most number of Filipinos coming from different colleges and universities in the Philippines as seasoned English teachers. My greatest contribution in the faculty was when given an opportunity to create and facilitate the English Club. I conceptualized the FFS English Club to help the students of GFP and those who are in the undergraduate programs to develop their skills in English Language. The FFS English Club was designed to provide students opportunity to use English language as a medium of communication to competently develop their English language skills. Several plans and activities were facilitated through its officers and members.

Another major contribution was being a committee member in a technical working group (TWG) on GFP and GC institutional accreditations.



Prior to the date of visit, there were major preparations of necessary documents. Being part of the committee is not so easy as you must design processes and policies relevant to quality assurance over and above your major duties and responsibilities without any additional compensation at all. Thursday is allotted for the TWG meetings to ensure that all members are working hands-on on the assigned task.

Apart from teaching and facilitating the English Club, working with GC motivated me to conduct research. At GC, the lecturer is required to publish at least one research per year. It also gave me an opportunity to present research papers in both local and foreign conferences.

In 2018, a full implementation of the organization was in full swing. There was a major restructuring and rebranding of the college. Many expats were laid off and contracts were not renewed due to Omanization. FFS was one of the departments where lot of lecturers were omanized. Later of the same year, I received a reassignment to be transferred in the Faculty of Business and Management Studies (FBMS) to handle English modules in L3 of the undergraduate program of Cardiff Met University.

Life is a journey that must be travelled no matter how bad the roads and accommodations. It is not a destination. We never really arrive at our destination. It is a continuous travel. We need to enjoy every moment of the day instead of trying to arrive.