

# Re-Entering the Faculty: An Exploratory Study on the Role-Shift from Administrator Back to Being a Faculty Member

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**Abstract** - *While there is a significant wealth of scientific knowledge regarding the role shift from faculty member to administrator, what we know regarding the other side of the process – that of shifting from an administrator back to a faculty member - leaves much to be desired. Using qualitative data obtained from the experiences of several faculty members who have stepped up to an administrative role and have then returned to a faculty role at least once in their career, this study aimed to understand the experiences of these faculty members who have returned to their old role after an administrative stint by asking three questions: (1) what were the initial responses of the faculty members after finishing their term as an administrator?; (2) what are the challenges experienced by faculty members once they return to fulltime faculty status after a stint in an administrative position?; and (3) what can be done in order to ease the transition from the perspective of these faculty members? Findings indicate that some faculty members-turned-administrators-turned-faculty members have mixed reactions towards their role shift, though more participants welcome the change rather than regret it for various reasons. However, the return to their old role is not an easy task, as their stint as an administrator has caused changes in their relationships in the workplace.*

**Keywords:** *Academe, Role Shift, Faculty, Administrator, Role Strain*

## INTRODUCTION

The academic organization presents a rare arrangement in the career track of members of a bureaucracy. Whereas the typical track of an employee within an organization is unidirectional in the sense that his or her career is expected to proceed upward through promotion, the career of a faculty member could consist of a cycle of “ups” and “downs”. A faculty member can get promoted to administrative roles. Unlike the typical bureaucrat in other types of formal organizations who stays in a particular leadership position until he or she is promoted to an even higher position, those who serve as part of the academe only hold a position for a fixed term. After their term has expired, they are expected to return to their old status as a simple faculty member. The nature of academic leadership means that faculty members could undergo a circular pattern of role shift during their stay within the organization.

The stock of scientific knowledge on leadership within the academe adequately describes the implications of the role shift from being a faculty member to an administrator. This transition is often regarded by the faculty as going over the fence

towards the “dark side of the academy” [1] or going from being part of the “us” to being one of “them” [2].

In 1983, John Bennett [3] identified three general changes that a faculty member must, and will, go through as a result of his or her assumption of a leadership/managerial role within the academe. These three are as follows:

a. *From a specialist to a generalist.* While all faculty members enter the academe with a specialization and are expected to function by utilizing this specialization, those who assume the role of a department chair are expected to let go of their tendencies to specialize only in one field. Instead, they are expected to explore new horizons as a generalist in response to their responsibility to a group of people with different specializations.

b. *From an individualist to a collectivist.* Most faculty members are allowed to function as individuals within the academe: they decide on the schedule per week for when they should conduct classes for the courses assigned to them, they decide the best time to check student requirements, when to prepare course materials, and even if and when to do scholarly research work. However, upon assuming the

role of department chair, it is the duty of the chair to become a collectivist who must strive to keep the faculty members together, ensure their cooperation, and gain their consensus on various matters.

c. *From disciplinary loyalty to institutional loyalty.*

As faculty members, it is well accepted that academicians are loyal to their discipline and by extension, to the department which houses their discipline. However, as department chair, one must try to mediate between the interest of the faculty member and that of the administration. A department chair whose loyalty is always leaning towards one of the competing parties is considered an ineffective department chair.

More than a decade later, Gmelch and Miskin proposed their own model of the changes that department chairs undergo as part of their transition from mere faculty member to administrator. According to Gmelch and Miskin [4], there is a “lifestyle” change that accompanies the role shift.

a. *Shift from a solitary life to a socially-oriented life.* This is similar to Bennett’s second point, the movement from the individualist to the collectivist. What Gmelch emphasized here is the shift in focus of the department chair from self-improvement to the improvement of others. The focus is now on the other, not the self: instead of finding opportunities to better one’s own career, the pressure now is on finding opportunities to better a whole unit.

b. *From stability to mobility and unpredictability.* The once stable lifestyle of the faculty member has become mobile and unpredictable due to the need to adapt to the various needs of the department.

c. *From manuscript to memoranda.* Whereas faculty members are expected to produce scholarly work as academic employees of the academe, department chairs forego the conduct of scholarly work in lieu of the various memoranda which must be written, signed, and distributed.

d. *From focused to fragmented.* Whereas faculty members can focus on a limited number of tasks, the department chair is expected to multi-task in order to accomplish the highly varied duties that are expected of them.

e. *From autonomous to accountable.* Whereas the faculty can function autonomously with little to no supervision, it becomes the department chair’s duty, given the fact that his or her decisions speak for the whole department, to try and ensure that every voice in the department is heard.

f. *From private to public.* Given the demand for transparency and the fact that more eyes are on the leader, the department chair, upon assumption of the role, gives up his or her sense of privacy in the process.

g. *From austerity to prosperity.* It is often part of the transition that the individual, given the increase in responsibility, is compensated with higher pay and even larger or better facilities such as an office.

h. *From professing to persuading.* Instead of simply speaking one’s mind regarding opinions and preferences on policies, the individual, as department chair, must now devote significant time and effort into persuading the faculty why particular policies are important.

i. *From client to custodian.* Whereas the faculty member acts seemingly like a client who asks or requests for particular aids or facilities from the administration, the department chair acts as a custodian who must ensure that the needs of the faculty and students are seen to.

A few years after, Hecht [5] also suggested that the changes experienced by a department chair are threefold: (1) changes in time, (2) changes in relationships, and (3) personal changes.

Changes in Time. According to Hecht [5] and Seedorf [6], faculty members who are called to serve as department chairs find, upon assuming their new role, that time is scarcer than it was before their role shift. Despite their assumption of a leadership role and their commitment to perform all the administrative duties that this office entails, department chairs are still expected to continue to perform their roles as educators and handle classes, albeit with a highly reduced teaching load. This forces them to distribute their already limited time to even more duties than before. According to Hecht’s and Seedorf’s respective studies, this results in three eventualities:

a. *A decline in scholastic productivity.* Given the increased amount and variety of tasks that a department chair is expected to accomplish in a limited time, one of the first things which department chairs are forced to give up is their time allotted for scholarly research. Since the conduct and publication of scholarly research is one of the bases by which the productivity of academicians is measured, department chairs feel that the loss of time for research results in a decline of their sense of worth as scholars of the academe.

b. *A feeling of loss of control.* Faced with multiple tasks and a wider network of peers and subordinates

whose needs must be met, department chairs feel that despite their ascent to a higher position they have lost a certain amount of control over their time. More than ever, new department chairs feel that they no longer have time for themselves as every minute of their working day is scheduled into either a class or a meeting. As one department chair put it, *"My days are not under my control. I can't walk to the bathroom from my office without at least one meeting!"*

c. *Decline in quality time for family and/or friends.* The large number of tasks to accomplish often cuts into the department chair's personal time. This results in the loss of opportunity to spend quality time with their families and friends. This issue has a great effect on the chairs' relationships as the lack of time with family and friends can cause a weakening of ties amongst the family or amongst the group of friends.

Similar to Hecht's points on the change in time, Achterberg [7] highlighted the high temporal demand that is experienced by department chairs. Aside from the temporal demand, Achterberg also stressed the feeling of loss of control due to the large number of surprises in the form of interruptions and changes in plans that department chairs have to go through as part of their duty. Add to this the issue of department chairs being forced to juggle their day to day duties with various other "pressure points" such as the need to include time in their schedules for the settlement of alumni, donor, promotion and tenure, and interpersonal issues amongst the faculty. This results in the need for constant multi-tasking on the part of the department chair.

*Changes in Relationships.* Hecht, Higerson, Gmelch, and Tucker [8] conducted a series of interviews with the participation of faculty members who served as department chairs in various academes within the United States. The data gained from their interviews suggest that many of those faculty members who were chosen to serve in an administrative capacity felt that they were unprepared for the changes that transpired when they assumed their new role. While they had foreseen the changes to the formal tasks that they had to accomplish in their new position, they were caught unprepared by the other changes that accompanied their ascent to the leadership position, particularly the changes to their informal groups and the way colleagues within the department interacted with them. These changes come in various forms. For some department chairs, these changes come in the form of a feeling that the once collegial faculty members had become detached. This

is exemplified by the lack of invitations to social gatherings such as lunch, possibly as a by-product of the faculty members' assumption that their one-time-colleague-turned-administrator is now far too busy with his or her new duties and responsibilities to share a lunchtime gathering with them. This detachment also involved a feeling that the other faculty members are no longer as open or vocal with them compared to when they were relatively equal in rank. Some department chairs even reported feeling that their faculty colleagues were avoiding them after they assumed their new leadership role [9]. This is not to say that they had less contact with the faculty. In fact, department chairs reported that given their new role, it became necessary that they keep in contact with the faculty, even those with whom they do not interact with before. However, the quality of the interaction became more detached.

Hecht et al.'s [8] interviews also gleaned that department chairs, given that most of them came from the same department prior to their assumption of office, felt an added pressure in their management duties. This is due to two reasons: first, these department chairs felt that there was a greater expectation on them from the other faculty to try and remedy problems within the department that had been discussed with them prior to their selection as chair, especially those issues that the new chair had previously been vocal about. The second reason was they felt that, having once been a part of the faculty, the other faculty members expected them to be on their side when negotiating with the higher ups in the administration. As Hecht [10] put it, *"From the start, chairs find themselves operating in a murky landscape of either ill-defined or conflicting expectations (p.7)"* It is noteworthy that this is the same issue discussed in Bennett's third point wherein the department chairs were forced to balance their loyalties between the department's faculty and the higher-ups in the administration.

Hecht's [5] study also indicated that new department chairs experienced a change in how they view their fellow faculty members, often leaning more to the negative. This is in large part because of the privileged position of the department chair wherein they are necessarily informed of more details of the lives of their fellow faculty members than they would have cared to know prior to their assumption of their leadership roles.

The relationships which changed as a result of the chair's new position are not limited to fellow faculty

members. Even the relationship with students changed. According to some of the department chairs involved in Hecht's aforementioned study, while the new position made them interact with an even greater number of students, the nature of the interaction shifted from being that of a teacher to that of a problem solver.

*Personal changes.* Hecht [5] also reported that department chairs experienced several personal changes which they attributed to their assumption of office. The most common of these changes was an increase in personal stress, sometimes accompanied with bouts of loneliness brought about by the changes mentioned above, such as the loss of personal time and changes in one's relationships with their informal groups. According to Diacon [11] who reflected on his personal experiences as a department chair, this stress was also due to the knowledge that one's decisions as department chair would affect those with whom the department chair is interacting with almost every day. As such, any negative effect of the decision could be guilt- and stress-inducing especially given the unavoidability of contact and even more so if the faculty members affected are part of one's informal group.

It is worth noting, however, that despite the feelings of stress, department chairs also reported a feeling of enjoyment at the challenges posed by their new role in the academe. It was not uncommon for the department chairs interviewed to report a feeling of accomplishment when their department was perceived to be improving or maintaining a positive performance. There is also a feeling of accomplishment from some department chairs owing to their perception that their assumption of the leadership role allowed them to improve themselves and branch out from their discipline. This was due to the need to explore the new perspectives needed to handle the issues posed by a diverse set of people with a relatively diverse set of specializations. This is similar to Bennett's [3] point that department chairs must shift from being a specialist to that of a generalist.

A final change experienced by the department chair was the feeling that they had "lost" their "voice" [7]. As a voice of authority, the department chairs lose their capacity to voice out their personal opinions on various matters that concern the academe in general and the department in particular. Due to the fact that their words, if not packaged properly, could easily be interpreted as the policy by which the faculty could,

and would, rally under, department chairs took great care when speaking out. What this often resulted in was the self-imposed silence of the department chair, surrendering his right to express his opinion on organizational matters in lieu of his performance of his tasks as an administrator.

While there is a significant wealth of scientific knowledge regarding the role shift from faculty to administrator, what we know regarding the other side of the process leaves much to be desired. This study hopes to shed more light on this other side by answering three research questions:

1. What were the initial responses of the faculty members after finishing their term as an administrator?
2. What are the challenges experienced by faculty members when they return to fulltime faculty status after a stint in an administrative position?
3. What can be done in order to ease the transition from the perspective of these faculty members?

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The research interest of this paper suffers from a paucity of research dedicated to understanding the administrator to faculty transition. To start with, however, it has been noted in previous research that the transition, be it from faculty to administrator or administrator to faculty, is met with challenges and necessitates adaptation by the person because of the differing cultures of the faculty and administrator social roles [12]-[13]: faculty culture generally revolves around the attempt to accumulate, and consequently disseminate, new knowledge [14], administrative culture is centered predominantly on the principles of service, fairness, community, and equal opportunity [15]. Jacobs [16] added further that the difficulty of transitioning from administrator to faculty makes it nearly impossible for an administrator to go back to being a faculty member within the same educational institution (and therefore, a loss of asset for that particular educational institution unless the transfer is toward a different unit of the same institution) because it is simply not a type of transition usually accounted for in college culture or policy. This lack of emphasis on this phase of the role transition runs the risk of making ex-administrators return to a faculty position as embittered employees if the challenges of the transition become too much and the person grows to resent the faculty position [1]. This, however, does not mean that the circular pathway of faculty-administrator-faculty is a dysfunctional aspect

of the academic institution. Instead, this model can be seen as advantageous in increasing the institutional capacity of the academe by retaining a large pool of people with institutional memory: the fact that many faculty members become administrators then step back down to being faculty members while another faculty member takes their place produces in the academe a pool of personnel who are experienced in both the faculty and administrative roles. This protects the academe from being crippled by the loss of one or two administrators because there would be others who have the experience and can therefore take their place within a short transition time.

In a study comparing the difference and transition between faculty- and administrator-life, McCluskey-Titus and Cawthon [17] found administrators see four particular aspects of academic life where being a faculty member is considered as more advantageous than being an administrator:

*Quality of life.* According to the participants in the study, administrators often felt burnt-out by the heavy workload associated with their administrative role, making them long for their old roles as mere faculty members, which accorded them more flexible and predictable schedules.

*Intellectual pursuits.* Aside from longing for their less hectic schedules, the administrator participants in the study also indicated that they preferred the faculty role over the administrator role because of their desire to focus more on intellectual pursuits. The administrator participants preferred to think rather than always simply execute policies, engage in scholarly dialogues, and work more independently in scholastic activities – all of which are deprived of them in the nature of an administrator’s work.

*Passion in work.* The administrator participants in the study also opined that they preferred the faculty role because of the view that classroom teaching and research are more fulfilling than the bureaucratic duties that administrators face every day.

*Contribution to the profession.* The administrators in the study also pointed out that being a faculty member allowed them to give more significant contributions to their profession than being administrators. They expressed that they felt limited in their capability to engage campus issues and they cannot be vocal about progressive issues because of the constraints of being in the administrative role. This is similar to the sentiment of losing voice that was previously mentioned in this paper.

Borba [18], on the other hand, identified seven advantages of being a faculty member that predisposed administrators to yearn to return to a faculty role, with some being similar to those mentioned by McCluskey-Titus and Cawthon:

*Few deadlines.* Faculty members faced a less time-bound work life compared to administrators who were constantly pressured to meet deadlines imposed either by themselves or those higher-up in the bureaucratic structure, or by external parties who had either a partnership or regulatory jurisdiction with the educational institution.

*Reduced work weeks.* According to Borba, school administrators often faced a higher number of work hours than the faculty members, often averaging around 15-hours a day, 100-hours a week, and 220 days per year. The faculty, on the other hand, were usually required to render duty only during their class hours, consultation hours, and committee meetings, allowing them greater flexibility on their time especially when some of their work could be done in the comfort of their homes or other locations aside from the office.

*Differences in usual clientele.* The usual people who the faculty had to deal with are students who were less confrontational. Students, for example, usually defer from pursuing formal avenues of complaint even when they disagree with the faculty in terms of instruction and grading. The usual clientele of administrators, on the other hand, were more open to complaints and confrontation.

*Freedom to pursue other personal projects.* Unlike the school administrator whose work hours were often loaded with meetings and paper works that require their hours of work to impinge on their personal or family time, the time of the faculty members was flexible enough to allow them to pursue personal projects or accept other activities relevant to their career like consultancy works, conferences, and further studies.

*Access to resources for professional development.* The faculty, aside from having the temporal resources to devote to their self-improvement, often had access to resources such as financial support for research and further studies.

*Significantly more personal free time.* As mentioned previously, the administrator’s work life often impinged into the hours within a week that were supposed to be dedicated to their personal life. The faculty’s work hours, on the other hand, gave them greater chances of devoting significant time to family

and friends as well as their personal rest, especially during the periods within a year when the campus was on vacation.

*Higher levels of job satisfaction.* Finally, faculty members tended to have higher levels of job satisfaction, most likely because of the advantages previously mentioned.

McCluskey-Titus and Cawthon's [17] study also identified three particular differences between faculty life and that of being an administrator:

*Faculty schedule.* It was made salient in the study that one of the biggest differences in the eyes of administrators regarding lifestyle was the flexibility in time enjoyed by the faculty members compared to the time-constraints experienced by administrators. While faculty members were afforded autonomy in deciding their work hours to a significant extent and were given limited accountability, administrators were held accountable for a lot of things and were often expected to fix different problems, even those which they believed to be beyond their control or jurisdiction.

*Nature of work performed.* Another noted difference is in the conceptualization and accomplishment of "work" between faculty members and administrators. Most faculty members did their work, which is centered on instruction and research, in isolation. This requires the discipline to regulate one's progress and make sure that one does not grow lax. Administrators, on the other hand, had to do routine bureaucratic work in coordination with others.

*Sense of worth.* According to administrator participants, they considered their faculty work required a greater amount of self-confidence and intellectual capacity than their administrative duties. Furthermore, they noted that the freedom to create knowledge or reality was deprived of them in their administrative role unlike when they were mere faculty members.

Similarly, Borba [18] identified five aspects with which faculty life differed from an administrator's life. These five aspects were as follows:

*Skill levels.* According to Borba, though there are many similarities in the skills necessary for a successful administrator and faculty, being a faculty required more skills in terms of scholarly writing (which has been noted previously in other literature to be replaced by memoranda in the life of administrators) and independent secretarial production – owing to the lack of the support staff often enjoyed by an administrator.

*Governance.* Borba further noted that administrators and the faculty differed in the amount of bureaucratic processes that they had to contend with. This was because the faculty, though not imbued with the same level of legitimate authority as their administrator counterparts, were given a significant sense of autonomy in their academic exercises.

*Political dynamics.* Another significant difference in the life of the faculty and the administrator was in the kind of political arena in which they had to operate in their professional career. While administrators were evaluated by their supervisors annually or biannually, the evaluation of faculty members was more complicated – often influenced by interpersonal nuances and conflicts related to co-existence with fellow faculty members, especially those who are more senior than them. Furthermore, the evaluation of faculty had more indicators, including scholarship, teaching, professional development, and university service. This made it more difficult for faculty than administrators.

*Collegial interaction.* Another difference between administrators and faculty was the level of collegial interaction they had with other faculty members. In practice, because the faculty members were usually given autonomy to decide on their time or work, two faculty members may have worked at the same institution for a significant amount of time without having to interact with each other. Administrators, on the other hand, often interacted with the faculty to ensure the efficient delivery of service in the academe.

*Academic freedom.* Finally, Borba noted that faculty members were often protected by academic freedom, of the freedom to "select teaching techniques and instructional materials that are relevant, engage in research of their choice, speak and write freely about social, political, and economic issues, associate with whom they desire, and be accorded legal due process". This gave them a significant sense of protection and autonomy from administrators. Borba even noted that university professors often made use of this as a major protective device, even if it was sometimes misused to "protect mediocrity among the ranks of tenured professors" which would clearly be a problem for an administrator. Administrators, on the other hand, must tread more carefully because their actions and words carry more weight and greater implications than those of the faculty members.

Due to the differences between faculty and administrators, which administrators more oftentimes

viewed as veering towards the advantage of a faculty position rather than an administrative position, faculty-turned-administrators often considered returning to the faculty position in a positive light. However, several challenges arose during and after the transition. These challenges were discussed by McCluskey-Titus and Cawthon [17] and Sale [1]:

*Research skills and publication.* Administrators who returned to full-time faculty roles found themselves once again needing to do research as part of their occupation. However, they soon realized that relevant research interests and specializations, methods, and technology changed during the period they focused on serving as administrators. The research and publication record of the person, which had dwindled during his or her stint as an administrator, became even harder to recover when the administrator-turned-faculty member no longer had the same familiarity and social capital to convince funding agencies to fund one's scholarly activities.

*Social capital.* Network with other professionals related to one's field was another challenge encountered by the administrators who wished to return to a faculty role. According to administrators, it was highly likely that by the time that one returned to being at a faculty role, the professional networks may have changed alongside the dynamics of professional organizations. It was also possible that the pool of faculty members in one's occupation was no longer the ones with whom the administrator transitioning into a faculty role had strong ties with, either because these ties had weakened during the administrative stint or the faculty members themselves had left and been replaced over the period. During and after the transition, these administrators-turned-faculty members needed to renegotiate their faculty life with colleagues who used to be their subordinates. The person's social capital could also be threatened by the delicate position he or she now held as a former administrator who must give greater attention and care to his or her words because members of the administration and faculty may give deference to the person due to his or her former position – potentially making a breeding ground for resentment with one's successor to the administrative role and other fellow faculty as well.

*Disciplinary qualifications/ expertise.* Administrators returning to a faculty position also oftentimes find that disciplinary knowledge had changed during their administrative stint, and new theories, concepts, and themes within the discipline

had been developed over the years. This was more problematic among those whose disciplines required the updating of certifications or licensures. Those who assumed an administrative post without a Ph.D. were also under pressure once again to pursue higher studies.

*Teaching skills.* It was also noted that administrators who sought a return to a faculty role sometimes found themselves naïve to the composition, abilities, and preferences of the general student population, especially if the administrator had been fully detached from teaching as an administrator. This was especially the case for long-time administrators who would then teach a new generation of students with different experiences from the ones with whom the administrator-turned-faculty member had met before, and also had different expectations of their teachers.

*More independent execution of tasks.* These administrators transitioning back to a faculty role were also challenged by having less support staff to assist them in their daily tasks as a result of losing their administrative position. They had to once again grow accustomed to being more independent in the execution of their duties. If the administrator failed to cope, the repercussions could be missed deadlines and a pile-up of workload.

Sales (2013) warned that if these challenges become too much for the administrator transitioning back to the faculty role due to the limited assistance given by the institution during the role shift, then this maladjustment could cause emotional turmoil and feelings of inadequacy for the returning faculty member and may threaten their performance and commitment.

## METHODS

One-on-one interviews with 15 faculty members who have fulfilled the role of being an administrator of their departments for at least one term were conducted for the study. All participants were employed in private educational institutions within the Laguna province during the conduct of the study. Each participant was informed of the nature of the research and was given the opportunity to decline from being included in the study. In order to protect the faculty from possible identification, their characteristics are kept confidential. Each interview lasted for approximately an hour to an hour and a half. All interviews revolved around their typical work experiences before, during, and after their term as an

administrator. Themes were then formed out of the information gathered from the interviews. The respondents' perceptions on how the administration can help in the challenges and difficulties of the role shift were also presented.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. What were the initial responses of the faculty members after finishing their term as an administrator?**

When asked about their life after their stint as an administrator, the faculty participants gave mixed reactions. While all of the participants said that they welcomed the end of their administrative stint, there were also some who expressed mixed feelings of joy as well as a sense disappointment at the end of their term as an administrator. It is notable that no one expressed purely negative feelings at the loss of their administrative position. Furthermore, it is also notable that while the participants recognized that the loss of the administrative position entails lesser income, none of them considered this as a big loss. Their reactions to the end of their term have the following salient themes:

#### *1. Relief on freedom on time*

The participants reported that their relinquishment of their role and return to their purely-faculty role was a welcome change. One of the main reasons for this was because their return to a faculty role and the end of their administrative role had given them greater flexibility in terms of time – a resource which they claimed to be very limited when they were still administrators. For one participant, this greater flexibility in time had allowed her to pursue further studies and aim for more journal publications. For another participant, the reduction in the hours of work allowed her to have a more active social life outside of the academe – something which she claimed suffered when she was busy with paperwork and deadlines especially when the school was undergoing accreditation processes. She remembered instances when relatives and friends would send her SMS messages inviting her out for leisure time but she would be forced to decline in order to devote her time to the work at hand. None of the participants welcomed the freedom on time more than one male faculty who had been teaching for almost two decades. Before being an administrator, he used to “moonlight” or work part-time in two other schools when he was not on duty at his primary place of

employment. This moonlighting practice had allowed him to earn at least PHP70,000.00 a month, a far cry from his income as an administrator of less than PHP50,000.00. He had to stop his moonlighting activities after it became apparent that juggling his side-jobs and his administrative work was no longer compatible with his new schedule as an administrator. He also reported that the free time he had after being freed from his administrative work allowed him to spend more time with his wife and child. He emphasized the important of his free time, claiming that the lack of time had weakened the ties with his family.

#### *2. A less stressful work life*

Due in part to the greater amount of free time they now enjoyed, the faculty participants welcomed their return to a faculty role because it entailed less stress. According to several participants, while they still led busy lives teaching students, they preferred this kind of workload than having to constantly attend meetings, read and sign documents, and make potentially unpopular decisions that would affect several colleagues and even friends. According to one participant, the work of being an administrator had a greater physical, mental, and emotional toll on her than that of facing the challenge of teaching tens of students, answering their queries, and checking their papers.

#### *3. A more meaningful work*

A common statement given by the participants as a reason for preferring a return to a full-time teaching role to being an administrator was that they were in the academe to teach students instead of doing bureaucratic paperwork. According to three of the participants, though they received larger pay as administrators, they didn't miss their old position because they found more meaning in their role as a teacher. One participant even lamented the practice in their school of making the possession of higher education degrees a powerful basis for promotion into administrative roles, arguing that those with advanced educational degrees should use their degrees to teach students rather than to do bureaucratic work.

#### *4. Regret at the end of their term's visions*

The role shift back to a faculty role was not wholly positive for all participants. According to a few of the participants in the study, even though they were relieved at the loss of the burden of leadership



after their term, they felt a sense of disappointment that they would have to leave behind some projects or goals unfinished and a sense of worry that the projects which they started or supported would no longer be prioritized. One notable response was given by a participant who had returned to a faculty position after more than half a decade of being an administrator. According to her, it was very disappointing to see that the performance of the unit which she used to lead had steadily decreased in its rankings in standardized exams. It was frustrating, according to her, to see the school ranking that she had worked hard to improve deteriorate as the years went by under a new administration whose focus, she claimed, had shifted from scholastic achievements to other pursuits, such as cultural arts. The participants also indicated a sense of wonder. They sometimes contemplated in hindsight whether they could have done more than they had during their term as an administrator.

***B. What are the challenges experienced by faculty members when they return to fulltime faculty status after a stint in an administrative position?***

When asked what challenges they faced upon returning to a fulltime faculty position, the faculty gave various answers. These answers are categorized into three categories. Each of these categories are discussed below.

*1. A feeling of being compared*

Some of the faculty participants indicated an internal challenge which they had to get to grips with after their return to fulltime faculty role: a feeling that their performance and accomplishments when they were the one in the administrative position was being compared with that of the new administrator. While many claimed that they did not specifically hear their colleagues comparing them with the newer administrator, they said that the comparison was usually internal and initiated by themselves. One participant opined that it must be a common thing to happen – you would always try to compare what you have done when you were in the position with the one who was currently holding that position.

*2. Alienated relationships*

The most common response of the faculty participants interviewed was a feeling of alienation when it came to their social relationships with colleagues, with their students, and in some cases, with their friends and family members.

*a. With colleagues*

A feeling of alienation with colleagues was something that almost all of the participants identified as a challenge to their transition back to being a fulltime faculty member. In fact, all save for one participant mentioned this in the interview – and even that sole participant acknowledged that the only reason why he did not feel alienated from his colleagues was because he resigned from his post and returned to being a full time faculty after just one year of being an administrator. The resignation was motivated by the fear that staying in the position would jeopardize his working relationship with his colleagues.

This feeling of alienation with colleagues, according to the participants, was usually brought about by relationships strained because of two possible reasons: (1) because their capability as an administrator was questioned by more senior colleagues who were passed over for the position, and the more often cited reason by the participants, (2) because they had to make unpopular decisions during the course of their administration. It was observed to be a common occurrence in the interviews that the participants would cite certain colleagues whom they had considered to be friends before they became administrators but were now no longer on speaking terms with them. This was particularly true for two of the participants who claimed to have been good friends with a colleague for several years (with the colleague even being godfather to his son in the case of one participant) before they were given the administrative position. After they made certain decisions which were received negatively by their friends, they eventually had a falling out and the relationship had not recovered since.

In the case of one participant, the feeling of alienation was felt most after her former administrative position was filled by someone who was very critical of her position and with whom she was not on good terms. According to her, several of her current colleagues used to go to lunch with her when she was still the head of the department. However, once her term ended, the arrangements changed. There was even one time, she said, when she hinted to her colleagues that she was about to go to lunch. However, her colleagues did not bother to even offer to join her. That particular incident made her doubt if they really liked her when she was the head of the unit or they were just around because of the position she held. However, she also considered the

fact that her colleagues were just afraid of being caught in the rift between her and her successor. Either way, she considered this as one of the bigger challenges that she faced when her role shifted back to being a faculty member.

It is precisely this feeling of alienation that prompted one faculty member to step down from his post after one year of being an administrator. According to him, from the very start, he was wary of what could happen if he was put in an administrative role. He described himself as the “*pasaway*” or troublemaker in the ranks of the faculty. He was also an active member of the union in their school and had served the union as an officer more than once. For him, his appointment into an administrative position was a means by which the school administration tried to control those who were critical of the school’s policies. He cited as an example a fellow active union member several years back who was given an administrative position. Ever since she was given the administrative position, she could no longer participate in the union. Furthermore, he also mentioned an incident where he was being asked to sign a document which was already approved by his superiors. He refused to sign the document, reasoning that it was approved without his knowledge and he was not part of the deliberation before the decision to approve it was made. He felt that the higher ups were just trying to use his name to make the policies in the document more palatable to the rest of his colleagues. The faculty participant said that he valued teaching as well as his relationship with his fellow faculty members and his students more than the position and its higher pay, so he decided to resign.

*b. With students*

Some of the faculty also recounted that before their time as an administrator, they were quite close with the students, especially one of the participants who claimed that he used to be called “*Tatay*” (Father) by some of his students. However, because of their ascent into administrative roles, they lost most of the contact they usually had with students. Even when they did have contact with students during their time as administrators, it was more formal and they were viewed as strict and, in some cases, uncompromising and not “pro-student”. Because of this, they did not have as strong a relationship with students as they once did. Furthermore, some of the participants also noted that they were not familiar with several of the students now because they were busy with office work

when these new batches of students joined. The students are not familiar with them as well. This, they claimed, made establishing rapport more difficult.

*c. With family*

One faculty participant also lamented that his long working hours during his administrative stint made him lose precious moments with his family. According to him, when he was still an administrator, he and his wife barely had time to talk to each other. His wife was working a night shift and on several occasions, she had already left when he came home. Even if they did meet, his wife was getting ready to leave for work when he arrived. According to the participant, they didn’t have enough time to even share dinner. Furthermore, his administrative duties sometimes required him to go on official trips for several days, and his wife and son were left at home alone. He also expressed sadness about the fact that he was unable to spend more time with his son as he grew up. At the time of this interview, he was already in high school. The faculty participant believed that it is important for him to be there for his son especially given the often confusing time of puberty. He preferred that his son came to him for questions instead of getting his information elsewhere, such as peers and the internet. It was mainly for this reason that he refused an extension of his administrative position when the head of school offered it to him.

*3. Trapped in office politics.*

The last theme which became salient in the interviews of faculty was that after their term as administrators they felt that they were still trapped in office politics even after having relinquished their authority over their unit. This feeling of being trapped stems from their colleague’s tendency to make them the representative or the spokesperson when they had a particular sentiment which they wanted to express to the school administration. They were also usually one of the people with whom their close colleagues voiced-out their complaints. This particular set-up, they claimed, sometimes proved problematic as their successor sometimes interpreted this as them contesting the decisions just because they used to hold the same position. Furthermore, when the new administrator’s policies and decisions are were being criticized, they were sometimes used as a basis for comparison. This, they claimed, made their relationship with the new administrator strained or awkward at the very least.

Table 1. Summary of results for the three research questions of the study.

What were initial responses of the faculty after finishing their term as an administrator?	What are the challenges faced by the faculty after returning from their administrative roles?	What can be done in order to ease the transition from the perspective of these faculty members?
a. Relief on freedom on time b. A less stressful work life c. A more meaningful work d. Regret at the end of their term's visions	a. A feeling of being compared b. Alienated relationships i. with colleagues ii. with students iii. with family c. Trapped in office politics	a. Transfer to another unit/department b. Encourage an organizational culture that emphasizes distinction between personal and professional lives

### C. What can be done in order to ease the transition from the perspective of these faculty members?

The faculty participants indicated only two general suggestions on how the administration could help in the transition. The first suggestion was to consider transferring the faculty into a different department aside from the one that the faculty used to serve as an administrator. This was attested to be a feasible solution, according to one participant, who used to serve as the principal of the school's high school department but was then transferred to another department after her term ended. Nevertheless, she recognized that even this did not wholly solve the problem as she remained on poor terms with her former subordinates – she was just able to do her job efficiently because they did not share the same department and had no need to coordinate heavily with each other. For the participants, the second possible solution was more important: a cultivation of an organizational culture that emphasizes the distinction between what is personal and what is professional. In Filipino, they call this “*walang personalan, trabaho lang*”. The hope of these former administrators was that their colleagues would understand that their decisions are part of their job and they should not have a bearing on their personal ties.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study, though bereft of any capability for generalization due to its nature as qualitative research, has shed light on some of the experiences of faculty members who were called to serve as administrators and had to return to their old faculty role after their term had ended. A summary of the results to the three research questions of the study are provided in Table 1.

It became noticeable in the findings of the study that many of the experiences, especially the challenges, faced by the participants following a role shift from administrator to faculty are extensions of the changes that accompany the role shift from faculty

to administrator. The relief felt by the faculty because of the return of their freedom on time upon relinquishing their administrative roles, for example, are connected to Hecht's [5] and Seedorf's [6] observations that department chairs experience a reduction in quality time for friends and family as well as a decline in scholastic productivity. With an increase in the surplus time that was utilized before by administrative duties, the faculty participants can now devote more time to their family, their social lives, and their scholastic careers. However, it must be noted it is not often a smooth return to a full-time faculty life and, just like the change in relationships experienced by a faculty member when transitioning into a department chair, the feeling of alienation, be it with colleagues, students, and family are felt by the faculty participants as they try to readjust to a full-time faculty role once more.

The finding that faculty participants report a less stressful work life and, more importantly, a more meaningful work life, are also connected with the problem of decline in scholastic productivity. The literature talked of the feeling of loss of self-worth as scholars among department chairs because they had been forced to devote more time and energies to bureaucratic rather than scholastic pursuits during their time as department chairs. However, the findings of the study show that in their transition back to a full-time faculty role, the participants report a return to a life of less stress and, more importantly, a feeling that their jobs are once again meaningful – indicative of a positive evaluation of self-worth as scholars. Despite these benefits of less stress and more meaning, these participants lament that the return to a full-time faculty position is riddled with a feeling of being compared (be it initiated by themselves internally or initiated by external parties), being trapped in office politics, which may lead to a loss of voice to avoid conflict with the new department chair (akin to how department chairs themselves report a feeling of losing their voice though due to a different reason),

and regret at the end of their term's visions which is related to the department chair's feeling of accomplishment when they perceive that their department improved under their leadership. With these findings in mind, a conceptual framework describing the challenges and experiences of transitioning from faculty to department chair, and then from department chair to faculty, can be constructed using the combination of the existing literature and the findings of this research. This conceptual framework is provided in Figure 1.

This study makes the salient point that the transition is not easy and fraught with several problems that are usually interpersonal in nature, and social relationships are tested in the process. These findings are in line with the findings of the previous studies on the matter. Noteworthy in this study are three of the experiences reported by the participants that were not often salient in the literature: the administrator-turned-faculty member's regret at the end of their term's vision, a feeling of being compared, especially the comparison initiated by one's self, and most importantly, the salience of alienated relationships within the family unit – which

highlights the encroachment of work life into personal life and the high importance given by Filipinos to the family unit and the relationships therein, and the changes that happen to them, are important enough to be raised during the interview. The idea of leaving personal issues at the door when you enter an organization, after all, is easier said than done. Nevertheless, the difficulties faced by these faculty members could potentially prove problematic for both their personal and professional well-being. For this reason, there is reason for school administrations to take a closer look at the plight of these employees, and try to come up with possible solutions to ease the return of these faculty members to their old role in the academe.

It must be noted that this is an exploratory study into the transition experiences and challenges faced by administrators returning to a full-time faculty role that involved participants from private educational institutions. Other scholars are encouraged to continue this endeavor to further enrich and add to what is already known about the matter in order for us to have a clearer picture of the experiences and challenges faced in the faculty-administrator-faculty transition.

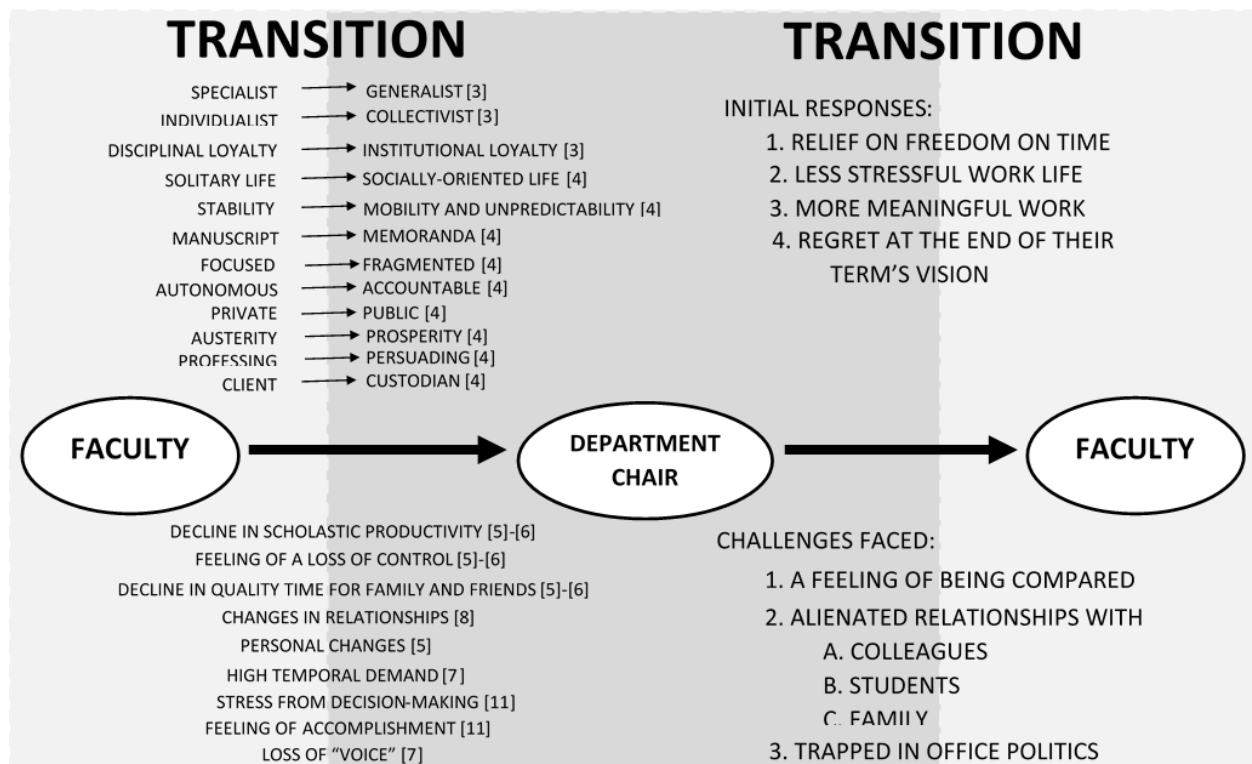


Figure 1. Faculty-Department Chair-Faculty Transition experiences and challenges as derived from the literature and the research findings.

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