



Interacting in an Academic Community

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Abstract- This Qualitative-Phenomenological study focused on the interaction among the faculty members in the college setting as it investigated the common structure of their lived experiences and sought for a comprehensive essence of experiences that were common to the faculty members in a Higher Education Institution (HEI). The research participants were the nine faculty members who have at least three years teaching experience. Their interaction inside and outside the school about the teaching practices was being studied. Their responses were being extracted through an in-depth interview. After analyzing the data, four themes emerged namely: Personal Life, Work, Interest, and Social Life. Personal life pertained to their love life and family life. Work involved career, delivery of instruction, and performance of students. Moreover, interest pertained to their preferences of things that excite their feelings involving making choices. Lastly, Social life involved their relationships with fellow teachers and their conversations about people around them. The study then concluded that teachers always relate themselves to others. Thus, their interaction should further be enhanced to promote healthy relationships among faculty members.

Keywords- *Interaction, Phenomenology, Epoche, Eidetic Reduction, Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction, Personal Life, Work, Interest, Social Life, Philippines*

I. INTRODUCTION

Workers need to have a place where they can relate to each other regarding their work. They also need it to establish ties among themselves. It can be a physical one where they are really communicating with each other. Nevertheless, interaction is present in every workplace.

Interaction involves a joint activity and co-constructed with verbal structures between two or more individuals (Quasthoff & Becker, 2005). Moreover, this interaction is also shown in the Filipino value "pakikisama" as it talks about living with others in a spirit of camaraderie (Ramos, 2004). This joint activity is a manifestation that the ones doing it are active participants, thus, are keeping a healthy interpersonal relationship among each other. This healthy relationship which can be exercised among the members in the workplace can particularly be observed in an academic workplace. Specifically, this can be viewed by looking at the community of practice among college faculty members.

Accordingly, community of practice refers to a group of people who share a common concern in what they are doing

and on how they are improving it (Wenger, 2011). It allows individuals who belong to the group to work for a common purpose. This purpose is to develop the group's members by improving their abilities and thus, improve the relationship among them. Community of practice is a term of new coinage, yet the practice of this is dated a long time ago.

Recently, community of practice is actualized by different professions. A group of surgeons are exploring new ways of doing their work to further improve their skills in surgery (Wenger, 2011). Meanwhile, Swan, Scarbrough, & Robertson (2002) stressed that this can also be practiced within an organization. This happens when it desires for innovation and promotion of learning.

Consequently, this community of practice can also be applied in the field of teaching like in higher education level. This can be observed on how the faculty members shared to each other their conduct of work like that of sharing different strategies in delivering lessons, motivating students, and eliciting students' performance. Thus, the interaction in an academic community brings beneficial consequences to the group of college teachers that will lead them to quality of work.

With the presented scenario, the researcher is eager to discover the life-world of these faculty members. This can be done by dealing with the experiences of the target participants through an analysis of their day to day interaction.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to investigate the community of practice among the teachers in the college setting. This was conducted during the second semester of the Academic Year 2016-2017. Purposively, this explored answers to the following questions:

1. What do teachers usually talk about in their conversations?
2. What are they communicating with each other for the purposes of new learning and improving their practices in the classroom?

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design is utilized for this paper. Qualitative research stresses the verbal descriptions and explanations of a certain phenomenon in the life experience of the participants (Garcia et al., 2011). Specifically, this study

used the phenomenological type of qualitative research, a method used by the philosopher, Edmund Husserl. His method banks on two supreme principles: “back to the things themselves” and absolute elimination of all presuppositions that are unproved and unjustified (Quito, 2001).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher employed coding as he identified key themes and key issues in the data. The sequence of the data analysis was based on the steps presented by Kleiman (2004). According to him, data analysis for a phenomenological study contains five steps.

It starts with the reading of the entire interview transcript to get a global sense of the whole. The data were not taken individually but treated as those that comprise the entirety of the participants’ experiences.

The second step is the reading of the entire manuscript for the second time. However, during this time, reading was done more slowly while dividing the data to meaningful sections or units.

The third step involves the integration of those sections/units as having similar focus. The researcher then made sense of those similar sections of the data.

The fourth step involves subjecting the sections/units to a free imaginative variation. This in turn involves a determination of which the meaningful units or themes are essential to the study (Kleiman, 2004). This is made to identify the phenomenon being dealt with.

The final step involves revisiting of the raw data transcriptions to justify interpretations. This was done by quoting the statements of the participants from in-depth interviews.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Epoche

In the bracketing stage, this is the process where my readers can find the common kinds of interaction I experienced in being one of the faculty members of the College of Teacher Education, Arts and Sciences (CTEAS). To start, when I was with my fellow faculty members in the office, we shared about different things. There was a time that I talked with those who taught the subjects that I also taught. We shared about the coverage for a certain examination. We exchanged ideas with regard to the methods of teaching a particular subject and at the same time references to be used and handouts to be distributed.

B. Eidetic Reduction

Through the process of analysis, there were one hundred eighteen (118) statements that were considered significant. They surfaced out after repeatedly reviewing the participants’ responses. In addition, I was able to examine the meanings of the responses made. The four emerging themes are the following: **personal life** that includes love life and family life; **Work** that involves career, delivery of instruction, and

classroom management; **interest** that deals with their preferences in life specifically their choices of actions whether to do or to possess them, and issues or topics for day-to-day conversations; and **social life** that includes the act of getting to know others and making connections with other people. All of these are shown in Table 1.

TABLE I. FREQUENCY OF INTERACTION ACCORDING TO THEMES

Coded Cluster	Participant								Total
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P7	P8	P9	
Personal Life: Love life and family life	1	4	1	2	2	1	2		15
Work: career, delivery of instruction and students’ performance	9	11	8	5	14	8	5	5	72
Interest: choices of things to do, to have and to talk about	2	1	8	3			4	1	19
Social Life: relationship with others	1			1	2	1	3	2	12

Table 2 shows that the theme on **Personal Life** involves the experiences of the research participants outside their workplace. These are the experiences that manifested in their journey of becoming human. This involves experiences of life’s struggles to be who they are at present time. Looking at the table, one can understand that their way of sharing themselves to others is done through the commitment of love. This personal attachment could be something that is ideal one and something that they experience in their own individual lives. In addition, family life is also included. It can be noted that some participants shared on the different issues and problems experienced by their families. Aside from the issues, it covers as well significant events that took place in the family. This also covers their relationship with their family members.

The second theme on **Work** incorporates the essence of interaction that pertains to the teaching profession of the research participants. This theme includes how they delivered their lessons, what activities they provided in their classes that promote effective learning, how they motivated their students to eagerly attend classes, how they constructed assessment measures to evaluate the learners, how they handled the problematic students like those who were in danger of failing, those who misbehaved and those who lack effort, how they gave feedback to students on their performance, and how they prepared their lessons. Work also includes the environment inside the classroom as to how they actualize their classroom management. This includes their teaching loads, schedule of classes, preparation and actualization of syllabus, submission of requirements, and club advisorship. In addition, this involves the different institutional activities they need to participate in and on how they follow policy changes and developments of the school. Moreover, this also covers the plans for career stability and their career development. Lastly, this also includes the facilities and materials needed in their profession. Basically, this theme has the more frequency of utterances among the research participants.

The third theme, **Interest**, pertains to the choices of research participants. This theme involves their choices of food as to which they like to eat and the places where they can find their preferred food. Descriptions like where to go and who will treat them are taken into account in this theme. Interest also involves their lifestyle, the way how they live their lives. Sharing regarding the activities done after their classes was mentioned. Further, interest involves what to wear as they conduct classes particularly on days when teachers were allowed not to wear their uniforms and choices of clothing when teachers went out together with their colleagues and friends. Another aspect under the third theme is the choice of technology. This involves the choice of gadgets the teachers want to possess and many other technological devices and gadgets. This theme also involves their choices of current events and issues as topics of their conversation. These events and issues could be the relevant ones present in the country or even in the world.

The fourth theme pertains to the **Social Life** of the participants. This theme involves their interaction on knowing each other. Sometimes, this is done through knowing their likes and dislikes. As a result, the participants are crafting relationships among themselves as to who are those colleagues who belong to their circle of friends. This theme also covers the sharing that involves people as objects. This happens when the participants talked about other people during their interactions. In the meantime, this also covers the relationships with teachers and students. Specifically, this involves those students who were at the same time friends of the teachers and those who were previously acquaintances of the teachers.

C. Phenomenological Transcendental Reduction

Going back to my experiences with my fellow college teachers, they are consistent with that of the theme “personal life”. What we shared is something relating to the way we live our life. Our conversation also involved many things regarding our profession as teachers. They are related to the second theme that pertains to work. Besides, we have common interaction that pertains to what we do in school. We conversed on what we have done in the classroom and how the students showcase their expertise.

In terms of interest, there were aspects of my experiences that pertain to it but as to what are they now is not something that is not the same with those of my participants.

In terms of social life, my experiences revealed that in some of the conversations that I participated in, there were instances that other people were the subjects.

D. New View on Interaction

Upon knowing the experiences of my research participants, I was able to come up with four themes namely: **Personal Life, Work, Interest, and Social Life**. In my way of moving to the essence of these themes, I was able to concentrate on dealing with what they really were as my participants experienced them. However, the next question to be asked is: “What is then meant by these themes that emerged?” As I then proceeded to another view of dealing with them, it is then the time that I dealt with my own consciousness in relation to the themes that emerged. This is now the time to bring about the importance of

a subject that perceives this emerging themes. Therefore, going back to the themes, it is no longer my participants’ personal life but “my own personal life”. It is no longer my participants’ work but “my own work” as well. It is no longer my participants’ interest but also “my own interest”. It is no longer their social life but I was dealing with but my “own social life”. Hence, “it is no longer my participants’ interaction but our interactions”

VI. CONCLUSION

As social beings, teachers always relate to and with others. Meanwhile, the teaching profession is profuse with various kinds of interaction. The teachers as they teach the students are also bestowing themselves to them. They offer both their expertise and gift of self to their students.

The practice of teaching is personalized. As one of the themes pertains to personal life, teachers possess their own unique ways of handling their classes.

The essence of interaction in an academic institution presupposes harmony. The teachers live and work harmoniously. Though being unique as individuals, yet they share something in common that is being bestowed in their daily interactions.

Lastly, the findings of this study pertain to a unifying theme. Among the many forms of interaction being shared, the researcher came up with few themes that captured the essence of experience”.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed by the researcher based on the findings of this study:

1. The interaction between faculty members needs to be enhanced. In this way, they will know each other better that essentially lead into openness of the self in times of need both in the teaching profession and in the personal life.
2. A copy of this study needs to be furnished to the CTEAS department for the participants to be aware of the overall essence of their experiences.
3. For the school administrators, they need to look for activities that promote healthy interactions among their employees. In this sense, the spirit of camaraderie leads to a development of a community.
4. A further study on other lived experiences found in the school setting needs to be done so that some other realities would be unfolded. There are still a lot of phenomena that need to be inquired, analyzed, and interpreted

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