

# Self-Enhancement Strategies, Self-View and School Environment as Building Blocks for College Teachers' Expertise

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Teachers are a critical mass of professionals whose growth within the teaching profession is of great consequence to the effective imparting of knowledge and skills to students. While previous studies maintain that superior subject matter mastery, the ability to relate well to students, and innovative teaching strategies are qualities inherent in the teacher that qualify them to be adjudged as expert teachers, the present qualitative study argues that teachers' life in the academe, their choice of Self-enhancement schemes, their self-view and their conception of the schoolwork environment are contributory building blocks in defining and maintaining their expertise.

Key words: self-enhancement strategies, self-view, schoolwork environment, expert teachers

Being an expert teacher is a status concern that includes a continuous possession of expertise. Such expertise is important to remain in the established profession and organization (Wood, 1980; Duane & associates, 2002). To be adjudged as experts, teachers must possess three basic qualities in balanced proportions; subject matter expertise, the ability to relate well to students and mastery of instructional strategies (Kaplan & Owings, 2003; Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000).

As higher education faces enormous challenges, there is a need for expert teachers to continuously improve their skills and competencies based on new knowledge (Gessner, 1987; Berquist, 1995). Initiatives for personal and professional growth primarily considers further honing of the teachers' pedagogical practices (Olson & Craig; 2001), and of maintaining the fund of knowledge specific to the

discipline through attending courses, intensive reading and the like (Yinger & Nolen, 2003; Becher, 1996).

A teacher's interaction with people at work results in his/her conception about himself and of others. This self-conception continuously undergoes change throughout life (Feldman, 1996; Brown, 2003; Vander Zanden, 1993). The teacher's self-view is an objectification of the self in the form of self-perceptions which are private and cannot be directly known to others unless revealed through language (Brown, Brooks, & associates, 2002; Erez & Earle, 1993). Carl Rogers (Duke, 1990), says that self-concept, similar to self-view, is an image of the self or the way one thinks about oneself or of one's role. Brown (2003) views the development of self-concept as a life-long process that begins with the individual's first awareness of himself as a person. Since the self has the capacity for self-evaluation, it generates needs for self-enhancement, needs that are partly shaped by the culture and personal characteristics of the individual (Erez & Earle, 1993).

Like other professionals, teachers are faced with unpredictable work situations that can affect their morale, performance and psychological state (Becker & Steele, 1995). They deal with a work environment where action

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takes place that either stimulates them to achieve or acts as a disincentive (Willis & Dubin, 1990; Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2003).

While a significant number of studies were directed toward expert teachers and what factors allow them to develop expertise, specific patterns in the strategies the expert teachers employ to further enhance their teaching competence, how their self view and the nature of the teaching environment can affect their teaching performance, have not fully explained how these factors bear on their survival in the academe. Moreover, this in turn could have important consequences on the students' quality of learning.

The purpose of this paper was to articulate three main issues relevant to the teachers' maintenance of their expert status in the academe. Specifically, the study sought to explore the methods the expert teachers use for their professional enhancement; characterize the teachers' views of themselves in relation to their teaching roles; and analyze the factors in the working environment that are either supportive or that impair the teachers' performance.

## Literature Review

### *Teachers' Self-Enhancement Strategies*

A considerable amount of literature has been accumulated on the importance of regular academic updating in assisting old and new faculty to deal with new and enormous cache of fresh innovations in knowledge transformation and transmission. Becher (1999) assumed that most professionals respond to new developments in knowledge through attending courses, reading and talking to colleagues. However, promoting faculty change and development is dependent on the availability of resources as well as the perception that the faculty themselves should show interest and assume personal responsibility in identifying their varied personal development needs (Smolen, 1996; Riner & Billings, 1999).

Being aware of the different dimensions and expected boundaries of the enrichment needs of the expert faculty is at the root of ensuring the creation of a viable continuing self-development process among them. Olson and Craig (2001) concluded that the traditional focus in teacher professional

development consisted of prescribed ideas intended to shape prospective and practicing teachers' pedagogical practices. However, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) believed that there is a need to understand the teachers' professional growth process and the conditions that support it and to allow teachers to make choices about their own professional development (Bainer, 2000). Preferences for development and how this development is received were found to be varied and complex with experienced faculty as the largest group affected by changes in education and practice (Riner & Billings, 1999).

Being expert teachers places pressure on them to work toward retaining the reputation that they have carved for themselves in the organization. According to McDiarmid (1998) and Aucoin (1999), since they are already in the mainstream of teaching, there is a need for them to attend educational activities in order to gain practical knowledge that can be applied to improve their teaching. One of the salient ideas and issues emerging from a cross project analysis study of Ruthwen, Henessy, and Deany (2005) showed that enhancing lesson resources by the teacher was achieved through the use of internet materials.

### *Self-View*

People interact with others based on their perception of who they are. Osborn and Broadfoot (1993) explained how sources of influence shape teachers' view of their role and that the difficulties in teaching are mainly the result of both their self-imposed demands and the demands being put on teachers by society. Experienced teachers could be assumed to hold a particular view of themselves and what they are capable of doing, which could explain why they behave in specific ways with others in the academic community. Individuals rely on self-views to estimate their performance levels which may vary from the truth because those estimates are influenced by inaccurate self-views of their abilities (Ehrlinger & Dunning, 2003). Biestra and Mediema (2002) alleged that the pedagogical task conceived as a concern for the whole person of the student is the proper and all encompassing task of educators.

### *Work Environment*

A workplace influences success in teaching, and the

teachers' perceptions and interpretations of the school, students and teaching performance (Hebert & Worthy, 2001), and its perception is derived from attitudes and expectations that faculty members have about working relationships, personal growth and organizational systems (Doughty, May, Butell, & Tong, 2002). As virtual members of knowledge communities, the faculty cannot escape from the imperatives of working with others, e.g., both colleagues and students. in the achievement of the common educational goal.

Veteran educators can support and validate positive relationships with younger faculty members by simple gestures of acceptance through overt respect and joining them in informal lunches (Magnuson, 2002). Billet (2002), in proposing a model for workplace pedagogy, maintained that it is possible to identify key roles through which those with the greater expertise can guide the learning of individuals in the workplace. It was found that more experienced co-workers can be instrumental in assisting learners' development through managing the pace and sequencing of activities for learners.

Cawyer and Davis (2002) posited that accessibility is the most important feature of mentoring newcomers by experienced colleagues, by allowing them to establish interpersonal bonds, and to receive support and advice. Friendship is primarily related to decreased turnover intentions. Cohesiveness and opportunities for friendship are related to increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment. It is important that the workplace gives a sense of belonging just like a church, community or extended family (Morrison, 2004).

Staten, Mangalindan, Saylor, and Stuenkel (2003), assumed that control in the work environment is an important factor in staff retention and in maintaining a quality workplace. Communication is essential to a sense of collegiality that tolerates intellectual diversity, encourages open debate and maintains ordinary human decencies in day-to-day working relations (Harrison & Brodeth, 1999). In any work setting, there is at play a characteristic group psychology that can either inhibit or encourage the drive for personal standards of excellence and self development. In a study of peer supervision framed within the context of a formal school board, Wallace (1998) divulged that all the teachers in the study eschewed coaching. Teachers did not see conferences, observations and record keeping as essential to their daily practice. They were more receptive to

the general idea of being helped than coached or supervised.

In dealing with students, Klaasen (2002) revealed how teachers are fearful of the moral issues that can arise in their classes and of situations wherein they must settle disputes, deal with inappropriate behavior, decide moral dilemmas and decide what merits study.

## Method

### *Study Design*

A qualitative design, specifically the life history method, was selected for this study. This method allowed the researcher to listen and prompt the telling of the teachers' life story for the purpose of understanding their life in oral form (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Stories have their own logic and are temporal (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Denzin, 1989). Slices of life can be reconstructed through the story telling or use of narrative. Moen, Gudmundsdotter and Flem (2003) asserted that one way of structuring experiences is to organize them into meaningful units as the participants in this study revealed their experiences relative to the particular segments of their professional lives.

Life history is thought to be the best available technique for studying the socialization of teachers, their occupation as teachers, their work experience as well as their situational response to the daily interactional possibilities which exist in a school organization (Roberts, 2002). Life histories are briefer, more focused biographies mostly told from the teachers' own perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), and as they describe the way they see themselves in relation to the larger work context, the school situation can be critically understood and what these would mean to their well-being as expert teachers.

### *Sampling Procedure*

Using purposeful sampling, a group of 15 professors was identified from the different academic units of a high profile, comprehensive university in Metro Manila. The participants were chosen based on the following criteria: they must be tenured, a holder of an MA, MS or a Ph.D.,

must be rated highly satisfactory by his or her students, and they must be actively engaged in research activities.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

In-depth interviews which lasted from 1½ to 2 hours were carried out with 15 expert teachers to produce the data and to bring to the surface what the teachers used as methods for self-enhancement, their self-view and how the schoolwork environment impact on the maintenance of their expert status. Procuring the data for these three main aspects of the study were taken into account in the *aide memoir*. As the teachers were telling their stories, they were prodded to elaborate on what they meant at certain points as the researcher searched likewise for deeper implications as she listened to them (Creswell, 1998).

Table 1

#### *Aide Memoir*

Self-Enhancing Strategies
What do you do to enhance your basic knowledge and skills in teaching?
How often do you attend professional updates?
How do you share and exchange educational ideas and with whom?
How does involvement in professional organization help you grow as a teacher?
Self-View
What did you believe about yourself?
If you were to compare yourself with an object, what are you?
How would other faculty members and students describe you?
What does it mean to be a teacher?
Working Environment
How do you relate with senior and new faculty members?
How often do you socialize with your colleagues?
With whom do you discuss student needs and progress?
What were the instances when you were acknowledged and supported by your colleagues and in what way?
How does your working environment empower you as a teacher?

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis started with coding significant statements in the interview transcripts. Major themes in the responses were noted and the bases for interpretation. From a larger context, (professional, personal, social as well as institutional), the researcher then explained the implications of, and provided an integrated explanation of the experiences of the teachers.

## **Findings**

### ***Expert Teachers' Strategies for Professional Self-Enhancement***

The outcome of the interviews with the participants unveiled a number of different strategies they resorted to for professional self-enhancement, which could be typified as:

*a. Hermetic activities* that are solitary in nature, in the form of traditional/technological individual sourcing of teaching materials; attending seminars of their choice and other forms of professional development that did not depend on opportunities sponsored by the school, hence they oftentimes had to pay on their own. Most participants reported that for their personal content enhancement in their subject area, reading books and journals and surfing the Internet were a regular practice. About eight of the 15 participants had little time to go to the library because they were assigned too much classroom teaching, but relied increasingly on the Internet for the sourcing of teaching materials. On the other hand, the teachers realized that combining books and Internet sourcing provided a richer array of teaching materials. Teacher O felt that reading was a way of getting off the hook of old teaching practices. She stated:

*"I read, read, read. Yes, because the instructors who taught us used mostly lectures that's why what I learned from them are all lectures until I was exposed to other methods of teaching."* (Teacher O)

*b. Heteronomic activities* consisting of systematic arrangement of involvement in professional organizations, collegial academic exchanges through professional meetings,

international and local conferences, presentations and professional skills development activities were considered bottomless wells for sourcing new trends in skills and knowledge.

Sharing expertise and exchanging ideas about education with professionals from other schools in the country took the form of published studies and books. However, only five participants claimed they have published internationally and locally. Most of them found it difficult to write and publish because they were occupied with demanding classroom schedules and related concerns. All the participants acknowledged that publication is an ultimate indication of scholarship and agreed that it could bring their teaching to a higher level, as well as immortalize one's name among peers and students. As succinctly put by a teacher:

*"I find fulfillment in writing. The activity of writing gives me a kind of fulfillment which money can't give. Seeing your article with your name on it gives me a lift. So I keep on writing. Nonetheless, I see myself there . . . an extension of myself. In writing, I speak to an audience, they don't see me, yet I speak before them."*

All the participants in the study claimed active involvement with their respective professional organizations as members and officers in several organizations. Teacher F found that involvement in organizations made it easy for him to gain access to new developments in his discipline through active interchange of ideas.

*"It helps me a lot. It helps me become more determined, more positive in my outlook in life, it makes me more concerned with the welfare of my students. After all they are the recipients of what I am trying to learn in life. They are my beneficiaries."*

### ***The Expert Teachers' Self- View***

When asked to describe themselves as teachers, two distinct roles were made apparent: (a) *roles relative to students* and (b) *roles in relation to work*.

(a) *Roles relative to students*. The expert teachers saw themselves in several levels of relationship with students: as friend, mother, teacher and counselor. Trying their best to be fair, compassionate and patient caused them to engage in deep reflection about their multi-faceted role. The teachers

gave various metaphorical descriptions about themselves and their roles as teachers. They described themselves as specific objects such as a watch, the sun, a ball, water, a book, a fresh flower, a writing pad, a writing instrument, a comfortable cushion and diamonds. They offered a variety of explanations that have specific psychological meaning to them.

Four teachers imagined that students perceived them as strict, intimidating or unapproachable. In contrast, nearly every one of the participants thought that students would describe them as friendly, approachable, kind and a mother-like figure.

As student advocates, their actions were influenced by three main concerns for students: poor grades, attitude problems and economic problems. Sometimes students' concerns contained a number of moral elements, which they felt they had to attend to with caution. Teacher N clarified this:

*"Initially, (in such cases), I discuss with the department heads, because if it is about the progress of the students I don't like them to be the subject of unnecessary talk among teachers. So, if I really have a problem with the grade of a student, I go to the department head or supervisor to ask them for their suggestions. If I have to discuss the situation with other colleagues, I never mention the name of the student. I don't gossip about students with other teachers. I, of course, know what the students would want us to or would not want us to talk about them."*

(b) *Roles relative to work*. The teachers viewed themselves in terms of their transition from the follower role to initiator role, and developed an expanded perspective of concern for students, their peers and other aspects of life in the academe. When a teacher said, "As an educator . . . I don't teach only for the sake of getting a salary" it echoed what most of them felt as a triumph over self-interest which they admitted as characteristic of their earlier years as teachers.

As teachers, the participants regarded themselves as potent sources of motivation and inspiration for the younger faculty members through their published articles and their performance as teachers. They were aware that young faculty members deferred to them, especially in regard to professional development and in making decisions.

The participants indicated that to be teachers meant being in a noble but demanding job. They also acknowledged the many ramifications of the teachers' job, which were related to the execution of their tasks as teacher.

*"It entails a lot of sacrifice, like for example, when you're home, instead of spending time with your family, you have to do something like checking examination papers, doing some reading . . . (and) we have to be careful with teaching our students in the clinical area because if they make mistakes we are (the ones) held liable. The responsibility is really great (because) the lives of patients depend on you, and you cannot take this for granted. That's the worry."* (Teacher G)

*"To be a teacher is to be everything. You can be a parent, a guidance counselor, brother or sister. Teaching is a multi-faceted thing."*(Teacher I)

### ***The Effect of the School Working Environment on the Expert Teachers' Performance***

The participants described their relationship with the senior and junior colleagues as generally collegial. Five participants admitted that in earlier years, as young faculty members, they deferred to the more senior faculty members, but as senior faculty members they were supportive of the junior faculty members who they treated in a similar way to an understudy to prepare them for more teaching responsibilities later on. A male faculty member practiced respect and toleration for those whose company he could not avoid otherwise he dealt with them very formally. When there was friction, one of the participants recommended a more understanding approach to facilitate harmony when dealing with difficult situations. Overall, the participants assumed that their colleagues viewed them as friendly and approachable, although one was not certain how other faculty members would describe her.

On the whole, the participants made use of their familiarity with the structure of relationships that aided them in deciding with whom to discuss serious teaching and learning problems.

The lighter side of their day-to-day existence consisted of convivial and informal activities unrelated to teaching. During informal chats, the teachers talked just about anything *"from the lofty to the ridiculous"* according to Teacher I. Six of the teachers viewed socialization as

necessary to keep their sense of equilibrium, although the rest were concerned about the appropriateness of taking part in occasions of friendly bonding. Three participants disclosed having to choose between socialization activities with colleagues and their family commitments and other reasons. Teacher E felt it was more important *"to be with my family so I don't go out casually with my colleagues"*. On the other hand, Teacher L had a positive view of going out with other faculty members but *"I don't anymore, because I'm getting old now."*

Every one of the participants reported that they were rightfully recompensed for what they were doing. Recognition and reward for their good performance were in the form of awards and promotion. They were also grateful for the cordial manner their colleagues demonstrated support in times of need, or appreciation, or during personal triumphs. The proceeding explanation provides an insight into how acknowledgment and support were extended to them:

*"I felt so acknowledged when I became a Dangal Awardee. It was my first time to feel that. 'Wow!' there were lots of flowers and everyone was congratulating me. Then, when I was operated on, many faculty members visited me at a time that I was vulnerable. It gave me a beautiful feeling that many cared for me."*(Teacher E)

In contrast, a participant expressed her disappointment over her inability to obtain collegial support. She stated

*"I am supported by significant people, but colleagues . . . there are those who do not support me, (because) there are those who are envious. Sometimes they put you down, when they think you are progressing."* (Teacher B)

The working conditions and the working atmosphere were described positively by a good number of the participants in the study. They mentioned that new classrooms and faculty rooms that were newly renovated afforded privacy for everyone wanting to concentrate. There was openness and collegiality and a good working atmosphere. Instances of negative feelings were assumed to be manageable. Although the working conditions and working atmosphere were described in positive terms, at least one struck a note of dissatisfaction. As expressed by Teacher (E),

*"In terms of remuneration, the difference in salary*

*does not adequately compensate me which I don't feel good about considering that I have to earn my keep during summer and they (others) do not come but get paid, that's what I do not like. The working atmosphere is good, the relationship is good, except for the workload and demands."*

Other faculty members associated their satisfaction to the positive relationships of people in the organization and the rational policies that emanated from the administration. One of them said:

*"It really helps if the administration trusts us. It helps that the administration will not police your every move; because I feel I am effective and efficient (even) when nobody is looking. For example: checking the attendance of the faculty. But what happens inside the classroom? It is as if you're only concerned with efficiency, but how about the effectiveness of the faculty. Come on . . . people get sick, people have problems. You cannot be 100% efficient and effective. There are times when there is very high morale, times when it's very low. I guess in the college, nobody is afraid to say anything, and with a dean who trusts us, it's empowering."* (Teacher J)

## Discussion

### *Self-Enhancing Activities*

The expert teachers revealed that financial constraints limited their attendance to important conferences to meet their professional development requirements not sponsored by their institution of affiliation. The situation mirrored the teachers' need for a more liberal monetary assistance by the school. This calls to mind Gessner's (1987) criticism that continuing education has been dependent on a patchwork structure of support systems to fund programs for the academic enhancement of teachers. The institution-sponsored professional updates were sometimes incompatible to their needs. Thus, prescribed ideas intended to shape teachers' pedagogical practices (Olson & Craig, 2001) did not always address the teachers' professional development priorities. As adults who have had many varied experiences, the expert teachers can judge the value of a learning activity and its relevance to their own professional development

(Battenwald & Merriam, 1982; Bainer, 2000; Riner & Billings, 1999). Professional development is a synchronic concern between the teachers and the organization that understands the process by which teachers grow professionally and the conditions that support and promote that growth (Chrispeels & Burke, 2003; Clement & Vanderberg, 2000; Clarke & Hollingsworth 2002).

The participants admitted that they did not have time to go to the library but found reading materials from the Internet really dependable for the content augmentation of their subjects. The shift from the traditional to the technological sourcing of teaching materials warranted the teachers' need for more time to read. A well-guarded possession, knowledge jurisdiction (Yinger & Nolen, 2003) that is expanded through reading, is essential to maintaining the fund of knowledge, which teachers must ever enhance by reading to ensure their claim to academic immortality.

Constant academic bonding with other teachers both inside and outside the university likewise helped most professionals to search for new knowledge in their areas of expertise through talking to colleagues (Becher, 1999) and sharing original ideas from their published studies and books. In return, they get advance knowledge from such collegial interactions, and a deepened understanding of their role as teachers. Clement and Vanderberg (2000) observed that interactions among teachers offer learning opportunities, especially when they have strong content and pedagogical knowledge that they carry along in professional group meetings (Morris, Chrispeels, & Burke, 2003; Duke, 1990).

### *The Expert Teachers' Self-View*

In general, the participants indicated positive self-views as teachers in terms of their abilities and other attributes. Their self-descriptions likewise showed that they looked at themselves from specific frames of reference. Their great self-confidence in their capabilities was strongly linked to their perceived roles as teachers. Ehrlinger and Dunning (2003) have explained that the chronic self-views people hold regarding their abilities can influence their performance estimate. On the other hand, Ben-Peretz, Mendelson, and Kron (2003) have argued that the teachers' professional roles are closely linked to their self-image and their impact on the learning and achievement of their students. However,

Osborn, and Broadfoot (1993) called attention to the very little knowledge about the sources of influence that shape the way teachers built up a view of their role.

The majority of the participants were optimistic about how their colleagues and their students would describe them. Vanden Zanden (1993) explained this positive assumption as having to do with the conceptions people have of themselves and others, which they use as a basis for interacting with one another. The participants also had varied ways of defining themselves, which indicated their use of different sets of dimensions in defining and judging themselves (Rathus, 1991). The various roles they identified were dependent on the meanings they attributed to their teaching responsibilities.

The participants disclosed their experiences of the rewards and downsides of teaching. What the teachers considered as the difficulties of teaching could be the result of self-imposed demands and the demands of society (Osborn & Broadfoot, 1993), at the same time that teaching was for them a source of self-esteem and affective rewards.

### *The Schoolwork Environment*

The participants revealed that their relationship with the older faculty members was characterized by a deference that was rather intricate and a little uncomfortable. This is to be expected since most of them were their former teachers. On one hand, Fontana (1990) stated that people in a work setting would tend to defend their turf in a social work milieu, and there is a tendency to defend one's own professional position and one's ego rather than the abilities of the juniors concerned or the interest of the organization. On the other hand, Viernes and de Guzman (2005) averred that the concept of the workplace as a family and as a community added to the significance of relationships as a strong influence in teaching practice. Interactions with colleagues are seen not as an obligation but as part and parcel of their being a teacher and a member of the school family.

The participants' efforts to make younger teachers feel at ease indicated their personal transition from being receptors to being dispensers of favors or help (Magnuson, 2000; Wallace, 1998). Collegiality, made explicit as accessibility to others, is one of the important organizational determinants of the teachers' continuous professional

development (Clement & Vanderberg, 2000; Berquist, 1995; Cawyer & Davis, 2002). During their free time, the participants said that small talks helped them get relief from the tensions of teaching.

The participants confirmed the contribution of the work milieu and the prevailing atmosphere on their achievement of a level of perfection in teaching. Teachers, like other professionals are faced daily with erratic work situations made complex by the presence of individuals with different levels of work engagement motives. In the same manner, the physical environment exerts an effect on the teachers' psychological health, which is critical to their professional development and performance quality (Morrison, 2004; Millin, in Willis & Dubin, 1990; Porter, Bigley, & Steers, 2003; Hebert & Worthy, 2002; Clement & Vanderberghe, 2000; Becker & Steele, 1995). It includes amenities where one can think, write, talk or read (Becker & Steele, 1995) and influences not only relative success in teaching but also the teachers' perceptions and interpretation of her school, students and teaching performance (Hebert & Worthy, 2001; Doughty, May, Butell, & Tong, 2002). Furthermore, a teaching context has a significant impact on teachers' images of their professional selves and their knowledge base (Peretz, Mendelson, & Kron 2003; Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). Above all other concerns, dealing with students' needs, problems and progress with caution, the possibility that moral issues can arise from mishandling situations involving students are all factors of import (Klaasen, 2002).

A redeeming aspect of the teachers' tedious life is friendship with co-teachers (Morrison, 2004). However, family life and other concerns could get in the way of fulfilling work-related socialization (Muchinsky, 1993). The expert teachers in the study were midlife individuals who were becoming critically aware of life's potential limits in time that affect the amount of time they were willing to spend in other activities (Dolpin & Holtzclaw, 1983).

The majority of the participants believed that they were able to motivate and inspire younger teachers through their achievements along with their warm support for them. Reeve, Jang, Hardre, and Omura (2002) mentioned that providing a rationale for doing something worthwhile is one way of motivating others.

## Conclusions

The impact of the 3 S's, consisting of self-enhancing strategies, self-view and schoolwork environment, on the teachers' academic welfare and staying power have been successfully unearthed in this study. The expert teachers have represented their lives as teachers honestly and without unnecessarily romanticizing it, and showed a profound self-understanding of their abilities, achievements, even their shortcomings and frustrations. The next generation of teachers who behold these expert teachers as models, will benefit from their accumulated wisdom from years of exemplary practice. There is, therefore, a need to encourage a mentoring relationship between a veteran teacher and a new teacher. An informed method of framing this proposed scheme must be supported by research for successful application.

Some significant implications are deduced from this study. Particular attention and support must be given to maintaining the teachers' expertise and continuous professional growth as teachers. Being aware of new trends, new technologies and new knowledge developments were at the base of their increasing self-confidence as teachers. Thus, there is a need for the professional development programs to take into account the particular updating needs of the teachers as central to the determination of their updating priorities. Yet, this alone will not suffice. It is important for the school administration not only to give ample financial support but also treat such activities as a mutual search for excellence. The experiences described by the participants became even more meaningful when seen in the immediate instructional context. The work milieu that the participants found to be near ideal exerts a powerful role in shaping the teachers' academic life, their advancement as experts, and their survival in the academe.

Admittedly, the findings of this study cannot warrant confident generalization because the respondents came from only one comprehensive university. In the light of this fact, together with the use of a qualitative approach that poses limitations on generalizing the findings, this author recommends further research on the vital influences of the factors of self-enhancement strategies, self-view, and schoolwork environment on the college teachers' academic life using other appropriate research designs.

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