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Autoethnographic Research: A Personal Journey through Education and Professional Development

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Abstract

This autoethnographic study examines the researcher's educational and professional journey, emphasizing transformative experiences that have shaped their teaching philosophy and identity. It pursues three key objectives: analyzing the researcher's journey, linking personal experiences to broader educational theories, and providing insights for educators to foster reflection and growth. Utilizing autoethnography, the research combines personal narrative, reflexivity, and cultural context. The narrative details the researcher's path from an elementary teacher, focusing on foundational skills and understanding student diversity, to higher education, where critical thinking and active learning became priorities. Progress continued with a master's degree and ongoing doctoral studies, emphasizing evidence-based practices and leadership. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted challenges in adapting to online teaching and the necessity of empathy in student engagement. Additionally, participation in workshops and professional organizations enriched the researcher's methods. This study ultimately underscores the significance of self-reflective research in understanding factors influencing professional growth in education, offering insights for educators and students alike.

Keywords: Autoethnographic; Teaching Journey; Educational Reflection; Pedagogical Development; Cultural Experiences; Leadership in Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Within the realm of education and career development, autoethnographic research serves as a perspective for individuals to contemplate and critically assess the evolving dynamics of learning, instruction, and professional growth. This reflective method allows the researcher to explore the development of their values, skills, obstacles, and successes, placing them within larger educational and professional contexts.

It enables researchers to explore their personal experiences within larger frameworks, forming a story that connects on both personal and group levels. According to Grant (2023), This approach, rooted in personal storytelling, facilitates a reflective examination that frequently reveals insights into identity, career obstacles, and cultural experiences that conventional methods may overlook. Moreover, this research utilizes autoethnography to record and examine the researcher's distinctive journey through education and career growth. Through reflection on their own experiences, the researcher seeks to offer insights into the individual and organizational elements that influence professional identity, learning dynamics, and career progression. This method facilitates a richer comprehension of the personal challenges, achievements, and changes that are frequently overlooked in traditional educational research.

This research contributes to the discipline by showcasing how personal stories and selfreflection can provide distinct perspectives that enhance our comprehension of educational experiences and the development of professional identity. Through examining personal experiences, the researcher offers a relatable story that may connect with others on similar journeys, fostering empathy, contemplation, and potentially inspiration for future researchers and practitioners. Furthermore, this study promotes the creation of more inclusive educational policies and practices by emphasizing the individual aspects of learning and professional growth.

➢ *Objectives of the Study*

The study aims to contribute to the field of educational research by providing a nuanced, personal perspective that combines lived experience with academic

insight, fostering a deeper understanding of the personal dimensions of learning and professional advancement.

This research aims to achieve the following:

- To examine researcher's educational journey, highlighting personal growth, struggles, milestones, and significant contributing experiences.
- To connect personal experiences to educational theories, noting systemic challenges and highlighting resources that support professional and personal growth within society.
- To provide insights for teachers and learners to enhance educational practices, promote reflection, and support personal development.

II.   METHOD OF RESEARCH

Autoethnographic research is composed of several interrelated components that facilitate both personal reflection and social analysis. These parts are essential for constructing a narrative that conveys the complexity of lived experiences within cultural or organizational contexts. Key components of autoethnographic research include:

➤ *Personal Narrative and Reflexivity*
These narratives serve as data that represent the researcher's lived experiences, often focusing on transformative events in education or career development. Reflexivity—the process of critically examining one's biases, assumptions, and role within the narrative—is essential for adding depth and transparency to these accounts (Grant, 2023)

➤ *Cultural and Social Context*
This contextualization allows the researcher to explore how larger forces shape personal and professional identity. For instance, an educator's journey may include reflections on how institutional policies or cultural norms in education impact their experiences and values (Ellis et al., 2011).

➤ *Ethical Considerations*
As autoethnography entails in-depth personal narratives, it frequently brings up ethical concerns regarding privacy, consent, and representation— especially when addressing sensitive experiences or incorporating others into the story. Researchers need to thoughtfully reflect on the ethical consequences of revealing personal and relational details (Adams, 2024).

III.   DISCUSSION AND NARRATIVE

This research is delved into the transformative power of my self-reflective research. Through this journey, autoethnography offers valuable insights for educators, students, and professionals, encouraging reflective practice and a deeper understanding of the factors shaping personal and professional growth.

➤ *My Early Beginnings: Laying the Foundation*
This study signifies my path as an educator, beginning with my first knowledges in elementary schools to my present position as an Instructor III at Laguna State Polytechnic University (LSPU). With this, Researcher aim to share journey as a teacher, the obstacles encountered, and the professional growth experiences that influenced teaching philosophy.

Researcher academic path commenced at Makativille Elementary School, where served as an elementary teacher for three years. This initial stage career was both demanding and fulfilling, as responsible for providing basic knowledge while meeting the diverse needs of young learners. It was during this time that realized the importance of creating a secure and encouraging educational environment. Appreciated that teaching is more than just sharing knowledge; it encompasses building trust and ensuring that students feel encouraged, motivated, and empowered.

In the classroom setting, occasionally struggled to handle behaviors and adjust teaching strategies to meet different learning needs. However, the most significant lesson learned during this time was realizing that every learner arrives with their unique background, learning speed, and emotional requirements. In the quest to address varied needs of the students, concentrated on designing stimulating lessons and cultivating an environment where students felt secure to share their thoughts and investigate new concepts. This essential experience significantly shaped present teaching method to establish a classroom atmosphere that encourages curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

➤ *Transition to Higher Education: Evolving as an Educator*
The transformation from elementary education to taking on as part-time teaching role at LSPU represented a notable turning point in researcher career. In this new position, started teaching college students, which brought forth fresh challenges and chances for development. In a role as a part-time instructor, It was assigned to teach topics within a more specialized area, including Environmental Management, Social Sciences, Biological Sciences, and Natural Sciences.

This transition from basic to advanced education compelled to reevaluate teaching philosophy and modify methods. The purpose in shifted from merely imparting basic knowledge to fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills in a discipline that holds practical relevance. Started prioritizing active learning approaches, motivating students to interact with the material via practical projects and conversations. Throughout this time, researcher also started to recognize the importance of technology in education, especially as digital resources began to play a more vital role in improving classroom instruction.

➢ *Growth through Formal Education: Master's Degree and Beyond*

As completed Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) with a focus on Administration & Supervision from PHINMA Union College of Laguna. This was a significant phase in authors life, not only enhanced academic qualifications but also refined abilities in educational leadership. The MAEd program introduced to different theories and methods in educational management, enabling to enhance leadership approach. It was while pursuing master's degree that recognized the significance of combining research and evidence-based methods in education. Understood that the most effective teachers are also researchers—regularly evaluating and enhancing their techniques to better learning results.

After finishing master's degree, author aimed to challenge more by continue educational path by enrolled a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program in Science Education at the University of Perpetual Help System Dalta. In the early stages of this program, enlightening my knowledge of pedagogy and science education. This decision to engage in doctoral studies proves author dedication to continuous learning and aspiration to make a significant contribution to the field of education through research and scholarship.

➢ *Navigating the Challenges of the New Normal*

The unforeseen shift to online education necessitated adapting to different teaching techniques, which included by mastering online learning management systems (LMS) and virtual classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic, a particularly challenging period in author career. Initially, the transition felt threatening, as struggled to reach the same level of engagement and interaction that made during face-to-face classes. Nonetheless, the knowledge acquired from workshops like Classroom Online, Innovative Strategies for the Digital Era and Learning Management Systems and Distance Education proved essential in enabling transition to a more efficient online teaching method.

From these experiences, cultivated a deep principle in the adaptability of learning. Author became increasingly aware of the needs of students facing challenges with remote learning by offering extra resources and different methods of involvement. The pandemic further emphasized the importance of empathy in education. While students faced the hurdles of remote learning, intentionally sought to connect with them on both academic and emotional levels, offering the assistance required for their success during these challenging periods.

➢ *Professional Development and Lifelong Learning*

As a dedicated educator to professional development, Researcher engaged in numerous trainings, seminars, and workshops. Notable seminars feature in the National Graduate Teacher Education Seminar-Workshop (NGTESW) along with workshops focused on Instructional Transition and Digital Transformation in Education. These professional growth opportunities have been essential in supporting me to keep up with current trends in education, especially concerning technology integration, research methods, and instructional strategies.

By joining in different seminars, author also started to recognize the significance of working together with other educators. By participating in professional groups like the Philippine Association of Graduate Students in Teacher Education (PAGSTE) as Treasurer for External Affairs, Philippine Association for Teachers and Educators, Inc. (PAFTE) and Philippine Association for Laboratory Animal Science (PALAS), Author have been able to connect with similar professionals, share ideas, and gain insights from the experiences of others. These networks have played a role in development as an educator and a leader

➢ *Reflections and Future Aspirations*

Reflecting on journey, author realize that the road to becoming a teacher was not straightforward or simple. It has been marked by experiences of growth, obstacles, and important lessons learned. The development of teaching philosophy—from a focus on fundamental knowledge delivery to promoting critical questioning—shows the continual dedication to enhancing skills.

While pursuing PhD studies, Author intends to enhance research skills, especially in the field of science education. Seek to examine the overlap between environmental science and education techniques, studying how innovative teaching strategies can enhance student engagement in environmental matters. Moreover, It aim to persist the role as a mentor and leader, inspiring my students to follow their interests and make significant contributions to society.

IV.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The autoethnographic research highlights the significant role of personal experience in shaping one's teaching philosophy, growth, and educational practices. Through self-reflection, the research underscores how an individual's educational background, challenges, and achievements contribute to their professional development. By connecting experiences with the broader educational context. Ultimately, each journey highlights the significance of continuing learning, creativity, flexibility, and guidance in education. As we foresee the future, we stay dedicated to fostering a secure, inclusive, and stimulating educational environment for every student, assisting them in acquiring the skills needed to flourish in a constantly shifting world.

Future studies should emphasize broadening autoethnographic research to incorporate wide-ranging cultural, institutional, and socio-economic settings. Additionally, educators could benefit from integrating personal narratives in professional development programs to deepen understanding of teaching practices and enhance learner engagement.

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