Constructing Teacher Communities

for Professional Development in a Filipino Setting

By

TERESITA-SALVE R. TUBIANOSA

Bachelor of Science in Education, Bicol University, 1981
Masters of Art in Education, Annunciation College, 1986

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Department of Curriculum Studies
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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This study of science teachers in a Philippine state school explored the potential of group discussions as a learning landscape considering, in particular, how sharing of teaching experiences may contribute to professional growth. The study was conducted from July 1997 to January 1998. The main objectives were to gain an understanding of the influence of social interactions in improving the practice of individual teachers; and to explore how Filipino culture affects the interaction process.

The setting of the study was the science department at a state school (K-10) in the Philippines. A discussion group was established to explore how teacher interaction might serve to raise awareness and shape classroom practice. The group discussions and individual interviews were videotaped and audiotaped, respectively. Group discussion as an intervention of the study provided an opportunity to examine how certain Filipino cultural traits and traditions may influence the participation of teachers in the interaction process.

Qualitative analyses of the data provided information about the nature, value, benefits, and constraints of group discussions in learning to teach. The findings suggest that improvement in teaching is a collective rather than an individual enterprise and that teaching happens best in concert with colleagues (Rosenholtz, 1989); that collaboration is linked with norms and opportunities for continuous improvement and career-long learning (Fullan, 1991); that by interacting collaboratively, strengths can be maximized, weaknesses can be minimized, and the result will be better for all (Friend & Cook, 1992); that a learning forum free from traditional restraints is instructive (Krupnick, 1997); and that the field of education needs to capitalize on the knowledge of teachers who know about education as few others do (Duckworth, 1997).

The researcher argues that Filipino culture plays a significant role in the dynamics of interaction occurring during group discussions. Recognizing and identifying this role is
important if we wish to provide the teachers with the support, reassurance, and strength that their school and work demand.
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CHAPTER ONE
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Inherent in teaching is the notion of "giving" that requires teachers to give of
themselves, intellectually and emotionally. This constant giving process is a demanding,
draining, and taxing event, which can be difficult to sustain. Teaching responsibilities not
only involve instruction in the classrooms but also paperwork, lesson preparations,
committee meetings, student and parent consultations, and extra curricular activities. A
teacher’s day is often defined by a flurry of activities frequently independently
accomplished in the isolation of the classroom.

Good (1989) acknowledges the need to explore novel means of promoting
individual teacher excellence in ways that not only improve instruction but also inspire
teacher community, for example, a teacher’s willingness to help other teachers. However,
developing teacher community can be challenging. There is much in the school situation
that cuts teachers off from one another. What goes on under the label of discussions,
faculty meetings, committee meetings, and the like, often brings people together
physically, but keeps them emotionally, intellectually, and socially apart. While teacher
discussions and meetings provide opportunities for teachers to reach out to others, still a
distance exists between teachers. The fundamental independence of classroom teaching
appears to create a tension between individuality and the professional community. How
can the individual find a space in a professional community? What transpires if teacher
isolation shifts to a collective structure?

This study has evolved from my strong personal belief in the importance of
community for an individual’s growth. The study is based on my work with teachers on a
long-term educational reorientation program. That involvement with teachers has
contributed to my understanding of the significance of a continuous teacher development
program. While the value of working in groups to improve teaching has been
experienced by many, educators have fallen short on providing information about how to
sustain such vision, and they have not often articulated what a community means for the
role of the individual teachers and the school.

My interest in exploring how teachers, as a group, learn to teach was enhanced by
reading the success stories of teacher professional development activities in collaborative
settings (for example, Baird & Mitchell, 1987; Baird & Northfield, 1992; Barth, 1990;
Fullan, 1991; Rosenholtz, 1989). Reformers and educators agree about the need for
greater teacher collegiality and the development of a community of learners. However,
the growing movement promoting teacher communities is mostly taking place in North
America and Australia (Baird & Mitchell, 1987; Baird & Northfield, 1992; Duckworth &
the Experienced Teachers Group, 1997; Rosenholtz, 1989; Westheimer, 1998). The
favorable outcomes of teacher communities in some Western countries raised for me
fundamental questions about how a professional community might appear in a non-
Western context, and whether a collaborative model of professional development is
transferable to an Asian culture.

Studies of teacher communities conducted in Western countries suggest that two
assumptions can be made about collaboration and teacher development. First, it is
believed that a discussion group can provide a basis for a community where teachers talk,
share, observe, and analyze their teaching experiences. A second assumption is that
teacher interactions are invaluable for teacher professional development. For this study, a
third assumption is being made, namely, that culture is a factor that influences the outcome of teacher interactions.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the potential of a collaborative structure of teacher development in the Philippine setting and considers how sharing teaching experiences may contribute to professional growth. The objectives of this study are to explore the potential of group discussions about teaching practice for teacher professional development, and to examine the influence of social factors within a culture that facilitate and/or limit the ways in which teachers interact with each other. Moreover, the study goes further, inviting teacher practitioners and teacher educators to consider how conversations about teaching and learning can enrich understandings of what it means to teach, to become a teacher, and to grow as a teacher.

Investigating teaching practice should carry with it an intention to make the study useful to practitioners. For the research participants in this study and myself, a significant goal was that we would be learning, directly or indirectly, from working with each other. To achieve this goal, a discussion group of science teachers was set up. The group setting was also intended to make the study immediately useful to us as it progressed, in contrast with a later, completed study that would eventually contribute to a body of knowledge and result in useful applications.
Aside from its practical purpose of bringing teachers together to talk about their work and to provide a data-gathering service for teacher practitioners, teacher educators, and myself, the study specifically aimed:

1. to create a space for teachers to share their classroom experiences through group discussions;
2. to examine teachers' experiences in group discussion as a collaborative structure for teacher development; and
3. to explore the role that cultural factors play in a collaborative teacher development setting.

Research Questions

This study focused on (1) the potential of sharing teaching experiences in the group discussions for teachers' personal and professional development and (2) the influence of Filipino culture on the interaction process. The following questions are addressed in this study.

- What impact has group discussions on the personal and professional development of teachers?

This question looked into what teachers learn from interacting with each other through sharing stories about classroom experiences. Question 1 focused on two specific areas: (1) What is the nature of personal and professional growth which occur in a group discussion setting? and (2) What is the nature of community that promotes teacher growth?
• How is the interaction process during group discussions mediated by Filipino culture?

This question looked at the relationship between Filipino culture and the dynamics of interaction in the sharing sessions. Cultural practices and traditions that affected collaborative relationships were explored to determine linkages between culture and interactions. Question 2 specifically focused on Filipino practices and traditions manifested during the group discussions and how these practices and traditions affected an individual teacher's participation and the interaction process.

Significance of the Study

This study is important in that it involves teachers, in a non-western cultural setting, collectively attempting to deal with their own growth and learning. The context within which teachers work is seen as a dynamic interaction of personal, social, and cultural parts with effects on teachers and on how they teach and learn. As the study delves into a central issue of learning to teach -- the tension between teachers working in isolation and teachers working as members of a community -- the study takes on a particular significance. While generating an awareness of the varied possibilities for engagement in professional communities, the study explores the struggle between the individual needs and collective needs of teachers.
The importance of “restorying” (Black, 1993; Kennard, 1993) lived experiences in the classrooms set in a non-Western culture as a tool for research, teaching, and learning is a highlight of the study. Stories of teacher practitioners open a whole range of possibilities for teacher growth. They convey the realities in the classroom and can inform teaching practice, offer alternative perceptions about teacher professional development, and provide practical teaching exemplars communicated in the language of classroom teachers.

Research Methods

This study was conducted in a public elementary and secondary school under the control of a state university in Quezon City, Philippines, from June 1997 to January 1998. To address the research questions, a discussion group was set up which offered teachers an opportunity to share classroom stories. The discussion group was composed of 15 elementary and secondary teachers from the science department. Three teachers volunteered to be videotaped while teaching and to share parts of their videotaped lessons in the group discussions. These three teachers met with the researcher for pre- and post-group discussions, to plan the group discussions, and to explore their perceptions of sharing teaching experiences and of using their lessons as the focus of the group discussions.

The main sources of data are videotaped recordings of the group discussions and audiotapes of individual interviews. Observations, informal interactions with the teachers, school documents, and the researcher’s journal provide supplementary data in the form of written accounts about the teachers, school, and teacher interactions. The inductive
Excerpts from video and audio transcripts were used to illustrate important themes and patterns. A detailed account of the methodology is provided in Chapter 3.

Organization of the Thesis

This study is presented in seven chapters. The first chapter provides an overview and rationale of the study. It briefly explains the objectives, research questions, methodology, significance of the study, and organization of the thesis.

Chapter Two reviews the related literature that informs the study. Themes about teacher professional development and collaboration situate the study within the growing field of research conducted on teaching, teacher education, and collaboration. Literature about the features, problems, and possibilities of creating teacher communities for continuous personal and professional development guided the analysis.

Chapter Three presents the research methodology of the study and provides an outline of the activities in the conduct of the study. The research setting and participants involved in the study are briefly described in this chapter. A section in this chapter provides a glimpse of the Filipino culture, where common cultural practices and traditions are identified.

Chapter Four focuses on the collective experience of the teachers in the three group discussions. It provides a portrait of a community of teacher-learners that was taking shape in the process. This chapter accounts for the actual interactions that took place, supported by selected discussion episodes and graphics.
Chapter Five focuses on the impact of group discussions on the personal and professional development of teachers individually and collectively. This chapter examines the factors that promote and constrain group discussions as a structure for individual and group personal and professional growth.

Chapter Six explores the connection between the Filipino culture and the interaction process. This chapter revisits common Filipino cultural practices and traditions and discusses how these practices and traditions "gave voice" or "inhibited voice" during the interactions.

Chapter Seven summarizes the results of the study and discusses them in the light of the perspectives contained in the literature and within the Philippine cultural context. Recommendations and implications for further research are provided.
CHAPTER TWO

RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature that informed this study, then presents the need for a collaborative structure of continuing teacher professional development. Two bodies of literature influenced this study—teacher professional development and collaboration. The first set of literature presented explores the notion and importance of teacher professional development, and identifies sources that can provide support for teacher development. The literature presented on collaboration examines the features and components of a collaborative structure for learning to teach, then presents group discussions as a structure for professional development.

Teacher Professional Development

Often, the terms “professional development” and “in-service training” are used interchangeably. Differentiating the two will be helpful for this study. Based on my experience in an institution that trained science and mathematics teachers in Southeast Asia, in-service training encourages teachers to modify or change their practices after new sets of information are presented to them. By contrast, the focus of professional development is on the continuous support for a teacher, and it is provided throughout the course of the teaching career. In this study, the term “teacher professional development” refers to the life-long process of learning to teach, a continuum from recruitment to career-long teacher education. If teacher professional development is a long-term process, teachers need to acquire additional knowledge and skills to improve their teaching
practices. Hence, it becomes imperative that opportunities be made available to them to advance their knowledge and skills.

There is no single model of learning how to teach. Learning to teach means acquiring knowledge directly related to classroom performance (Carter, 1990). For Smylie (1988), teacher professional development refers to the process of learning to teach through activities designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and understanding of teachers. These changes lead, in turn, to changes in their thinking and classroom behavior. An important component of teachers’ learning is the expansion and elaboration of their professional knowledge to include what individual teachers bring to the social dynamics of teaching (Borko & Putnam, 1995). When teachers’ personal perceptions of their work interact with new information presented to them in a learning environment, they should derive new meanings from their connections and relationships. Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon (1996) view teacher professional knowledge as a “combination of formal and personal knowledge on which teachers base their practice” (p. 192). Their study explored the ways in which teachers use professional knowledge, and revealed that both formal and personal knowledge inform teaching and provide the basis for change. Learning that is grounded on practical activities enhanced by new techniques will have more personal meaning to the teachers. Ayers’ (1989) notion of learning to teach emerges from looking at the detail of teachers’ everyday practice. The secret of teaching, says Ayers, is to be found in the events unfolding in the classrooms, and we must turn to individual teachers in order to better understand teaching.

In their study, Davis and Sumara (1997) propose looking at learning to teach through an enactivist lens advocated by Varela, Thompson, & Rosch (1992). This
perspective extends the conventional notion of cognition as socially constructed to a perspective of learning in which there is a “co-emergence” of knowledge and identity. Davis and Sumara examine the pressures and forces at play in conventional schooling and conventional teacher training programs. They argue that pre-service and in-service programs do not account for the cultural circumstances that affect learning. Enactivism rejects the formal educational setting, that is, seminar rooms, and universities, as the principal locations for learning. There is a need to consider the personal experiences of the learner and the environment in which learning occurs. This emerging notion of learning to teach suggests that teaching is reenacting entrenched conceptions of what it means to teach. Davis and Sumara question learning to teach programs that emphasize fitting into, coping with, and copying existing practices. They envisage a program that interrogates the conditions that support teaching, a program that replaces the mechanical and business metaphors with an interpretive mind-set.

The enactivist view of learning to teach is a refusal to allow a clear distinction between knowledge and action, individual and collective, imagined and real. Enactivism questions the beliefs that learning is linear and is caused by the teaching act. Instead, it advocates learning as a collective activity, as a matter of coordinated actions of autonomous agents, offering an interpretation of human activity as relational, codetermined, and existing in a complex web of events. The teachers’ lived experiences in the classrooms serve as instruments for teachers to connect with others. Lived experiences are reflections of teachers’ knowledge and understanding of teaching. Sharing these stories provides opportunities for teachers to engage in conversations about teaching aimed at improving their practice by working harmoniously with other teachers.
Clandinin and Connelly (1988) talk about teachers as “knowledgeable and knowing persons” and as such their knowledge resides in their practice. Teachers are inventors of their own practice drawn from their training, experiences, skills, habits, personal values and beliefs, and conceptions of teaching and learning. Teachers’ knowledge reflects past and present experiences that contribute to planning future actions and the shaping of teaching practice. These personal experiences are enacted in their classroom practices and teaching lives. Clandinin and Connelly (1988) advocate the practice of sharing classroom stories as a form of learning to teach. The Project for Enhancing Effective Learning (PEEL) (Baird & Mitchell, 1987) and the Experienced Teachers Group (Duckworth and the Experienced Teachers Group, 1997) illustrate the possibilities of teachers learning with each other by sharing their teaching experiences. The two projects focus on telling and listening to stories of teaching to enhance professional growth.

PEEL, began as a collaborative project between teachers of Laverton Secondary School and education researchers of Monash University, and has continued to spread to other schools in Australia. The project demonstrates that teacher discussions about educational theory and classroom practice can contribute to advances in understanding teaching and improved student learning. The project illustrates the potential of a collaborative model to improve practice. The Experienced Teachers Program (ETP) is composed of thirteen teachers enrolled in a one-year graduate program in Harvard Graduate School of Education. The ETP was aimed at helping teachers become better teachers. The program grew out of an awareness of the power of experienced teachers sharing their knowledge with less experienced practitioners. The strength of teacher
collaboration emerged from these sharing experiences. In the Integrative Seminar, a one-year course, teachers come together to learn from each other by discussing matters that were important to them. The accounts of the teachers in this course illustrate the power of drawing on the personal experiences and how these experiences may serve to create a community. These two projects that showcase efforts in collaborative strategies for learning to become better teachers draw our attention to the need for a more coherent mode of teacher professional development.

The Need for Teacher Professional Development

Teaching is not a fixed method applicable to all situations. Darling-Hammond (1988) speaks of teaching as requiring a specialized knowledge base from which appropriate decisions can be made on behalf of students. Reflection (Schön, 1983, 1987) becomes a necessary process in improving teaching practice. Teachers need to question their work. Because teaching is knowledge-based, reflective, and inquiring, Levine (1992) and Sarason (1981) claim that learning to teach involves the acquisition of knowledge to perform well and to adjust to the school environment. The expectation that teachers should be able to work effectively with all learners and be concerned with education that will preserve a democratic society are explicit in Lortie’s (1975) work as well. With increasing demands and expectations, the lack of a defined technical culture, and the changing school environment there is a need for the continuing professional development of teachers.
Increasing Demands and Expectations

Teachers deal with the instructional tasks in the classroom, changing school policies and programs, changing school demographics, and the expectations from the community. Thus, one of the most essential elements of a school program should be a teacher professional development component. Teachers go about their work in different ways determined by their own belief and value systems, and the cultures in and out of their work environment. They are immersed in instructing and coping with the curriculum that is constantly changing. Teachers are expected not only to teach in the classroom but also to shape the students according to the conventions of society. Similarly, they perform non-teaching tasks as part of their service networking. The role of the teacher in Dewey’s (1956) view is not merely that of a technical expert who imparts knowledge, but of an individual who transforms a knowledge base, reflects on practice, and generates new knowledge. Teaching practice not only involves a complex form of thinking (Schön, 1983; Kilbourn, 1988), it entails the construction of a knowledge base. If this knowledge is to be enhanced through professional development, it is necessary to look into the learning structures teachers use to develop their professional knowledge.

The growing interest to develop alternative modes for professional development is encouraging. Studies on professional development have shifted from programs that use conventional lecture and workshop strategies to teacher interactions that focus on the lived experiences of teachers (Baird & Mitchell, 1987; Baird & Northfield, 1992; Duckworth, et. al., 1997; Westheimer, 1998). These studies support the need for a
mechanism for continuous teacher professional growth with an advocacy for collaboration.

Lack of Technical Culture

The teachers’ lack of a technical culture, i.e., a specialized vocabulary for talking about their work (Jackson, 1968), calls for developing a program that revitalizes learning to teach while making it personal and communal. Lortie (1975) claims that because of the “norms of not sharing, observing, and discussing each other’s work, teachers do not develop a common technical culture” (p. 79). In other professions, for example, in medicine, law, or business, the shared cultures make their own particular practice distinctly different from that of other professions. Teacher professional development must assume that teachers possess prior knowledge relevant to their teaching practices. Teachers knowledge about their work can be identified and categorized (Shulman, 1987). Knowledge related to the classroom practice of teachers is referred to as personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1986). Professional knowledge involves pedagogical principles and practices (Erickson, 1987). Court (1988) adds methods, materials, content, and classroom management. If there is professional and practical knowledge that is specific to teachers, the focus of activities for learning to teach should be on the development of teachers’ knowledge.

Changing Environment

The changing demographics result in an increasingly diverse faculty and student population. Changes in school programs and policies demand additional and newer skills
and knowledge from teachers. The school structure is another concern teachers have to contend with. To prepare teachers to work effectively in an ever-changing environment, they must be given opportunities to be informed and to actively participate in the process of change. The study of Cohn, Kottcamp, McCloskey and Provenzo (1987) reveals that teachers in bureaucratic systems are discouraged from making decisions at the classroom level. Teachers' work and roles are determined for them. They may not be able to make decisions in the best interests of their students. They are confronted by more external control, more paperwork, less time for planning and teaching, less involvement in curricular decisions, and little control over student assessment issues. Seldom do teachers have the opportunity to work together on professional issues.

To deal with these challenges, the role of the school-based teacher development programs needs to be expanded and altered. For the most part, teachers are more goal-oriented. They look toward professional development programs to improve their job performance and want to achieve success in as brief a time as possible. Professional development activities must be built around teachers' goals and their needs in the classroom (Brody, 1995).

A common feature of teacher development programs is “mending” the perceived deficits in teachers' knowledge and skills (Barth, 1990). Consequently, the program aimed to address this concern seems to be an assurance of providing teachers a minimum level of instructional competence. Many teacher development programs may fall short in terms of their utility and applicability in the classrooms because of simply failing to make the connections between training and work environment. It is essential to note that it is not sufficient for teacher educators to tell the teachers that the content of the program will
be very useful when the teachers get back to the classroom. Teachers expect to benefit from professional development programs; they want ideas that they can implement in the classrooms. They look forward to immediately employing the knowledge and skills covered in the training to particular classroom situations.

Griffin (1987) claims that successful teacher development programs are ongoing, continuous, and developmental. Teachers need technical assistance throughout their career in order for them to feel confident and efficient in performing their work. They must be provided opportunities that will enhance their teaching competencies through active engagement in their own learning process. Redesigning programs using the transmissive approach to an interactive or transformative process could encourage more teacher voluntary attendance and participation.

**Sustaining Teacher Professional Development**

The significance of the teacher professional development resides in the teachers' perception of the program’s utility. Providing teachers with the necessary and immediate support is imperative (Lortie, 1975; Morgan & Morgan, 1992; Rosenholtz, 1989). The type and quality of support often spell the difference between the success and failure of a professional development program. Achieving success with teacher professional development requires an understanding of the purpose and form of the program, and a need to identify factors that directly affect the success or failure of such programs. Both personal and institutional factors affect the conduct of teacher professional development.
Personal Support

A professional development program based on the principle of volunteerism encourages participation by all teachers. Giroux (1988) uses the term “legitimate participation” to describe forms of democratic participation that are public and have effects. Democratic participation, in this present study, refers to the engagement of teachers in professional development activities through sharing teacher experiences in an atmosphere of trust and freedom. Storytelling, in the group discussions, creates not only a means for a free expression of ideas but also hearing and giving voice. In the process of sharing, an important interaction is built between teachers and the larger community beyond the school (Westheimer, 1998).

Duckworth’s (1997) work with teachers in a year-long project suggests that the success of professional development programs requires the presence and active participation of teachers, not only thoughtful well-designed activities. It may seem too obvious to state that even sophisticated programs may fail if teachers do not attend. It would be difficult to have all teachers volunteer their own time before or after school to participate in a development program. An increase in utility of teacher development programs may be based on teachers volunteering to participate on their own time, without financial compensation. Reducing the length of time spent in meetings, while increasing their frequency might increase participation. Rather than offering a series of regular training sessions that require more time commitment, the teachers might be attracted to the activities they plan and schedule. Volunteerism emerges from an opportunity to participate in decision making and a personal willingness and commitment to learn.
At the heart of the effort of shaping teaching practice is a personal commitment to grow professionally continuously. To adapt to the constant changes in school programs and policies, societal demands, and student demographics, teachers should possess adequate knowledge and newer skills. Meyer (1996) suggests to a group of writers the creation of a personal support system. This support system involves “being honest with yourself about what you need from the group, working to clarify those needs, and understanding how you, as a unique individual writer [teacher], go about forming relationships” (p. 106). The process of forming relationships within the support system keeps changing as one works and grows with others, this leads to the development of the teachers’ potentials.

Institutional Support

Teachers need academic, emotional and social support in order to grow professionally and personally (Lortie, 1975). When teacher development programs cannot be delivered by the school staff, other sources of expertise can be called upon. Colleges and universities have a longstanding tradition as providers of teacher development activities. Faculty are often up-to-date on current trends, although they have been criticized for not being very realistic and practical in their outlook, not always willing to adapt their curriculum to school needs, and not always practical and useful (Brody, 1995). Offering technical and professional services, and sharing resources are some of the many ways in which support can be provided. However disparate the services may seem, a common essential thread may be found running through those that are successful — immediacy of application.
A caring school environment needs to be in place to inspire teachers in the performance of their work and to sustain life-long learning in the profession. In their collaborative work, the teachers in Clandinin and Connelly’s (1995) study describe the teaching communities they have created as “conversational spaces” and “safe places.” These spaces may be located inside or outside of the classrooms. The opportunity to share stories, in trusting communities, about teaching experiences brought the teachers together. Westheimer (1998) proposes that institutionalized structures must provide room for innovation in order to promote teacher participation. An atmosphere of trust and freedom will facilitate teachers moving from a highly structured format of participation to an open sharing format. In Westheimer’s study, the teaching communities became richer because the teachers’ individual contributions resulted in participation and interaction occurring like normal friendly conversations.

In both studies previously mentioned, the teachers’ participation that developed within an ethic of care (Noddings, 1995) was seen to have contributed to the formation of individual identities in relation to the other members of the school. According to Noddings, the classroom represents a microcosm, and the school and community cultures compose the universe. What happens in the classroom reflects and is reflective of the cultures surrounding it. Because, participation in and with the universe is essential and inevitable, enabling conditions are necessary, e.g., a freeing school atmosphere, good working conditions, caring colleagues, adequate facilities, and acceptable school policies. Moreover, the school is expected to provide a sense of community where psychic rewards outweigh the frustrations teachers experience. A supportive school environment allows teachers to share successful and not so successful stories whereby affirmations and
assistance are offered. Sharing teaching experiences may not only advance the teachers’ teaching competencies, but also enhance their interpersonal relationship that is supportive of and sensitive to the needs of each other.

Since this study is about creating teacher communities for professional development, I propose the use of collaborative group discussions as a structure to bring teachers together to talk about and reflect on their teaching practice. This structure will provide an opportunity for teachers to share, and examine their teaching experiences with others in order to improve their practice.

**Collaboration**

The need for teachers to work together is strong (Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1989). Rosenholtz argues that collaboration “brings new ideas, fresh ways of looking at things” (p. 41). The different uses and different meanings of collaboration vary according to the settings in which they are applied. Hargreaves (1989) believes that true collaboration is a deep, personal, and enduring enterprise. West (1990) treats collaboration as synonymous to consultation and teams. This study adopts Friend and Cook’s (1992) view of collaboration -- “working together in a supportive and mutually beneficial relationship” (p. 5). Collaboration is seen as a mechanism for continuous growth that will serve to enhance, support, and sustain classroom practice, not to undermine the individual teacher’s desire to author his or her own practice. The outcome of a collaborative structure of learning through group discussions about teaching is the subject addressed in this study.
Rosenholtz (1989) stresses the collective knowledge generated through a collaborative activity as more fruitful than working in isolation. However, the desire of teachers to have the autonomy and freedom to construct classroom practices that make sense to them and their students is of equal necessity and importance (Little & McLaughlin, 1993). Likewise, the desire of the teachers for identity must also be taken into account when establishing a collaborative relationship in a school setting. The collaborative research conducted by Tom, Fingeret, Niks, Dawson, Dyer, Harper, Lee, McCue, & Morley (1994) illustrates this point. Their study focuses on collaboration as the conscious and appropriate sharing of power. Complex collegial relationships were established within the research team, and between the team and the field through a “creation of opportunities for discussions and negotiations for power and existing arrangements” (p. 27). Making a valuable contribution to the discussions must not be interpreted in terms of the quantity of contribution during the interaction, but in one’s willingness to be an active participant of the group. Active participation includes a desire to share one’s personal experience, the gift for listening to others, and a willingness to engage in a supportive relationship.

**Isolation vs. Collaboration**

Teaching requires contact with adults and students. As a social activity, teaching involves relationship with others and an understanding of oneself within those relationships. However, the isolating nature of teaching appears contradictory to teaching as a social act. The cellular organization of schools promote physical isolation (Lortie, 1975). This means that teachers privately struggle with their own problems and anxiety,
spending most of their time apart from other teachers. Often privacy is taken to mean the absence of collegiality; that it never moves beyond its physical nature to an intricate relationship with the expected roles in a dynamic interaction.

Nias (1989) points out that the teachers’ continuing preoccupation with their students should not be taken to mean that other adults in their schools are unimportant to them or that they have no contact with them. Teachers do spend a large part of their school hours inside their classrooms but they also step out of their classrooms on particular times to talk or mingle with other teachers. Lortie (1975) and Rosenholtz (1989) report that although working alone might be ideal for some teachers, interacting with others might offer more assistance. Some quiet time each working day is valuable but relating with others is even of greater importance.

The isolating nature of teaching is mirrored in the classrooms where various forms of interactions are displayed. Classroom activities tend to be competitive rather than collaborative. Ratings, honor rolls, or academic contests encourage competition among students in the classroom. The competitive nature of instruction is unconsciously perpetuated in the school. Similar events, in different forms and of varying degrees, find teachers falling into the trap of competition. Subject area specialization, teaching experiences, class and task assignments, awards, membership in organizations inside or outside of school, and academic preparation become issues that cause disparity among teachers.

Sharing an experience in a collaborative setting helps build a community from a diverse group of teachers united by common educational goals. A collaborative structure of professional development is a way of enriching a teacher’s life (Westheimer, 1998).
Sharing stories of teaching is an affirmation of the meaning a teacher attaches to his or her work (Duckworth, et. al., 1997). When teachers listen to another teacher’s experiences, personal construction of meanings from such sharing could likely occur. When these meanings are shared, they could be accorded significance. Open discussions may reflect the joint understanding of teaching and may not necessarily mean that teachers agree upon every detail or that every aspect of each teaching issue is exhausted. Instead, the conversations help elaborate and redirect the interpretations of teaching in ways that support the value of collaborative discussions for understanding the complexity of classroom practice.

Studies about teachers collaborating to learn to teach (Baird & Mitchell, 1987; Baird & Northfield, 1992; Duckworth, et. al., 1997; Westheimer, 1998) reveal that examining classroom practice is a social interaction. Multiple interpretations are generated in on-going conversations of teaching experiences that can extend beyond what an individual teacher could have done on her own. Notions about teaching are enriched in the process of examining their teaching practice as a group. A merging of individual and collective views become more rewarding. Through collaboration, these views are not treated as contradictory, they are considered alternative perceptions. The teachers may learn to value multiple voices generated through collaboration. Cryns (1993) argues that the teachers’ separate voices can be made evident in their individual interpretations with a joint interpretive understanding. Meanings interpreted by a group of teachers move to the details that could be gathered from one or the other and may make them more accessible and informative to participants. Pluralism of ideas may well enhance the understanding of the complexity of the teaching phenomenon. Teaching communities
must allow for and support both individual and collective views of shaping of classroom practice. Working as a group does not mean that the individuality of a teacher will be lost in favor of uniformity. Individuality must be respected in collaboration.

**Contrived Collegiality vs. Collaborative Relationship**

Studies that examine and explore working relationships among teachers have increased in recent years (e.g., Baird & Northfield, 1987; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Fullan, 1991; Little & McLaughlin, 1993; MacDonnell. 1995; Duckworth, et. al., 1997). These studies shed light on the nature of relationship that plays major roles in teacher development.

The term collegiality refers to “any situation in which colleagues work together and plan, reflect on, or improve their practice” (MacDonnell, 1995, p. 46). Contrived collegiality describes occasions in which teachers are invited to collaborate on agenda devised by administrators and policy makers (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). Fullan (1991) refers to these occasions as the project-based collaborations mainly initiated by the institutions or in fewer instances, by teacher networks. A more detailed description of contrived collegiality is provided by Hargreaves (1989).

Contrived collegiality is characterized by a set of formal, specific bureaucratic procedures.... It can be seen in initiatives such as peer coaching, mentor teaching, joint planning in specially provided rooms, formally scheduled meetings and clear job descriptions and training programs for those in consultative roles (cited in Fullan, 1991, p. 136)

It must not be construed that all teacher interactions give positive results. Little (1990) warns that forms of collegiality that involve assistance, sharing, and storytelling, are some superficial examples of collaboration. She suggests that “joint work is a deeper
form of interaction. Joint planning, observations, and experimentation are dependent on the “structural organization of task, time, and other resources in ways not characteristic of other forms of collegiality” (pp. 14-15). She argues for the importance of teachers’ beliefs and values in teacher interactions. These beliefs and values define the nature of the teachers’ work, their sentiments toward their work, the meaning they attach to their work.

MacDonnell (1995) enumerates five working relationships under collegiality: peer supervision, peer coaching, cooperative professional development, collaborative consultation, and peer assistance. These five types of collegial relationship operate on structured roles and goals. They portray the classic expert-novice relationship. One supervises, the other is supervised. The focus is on the learning and transfer of new skills and strategies into the existing repertoires of teachers. The goals are to improve teaching practice and enrich teaching repertoires. As opposed to collaboration, contrived collegiality is a scheme of meetings and working together to implement the curriculum and instructional strategies developed by others. Contrived collegiality consists of administratively planned interactions among teachers (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). Contrived collegiality enhances administrative control.

Collaboration is linked with norms and opportunities for continuous improvement and career-long learning (Fullan, 1991). The conditions under which teachers grow are based on the notions of improvement in teaching as a collective rather than an individual enterprise, and that analysis, evaluation, and experimentation happen in concert with colleagues (Rosenholtz, 1989). Rosenholtz stresses the need for individual teachers to
relate with other teachers. She does not ignore teacher's individual experience, instead she acknowledges the role it plays in a collaborative activity.

Making Collaboration Work

Lieberman, Miles, & Saxl (1988) enumerate conditions necessary for collaboration to occur. Building legitimate and credible trust and rapport; dealing with the process of conflict mediation and confrontation skills; managing time and setting priorities; using available resources; and building skills and confidence are fundamental. Hargreaves and Dawe (1990) argue that collaborative cultures consist of "evolutionary relationships of openness, trust and support among teachers where they define and develop their own purposes as a community" (p. 227).

Lieberman and her colleagues claim that teachers' skills and confidence are developed through networking, listening, and experiencing rewards. Rosenholtz (1989) states that self-esteem, shared teaching goals, involvement in decision making, and team teaching influence the extent to which teachers are likely to engage in collaborative activities. Open and supportive communication as an integral part of building trust is a very important condition in a successful collaborative venture.

Wildman and Niles (1987) discuss other attributes of successful collaboration. They claim a collaborative structure of learning to teach values innovation and risk-taking and point out that in collaboration, uncertainty is perceived as a feature of professional growth rather than a weakness in teaching.
Creating Teaching Communities

There is agreement about the necessity for greater interaction and collegiality through building a community of teacher-learners that respects the individuality of every teacher. The preceding discussion looks at what communities of learning can do for teachers personally and professionally, and what roles teaching communities play in teacher professional development.

In this study, community is envisioned in the way that Corrigan (1996) embraces and builds on Tonnies' (1957) definition of a community as a space of kinship, place, and mind. Corrigan agrees with Tonnies notion that a community of kinship emerges from relationships among people that create a unity of being. These relationships are similar to those found in families and closely-knit groups of people. From the sharing of a common "habitat and locale for a sustained period" (Tonnies, 1957), emerges a community of place. The bonding of people around common goals, shared values, and shared conceptions of being and doing, propels a community of mind to emerge. Taken together, a community of kinship, place, and mind symbolizes a web that connects a diverse group of people. The web develops among individuals a "sense of belonging and a common identity as human beings who are capable of affection and caring for others as well as themselves" (Sergiovanni, 1994).

Dewey (1938) writes that community life does not organize itself in an enduring way spontaneously. It requires thought and planning ahead. Teachers must be able to allow communities to develop in schools; and they must be willing to act on the values embodied in such communities. In addition, teachers have to learn to collaborate with
other people who serve schools. Westheimer (1998) wonders why some groups of teachers seem to be able to accomplish so much and overcome enormous obstacles, maintaining their commitment to their work, to students, and to their colleagues, while others do not. He argues that good work, a sense of place, and belonging result from an alliance of committed individuals and arbitrary circumstance. The individuals involved, or the circumstance of their coming together may explain what teachers accomplish when they work together. However, Barth (1990) and Lieberman (1995) concentrate on the conditions in the workplace rather than assume arbitrary circumstance. They advocate providing new structures in the workplace that afford teachers time to meet and plan the curriculum.

A collaborative community is shaped by the quality of teacher-to-teacher interactions. According to Little and McLaughlin (1993), there are three dimensions evident in collaborative interactions. First is the intensity of ties among teachers with respect to classroom practice and commitment. Little and McLaughlin state that strong professional ties must be demonstrated in collaborative cultures. Huberman (1989) and Hargreaves (1989) think that these strong ties are rare. This rarity is associated with the second dimension, the inclusivity of teachers' collegial groups. The aspect of inclusivity links norms of collegiality to goal consensus. Membership in teachers' groups, according to Hoyle (1988), creates different microclimates with different micropolitics and notions of collegiality. Within teaching, there are varied and distinct communities of teachers. The distinctions made are due to the categorical labels that "lead some members to separate themselves from others" (van Maanen & Barley, 1984, p. 295). Orientation is the third dimension that involves the aspects of value dispositions and expertise of
teachers. The beliefs teachers hold about teaching, learning, and schooling come into play when teachers interact with each other. Past schooling and teaching experiences are likely to surface when teachers discuss their work with colleagues.

The conclusion Nias (1989) provides in her study speaks about the conditions for developing a collaborative community. She discusses roles individual teachers have to play in developing and maintaining a collaborative culture. Taking some responsibility as members of a collaborative culture is central to the special affective relationships among teachers.

[Teachers] are happiest in a social environment characterized by mutual dependence in which “sharing” is the norm and individuals do not feel ashamed to admit to failure or a sense of inadequacy... relationships between staff who can and do help each other, provide one another with an oases of calm in a long and frenetic day, set one another high but attainable standards for professional performance and provide a mutually supportive social environment, are characterized by: personal accessibility; plenty of opportunity for discussion; laughter; praise and recognition. (pp. 152-153)

Several problems arise in establishing a collaborative culture. As mentioned earlier, it is not built overnight. The imposed demands on teachers encourage them to work individually which results in fewer interactions. Making frequent interactions happen will depend upon teachers’ perceptions about the worth and relevance of sharing their practice. The avoidance of talk about teaching is illustrated by the perceived absence of reciprocity, for example, in lending and borrowing of materials.

Another issue in creating teaching communities are the boundaries established by each teacher’s knowledge, skills, and experience that determine the extent and type of participation in collaborative work. With increased experience, teachers may become more “isolated professionally, as teaching beliefs and behavior become firm and
automatic and so less subject to change" (Rosenholtz, 1989, p. 20). A newly hired teacher may struggle with integrating into the group. Less experienced teachers may be discouraged from openly sharing their stories with the more experienced teachers. Newcomers often rely, in Lortie’s (1975) terms, on the “sink or swim” socialization. In such occasions, beginning teachers are confronted with varied perspectives of teaching worlds and left to define their own perceptions of teaching. Thus, developing a socialization process that would introduce newly hired teachers to the goals of the school and would induct them into the organization, is recommended.

Studies on collaboration bring to the forefront the need to establish teaching communities where teachers can celebrate their work with others. While these studies focus on the professionalization of teaching (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Hargreaves, 1992; Lieberman, 1988), giving teachers authority and decision-making power (e.g., Duckworth, et al., 1997), the teachers’ workplace (Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1989), or change (Fullan, 1991; Sarason, 1981), they all hope to foster collegial work and interaction. These studies confirm the need for designing teacher professional development programs around the active involvement of teachers — programs that place value on the lived experiences of teachers.

Collaboration as a Structure for Teacher Professional Development

Recent studies portray teachers in the learners’ role (for example, Baird & Mitchell, 1987; Duckworth and the Teachers Experienced Group, 1997; Fullan, 1991; Lieberman, 1988, 1995; Westheimer, 1998). These studies highlight how teachers learn
to teach through collaboration; more specifically through talking about their work and their lives. Qualitative methods of inquiry were extensively used to understand the teachers’ life in the classroom, how teachers learn on the job, and what factors contribute to their growth as teachers and shape their teaching practice. These studies speak about how an understanding of teachers’ individual practice, their collegial relationships, and the cultures in which stories of teachers’ lives and work may inform the designs of continuous professional development programs. The lessons derived from studies of teachers learning together to improve their practice showcase the strengths of collaboration for teacher professional development.

Classroom practice is a complex phenomenon that needs to be reflected upon by the teacher, initially and individually, in order to understand it. An awareness of one’s experiences and the ability to describe these experiences begin with the self. At any given time during reflection, processes are underway which might cause a reframing of or a change in understanding. No matter how private and intimate one’s teaching practice is, a teacher must have the willingness to make her teaching experience discussible. A collaborative group may serve as a support mechanism for the “risky adventure” of sharing something of the self with others when a teacher offers one’s teaching experience for examination.

Clandinin (1993) points out that teacher knowledge is embodied in who we are as people, and enacted in our practice. She claims that what is missing in teacher education are the teachers’ stories that have not been valued, and the kind of knowledge teachers possess that has not been given voice. The prescriptive environment that exists in schools may have caused the devaluing of teacher stories. Time may likewise prevent teachers
from coming together and talking about what they know about their work. Grumet (1988) describes teacher knowledge as biographical, hence, there is a need for “restorying” (Clandinin, Davies, Hogan and Kennard, 1993) a teacher’s work to other teachers. In Clandinin, et al’s (1993) study, most teachers agree that sharing stories helped them to see that everything they experience is part of who they are. Ayers (1989) concurs with other researchers regarding the value of the teachers’ personal experiences that need to be made public. The stories represent the interconnectedness of an individual to others and the world.

Multiple spheres of personal experience both echo and enable events shared more widely, expressions of moments in which we recognize that no microcosm is completely separate, no tide pool, no forest, no family, no nation. Indeed, the knowledge drawn from the life of some single organism or community or from the intimate experience of an individual may prove to be relevant to decisions that affect the health of a city or the peace of the world. (p. 58)

Talbert’s (1993) study focuses on problem solving about teaching experiences in a collaborative setting. She emphasizes the critical role of leadership and professionalism in enabling teachers to succeed in a group context. She advocates transformational leadership that “challenges constraints on teachers’ professional lives while orchestrating conditions that enable individuals to learn and succeed in a new vision” (p. 183). Although her study centers on the leadership of the principal, it provides an interesting insight into the group developmental processes involved in collaboration. The core principles that create what Talbert refers to in her study as the “special collaborative relationships are: (a) educational success is a collective undertaking, (b) every individual counts, and (c) problems are to be solved, not hidden” (p. 180).
Collaboration is more than working together. To work together connotes an array of specific interactions by which teachers come together as a group to discuss, plan, design, and evaluate teaching-related activities. The notion of encouraging teachers to become a source of learning, through sharing and discussing knowledge and experience with their peers, is a positive step towards collaboration as a form of personal and professional development.

Collaborative communities are characterized by pervasive qualities, attitudes, and behaviors that run through relationships on a moment-to-moment, day-to-day basis. Collaboration acknowledges and gives voice to the teacher's purpose. Collaborating to learn to teach respects, celebrates, and makes allowances for the teacher as a person. They create and sustain more satisfying and productive work environments (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). A healthy work environment encourages worthwhile teacher interactions acted out in the classrooms. Bruner (1990) believes that human action cannot be fully understood by referring only to the traits, learning capacities, motives, or whatever. Human action requires a community where self-expression can occur and live in concert with the world. Bruner strongly states,

Human action could not be fully or properly accounted for from the inside out -- by reference only to intrapsychic dispositions, traits, learning capacities, motives, or whatever. Action required for its explication that it be situated, that it be conceived of as continuous with a cultural world. The realities that people constructed were social realities, negotiated with others, distributed between them. The social world in which we lived was, so to speak, neither “in the head” nor “out there” in some positivistic aboriginal form. And both mind and self were part of that social world. (p. 105, emphases in the original)

Collaboration stresses norms of continuous school- and self-renewal (Rosenholtz, 1989). It is assumed that improvement in teaching is more of a collective rather than an
individual enterprise. As Little (1982) says, "analysis, evaluation, and experimentation in concert with colleagues are conditions under which teachers improve instructionality" (p. 339). Support for reflection and opportunities to learn from peers, are made available through collaboration. Collaborating with people of different experiences, specialization, values, and beliefs will bring teachers face to face with diverse viewpoints. The socialization process will help enlarge teachers' understanding and make them aware of their classroom practice. The motivation to define their own perspectives more clearly will be enhanced. Ownership of their knowledge and learning is established through the interactive process.

The findings of Newell's (1996) study reveal that increased self-assurance of teachers resulted from collaboration and mutual discussion of teaching dilemmas. Teachers valued the inclusion of their own knowledge. At the same time, teachers in the study were aware that occasionally conflict could arise when they could not align their various perspectives. Newell claims that disagreement is a powerful tool to engage people in richer elaboration of their position, thereby facilitating the construction of meaning of their own practice. Rosenholtz (1989) claims that meanings not only are forged in the crucible of everyday interaction, they also form that interaction. Rosenholtz shares his thoughts about learning to teach. His quote illustrates that collaborative discussion encourages a critical examination of teaching practice. Exploring teaching practice collectively provides opportunities to learn in new ways.

Teachers develop new conceptions of their work through communication in which others point out new aspects of experience to them with fresh interpretations. It is only when teachers adopt these fresh perspectives that their behavior becomes subject to change. (p. 3)
Change for each individual is brought about by an understanding of collaboration as both contributing and learning that become a single process. Somekh (1994) points out that true collaboration "is only possible if there is an intention and a belief that both partners will make equal but different contribution ... and each will change as a result of the collaboration" (p. 373, emphasis in the original). In her discussion of the type of support provided by the schools, Little (1982) highlights time and frequency as relatively important in interactions. These interactions need not happen in formal conferences. Teachers talk about teaching daily in other small ways. Through constant interactions, they act as colleagues on a continual basis. When teachers engage in frequent talk about teaching practice, they build up a shared language adequate to the complexity of teaching. The shared language helps distinguish one practice from another and enables the integration of different practices into distinct and sensible perspectives of what teaching is all about. The usefulness of collaborative work, according to Little (1982), is a direct function of the concreteness, precision, and coherence of the shared language.

Collaboration may be a threat to one's self-esteem (Westheimer, 1998). Sharing teaching experiences entails risk-taking. Almost everyone assumes that most people like to think well of themselves. This assumption results in an avoidance of situations where a person is placed on the spot, where self-worth is called into question. A refusal to participate, such as not disclosing professional inadequacies, may have to do with uncertainty about how teaching should be best done.

Other threatening possibilities arise from offering or requesting assistance. Soliciting help might be interpreted as incompetence. In instances where teachers may opt to avoid self-disclosure, a collaborative culture that provides mutual advice and
assistance could prove to be helpful. A helping behavior in an organization is important and necessary to overcome this dilemma. An ethic of care (Noddings, 1995) could even encourage the most capable person to ask for help in a similar situation.

A community built on the collaborative concepts of trust, freedom, and care can encourage sharing of both successful and disappointing personal experiences, without fear. Peterat and Smith (1996) noticed that in a dialogue between student teachers, school advisers, and faculty advisers where they observed politeness and tactfulness, only the “positive and pleasant dimensions” of collaboration were demonstrated (p. 16). They support the need to build community that will provide spaces where different beliefs and perspectives are recognized as fundamental to the learning process.

Somekh (1994) uses the metaphor of “inhabiting each other’s castles” to describe collaborative work (p. 357). She states that collaboration is fraught with difficulties and complete equality is probably impossible to achieve in any partnership. An attempt to achieve equality between and among teachers is an elusive pursuit. Establishing collaborative relationships requires time to develop. Teachers need to discuss the purpose of a collaborative activity, the nature of their participation, and the benefits they can gain. As well, continuous negotiation and open conversations are required. The responsibility and commitment of each teacher to building a collaborative community of teacher-learners is crucial. An ethic of care is imperative. Teachers are human beings. Their stories are private and may be fragile. To be effective teachers must feel secure. Their stories must have a place in teacher professional development programs. Teachers need to have a clear idea not only of their own values but also of the skills and abilities they
possess to enable them to do the job that is important to them. Teachers need support to find their place in each other's lives within a caring community.

Summary

From the previous discussion, it is evident that collaboration offers several potentials for the professional and personal growth of teachers. Teaching communities may develop when teachers are provided opportunities to work and learn together. Communities that adopt collaborative concepts become a special place where each teacher counts, where classroom successes are affirmed, and where failures can be made more manageable.

A community of teachers built on collaboration opens possibilities for teachers to enhance their humanity and profession. In a collaborative community, teachers may find spaces for expressing personal experiences in a spirit of respect, confidence, and trust, thereby, enriching the professional and personal dimensions. Classroom practice, Little and McLaughlin (1993) maintain, emerges from a "dynamic process of social definition and a strategic interaction among teachers, students, and subject matter in the context of a school or a department community" (p. 98). They assert that the professional community that exists in the classroom and the school, whether collegial or isolating, risk-taking, or rigidly invested in the best practices, plays a major role in how teachers see their work. They continue to say that the character of the professional community explains why teachers opt out or persist and thrive even in the most challenging teaching contexts.
The studies discussed in this chapter report the impact of collaborative communities on teachers' performance and personal and professional growth. Most studies involved university professors collaborating with classroom teachers in exploring teaching practice to improve teaching and learning. The studies on collaboration cited above provided a framework for examining how group discussions about teaching practice may enhance the professional development of Filipino teachers involved in the present study. Since this study also explores how Filipino culture mediates teacher participation in the group discussions, it is a departure from the studies reviewed in this chapter, which are set in North America and Australia. This present study particularly looked at how collaborative teaching communities, found effective in the western context, may function in an Asian context.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

The intent of this study is to analyze the experiences of teachers talking about teaching in a group discussion setting. The study aimed to gain insights about a collaborative structure for teacher development in a Filipino setting, and to explore the teachers' perceptions of learning about teaching through sharing classroom experiences. To document the teachers' experiences in group discussions and examine the influence of Filipino culture on teacher interactions, several data collection strategies were employed.

This chapter provides the context, a description of the study procedures, and my role in the research setting. The context section describes the cultural context, the school setting, the characteristics of the educational system, and the teacher training program in the Philippines. The section entitled description of the study deals with the methodology employed in the collection and analysis of the data. The final section of the chapter briefly explains my involvement in the study.

The Context of the Study

This section describes the cultural and school contexts of the study. The cultural context consists of a brief discussion of the history and culture of the Philippines. The discussion introduces the reader to Filipino practices and traditions that will be discussed later in this thesis as having played a role in the interactions that took place among the participants in this study. The school context describes the educational system and the teacher training program in the Philippines, and the school involved in the study.
A. The Cultural Context

Philippine history entails the lengthy domination by Spain and the United States. The Philippines was the first country in Southeast Asia to achieve independence after World War II and is the only Christian country in all of Asia. Roman Catholicism, the dominant religion in the Philippines professed by about 80% of the people (Elesterio, 1989), was introduced in 1521 by Ferdinand Magellan. Administering the 7,100 islands required the organization of 15 administrative regions inclusive of two autonomous regions and the national capital region. Education in the country is administered by the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS). Literacy is greater than 93 percent (Ibe & Punzalan, 1997). Filipino, English, Spanish, and Chinese are the major languages spoken in the country. There are also about 120 identified minor languages. Filipino, the major national language, belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian family of languages. English is the language officially used in education, government, and industry.

The Filipino Family

The Filipino family has been a subject of special interest because of its all-pervasive influence. Researchers claim that the Filipinos survive and prosper largely by virtue of traditional values associated with the family, social class, and religion (Agoncillo, 1990; Friesen, 1988; McCoy, 1993; Pertierra & Ugarte, 1994; Vergara, 1995; Yu & Liu, 1980). The family plays a critical role in the nation's life (Porio, Lynch, & Hollnsteiner, 1978) which is evident in the rise of commercial and political family dynasties.
Porio, et. al. (1978) report contradictory characterizations of the Filipino family as patriarchal, matriarchal, authoritarian, traditional, egalitarian, or modern. The father is the main source of authority in the Filipino family. The Catholic Church taught passivity and piety as the proper traits for women. Although more women were brought into the work force during the American regime, women still quietly serve in the background. The public education system introduced by the American colonizers emphasized egalitarianism; however, this feature did not overcome the influence of four hundred years of Spanish Catholicism's emphasis on passivity and piety.

According to Grossholtz (1964), the family is the "strongest unit of society demanding the deepest loyalties of the individual and coloring all social activity with its own set of demands" (p. 86). Filipinos have very close family ties and strongly value unity through rough and good times. Families in the Philippines are large, and extended families live under one roof and are counted as one household (Vergara, 1995). Children receive extensive maternal attention illustrated by the long weaning periods; younger children sleeping with their parents; and mothers, grandmothers, older sisters, or nannies waiting on them in schools.

Cultural, religious, and social events where families come together for weddings, baptisms, anniversaries, and wakes, strengthen family unity. Any action taken by a family member is considered a reflection of the entire family's integrity. This is a foremost concern every family member upholds and protects. Family unity is most clearly demonstrated through the practice of a familial support system. Married or unmarried children may choose to live with their parents as long as they want. Not only do
immediate family members get parental support, but relatives who are in need, receive support, as well.

**Filipino Practices and Traditions**

The customs and practices presented in this section are Filipino hospitality, respect for elders, *utang na loob*, *bayanihan* spirit, and *pakikisama*. These specific practices and traditions are highlighted because they were reflected in the dynamics of interactions that took place during the group discussions.

**Filipino Hospitality**

Filipinos are famous for their graciousness and hospitality. People all over the world are hospitable in their own way, but the Filipino hospitality is “something that is almost a fault” (Agoncillo, 1990, p. 6). As the custom dictates, visitors are fed usually before any gathering, and a family feels honored by the ‘invasion’ of privacy even if a visit occurs at an unholy hour of the day or night. Every family member goes out of their way to make the visitors comfortable even if this means sacrificing their own comfort.

**Respect for Elders**

The Filipino notion of family connotes deep respect for the elderly, and power of elders over children. Respect for elders requires obedience and respect for parental decisions. An adherence to the notion of respect is still practiced in families in the semi-urban areas and in the provinces. Respect for elders includes respect for an older brother or sister who performs, in part, the responsibilities of the father and mother to the
younger family members. Children are seldom allowed to mingle with adults in most situations. In the home, discussions are categorized as “adult talk” or “children’s talk.” Titles prefixed to family members and in the workplace identify the position or line of authority. Younger family members are prompted to address older persons as “Mang” and “Aling” or “Tio” and “Tia,” to mean uncle or aunt in the national and Spanish languages, respectively. In the workplace, younger employees address their administrators with “Sir” and “Ma’am” or “Dr.”, “Atty.”

Bayanihan Spirit

To Filipinos, society is cooperative, not competitive. The bayanihan spirit is depicted by a group of men carrying on their bare shoulders a “nipa hut,” a traditional house made of bamboo and nipa shingles. This community spirit is strong, in its traditional essence, in the non-urban areas and currently kept alive in some urban communities. Getting along is the norm in bayanihan. The group will is all-important. Direct confrontations are avoided. Efforts are made to keep communications smooth and courteous.

Utang na Loob

Translated as a “debt of gratitude,” utang na loob has its origin from the feudal structures during the Spanish regime when laborers were bound in servitude as part of a debt dependent population. Utang na loob is a deeply held notion in the Philippines. If someone does something for a person, especially at a time of great need, the person will be in the benefactor’s debt forever unless the favor is repaid in an equal manner.
Pakikisama

This Filipino practice is translated as “a spirit of comradeship,” the main elements of which are unselfishness and good faith. A person who is unselfishly helpful earns the respect of a community. To be selfish is to be a disgrace to the family. Pakikisama has clear affiliation to the bayanihan spirit because in the process of finding solutions to a communal problem, Filipinos develop a sense of camaraderie.

B. The School Context

This section provides a snap shot of the Philippine educational system, the teacher training program, and a description of the research setting.

Philippine Educational System

The Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS) oversees education in the Philippines. Elementary, secondary, and non-formal education are administered by separate bureaus while the Commission for Higher Education (CHED), a recently established autonomous body, administers tertiary education. Although both public and private schools are under the control of the DECS, only public schools get financial support from the government. The elementary and secondary levels, that is, K-10 in the public schools and K-11 in most private schools, are compulsory.

Secondary schools are classified according to their curricular offerings. General secondary schools offer a regular curriculum (i.e., communication arts in English and Filipino; science; mathematics; civics; music, arts, and physical education; values education; and practical arts). Vocational or comprehensive schools offer other
specialized courses in addition to the basic disciplines taught in the general secondary schools. These specialized courses include auto mechanics, food science, cosmetology, woodworking, handicrafts, metallurgy, agriculture, or fisheries. The National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), required upon completion of any of the secondary programs, determines the course and institution that a student will attend for post-secondary education. The time involved to study in the university depends upon the nature of the pursued course, including entrance to teacher education programs.

**Teacher Training**

Individuals entering the teaching profession must complete a four-year bachelor’s degree either in elementary or secondary education in a university or teacher training college. Any institution offering education curricula is required to maintain in its campus a laboratory school that offers young people the elementary and secondary curriculum. These schools provide education students a venue for their practicum, the practice teaching phase that usually takes place at the final year of the teacher education program. The teacher education curriculum is a four-year program consisting of three years of academic courses and a one-year practicum. A practicum involves some in-campus teaching, in the institution’s laboratory school, and an off-campus teaching component in any public or private school. Students opting to train for secondary teaching must specialize in one or two disciplines, e.g., biology, history, English. No specialization is required of students completing the elementary teacher education program. Graduates of the teacher education programs may write the Professional Board Examination for Teachers (PBET) set by the Civil Service Commission. This licensing examination
renders eligibility for any teaching position in the public elementary and secondary schools.

The Research Setting

Kaularan Integrated School\(^1\) (KIS) is an urban, mid-sized, Kindergarten to Grade 10 school located in the campus of a state university. As the laboratory school of the Faculty of Education, KIS is administered by the State University through the Dean of the Faculty of Education. The admission policy of the school resulted in a student population of wide-ranging abilities, diverse elementary orientation, and varied socio-economic status. During the 1997-1998 school year when this study was conducted, 1712 students (349 for K-2, 569 for Grades 3-6, and 794 for Grades 7-10) were enrolled. There are 149 school personnel headed by a principal. At the time of the study there were 95 teachers employed by the school, 17 of whom were on leave.

KIS was selected for the study because it is involved in a teacher training program and the teachers are interested in teacher professional development. KIS is the only school in the Philippines using Filipino, the national language, as a medium of instruction in all disciplines except English. The use of Filipino was regarded to be a positive attribute of the site, as it could help make the sharing of classroom stories a more natural part of the teachers' conversation. Furthermore, because KIS is the only school not implementing the mandated national curriculum, the teachers have more freedom to develop their curriculum without interruption from the government. Given this school

\(^1\) A pseudonym
atmosphere, it was assumed that there would be more autonomy to explore teaching practice and a collaborative model for professional development. My previous involvement in a training program for science and mathematics teachers in Southeast Asia in 1992-1995 prompted my decision to work with teachers in the science department of KIS.

Description of the Study

This section describes access to the research setting, selection of the research participants, methodology, and considerations for using qualitative research.

Establishing the Research Setting

I first contacted Kaunlaran Integrated School by sending a letter of request and the informed consent forms in February 1997 to the Dean of the Faculty of Education of the university, and to the principal and teachers in the science department of the school. Because the study involved a series of individual interviews and the conduct of group discussions over seven months, I explained the purpose and design of the study at an introductory meeting with the science teachers in June 1997, and invited those interested to volunteer. Negotiations regarding activities and schedule took place throughout the data collection period.
The Research Participants

There are 15 teachers in the science department at KIS, 13 of which are females. Ten teachers worked in the secondary program and five in the elementary. At the meeting on June 27, 1997, all the teachers expressed a desire to participate as members of the discussion group. Two of the secondary teachers who were out of the country at the start of the study willingly joined the discussion group upon their return. Within the first two weeks of the study in July 1997, three female secondary teachers, Aruwanara, Dina, and May (pseudonyms), indicated willingness to have me videotape some of their lessons and to share these lessons with the other science teachers. These teachers invited me into their classrooms, and met with me for interviews several times during the study. Three other teachers, Arlene, Lorna, and Zinnia (pseudonyms) volunteered for interviews toward the end of the study. Voluntary participation was indicated by the signed consent forms the teachers submitted.

Aruwanara, Dina, and May will be referred to as the focus teachers in the study while Lorna, Zinia, and Arlene and the other science teachers who composed the discussion group will be interchangeably referred to as the “other teachers” and “group members.” The focus teachers and the group members will be collectively referred to as the research participants.
The Focus Teachers

Aruwanara, Dina, and May, the three focus teachers, volunteered to have their lessons videotaped, and discussed these lessons with the other teachers.

Aruwanara (Grade 9, Chemistry)

Aruwanara, a chemistry teacher, completed her doctoral degree in 1976. Her story of teaching is rooted in her experiences as a student in Manila that motivated her to become a chemistry teacher. At the start of the study, she was in her 35th year of teaching. For Aruwanara, a teacher’s responsibility is “not only inside the classroom or realizing plans of the lessons” (Entering interview, July 15, 1997). She believes in the power of talking to students and knowing the factors that affect their performance. Aruwanara is one of the teachers who proposed the use of Filipino as a medium of instruction in Kaunlaran Integrated School.

Dina (Grade 7, Integrated Science)

Dina has been a teacher for 28 years. She has a master’s degree and is currently completing a doctoral program. Her life story reveals her early dream of being a teacher. “Teaching,” Dina states, “is more than a job. It is more than just transmitting the curriculum in class and for the students to regurgitate the contents of the syllabus” (Entering interview, July 14, 1997). She considers student-teacher relationships as important as the subject matter. Dina is one person who wants to enjoy her work in order to give her best. She credits her work ethic and discipline to her father, a military officer.
May (Grade 10, Physics and Grade 7, Integrated Science)

During this study, May was in her fourth year teaching physics and in her first year teaching integrated science. The story she shared tells about her search for a place in the teaching community that is reflective of the struggle of a beginning teacher. Her four years in the classroom heightened her belief in the breadth and depth of a teacher's responsibilities and influence over the students. She claims, “My professional background informs my decisions but my human element gives meaning to my performance in the classroom” (Interview #2, August 1, 1997).

Other Teachers of the Discussion Group

The thirteen other teachers in the science department teach elementary and secondary science. Lorna, Zinnia, and Arlene volunteered to be interviewed after the last group discussion. Lorna was the department head at the time of the study. In addition to her administrative responsibility, she teaches biology. She had taught for 35 years, and was completing the last stage of her doctoral program. Zinnia, a chemistry teacher, has been teaching for 30 years and was pursuing a doctoral program. Arlene is an elementary science teacher. She was accepted at KIS immediately after graduating in 1995. She is planning to enroll in a Master's Program.

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

The primary sources of data for this study were the videotape recordings of the three group discussions and the audiotapes of the semi-structured interviews with the focus teachers and the three additional teachers from the large group. The researcher's
field notes and school documents served as supplementary sources of data. Data collection occurred between June 1997 and January 1998 (see Figure 1 for schedule of data collection). It must be noted that the first group discussion scheduled in August 1997 was not videotaped at the request of the teachers. No videotaped lessons were shown and this discussion focused on the students and classroom management. This meeting, referred to as the initial group discussion, was excluded from the data analysis. This initial meeting helped the research participants and myself to get a feel of the group discussion process.

Individual Interviews

A number of interviews and interview-like formats were used in this study. These included semi-structured, pre-arranged individual interviews, discussions, as well as informal conversations with research participants. Most interviews were scheduled, conducted in the national language, audiotaped, and lasted for approximately 45 minutes on average. These scheduled interviews usually occurred in the teachers’ respective classrooms or the faculty room. The focus teachers, Aruwanara, Dina, and May, were separately interviewed on several occasions at the initial stage of data collection, after each videotaping of a lesson, after each large group meeting, and at the end of the study. Three additional teachers from the large group, Lorna, Zinnia, and Arlene, were interviewed at the close of the last group discussion in January 1998. I asked a colleague who teaches communication arts in Filipino to translate the interviews into English after I produced verbatim transcriptions of the interviews.
Figure 1. Schedule of data collection procedures

- Individual Interviews
- Videotaping/observations
- Pre-sharing discussions
- Post-sharing & post-group discussion interviews

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<td>June 27</td>
<td>Initial group discussion</td>
<td>Aug. 12</td>
<td>First group discussion</td>
<td>Oct. 28</td>
<td>Second group discussion</td>
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- discussions without video viewing
- discussions with video viewing
Videotape Recording (VTR)

The lessons of the focus teachers, and the three group discussions were videotaped between July 1997 and January 1998. The focus teachers selected the lessons and set the schedule for recording. In this study, the videotapes of the lessons served as catalysts for the group discussions and the videotapes of the group discussions served as instruments for data collection and analysis (Collier & Collier, 1986; Copeland & Decker, 1996; Hanson, 1987). The videotapes of the three group discussions offered a flexible and easy means of observing and examining teacher interactions that previously required detailed and lengthy written descriptions (Bottorff, 1994). The density and permanence (Grimshaw, 1982) of the recordings facilitated data analysis.

Observations

I observed the classes of Aruwanara, Dina, and May once a week from June to November 1997. Four observations for each focus teacher per month offered opportunities to learn more about the teachers and provided additional insights into their classroom life. Despite the demands of writing notes during observations and despite the intrusiveness of my presence in the classroom, these observations were essential for gaining an understanding of teaching practice, and to reinforce the interview data. The informal conversations that occurred oftentimes after or sometimes within each observation provided opportunities for the teachers’ to reflect on their lessons and/or express their perceptions about teaching. These observations and discussions contributed
toward building a harmonious rapport between the focus teachers and myself. Moreover, the observation activity established the agenda for conversation during the interviews.

The Group Discussion Cycle

The primary purpose of the group discussion was for the teachers to share and discuss their teaching experiences. The meetings were under the control of the focus teachers who decided on the procedures for telling their stories and the interaction process. As the study unfolded, a cyclical process of teacher observation and teacher sharing evolved which is referred to here as the “group discussion cycle.” The group discussion cycle included four activities, namely, the videotape recording of the lessons of the focus teachers (Aruwanara, Dina, and May), discussions with each of the focus teachers before each large group discussion, a large group discussion composed of sharing sessions, and another discussion with each of the focus teachers. This cycle occurred three times during the study. Three additional teachers from the discussion group were interviewed only once, after the final group discussion. The cyclical discussion procedure is graphically illustrated in Figure 2 and each activity is described in more detail in this section.

A. Videotape recording (VTR) of lessons

Each focus teacher selected and scheduled lessons or parts of the lessons for recording. A total of 16 lessons were videotaped, three lessons for Aruwanara, eight for Dina, and five for May. Portions of the videotape recordings selected by the three focus
Figure 2. The group discussion cycle

Aruwanara

Dina

May

Videotape Recording

A

Aruwanara

Dina

May

Post-Sharing Discussions

D

Aruwanara

Dina

May

Pre-Sharing Discussions

B

Oct. 28, 1997

Nov. 21, 1997

Jan. 15, 1998

Group Discussions

C

3 other science teachers

1

2

3

Post Group Discussion Interviews

56
teachers were used for stimulated recall about the lessons. These videotaped lessons were not transcribed.

**B. Pre-Sharing Discussions**

Pre-sharing discussions were conducted separately with each focus teacher before a large group discussion. Each focus teacher met with me to view the whole VTR, talk about their lesson, select a video clip of interest and significance to each of them, and plan for the sharing process in the group discussion. In the pre-sharing meeting, the teacher examined the activities in the video clip in relation to the objectives set for the particular lesson, discussed what particularly went well and did not go well with the lesson, and prepared sharing plans.

**C. Sharing Sessions**

Sharing the videotaped lessons with the discussion group took place only after an expression of readiness from the three focus teachers who served as facilitators for their own sharing session. A “viewing-orientation-interaction” sequence tried out in the first group discussion emerged as the preferred procedure in all other sharing sessions. This sequence consisted of viewing of a video clip of a lesson, a brief overview of the whole lesson by each focus teacher, and a discussion about the lesson/video clip with the other teachers in the large group. The total length of each sharing session was determined by the length of the video clip and teacher presentation, and the flow of the conversation and interaction that followed. Communication took place in both English and Filipino during the large group discussions. Towards the end of each group discussion, plans and
schedules for the next meeting were discussed within the group. During the sharing sessions, I did not play any active role.

D. Post-sharing discussions/post group discussion interviews

The post-sharing discussions were conducted with each of the focus teachers after each large group discussion. The purpose of these conversations was to explore teachers’ feelings and perceptions about their experiences in sharing their teaching practice during the group discussions, and to identify ways of improving the ongoing sessions. After the final group discussion, a closing post sharing discussion was held with three other teachers from the larger group. These final discussions contributed information about teachers’ views on the roles they had played as members of the discussion group, the benefits and constraints of conducting group discussions, and their perceptions of using group discussions as a structure for professional development.

Data Analysis

Analysis was accomplished through several stages, a) preparation of video and audio transcriptions and field notes, b) identification of emerging patterns and categorization by themes, and c) searching for linkages across data. The first stage mainly involved recording, transcribing, and organizing data. White stationery was used for transcriptions of individual interviews and discussions with the focus teachers, yellow stationery for the three additional teachers from the discussion group, green stationery for transcriptions of the group discussions. Transcriptions of individual interviews with the
focus teachers were coded, "entering," "closing," "post group discussions interviews," "informal conversation," "post or pre-sharing discussions." Post group discussions interview refers to the individual interviews conducted with the three additional teachers from the large group. Patterns were identified in the second stage. Key words and teacher's quotes were highlighted and listed in columns and rows. After completing the list, data were categorized according to research participants, discussion sessions, and themes. The final stage summarized the data based on the categories and guided by the research questions. This process provided insights on the dynamics of the interactions in the group discussions, led to the identification of the facilitating and limiting conditions of using group discussions for professional development, and contributed data on how teacher interactions were mediated by Filipino culture.

The analysis of the interview data was guided by the techniques of data categorization and interpretation suggested by McMillan and Schumacker (1993). The goal of the interview analyses was to determine the teachers' perceptions of group discussions as a structure for professional development. As well, the teachers' views about teaching emerged from these interview data. The analyses shed light on the impact of group discussions on the professional growth of teachers. In the interviews, the teachers spoke about how they felt as participants of the discussion group, the roles they played, the benefits they gained, and the problems they encountered throughout the experience.

Erickson's (1992) inductive approach to the analysis of interaction was used to analyze the data from the large group discussions. This began with a careful reading of all the meeting transcripts. All interactions taking place during the segments of meetings led
by Aruwanara, Dina, and May were plotted graphically to provide an illustration of the physical aspect of the interactions that went on in the group discussions (see Figures 3.1 - 5.4, Chapter 4). Then, these plots of interactions were used in conjunction with meeting transcripts to interpret the dynamics of interaction that occurred.


**Data Verification**

While interpretation lends meaning to the narratives of experiences, subjectivity intensifies the problem of making sense of data. In the present study there was a dialectic between what the video captured and what it excluded, what in the interview and observation segments was identified as significant and less significant. These concerns prompted the use of several strategies for verifying data: triangulation (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985); juxtaposition (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); participant verification (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) or member checking (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993); and audit trails (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).
Triangulation was accomplished by using multiple data sources and analysis procedures to overcome the weaknesses and bias of a single method Denzin (1989) and to determine the consistency of data. The three main sources of data are the videotapes of the three group discussions, interviews, and researcher's field notes. Juxtaposition was accomplished by comparing data from one teacher with other comments made by the same teacher in order to identify recurring themes and perform a reliability check. In this study the videotapes, teachers' narratives, and analyses were shared with the research participants and feedback was encouraged in order to provide what Denzin (1989) defines as participant verification. Sometimes, this verification process is referred to as member checking (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). An audit trail allowed the interpretations and written accounts to be reexamined by other researchers. Two graduate students interested in teacher professional development were asked to view the VTRs and to browse through the narratives between November and December, 1999. Their comments offered alternative perspectives that enriched and confirmed my interpretations.

Data Presentation

The data and results of the study are presented as narratives that describe the interactions that occurred in the three group discussions. Graphical presentations reinforced these descriptions. Chapter Four contains the narratives about the collective experience of the teachers in the group discussions. The chapter describes the conduct of each group discussion composed of the “sharing sessions” where smaller stories about classroom experiences were shared. Chapter Five is an analysis of the interactions that
occurred in the three group discussions and brings together the “sharing sessions” as one large story about the development process of a community of teacher-learners. The story is an attempt to account for the influence of group discussions on the teachers’ professional growth. Chapter Six explores how teacher interactions during the group discussions were mediated by Filipino cultural practices and traditions.

Considerations for Using Qualitative Methodology

For this study, a qualitative research approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McMillan & Schumacher, 1993) was employed to provide insight into the impact of group discussions on teachers’ professional growth, and the influence of Filipino culture on the interaction process. Qualitative research is concerned with understanding a particular phenomenon. This understanding is acquired by analyzing the context of the research participants and by interpreting participants’ meanings of the situations and events. Participants’ meanings include their beliefs, feelings, thoughts, and actions.

Since this study provides descriptive accounts of the teachers’ engagement in the group discussions, writing thick descriptions is required. Thick descriptions aim at documenting participants’ experiences and the setting, adequately to allow the reader to enter a situation he/she had no opportunity to witness directly. It is the responsibility of a researcher to help the reader to experience a sense of “being in” the research setting by providing the context. Eisner and Peshkin (1990) suggest the use of thick description not only to describe the context but also to address the issue of validity in research. They
claim that validity is achieved when the descriptions represent the phenomenon described and when an account objectively describes occurring events.

**Engaging in the Research Setting**

Van Manen (1990) states that researching as a way of knowing the world in a certain way requires the “act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to become the world” (p. 5, emphasis in the original). Despite the complexity of engaging in the research setting, the insight van Manen shares guided the conduct of this study. Working closely with the research participants was essential to my “being in” their world. Throughout the data collection period, I was in Kaunlaran Integrated School every day. I attended activities in and outside of the school even on weekends in order to take part in the experiences of the research participants, get a better picture about the school, and learn more about the teachers. I videotaped the lessons of the focus teachers, observed each of their classes, and talked to them. I interacted with the other science teachers in between my visits with the focus teachers. During the three group discussions, my main responsibility was to videotape the proceedings of the interactions and write field notes. I did not actively participate in the discussions that took place.

The social and working relationships I established with the research participants were based on ethical grounds. We worked closely to plan for the sharing sessions and the group discussions. The researcher’s role I played came closest to what Becker, Geer, and Hughes (1968) recommend, namely that the researcher’s presence in a social
institution and their active participation in the natural setting are equally important. As an active participant, I was in a "face-to-face relationship" with the research participants and engaged in their school and social activities. Through observations, interactions, and participation, I gathered data. Throughout the study our thoughts, ideas, and feelings about the various aspects of the study were communicated through interviews, group discussions, meetings, and informal conversations. The partnership that we experienced as we worked together was most useful when we started to consider the community of teacher-learners that was taking shape.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE COLLABORATIVE JOURNEY OF FILIPINO
TEACHER-LEARNERS

In this chapter, I describe the collaborative journey of the research participants through the three group discussions and focus specifically on the large group discussions that took place among the science teachers at Kaunlaran Integrated School (KIS). This section of my thesis describes the experience of the Filipino teachers' seven-month collaborative inquiry into teaching. By looking closely at the events taking place during the group discussions, I hope that a sense of the whole story is captured. In this section, I use the term "sharing session" (SS) to refer to a portion of the group discussion where one of the three focus teachers shared their videotaped lessons with the group. Of the three discussion group meetings that were held, the first two group discussions were composed of three sharing sessions each, while the last group discussion had four. Data presented here was derived from transcriptions of videotapes of the three group discussions and audiotapes of individual interviews with the three focus teachers and with the three additional science teachers attending the discussion group meetings.

The Journey of Learning Together

The three large group discussions conducted from August 1997 to January 1998 were separately scheduled from the regular monthly meetings in the science department. The first two group discussions were held in the audiovisual (AV) room of the school library, and the final one in the computer laboratory of the science department. Each
group discussion lasted about 60 minutes. What follows is a description of the three large group discussions. Activities taking place before, during, and after the group discussion are included to provide a rich image of what transpired. Verbatim quotes are presented to illustrate the teachers’ feelings and insights about their experiences. Portions of the interactions are excerpted to highlight teaching concerns that invited attention and triggered longer conversations.

In order to portray the dynamics of interaction, I prepared a graphical representation of the actual dialogue that took place during the sharing segments of each group discussion. These are illustrated in Figures 3.1 through 5.4. Figures 3.1 to 3.3 illustrate the interactions during the first group discussion, Figures 4.1 to 4.3 depict the second group discussion, and Figures 5.1 to 5.4 show the third group discussion. The graphical representations of the sharing segments also illustrate the actual physical set up of the room and seating arrangement of the research participants. Flow is illustrated with arrows and the sequence of conversation is indicated numerically. The following are the symbols used in the figures.

- □ Focus teacher
- ○ Secondary teacher
- △ Elementary teacher
- ⊙ Department head
- (Q) Question asked
- → One-way interaction
- ↔ Two-way interaction
- ı Personal experience shared
Inside the AV room of the school library, chairs were arranged in a circle leaving the center space free. In front of the room near the overhead projector screen were the video player, the TV, and the video camera. Seven secondary and five elementary science teachers and the department head arrived at different times, since this first group discussion was scheduled during the first term break.

Before the First Group Discussion

Eight lessons of the three focus teachers were videotaped between July 28 and October 2. Two lessons in Aruwanra's Grade 9 classes were taped, four in Dina's Grade 7 classes, and two in May's Grade 7 classes. In the separate Pre-Sharing Discussions, Aruwanara, Dina, and May viewed the videotapes with me, selected the video clips to show to the large group, discussed the chosen portion of the lesson, and planned for the sharing.

Aruwanara and Dina felt at ease with their plans for sharing lessons. Aruwanara was more than “happy to discuss her lesson openly to the large group” (Oct. 17, 1997). Dina felt comfortable with discussing her lesson, although she had “mixed feelings” (Oct. 10, 1997) about showing the videotape of a portion of her lesson. On the other hand, May was a little worried about hers, saying, “I'm not sure they [the teachers in the group] can learn from me. They are more experienced than I am” (Oct. 20, 1997).
During the First Group Discussion

Several teachers were already sitting, talking, and laughing; a few were still standing in pairs catching up with each other’s plans for the term break. The small group conversations and the laughter revealed a friendly climate. The teachers were asking each other about the prospect of a new type of teacher discussion where talking about their work was central.

Carrie: What are we supposed to do?

Zinnia: Do we have to do anything special?

May: I’m not really sure what will happen with my sharing.

(VTR #14, SS #1, 1st Group Discussion, October 28, 1997)

Lorna, the department head, arrived, greeted everyone, looked around as if checking the attendance. After the teachers found their seats, Dina announced the sequence and the sharing procedure. There was silence while Aruwanara was getting started with the first sharing session.

Aruwanara’s Sharing Session (SS #1, First Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)

Video viewing lasted four minutes followed by a 15-minute discussion. The lesson shared by Aruwanara was about Boyle and Dalton’s Gas Laws. The lesson was a check of the seatwork assigned the Grade 9 students previously when Aruwanara attended a one-day conference outside of the school. The interaction started with how students accomplished the assigned seatwork. In the following opening conversation, the teachers raised issues about students doing exercises on the board, their explaining them to the class, and voluntary participation.
Lorna: How many students actually volunteer? I’m thinking how this technique will encourage participation.

Aruwanara: I always make them explain their work to their classmates.

Zinnia: How did the students feel when they worked on the board and later explained to the class? (VTR #14, SS #1, 1st Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)

Although, the discussion on student participation caught the interest of the teachers, Figure 3.1 shows the primary interaction that occurred between Aruwanara, Lorna (the department head), and three senior teachers (Dina, Zinnia, and Rudy). There was more listening than talking, and lengthy pauses between the exchange of ideas throughout the session.

Figure 3.1. Aruwanara’s Sharing Session (First Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)
May's Sharing Session (SS #2, First Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)

May's video clip showed the Grade 7 students doing an activity for a lesson on motion, a computer simulation about distance probe. Video viewing took six minutes and the interaction, 20 minutes. May immediately informed the group of the technical problem she encountered and the difficulty the students had with the graphing task. She pointed out the advantage of complementing hands-on activity with a computer simulation. Following her presentation, the interaction started with a focus on student preparation for the computer task, and moved to a discussion of the strengths of using group work in developing skills. The transcript excerpts (not in sequence) illustrate the teachers' interest in computer simulation and their advocacy for hands-on activities and group work.

Dina: I make my students do a lot of group work. It's very effective in my class. Students work together.

Rudy: It [group work] would make them work on their own, figure things out for themselves without so much help from the teacher.

Telly: I find that hands-on activities help my elementary pupils understand the concepts more easily because they actually experience the activities.

Lorna: Could it be also because, when they [students] perform the activity, they are actually making their own discoveries?

(VTR #14, SS #2, 1st Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)

The interaction in May's session progressed from the use of computers in teaching to class discipline in the computer laboratory and problem-solving. As shown by Figure 3.2, six teachers shared teaching experiences with group work or hands-on activities. The illustration shows Lorna, the department head, taking charge of the
interaction. When Lorna shifted the topic to classroom management, there came a fast-paced discussion of strategies of dealing with student misbehavior, which was accompanied by laughter from the teachers at the recollection of their experiences. Lorna brought the discussion back to the lesson, requesting May to share the rules she and her students have set up for the activity. May’s response wound up her sharing session. Despite the varied topics that emerged in the discussion, some of the teachers who opted to listen in the first sharing session continued as silent participants in May’s session.

Figure 3.2. May’s Sharing Session (First Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)
Dina’s Sharing Session (SS #3, First Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)

Dina chose a video clip of a game showing her students working in groups. The part of the lesson she shared was a Pictionary game about the atmosphere. The group viewed the video clip for five minutes and proceeded into a 13-minute discussion. She used a Pictionary game as a culminating activity for her lesson on relative humidity. The video clip ended with students’ laughter, teasing, and reactions that echoed inside their classroom. In her presentation of the lesson, Dina pointed out the length of time she spent for instructions.

I spent more time for instructions, reminders for working in groups, scoring, behavior checklist, things like those. There was some bargaining with the rules of the game (laughter). (Dina, VTR#14, SS #3, 1st Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)

Most teachers agreed with Dina regarding the positive results of using games. Some of the issues raised by teachers concerned group rating, maintaining discipline during games, having fun vs. learning concepts, and the benefits and dangers of using games. The following opinions, shared at different places in the discussion, illustrate these issues.

What about rating? Was it group or individual? (Rudy, VTR#14, SS #3, 1st Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)

The problem with games is maintaining discipline. The teacher gets more exhausted. Our rooms are not soundproof. (Annie, VTR#14, SS #3, 1st Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)

Don’t you think that the students had more fun than learning about the concepts? We saw how they were enjoying themselves, the enthusiasm, noise, the teasing. How do we know they are learning? (Zinnia, VTR#14, SS #3, 1st Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)

We really have to be careful when using games. We have to be clear about our purpose and the skills needed for the students to participate in the game. (Lorna, VTR#14, SS #3, 1st Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)
Dina’s session revealed an increased engagement of the teachers in the conversation (Figure 3.3), although the interaction was dominated by Dina, Zinnia, and Lorna. A discussion of the use of games as a teaching strategy served to invite the teachers to share their opinions. A fragment from the longer transcript demonstrates the interaction that went on. The exchange of ideas between the teachers raised issues about rating, students’ skills, teacher intervention during the activity, and the focus on content when using games in class.

Zinnia: Was this the only activity for the whole period?

Dina: Yes. This is a culminating activity of my unit [on atmosphere]. But you see, I spent quite a long time for instructions, criteria, and checklists. There was bargaining of rules (laughter). You saw that we had short discussions within the game. If I see some significant points, I draw the students’ attention to that.
Lorna: Was this rated?

Dina: No. The scores were incentives but would not be a part of their grade.

Rudy: How about those who were not good with drawing? Did they find that difficult?

Dina: Not really. What was important was for them to symbolize their understanding of the situation in the cards. Although, some students said, “It did not look like that!” (laughter)

Lorna: What I saw here is the discussions within the game when Dina sees a good point to talk about. That was really good because the activity did not focus on the game but on the content.

Dina: Thanks. I can’t let that [discussion] pass. It helped me summarize the unit. (VTR #14, SS #3, 1st Group Discussion, Oct. 28, 1997)

Towards the end of Dina’s sharing session, Zinnia shifted the discussion onto the advantages of using videos for discussion purposes. The teachers discussed its advantages, cost effectiveness, time involved, and skills requirements. After a short silence, the structured discussion ended when somebody suggested having lunch together outside of the university campus. The teachers continued their conversation about the lessons during lunch. Most times, they laughed at what happened. Other times, they became thoughtful at some problematic issues that arose during the discussion. And they were surprised and elated at having the chance to talk with each other about the “ordinary” (Dina, Oct. 28, 1997) issues related to their work, such as student behavior and performance and teaching difficulties, which they “have taken for granted” (Lorna, Oct. 28, 1997). Comparisons between the department meeting and the recent group discussion carried on throughout lunch.
After the First Group Discussion

Aruwanara, Dina, and May happily recalled their sharing experiences during the Post-Sharing Discussions between October 30 and November 10. Each expressed positive feelings about sharing their lessons with the other science teachers in the large group.

I was not really worried about sharing my lesson. Probably, this has to do with my experiences in conducting in-service training and workshops (Aruwanara, Post-Sharing Discussion #1, Oct. 30, 1997).

That [sharing a videotaped lesson] is a new experience for me. I have been videotaped before but there was no discussion afterwards. That felt good (pause) more than I ever imagined (Dina, Post-Sharing Discussion #1, Nov. 3, 1997).

Although I was a bit scared, it felt good when the other teachers listened to me (May, Post-Sharing Discussion #1, Nov. 10, 1997).

When the three focus teachers were asked about what things went right and what went wrong with the first group discussion, they provided a number of insights. Although, after only one group discussion it may seem premature to claim these are insights, the thoughts the three teachers expressed illustrate a positive outlook and their recognition of the value of coming together to share and talk about teaching.

When I volunteered to participate in this study, I was thinking about learning more about my work. I guess, so far, so good ... To this moment, I can’t find anything wrong with our first discussion. (May, Post-Sharing Discussion #1, Nov. 10, 1997)

I think, discussing our work would be very helpful to us. We seldom find time to talk about our work. Our meetings always have an agenda. I have a feeling this will work for me... I guess, everything went well (laughter) even if we were not sure of what will happen. (Dina, Post-Sharing Discussion #1, Nov. 3, 1997)

Personally, I believe that helping each other is one way to enrich yourself. Take me, for example, I had my university education a long time ago. I can learn from the new generation of teachers. But I think, teachers must
make it a responsibility to participate in the discussion. (Aruwanara, Post-Sharing Discussion #1, Oct. 30, 1997)

For each teacher’s sharing session, it appeared that Lorna, the department head, took charge of making sense of the interactions. I will return to her role in the group discussions in Chapter 5. Lorna steered the discussion by inviting teachers to share their experiences, bringing a focus to the topic, and summarizing points that served to end each sharing segment. May regarded Lorna’s intervention in her sharing session as a supportive gesture.

Ma’am Lorna provided the lead questions. She tried to make the other teachers to talk. That made me less nervous. This is my first time, you know. (May, Post-Sharing Discussion #1, Nov. 10, 1997)

Analysis indicated that the first sharing session appeared to have more experienced teachers engaged in the interactions. There were longer wait times between comments during the sharing sessions. This may have been due to the novelty of the experience with talking about teaching. Each teacher seemed to expect others to react to the ideas shared rather than getting personally involved in the discussions. Amy, Carrie, and Wilma chose to listen in all the sharing sessions.

The Second Group Discussion
Friday, November 21, 1997
AV Room, 3:30-4:39 p.m.

The teachers who attended the first group discussion came back for the second. The seats were arranged in a circle with the video player, TV, and video camera in the same location as for the first group discussion. The conversation within the group lasted 54 minutes after a 13-minute viewing of the three video clips.
Before the Second Group Discussion

Aruwanara, Dina, and May easily identified the portions of the lessons they wanted to share with the teachers. Aruwanara and Dina selected from the lessons videotaped on November 14 and 18, respectively. May chose a video clip from a lesson recorded earlier on August 26. Her involvement with other school tasks prevented the videotaping of lessons prior to the second group discussion. During the Pre-Sharing Discussions, these three focus teachers decided to follow the same procedure of sharing as used in the first group discussion, that is, by screening of the video clip, providing a background of the lesson, and discussing the lessons. They did not wish to make any modifications to the sharing procedure. May expressed confidence with the next sharing event. The extracts below reflect what Dina and Aruwanara viewed as the purpose of sharing experiences, and the supportive atmosphere that facilitated May’s sharing.

A discussion after a group activity is my favorite strategy. It would be helpful if the other teachers give me feedback on this. Even if we use similar teaching strategies, we will always have different experiences. (Dina, Pre-Sharing Discussion #2, Nov. 7, 1997)

I am choosing this part of the lesson, the post lab discussion so that the other teachers will feel that a one-period science class is not enough. This activity should have happened right after the experiment but we lacked time. I want to know how the other teachers manage their time. (Aruwanara, Pre-Sharing Discussion #2, Nov. 14, 1997)

I felt comfortable with the process the second time, (laughter) I hope (pause). With teachers listening to me and being supportive.... that helped me to share. (May, Pre-Sharing Discussion #2, Nov. 11, 1997)

During the Second Group Discussion

As soon as the elementary teachers arrived, the discussion started. For this meeting, Dina was the first to share, followed by May and Aruwanara.
Dina’s Sharing Session (SS #1, Second Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

The video clip Dina selected for her sharing involved the processing of a group activity on molecules. Her sharing session took 17 minutes with five minutes for viewing and a 14-minute group discussion. This portion of her lesson showed a different kind of class interaction. Dina was at the center of the activity, facilitating students’ discussion as they reported strategies they used in the group problem-solving activity. Inquiries about the processing of the activity occurred as soon as the video viewing ended. The teachers were awed by the way Dina dealt with student responses. Questions focused on the techniques for mapping students’ responses on the board, making students generalize from the categorized responses, and equalizing student participation. Two of Dina’s responses to the questions articulated her teaching practice and beliefs.

I often do this when I have the time. Actually, my purpose was for them to summarize their learning from the activity. This helps me know how much they have learned and from there, I plan my next move. (VTR#18, SS #1, 2nd Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

As much as possible, I ensure that every student will have the chance to participate. I always give them open-ended questions. Of course, I know whom to call for easy or difficult questions. I want them to experience success (VTR#18, SS #1, 2nd Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997).

In Dina’s session (Figure 4.1), the teachers indicate their interest in problem-solving. The issues raised by the teachers focused on the details associated with using group problem-solving activity as a learning strategy. Rudy, Wilma, and Telly responded in part to these questions when they pursued the discussion and shared similar experiences with group problem-solving.

Did these students design their own activity? (Rudy, VTR#18, SS #1, 2nd Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)
Asking students to solve problems as a group requires planning (*pause*) like what skills do they need. Is there a need for a leader? It’s not because they can’t do the activity but (*pause*) how many of our students can do this? (Wilma, VTR#18, SS #1, 2nd Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

We also need to consider how much freedom to allow your students, for example in this activity. Should they choose a leader? a recorder? (Telly, VTR#18, SS #1, 2nd Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

Figure 4.1, Dina’s Sharing Session (Second Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

May’s Sharing Session (SS #2, Second Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

The video clip May shared was a second activity on using games. May explained that she used the game as a conclusion to the lesson. A battery of questions followed viewing of the video clip. The teachers observed that the students were guessing and struggling to provide words related to the terms written on the cards. The issue of using Filipino as the language of instruction in school captured the attention of the teachers.
Some teachers expressed concern over using a literal translation, which may cause misconception rather than clarity. They were united in retaining English for scientific terms without any corresponding translation in Filipino. Selected excerpts from the second group discussion reveal the teachers' concern over the use of Filipino in teaching science.

They need vocabulary. For vacuum, they said “sipsip” [a Filipino term for drinking through a straw]. But that was fun. (May, VTR#18, SS #2, 2nd Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

You know, we don't have the literal translation for all the scientific terms. (Arlene, VTR#18, SS #2, 2nd Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

Sometimes you sacrifice the meaning when you use non-scientific terms. Misconception is likely to happen. (Zinnia, VTR#18, SS #2, 2nd Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

Why don't we use the English terms? I have an article about language. I hope I have it with me. (searches in her bag) Okay, here it is. Mother tongue versus the universal language...” (Lorna, VTR#18, SS#2, 2nd Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

Again, the tension between fun and learning concepts when using games was raised. The discussion revolved around purpose, rules, and scoring. Dina brought the discussion to focus on group activities and contended that group work is a very effective strategy in her classroom. Most teachers affirmed her views and continued sharing group activities that they used in their classes. Lorna, at the middle of May’s sharing session, brought up the issue of evaluating group performance.

The sequence of the conversation (#23 to 30 in Figure 4.2) illustrates this point. May’s short response invited more sharing of personal experiences and opinions.
Lorna: How did you rate their performance?

May: The students decided on the scoring before we started the game.

Rudy: In my class, the pupils agree on the points. For example, five points for a correct answer with explanation, three for a correct answer that is short, and one for a phrase that is almost the correct answer.

Wilma: It’s not all the time that I ask my students to decide on the score. Sometimes I set the scoring myself. But the students like deciding on the points and this takes time. Both ways work well in my class.

Carrie: I would like to know when you do it [setting the scores] …… and when you ask your students to do it.
Wilma: Time is the determining factor. If I have the time before the game, I ask the students to agree on scoring.

Telly: Not only time! But also the kind of game. If it is a new game for the students, we need the time to give the instructions.

Wilma: You’re right. (VTR #18, SS #1, 2nd Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

Aruwanara’s Sharing Session (SS #3, Second Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

The four-minute video clip for the third sharing session showed the students and Aruwanara having a post-laboratory discussion. The students seated in groups were responding to her questions and those of a few other students. The nine-minute group interaction following Aruwanara’s video presentation was the shortest. The interaction focused on the post-laboratory activity that was conducted in the next science class.

Figure 4.3. Aruwanara’s Sharing Session (Second Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)
In contrast, during the third sharing session, only Aruwanara, Lorna, and the two other chemistry teachers, Zinnia and Wilma, were involved in the discussion of a post laboratory discussion of an experiment on acids (Figure 4.3). The other teachers silently watched and observed the progress of the interaction. The questions that Lorna posed kept the interaction going between the small group. Nobody else reacted when Aruwanara described how she and her students agreed on rules of behavior in class.

Lorna announced the end of the discussion. Teachers prepared to leave the room, a few stayed on. During the light snack in the faculty room, the teachers talked about the forthcoming Christmas break, periodical testing, and the individual assignments for the science contest in January 1998.

After the Second Group Discussion

In the follow-up meetings, the three focus teachers freely expressed the gains they felt they had derived from sharing their lessons with the larger group. Specifically, they talked about the usefulness of the meetings in relation to both their personal and professional lives. Their comments indicate how they value group discussions as a way to learn about teaching.

I can see the benefits a teacher can get from it [group discussion]. It can develop a closer relationship between us. Not that we are not close before this study. We are close but probably, our closeness has something to do with our academic work. This discussion touched on a different level (pause), something to do with our personal aspect. Each one listened and got involved. (Dina, Post-Sharing Discussion #2, Nov. 28, 1997)

The sharing enabled me to learn, to share effective techniques in teaching. I would say that getting involved in the discussions updated me, particularly the lessons taught by the other teachers in chemistry. The funny stories relieved me of the tensions and humored me through the day. (Aruwanara, Post-Sharing Discussion #2, Nov. 24, 1997)
When I saw myself on the video, I found myself thinking about what I have done even after the discussions. I brought that image home and kept thinking about myself as a teacher. My perspective was enriched. If I continue to share I can clarify some teaching concerns I used to think about alone. I think I began to be reflective. (May, Post-Sharing Discussion #2, Nov. 24, 1997)

Each teacher focused on something different. Dina stressed the benefits of the group discussion in terms of relationships. She saw that her personal relationship with other teachers was enhanced by sharing their work. Aruwanara, despite her credible academic qualification, viewed the group discussions as a way of updating her knowledge and skills in teaching chemistry. Not only were the teachers’ stories insightful for her, they were tension-reducing and entertaining. Sharing her lessons with the large group helped May become more reflective about her practice. She acknowledged the power of a group of teachers clarifying teaching concerns rather than finding solutions to classroom problems in isolation.

**Third Group Discussion**  
Thursday, January 15, 1998  
Computer Laboratory, Science Department  
3:30-5:08 p.m.

Unlike the two previous occasions, the third meeting took place at the computer laboratory of the science department, the only other room with available VCR and television units. Unlike the seating arrangement at the AV room in the library, all tables were arranged in rows, two or three chairs by each computer. Some teachers moved their chairs toward the center, others remained in groups of two or three. Two secondary
teachers, one who just came back from Australia and another from the United States, joined the group. One elementary teacher failed to attend because of an accident. The school principal arrived during the second sharing session.

**Before the Third Group Discussion**

In each of the Pre-Sharing Discussions that took place, the three focus teachers shared their reasons for the choices of the video clips they planned to show to the large group. A common purpose was noticeable. Aruwanara, Dina, and May each found that the group discussions provided an opportunity to solicit help and to sort out teaching difficulties.

This is the first time I am doing this [motivational activity] to the whole class. I tried it out in small groups. Perhaps, the other teachers could help me out in modifying this activity. (Dina, Pre-Sharing Discussion #3, Jan. 12, 1998)

I need some feedback on this lesson. Everytime I reach this part, I got a problem. I can't think of an effective way of motivating kids to memorize the periodic tables. I have tried several but still they find difficulty with it. (Aruwanara, Pre-Sharing Discussion #3, Nov. 26, 1997)

This is my first time to teach Grade 7. I am struggling with almost everything. I found this lesson a little bit frustrating. It felt nice to share your problems with others. Here is another chance (laughter). (May, Pre-Sharing Discussion #3, Jan. 7, 1998)

**During the Third Group Discussion**

Unlike the first two group discussions, which consisted of three sharing sessions, this last one had four sharing sessions. Dina volunteered two video clips at the early part of the meeting. Aruwanara shared second and May, last. For this discussion session, viewing of video clips took 14 minutes and the group interaction went on for an hour and 14 minutes.
Dina's Sharing Session (SS #1, Third Group Discussion, Jan. 15, 1998)

Dina shared an activity on team building. The student discussion focused on listening and speaking skills and following instructions. The purpose and procedures of the motivational activity encouraged the participation of most teachers (Figure 5.1). Dina stressed the importance of communication skills when working in groups. When Zinnia asked about the connection of the activity to the subject matter being taught, Dina openly admitted that there was no direct relation to the content of the lesson. The activity was more of learning skills to work in groups. A discussion of the procedures Dina used in the activity continued, particularly issues related to giving instructions. Several teachers enumerated some humorous ways in which students dealt with instructions. Laughter

Figure 5.1. Dina’s Sharing Session (Third Group Discussion, Jan. 15, 1998)
among the teachers arose from the shared episodes. Gene's comment affirmed Dina’s facilitating skills, but he considered the time involved problematic.

The way you discussed the activity with the students afterwards was really good. You did well with focusing the students, then you wrote their responses on the board. (pause) Plus the time to do that. You spent quite some time on this before the lesson. I'm wondering about the time left for the main lesson. (Gene, VTR# 28, SS #1, 3rd Group Discussion, Jan. 15, 1998)

Classroom management resurfaced in the conversation, circling around concerns for student misbehavior and identifying the factors responsible for their occurrence. More laughter occurred when Wilma and Dina recalled a student who used to sleep under the teacher's table. Lorna attempted to solicit ways of resolving the problems. A few teachers agreed that the disciplinary problems required a “case-to-case” approach that the solutions vary according to students and the nature of the problem.

Dina's Sharing Session (SS #2, Third Group Discussion, Jan. 15, 1998)

The second video clip Dina chose showed six students working out a problem on motion. There was a fast-paced discussion about the students' activity. All teachers were involved in the discussion (Figure 5.2). The excerpts that follow are culled from the longer version of Dina’s sharing session in the third group discussion. They reflect the teachers’ concern for developing students' critical thinking through group problem-solving.

I think the students were getting confused here. Can they see the relationship of the concepts to what they were doing? It looked like they don’t know where they are heading. (Lorna, VTR# 28, SS #2, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)
But don’t you think they are already capable of analyzing? They talked about the formula and looked at their notes. They had a background of the concepts about motion. This is some sort of a reinforcement of the unit on motion. (Dina, VTR# 28, SS #2, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

But looking at students talking like this, in the social science point of view..... this is giving focus on their own thinking. (Principal, VTR# 28, SS #2, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

Although they were asking each other questions, they were not getting into the answers. (May, VTR# 28, SS #2, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

Yes, they [students’ ideas] were stated as questions because probably for them those questions served as guides to verbalize their thoughts. And so that they can verbalize their thoughts they need to have something to help them organize their thinking. But this group could express what they’re thinking. (Principal, VTR# 28, SS #2, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)
The teachers were united about the benefits of providing students the freedom to explore and discuss their ideas in a small group. As well, it was suggested that teacher intervention is necessary in order that the students take away with them the correct concepts and understanding. The discussion progressed to the roles of students, group size, preparation of students for group tasks, the issue of leadership, and evaluation of group outputs.


The third video clip that ran for four minutes was an introductory activity to formula writing where Aruwanara was sharing her “shopping story.” Students in groups were asked to listen for things that she bought in the supermarket. They had to list the products, identify the active elements, and write their chemical symbols. In her introduction, Aruwanara explained the difficulty her students experienced with periodic tables. The extracts show the diverse reactions of the teachers regarding learning via memorization vs. learning for understanding and relevance.

Is it necessary that they memorize the tables? (Lorna, VTR# 28, SS #3, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

I think, the difficulty is because sometimes our students don’t find any relevance of those elements in their everyday lives. (Principal, VTR# 28, SS #3, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

Do they understand why they are studying the periodic tables? Can they see the importance of studying that? (Monet, VTR# 28, SS #3, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

I guess that they’re forced to memorize those symbols for the test. It’s a challenge for us to make the students see that what we are doing in class is happening in their lives and that these concepts will be helpful to them. If
The issue of applications of chemistry was further explored by discussing several examples of chemical reactions offered by Zinnia, Wilma, and Dina. These examples were digestion of food, cooking, painting, and rusting. When Dina commented on the difficulty of relating abstract topics to real-life situations, the use of metaphors to explain concepts to students invited more conversation among the teachers during Aruwanara’s sharing session (Figure 5.3).

The portion of the conversation that follows is particularly interesting (Conversation Sequence #33 through #43). The discussion about the use of metaphors illustrates teachers’ difficulty in using metaphors and their understanding of it in terms of
the purpose, appropriateness, and dangers. The conversation generated insights into the pros and cons of metaphors as a teaching strategy. The periods of silences occurring between the exchange of ideas seemed to allow the teachers moments to think about the opinions expressed, to either affirm or oppose nonverbally.

Aruwanara: I find metaphors helpful in my class ..... for understanding, at least.

Wilma: But we really have to be skillful when using a metaphor, you know. We have to provide a clear analysis and go into details for the students to really see the similarity.

Zinnia: I agree with that. Sometimes, using a metaphor might cause misconceptions rather than clarify the concept as what Lorna mentioned earlier.

Gene: Right. Take for example, in our bio class ... photosynthesis. We use terms such as ‘drink water’ and ‘take food’ from the soil, or the leaves ‘catching the sunlight’. These terms may create different understandings of the processes. The students may take them literally and before we know it, they’re having the wrong conceptions. I’m talking from experience (laughter). That was in my elementary [schooling]. (Shrugs his shoulders).

Monet: That’s because elementary teachers try as much as possible to simplify concepts. We can’t avoid using concrete examples to go down to the level of understanding and readiness of the pupils.

Principal: That’s one big problem. We baby our elementary pupils.

Silence.

Dina: Let’s go back to metaphors. They bring about a lot of problems.

Lorna: I know, but metaphors sometimes make a lot of sense.

Telly: It is too difficult for me to find an appropriate metaphor. Actually, I am afraid that the students might have a different interpretation. I avoid metaphors as much as possible.
Principal: We have to be really extra careful in using metaphors.

Silence. (VTR# 28, SS #3, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

May's Sharing Session (SS #4, Third Group Discussion, Jan. 15, 1998)

The video clip for the fourth sharing session showed six groups of students working with toy trucks on wooden ramps. Some groups were in the corridor, a few inside the room. They were recording the speed of the trucks at different inclinations of the ramp. May was seen moving from one group to the other. At the outset, May recalled how she managed the activity. Her hands were locked at the back of her head, looking disappointed with her lesson as she related the difficulty she had with instruction giving and the materials.

We spent a lot of time on instructions. I realized later that they needed step-by-step instructions. So you saw me running from one group to the other. It was really noisy. Then we had problems with the timers. Not all of them were functioning. (May, VTR# 28, SS #4, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

Nods and a chorus of “yes” came from the teachers who were closely following the exchange. Dina’s and the other teachers’ reaction to May’s dilemma seemed to echo her frustration.

That’s one of my concerns. That’s why I tell them at the beginning to listen carefully because I am not repeating instructions. Most often, I provide written and oral instructions. That saves time. I had the same problem with this activity. I should have checked the timers a day before .... after requesting the technician to prepare them. (Dina, VTR# 28, SS #4, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

Our elementary [students] are even worse. Right after your instructions, you will hear, “Ma’am answer only?” or “Ma’am, in our notebook?” It’s really funny. (Sally, VTR# 28, SS #4, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)
That is also true to high school students (*laughs*). They will ask you to repeat the instructions. (Amy, VTR# 28, SS #4, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

Figure 5.4. May’s Sharing Session (Third Group Discussion, Jan. 15, 1998)

Figure 5.4 shows that there was full engagement of the teachers in the discussion. May’s sharing session was the longest of all the sharing sessions. Most of the interaction was spent exploring the development of critical thinking. Several thoughts shared by the teachers illustrate their concern with developing conceptual understanding and helping students gain critical thinking skills.

As you saw on the video, my students had difficulty with interpretations. They can’t see the connections between the conclusions with the results of their activity. (May, VTR# 28, SS #4, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)
When the correct results do not emerge, do we ask our students why that happened? Can we give them additional time to work on the task all over again? (Principal, VTR# 28, SS #4, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

It might be because they have not developed critical thinking. (Sally, VTR# 28, SS #4, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

Our students tend to be very dependent on the teachers. They want us to tell them everything. They are comfortable with that. That’s why I really do many group activities whether it’s a discussion or hands-on. I thought that would help them to be independent. (Telly, VTR#28, SS#4, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

The moment was broken by an announcement by Carrie, “Snack time! Remember this is our last group discussion.” The teachers gathered up their materials and moved to the faculty room. The video camera, recorders, tapes, and notes were packed. Light snacks and more thoughts were shared before they simultaneously bid each other goodbye.

After the Third Group Discussion

In the Post-Sharing Discussions with Aruwanara, Dina, and May, they expressed their views about the group discussions, in general, and their individual experiences as main research participants, in particular. Their responses describe the benefits and constraints, what went right and wrong with the sharing sessions, and the ways of improving the conduct of group discussions. In this post-sharing discussion, they acknowledged the potentials of group discussions as a learning structure for professional development. A more detailed discussion of the benefits and constraints of the group discussions as perceived by the focus teachers, is found in Chapter Five.
Dina (Post-Sharing Discussion #3, January 19, 1998)

I experienced a different feeling when I shared something that failed in my lesson. I’ve never done that in public before. Usually we share stories of success. If ever we want to talk about our mistakes or weaknesses, we do that to a very close friend. But the other teachers were so supportive.

As a focus teacher, it [sharing] provided me immediate feedback, meaningful data to end users like the three of us who volunteered (laughter). I just realized that a study introduced me to a new view of research, one that could be of help to the participants even during the data collection. I did not regret volunteering.

Dina’s quotes reveal the benefits she derived from the group discussions and the factors that enabled her to talk about her mistakes or weaknesses in public. She credits her willingness to share teaching experiences that she felt were failures, to the support she received from her colleagues. By volunteering to be involved in the study, she claims that she, along with Aruwanara and May, gathered immediate feedback of their teaching experiences through sharing and the research process.

Aruwanara (Post-Sharing Discussion #3, January 16, 1998)

Our relationship was enhanced by the sharing sessions specially that our discussions focused on our work. In our small group [chemistry], we discuss our lessons but we never really go to the extent of analyzing them. We only make sure that the three of us are having the same topic for the week, time, you know.

From my participation in the group discussion, I realized the value of giving time, space, and freedom for my students to learn, the way I experienced that in the discussions. To care and show concern were very evident during our sharing sessions. They [group discussions] encouraged open sharing of experiences.

In talking about the benefits Aruwanara gained from sharing teaching experiences, she compared the discussions she used to have with the other two chemistry teachers in the faculty room, with the three group discussions involving other colleagues. What stood out for her was the relationship that went on to a new level. The time, space,
and freedom to learn that she experienced from the group discussions were the intangible benefits she brought back to her classroom. She pointed out that the care and concern shown by the other teachers resulted in sharing experiences openly.

May (Post-Sharing Discussion #3, January 19, 1998)

I could give you a list of benefits and very few problems (laughter) about the group discussions. The only problem I saw was the minimal engagement of the other teachers in the conversations. Benefits? Knowledge, strategies, harmonious relationship, friendship, openness, confidence. Listening had the most impact for me.

At last, my responsibility, correction, my commitment (laughter) is over. Personally, everything went well. My fears vanished when I was listened to. The discussions provided me the best learning experience so far.

Although May experienced anxiety as one of the focus teachers, she found the group discussions a powerful learning experience. The other teachers listening to her story contributed to building her confidence as she performed her major role in the group discussions. Being listened to had the most impact on her, given her “inexperience,” a description of herself which she gave throughout our conversations. The group discussions enhanced her pedagogical knowledge and skills as well as strengthened her relationship with the other teachers. The “minimal engagement of the other teachers” during the interactions was one factor she identified to be a hindrance to the success of group discussions. May observed that some teachers seemed uncomfortable with sharing their ideas and thoughts openly, even in the later sharing sessions. “I think some of them shared only when a question was addressed to them directly. Although, I understand the feeling,” she said. She speculated that continuing the group discussions might eventually help teachers to overcome their inhibitions.
Group Discussions Afterthoughts

Interacting with one another was neither a new nor a difficult process for the teachers, who occasionally enjoyed some brief moments between class periods and lunch time to talk mainly about teaching and domestic concerns. Conversations about teaching previously took the simple form of colleagues informing each other about what they were doing in class in relation to the syllabus. Having to bare one’s practice in public, a very novel experience for them, posed a different problem.

The process of capturing the sharing sessions of writing about the teachers’ experience with group discussions is both fascinating and messy. Once a sharing segment started, it took on a life of its own. The teachers have rich, valuable stories of teaching to tell. They saw similar images of their own practice in the stories they heard. Sharing stories opened possibilities of looking at the ways in which each teacher had been shaped by the school, the profession, and culture.

The teachers were unanimous in saying that the sharing process gave them freedom to make choices, gave them confidence, and assisted them in obtaining professional assistance. Furthermore, this process could continue to do so. They welcomed the notion of working together to find answers to perplexing questions about teaching. They learned to value their work more and to value themselves more by respecting each other’s voices as they individually and collectively made sense of classroom practice. Through this process, they found a way of seeing themselves as persons.
The feeling of isolation at KIS seemed to weaken. Everybody listened. Each teacher made it a top priority to invite everyone to speak and suggested how they could better help each other in being fully engaged in the interactions. The sharing process inspired the group to continue the dialogue and to move forward by working together. Relating with other teachers opened doors of understanding, community, and caring. Learning to care for each other made their collaborative experience special. Caring was shown by the consistent attendance at all the group discussions; listening to each others' stories; discussing lessons without evaluating them as right or wrong, effective or ineffective; offering feedback; and respecting each others' opinions. Caring turned out to be a significant factor when the teachers embarked on the journey together.

Sitting in the classes in between the scheduled group discussions, I observed new stories being lived out. From the shared stories came a beautifully crafted “recycled” story, the kind of story built from the stories shared in the group discussions and old common stories in the classroom. The focus teachers acted on the feedback offered by the other teachers during the sharing sessions. May introduced her class to a cooperative task of recapitulating lessons. Grade 9 students in Aruwanara’s classes were given more freedom to design their own experiments, a departure from the “recipe” laboratory activities. Dina continued to refine the procedures for group problem-solving.

During the later sharing sessions, the other teachers reported their experiences on utilizing strategies and teaching ideas discussed in the earlier sessions. Wilma combined Dina’s Pictionary game and May’s Association game. Arlene, Rudy, and Annie tried negotiating the rules and scoring schemes with their elementary pupils. Zinnia enjoyed surveying her students’ ideas before each lesson.
Together, these experiences, storied and restoried in the group discussions, shaped new stories of teaching. The sharing provided a tool for the teachers to plan lessons, using their own stories to reflect on their teaching. It was an astonishing recycling process generated from a practical way of talking about what they knew and who they were as teachers.
CHAPTER FIVE

GROUP DISCUSSIONS:
SPACES FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

This chapter addresses the first research question: What is the impact of group discussions on the personal and professional development of teachers? It describes how the Filipino teachers’ group discussions served as a platform for teacher professional development. The first section examines the growth of the three focus teachers and the other teachers in the large group. The second section discusses the factors that promoted and hindered professional growth in individuals and the group.

The professional and personal growth of the three focus teachers and the other teachers in the large group are discussed separately in this section. Professional growth, as used here, refers to the development of the pedagogical knowledge and skills related to teaching, such as, knowledge of science content, teaching strategies, classroom management, and instructional resources. Personal growth refers to the teacher’s personal skills and attitudes for example, confidence, risk taking, openness, and a willingness to continue to learn.

Teachers’ Individual Growth

This section discusses the personal and professional growth of the three focus teachers. The benefits each teacher claimed they derived from their direct participation in the group discussions are identified in this section. A discussion of the problems and difficulties they encountered in the sharing process is also provided.
Benefits Derived from the Group Discussions

The benefits the focus teachers derived from sharing their stories with the large group were associated with the professional and personal aspects of growth. Insights about enriching teaching practice and becoming more reflective because of the shared stories, relate to their professional growth. Evidence of risk taking, openness, and caring signaled interpersonal change. That the group discussion provided voice was viewed as contributing to both the teachers' professional and personal growth.

Enrichment of Teaching Practice

The primary benefit the teachers took away from the group discussions was the enrichment of their pedagogical knowledge and skills. Despite the length of their teaching experiences, Aruwanara and Dina found the sharing sessions refreshing and rewarding in terms of learning new trends in teaching. May, a beginning teacher, strongly expressed that the group discussions were significant opportunities for her to grow as a beginning teacher. The changing environment required Dina to continuously learn to make her lessons relevant to the changes. Aruwanara claimed that her "ancient" teacher training preparation needed to be updated.

It was so long ago since I had my teacher training. It's not fair to my students. I have to know newer teaching techniques. (Aruwanara, Interview #4, September 15, 1997)

After more than 35 years of teaching, Aruwanara openly declared the fundamental responsibility of a teacher to update her knowledge and skills as a way of exercising justice in the classroom. A doctoral degree neither prevented nor bothered her from acknowledging the contribution that her younger colleagues could offer her. Her
willingness to continue to learn from others was also evident during the regular
discussion sessions with fellow chemistry teachers.

Times change, students change, needs change. We have new sets of
students every year. We face a new problem in the classroom every day. I
find time to read new materials and learn from others. (Dina, Interview #5,
November 18, 1997)

Dina justifies the need for continuous teacher development. Presently, in her mid-
career year, she still takes advantage of learning through reading and from other teachers
to enable her in dealing with classroom issues she encounters every year with new sets of
students.

I realized that in a collaborative setting we could learn so much. I think it
was because of relationships. Being new but with others, I know that I will
continue to learn. I will try new things. I also know that as I continue
teaching, I will not be alone. (May, Closing Interview, January 22, 1998)

Having been introduced to the mentoring program at the initial stage of her
teaching career, May favors learning with a group as a support mechanism in order for
her to grow as a teacher. Although, she benefited so much from working with another
physics teacher during her first year in KIS, her experience with the sharing stories to her
peers made her feel that she belongs.

Promotion of Self-Reflection

Self-reflection was fostered by the group discussions. The focus teachers admitted
that reflecting on what they do in the classroom previously had occurred only when
something went wrong. Because previously the reflection process was primarily aimed at
finding solutions to problems, Aruwanara, Dina, and May did not consider reflection a
regular part of their teaching practice. The acts of preparing for the sharing sessions and
the sharing process helped them realize the value of reflecting on their practice as part of growing in the profession.

After the first videotaping of my lesson, I thought about what I have done. I said to myself, "how did I do?" (laughter) As we continued to prepare for sharing and discussed afterwards, I realized that examining your actions is an opportunity to improve yourself. I used to ask myself questions about the lesson when it failed. What pushed me to do that is for me to find a solution. But the nice thing about reflecting all the time is for you to trace your actions and how they affected your students and the objectives of the lesson. I am even keeping a journal now (laughter). (May, Closing Interview, January 22, 1998)

I liked this opportunity of being a participant in the group discussion. It helped me reflect on..... review my teaching with others. I think about what I did on my own. It is simply going back to what happened in the classroom. But I’ve never experienced reflecting with others. I guess, the discussions are a way of reflection. We examined the lesson, then discussed how it could be improved. I liked it. (Dina, Closing Interview, January 20, 1998)

The quotes from May and Dina reflect Schön’s (1983, 1987) notion of “reflection-on-action” when they stepped back to look at what happened. In doing so, the process became a mode of learning through an examination of their actions that allowed possibilities for new ideas to interplay with their thoughts. Interpreting these events using an enactivist perspective (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993), May unconsciously brought together an awareness of her action and knowledge about their subject area that turned the act of reflection into a personal experience, rather than a mere examination process. Dina extended her thoughts by looking at the group discussions as a useful form of collective reflection.
Encouraged Risk Taking

The supportive atmosphere shown by the teachers' interest and patient listening, enabled risk taking and open sharing without fear of being evaluated. The focus teachers felt comfortable and at ease about giving and soliciting assistance. Looking back on their experience May and Dina talked about the benefits they perceived from sharing classroom experiences, and the learning atmosphere that enabled them to take risks. Dina found that the conversational format of the meeting and the affirmations the teachers offered, encouraged her to discuss her weaknesses openly.

....[this was] a less formal mode of learning from each other and with one another. At first, it was uneasy. But later talking about my weaknesses, I became more open to what others have to say. The other teachers were very affirming. (Dina, Closing Interview, January 20, 1998)

On the same note, May claimed that an open discussion of one's weaknesses is a powerful way of learning. However, the disclosure of not-so-successful stories can only take place in a caring environment.

Had the group members not been friendly and supportive, the teachers would be discouraged to talk about their weaknesses (pause) from where they could learn a lot. (May, Post-Sharing Discussion #3, January 19, 1998)

Risk taking was key to bringing about several other interpersonal actions fundamental to the development of a caring community. Mustering the courage to take risks caused the focus teachers to disclose their practice openly, and to encourage others to examine their practice as a way of soliciting feedback. The later sharing sessions reveal the confidence of the focus teachers to share not only their success stories but also experiences that did not particularly go well.
Increased Confidence

Choosing video clips to stimulate discussions was a trying moment for Aruwanara, Dina, and May. In the first group discussion, it took them a longer time to decide on what to show and tell. The three video clips shown in the first group discussion were mostly of the students in action. They showed portions of lessons that went well. In these excerpts, the teachers were seen either at the side of the video frames observing students or with their backs toward the camera. However, in the second and third group discussions, decisions about what to show happened right after the teachers viewed the taped lessons. The gradually increasing presence of Aruwanara, Dina, and May in the video frames was revealing. In fact, Dina volunteered to show an additional video clip during the last discussion session. May credited her increasing confidence in sharing her story to the support from the other teachers in the large group.

I was not the main character here. I was really nervous that first time. Imagine my lesson is documented. I thought about the reactions of the other teachers. You know, I have just begun my teaching career. I thought, "can they learn from me?"(May, Pre-Sharing Discussion #1, October 20, 1997)

It felt good that first time that they [teachers] were listening to me. I got braver this time, I guess. (May, Pre-Sharing Discussion #3, January 7, 1998)

Initially, doubts about sharing her stories were mainly caused by her status as a beginning teacher. But being listened to without judgment helped her gain more confidence.

Even Aruwanara, a veteran teacher with a wide range of experience, was very concerned about saying the right thing in front of her peers. Like Dina and May, she became more relaxed in the second group discussion (even though this was not apparent
to the other teachers who felt that she was most relaxed during the first group discussion).

Dina shared the feelings of Aruwanara and May that the support they got from the teachers in the large group helped most in sharing their stories.

Although, I’m used to talking to a group of teachers, it was different when you are talking about what you do in the classroom. You have to be sure with what you say. (Aruwanara, Post-Sharing Discussion #1, October 30, 1997)

My feelings after the second group discussion? Certainly different from the first! (Laughter). I think I was more relaxed. You know, everybody was interested in the sharing. (Aruwanara, Post-Sharing Discussion #2, November 24, 1997)

**Willingness to Disclose Teaching Practice**

The listening behavior of the other members of the discussion group during the first group discussion encouraged Aruwanara, Dina, and May to take the risk of sharing their weaknesses. They were willing to accept whatever emerged from their presentation. A desire to learn took the place of the fear of exposing themselves to public scrutiny. Where they initially opted to show the best of themselves, they became more open about learning from their mistakes and soliciting assistance from the other teachers in the later discussion sessions. The quotes from May and Dina illustrate the willingness to expose and have others examine their practice.

I wanted the teachers to see the difficulty of the students in interpreting results of experiments. (May, Pre-Sharing Discussion #3, January 7, 1998)

This is a trial. By showing this, the teachers could give me more tips so that I could come up with a set of rules for this activity. (Dina, Pre-Sharing Discussion #3, January 12, 1998)

The first set of choices showed parts of lessons that went well. Aruwanara, Dina, and May chose to talk about teaching strategies that worked well in their classroom. The
second set of video clips was a mixture of two successful lessons and a lesson that did not go particularly well. Dina shared an activity that demonstrated her strength in processing student responses. A lesson using games as a wrap up of the lesson was presented by May. Aruwanara shared activities in which students found difficulty in expanding their ideas. In the last group discussion, the video clips were parts of the lessons where the teachers used new strategies that caused instructional problems.

**Willingness to Solicit Feedback**

Over the period of the study, I observed a shift in the focus teachers’ purpose for choosing video clips. In preparing for the first group discussion, sharing teaching strategies as exemplars of good practice was the main reason for choosing parts of the lessons to show to the large group.

Why I chose this? To share a teaching strategy. This [group problem solving] is very effective in my class. (Aruwanara, Pre-Sharing Discussion #1, October 17, 1997)

The sharing process shifted from showing and telling to gathering feedback on the lessons that were selected to discuss with the group. Instead of merely showing and telling about an activity occurring in the classroom, the focus teachers saw the later group discussions as an opportunity for generating reactions from the other teachers in the large group.

I spent a lot of time on giving instructions in this lesson [group activity on motion]. I was getting worried because we were losing time for the main activity. You know, this is my first time to teach grade 7 science. I need to know a lot more from other grade 7 teachers. (May, Pre-Sharing Discussion #3, January 7, 1998)
The part I want to share is the storytelling. They [teachers in the large group] might suggest some strategies to motivate students to appreciate the lesson on the periodic tables. (Aruwanara, Pre-Sharing Discussion #3, November 26, 1997)

Dina’s recollection of her reasons for selecting video clips to show and discuss with the large group illustrate that she attributed the group atmosphere as contributory to her choices. The teachers listened to her stories, clarified some points, and offered suggestions. The interaction was not a process that made a teacher feel she has nothing valuable to share.

After our post sharing discussions, I realized the different choices I made of the lessons I wanted to share with the group. It’s funny that I started with the good parts and later with the problematic part (laughter). Human nature, I guess (laughter). I think the atmosphere during the discussions caused that. (Dina, Closing Interview, January, 20, 1998)

Provided Voice

The group discussions provided May, the youngest of the focus teachers, the context to develop a sense of “personal power.” She believed that being one of the focus teachers offered her a space where she was able to express freely her teaching concerns and difficulties. The support of the other teachers encouraged her to voice the concerns of a beginning teacher, and she took their advice to her classroom. Their affirmations provided her with a deep sense that she was doing fine with her performance. Taking charge of her sharing sessions became a moment for May to acknowledge the contribution she could offer to a group of teachers who are more experienced and knowledgeable than she was.

I think power develops in the context of relationships. It has to develop over time. My willingness to learn to teach better is because of a need to help my students. Learning continuously should help me make wise decisions, will give me the courage to speak out my mind, expressing your
thoughts will make you learn more. In fact, I am beginning to be firm with my beliefs. I call that “personal power.” I was able to see this after my experience in these discussions. You know, I am a new teacher. (May, Closing Interview, January 22, 1998)

An Emerging Caring Relationship

One aspect the focus teachers valued in the sharing experience was working and learning with other teachers. The sharing process took them to a different level of relationship. They became more sensitive and responsive to the needs of others. Similar stories turned out to be a unifying factor among the teachers. The feeling of being “needed” and “needing help” grew out of the stories the teachers brought up for examination during the group discussions. Sharing stories of success and difficulties affected Aruwanara positively.

.....the stories made us know each other better. We share the same problems, same triumphs. Also (pause) talking about the problems that other face helped bring us closer. I felt I was needed by others as much as I needed them. I never thought about stories having this effect on me, my relationship with other teachers. (Aruwanara, Post-Sharing Discussion #3, January 16, 1998)

Coming together to talk about teaching left a lasting impression on Dina. She attributes their enhanced relationship to sharing experiences with each other. She claimed that sharing classroom stories became more enjoyable in group of supportive teachers.

...it [sharing] developed a closer relationship between us. Not that we are not close. It felt good being together to talk about our work.....by sharing. We have taken that for granted. The company is enjoyable. (Dina, Closing Interview, January 20, 1998)

A significant outcome of the group discussion for May was the non-threatening atmosphere. Her peers responding without passing judgment, and the friendly
The atmosphere provided her a safe place for disclosure without fear.

The group discussions were very personal and friendly. There were no judgments...no right or wrong. Others asked questions but never, “Was this right?” “Was this wrong? Those made all the difference. We became closer to each other. (May, Closing Interview, January 22, 1998)

Problems and Difficulties

The main actors in the group discussions, Aruwanara, Dina, and May also expressed some of the difficulties they experienced in performing their roles. All three teachers agreed that time related factors challenged the scheduling of group discussions. Different class schedules and extra curricular activities made it difficult to find a common time slot for the teachers to come together for the discussions. The focus teachers were one in thinking that there was very little opportunity within the school schedule for bringing teachers together to talk about their practice. Had there been fewer extra-curricular activities, they would have loved to have more than three group discussions within the seven months of the study. Dina felt that finding time to come together to talk about teaching will continue to be a challenge in the future. Task overload appeared to exacerbate the situation thereby, preventing the teachers to give their time for group discussions.

Time is our biggest enemy in making group discussions become a success. Like now, we worked together for seven months, we only had three group discussions. But we just can’t do it. I think it’s more of the outside structure. We attend to our teaching, extra-curricular activities, meetings, and workshops. We have deadlines to meet excluding other governmental thrusts expected of the schools. (Dina, Closing Interview, January 20, 1998)
There were also individual issues that influenced how the focus teachers participated. May felt that her academic preparation was a source of insecurity that affected the way she shared in the discussions. As mentioned in a previous chapter, May is a physics major who had not taken any methodology courses before entering the profession. Her limited knowledge about teaching strategies initially prevented her from actively taking part in discussions on the topic of teaching.

When teachers started talking about educational theories, I became insecure. Even in my session, I could not make myself add any comment. I was already feeling more relaxed with sharing my lessons, but I could not avoid thinking about my inadequate teaching preparation. Sometimes, that prevents me from being open (pause) you will have this fear of talking about your failures. But I guess, I overcome that (laughter). What do you say? I think I did. (May, Post-Sharing Discussion # 3, January 19, 1998)

In contrast, Aruwanara felt her seniority, age, and educational qualification affected the way she facilitated her sharing sessions. She suspected that the other teachers were quiet when she led the discussion because they look up to her as an older person, and that she knew much more than them.

At some point I thought, the longer time the teachers reacted in my discussion period was because (pause) they might be thinking that I know everything because of my Ph. D. (laughter). I am very much older than they are. I did not know how to deal with that. (Aruwanara, Post-Sharing Discussion #3, January 16, 1998)

A feeling of uncertainty about the progress of the group discussion was a source of concern for all the focus teachers. May expressed her apprehension about sharing her story. "I don’t know what’s going to happen. Do I just wing it [discussion]? (May, Presharing Discussion # 1, Oct. 20, 1997). Initially, Dina found the slow pace of the interaction a problem. She shared how uncomfortable she was when the other teachers
took time to get involved in the discussion thinking that she was not making good progress with her sharing session.

It was frustrating when the flow of conversation was moving slowly. I felt that my sharing session was not interesting. (Dina, Post-Sharing Discussion #1, November 3, 1997)

Although the progress of the discussions was not rapid and dramatic, the exciting times in the focus teachers’ journey were punctuated with periods of active participation, heightened pace of interaction, increased confidence to talk about one’s work, and the courage to take risks. Increase in trust, respect, support, and freedom to espouse personal beliefs and values were the enabling conditions that inspired and encouraged the focus teachers to share their lives and work with others. Through the group discussions came an awareness of some areas they want to work on. Each focus teacher experienced professional and personal growth in the context of meaningful life experiences and relationship with the other teachers in the large group.

**The Group’s Growth**

This section considers the growth of the other (non-focus) teachers. Their professional growth experiences are discussed in terms of their connecting theory with practice, changing patterns of interaction, and increased sharing of personal experiences.

**Connecting Theory with Practice**

Creating connections between classroom practice and theory is a challenge for everyone working in the field of education. Yet, it was evident in this study that the
group discussion format encouraged the participating teachers to make connections between theory and practice. In three instances, teachers made reference to relevant readings about teaching they felt would support or inform issues discussed by the larger group. While responding to a teacher’s question about memorization, Aruwanara cited ideas from her readings on how a brain works in relation to the capacity of a student to absorb information. The reading that Aruwanara shared supports that memorization is a part, at some point, of the learning process. In another instance, Lorna read excerpts from an article about “Mother Tongue and the universal language,” following May’s sharing segment in the second group discussion. The focus of the discussion was on the problem of not having direct translations of scientific terms in the Filipino language. The article raised the issue that the language being used for instruction influences the quality of science learning. During Dina’s sharing segment in the third group discussion, Wilma offered ideas she had gleaned from reading a study conducted about cells. Absolute knowledge in science was put in question when Wilma related the findings of the study. These examples provide evidence of the teachers’ making connections between pedagogy on paper and pedagogy in practice.

Changing Patterns of Interaction

Analysis of teacher interactions in the first large group meeting revealed a subtle increase in non-focus teacher participation from the first to the third sharing session (Figures 3.1-3.3, pp. 69-73). Generally speaking, the interaction was dominated by the more experienced teachers. Most of the interaction in the sharing sessions took place
between the secondary teachers and Lorna, the department head, who was clearly steering the interaction process. She appeared to be in charge of the interaction process, directing the course of the discussion, inviting other teachers to join in the conversation, asking questions, or wrapping up the session. Despite the varied topics that emerged in the discussions, there were a number of teachers who refrained from speaking. Four of the five elementary teachers assumed listening roles, and only Rudy joined in the conversation when he inquired about students explaining their work to the whole class.

A change in dynamics occurred in the second large group meeting. Figures 4.1 to 4.3 (pp. 79-82) illustrate that overall more experiences were shared and more questions were raised during these interactions. Participation did decrease in the third sessions, however (Figure 4.3, p. 82). Students' group activities and games were the topics discussed in the first two sessions while the third session focused on post laboratory activity in a chemistry class. It appeared that fewer teachers could relate to the topic of the third sharing session.

The plots of interactions of the final large group meeting shown in Figures 5.1 to 5.4 (pp. 86-93) illustrate participation of all the teachers in three of the four sharing sessions. Over time changes in the interaction process were evident, from simple information sharing to questioning others' opinions and perceptions, from sharing success stories to discussing activities the focus teachers found difficult, from teachers listening to teachers speaking, from brief responses to sharing of personal episodes, and from slow- to fast-paced exchange. These changes in the pattern of participation from the first to the last large group meeting suggest that the level of trust and comfort of the teachers increased over the course of the study. The listening and speaking roles played
out during the discussions contributed to the confidence of the teachers, and a willingness to share not only pleasant experiences, but also those they found frustrating and disappointing. It appeared that a trusting, supportive atmosphere may be responsible for this change in teacher participation.

The exchanges during the sharing sessions of the first large group meeting were primarily a one-on-one question and answer format. Some teachers watched the initial progress of the discussion in the meeting and chose to listen. Those teachers who participated tended to offer information about the topic in discussion. Longer wait time and frequent periods of silence between comments occurred in the first two sharing sessions of the first group meeting. The dynamics of interaction slowly shifted during the second group meeting on November 21, 1997. The interaction plots of the three sharing sessions show an increasing number of questions asked by teachers other than Lorna. Questions were not solely directed to the focus teachers. Here are some examples of the questions asked about the lessons presented by the focus teachers in the second group discussion.

- What would be an effective way of doing a post lab discussion when you don't have the time right after the lab? (Carrie to Zinnia, SS #1)

- Acting out is fun for elementary pupils. What happens to those students who can’t act out what is in their mind? Do you think that will be fair? (Rudy to Sally, SS #2)

- When you ask students to write lab reports, how do you grade them? Copying from each other is always possible to happen. (Zinnia to Dina, Aruwanara’s SS #3)

- During the second and third group meetings, the number of questions and inquiries directed to the focus teachers diminished. They did not have to address all the inquiries raised. As the study progressed, it turned out that Aruwanara, Dina, and May
were not the main actors in the sharing process. The "other" teachers became more inquiring in the second and third group meetings. The following questions indicate the teachers' interest in the topics under discussion. Amy, Wilma, and Telly responded in part to these questions when they shared similar experiences with group problem solving.

Did these students design their own activity? (Rudy)

Asking students to solve problems as a group requires planning (*pause*) like what skills do they need? Is there a need for a leader? It's not because they can't do the activity but (*pause*) how many of us trust our students? (Rudy)

In the elementary, how often do you give your students this kind of activity [group problem solving]? How do you prepare them? (Lorna) (VTR #18, SS #1, 2nd Group Discussion, Nov. 21, 1997)

Excerpts from a conversation in the third group meeting show how the teachers examined Dina's activity. The exchange of ideas seemed to be a fruitful activity for Dina who offered clarification to the inquiries rather than taking a defensive stance. The friendly interaction encouraged Arlene and Annie, elementary teachers, to join in the conversation.

What was the purpose of this activity? I think it has no connection to your main lesson (Zinnia).

This [team building activity] was not intended for our lesson on motion. I felt that my class needed some skills for working in groups. This activity was not intended only for the group work in this lesson. I was thinking of the long-range future. All that will be needed is to remind them of what they need to do when they do a group activity (Dina).

Did they question why you did not repeat the oral instructions? (Lorna)

They did but that was done on purpose (Dina).

How effective was the activity? Did you see any change in how students work together? (Gene)
Right after this activity, it did. I have to see if this will have a carry over next time they work in groups. (Dina).

I think that would work for your class. I wonder how much time we need in order for that to work in the elementary. Our students seldom listen. You have just given the instruction, they would repeat your instruction as a question. *laughter and agreement from the teachers in the group* (Arlene)

Watch our elementary students. Before you even finish your instructions they are getting the materials then ask again for the instructions *laughter* (Annie). (VTR #28, SS#1, 3rd Group Discussion, Jan. 15, 1998)

**Increased Sharing of Personal Experiences**

Cautious sharing was manifested by the longer silences between interactions and the hesitance to respond in the first large group meeting. The succeeding two group discussions revealed a different scenario. As opposed to responding in short one-line statements in the earlier sharing segments, most teachers were more willing to share their stories in the succeeding segments. Throughout the exchange of ideas, much information and many lived experiences were shared. Teachers spoke about the joys as well as the disappointments of teaching. The fact that the telling of personal stories continued in the faculty room following the close of each large group meeting suggests that the teachers valued listening and learning from their colleagues' lived experiences.

**The Group Development Process**

The seven-month journey of the teachers provided several insights about Filipino teachers collaborating to learn about teaching. As the discussions became more open and honest, connected knowing gradually developed. It was a wonder to watch the group
venture out with careful tentative steps during the initial group discussion that gradually became more confident in the second and third large group meetings. The teachers’ growth as a group progressed through phases of uncertainty, exploration, indecision, risk taking, and valuing. This progression, however, did not reflect movement in a linear fashion. The movement involved a cycling back and forth between and among these phases in the process of building a community.

Phase of Uncertainty

The initial meeting for this study took an experimental form. The teachers’ behavior during this meeting characterized the phase of uncertainty. They asked each other about their roles and what will happen during the group discussions. Most assumed a listening role in the first group discussion. An expert-novice relationship was evident in the first group discussion, as the teachers clearly hesitated to share their ideas and waited, rather than reacted to the views of the other teachers. Aruwanara, Dina, and May experienced uncertainty different from the other teachers in the science department. They worried about what video clips to show and what stories to tell about their personal knowledge and skills. May’s quote expresses the uncertainty she felt about sharing her lessons with the group.

Do you think they can learn from a new teacher? I hope I do fine with the sharing. (May, Post-Sharing Discussion, November 10, 1997)

The focus teachers’ uncertainty was overcome when the other teachers in the larger group listened to their stories, without making judgment, and appreciated the value of sharing experiences.
Other teachers talked about being members of the discussion group. During the post group discussion interview, Zinnia shared her initial feelings about her participation in the interactions. Although Zinnia was willing to experience a meeting where teachers talk about their work, she expressed her doubts about discussion groups.

I was not sure what I was getting into at first. I thought it [group discussion] would be like all the other meetings. I was wrong. (Zinnia, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 19, 1998)

**Phase of Exploration**

The focus teachers were extra careful about how much to reveal about themselves. They took time when choosing the video clips they would show and discuss with the group. Similarly, the teachers in the large group gave each other time for wondering to themselves. They claimed that the discussions provided them the opportunity to look closely at their work with others, to examine teaching in a new light, and to think about where to go from there. In the course of sharing stories, the teachers learned to gradually come to grips with the notion of examining their work openly with others and soliciting and accepting feedback. Those who were sharing responded as best they could with tentative explorations of their places with the rest of the group.

We saw things we weren't able to see before. It was good to do that as a group. (Arlene, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 19, 1998)

The group discussions gave us the chance to look at our beliefs as a group. We began to think about what was right for us as teachers. We became courageous enough to ask questions. (Zinnia, Post-Group Discussion interview, January 20, 1998)
Phase of Indecision

There was a point when the teachers started discussing the difficult issues about their work. It was tempting to label this phase in the group development process as the "conflict phase" because the teachers were clearly struggling with these issues. However, conflict suggests a fight between opposing forces or views that cannot be reconciled. Instead of a clash of opinions the group discussions of difficult and sensitive issues were exercises in a kind of "soft negotiation." All opinions were listened to and examined openly without any expectations that there was one best alternative. A teacher was never required to defend her stand on issues. The discussions became spaces to hear differing views and generate alternative solutions that provided some food for thought.

One subtle example of the phase of indecision is seen in a vignette taken from the second group discussion. Although slight, value conflicts arose in the process of looking at the learning situation being presented. In the passage that follows it is clear that not all teachers agreed that learning and playing games were compatible. Although the discussion did not provide final answers to the teachers' questions, it did lead the teachers to consider the conflicting issues and provided a topic for further exploration. The frequent moments of silence between the brief interactions and the unanswered questions reflect the indecisiveness some teachers were experiencing.

Rudy: My concern with games is when the focus on concepts is overruled by the game itself. (silence)

Lorna: I've seen games in the elementary. Often, a disaster (laughter). There was more time on, "Keep quiet!" "Go back to your places" (laughter).
Sally: That's elementary, you know.

Arlene: They easily get excited about almost everything. (*laughter*)

Aruwanara: Could we discuss the criteria with the students before the game?

Rudy: Not only that Ma'am, sometimes students miss the purpose of the game. They are more concerned with the points.

Zinnia: How can you tell them not to focus on the scores?

(*silence*)

Wilma: But those who seldom participate in discussions are active in the games, which to me, is an understanding of the concepts.

(*silence*)

Carrie: How about those who are not good in drawing or acting? Did they find that difficult?

Amy: Then, don't give points for good or beautiful drawings. Some will be good, some will be really bad. (*laughter*). Look at the main idea.

Lorna: I still wonder whether students who don’t have those skills will participate in the game.

(*silence*)

Wilma: Games can cause problems.

(*silence*) (VTR 18, 2nd Group Discussion, November 21, 1997)

**Phase of Risk-Taking**

Each teacher took risks and greatly invested themselves in terms of their stories, emotions, and time -- a reason to desire a hundredfold of dividends from the group discussions. As the teachers continued to listen and explain more of themselves to each
other, they started disclosing classroom experiences that did not work particularly well. As teachers exposed their classroom stories for examination by the other teachers, they looked to each other for support. Through this process they gained an awareness of each other’s potential and became responsive to the needs of others as well as their own. The supportive atmosphere, shown by the teachers’ patient listening, enabled risk taking and open sharing without fear of being evaluated. The teachers gradually moved from a state of unease to a level of comfort.

Usually it is easier for us to share among ourselves. It was nice that even if we are elementary teachers, they listened to our experiences. But during that second group discussion, we were given the honor to share our story (laughter). Our stories were appreciated. That encouraged me to share. (Arlene, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 21, 1998)

If you want to learn from your mistakes, you must have the courage to share them with others. You have to look at the positive effect of being open even if sharing your weaknesses will be (pause) embarrassing. But what you get from it is more than being embarrassed. (Zinnia, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 19, 1998)

Phase of Valuing

The interactions and camaraderie in the faculty room revealed mutual trust, openness, and respect that helped the teachers to explore their practice and take risks. Consequently, they came to see the potential of sharing their lived experiences as a mechanism for improving their practice. The group discussions served as a learning space where teachers can grow together over time with an awareness that each one, regardless of experience and expertise, has classroom stories to offer to another. Each teacher has a
gift to share with other teachers. The teachers realized that part of the secret of gift giving is to pay attention to the other teachers.

I think, probably the first part was “their show” [referring to the focus teachers discussing their videotaped lessons], isn’t it? Then, isn’t it that when they said, “What can you say about this?” That was the time some teachers joined in the discussion. I said to myself, “We’re part of the show!” (laughter). (Arlene, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 21, 1998)

Respect for other’s opinions came strong during the discussions. All views were heard. If others want to react, they did politely. No idea was considered wrong. I think, the discussions went well because we believe that each of us has a skill or talent which we can share with others. We just didn’t have the opportunity to know each other’s strengths. (Zinnia, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 19, 1998)

There was a lot I learned from the other teachers by sharing the classroom experiences I was not satisfied with. It’s like (pause) sharing your story is a way of getting help. (Dina, Post-Sharing Discussion #2, November 28, 1997)

The lack of a consensus on most issues was not a negative aspect of the group discussions. The teachers were never bothered about not arriving at decisions for conflicting issues that emerged. The “unfinished business” left the teachers to reflect on the issues and make their own choices in the light of the existing needs and conditions. An unforeseen and surprising enthusiasm was shown by the continuation of the conversations in the subsequent group discussions, the corridors, the canteen, and the faculty room. Engaging teachers in the process of examining and deliberating on the consequences of each alternative not only enhanced the teachers’ confidence in making judgments collectively, but also promoted individual decision making. Respect for opinions brings about recognition of a teacher’s individuality in a community. This nurtures personal and professional growth.
Sometimes we really did not have the solutions but at least several ideas gave us something to think about. There were no judgments....no right or wrong. Others asked questions but never, “Was this right?” “Was this wrong?” (May, Closing Interview, January 22, 1998)

The teachers’ insights about the group discussions speak about the group’s growing together as a community of teacher-learners. Conditions that promote group discussions were evident. These were acceptance, support, openness, mutual trust, and risk taking. A learning environment, the teachers claim, should be one where each group member was on “equal terms with everybody, one that promoted the disclosure of problems and failures in the classrooms” (Arlene, Post group discussion interview, January 21, 1998). May learned that disclosing her difficulties resulted in offers of assistance from her colleagues. She considered the sharing process as particularly an important aspect of the growth.

The discussions were really good. The openness when the teachers shared without rivalry or feelings of self-consciousness is one good aspect. Then the willingness of everyone to talk about mistakes and effective methods and strategies...the sympathy and empathy for problems we meet. The atmosphere was very encouraging. (May, Closing Interview, January 22, 1998)

Factors Affecting Teacher Interactions

The group discussion aimed to bring together teachers to share and discuss their teaching experiences. In the course of the study, several conditions that facilitated and/or hindered the sharing process were identified. These conditions were seen to be responsible for the nature of the teachers’ participation in the discussions, and the ways in which they worked for or against teacher professional development.
Factors that Promote Group Discussions of Teaching Practice

Certain conditions were already in place when the idea of having a discussion group, the intervention of the study, was introduced to the teachers at Kaunlaran Integrated School. First, a feeling of collegiality was evident among the teachers at KIS and the democratic atmosphere in the science department allowed this intervention to flourish. Second, since the school is a venue for educational projects, the teachers were open to innovations. Other factors that supported group discussions as a mechanism for continuous teacher professional development that emerged in the course of the study are discussed in the following section.

Support and Trust

The teachers in the study saw each other as not only colleagues and friends but also as an important support system made possible by the sharing process. A teacher needs support in the process of growing in the profession. The teachers learned that a discussion group could become a space where they can get assistance, celebrate their triumphs in the classrooms, and take risks. During the scheduled interviews and informal conversations, the teachers mentioned what they gained from the group discussions and the enabling factors that promoted the conversations to take a positive course.

That time they listened to me ... they are supportive of you. Our relationship is taking a new direction. We met because we are talking about our teaching, not because we have to do an assigned task. It felt different. (Arlene, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 21, 1998)

I like learning about teaching strategies in this way [sharing stories]. You see what is actually going on in a class (pause) not from a great educator. What we talked about is the reality in the classroom. (Gene, Informal Conversation, December 2, 1997)
**Informal format of the sharing process**

The group discussions were a departure from the regular meetings the teachers in the study had attended. Teachers were encouraged to actively participate and shift from the passive roles they typically assumed in the staff meetings. A discussion initiated by a colleague led teachers to openly share their thoughts and feelings. Zinnia and Gene’s perceptions about group discussions illustrate this point.

Perhaps it [group discussion] should form a part of our teaching schedule until it becomes a permanent structure. I believe it is more effective than the seminars we used to attend. Here, we talked about ourselves, what we do, how we solve our problems in class, the decisions we made. They are real events. (Zinnia, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 19, 1998)

A meeting like this not led by an administrator is a new experience. We were encouraged to share more. It’s a simple gathering of teachers talking about their work. No agenda, no pressure. (Gene, Informal Conversation, October, 20, 1997)

The freewheeling interactions invited more participation from the teachers. There were no predetermined destinations or goals that had to be met by the end of each session. And, the use of Filipino, the national language, contributed to the facility of expressing their views to the group.

Because we were talking about our work, our discussions became personal conversations. We were talking in Filipino. It’s like we were in the living room or in the dining room. We were not pressured because it feels so informal. The flow of conversation was determined by the reactions of the other teachers. (Zinnia, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 19, 1998)

**Collectivity**

Group problem solving that generated immediate responses to identified local needs and problems became a main motivation to engage in the discussions. Sometimes
during the group discussions, just seeing the problem through another’s eyes gave clarity. Other times, brainstorming solutions led to productive results. Through communicating their thoughts and feelings, the teachers saw similarities in their beliefs and approaches. These empowered them. As well, they saw the unique qualities of their individual practice.

I tried doing what we talked about. It worked in my class without any hassles. (Sally, 2nd Group Discussion, November 28, 1997)

I had been trying to figure out what to do alone. I began to understand that part of my frustration came from lack of interaction with others. I realized that the discussions cleared my doubts. I was also encouraged to tell my story as a beginning teacher that I did not have the chance to do before. (May, Closing Interview, January 22, 1998)

The teachers saw the advantage of finding alternative solutions to the difficulties they encounter in the classrooms. The feedback Aruwanara received from sharing her lessons allowed her to make immediate modifications in her classes.

What is really good about these discussions is that we can implement the suggestions in our classes right away. I was able to make the necessary modifications in my next class. (Aruwanara, Interview #7, November 11, 1997)

Arlene, the youngest in the group, was given the opportunity to decide which strategies would work for her class at the same time becoming aware of the weak points of each of them. Threshing out problems as a group was helpful in making personal decisions.

Actually, what happens is we can picture for ourselves an improved version of what we saw which we can apply in our classroom. The whole group has identified the strong and weak points of an activity. So we can look at the strong points if we are doing them in class. The discussion made decisions easier for us already. (Arlene, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 21, 1998)
Wilma came up with a game which was a combination of two games shared by Dina and May. The result was rewarding for her students who were given more options to express their understanding of the lessons on top of encouraging more participation.

I tried mixing acting and drawing in the game I used in my class the other day. The drawing I got from Dina’s pictionary game and the acting from May’s association game. The students had more choices. It was more fun. (Wilma, VTR# 18, SS #2, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)

Use of Video

All teachers favored the use of videotaped lessons as catalysts for the discussion. Towards the end of the second large group meeting, they discussed the advantages and disadvantages of using the video in group discussions. The following are some of their thoughts supporting the use of the video to promote group discussions. Rudy, Amy, and Arlene shared similar feelings of being transported into the classrooms of Aruwanara, Dina, and May. Viewing the video clips made the lessons come alive and helped the teachers relate to the events of each of those lessons.

Even if it is expensive, the video is excellent as compared to listening to a description of a lesson being shared orally. You feel as if you are there inside the classroom. (Rudy, VTR# 18, SS # 1, 2nd group discussion, November 28, 1997)

The video is magic. You see the events happening before your eyes although you were not present in the lessons of these three teachers. The lesson is a live performance. (Amy, VTR# 18, SS # 2, 2nd group discussion, November 28, 1997)

... the video was very helpful because we can see the actual event, everything, the kids and the teacher in action. You can have all that on video. We are transported to the classroom. It’s easier for us to discuss. (Arlene, Post Group Discussion Interview, January 21, 1998)
Use of the National Language

The teachers' conversations were facilitated by the use of Filipino, the national language. During the meetings, the teachers frequently switched from Filipino to English when they did not find direct translations for English terms to Filipino. The teachers were able to relate more personally when the stories were shared in the native language. The ease of expressing thoughts and ideas was reflected in the pace of dialogue and breadth of topics dealt with during the discussions. Zinnia contrasts the effect of using Filipino in the group discussions with regular school meetings where English as the official language is used.

.....[in] these group discussions we really talk about our classrooms. They were spontaneous, very informal like the usual simple conversations. We talk in the language we use at home. There is no pressure. No grammars to think about, or sentence construction. (Zinnia, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 20, 1998)

The feeling of thinking and expressing your thoughts in Filipino is very much easier than thinking in Filipino and figuring out how to express your ideas in English. For sure, you are more confident with your own language. (Lorna, VTR# 18, SS#2, 2nd group discussion, November 28, 1997)

Factors that Limit Group Discussions of Teaching Practice

The subject matter, teacher's identity, venue, presence of the administrator, time constraint, and cultural factors seemed to hinder or limit teacher participation in the interactions. The cultural factors that affected the interaction process are separately discussed in the succeeding chapter.
**Subject of Discussion**

The subject mattered during teacher interactions. The topic of the conversations seemed to determine the nature of the teachers' participation. Elementary teachers tended to refrain from participating in the conversation where the topics involved secondary science. In contrast, more interactive engagement took place in discussions about classroom management, student behavior, games, and the use of computers in the classroom. Provision of actual classroom experiences prompted most teachers to relate similar experiences that enriched the group's repertoire of teaching strategies and provided alternative perspectives for looking at instructional concerns.

**Teacher's Identity**

A sense of identity as "beginning" or "less experienced" and "experienced" teachers seemed to be strongly felt during the interactions. There was a difference evident in how these two groups of teachers participated. In the first sharing sessions, the less experienced teachers chose to be on the receiving end with little to say. Conversely, the more experienced teachers seemed to serve as the only source of wisdom. Even when the less experienced teachers began to share their practice, their words were very soft, as if the act of speaking required great effort and thought. The plots of the interactions reveal that during the sharing sessions of Aruwanara, the less experienced teachers assumed listening roles. I suspect that Aruwanara's length in service, qualification, and work experience may have contributed to this kind of participation. Her peers were aware that she had taught chemistry for over 30 years, and had written chemistry books. One of the ten national outstanding teachers awarded in 1988, she has a doctoral degree and has
attended national and international conferences. Less experienced teachers might have expected her to act as a consultant or an adviser.

The challenge of exposing one’s teaching beliefs and practices in front of more experienced teachers was a struggle for the less experienced ones. The younger teachers who did participate in the early conversations, did so because either the department head or the more experienced teachers encouraged them. The Filipino notion of respect may have played a role in discussions where a more experienced teacher was taking charge of the interaction. This cultural factor will be explained in the next chapter that discusses how Filipino culture mediated the teacher interactions.

**Physical Venue**

The physical set up of the room seemed to have an effect on the dynamics of interaction during the group discussions. The venue for the first two group discussions was the audiovisual room of the school library. The third group discussion was held at the computer laboratory in the science building. The school library had movable chairs making possible the circular seating arrangement that allowed all teachers to see each other. On the other hand, the computer laboratory had fixed computer tables. Even if the chairs could be moved, the limited space at the center prevented the circular seating arrangement. As a result, chairs were clustered in groups of three or four. I observed that the clustering encouraged teachers to carry on with semi-private conversation during the large group discussion (see Figure 5.1, p. 86). Because the teachers were not facing each other, those who were sitting in front needed to turn when somebody from the back joined in the conversation. Teachers sitting in the front rows became physical barriers
between each other, between the speaker and the listeners. The semi-circle seating arrangement in the first two group discussions created a physical closeness between the group members. A few teachers commented on the effect of the seating arrangement in the third group discussion.

The stool chairs in the lab were uncomfortable. You lose your concentration because you have to shift your seating position several times. (Zinnia, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 19, 1998)

I prefer the AV room to the computer lab where we were seated in small groups. Teachers were talking to each other during the discussions. The AV room was more spacious. It was conducive to discussions. (Arlene, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 21, 1998)

**Presence of Administrator**

In most of the discussions, Lorna, the department head played a major role in most of the interactions. The plots of interactions show the extent of her participation throughout the discussions. She not only shared her ideas but also initiated the interactions and provided lead questions to encourage the teachers to participate. Transcripts of the videotaped group discussions reveal the part she played at the start and end of the sharing sessions. The dominant role she played in the discussions may be attributed to her intention of engaging all teachers in the interaction. Most inquiries that came from Lorna served to start the discussion and encourage the other teachers to join in the conversation. The convergence of communication lines indicating a one-way flow, for example in Figures 3.2 and 3.3 (pp.71 & 73) illustrate how Lorna led the first group meeting, directing questions to the focus teachers and the other participants. Her position in the science department may explain why she took on this role. On one hand, Lorna’s role might have set the stage for the teachers to talk. On the other hand, it might have
inhibited the teachers to take part in the discussion. Being addressed a question might have made a teacher feel that she was being put on the spot.

In the computer laboratory, the teachers were seated in clusters during the final large group meeting. Conversations among teachers in three small groups occurred while the large group discussion was going on. Interestingly, these conversation asides took place only in the first sharing session. The teachers, though still seated close together, gave their full attention to the discussion in the subsequent sharing session. The presence of the principal, who joined the group for the second segment, may partly explain the situation. Again, this situation brings back the issue of respect for elders (authority, in the case of the principal). Her presence during the third group discussion tended to create an atmosphere of formality as resulting in the teachers listening attentively or giving brief reactions.

Time Constraints

Group discussions as learning structures for continuous professional development require a significant time investment. Time is an essential factor that makes teacher talk productive and operational.

Discussing what we do in the classroom is very time-consuming. We have to ask questions, discuss, or else we end up only...like...reporting. If we want to learn from our dialogues, we have to invest time so that we can fully engage in the discussions. (Zinnia, Informal Conversation, November 25, 1997)

The existing school schedule at KIS created a tension as the teachers juggled teaching and non-teaching responsibilities with participating in the discussions. In addition to the teachers’ responsibilities there were required government programs
integrated into the curriculum. These additional programs added to the time-related
tension the teachers felt. Lorna expressed the challenges of meeting and finding time to
talk with colleagues.

We really have to talk about continuing these discussions. Our problem here is time. Let’s take the science department. We have our free days spread over the week. We don’t have common free days. Another thing, our status... there are other expectations from the university added to our teaching periods. But we really have to find time to talk to each other in depth. (Lorna, Informal Conversation, December 7, 1997)

Time limitations also affected group discussions where pressing teaching issues were being raised. One feature of all the sharing sessions was the absence of an agreed solution to problems raised by the teachers. Although the sharing process generated some alternative solutions, additional time may have allowed the teachers to extend their discussions and provided more clarity to the issues that emerged. Nevertheless, not coming to a common agreement gave teachers the freedom to evaluate the consequences of the alternatives in the light of their personal perspectives and the particular classroom conditions.

In addition to the previously mentioned factors that affected the success of group discussions for professional development, there were a number of cultural factors that played a role in the teacher interactions. A discussion of these factors is presented in Chapter Six.

The Individual Growing through the Group Discussions

Over the course of this study, teachers participating in the KIS discussion group grew and changed professionally and personally. The exploration of teaching practices
that occurred in the three large group discussions allowed the teachers to not only enrich their pedagogical knowledge and skills, but also to enhance their relationship with each other. By participating in the discussions, the teachers experienced a sense of belonging in a safe atmosphere that encouraged sharing of stories of their life and work. From the sharing, evolved a process of integrating oneself with a group of trusting colleagues, resulting in a state I will refer to as the “oneness of an individual teacher in concert with the other teachers.”

In an attempt to illustrate and trace the growth experience of the individual participants, I offer a graphical representation (Figure 6). Teachers’ experiences and participation in the group discussions may be depicted as four images that the teacher portrays in the group setting. These are represented in Figure 6 as four quadrants. The public self image (quadrant A) contains information about a person made accessible to the public, i.e., family demographics, educational attainment, address, telephone number. The private self image (quadrant B) is the window of the intimate self made up of a person’s dreams, joys, aspirations, and fears. A person may or may not disclose this intimate information to peers and close friends. The gifts a person possesses which may have not been brought out to full use are contained in the gifted self image (quadrant C). The unknown self image (quadrant D) depicts what other people see in a person, for example, mannerisms, behavior, or gestures.
Individual teachers learn about each other and themselves by talking about their personal and professional lives. Restorying classroom experiences in the group setting helped expand, extend, and uncover the images of the self. This may be depicted by changing the relative size of the four quadrants (Figures 6a-c).

Figure 6a. Expanding the public self image
For example, through the process of disclosing personal experiences, the public self image expands into a space previously occupied by the private self image (Figure A). In this study, as KIS teachers talked about their strength and weaknesses, they were sharing a part of their private selves with the other teachers and thus enlarging their public self image.

Figure 6.b. Expanding the private self image

The acceptance of feedback without rancor while recognizing discussions as an opportunity to reshape or refine one’s practice can be illustrated by expanding the public self image vertically into a space previously occupied by the unknown self image (Figure 6 B). In this study, listening to the opinions of others served as a facilitating factor that made the teachers more aware of how they and their practice were viewed by others.
Through conversations, old borders – teaching experience, grade level, specialization, and personality -- receded to the background. Individual teacher’s capabilities and strengths, that is, the gifted self image, was disclosed and became part of their public self image. Knowledge of one’s gifts motivates more risk taking, enhances a teacher’s personhood and professionalism, and strengthens her relationship with other teachers, hence, the shaping and reshaping of her teaching practice.

This representation is meant to illustrate how the individual teachers grew within the group setting. In the KIS project, group discussions provided the teachers a space to learn and grow with others, and to live out a teaching life in synchrony with the other teachers’ lives within a caring community.

Summary

This study reveals that Filipino teachers’ participation in the group discussions paid personal and professional dividends. “Restorying” (Black, 1993) the ways in which the teachers in the study experienced the group discussions and the ways in which they
looked at teacher interactions as an alternative for continuous growth can benefit other teachers who will be willing to grow with others.

This chapter provided a description of how group discussions served as a structure for Filipino teachers to continue to learn about their work. The benefits the teachers gained from the experience illustrate how group discussions may serve as a structure for teacher professional development. Through sharing teaching practice, the research participants enhanced their teaching knowledge and skills, took their relationship to a new level, and became aware of their potential to grow individually and with others. The group discussions began the celebration of the lives of the teachers who deserve to be better recognized and cherished for their invaluable work.
CHAPTER SIX

THE INTERPLAY OF FILIPINO CULTURE IN THE GROUP DISCUSSIONS

This chapter looks at Filipino cultural practices and traditions that were manifested during the group discussions, and considers their influence on the interaction process. In so doing it addresses the second research question: How is the interaction process during the group discussions mediated by Filipino Culture? The discussion focuses on Filipino practices that gave voice or silenced the voice of the teachers during the group discussions. Respect for elders was seen to have great influence on the dynamics of interaction. The practices that were deemed to give voice included bayanihan spirit, close family ties, and hospitality. Pakikisama, patriarchal structure of the family, and utang na loob were practices that limited teachers’ participation and voice.

Filipino Cultural Practices that Influenced the Interaction Process

The role of Filipino traditions in the group process is discussed in this section. As I considered the influence of culture I was able to identify some practices that gave voice and others that silenced the voice of the teachers. Certain cultural practices manifested during the group discussions may be interpreted as affecting the interaction process both positively and negatively. The Filipino practice of respecting elders was one such tradition and this is described in its own section.
Respect for Elders

It was observed that the extremely polite conversations that occur in the Filipino family settings were reflected in the group discussions through the use of “Ma’am” or “Sir” that was affixed to names of older teachers and those in authority. Filipino courtesy strictly requires the use of the plural form of pronouns when talking to older persons and taking more of the listener’s rather than the active participant’s role during conversations. In this regard, the parent-child relationship at home seemed to equate to the novice-expert and administrator-teacher relationships present in the teaching environment at Kaunlaran Integrated School (KIS). As children honor their elders, novice teachers deferred to the more experienced teachers. Listening to elderly advice at home parallels the beginning teachers’ tendency to look up to their experienced colleagues. Parents, elders, and experienced teachers, looked upon as sources of wisdom, lead children and novice teachers to assume the role of receptive listeners. The following excerpts illustrate this sense of struggle, and the hesitancy to openly and honestly express their feelings.

You mean question my instructor? I would really be scared to tell my instructor that! I think we were not trained to do that. (Arlene, Post-Group Discussion Interview, January 21, 1998)

Although the younger, less experienced teachers were bubbling with ideas, articulating their perceptions about teaching issues was, indeed, a huge step to take. When these teachers did speak their minds, they were extra careful in expressing their ideas.

I feel that.....(a pause) I don’t know. I may be wrong. But (pause) do you think that giving too much incentives is (pause) dangerous? (pause) I mean, not good? I’m not sure. (May, 3rd Group Discussion, January 15, 1998)
In most of Aruwanara's sessions (see Figures 3.1, p. 69; 4.3, p. 82; & 5.3, p. 90) the less experienced teachers tended to act as listeners during the interaction occurring between the experienced teachers. The response of teachers to the attendance of the school principal in the second sharing session of the third large group meeting also manifests respect for authority. The "chatty" groups of teachers evident during the first sharing session (Figure 5.1 & 5.2, pp. 86 & 88) were noticeably silent when the principal was present. This incident illustrates the deference and sense of deep respect shown for a school official. While younger Filipino teachers may acknowledge the importance of discussing teaching issues, they always appeared to be conscious of their place in a hierarchy. These younger teachers may not necessarily engage in the public deliberation process due to the high value placed on respect for elders.

To contradict anyone in public, particularly the opinions of the administrators or the more senior teachers, might be considered offending or discourteous. Thus, instead of debating issues or presenting alternative viewpoints, the younger teachers either related similar personal experiences or remained listeners. No matter how exposed the teachers were to a variety of democratic settings, respect for elders always appeared to limit the conversations. Even so, this tradition of respect did promote polite conversations which in their own way, encouraged all teachers to participate to some degree.

Filipino Cultural Practices that Gave Voice

The following cultural practices were seen to have played a positive role in the way teachers engaged themselves in the conversation about their teaching experiences.
The spirit of camaraderie, close family ties, and hospitality were instrumental in making the research participants feel comfortable working with each other. They facilitated the gradual development of openness when sharing classroom stories.

Bayanihan Spirit

Bayanihan, a local term depicting the Filipino spirit of camaraderie, the main elements of which are unselfishness and good faith (Agoncillo, 1990), factored in community building. This term refers to the Filipino tradition of helping ‘neighbors in need.’ Bayanihan is commonly practiced in smaller communities and continues to be lived out in the workplace. A helping hand is always available for employees who need assistance. In school, bayanihan means a community of friendly and supportive persons. The helping aspect of bayanihan gets transported into the school and is manifest through teachers attending to the welfare of the students, colleagues, and school over the self.

The task of building a community of teachers grounded on the bayanihan spirit, appeared to be a sacred work where togetherness, caring, and sensitivity are vital steps in the process. Some key features of bayanihan, i.e., respect, cooperation, belief in others, and unselfishness, emerged in the process of the teachers’ sharing classroom stories. The essence of bayanihan spirit then, seemed to become a powerful tool that helped to nurture teachers’ commitment to working and learning together as a group.

The bayanihan community spirit was evident at the start of the study, motivating teachers to come together as a learning group never posed a problem. The teachers were willing to try out another way of learning to teach collectively. The involvement of the
whole science department is evidence of the group spirit that helped teachers to take risks in baring their individual practice.

Why don't we give it a try? Let's attend the first group discussion. Then, make decisions later. How about that? But count me as a member of the group. (Lorna)

If there will be teachers sharing, we need listeners (laughter). You know, I think we need to be there for those who will volunteer to share their stories. (Dina)

I'll volunteer as a member of the discussion group and I promise to stay on until the end. (Zinnia)
(Orientation Meeting, June 27, 1997)

Extended Family and Close Family Ties

An extended family system is predominant in the Filipino society. Family dynasties grew out of business or political endeavors. Close family ties within the affluent families are shown by the feudal-inspired family compounds where the ancestral home takes a central location. Within the middle- and low-income families, the bond is kept stronger with the presence of three generations living together under the same roof.

Most research participants came from closely-knit, extended, and clannish families whose primary concern is protecting children and keeping them in safe premises at all times. KIS assumed a quasi-parental role by providing a mentoring program for teachers new to the school. The beginning teachers involved in the study were involved in a mentoring program to introduce them to the teaching world. They seemed to have had an unwavering faith in the more experienced teachers helping them to shape their practice, instead of acknowledging their capabilities to develop their own.

When I first came to this school, Amy was my mentor. She is a physics teacher. I followed her all the time (laughter). She taught me teaching strategies. (pause) This is my first year to teach integrated science. I
discuss my lessons with Ma’am Dina all the time. She taught me a lot 
(pause), she gave me sample activities and shared some materials with me. 
(May, Interview # 5, Oct. 14, 1997)

A sense of family was seen to contribute to the strong collegial relationship 
among teachers. Sharing teaching experiences became more comfortable when the 
experienced teachers listened and offered advice to the less experienced teachers. The 
support mechanism was particularly evident when teachers were sharing their stories. 
However, dependency and deep respect cultivated through close family ties may also 
have prevented the less experienced teachers from speaking openly during group 
interactions. The group discussions saw the less experienced teachers adding to and 
enriching their repertoire of teaching strategies more from listening than through getting 
involved in the conversation.

Filipino Hospitality

Filipinos are known for their hospitality, a very dominant trait at home, in the 
workplace, and everywhere. The family becomes a fertile training ground for developing 
a sense of community, responsibility, and harmonious relationships. In the teaching 
community, Filipino hospitality is made evident when teachers relate with each other and 
school visitors. The act of participating in a teacher’s family affairs offers another 
dimension that connects teachers with each other. Teachers inviting each other to family 
weddings, anniversaries, and parties were not only socialization activities but 
opportunities for teachers to know each other on a personal level. The environment 
outside of the school becomes a tension-free space where teachers get to know and better 
understand one another.
The Filipino hospitality custom is often equated with the coffee jar, cups, and saltine crackers that appear within minutes of people getting together for a ‘chat.’ This strong traditional practice requires that visitors are fed before any gathering. Serving food is a welcoming ritual where individuals are made comfortable and relaxed in a group. The food offering also creates a space for individuals to relate with others in an informal and non-threatening manner. This tradition was noticeable on several occasions during the study. The lunch that was shared after the first group discussion provided the research participants and myself a debriefing session, an opportunity for expressing how individuals felt about their “initial” experience with sharing stories of teaching. Snacks that followed the large group discussions seemed to relieve the focus teachers of their leadership responsibilities and initiate a celebration of sharing each other’s lives.

In the group discussions, a sense of hospitality was ever-present and served as a facilitating factor, in the sense that every teacher felt safe and comfortable in the group. A sense of belonging eased the initial stage of forming the discussion group. Warmth and caring, two essential elements of the Filipino hospitality, were reflected in the teachers’ sense of belonging. Creating a friendly atmosphere and giving a warm welcome to everybody, the primary concerns of hospitality, were ingrained in the teachers’ lives. These attributes contributed to the growth of a community of teacher-learners. The fact that the teachers strongly resisted offending anybody indicated how hospitality was, at the same time, a limiting factor. The thought of upsetting someone tended to prevent the teachers from publicly expressing problematic and contradictory ideas.
Filipino Cultural Practices that Silenced Voice

_Pakikisama_, the patriarchal structure of the family, and _utang na loob_ were seen to have affected teacher interactions more in a negative way.

_Pakikisama_

The Filipino custom of dealing harmoniously with others is referred to as _pakikisama_. This traditional practice demands providing cooperation in community projects and activities, and support for relatives, political friends, a godfather, an organization, or a religious group. Family relations, affiliations to religious, professional, political, and civic organizations influence the way Filipinos exercise _pakikisama_. Although the level of cooperation developed through these affiliations varies among groups of individuals, close family ties have the greatest impact in maintaining relationships. On one hand, the harmonious relationship developed from _pakikisama_ is definitely essential in building a teacher community. On the other hand, this kind of relationship may hinder a teacher from questioning another teacher because of their friendship bond or special affiliation.

In the group discussions, _pakikisama_ appeared to both promote the sharing of successful teaching experiences, and prevent teachers from challenging or raising questions about potential problematic experiences. These situations were tricky and require some risk taking as teachers had to decide if questioning practice, as a form of professional inquiry, was putting somebody on the spot. The teachers shared stories with some reservations having an awareness of their personal and family connections. To question meant risking relationships, and betraying a friend. In most sharing sessions, it
was most evident that critiques were initiated by the more experienced teachers. Consequently, less experienced teachers tended to agree on issues without any deliberation or criticism.

**Patriarchal Structure of Family**

The exercise of power at home, and in the workplace is communicated in nearly the same manner. A typical present day Filipino family portrays a strong vertical authority structure where traditional codes of conduct -- of obedience, virtue, politeness, faith in God, goodwill, fairness or ritual -- are in evidence. Power structures within the family vary according to economic, socio-cultural, spiritual, demographic, geographical factors, and the changing times. In some families, both parents share in the decision making process, but in most, the father makes the decisions. The wife retains the domestic role. In terms of the Filipino formula, regarding the woman as powerful is a bit of a role reversal, although, women have recently taken center stage in political and corporate worlds, as well as the educational field. There are more working mothers nowadays but most families remain patriarchal.

The patriarchal structure of the family resonates with the school system. The top-to-bottom decision making process in the home and school environments are parallel. Decisions are made by the parents and administrators while children and teachers are expected to respect and accept decisions without question. In both the family and the teaching community, children and teachers seldom question the decisions of the parents and school administrators. As a result, children and teachers tend to be more indecisive.
You must have observed teachers during decision making. We mostly go for the majority vote, going with the tide. I always wonder why we continue to be dependent on someone when we have been exposed to new trends in society. Is it because of the fact that we don't participate in decisions at home that we refuse to take part in school? Or is it insecurity? Or.....not ready to defend your opinion? Or overprotection? (Lorna, Informal Conversation, September 23, 1997)

It is not a problem to ask people to cooperate. In our society, cooperation is an easy task because of our extended family system. The problem is speaking out our mind and taking a firm stand on our beliefs. We got used to having our parents decide for us. We still have students taking courses in college chosen for them. We have been used to that. Although, parents now let their children take courses they have chosen, still, most children wait on parents to make that choice for them.(Aruwanara, Closing Interview, January 16, 1998).

In comparison to other Filipino schools, KIS, the school involved in this study, is enjoying the freedom to develop its own curriculum as opposed to implementing curriculum mandates. But despite the rare freedom to plan their own curricular activities, an authoritarian type of management is somehow felt. Although the teachers experienced a sense of independence and a climate of a community, their identities as “younger” or “older,” and “less experienced” or “experienced” affected their personal involvement in the interaction process. It will take time for teachers to gain a sense of equality with another teacher when they work in a community that has hierarchical structure. Hence, teaching experiences, age, and academic qualification make a difference. As in the home, the school does not speak to a sense of equality between administrators and teachers, teachers and teachers, and teachers and students.

Utang na loob

In the Philippines there is a strong tradition of loyalty to a friend or a benefactor for favors received. This loyalty is an offshoot of the bayanihan tradition. When an
individual receives a favor, he or she becomes “indebted” to the benefactor who expects him or her to return the favor in another way, another time. Thus, offering assistance may not grow out of a willingness to help, but rather be related to a “pay back” motive. Protecting the image of benefactors and supporting their ideas are also common Filipino practices. Bias and powerlessness may develop from the benefactor-beneficiary relationship.

In the group discussions, *utang na loob* was seen in part when the teachers unquestioningly accepted Lorna taking charge of the interactions. It was also evident when they chose to be silent when the principal joined in the last session (see Figure 5.2–5.4, pp. 88-93). Administrators were regarded as benefactors. Therefore, the teachers “owed” them loyalty and service, and tended to refrain from sharing their opinions during faculty meetings, and would accept additional tasks without question. To do otherwise, would be considered ungrateful.

**Summary**

Filipino cultural practices and traditions were found to contribute to starting a teaching community that caters to the personal and professional growth of the teachers. Cultural factors that facilitated the creation of an atmosphere of trust, converted sharing from an instructional experience into a process of enriching, validating, and affirming the personal meanings the teachers attach to teaching. Closeness, respect, and cooperation allowed the teachers to participate in building a caring community. A supportive and caring environment, a safe place to learn and take risks grew from sharing conversations.
Filipino traditions were contributory to the teachers becoming closer to each other, becoming more sensitive to their needs and their own, and belonging to a community.

Interestingly, some Filipino practices appeared to be influential in both sustaining the teachers’ relationship, as well as limiting participation in the group discussions. Traditional values seemed to play a role in some teachers’ ability to make decisions and claim voice, and at the same time encouraged the passive behavior of other teachers. The cautious sharing of personal opinions and careful choice of words in the group discussions echo a family rearing practice where children speak only when spoken to, where questioning someone older or in authority is considered as a sign of “disrespect” or an offensive act. It is noteworthy that despite the onset of progressive management approaches at Kaunlaran Integrated School, the roles that the teachers acted out continued to reflect the more conservative field and traditional social practices.

In the course of this study, the less experienced teachers started speaking with self-confidence and the savvy of veteran teachers in the profession. They sometimes treaded into discussions of uncomfortable issues like awards, promotion, rating, and caring. When the discussion moved into these issues, listening, respect, wait time, and even the need for a second of silence resurfaced.

Thus, while all research participants acknowledge the value of talking about their work, this study illustrates the cultural challenge associated with the Filipino teachers’ making a shift from listener to participant, from accepting teaching advice to questioning practice, and from inhibited to open sharing.
CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study describes an alternative structure for teacher professional development in the Philippine setting, using a mode of inservice that has been successful in the western context. Specifically, it explored the potential of adopting collaborative group discussions for enhancing professional development in a non-western setting. The study moves away from a traditional approach to teacher professional development that typically involved the delivery of new educational programs. Rather, the study emphasizes teacher development in a collaborative setting. Factors within the Filipino culture that facilitate and/or limit the ways in which teachers interact in a collaborative group setting were also examined.

This chapter summarizes the results of this study, and addresses the research questions: (1) What impact has group discussions on the personal and professional development of teachers? and (2) How is the interaction process during group discussions mediated by Filipino culture? This chapter concludes with a look into the implications of the study, and offer suggestions for further studies.

Research Question 1: What impact has group discussions on the personal and professional development of teachers?

This study illustrates that teachers have rich experiences to share and that they can learn from each other's experiences. The stories that Aruwanara, Dina, May, and the
other teachers shared were both a springboard for the group discussions and a powerful point of origin for professional growth.

Group discussions brought the teachers together. The group discussions at Kaunlaran Integrated School served as a learning space where teachers could come, create, dwell, and rekindle their spirit. A feeling of unity that is essential for success came about as the teachers crafted a new vision of building a community of teacher-learners through group talk. The elements of togetherness, caring, and sensitivity to each others’ needs brought strength to the dialogues -- the teachers in the study acted as inquiring persons, not empty receptacles. Through group discussions the teachers learned to believe in themselves and began to take back teaching into their lives. The teachers became aware that the time spent developing a community was well invested. Together, they envisioned a community where individuals can take risks and grow because the atmosphere was safe. For the teachers collaborating to learn about teaching meant accepting another teacher’s life into one’s personal experiences, as well as entering into another teacher’s world of experiences.

The group discussions provided a learning experience through inquiry and a reflective dialogue among teachers. The teachers in this study discovered that talking to each other about their work helped them recognize and make sense of their immediate concerns and needs. An appreciation for the value of working in a group grew out of discovering that looking closely at the problems of teaching was made easier when viewed with others. The KIS group shared familiar and ordinary, not dramatic, classroom
stories. “Restorying” (Black, 1993) these common, ordinary classroom experiences helped the teachers to examine and reflect on their practice, individually and with others. For these fifteen teachers the group discussions served as a catalyst for professional and personal growth.

Sharing stories gives teaching back to the teachers. It is important that the teachers have a place in the professional community and part of finding that place is recognizing the value of their individual voices through their classroom stories. “The telling of the stories of our lived experiences as teachers makes us better teachers, keeps us alive as learners, and helps us understand what is unfolding before our eyes in our classrooms” (Meyer, 1996, p. xi). In the process of becoming a community, the teachers strive for a sense of belonging, purpose, importance, and validity. The more they listened to each other’s stories, the more they saw the complexity of teaching. Through their interactions, the teachers tried to raise practical questions and take ideas a bit further.

In the teachers’ quest for understanding and improving their teaching practice, they noted with joy all of the good things which the group discussions provided. Sharing stories in the group discussions was a celebration of their lives. Offering a classroom story for examination contributed to the teachers’ confidence in themselves and acknowledged that they were doing fine in their classrooms. Sharing an experience and gaining modified, enriched, or new insights were rewarding for the teachers. The give and take process led the teachers to take ownership of a practice that was being shaped and reshaped as the group discussions progressed.

Sharing stories must be a voluntary act. Voluntarily participating in the group discussions inspired the teachers in the study to work in a friendly, low-stress
atmosphere. The sharing sessions turned into moments where Aruwanara, Dina, and May glowed in the presence of their colleagues. Through their journey, a special bond, an intimacy traditionally reserved for close friends grew stronger among all the teachers. Everybody started to talk about his or her concerns in public rather than keeping these to themselves. Their stories, that allowed their ideas, their opinions, and their beliefs to unite them, were intangible investments in a relationship of lasting value.

The group discussions promoted the professional and personal development of teachers at all levels of experience. Throughout the group discussions, each teacher’s story was heard and valued. Besides Aruwanara, Dina, and May, other teachers actively participated, discussing the appropriateness of the teaching strategies embedded in their stories. Educational qualifications and teaching experience blurred as the study progressed and more teachers participated. The less experienced teachers enjoyed the feeling of being able to openly express their ideas to colleagues more knowledgeable and experienced than they were. Exposing their practice without being evaluated was a part of the gifts they took away from the group discussions.

Research Question 2: How is the interaction process during group discussions mediated by Filipino culture?

In this study of Filipino teachers’ collaborative experience, particular cultural and family practices were seen to have affected the interaction process. These cultural factors played important roles in the ways the teachers engaged in the sharing opportunities for personal and professional development. These findings support Rosenholtz (1989) and
Lortie’s (1975) claims that learning is not adequately conceptualized as a relationship between content and cognition; it is embedded within the deeper values of the learner and within the culture of the learning context.

Family values and traditions were found to influence the engagement of the teachers in the group discussions. Filipino child rearing practices contributed to both a fruitful and inhibitive involvement of the teachers in the discussions. Respect for elders, bayanihan spirit, close family ties, and Filipino hospitality were traditions that facilitated the growth of the group as a community. The sense of belonging and working together came naturally to the teachers in the study. The patriarchal structure of the family, and utang na loob affected the interaction process.

The Filipino notion of respect with a strong adherence to religious beliefs influenced the teachers’ participation in the discussions. The greatest obstacle to sharing was the deeply held notion of respect, which made it difficult for one teacher to question another teacher’s views. For some teachers, opposing other teachers’ perspectives was a very difficult and frightening thing to do. Respect for elders also influenced teachers’ thoughts, concerns, and actions.

The patriarchal structure of the family and utang na loob were manifested by the novice teachers’ feeling they had little to contribute. These traditional practices led them to assume a passive role in the discussions. These contributed significantly to the dynamics of the group discussions. These novice teachers participated with slow and
nervous dialogues even after experienced teachers had set aside their achievements, status, and social position in an effort to get closer to their younger colleagues.

The Filipino family provides a sense of security that often leaves little place for individuality or creative initiative. Novice teachers relied on the more experienced teachers to serve in a parental role to provide interventions and direction. This provided them with a sense of security in the workplace. Vanier (1998) tells us about this same sense of belonging in African villages. He admits that belonging has something "humanly beautiful, however, the price paid for such order and security is the great difficulty individuals have in freeing themselves from the power of the group, to liberate their true, deepest self, to search for the new" (p. 18).

Although there was a tension between Filipino culture and the influence of western society, the teachers in the study seemed to hold on to their traditional values. This study suggests that teachers should be aware of the cultural factors that will enhance and impede their participation in interactions as they engage in conversations about teaching. An awareness of these factors might help make participation in group discussions more productive, and contribute to the development of a caring community of teacher-learners. It is not a question of "either or" but an interweaving of enabling Filipino practices and open fruitful teacher interactions.
Conclusions

This study of Filipino teachers has shown that an atmosphere of trust is vital in building a community of teacher-learners. When the teachers in the study began to trust each other and to listen to their colleagues, they started to value each other's stories, and learn from them.

Respect for individuality is also essential in developing a culture of teacher collaboration. Teachers attach diverse meanings to their work. They differ in their perceptions about how their actions affect students and other teachers. The group discussions created an atmosphere that allowed every teacher to be himself or herself. Participating did not mean deciding to give up one's individual rights. Each teacher was made to feel as a significant contributor to another's growth through the sharing of experiences. Every teachers' personal contribution enriched the group's experience.

Collaborating to learn as a group requires support and caring. The stories shared by the teachers in the study revealed that their lives are blends of incredible simple and complex, successful and frustrating, experiences. Exposing one's teaching practice requires courage for there are high risks associated with exhibiting individual practice and revealing larger parts of the public self. In a workplace that has high expectations, teachers need supportive individuals with open and listening hearts. The teachers in this study realized that they could not have had as enlightening a journey as they did without the support of the other teachers in the discussion group.

The basic message of this study is simply this: Growing in concert with others is more powerful than learning in isolation. A collaborative setting of professional
development is an invitation that will facilitate moving away from the isolating nature of the teaching life. The results of the study also confirm the transferability of a collaborative structure of learning. A distinctive feature of this study, however, is the way that Filipino culture seems to influence how the teachers in the study coped with collaborating, questioning, and responding to inquiry about their work. In the group discussions, there was a lack of distinct challenging discourse, such as, probing issues and publicly taking a strong stand on particular views.

Group discussions about teaching ultimately were a definite advance over the department meetings in as far as it contributed to discussion of classroom practice and other forms of information sharing and consultation among the teachers. The difference was evidently clear to the teachers involved in the group discussions—they recognized the shift from the highly organized meetings that were administrator-directed. This structure took time to develop but ultimately promised a new character for future teacher meetings.

The KIS teachers showed that by listening, working, and learning together, teachers will grow and extend their understanding of practice. Creating a healthy community of inspiration may be an enormous challenge to achieve in the daily hustle of classroom life, but it is still the ideal for which every teacher should strive. Indeed, there is much territory to discover in the land of “what if?”
Implications of the Study

This study asserts the importance of the teacher: of knowing the teacher, of listening to the teacher, and of speaking with the teacher. The shared stories represent the need to create spaces for teacher ‘talk’ in the preservice and inservice teacher education programs.

Implications for the Research Participants

Teachers need to find time to talk about their teaching practice. They have more questions and ideas to share than an hour a week would allow. For Filipino teachers to grow personally and professionally through sharing teaching experiences, they should strive to discuss their practice publicly. Group discussions will help them to see their work differently. The value of listening to each other and having experienced and novice teachers listen and talk together will help teachers grow and become a caring community of committed group members. The research participants recognized the power of classroom stories in helping them to reframe their past teaching experiences and conceptualize action. This increasing awareness of the power of teacher interactions to improve teaching competencies, to enhance interpersonal skills, and to offer support for each other, require a personal commitment to continue and sustain ongoing conversations about teaching practice. Administrative support becomes a necessary element for these teacher interactions to happen.
Implications for School Administrators

McLaughlin and Yee (1988) state that teachers teaching in classrooms are what education is all about. The degree to which teachers can respond effectively to changing conditions and pressures on the system depends in part upon the support of school administrators. Schools need to sustain ongoing conversations about teaching. Teachers can come together for many reasons but at the heart of the gathering must be a willingness to learn and grow. This study revealed the need for support mechanisms, individual and institutional, in order to sustain a community of teacher-learners.

Learning can happen best in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, an atmosphere that invites involvement, and one that makes teachers feel comfortable and believe that there are no expectations for what should be done. The teachers in this study saw new possibilities for an improvement in teaching, by questioning their practice, and by learning to believe in themselves as they openly talked and listened to each other. Teachers have much to say to each other about their work and life, about respect and friendship, and the kind of working relationship, but they never seemed to find the opportunities for this type of telling. Teacher conversations can be fostered if school administrators provide time, space, and encourage teachers who are willing to take the first step.

Implications for Teacher Educators

Rosenholtz (1989) states that the “teachers, like members of most organizations, shape their beliefs and actions largely in conformance with the structures, policies and traditions of the workaday world around them” (p. 2). Rosenholtz emphasizes the
importance of looking at the social context that shapes the kind of practice each teacher hopes to achieve. To be useful to teachers, professional development programs need to recognize teachers' understandings and knowledge of their work, and consider the influence of the school and community environments on teaching. An acknowledgment of what teachers know and understand about teaching will allow teachers to meaningfully engage in professional discussions. Teacher interactions serve as an alternative means for teachers to grow professionally and personally.

Teacher educators need to value and make use of classroom stories to inform teacher education programs. A useful professional development program requires "familiarity with and high regard for principles and conclusions derived from immediate classroom experience" (Hargreaves, 1989, p. 250). Hargreaves suggests the need to value classroom stories in teacher inservice programs. Classroom experiences shared by practicing teachers provide a source of practical knowledge about teaching. Thus, inservice providers should structure professional development opportunities that bring teachers together to share classroom stories and knowledge.

The context from which the teachers are coming, determines the way in which they respond to the school environment. Teachers bring to the workplace their "mental baggage" such as, schooling experiences, family rearing practices and traditions, beliefs and values, some of which may be passed on through generations, and several conventions of their particular communities. They have varied understandings and knowledge about school life and their personal and professional expectations. Because of this diversity, teachers respond to school environment differently. Teacher educators need to provide continuing teacher development programs that consider the cultural context.
Further Research

It is hoped that the present study will promote reflection and stimulate research across a range of practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers concerned with supporting the learning of teachers. This study did not examine the notion of teachers as adult learners and the practical implications of this for professional development. It would be interesting to explore more directly the teachers' perceptions of themselves as learners and of learning in the profession. There is also a need to look at how participation in group discussions triggers change in teaching practice.

This study was conducted in only one subculture, a science department in a K-10 school in the Philippines. It would be interesting to build a larger learning community by including other departments in the school in group discussion meetings. The research setting selected for the study is not typical of the Philippine public schools. Conducting a similar study in a public school in a more typical context would provide an interesting contrast and might lead to further understanding of the interplay between culture and teacher professional development in the Philippines. There is also a need for a longer-term study to better understand how a teaching community sustains itself and evolves over time.

Final Thoughts

Teachers' stories will go a long way in helping teacher practitioners to grow professionally and personally, if only more spaces for teacher talks were made available.
to them. For the teachers at KIS sharing intimate stories of teaching was an initial step, and at the same time a big leap toward the building of a caring community of teacher-learners, a community that values teachers’ values and belief systems, ideas, expectations, and knowledge about their work.

There was no closure to the group discussions at Kaunlaran Integrated School. The last act was left wide-open even as more questions and issues emerged. Even if we did not immediately see a superb ending, I hope and imagine another group discussion has unfolded since I left the research setting. I believe that over the next few years that a caring community in Kaunlaran Integrated School will continue to blossom. I have faith in that.
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## APPENDIX I

### Schedule of Activities (July, 1997 - January, 1998)

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<th>May</th>
<th>Enter Interview</th>
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<td>Enter Interview</td>
<td>15-Jul-97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dina</td>
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### Video recording

**Jul 18-30, 1997 Science dept/classrooms**

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<th>1-Aug-97</th>
<th>Faculty Room</th>
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<td>Room 106</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Video recording

**2-Sep-97 School campus, buildings**

| Aruwanara | Interview #3 | 4-Sep-97 | Faculty Room |
| Dina | Interview #4 | 4-Sep-97 | Room 111 |
| May | Interview #3 | 5-Sep-97 | AV Room |
| Dina | Video recording | 11-Sep-97| Room 111 |
| Aruwanara | Interview #4 | 15-Sep-97| Room 109 |
| Dina | Video recording | 25-Sep-97| Room 111 |
| Aruwanara | Video recording | 26-Sep-97| Room 109 |
| May | Interview #4 | 30-Sep-97| Room 106 |
| Aruwanara | Interview #5 | 30-Sep-97| Faculty Room |
| Dina | Video recording | 30-Sep-97| Department Meeting |
| Dina | Video recording | 2-Oct-97 | Room 111 |

### Video recording

**10-Oct-97 AV Room**

| Aruwanara | Interview #6 | 13-Oct-97 | Room 109 |
| May | Interview #5 | 14-Oct-97 | Faculty Room |
| Aruwanara | Presharing Discussion #1 | 17-Oct-97 | AV Room |
| May | Presharing Discussion #1 | 20-Oct-97 | AV Room |

### GROUP DISCUSSION #1 (October 28, 1997)

<p>| Aruwanara | Postsharing Discussion #1 | 30-Oct-97 | AV Room |
| Dina | Postsharing Discussion #1 | 3-Nov-97 | Faculty Room |
| Dina | Presharing Discussion #2 | 7-Nov-97 | Faculty Room |
| May | Postsharing discussion #1 | 10-Nov-97 | Room 106 |
| Aruwanara | Interview #7 | 11-Nov-97 | Faculty Room |
| May | Presharing discussion #2 | 11-Nov-97 | Room 106 |
| Aruwanara | Video recording | 14-Nov-97 | Room 109 |
| Aruwanara | Presharing Discussion #2 | 14-Nov-97 | AV Room |
| May | Interview #6 | 15-Nov-97 | Faculty Room |
| Dina | Video recording | 18-Nov-97 | Room 111 |</p>
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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Room 111</td>
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<td>GROUP DISCUSSION #2 (November 21, 1997)</td>
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<td>22-Nov-97</td>
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<td>Room 106</td>
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<td>Family Day (Grade 7)</td>
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<td>Dina</td>
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<td>Video recording</td>
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<td>Inauguration/ X'mas Party</td>
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<td>19-Dec-97</td>
<td>Lantern parade</td>
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<td>12-Jan-98</td>
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<td>Video recording</td>
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<td>Room 111</td>
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<td>Battle of the Brains</td>
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<td>Computer Lab</td>
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<td>GROUP DISCUSSION #3 (January 15, 1998)</td>
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<td>Arlene</td>
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<td>Elem. Science Room</td>
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<td>Lorna</td>
<td>Post GD Interview</td>
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## APPENDIX II
### Videotape Recordings

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<td>Distance Probe: Grade 7-Venus (May)</td>
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<tr>
<td>28-Jul-97</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Boyle's &amp; Dalton's Laws: Grade 9-Oxygen (Aruwanara)</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-Jul-97</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Distance and Diameter: Grade 7-Pluto (Dina)</td>
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<td>7-Aug-97</td>
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<td>Faculty Room (whole day)</td>
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<td>12-Aug-97</td>
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<td>Teacher interactions in the faculty room</td>
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<td>26-Aug-97</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Atmosphere: Grade 7-Venus (May)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-Sep-97</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>School campus, buildings</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-Sep-97</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Molecules: Grade 7-Pluto (Dina)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-Sep-97</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Relative Humidity: Grade 7-Pluto (Dina)</td>
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<td>26-Sep-97</td>
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<td>Acids: Grade 9-Oxygen (Aruwanara)</td>
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<td>30-Sep-97</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Department Meeting</td>
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<td>2-Oct-97</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>14-Nov-97</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Formula Writing: Grade 9-Oxygen (Aruwanara)</td>
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<tr>
<td>18-Nov-97</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Atmosphere: Grade 7-Uranus (Dina)</td>
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<td>20-Nov-97</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Group dynamics: Grade 7-Pluto (Dina)</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>GROUP DISCUSSION #2</td>
</tr>
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<td>22-Nov-97</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Motion: Grade 7-Pluto (Dina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-Nov-97</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Motion: Grade 7-Venus (May)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-Nov-97</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Motion: Grade 7-Neptune (May)</td>
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<td>29-Nov-97</td>
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<td>18-Dec-97</td>
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<td>K-2 Building Inauguration/Faculty Christmas Party</td>
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<td>Lantern parade around the University campus</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>7-Jan-98</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>15-Jan-98</td>
<td>28</td>
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### APPENDIX III.a

**Interviews/ Videotape Recordings / Discussions (Aruwanara)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Entering Interview</td>
<td>15-Jul-97</td>
<td>Personal Background</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video recording</td>
<td>28-Jul-97</td>
<td>Boyle/Dalton's Laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview #2</td>
<td>8-Aug-97</td>
<td>Typical day</td>
</tr>
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<td>4-Sep-97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview #4</td>
<td>15-Sep-97</td>
<td>Tests/likes and dislikes</td>
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<td>Video recording</td>
<td>26-Sep-97</td>
<td>Acids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview #5</td>
<td>30-Sep-97</td>
<td>Science fair/Students performance/behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview #6</td>
<td>13-Oct-97</td>
<td>Investigation Laboratory (I-Lab)</td>
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<td>17-Oct-97</td>
<td>Boyle/Dalton's Laws/Procedure for sharing</td>
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<td><strong>GROUP DISCUSSION #1 (October 28, 1997)</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td>Postsharing Discussion #1</td>
<td>30-Oct-97</td>
<td>First sharing experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview #7</td>
<td>11-Nov-97</td>
<td>Grade9 students' story</td>
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<td>Video recording</td>
<td>14-Nov-97</td>
<td>Formula Writing</td>
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<td>14-Nov-97</td>
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<td>16-Jan-98</td>
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<td>Participation in/gains from the group discussions</td>
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## APPENDIX III.b

Interviews/ Videotape Recordings / Discussions (Dina)

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<tr>
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<td>12-Aug-97</td>
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<td>23-Aug-97</td>
<td>Likes and dislikes</td>
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<td>Becoming a teacher/working style/choosing teaching</td>
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<td>25-Sep-97</td>
<td>Relative humidity (Grade 7-Pluto)</td>
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<td>Grade 7 students' story/working style/typical day</td>
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<td>Group Dynamics (Grade 7-Pluto)</td>
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<td>Working in groups/group problem solving</td>
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## APPENDIX III.c

### Interviews/ Videotape Recordings / Discussions (May)

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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview #3</td>
<td>5-Sep-97</td>
<td>Games in teaching/grouping of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview #4</td>
<td>30-Sep-97</td>
<td>first year of teaching/likes and dislikes</td>
</tr>
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<td>14-Oct-97</td>
<td>Changing plans during instruction/reflecting on lessons</td>
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<td>Distance Probe (Computer Simulation)/sharing procedure</td>
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**GROUP DISCUSSION # 1 (October 28, 1997)**

- Postsharing discussion #1: 10-Nov-97 First sharing experience
- Presharing discussion #2: 11-Nov-97 Association Game (Atmosphere)/sharing procedure
- Interview #6: 15-Nov-97 Grade 7 students' story

**GROUP DISCUSSION # 2 (November 21, 1997)**

- Postsharing discussion #2: 24-Nov-97 Second sharing experience
- Video recording: 24-Nov-97 Motion Grade 7-Venus
- Video recording: 25-Nov-97 Motion Grade 7-Neptune
- Interview #7: 25-Nov-97 Growing as a teacher
- Video recording: 6-Jan-98 Student Activity (Motion)
- Presharing Discussion #3: 7-Jan-98 Group activity on motion

**GROUP DISCUSSION #3 (January 15, 1998)**

- Postsharing discussion #3: 19-Jan-97 Third sharing experience
- Closing Interview: 22-Jan-98 Participation in/gains from the group discussions