

# The Elderly Educators in Their Quest for Lifelong Learning: Some Stories to Tell

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**Abstract-** *This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of 20 elderly teachers, 50 to 65 years old, still in the service and enrolled in post graduate education. Through in-depth interviews of 10 informants and focused group discussion of 10 participants, the data were gathered and subjected to thematic analysis. The results revealed that the elderly teachers decided to enroll in post graduate education for reasons of dealing with age-specific issues and expectations, balancing personal and professional responsibilities, being infused with young brood and new perspectives, aspiring for career advancement opportunities, enhancing professional portfolio, and rearranging needs and priorities were the themes. The themes for the challenges of the elderly educators connected to their quest for lifelong learning included, balancing and prioritizing, keeping abreast with technology and new sources of knowledge, being optimistic and positive, and being determined and resolute. The insights of lifelong learning shared by informants and participants were, professional advancement brings promotion opportunities, lifelong learning is personal development, age does not matter in learning, and lifelong learning has its rewards. What is notable in this study is the participants' being still active and generative, their resiliency to face the challenges, and their insights of wisdom, hope, and faith.*

**Keywords-** *educational management; elderly educators; lifelong learning; qualitative research; Philippines*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

"Never too late to learn" is the word I will address towards those personalities who continue study even in their retirement age. Getting older can seem daunting-greying hair, wrinkles, forgetting, physical and mental health problems which occurs due to aging situations (Findsen & Formosa 2011)[32]. Although, elderly people are relatively new in research literature, a quantity of authors have tried to answer the query of what determines a person's intentions (Jones & McIntosh, 2010; Lim & Feldman, 2003) and actual participation in lifelong learning (Cahill, Giandrea, & Quinn, 2011; Gobeski & Beehr, 2009; Kim & Feldman, 2000). Educators need to acquire new skills and become lifelong learners themselves to keep up to date with new information, educational ideas, and technology. As learning becomes more cooperative, so too must teachers' professional growth, which must be promoted by professional networks and learning societies within schools and institutions. These studies provide insights into the revelation of elderly educators; however, they do not focus on a particular subgroup of society for example, on not yet retired teachers.

In the United States, the proportion of individuals in lifelong learning in adult education rate for the older population is fast catching up. The participation rate for persons aged 16-50 is 53-55% and 41% of adults aged 66 and over participated in adult education in 2001. The

bottom rate of 22% is for persons aged 51-65 (Kim, Collins, Hagedorn, Williamson, & Chapman, 2004). This trend continues to increase as this age group increased due to aging of the baby boom cohorts, those born 1946 to 1964 (Hebert & Luong, 2008)[44]. While in Japan, the middle aged or younger people aged 60 to 69 years old account for 20% of those engaged in learning or educational activities (Yamaguchi, 1998)[109].

In the Philippines, there are scholarships provided to teachers to pursue master's and doctorate degrees aligned to their field of specialization. However, age is the only requirements set for these scholarship grants to be awarded and this is not in favor of elderly educators. As a result, few elderly teachers enroll in the master's and doctorate degree programs considering the cost it will require them for enrolment. In this regard, the call for lifelong learning among elderly teachers need to involve the lifelong learning programs for them to become competent enough to teach effectively the learners in this generation (Sandin, Wright & Clark, 2013)[89].

In view of the new professional standards for teachers, the Department of Education (DepEd), through the Teacher Education Council (TEC), issued this DepEd Order for national adoption and implementation entitled, "Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, (PPST)". It distinguishes the importance of professional standards in the continuing professional improvement and enrichment of teachers based on the standard of lifelong learning. It is dedicated to supporting teachers, and takes cognizance of the fact that good teachers are vigorous to

raising student accomplishment. Quality learning is contingent upon quality teaching. Hence, improving teacher quality becomes of highest significance and supports nation building (DepEd Order 42, s. 2017).

At present, the scholastic organization of Philippines is confronted by several issues that must be addressed to enhance the delivery of education to the most number of the people. One is the excellence and convenience of education to its takers. Reality tells to academicians and policy makers that even if the government school educators are competent to educate, the lack of materials for instruction, insufficient facilities and lack of training for professional growth deter them to bring out at their best. This problem is also true for the aging educators in their quest for lifelong learning (DepEd Order 8, s. 2012). Moreover, the researcher has not come across qualitative researches done specifically on aging educators in their quest for lifelong learning. It is on this premise that the researcher decided to conduct the study with the hope that this may fill the research gap related to lifelong learning of the aged educators.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to delineate the elderly teachers in Region XI and to assign meaning to their lived experiences in the framework of “what” and “how” they experience the phenomenon of elderly education quest for lifelong learning. The template of the purpose statement in phenomenological investigation approach was advanced by Creswell (2013)[23].

This study also envisions to document the positive and negative experiences of teachers in their quest for lifelong learning in their respective workplaces, from different schools in Davao City. This phenomenological study presents evidences about the participants’ personal characteristics, activities and achievements in school; experiences, desires and ambitions in life; and their capacity to confront the challenges at this time in their lives.

It is hoped that the Philippine administration and private institutions may craft policies to provide scholarship for elderly teachers to continue their profession or to pursue a different one tailored along their interests and capabilities as an aging worker.

### 1.2 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions.

1. What are the experiences of the elderly educators in their quest for lifelong learning?
2. How do they face the challenges connected to their quest for lifelong learning?
3. What are the learnings and insights of lifelong learning that they can share to their families, peers, and community?

### 1.3 Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943)[62]. This theory is in a pyramid shape and laid out

in five broad layers: the physiological needs, the desires for protection and security, the needs for love and belonging, the needs for esteem, and the need for self-actualization, in that order from the bottom which is the largest and the best level is known as growth or being needs (B-needs). The self-actualization needs is the individual potential, self-fulfillment, looking for personal growth and top experiences and a desire to “become everything one is capable of becoming.”

Supporting this theory, is, The Activity Theory of Aging, developed by Robert Havighurst, which assumes that the more active and involved aging people are, the more satisfaction they derive from life (Connidis& Wilson, 2011[19]; Moody, 2010)[69]. Hence, activity and participation of elderly people can be provided for them if they engage in lifelong learning.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

Lingering issues on elderly educators have continued to prevail worldwide. These unthressed issues form the basis for many studies about the elderly educator’s quest for lifelong learning plans of organizational managers for their employees, and their benefit. The employees on the other side may benefit from continuing their education or post graduate program given to them by the management at the start of their career job and on their promotions (Collinson, 2017).

In the same manner, this study about elderly teachers quest for lifelong learning’s varied forms may facilitate formulation of guidelines and practices planned to encourage active aging (James & McIntosh, 2010[46]; European Union, 2012)[31]. Aging influences an organism’s entire physiology, the elderly feel loneliness, changes of attitudes, poor immune system and more vulnerability to different diseases. Thus, family members must be near to give assistance and provide them with economic, emotional and psychological assistance. Thus, changes are harmful to bodily function which causes chronic diseases to develop.

Moreover, this study may contribute to the research literature on elderly educators’ quest for lifelong learning, specifically involving aging teachers. Furthermore, the outcome of this study may serve as a channel through which the sentiments of the aging educator may be heard by policymakers so that in turn, they can help formulate policies designed to produce opportunities for elderly teachers to help prevent rising insecurity and risk towards the end of their lives.

## 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

To help provide understanding on the vital phenomenon of this study, the following review of literature surrounding the elderly educators’ quest for lifelong learning and its related concepts is provided.

*Elderly educators* refer to elderly teachers who continue studying and who are registered in the graduate and postgraduate degrees, the reasons being not limited to

augment the economic aspect of the job but also to enhance a sense of authority and professional growth. In this picture, an elderly educator who earned a doctorate degree is usually viewed as a person of authority and learned (Boud & Hager, 2012[12]; Lumpe, Czerniak, Haney & Beltyukova, 2012[61]; Stewart, 2014[96]; Mundy, Kupczynski, Ellis & Salgado, 2012)[74]. Meanwhile, other elderly educators enroll into advance degree programs because they believe that the learning they will acquire will be essential to navigate their current work. The formal education helps them become effective in their work for improvement of their skills. They have the idea that higher learning in their undergraduate degree course will help them learn the many things essential in their career for them to easily navigate their work (Conroy, Hulme, & Menter, 2013[18]; Mulder, 2014[73]; Seidel & Stürmer, 2014[92]; Petko, 2012)[83]. On the same vein, many elderly educators take the challenge of enrolling in the master's and doctorate programs because they need to gain new knowledge. They are inclined to the idea that their admission in a master's degree program will enhance their skills. They are interested to learn and are enthusiastic to put into practice their learning. With this, they are much willing to spend their resources and time to obtain the degree they think will help them appreciate the nature of their work and eventually get promoted in their job. In this way, their learning process brings desirable outcome to their work (Biesta, 2015; Knowlton, Fogleman, Reichsman & de Oliveira, 2015[52]; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012[55]; Morley, 2013[70]; Trede, Macklin & Bridges, 2012)[101]. Many of these teachers despite their age show interest to learn many things. They are interested to know new technologies and how these affect the teaching and knowledge process. They are also inclined to attend trainings and workshops that will contribute to their acquisition of knowledge as far as education is concerned. These teachers show an overwhelming interest towards knowledge and developing their skills. They also manifest eagerness in the presentation of their learning by engaging in discussion with colleagues and implementing their acquired knowledge in their class (Buabeng-Andoh, 2012[15]; Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014[40]; Linder, Post & Calabrese, 2012[58]; Trust, 2012)[102]. Lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is the self-directed, nonstop journey to pursue formal or informal learning for personal satisfaction or to grow professionally. It plays an immense role in enhancing the teachers' ability to develop further effectiveness in teaching profession. It directs teachers to update innovation skills, acquire new strategies pertinent to the desires of the students, and develops mechanism to maximize learning opportunities as an instrument to improve students' critical thinking ability. It also facilitates the growth of teachers' work skills to harness professional competence directives to adapt to a knowledge-based society. It is supposed that the more teachers are immersed in formal lifelong learning

programs, the better they can enthusiastically share in the many spheres of both social and economic life (Bruce, Hughes & Somerville, 2012[14]; Muijs et al., 2014[72]; Ranieri, Manca & Fini, 2012)[85]. Meanwhile, the onset of globalization and the impact of information technology have given lifelong learning an attention it deserves. From then, industries have been intense in implementing this concept to ensure that workers are equipped with essential skills to see the growing demands of the knowledge-based economy. In the area of education, lifelong learning among educators is seen as a factor that builds the strong foundation of the learners in evolving their critical thinking skills and in honing values essential in their acquisition of life skills (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012[45]; Lucas, Nasta & Rogers, 2012[60]; Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). In view of this, having realized the significance of lifelong learning, many countries designed and reframed policies to effectively implement lifelong learning programs. These countries give important attention to these programs with the primary goal of eliminating the gap between the skills of employees against the actual required standard of the society (Bouchamma & Michaud, 2014[11]; Silva & Herdeiro, 2014[93]; Thessin, 2015)[100]. Moreover for several years, educators are convinced that lifelong learning is one of the means of cultivating the quality of graduates in an institution. Today, the deeper meaning of lifelong learning has taken different forms. Among the elderly teachers who take up graduate studies degree, they know that their quest for lifelong learning does not only limit them to become equipped with relevant knowledge on the classroom-based instruction, but it also another way of fulfilling their wishes to earn another degree as proof of their ongoing professional improvement as teachers (Banks, 2014[6]; Hager & Johnsson, 2012[41]; Mundy et al, 2012[74]; Schrum & Levin, 2013)[90]. There are many factors that can be attributed to the engagement of elderly educators in their quest for lifelong learning: One important factor which influences aging educators in the lifelong learning is professional position in the workplace. The industries today require employees who have acquired relevant degree courses to hold key functions in the offices. In the teaching sector, teachers who acquire relevant degree courses are generally considered for promotion along with other qualifications. The promotion guidelines today favor those who have acquired relevant graduate degree courses. The professional position also means economic advancement because the salary increases when a teacher is promoted to higher position (Alfrey, Cale, & Webb, 2012[1]; Finsterwald, Wagner, Schober, Lüftenegger, & Spiel, 2013[35]; Twining, Raffaghelli, Albion & Knezek, 2013)[104]. Aside from economic development brought by lifelong learning activities to elderly educators, teachers also enjoy a *higher social status in their school*. Most teachers who



have a master's degree are always looked up to by other teachers. They get the high respect from colleagues and they are oftentimes considered to stand as authority in their ground. Many teachers will consider them as inspiration and they are also considered as having deep knowledge on the discipline they have earned a degree in (Atencio, Jess, & Dewar, 2012[3]; Dubinsky, Roehrig & Varma, 2013[29]; Forsberg & Wermke, 2012[36]; Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe & Terry, 2013[49].

Another factor which influences the elderly educators is that *voluntary participation in civic groups and community service activities* are the celebration of their learning. They want to convey a message to the community that a person of higher learning always goes back to the community and serves because for them this is a single of the true meaning of attaining learning (Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013[4]; Day, 2012[27]; Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori & Algozzine, 2012)[78].

Consequently, many educators agree that the greater participation of educators in lifelong learning activities turns them into agents of change. This is because the knowledge these teachers acquire can help solve many social issues and concerns. Many elderly teachers can get formal learning in the graduate degree courses. These learnings are essential to address many concerns in the classroom situation or in the school setting. Teachers are trained for many problem-solving strategies in the master's degree program which can be used in solving concerns in school (Biesta, 2012[9]; Robertson, 2012[86]; Schumacher, Englander & Carraccio, 2013)[91].

The aforementioned ideas, related constructs, research outputs, and theories on aging taken from several sources have bearing on this study, since they served as support to the significance of the investigation and have become the anchored lens towards understanding the results of the present study.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

The phenomenology approach was used in this study because the study was built on the data contained within the representation of the lived experiences of the aging teachers who experienced the phenomenon of lifelong learning. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of human insight of events or phenomena from the real undertakings in the actual world. It is reliving the experiences of the participants involved in the study and going deeper into their thoughts, identifying the essence of the experience as described by the participants, through in-depth interviews and focused group discussion (Campbell, 2011[16]; Creswell, 2007[21]; Speziale & Carpenter, 2007; Willis, 2011).

The origin of phenomenology could be traced back to the German mathematician Edmund Husserl, who was regarded as the fountainhead of phenomenology in the 20th century. Husserl's idea was that any phenomenon could go back to the concrete. His ideas were expanded

by Heidegger with his introduction of the concept of "Dasein" or "Being there" and even furthered by Schultz asserting that the human world was a composite of different provinces of meaning (Creswell, 2013[21]; Moustakas, 1994; Vandenberg, 1997).

However, Creswell (2009) described phenomenology as a research strategy of investigation in which the researcher classifies the spirit of human practices about a phenomenon as described by participants. The phenomenologists' purpose is to reduce individual experiences on the phenomenon to a universal essence (Van Manen, 1990; as cited by Creswell, 2013). To achieve this purpose, the researcher collects data which are responses from what and how individuals experience the phenomenon and develops a common description of the essence of the experience for all informants (Moustakas, 1994[71]; Creswell, 2013)[21].

Moreover, Stones (1988) posited that the operative word in phenomenological research is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-conceived paradigm, but sticking to the facts. The phenomenologist is concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of informants. To achieve this audio-taped in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussion (FGD) are methods used in extracting data from the informants of the study (Willis, 2007).

Furthermore, through a phenomenological reduction, the researcher simply reduced the realm from how it is perceived naturally, with all biases and judgment to a realm of pure phenomena (Dowling, 2013). Thus, the spirit of the phenomena was allowed to surface. In addition, the members' own arguments were used throughout the process of data analysis and phenomenological description. The process of bracketing was employed throughout the course of the study to avoid injection of personal biases and researcher's preconceived ideas into the data. The phenomenological method was employed to examine and scrutinize the phenomena through the subjective eyes of the participants, focusing on subjectivity of reality and continually pointing out the need to understand how humans view themselves and the world around them, and in the process, the researcher set aside his personal experiences and opinion to fully grasp the experiences of the participants, identifying its essence (Creswell, 2007).

As regards phenomenology as a qualitative inquiry, Corbin and Strauss (2008) stressed that qualitative methods are more appropriate than quantitative methods in extracting details about a phenomenon such as feelings, emotions and thought processes since these phenomena are difficult to quantify. This made the phenomenological approach very good at surfacing deep issues.

Nonetheless, Davis (2007)[26] mentioned that the objective of the phenomenological approach is to be able to extract common themes from the experiences of the subjects, convert these experiences to a description of the universal essence of the phenomena and grasp the very

nature of the thing. To understand a complex phenomenon with the multiple realities experienced by the participants themselves, their insider perspectives will be considered. Moreover, Creswell (2013) classified qualitative methods as narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Various authors advanced that the bases of qualitative data include interviews, observations and documents (Creswell, 2007; Giorgi, 2009[39]; Locke, 2010; Silverman & Suter, 2012). They stressed two ways of collecting data: the traditional face-to-face interview and the written account of the experience. Similarly, specific methods used in this study included in-depth interviews, focused group discussions and note-taking, giving much attention to details and significance of the emotional content to open up an array of human practices of the subjects involved in the study. What one seeks from a research interview in phenomenological research is as complete a description as possible of the experience that a participant has lived through (Giorgi, 2009). Hence, in order to describe and understand the lived experiences, the coping approaches and the insights of the elderly teachers as they engaged in lifelong learning, this phenomenological approach was employed.

### 3.2 Role of the Researcher

In this study, I took the roles of designing, encoding, interviewing, transcribing, verifying, reporting, interpreting, and analyzing. As an elementary teacher myself, I contrived to follow to the researcher's characteristics as described by Creswell (2013), that is, to bracket myself.

Moving on towards my objectives, the use of bracketing was applied to minimize presuppositions to prevent potential harmful effects of presumptions that may have affected the research process, thereby increasing the precision of the research study. The researcher's pre-existing beliefs on the study or prior knowledge and experiences were put aside to fully capture the experiences being told by the participants with an open mind (Creswell, 2009[22]; Taylor, 2012[99]; Tufford & Newman, 2010)[103]. To achieve this, I tried to be objective in my analysis of the data obtained from the informants by sticking to the verbatim transcripts of the informants' responses, taking down notes and memos transcribed in field notes to get rid of any personal biases or judgment.

### 3.3 Research Participant

In phenomenology, researchers may interview five to 25 participants who had experienced the same phenomenon to achieve the goal of representativeness and generalizability as a criterion, from a small number of research participants (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Nevertheless, sample sizes of 10-15 are adequate, provided participants are able to provide rich descriptions of the phenomena (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007)[95]. In addition, Hancock (2009)[42]

further stated that focus groups are considered to work quite well with six to 12 people.

In this study, purposive and snowball sampling have utilized to come up with the sufficient number of participants (Creswell, 2013). Purposive sampling was widely used and popular in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015; Patton, 1990). Thus, initially I opted to come up with ten informants for the in-depth interview and ten for the focused group discussion, for a total of 20 which is well within the range of five to 25 participants as mentioned.

In choosing purposive samples in this study, the inclusion criteria was established and these were: elderly teachers teaching in elementary and secondary schools in Region XI specifically in Davao City, 50 to 65 years old, enrolled in graduate and postgraduate studies, and not retired. For saturation of the selection of participants I employed the snowball sampling as advanced by Creswell (2013) to choose at least 20 informants for this phenomenological study, ten for focused discussion group and the remaining ten for the semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interview in the natural setting venues. The 20 elderly teachers were distributed as follows: sixteen from Ma-a District, one from Calinan District, one from San Roque District, one from Buhangin District and one from Davao Central District. All places are within Davao Region. Excluded in this study, however, were the retired teachers 60 to 65 years of age, even if they were enrolled in graduate and postgraduate courses for personal development and additional knowledge. Observably, there were many elderly teachers, who were also my classmates and friends enrolled in the graduate and postgraduate program to compete the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to learn more knowledge and be promoted before they reach retirement to receive a high pension to fulfill their needs.

### 3.4 Data Collection

In gathering data, in-depth interview (IDI), focused group discussion (FGD) and note-taking were utilized. Before hand, I made sure that my participants and key informants were available during the set time and place of interview. In addition, it is necessary for a researcher to understand the nature of the research and the reason to conduct the study so it would be easier to introduce and request permission from the informants to conduct the study and involve them in the quest (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008; Patton, 2015[81]; Willis, 2007)[107].

As per guidelines of the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC) the consent forms contained the following items: introduction of the study, its purpose, study procedures, potential risks and discomforts, potential benefits to participants and the society, confidentiality, participation and withdrawal, researcher's contact and information, rights of the research participant, and research participant's consent to

be signed if the participant agreed to participate. In this study signed informed consent forms were collected before the set schedule of one on one, face-to-face interview for each of the ten qualified participants' convenience and for the ten participants for focused group discussion. In addition, the members of the focused group who were privy to the discussion were briefed to keep the individual sharing of information confidential to protect the participant's identity.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The method of analyzing data in this study was patterned after the method used by Gempes, Sayson, Manalaysay, Mejica, &Noveno, (2009).This involved summarizing the mass of data collected and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important features. Data was analyzed by a method which included data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification, adding that qualitative content analysis is any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings (Hancock, Ockleford& Windridge, 2009; Zhang &Wildemut, 2007)[110].

Initially in data analysis, data reduction is employed to get the abstraction of data from the transcriptions, deleting data, which are unimportant and transforming it into a comprehensible material, easily understood by many (Namey, Guest, Thairu& Johnson, 2007)[76]. Thematic analysis involves pairing and sieving of data, a form of sorting and categorizing. With data reduction, which is a summary of responses deleting irrelevant information, I employed the expertise of a professional data analyst for data analysis, who also helped in managing and handling the data, particularly with sorting and organizing large volumes of qualitative data, retrieving and locating words and phrases.

Next is the data display, which is the organization of data in the form of graphic organizers such as: matrices, charts, and graphs that would enable the viewer to draw his conclusion. It sorted the data in an arranged and orderly manner, clearly showing the interrelationships of bits of information, readily available to the viewer. At this stage, other higher order categories came out beyond those discovered during the first step of data reduction (Names et al, 2007; Paul, 2006; Suter, 2012)[98].

Finally, comes the conclusion drawing and verification as the last step of qualitative analysis. It involves going back to consider what the analyzed data means and to assess their aftermath for the questions at hand, while verification, integrally linked to conclusion drawing, required revisiting the data as many times as necessary to cross-check or verify these emergent conclusions (Paul, 2006). At this point, no definitive judgments were made; but rather, the data were allowed to speak for themselves by the as the conceptual categories and descriptive themes emerged.

As part and parcel of the process, the conceptual and emerging themes were then interpreted with reference to

the related literature on the subject in an attempt to explain, with a theory, the phenomenon being studied, by the researcher with the assistance of two independent readers and analysts who are experts in the field of study to form a triangulation team where each examined the data and compared individual findings to obtain a deeper and broader understanding of how each investigator viewed the issue. Triangulation is used to ensure the validity of the data by using more than one person to collect the data, thereby increasing its reliability (Speziale& Carpenter, 2007). In addition, if the study was replicated in another venue utilizing different informants but bringing out same categorical themes, then the researcher would be confident that the result of the research study was reliable.

### 3.6 Trustworthiness

To establish the trustworthiness of the study, four components, namely: credibility, conformability, transferability and dependability were considered as posited by Lincoln and Guba (2013). Lincoln and Guba's constructs correspond to the criteria employed by the positivist investigator: credibility (in preference to internal validity); dependability (in preference to reliability); conformability (in preference to objectivity); and transferability (in preference to external validity/generalizability).

To ensure the credibility of my study, rigor was properly observed during the data collection, especially during the interviews, where everything was based on factual data, obtained directly from the participants. I also made sure that no relevant data was excluded nor irrelevant data included. This is supported by Suter (2012)[98] who posited that credibility refers to the believability of the findings enhanced by evidence such as signed member check evaluation form by the research participants, convergence of multiple sources of evidence such as verbatim interview transcripts, reflective field notes and investigator triangulation.

To address the conformability of my study, I bracketed my personal opinions, assumptions and judgments as an elementary teacher with the same department in order to guard against distortion of data. I used the bracketing approach as part of my methodology to suspend personal bias. I also applied the use of triangulation and peer consensus to ensure that the findings of the study are free of biases and prejudice.

Moreover, to address transferability, I provided detailed description of the research substance and the assumptions central to the research and employed transparency as much as possible. Rich and thick descriptions were provided, so that the person who wishes to "transfer" the results to a different setting can determine how congruent the transfer is (Suter, 2012)[98].

Finally, to establish the dependability of my study, I employed consistency during the data collection and analysis via the code-recode system during data reduction and peer evaluation and investigator triangulation of the



data. Moreover, dependability is enhanced by such qualitative strategies as audit trails, rich documentation, and triangulation and also by traditional methods such as inter-coder or inter-observer agreement and code-recode consistency using the same human instrument which I employed as parcels of my methodology package (Suter, 2012[98]; Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008).

### 3.7 Ethical Consideration

Ethical principles as described by Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005)[64], included such principles as respect for persons, beneficence, justice, consent and confidentiality and were justifiably followed in this study. Respect for persons necessitates a commitment from the researcher to protect participants from exploitation of their weakness. Prior to conducting the study, and with the help of my gatekeepers, I visited my participants' prospects and asked their permission to get involved in my study. I distributed letters of invitation and informed consent forms and gave them time to think and consider my invitation. I made follow-ups either through visitation or text and call to confirm their decision. I underwent all these processes advanced by Creswell (2013), as a symbol of my respect for the persons involved in the study.

Informed and voluntary consent is another issue of ethical considerations. Prior consent is one of the most important instruments for showing respect for persons involved in the conduct of research (Mack, et al., 2005)[64]. Before I conducted the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, I explained to the IDI and FGD participants orally and in writing the objectives and purpose of this research study and made clear that the proceedings would be audio-taped. After getting their decision to participate, I asked them to sign a written consent. The informants were also informed of the findings and results of the study as due recognition for their involvement.

Beneficence, on the other hand, requires a commitment of the researcher to lessen if not eliminate the risks linked with research, involving psychological and social risks. The participants had the right to refuse to answer questions that made them uncomfortable. However it also maximized the benefits that were due to the participants of study. To minimize the risks of exposure that may come to the participants, keeping the identity of the interviewee in relation to the information shared was done by using pseudonyms to address them. Participants were protected at all times so data or files of information in notebooks were locked safely in cabinets or stored in password-protected computer files (Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Bricki & Green, 2007; Mack et al, 2005).

Moreover, confidentiality of the results and anonymity of the informants' identities was observed through a coding system. Part of the briefing of the participants was the information (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007)[67] that all database linked to them (i.e. digital voice recorders, typed transcripts, field notes, and other related

materials) would be destroyed after the completion of the analysis.

Justice requires commitment to ensure a fair distribution of the risks as well as the benefits resulting from research. To achieve this, I saw to it that the research protocol must have a provision of recognizing the participants and their contributions to the research process and to give back to them in various ways for their involvement (Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This included the assurance that the participants would not spend any amount for the interview and their comfort and safety were priority. Tokens of appreciation for their efforts were given after each interview. Their contributions would also be recognized as a legacy because it is through them that people especially teachers would benefit from their shared insights. According to Bloom and Crabtree (2006), research must be able to enrich the freedom of the participants more than it improves that of the researcher. Finally, it is notable to mention that the protocol of this study was submitted to UMERG for review and subsequent approval after refinements were done to fit the UMERG Guidelines. Consequently, a certification of approval (appendix A) was issued allowing the researcher to conduct this study.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 The Experiences of the Elderly Educators in Their Quest for Lifelong Learning

From the final selective coding process, six essential themes emerged as responses to question one. As indicated in Table 1, these themes were: *dealing with age-specific issues and expectations, balancing personal and professional responsibilities, being influenced with young brood and new perspectives, aspiring for career advancement opportunities, enhancing professional portfolio and rearranging needs and priorities.*

#### 4.1.1 Dealing with age-specific issues and expectations

This was first essential theme that emerged. Elderly teacher participants stated that they experienced decreasing memory and cognition, both visual and auditory as well as a reduced concentration/focus due to overload which leads to less sharpness and absorption. They also revealed that they were regularly being labeled as experts and expected to excel at all times while they adjusted being with fresh graduates and inexperienced class composition. This result was congruence to the research findings of Bouchamma and Michaud (2014)[11], which elderly educators are always expected to perform best in the class because younger classmates often think of the elderly as full of wisdom because of their age and their experiences in life and in work. In addition, Bruce et al. (2012), Ranieri et al. (2015) affirmed that professors in graduate school hold in high regard elderly educators in terms of their wisdom. Their age and their experience are considered rich that the younger classmates always ask these elderly educators to

become leaders in the small tasks in the classes. As a result, the elderly are given the leadership roles despite that they think they lack the skill to perform the tasks.

Table 1: Major Themes and Core Ideas on Experiences of Elderly Educators in their Quest for Lifelong Learning.

Major Themes	Core ideas
<b>Dealing with age-specific issues and expectations</b>	Decreasing memory and cognition, both visual and auditory
	Reduced concentration/focus due to overload; less sharpness and absorption
	Less tolerance for some professors' teaching strategies
	Being voted as "leader" in groupings always.
	Being labeled as "experts" and expected to excel at all times
	Being with "fresh graduates & inexperienced "classmates
	Being with the millennials coping and groping with new technology
	Quite difficult due to my age considering that I am also working.
<b>Balancing personal and professional responsibilities</b>	Dealing with pressures every Saturday; having to wake up very early.
	Time constraints in the preparation of class reports and presentations.
	Doing research work, reports and complying with requirements
	Becoming very busy with commitments, work, family and studies
	Meeting the demands of job and requirements in graduate school
	Conflict of schedules; management of time between work and school
	Having to manage time between my work demands and studies
	Being always caught between work and school requirements
	Doing my duties as a mother, teacher and graduate school student
	Conflicting schedules of work activities and graduate school tasks.
<b>Being infused with young blood and new perspectives.</b>	Mingling with much younger student-classmates made me feel young
	Being with more dynamic & younger students is exciting but challenging.
	Engaging actively with younger professionals in the field; learning new things
	Being able to connect with others; meet new acquaintances; new experiences
	Having classmates who are younger and technology savvy; felt behind them
	I am excited and a little nervous to experience student life again due to my age.
	A new level of fun with the younger generation; new faces, new friends
	Establishment of new "connections" and collaborative networks
	Sharing different experiences and interacting with other elder students.
<b>Aspiring for career advancement opportunities</b>	My motivation is promotion in the future and eventually to get higher pay
	To augment the economic aspect of a job; fulfillment of dreams; opportunities
	Upgrade educational attainment because of stiff competition for higher position.
	Enhance sense of "authority" and "ascendancy"; develop professionally
	Attaining new titles, promotion, additional pay, to move up the ladder
	It is for my career advancement; to improve chances for promotion
	Fulfill desire for higher learning and knowledge; be in step with career goals
<b>Enhancing professional portfolio</b>	Expand professional network & linkages; for educational updating
	Driven by motivation to serve and be more competent
	Update knowledge in the field and develop self-esteem; gain respect
	To further enhance my competencies in teaching & handling subordinates.
	To become exposed to new avenues and dimensions of learning
	Continued learning; keeping pace with advances in technology
	Keep brain healthy, chance of acquiring additional inputs or knowledge
	To give myself chance to acquire a higher level of professional growth
	Be updated; obtain easy access to information & technological advances
	Achievement of a rich resource leading to technical competence
	Education advancement opportunities and professional growth
<b>Rearranging needs and</b>	Better understanding of social and technological phenomena
	Graduate school is expensive; have to consider current financial stability.
	Money is a concern; added financial burden due to tuition fee payments.
	Additional expenses are incurred for non-scholars.



<b>priorities</b>	Family time is sacrificed.
	Family responsibilities and household chores neglected
	Time for family and for self is set aside.
	Sacrificed in pursuit of studies; away from friends and community life.

On another vein, Jarvis (2014) the younger generation looks at the older classmates as gifted with rich ideas and wisdom because they believe that these people are already equipped with experiences and have been working for years making them acquire knowledge that of value.

#### 4.1.2 *Balancing personal and professional responsibilities*

The elderly teachers confessed that they have troubles waking up early every Saturday to attend classes. They also have to deal with having too little time to prepare for their reports and presentations in the classes making them feel anxious with the constraints. Most of them found it difficult to do research work and comply with the subject requirements. This confirmed the findings of Hénard and Roseveare (2012) that the elderly educators who quest for lifelong learning may experience difficulty in balancing their personal and professional responsibilities, which stems from the demands in their work and the number of research work they have to comply with in their studies. At times this can lead to poor work productivity due to pressures but with enough time management, meeting the requirements can be possible. The challenging work environment and the pressures in the class among the elderly educators have been well-documented. Lucas et al (2012)[60] acknowledged that the demands in terms of paper work among the teachers in the field have become more and more complicated. Teachers may find it difficult to beat the deadlines and this pressure definitely interfere in the work productivity. Similarly, this pressure can affect the teachers' performance in their academic quest as there are also some paper works and researches to do in the class under postgraduate degree programs. Meanwhile, Cruce and Hillman (2012)[24] admitted that there is a big challenge for elderly teachers to balance personal and professional responsibilities, noting that they are not as tough as younger classmates in terms of their energy to handle stress. However, with enough time management skills, there is no amount of requirement that these teachers cannot accomplish. Balancing between the work and studies can mean embracing the beauty of time management and understanding priorities to become successful in both.

#### 4.1.3 *Being infused with young brood and new perspectives*

The elderly educators shared that they have accustomed to engaging with dynamic and younger students and they find it challenging and interesting. Alongside with forming bonds with younger classmates, the elderly educators find it challenging to keep abreast with the skill of the younger classmates. This result was confirmed by Mälkki and Lindblom-Ylänne (2012) that elderly educators may have challenges in keeping abreast with younger classmates. The combination of different age levels in the classroom resulted to a productive learning

environment as the younger students may be able to learn the wisdom of the elderly classmates while the elderly teachers may learn the skills of the younger classmate's particular the skill in manipulating computers and convenient researching skills using the internet.

In the same vein, Karpiak (2013)[48] opined that most elderly educators who enroll in postgraduate education often wonder at the dynamic nature of learning ability of their younger classmates. This may cause a challenge among them but they will find it rewarding to integrate with the younger learners once they started working on work collaboration. Similarly, being with younger generations in the class may mean learning their characteristics and enjoying their presence.

Moreover, elderly educators can enjoy learning in the postgraduate education and dealing with younger classmates once they collaborate. Lucas et al (2012) admitted that younger students have the energy and the much needed enthusiasm to perform academic work and this can be complimented by the wisdom of the elderly educators. The result is an increased network of highly academic group.

#### 4.1.4 *Aspiring for career advancement opportunities*

The elderly educators shared that they want to finish their postgraduate degree because they have seen better opportunities after graduation aside from learning new knowledge. These research findings of Mälkki and Lindblom-Ylänne (2012) conformed that elderly educators are determined to further their education because of the desire to advance their career and getting high chances for future promotions. These two are usually the common aspirations to finish a doctorate degree and other reasons are only secondary. With these there have been numerous elderly educators who have sought to complete a postgraduate degree. In addition, Kukulska-Hulme (2012)[53] avowed that another reason for getting a postgraduate degree among the elderly educators is to enhance their sense of authority. The context of educational setting, students and teachers give a high regard to those teachers who hold a doctorate degree compared to those who finished only master's and baccalaureate. Moreover, a teacher who has a postgraduate degree is oftentimes considered authoritative authority and gains much respect and influence.

Moreover, Bouchamma and Michaud (2014), conform that there is a stiff competition for work promotion and to become the best candidate for promotion, elderly educators advance themselves by earning a postgraduate degree. This is one of the considerations for enrollment among elderly educators that is, to upgrade their educational attainment aside from the desire for professional development.

#### 4.1.5 *Enhancing professional portfolio*

The elderly educators expressed that they enrolled in postgraduate education because they wanted to expand their educational network and at the same time they wanted to become more competent in their work. These clustered statements conform to Bayar (2014); Boud and Hager (2012), that one of the reasons for elderly educators to enroll for doctorate degree is to achieve the goal of updating their knowledge in the field and develop self-esteem. When teachers manifest an updated knowledge, they become more reliable in their teaching and this attracts respect from the students and other teachers which eventually help teachers develop a higher sense of fulfillment and self-esteem.

Similarly, Silva and Herdeiro (2014)[93] affirmed that elderly educators go to school because they wanted to enhance their professional background. The drive to become more competent to further enhance the skills has been one of the ultimate motivations to pursue higher education. The postgraduate degree courses generally offer subjects that advance students to become more knowledgeable in their field.

On the other hand, Lumpe et al (2012) acknowledged that aside from the enhancement of professional development, elderly educators are motivated to earn a postgraduate degree in order to be more be updated and obtain easy access to information and technological advances in the field. The classes in doctorate degree help students become more acquainted with relevant instructional materials and researches that enhance the students' competence. It also provides avenue to write researches that will help develop new perspectives on the field of teaching and learning.

#### 4.1.6 *Rearranging needs and Priorities*

The elderly educators revealed that since they enrolled in postgraduate education, they have been working on to adjust in terms of the demands from their work and their priorities. This conforms to the idea of Banks (2014) that elderly educators are caught between following their dream to finish their degree and giving up due to many considerations. The key to solve the concerns is to rearrange the needs and priorities and find specific measures to provide solutions to the growing concern like not having enough time for family and considerations on financial stability.

On the other hand, Roeser et al (2012)[87] affirmed that there is always means to address the concern among elderly educators in pursuing their postgraduate degree. Being able to provide solution to problems on financial stability and neglected household chores among others can be easy once the goals and the management of resources have been clearly established.

Moreover, Nadelson et al (2013) admitted that it is essential that graduate school students can identify their priorities so that whatever concern that might come along the way can be easily addressed. The financial aspect in getting the degree is always a consideration including the numerous research work but these means nothing when

addressed properly. It only needs to find out how to provide solutions to the concerns and get the attention to focus the goal of finishing the degree.

## 4.2 **Mechanism of Elderly Educators in Facing the Challenges Encountered in Their Quest for Lifelong Learning**

In Table 2 is depicted the essential themes that emerged from data thematic analysis based on the statements of the participants as regards their ways of facing the challenges connected to their quest for lifelong learning.

Facing these challenges means adopting coping strategies. Based on data thematic analysis, four essential themes emerged, namely: balancing and prioritizing, keeping abreast with technology and new sources of knowledge, being optimistic and positive and being determined and resolute.

### 4.2.1 *Balancing and prioritizing*

The elderly educators expressed that they have to balance their workload and do time management often. They experienced being an employee and a student at the same time so they can overcome them. Their replies conformed to Boud and Hager (2012) that is favorable on the part of the elderly educators because they can solve their concerns. With this time management is essential to master in order to accomplish tasks. In addition, Schrum and Levin (2013)[90] affirmed essential that elderly educators have to know which from tasks they have to prioritize. When they can identify what needs to be done first and which needs to be given later attention, there can be enough focus to spend in the completion of the assignments. It also provides guidance to elderly educators once they are able to balance their time for work and in completion of paper works in studies.

Furthermore, in balancing workload and time management can increase work productivity. To master this skill, Hager and Johnsson (2012) affirmed that elderly educators should know which tasks are given priority. The key to balancing and prioritizing is dependent on the ability of the elderly educators to act on the tasks that require enough time to accomplish.

### 4.2.2 *Keeping abreast with technology and new sources of knowledge*

The elderly teachers stressed that they spent more time familiarizing the computer interface and doing research work online. The technology advancement has altered the learning environment and being able to navigate in the world of postgraduate education requires the informants to immerse in the use of technology. The result of this study acknowledged with the statement of Amundsen and Wilson (2012) that elderly educators are forced to keep abreast with new sources of knowledge. This means they have to get acquainted with learning to read more than just a handful of reference materials but also they have to learn to navigate computers. In addition, Patton et al., (2015)[81] admitted that elderly educators may require enough time to develop patience in learning ad familiarizing the interface of the computer and the

internet because this is one of the best ways for them access information. Their skill in surfing the net can lead them to finding best journals and readings they can utilize

in their subjects. Likewise, this skill also will help them prepare in writing their academic paper.

Table 2: Major Themes and Core Ideas on How Elderly Educators Face the Challenges Encountered in their Quest for Lifelong Learning

Major Themes	Core ideas
<b>Balancing and prioritizing</b>	Prioritize my duties as a teacher and graduate studies requirement
	Making thorough preparations on things that should be accomplished
	Striking a balance between work and graduate-student responsibilities
	Complying with the requirements and papers on time
	I had to double my time to be punctual in submitting requirements
	Balancing the workload and time management
	I do my responsibility and activity given by the teacher.
	I really use my time management
<b>Keeping abreast with technology and new sources of knowledge</b>	Trying to be familiar with the use of the internet
	Being adept with the new technology in spite of my age.
	Getting the best computer equipment;
	I keep on reading, reading and reading.
	Had to do so many readings and research
	Spending more time reading, researching, studying
	Reading the newest editions of references; surfing the net
<b>Being optimistic and positive</b>	Doing my best and letting God do the rest for me
	Taking things as part of my learning.
	Living each day expectant of new challenges and hoping for the best
	I accept and embrace it because I have my goal in life despite my age.
	I just take it easy; undertake de-stressing activities
	Having the support (emotionally and psychologically) of family members
	I tried to sustain my enthusiasm to cope up with the thesis writing.
<b>Being determined and resolute</b>	You can't rewind time so make good use of it.
	Don't be discouraged; never give up.
	If there's a will there's a way.
	Be innovative.
	Keep always motivated.
	Nothing is impossible with God.
	For me everything in these lands has a time for everything.
	I grew up as a teacher and I will die as a teacher
	I have to be more patient to study and to cope in my subjects.
	Doing work one task at a time (if possible)

Meanwhile, Petty et al (2012)[84] recognized that elderly educators will be exposed to reading different books and references. They will also be immersed in utilizing various websites as they research on different readings for their subjects. In general, graduate school students will spend most of their time doing research work and with the help of technology, they can easily keep abreast with the younger classmates who are digital natives and adept in exploring the computers.

#### 4.2.3 *Being optimistic and positive*

The elderly teachers stressed that being positive and optimistic despite the hardship they encountered in postgraduate education keeps them focused in achieving their goal to finish the degree. There seems to be

numerous demands and challenges in postgraduate education, however, being optimistic may help sustain the enthusiasm in order to graduate. From the point of view of Petty et al (2012)[84] conformed that possessing the right attitude while studying may help get along with the challenges in the postgraduate education.

On the other hand, Patton et al., (2015)[81] acknowledged that accepting and embracing the challenges can help overcome the difficult situation especially when being bombarded with many paper work deadlines. Being optimistic and positive can help any postgraduate student survive the challenges posed by different subject requirements. Taking the challenges as part of learning



can motivate them to hold their hope and remain true to their goal.

Meanwhile, being optimistic and positive will help postgraduate student withstand the challenges in pursuing a degree in postgraduate education. Amundsen and Wilson (2012) considered the goal of earning the degree can give motivation that will help sustain the interest to learn and complete the requirements set by the program in order to earn the degree.

#### 4.2.4 *Being determined and resolute*

The informants revealed that to keep them encouraged to pursue their education is to feel determined that they can make it regardless how difficult to balance work and studies can become. For Niedwiecki (2012)[77] a good sense of determination will help teachers find the reason to stick to their goals and keep them. Being fully aware of the many challenges and requirements along the way, elderly educators may find comfort in their determination to succeed.

In addition, Linder et al (2012) affirmed that patience and devoting more time in completing subject requirements will also help elderly educators achieve their dreams. The key to complete the degree is through having courage and persistence in doing the requirements. Being determined in faithful to the goal will pave the way to earn the degree.

### 4.3 **Insights that Lifelong Learners can Share to their Families, Peers and Community**

The data thematic analysis derived four essential themes from the categorical statements of learning and insights they can share to their families, peers and community about lifelong learning namely: professional advancement brings promotion opportunities, lifelong learning is personal development, age does not matter in learning and lifelong learning has its rewards. Table 3 depicts these results.

#### 4.3.1 *Professional Advancement Brings Promotion Opportunities*

There are various reasons why elderly educators pursue lifelong learning. Among these conformed to Trede et al (2012) the idea that the professional advancement will bring them promotion opportunities that the elderly educators are focused to complete a degree in postgraduate education simply because of the numerous opportunities it will benefit them when they are able to finish he degree. Among the most common reward for having a graduate degree education is being the best candidate for job promotion.

Furthermore, in the study of Obiakor et al (2012)[78] acknowledged that being able to earn a postgraduate brings professional advancement and improves competence in work. It also boosts esteem and makes elderly teachers become an authority in the field. The

regard that other teachers give to elderly educators who earn a postgraduate degree can help improve their views on work and in dealing with work opportunities.

Meanwhile, Darling-Hammond (2017) recognized that a post graduate degree earned definitely helps enhance professional competence and makes teachers become authority in their field. It also raised educational qualifications and developed esteem and above all, it becomes a better way to achieve economic stability once being promoted in work.

#### 4.3.2 *Lifelong learning is personal development*

The informants stressed that they enrolled in postgraduate degree because they makes them respectable in the field of their expertise when they finish the program aside from it will give them chances of learning many new knowledge essential in work and in school. Generally, many people give high regards to somebody who already earned a postgraduate degree because they manifest wisdom and in their field of expertise as what Mandinach and Gummer (2013) affirmed that the elderly educators pursue a higher learning education simply because they wanted to advance their professional growth. As the learning landscape continues to evolve, teachers must respond to the needs of the learners and acquiring postgraduate education may help them advance academically.

Similarly, Fenty and Anderson (2014) admitted that pursuing studies is a personal quest to make lives better and develop new learning opportunities. By acquiring a higher degree education, elderly educators have more chances to develop their full potential and academically they continue to efficiently provide the best learning experiences to their students. On the other hand, it also allows them to develop new learning insights making them provide meaningful learning experiences to their students.

The results of this study is also ranged with the ideas of Lee et al (2012)[56] which stated that lifelong learning brings intellectual growth which is essential in contributing knowledge to society. This is because higher learning education develops teachers to become experts in their field. The training and the researches undertaken in the graduate studies are sufficient to equip elderly educators with necessary knowledge to contribute to students.

#### 4.3.3 *Age does not matter in learning*

Many elderly educators pursue higher education degree regardless of their age. For them, age has nothing to do with the drive to learn and acquire learning. As the researched of Fenwick et al (2012) many elderly educators pursue doctorate degree courses in order to show to people that age is not a limitation to earn a degree in postgraduate education.

Table 3: Major Themes and Core Ideas on Insights that Lifelong Learners can Share to their Families, Peers and Community

Major Themes	Core ideas
	Invest in graduate degrees to be promoted/get higher compensation

<b>Professional advancement brings promotion opportunities</b>	Pursuing your graduate studies helps boost yourself and career
	Continue with advancement for their own good and for their family as well.
	A graduate degree may be used for promotions and career advancement
	Continue with what you started and later on you will reap what you sow.
	Enhance professional competence; raise educational qualification and improve income.
	Continued learning is a minimum requirement for success in our field.
<b>Lifelong learning is personal development</b>	Continue studying because learning is a continuous process of life
	Information and knowledge on everything is increasing every day.
	Pursuing studies is a personal quest to make our lives better and develop new learnings and insights.
	Never stop learning as it will lead you to a better life and well-being.
	Studying is very important even if one is a teacher.
	Studying offers great opportunity to become expert and respectable in the field.
	There is a need to pursue one's study in graduate or higher learning educations.
	Continue to pursue intellectual growth; contribute knowledge to society.
<b>Age does not matter in learning</b>	Learning is continuous process.
	One is never too old to learn new things.
	Age does not mean maturity, authority, wisdom nor competence.
	Age is not a factor to reckon in terms of growing professionally.
	Learning stops only when one is 6 feet below the ground.
	Age may matter but strong belief in God and in our capacity matter more.
	Move forward with conviction that you can make it to the finish line.
<b>Lifelong learning has its rewards</b>	It is a privilege that a person can have a continuous journey of learning.
	Learning is fun when you give your dedication and willingness to learn.
	Learning difficulties do not predispose anyone to a lower degree of education
	Given appropriate intervention and motivation, people excel and succeed.
	Being diligent in studies can be a way of showing that teachers are good models.
	Nobody could ever take education and learning away from you.
	One can always draw from personal experience and find strength from achievements and successes
	Learning has a lot of challenges but with perseverance, it can be really worth it.

There are many remarkable insights from researchers stating that age is not a limitation to acquire postgraduate degree education. For example, Forsberg and Wermke, 2012; Kereluik, Mishra, Fahnoe and Terry (2013)[49] conformed that elderly educators find it as a privilege to continue learning and be in the class with other younger students. They consider the knowledge they will acquire in the study as an important for career development and professional advancement instead of thinking that postgraduate education is only for younger students who wish to advance academically.

On the other hand, Alfrey, Cale and Webb (2012)[1] stated that elderly educators have full of experiences which they can integrate in their education. These experiences are important in enriching class discussion as it enriches the learning experiences in the subjects. It is in this aspect that age is not an issue in the acquisition of another degree instead it is beneficial to cultivate meaningful classroom discussions.

#### 4.3.4 Lifelong learning has its rewards

The informants expressed that learning can be a fun at any age. To Fenty and Anderson (2014) elderly educators consider the many opportunities that postgraduate education will offer them after earning the degree. It does not only help them establish network of researchers but also it makes them form better individuals as their skills are being cultivated in school.

Similarly, Trede, Macklin and Bridges (2012) stated that postgraduate education provides better lifelong opportunities and opens many possibilities for career growth. The advantages of earning a doctorate degree are limitless and it can pave the way to more professional growth. It can also be avenues for establishing linkages that help develop cultivate academic endeavors.

On the other hand, Seidel and Stürmer (2014) affirmed that the rewards one can get from postgraduate education range from finding academic maturity to developing new perspective in life in terms of strengthening academic endeavor. The desire to provide relevant theory and anchoring judgment based from research-based evidences

in discussing concepts in education are some of the major changes brought by earning a higher degree of learning. Similarly, elderly educators develop sound decision-making skills as they are trained in the class.

#### **4.4 Implications for Practice**

This study provided me new realizations of elderly educators in their quest for lifelong learning. The reasons behind engaging elderly teachers in education among the 20 unretired teachers produced six themes as: dealing with age-specific issues and expectations, balancing and professional responsibilities, being infused with young brood and new perspectives, aspiring for career advancement opportunities, enhancing professional portfolio, and rearranging needs and priorities.

In view of the foregoing reports, the activity and the continuity theories of aging (Connidis & Wilson, 2011[19]; Moody, 2010) are presumed to provide keys to happy and fulfilling aging years. Hence, inspired by this knowledge, teachers may be motivated to continue to actively engage in productive and life-meaningful activities after retirement and may pursue these activities either along same career path or in other pathways. Their motivation may have some bearing with their organizational commitment or career job satisfaction. This has some implication for organization and education managers to plan and prepare educational policies and institute information dissemination of these to their constituents as early as possible in their career employment. Education managers, on the other hand, may encourage their teachers to pursue their education as early as possible as recommended by Collinson (2017)[17].

In another perspective, four themes emerged as how elderly educators face the challenges encountered in their quest for lifelong learning. These are: balancing and prioritizing, keeping abreast with technology and new sources of knowledge, being optimistic and positive, and being determined and resolute. The themes collectively imply that the retired teachers had adjusted harmoniously into the transition from retirement to bridge employment. Explicitly, the themes updating and relearning and seeking family assistance and support implies that the retired teachers manifested the virtue of humility to accept that they needed updating and relearning, and family assistance and support. The rest of the themes further imply that the retired teachers had assimilated socio-psychological learnings over their lifetime (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). The themes have further implication for younger teachers that if ever they will engage in bridge employment, they may need to be maneuvers in their life course in such agentic activities as reaction, creativity, and self-appraisal. This calls also for the adoption of core values developed as they grow older over time (Bandura, 1999)[5].

In addition to these facts, the family and the society are duty bound to provide support for the elderly senior citizens to include retired teachers as stipulated in the Republic Act Number 9994 also known as "Expanded

Senior Citizen Act of 2010 in Philippine context if only to buffer the onslaught of stress and loneliness upon them. Thus, family members may be readily near to help them and provide them with economic, emotional and psychological assistance. Furthermore, academic institutions and education managers may consider the potential untapped resources which older workers and retired teachers represent. At a time when organizations are trying to streamline core workforces and increase the use of contingent teachers, better-trained and readily available retired teachers may provide better alternative than many other staffing options. Furthermore, the rest of the society utilizing the no age discrimination policy of the Philippine government may offer socio-economic support by providing the elderly flexible non-career bridge jobs fit for their physical limitations (Roohafza et al, 2014; Edwards, 1991)[30].

Finally, in another pivoted view, four essential themes on the insights shared by the retired teachers to their colleagues and the society in general, emerged, namely; be financially astute and prudent, internalize that retirement is just a phase in life, long for life's meaning and significance, and celebrate life and move on! The themes comprehensively imply the urgency of the need for the young teachers to prepare for their retirement, even if in their vision, it still looms in the far horizon of their life's landscape. This has implication for young teachers that when they reach the retirement phase in their lives, they may have prepared better than some of their predecessors in the academe. This calls for the young teachers to be prudent, to save and invest for the future, to be content and happy, and to adopt holistically a healthy lifestyle as early as possible to avoid psychological and medical complications in later life (Beehr & Bowling, 2013[8]; Collinson, 2017[17]; Maslow, 1954).

On a similar tone, the insights imparted by the retired teachers may provide impetus to the incoming retirees to radically change their lifestyle: stop accruing debts, start saving for life of retirement, have comprehensive plan for their retirement benefits, pay attention to their health in order to be better prepared than those who retired early.

#### **4.5 Implications for Future Research**

Unlike quantitative research methodology, qualitative researches do not generalize results to the population from which samples are taken (Creswell, 2013)[23]. Although related studies had been done mostly in other countries as previously mentioned, I cannot find such in my net searches in Philippine context. Hence, to fill up the knowledge gaps, future researchers may replicate this study in another setting, using different samples to validate the transferability of the results. Moreover, future researchers may pursue similar studies utilizing other qualitative approaches such as case studies, ethnography, and grounded theory to find out if similar themes emerged. Furthermore, in the deficiency of complete profile of elderly educators in the whole country, it is very hard to find samples large enough to qualify



representativeness for quantitative approach of research. Hence, future researcher may choose profiling of retired teachers which profile is accessible in the internet search. Once such profile is made readily available, future researchers may conduct study on bridge employment of retired teachers utilizing quantitative approach on such topics, for example, as predictors and outcomes of bridge employment.

#### 4.6 Concluding Remarks

What I learned from this study was the discovery of the participants' thoughts, feelings, and deep-seated longing for life-giving activities be it social, economic or domestic. It is notable that despite their age, elderly teachers remain economically productive and generative even in their retireable age. Moreover, elderly teachers manifest resilience in overcoming trials and difficulties in life. Furthermore, with hard-earned learnings of life's realities, elderly teachers generously share from their experiences wisdom, hope and faith to their colleagues in particular and to the society in general.

Finally, as a new teacher myself, I also came to the realization that after my struggle to finish this doctoral degree I would like to go study one more Doctorate Program related with my field of specialization even if it is tough to achieved. There is no hard for trying. No pain is no gained.

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