

Pre-service Immersion of English Major College Student Teachers

Ismael C. Casquejo, Ed. D.

Department of Education, Tanauan City Integrated High School, Tanauan City, Batangas, Philippines
ismael.casquejo01@depd.gov.ph

Abstract: Utilizing education to its full capacity starts with how prospective teachers are prepared for college. The education landscape has changed in recent years. Following this, teacher education should respond to the needs of the time. Curriculum changes should match the existing situation in schools. Adding relevant or removing unnecessary subjects is essential. Among the subjects, one crucial is the pre-teaching course. During this time, education students are called practice teachers. Practice teaching will bring the reality the teaching profession encounters every day. It prepares the education students for the eventualities that they will face when they become fully pledged teachers. On account of these realities, this study tackles the expectations, difficulties, and possible development of the pre-teaching program in Tanauan City National High School together with colleges or institutes that send practice teachers to the said secondary school.

Keywords—College, English Major, Immersion, Pre-service, Student-Teachers

Introduction

Education is a powerful tool by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and participate fully as citizens (UNESCO). Education is indeed a potent instrument; it leads people to opportunities that they can never have unless they are educated. But, to use its full capacity, the agents of education, the teachers, should be ready to transmit knowledge. Such is the importance of teachers in conveying knowledge, that there are laws created to upgrade the status of teachers in society. Republic Act No. 7836, also known as the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994 aims to strengthen the regulation and supervision of the practice of teaching in the Philippines and prescribes a licensure examination for teachers. This professionalization brings teaching prestige and is at par with other professions.

The process of utilizing education to its full capacity starts with how the prospective teachers are prepared in college. The education landscape has changed in recent years. Following this, teacher education should respond to the needs of the time. Curriculum changes should match the existing situation in schools. Adding relevant or removing unnecessary subjects is essential. Among the subjects, one crucial is the pre-teaching course. During this time, education students are called practice teachers. Practice teaching will bring the reality the teaching profession encounters every day. It prepares the education students to the eventualities that they will face when they become fully pledged teachers. On account of these realities, this study tackles the expectations, difficulties, and possible development of the pre-teaching program in Tanauan City National High School together with colleges or institutes that send practice teachers to the said secondary school.

Review of Literature

There are a number of relevant subjects in teacher education but, among others, practice teaching prepares education students for real-life school situations. No amount of theories can replace the actual encounter of future teachers with the students. No amount of ideas can substitute the real-life immersion in an authentic school setting. Simulation teaching is important but it lacks the reality and challenges to hone a future teacher. According to Morehead, Lyman, and Foyle (2009), student teaching is the capstone of a pre-service teacher's professional preparation program. The authentic experience of teaching is irreplaceable. Experiences during this program are very vital in forming a prospective teacher.

This experience is not easy for everyone involved. Not all elements to produce excellent future teachers are present during the practice teaching. Triads of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and college supervisors most often engage productively in the important work of providing an environment for the capstone experience of student teaching (Cuenca, 2012). But, providing a conducive environment is not that simple. Among the triad, not everyone is equipped for the pre-teaching program. It is possible that the student teacher is not yet mature enough to handle the responsibilities of a practice teacher. Another probability is that the college instructors or professors or representatives are not keen on checking the progress or problems of their students during their practicum. To the same extent, Schweinberg (2015) emphasized the critical role of the teacher mentor in practice teaching. She remarked that mentor teachers need to remember that regardless of their past training or lack thereof, it is their guidance, support and respect that will drive their teacher interns to become the best professional educators they can be. It is true that there will be

instances when the cooperating or mentor teacher is not fully equipped to guide a practice teacher. There are plenty of reasons for this to happen. It is possible that during the pre-service training of the mentor teacher, he or she was not fully guided and in return he or she cannot handle the responsibility of being a cooperating teacher. Also, the task of mentoring is never really easy, it needs practice and training and sometimes these trainings are never provided when the teachers are already in the field. But, nevertheless, assistance should still be provided. Even small amount of guidance and mentoring can help a starting student teacher.

Given that the situation may not always be very ideal, attempts to improve the condition must still be done because this is very helpful for practice teachers. Machado and Botnarescue (2010) said that a caring, supportive atmosphere helps each student teacher attain professional educator skills, based on accepted ethics and standards, and helps develop the student teacher's personal style and philosophy. Practice teaching is a crucial part of the student teachers' experience. Their experiences can help form the kind of teachers they are going to be. Letting student teachers have an ideal experience as far as the mentors can provide will mold the teaching style and philosophy of an eventual teacher. It is worth considering that not training full well potential teachers may result to poor delivery of instruction to the learners they will handle in the future.

Consequently, an imperative activity during the practice teaching is conferencing. Henry and Weber (2010) emphasized that teaching analysis based on the idea that observation and feedback will improve the instructional ability of a student teacher. Commending excellent practices in and outside the classroom of practice teachers can reinforce them while charitably admonishing unpleasant actions can curve them in the correct way. Some elements may probably not be provided during practice teaching but nonetheless feedback from mentors should not be left out because it is crucial for the improvement of the practice teacher. Worth underlining is the gracious way of giving feedback. It should be in the spirit of advancement of the intern teacher.

Research Questions

1. What were the expectations of the student teachers before teaching in public national high school?
2. How were the student teachers prepared for the pre-teaching?
3. What were the problems encountered during the pre-teaching course?
4. What programs or interventions may be developed to address the challenges encountered in the pre-teaching course?

Scope and Limitations

This study transpired in Tanauan City National High School and completed in the school year 2016 - 2017. It involved the practice teachers of different subject areas during their practicum. The practice teachers came from different college or institutes in Tanauan City, namely, First Asia Institute of Technology and Humanities, La Consolacion College and National Teachers College.

Mixed methods approach was used. For quantitative method, researcher made questionnaire focusing on instructional and practical challenges were given to respondents. Weighted mean and ranking were used to obtain the pertinent data from the questionnaire. For qualitative method, observation, interviews and focus group discussion were utilized. Data form this method was properly documented for the intent and purposes of this study.

Methodology

No sampling design was used in the conduct of the research because the number of participants is manageable. All the student teachers within the researcher's responsibility took part in the study. Their total number or population was 30.

Quantitative and qualitative data were used in this study. Quantitative data came from researcher made questionnaire. The questionnaire was in two parts namely, instructional and practical challenges. Each part comprised 12 statements which they have to rate from a scale 4 to 1, verbally interpreted as Always, Sometimes, Seldom and Never, respectively. After seeking permission form authorities, respondents were asked to answer the questionnaire.

Likewise, qualitative data were part of the study. These data came from observations, interviews and focus group discussion. Respondents involved in these activities were properly acquainted as to the nature of the research and where the obtained information will be used. Different sets of respondents were utilized for observations, interviews and focus group discussion.

The data collected were organized and categorized using the research questions to be able to identify the themes and patterns of the study. In order to come up with the data analysis, the following methods were used:

1. Weighted Mean and Rank. These quantitative approaches were used to measure the average responses and positional importance of responses.
2. Observations, Interviews and Focus Group Discussion. These qualitative approaches were appropriately utilized, documented, and synthesized to accomplish the purpose of this paper.

Results and Discussion

This part presents the responses to the research problems enumerated in the study.

1. Respondents were asked to participate in the focus group discussion and interview. They were asked what were their expectations coming in a public national high school. One respondent said: “I am expecting that during this practicum my teaching, communication and relational skills will be improved because of my encounter with students, teachers and school authorities.” Another respondent said: “I am expecting challenges in terms of school facilities and the big number of students in the classroom.” The common theme for the expectations of the student teachers were improvement of their capacity as future teachers and the challenges they have to undergo in teaching in public national high school.

2. As to the question, how were the participants prepared for the pre-teaching? One student teacher said: “We have frequent demonstration teaching with our classmates before coming to school where we are going to undergo our practicum”. Another participant replied: “We were given strategies on how to handle students; classroom management was emphasized during our classes.” The reaction of another respondent was: “We were given lectures regarding teaching process and how to prepare visual aids using internet and books.”

3. The student teachers were asked to answer a questionnaire which tackles instructional and practical challenges they face in pre-teaching.

Table 1
Instructional Challenges

	Instructional Challenges	WM	VI	RANK
1	Formulating objectives (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) for learning plan	3.27	S	2
2	Making visual aids and other instructional materials	3.13	S	4
3	Providing incidental teaching when necessary	2.97	S	8.5
4	Giving suitable verbal and non-verbal reinforcements	2.83	S	11
5	Incorporating moral values to lessons when possible	2.53	S	12
6	Involving maximum number of learners in the lesson/activities	2.93	S	10
7	Providing activities to meet the needs of slow, average and fast learners (Individualized instruction)	3.10	S	5
8	Devising effective introduction and motivation	3.17	S	3
9	Sustaining the interest of learners on the subject matter	3.33	S	1
10	Guiding learners’ thoughts to summarize the lesson discussed	2.97	S	8.5
11	Determining suitable activity in assessing students’ learning	3.07	S	6
12	Creating appropriate questions for appraising learners’ understanding	3.00	S	7

- 4.00 – 3.50 *Always (A)*
 3.49 – 2.50 *Sometimes (S)*
 2.49 – 1.50 *Seldom (Sd)*
 1.49 and below *Never (N)*

The respondents were asked to rank the instructional challenges they face. The following is sequenced from highest to lowest: Sustaining the interest of learners on the subject matter (3.33), Formulating objectives (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) for learning plan (3.27), Devising effective introduction and motivation (3.17), Making visual aids and other instructional materials (3.13), Providing activities to meet the needs of slow, average and fast learners (Individualized instruction) (3.10), Determining suitable activity in assessing students’ learning (3.07), Creating appropriate questions for appraising learners’ understanding (3.00), Providing incidental teaching when necessary (2.97), Guiding learners’ thoughts to summarize the lesson discussed (2.97), Involving

maximum number of learners in the lesson/activities (2.93), Giving suitable verbal and non-verbal reinforcements (2.53) and Incorporating moral values to lessons when possible (2.53).

It can be seen that the highest ranked was sustaining the interest of learners on the subject matter. The students nowadays have very short attention span and moreover their attention is very hard to catch. When practice teachers experienced such kind of concern, the cooperating teacher should be able to help out by giving advice. Henry and Weber (2010) remarked the importance of conferencing because this can help the instructional ability of the intern. During the pre-teaching, the closest authority whom the student teacher can get advice from is the mentor.

Table 2
Practical Challenges

	Practical Challenges	WM	VI	RANK
1	Lacking of training/instruction from pre-teaching instructor/school	2.60	S	7.5
2	Making errors in front of the class	2.63	S	6
3	Lacking command of English or Filipino language	2.40	S	12
4	Managing a classroom without assistance from cooperating teacher	2.57	S	9.5
5	Winning the respect and appreciation of learners	2.87	S	3.5
6	Handling disciplinary problem of learners	3.00	S	2
7	Managing the number of learners in a class	3.20	S	1
8	Feeling inadequate in the presence of seasoned teachers	2.50	S	11
9	Establishing commendable relationship with school head, cooperating teacher and other school personnel	2.60	S	7.5
10	Lacking of technological materials and modules for the lesson	2.87	S	3.5
11	Lacking of resources (e. g. financial capacity) for the pre-teaching training	2.70	S	5
12	Handling ancillary work (e.g. running errands, cleaning, proctoring, documenting, etc.)	2.57	S	9.5

Respondents were also asked about the practical challenges they face in the pre-teaching. The items are enumerated from the highest to the lowest. Managing the number of learners in a class (3.20), Handling disciplinary problem of learners (3.00), Winning the respect and appreciation of learners (2.87), Lacking of technological materials and modules for the lesson (2.87), Lacking of resources (e. g. financial capacity) for the pre-teaching training (2.70), Making errors in front of the class (2.63), Lacking of training/instruction from pre-teaching instructor/school (2.60), Establishing commendable relationship with school head, cooperating teacher and other school personnel (2.60), Managing a classroom without assistance from cooperating teacher (2.57), Handling ancillary work (e.g. running errands, cleaning, proctoring, documenting, etc.) (2.57), Feeling inadequate in the presence of seasoned teachers (2.50), and Lacking command of English or Filipino language (2.40).

Public national high schools indeed have greater number of students compared to private schools. The main concern of student teachers in practical challenges was the number of students. Sometimes such situation is given and the adjustments must come from the teachers. Student teachers can learn much from their mentors by giving them recommendations, but, always within acceptable ethics and standard as Machado and Botnarescue (2010) emphasized. Discipline problems are issues as well. The school should have established procedures to deal with these. For practice teachers, they should be initially briefed about school policies as how to respond to this concern when it occurs.

4. Practices or program which may be developed to address the challenges encountered in the pre-teaching program.

Evaluation of the entire pre-service experience as well as the persons involved can help identify the weak points of the pre-teaching undertaking. When weak points are identified, intervention or a program may begin and develop to counter them. The usual trend is that only the final demonstration teaching is evaluated but in reality, to be able to truly improve this endeavor, the entire undertaking of practice teaching should be assessed.

The school does not have a definitive program catering to the needs of student teachers when they hold their practicum. It is important that a binding agreement be established between partner colleges or institutes and secondary schools so as to meet the needs of the practice teachers. In this agreement, a program resulting from the evaluation can be developed to benefit the practice teachers, students and the two institutions which agreed during the practice teaching.

Moreover, training cooperating teachers on how to handle student teachers will greatly benefit the prospective teachers. There should be continuity of input from the college to practice teaching school. This can only happen when the mentor teachers are

equipped and well trained. The probable action is the partner colleges or institutes sponsor this mentoring input so that the cooperating teachers may properly guide their student teachers.

Recommendations

1. Tanauan City National High School has the highest number of students among secondary schools in Tanauan City. This was overwhelming for practice teachers; during the conduct of their practicum, the average number of students per classroom was about 80 persons. The reason for this was the lack of facilities, classrooms to be particular.

One action that can be recommended is shifting classes in the morning and afternoon, two grade levels for the first shift and the other two grade levels during the second shift. Another recommendation is to observe catchment areas. Many of the students of the city high school live far from the vicinity of the school but still choose the school. Observing the catchment area means the students will go to high schools nearest their homes, hence, if done, the number of students in city high schools will be lessened. The appropriate number of students can help practice teachers manage the classroom better. Accordingly, when classroom management is done well, the practice teachers can focus on other skills they have to develop during their practicum. 21st-century teaching is multi-faceted, there should be a shift in paradigm, teachers should not be one-dimensional but multi-skilled so they should be able to answer the demands of the changing education landscape.

2. One consideration for teacher education nowadays is computer literacy. Audio-visual presentations using technology are more appealing to learners than usual visual aids. Colleges or institutes should have correspondence when it comes to technology. Teacher education should include computer literacy in their curriculum so that future teachers can effectively engage with 21st-century learners. Nevertheless, established theories and ideals in education should remain as standard. They may be presented creatively through the current technology available.

3. The research questionnaire revealed that sustaining the interest of learners is one major concern of student teachers. Recent advancement in curriculum advocates active participation from learners and the role of the teachers shifted to facilitator. With the advice of cooperating teachers, the intern should be able to address this concern, guided by what is being prescribed by the advancement in curriculum.

Student discipline is also a major concern for student teachers. Physical punishment is not anymore advocated but there is a more humane approach called positive discipline. There are policies and programs in school which can attend to this concern. Discipline problems should always be dealt with moral and ethical standards.

4. The challenges in practicum may be minimized when there is an established program for practice teaching. It is recommended that the schools, namely the colleges or institutes and the high school make a program that can truly form a potential teacher, so that the education he or she will deliver in the future is really of quality and hence, help marginalized learners to be fully functional and truly contribute in the society.

It is essential as well for college instructors or professors to frequently check on their student teachers. The cooperating teachers are mentors, but the instructors or professors should also be informed of the status of their students. The formation of the future teachers will be incomplete if their instructors do not visit them and just let the duration of the pre-teaching be finished for mere compliance. If the high school learners have discipline issues, some college student teachers have discipline issues as well. The cooperating teachers can never fully address them without the college instructors or professors intervening.

Both secondary schools and colleges or institutes should consider the changes that are happening in the education system whether it is curriculum, technology, teaching strategy, facility and discipline. The landscape of education has immensely changed, shifting of paradigm is necessary to cope up with these alterations. Collaborative response between secondary schools and colleges or institutes is necessary.

References

Cuenca A. (2012). *Supervising Student Teachers: Issues, Perspective and Future Directions*. Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Henry M., and Weber A. (2010). *Supervising Student Teachers: The Professional Way (Seventh Edition)*. United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Machado J. & Botnarescue H. (2010) *Student Teaching: Early Childhood Practicum Guide (Seventh Edition)*. USA: Wadsworth

Cengage Learning.

Morehead M., Lyman L., & Foyle H. (2009). *Working with Student Teachers: Getting and Giving the Best* (Second Edition). USA:

The Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Schweinberg C. (2015). *Learning to Teach: Responsibilities of Student Teachers and Cooperating Teachers*. USA: The Rowman &

Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

International Journal of Science and Engineering. (2015). Retrieved on 24 March 2017 from [http://ephjournal.com/EPH-](http://ephjournal.com/EPH-Pdf/International-Journal-of-Science-and-Engineering/September-2015/International-Journal-of-Science-and-Engineering-6.pdf)

[Pdf/International-Journal-of-Science-and-Engineering/September-2015/International-Journal-of-Science-and-Engineering-6.pdf](http://ephjournal.com/EPH-Pdf/International-Journal-of-Science-and-Engineering/September-2015/International-Journal-of-Science-and-Engineering-6.pdf)

Republic Act No. 7836. Retrieved on 3 August 2017 from <http://www.chanrobles.com/republicactno7836.htm#.WYKDedQrLDc>

Right to Education – UNESCO. (2017). Retrieved on 24 March 2017 from

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/right-to-education/>