Challenges and Adjustments of BEED Students in their Practice Teaching amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: During the COVID-19 outbreak, the education system throughout the world was affected. Consequently, several schools, colleges, and universities were forced to switch to distance learning to manage the spreading of Coronavirus and mitigate its impact. The outbreak brought tremendous impact resulting in rapid changes in education. Students at all levels specifically, the BEED students who are engaging in practice teaching are now experiencing difficulties switching to the new learning classroom modality. It is with this situation when the researchers seek to voice out the cries of the participants and perhaps find the solution. This study aimed at investigating the real context of practice teaching as experienced by the BEED student teachers. This study further attempted to highlight the challenges that the BEED student teachers face while on practice teaching. The participants of the study are five (5) BEED students, randomly selected from among the graduating students enrolled in one of extension campuses of a state university. The study is descriptive qualitative and used phenomenology. Data were gathered through a google form. Interview through messenger was also followed to verify the data collected. Data have shown challenges among the participants, difficulty in delivering the lessons, inability to connect with students due to poor internet connectivity were some of the challenges encountered. Participants found the training to be ineffective and were not able to really practice teaching but on one hand, they have learned to face a challenging adjustment to the situation, to be flexible in strategizing on how to deliver lessons, in which they realize that these were really part and important trainings they need as future teachers.

Keywords—Covid-19, distance learning, practice teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic is first and foremost a health crisis. Many countries have (rightly) decided to close schools, colleges and universities. The crisis crystallizes policymakers' dilemma between closing schools (reducing contact and saving lives) and keeping them open (allowing workers to work and maintaining the economy). Many families around the world feel the severe short-term disruption: home schooling is not only a massive shock to parents' productivity, but also to children's social life and learning. Teaching is moving online, on an untested and unprecedented scale. Student assessments are also moving online, with a lot of trial and error and uncertainty for everyone. Many assessments have simply been canceled. Importantly, these interruptions will not just be a short-term issue, but can also have long-term consequences for the affected cohorts and are likely to increase inequality (Burgess & H. Sievertsen, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected education, and teacher education in particular, in various ways. As a result of the closure of universities and schools, teachers and students had to adapt to remote teaching rapidly. Teacher education is no exception. The need to create learning environment for student teachers doing their teacher education preparation implied decisions, choices and adaptations to meet not only the expectations of students but also the requirements of teacher education as well as the conditions in which both universities and schools had to operate (Flores and Gago 2020).

The rapid, unexpected and 'forced' transition from face-to-face to remote teaching has entailed many challenges and constraints and opportunities that need to be examined. Existing literature points to an 'emergency remote teaching' (Bozkurt and Sharma 2020, i) or 'emergency e-Learning' (Murphy 2020, 492) and to difficulties associated with poor online teaching infrastructure, the inexperience of teachers, the information gap (i.e., limited information and resources to all students) and the complex environment at home (Zhang et al. 2020). In addition, lack of mentoring and support (Judd et al. 2020) and issues related to teachers' competencies in the use of digital instructional formats (Huber and Helm 2020) have also been identified.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread worldwide, affecting almost all countries and territories. Countries around the world cautioned the public to take responsive care. The public care strategies have included hand washing, wearing face masks, physical distancing, and avoiding mass gathering and assemblies. Lockdown and staying home strategies have been put in place as the needed action to flatten the curve and control the transmission of the disease (Sintema, 2020). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic brought tremendous impact resulting in a rapid change in the education system. Consequently, students at all levels specifically, the college level where elementary education students who are now engaging in their practice teaching are currently experiencing difficulties adapting to the new classroom learning set up. The need to prepare student teachers to work in complex settings seems to be more crucial than ever as the world faces the current COVID-19 global pandemic (Flores, 2020).

We can still attest to its greatness during this turbulent time where everyone faces tremendous challenges in life, physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Despite the hardship, we still strive to learn and survive. Despite the outrage of the COVID-19 pandemic, we don't stop progressing. We don't stop learning.

Practice teaching is an opportunity for the BEED students to learn and experience how to deal with the students in the actual classroom as a teacher. It is a requirement for all student teachers to teach, lead, and mingle with the students inside the classroom. According to (Koross, 2016), "Teaching practice is an integral component of teacher training. Teaching practice is organized in education and is mandatory for all students who pursue education courses. Students go out to actual classroom environment for a whole term (approximately 14 weeks)".

Teaching practice is the name of the preparation of student teachers for teaching by practical training. Andabai (2011) posits that it is the practical use of teaching principles, teaching techniques and practical training/practical exercise of different activities of daily school life. This field practicum is regarded as the most crucial part of the teacher preparation experience (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Liu, 2012; Smith & Rayfield, 2017; Varela, Kupczynski, & Mundy 2019). All these definitions indicate that teaching practice is a vital exercise that allows beginning teachers to become socialized into the profession.

Teaching practice has attracted many researchers and most of the findings show that teaching practice has more strengths than weaknesses. Some of the forces that researchers have established are that: It grants student teachers experience in the actual teaching and learning environment (Marais &Meier, 2004; Perry, 2004).Teaching practice enables student teachers to understand the real world of teaching and let them know about problems and difficulties of teaching that they may face in the future. Hence, student teachers understand their students' environment and accept students' diversity. Moreover, teaching practice enables the student teachers transit from the role of students to the role of beginning teachers.

In this time of the pandemic, the BEED practicums faced a new level of challenges in their practice teaching. It's because of a sudden change in the learning environment within the education system, whereas the BEED student teachers are mandated to utilize the new learning modality either Online or Distance learning, Homeschooling, Modular learning, or Blended learning to seize and accomplish the given time for their practice teaching. This learning modality will guide all BEED student teachers in adapting to the change and reconnecting themselves in the new learning environment. It will help the student teachers adjust themselves in a situation where they are not familiar with and can learn new things and new levels of experiences as they get through it. As Merrill (2020) mentioned in his article, reach out to students as often as teachers can, or facilitate peer-to-peer communication, to get through with the work.

However, this will not be easy for BEED student teachers to adapt to change. It will take time to adjust to the new learning system because of COVID-19 restrictions, wherein several schools, colleges, and universities are mandated to close. And to ease the school and its learners, they use other teaching methods and approaches to continue the education. And for those who have already moved to online classes are now using platforms like google hangouts, zoom, google classroom, and google meet, which is a bit difficult to BEED practice teachers while in the field of practice teaching to teach students in front of the computer's screen. This is far from their perspectives towards the teaching profession.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the students' learning development throughout the world has been affected because of the sudden shift in the education system. Consequently, several schools, colleges, and universities worldwide are mandated to close to subside the spreading of the virus and mitigate its impact, which resulted in discontinuing the teaching and learning process in education for more than five months in the year 2020-2021. And, because of fear of losing the education for the students. All sectors in education provide new learning tools such as learning modalities and those technological applications as a learning platform that the teachers and students can use to continue the education. Nonetheless, adjusting and adapting to the new learning environment will not be easy. This will take the time that the teachers and students to fully adjusted.

Nevertheless, BEED students are now facing a new level of challenges while in practice teaching. The researchers now seek to find the solution for this study to aim at investigating the real context of practice teaching as experienced by the BEED student teachers in this time of global crisis and its impact on their teaching profession. This study further attempted to highlight the challenges that the BEED student teachers face while on practice teaching amidst of COVID19 pandemic.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The researchers believe that this study rises from the significance of practice teaching experience in the education programs and its role in teacher preparation. Also, this study is crucial because it examines the educational competencies of student teachers, and its ability to analyze the challenges faced by the BEED student teachers in their practice teaching amidst the pandemic.

Moreover, the results of this study may draw attention to several problems and challenges faced by the BEED student teachers while in the field. Therefore, this study endeavors to share these issues that may help the educational stakeholders minimize these challenges and their impact and facilitate the training process to achieve the goals of practice teaching for prospective student teachers and understand their perspectives towards the teaching profession.

The study endeavors to answer the following questions: a. What are the challenges encountered by the BEED students while engaging practice teaching during pandemic?, b. What adjustments are undertaken by the participants in coping with challenges

encountered?, c. What are the factors affecting the challenges and adjustments of the participants? And, d. What learnings do the participants gained during practice teaching?

METHOD

This section presented the research methodologies and procedures that employed in the conduct of the study. It also included the discussions on the research design, participants, instruments, data analysis and ethical considerations of the study.

Research Design

The research was purely undertaken as a qualitative-descriptive study. Qualitative design aims to "produce detailed and systematic accounts that plausibly and credibly explain events or phenomena", (Ingleton & Seymour 2001), while descriptive method is a "scientific method which involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way" (Shuttleworth, 2008). The study described the gathered data from the BEED students what essentially exists among the current situation and their past phenomenon while in the field.

Participants

The participants of the study are the five (5) BEED students who are engaging in their practice teaching in this time of COVID-19 pandemic. Since the study is descriptive, the researchers gathered only few participants, by random sampling.

Research Instrument

The researchers used a researcher-made questionnaire about the challenges the participants are encountering while engaging to practice teaching. This was validated by three experts in the field. The questionnaire is composed of seven (7) questions administered to select 4th year BEED students. The guide questions were subjective type which the participants are free to give or express their answers/opinions on the issues or concerning the current status of the study.

The researchers prepared informed consents for the participants which was noted and approved by the research adviser.

Data Collection

After the approval of the instrument, the researchers sent the questionnaire through the use of Google forms. They were given enough time to answer all questions. The participants were instructed to answer all questions. A videoconferencing was followed up through messenger to verify responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion that show the responses of participants based on the specific problems of the study.

Table 1. Induction of Codes for SOP 1

ID	Key point coding (participants' answers)	Coding
P1	They easily lose their motivation thus making them a bit slow to pick up things that were discussed.	Distracted
	Communicating through screen is one of the major challenges that I faced during this pandemic	Online communication
	It was hard to properly explain things	Difficulty in discussion
	it was also difficult to connect with the students since we cannot feel each other's presence	Inability to connect with the students

P2	It's exciting and frightening at the same time	Mixed emotions
	Having a poor connection	Poor Internet connectivity
	Thinking of ways on how I can connect with the students, how I can teach a lesson/topic in a way they will/can understand and get/pick-up it easily and instantly.	Inability to connect with the students
P3	The common problem I encountered is the internet connection since not all families can secure or provide a stable internet connection.	Poor Internet connectivity
	You cannot control all of the student's attention since we are not with them.	Inability to connect with the students
	I also cannot assure that learning is actually delivered to them.	Poor learning comprehension
	You cannot avoid the cheating of the students in an online exam.	Difficulty in class management
	A lot of pressure on how will I facilitate P.E class in an online manner.	Difficulty in class management
	It is more difficult to teach elementary rather than in college. But the stress is still there.	Difficulty in class management
P4	It is a big adjustment at the same time it is very difficult to teach as a student teacher for the college student.	Difficulty in discussion
	lack of money to sustain my online class	Financial problem
	poor connection	Poor Internet connectivity
	It is very difficult. Dealing with college student is very challenging especially when I encountered some students that are more knowledgeable than to me so it's so ashamed.	Inability to connect with the students
P5	nakakalungkot siya kasi hindi talaga naming na-experience yung practice teaching na ineexpect namin.	Sadness
	The only challenge na na-encounter ko is that some of our students during our discussion they are not participating.	Inability to connect with the students
	We are having difficulty in engaging them. Sometimes, kahit na tinatawag mo na sila isa-isa is hindi pa din sila sumasagot kapag nagtatanong ka.	Difficulty in classroom management

Table 2. Induction of Codes for SOP 2

ID	Key point coding (participants' answers)	Coding

P1	Instead of just focusing on the reference at hand, I also give simplified explanation and relate it to real life situations, as close as possible, to make things easier for my students	Learning strategy
P2	Teaching in college requires a lot of studying and HOTS, unlike teaching elementary students	Learning strategy
	Watch videos in YouTube on how to teach a certain topic	Video tutorial
P3	We are educators, we have to quickly adopt the transformation of education for the sake of our learners.	Adoptable
	We have to think of another strategies that fit in an online learning.	Learning strategy
	You have to be fully equipped in terms of gadget since it involves demonstration of movements.	Flexibility
P4	Need to be more knowledgeable about the topic or subject that I am teaching.	Mastery of the subject
	Face the challenges, all the things that I can do now is to accept it the new normal	Acceptance
	This is an opportunity for me to experience on how to be a teacher in college.	Experience as opportunity
P5	Mas madali magturo sa mga college students compare sa pagtuturo sa mga elementary students.	Adoptable
	Ang kailangan molang kasing gawin is, i-master yung subject na ituturo mo	Mastery of the subject
	I enjoyed my practice teaching during this pandemic kasi ang daming bangong experience para sa amin which is dahil sa mga experience na yon madamin din akong natutunan.	Experience as opportunity
	In terms of engaging the students to participate in our discussion, nag-iisip kami ng mga motivation games or icebreakers para maging masigla yung discussion namin.	Learning strategies

Table 3. Induction of Codes for SOP 3

ID	Key point coding (participants' answers)	Coding
P1	It already became a huge wall between me and my students by forcing us to execute classes via online.	Distance learning
	if it is already a challenge to gain the trust and familiarity of a single class in face to face, what more in communicating through screen	Challenge in gaining students
	Questions are sometimes being neglected and monitoring every student in class is difficult especially when there is a problem in connection.	Inability to connect with the students
		Undertrained

	It is as if my former efforts are in vain because online classes is a whole new adjustment in face to face class.	
P2	It affect my practice teaching big time because instead of teaching grade schoolers	Undertrained
	To deal with the college students which is for me a very challenging task.	Undertrained
P3	It has a big adjustment for me.	Big adjustment
	Conducting classes online is very hassle.	Distance learning
	the only way to pursue academic during this pandemic time is online learning	Distance learning
P4	It was hard to cope it the situation	Hard to cope
	I did not experience to teach in the field especially as a student teacher in elementary that I was actually need to my chosen profession.	Undertrained
P5	Nakaka-sad kasi hindi namin mapapractice talaga yung profession na kinuha namin and dahil nga online class siya, may limitation pa yung pwede mo matutunan.	Undertrained
	maraming schools ang nagsara and they shifted the face-to-face classes into modular distance learning and online class para sa safety ng mga students.	Distance learning
	Ang mahirap pa don is online class siya, may limitation yung pwedi naming matutunan.	Distance learning

Table 4. Induction of Codes for SOP 4

ID	Key point coding (participants' answers)	Coding
P1	Even if the difficulty arose, I am still having fun teaching and learning at the same time.	Passion
	After all, teachers are the ones who are professional when it comes to adjusting many things for the benefit of their students.	Flexible
P2	I think yes, because I've never experienced to teach elementary students, which is very important if you really want to pursue teaching profession.	Flexible
P3	Though we are facing this pandemic, my passion is still there.	Passion
P4	I was also practicing my teaching profession here in college	Flexible
	It's an opportunity for me to experience to teach in college.	Opportunity
P5	Dahil don, natututo ako at marami akong natututunan.	Learnings

Deduction of Code

This part explains the deduction of concept to show the challenges faced by the BEED students while in the field of practice teaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5. Deduction of Codes for SOP 1

Codes	IDs
Distracted	P1
Online Communication	P1
Difficulty in discussion	P1, P4
Inability to connect with the students	P1, P2, P4, P5
Mixed emotions	P2
Poor Internet connectivity	P2, P3, P4
Poor learning comprehension	P3
Difficulty in class management	P3, P5
Financial problem	P4
Sadness	P5

Table 6. Deduction of Codes for SOP 2

Codes	IDs
Learning strategy	P1, P2, P3, P5
Video tutorial	P2
Adoptability	P3, P5
Flexibility	P3
Mastery of the subject matter	P4, P5
Acceptance	P4
Experience as opportunity	P4, P5

Table 7. Deduction of Codes for SOP 3

Codes	IDs
Distance learning	P1, P3, P5
Challenge in gaining students	P1
Inability to connect with the students	P1
Undertrained	P1, P2, P4, P5
Big adjustments	P3
Hard to cope	P4

Table 8. Deduction of Codes for SOP 4

Codes	IDs
Passion	P1, P3
Flexible	P1, P2, P4
Opportunity	P4
Learnings	P5

Emerging Themes

This presents the narrative analyses and interpretation of the gathered data based from the specific problem of the study.

1. Challenges encountered by the BEED students while in the field of practice teaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.
From the sharing of the participants, the following were drawn to enrich the foregoing discussions and to mention:

Difficulty in discussion. The participants exposed that they encountered a lot of difficulties while engaging in practice teaching in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was noted from these responses:

"It was hard to properly explain things." (P1)

"You cannot avoid the cheating of the students in an online exam." (P3)

"It is a big adjustment at the same time it is very difficult to teach as a student teacher for the college student." (P4)

"We are having difficulty in engaging them. Sometimes, kahit na tinatawag mo na sila isa-isa is hindi pa din sila sumasagot kapag nagtatanong ka." (P5)

Poor Internet connectivity. The participants believe that one of the major challenges they encountered in their practice teaching during pandemic is poor internet connectivity. This was noted from these responses:

"Having a poor connection." (P2)

"The common problem I encountered is the internet connection since not all families can secure or provide a stable internet connection." (P3)

"Poor connection." (P4)

Inability to connect with the students. The participants also admit that being not able to connect with the students is challenging for them. This was drawn from these lines:

"It was also difficult to connect with the students since we cannot feel each other's presence." (P1)

"Thinking of ways on how I can connect with the students, how I can teach a lesson/topic in a way they will/can understand and get/pick-up it easily and instantly." (P2)

"You cannot control all of the student's attention since we're not with them." (P3)

"The only challenge na na-encounter ko is that some of our students during our discussion they are not participating." (P5)

Sad Experiences. The participants shared that they have a lot of experiences involving mixed emotions, easily distracted and the feeling of sadness while engaging practice teaching during COVID-19 pandemic. This was noted from these responses:

"It's exciting and frightening at the same time." (P2)

"nakakalungkot siya kasi hindi talaga naming na-experience yung practice teaching na ineexpect namin." (P5)

2. The adjustments of the participants during practice teaching in order to cope.

To add to the preceding dialogues and to mention, the following were gathered from the participants' responses:

Learning strategy. The participants exposed that teaching college is more difficult compared to teaching elementary students, but learned to strategize like maximizing the use of internet, using video tutorials to aid instruction. This was derived from the following responses:

"Watch videos in YouTube on how to teach a certain topic."(P2)

"Instead of just focusing on the reference at hand, I also give simplified explanation and relate it to real life situations, as close as possible, to make things easier for my students". (P4)

"In terms of engaging the students to participate in our discussion, nag-iisip kami ng mga motivation games or icebreakers para maging masigla yung discussion namin.". (P5)

Flexibility. The participants exposed that they have to be flexible, able to adopt to the current situation and accept it as a consequence of an emerged education crisis. Most importantly, participants must exhibit mastery on their subject. To mention:

"We are educators, we have to quickly adopt the transformation of education for the sake of our learners. (P3)

"Face the challenges, all the things that I can do now is to accept it the new normal." (P4)

"Mas madali magturo sa mga college students compare sa pagtuturo sa mga elementary students." (P5)

3. Effects of the pandemic to practice teaching

Based on the sharing of the participants, the following were drawn to enrich the foregoing discussions and to mention:

Undertrained. The participants shared that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their practice teaching as regards training per se. This was noted from these responses:

"Nakaka-sad kasi hindi namin mapapractice talaga yung profession na kinuha namin and dahil nga online class siya, may limitation pa yung pwede mo matutunan."(P5)

"I did not experience to teach in the field especially as a student teacher in elementary that I was actually need to my chosen profession." (P4)

"It affect my practice teaching big time because instead of teaching grade schoolers."(P2)

Distance learning. The participants believed shifted from face-to-face into distance learning affects their practice teaching. This was derived from the following responses:

"It already became a huge wall between me and my students by forcing us to execute classes via online." (P1)

"The only way to pursue academic during this pandemic time is online learning." (P3)

"Maraming schools ang nagsara and they shifted the face-to-face classes into modular distance learning and online class para sa safety ng mga students." (P5)

Difficulties. The participants exposed that they encountered difficulties and adjusted much in their practice teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. To mention:

"It is quite difficult but at the same time it is worth it." (P3)

"It was hard to cope it the situation." (P4)

"if it is already a challenge to gain the trust and familiarity of a single class in face to face, what more in communicating through screen." (P1)

"To deal with the college students which is for me a very challenging task." (P2)

"Conducting classes online is very hassle." (P3)

4. Learnings gained during practice teaching

The following were collected as learnings gained by the participants:

Opportunity. The participants were grateful from the experiences, as this was seen as an opportunity to learn other dimensions of learning through a different level of learners. The experiences widened the scope of training, from dealing with supposed to be elementary pupils to college students. This was derived from these responses:

"It's an opportunity for me to experience to teach in college." (P4)

"I think yes, because I've never experienced to teach elementary students, which is very important if you really want to pursue teaching profession." (P2)

Flexibility. Based on the data gathered, the participants have improved their flexibility and this was proven from these responses:

"*After all, teachers are the ones who are professional when it comes to adjusting many things for the benefit of their students*."(P1)

"*I think yes, because I've never experienced to teach elementary students, which is very important if you really want to pursue teaching profession.*" (P2)

Passion for teaching. The participants exposed that even though they have encountered a lot of challenges during their practice teaching still, it did not affect their teaching profession because they have a passion for teaching. This was derived from the following responses:

"Even if the difficulty arose, I am still having fun teaching and learning at the same time." (P1)

"Though we are facing this pandemic, my passion is still there." (P3)

Conclusions and Recommendation

This part of the research presents the summary of findings based on the stated problems of the study.

The challenges encountered by the BEED student teachers in their practice teaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the difficulties encountered by the participants were poor internet connectivity, making it difficult to discuss lessons, inability to connect with the students, and experiences of mixed emotions. To deal with difficulties, the participants learned to strategize by maximizing the use of internet and revisiting how to become professional by showing flexibility as a teacher, be more adoptive, and show expertise by executing mastery of the lesson.

For a very obvious reason, the pandemic has brought effect to On the Job training of graduating students. The participants regarded practice teaching as under training, due to teaching a different level of students. Though the participants encountered difficulties in the online set-up, still they sounded positive. They explored the beauty of the teaching, that teaching knows no boundaries. This was seen as an opportunity rather than the opposite of it. It was teaching out of the box, the participants went to maximizing their potential to teach. This was an additional learning for them. They have enhanced their flexibility and other positive attributes of becoming a teacher. Dhawan (2020) cited that the COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to pave the way for introducing digital learning.

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that during pandemic as considered the agent of so much effect on everything, having student teachers' challenges, encountered different difficulties, one of which is internet connection problem, not only for teachers but for learners as well, is to be given attention. Though other factors are linked to such problem; financial problem, technical problems, among others but still this must be resolved by the concerned institutions. Resolving the issue means resolving the effects as well; inability to connect to students, gaining students' attention, connectivity issues, etc. Learning to strategize also helps a lot if resolution delays. Above all these, it's the attitude of a teacher that matters, the professionalism plays a big role in strategizing. Whatever challenges, they must not affect us as teachers. Passion is worthy.

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