

EXPLORING THE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS EXPERIENCES IN PRACTICE TEACHING DURING PANDEMIC

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54476/ioer-imrj/447295>

ABSTRACT

The education system has shifted from face-to-face to online modality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift in the educational paradigm also affected pre-service teachers in the delivery of their practice teaching. This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of pre-service teachers in their practice teaching. Data were gathered from four student teachers during the focus group discussion using open-ended semi-structured questions. The gathered data were transcribed and analyzed using the active analysis. Three themes were developed in the study – (1) Problems encountered by student teachers during practice teaching, (2) Actions taken to solve problems encountered, and (3) Reflections based on their practice teaching experiences. It is noted that the guidance of their respective cooperating teachers is necessary to bridge the gap between the expectations of the practice teachers and practice teaching as preparation for a real-world teaching career. Moreover, it necessitates support from the administration to amplify the results of pre-service students' experiences. It is recommended the conduct exit assessments among the pre-service teachers on their experiences to further enhance programs to create more meaningful practice teaching experiences among the future pre-service teachers.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Practice Teaching, Pre-service Teachers, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

One of the key elements in graduating with a degree in education is the practice of teaching. In practice teaching, a glimpse of the teaching profession in the real world is experienced by the pre-service teachers. This helps the pre-service teachers to ascertain the application of theories they have learned in their classes to the real-world teaching scenario.

The centrality of the education system lies on the shoulders of professional teachers as they are considered to be the catalysts of change (Cebeci, Nur & Sil, 2018). And the success of being a professional teacher in the future can be traced back to their experiences during their pre-service experiences (Ögeyik, 2016). Thus, there is a need for constant support from both the assigned mentor and administration for their experiences, both positive and negative, to become a fruitful

experience. Aglazor (2017) explained the teaching practice triad which consists of the following elements – (1) Aspiring Teacher, (2) Cooperating teacher, and (3) University Supervisor.

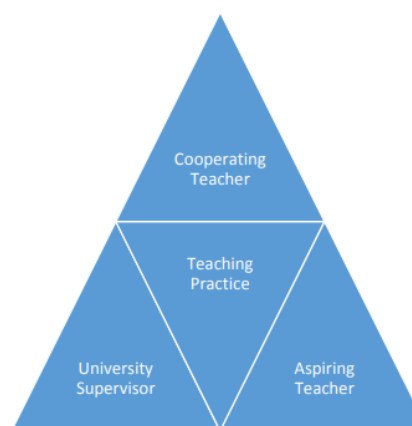


Figure 1. Teaching Practice Triad (Aglazor, 2017)

Aglazor (2017) also refers Teaching Practice Triad as the Student Teaching Triad as the meaningful experience of the teaching practice depends on the three key actors of the practice teaching itself. The success of the practice teaching of pre-service teachers is anchored in a clear understanding of the expectations of the administrators and their mentors. The clarity of these expectations will be the bridge to supporting and guiding the student teachers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the education system in the Philippines as education has shifted from face-to-face discussion to online learning (Cho, Kataoka & Piza, 2021). This shift in teaching modality has also affected the execution of practice teaching as it is also delivered depending on the modality preferred by the institution where the pre-service teachers are conducting their practice teaching. Moreover, it is imperative to determine the educational background of the professors in the institute as institutions offering education with more doctorate-holder professors tend to become better institutions as it correlates to more knowledge and expertise to be shared among their pre-service teachers (Mahinay, 2013).

In this study, the lived experiences of practice teaching in online modality through the lens of the pre-service teachers were determined. The focus of this study is on the problems they encountered, their coping mechanism to these problems, and their reflections.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to 1) determine the problems encountered during practice teaching; 2) evaluate the proposed action

METHODOLOGY

To determine the lived experiences of pre-service teachers in their practice teaching, this study adopted a phenomenological research design of qualitative research. Phenomenology determines different realities in the experiences of the students depending on the originator of these experiences (Robinson, 2012). Participants of this study are four pre-service teachers who were

chosen using purposive sampling (Palinkas, et al, 2013). The chosen participants are those who intend to be in the education sector after their graduation. The data gathering was carried out utilizing focus group discussion it involves collecting people with similar experiences to discuss common topics of interest, as in this case experiences of pre-service teachers, with a strategy that the source of data has the freedom to express their opinions, ideas, and experiences (Focus Group Discussion, 2016).

Researcher-made unstructured interview questions were used in this study. The questions included are (1) How were your experiences during your practice teaching?, (2) What are the problems you encountered during practice teaching and how did you manage these problems?, and (3) How would you utilize these experiences for your future career as an educator in the future? Further questions were asked to the participants, depending on their answers, to facilitate data collection. The collected data were analyzed using active analysis which aims to analyze data concurrent with the data collection (Yin, 2009). Consent before data collection was secured before the focus group discussion. Names of the participants and those they were cited were intentionally altered for data privacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following the interview with the student practitioners, who responded to all of the inquiries about the students' classrooms, seven responses were further discussed in light of their professional experiences. Actions taken and reflection were also noted.

1. Problems Encountered during practice teaching

A class observation allows students to observe various teaching approaches in action and get experience in a classroom setting as part of the preparation for the practicum. Students who participate in field studies have the opportunity to have first-hand experiences that develop their critical thinking, long-term memory, transferability,

positive attitudes toward science, love of nature, and enthusiasm for the topic.

We were ready to do the lesson plan and record of activities but we are not ready for the different strategies of teaching, on how to approach and adjust our teaching styles with different personalities of our students.”

“I am willing to meet with my students virtually but not in person. We worry about how to handle their mannerisms during class discussions and their learning style.”

“To be fully honest, it's 50/50 because, when watching, we focus on the educational material and do not take into account how to handle the behavior of the students.”

“Out of ten, I can only say I got seven In order to effectively teach the students, I need to see how they behave.”

Due to their incomplete exposure to the classroom environment, it was apparent that the student teachers lacked experience managing the students. Some students misbehave differently, especially when the teacher uses a different teaching method. If the camera is off, teachers are not able to track what the student does, if he/she is still listening or sleeping. Based on the students' performances and the teachers' observations, it is evident that blended learning does not apply to this situation, especially for the student teachers' practice and learning.

1.1. Subject and Critic Teacher

The best resources for the students to learn from and use in their teaching practicum were

provided by two of the resource instructors that were identified. The learning of the practitioner education students lies on the guidance of the resource teachers.

The techniques being employed, the values being implanted, the process of the students' learning process itself, and especially the values being instilled, direction from the resource teacher.

It is advantageous for students to learn a variety of skills and knowledge, particularly if a new teacher will be tasked with teaching a subject she is unfamiliar with. The subjects covered were chosen so that students would learn and have a variety of knowledge outside of their field of specialization. A teacher needs to be adaptable and capable of teaching any level and subject.

“I didn't have a chance to practice my major because there were few sections for the civil tech teachers to handle. I had a lot of challenges in teaching agriculture and fishery since it was not my forte. I only had a basic knowledge of the subject when I was a student, so I needed to revisit my notes and study hard about its topics. With regards to my critical teacher I choose Ma'am B since she was my former teacher and the subject she's currently teaching is aligned with civil technology I most especially the study of the topic. We have soil investigation, where we able to study about the different types of soil, pH level and its composition, so somehow it's related to the subject of agriculture, especially farming.”

“I need to study the subject because its new to me, as well as the topics included. I have limited knowledge about it and I don't know the procedure for planting, So it's a big challenge for me to read a lot of books, to draw an activity that fits to students needs and interest.”



“As FSM (Food and Service Management) students, it is much simpler for us to handle the subject of Purposive Communication because we only concentrate on the students' knowledge. It is also simpler for us to teach them and use various teaching methods in contrast to the food industry, which is expensive and some students find it difficult to afford due to the high cost of the ingredients. Also, because of the food preparation, the student teacher must concentrate on the many strategies and produce instructional materials that are not just plain PPT. Additionally, it covers time management for laboratory work.”

“We don't need to buy expensive ingredients or allot a lot of time for preparation and demonstration; all we need to do is thoroughly research the topic and concentrate on the activity that will increase students' knowledge of purpose.”

“Since Ma'am L is the most attentive instructor I've ever had in MPC, concerning the submission of the work and giving care to the student's situation, I don't have any trouble talking with her as my critic teacher. Although I didn't personally select Purposive as the subject to teach, I seized the chance to learn more about it and put all the knowledge I had acquired as a student into practice.”

“I take the challenge to teach the subject out of my comfort zone because I believe it is an opportunity to learn and enhance my teaching skills as a future teacher.”

1.2. Students

The link between higher sadness and a tiresome virtual (online) learning environment, stress, exam anxiety, and decreased productivity is

based on the collective thoughts of the student practitioner. Additionally, most of the students' have problems in is poor internet connection. Some do not have access to Google Classroom, and some of which cannot download materials because o they lack tools as a good service provider.

Moreover, learning a second or foreign language might be hampered by the culture of the learners. Cultural misconceptions and confusion can result from cultural differences. For example, learners may find it difficult to communicate in a second language. They are aware of the solution but are hesitant to express it. Some people struggled to find the right phrases to employ. Some are bashful because they fear being laughed at, especially given the amount of technology. To get greater results from this, teachers must demonstrate that their students can communicate. Age is also one of the factors. If the student is much older than the teacher there might be instances of intimidation, but that can be handled if the teacher would perform accordingly and professionally.

“It was a challenge for me to establish a routine and gain respect from the students because they see me as a student too, I had a hard time during discussion because I call their attention from time to time particularly the students at the back.”

“I got intimidated by my students' age because most of them are the same age as mine. Also, the number students in the classroom is beyond our expectations because we are exposed on the two sets set up during online classes. It's a challenge to deliver the lesson effectively because our classroom management is always on test/ at risk.”

“Since we are in online class and use my Facebook account to communicate with the



students I had encountered personal messages at night asking how I checked their quizzes and activities because they got a low score.”

“There are some discussions on Google Meet in the students are not actively participating. I don’t know if they’re paying attention or they are sleeping or doing something. It’s always a challenge for me to deliver lessons well since I can’t see my students online.”

“You did not get a 100% response on a student when you posted something on Facebook or Google Classroom.”

“Communication using English language. There are some instances that during discussion the students always use their mother tongue (Tagalog) in answering the question.”

1.3. Technologies

The most crucial component of this synchronous and asynchronous learning is access to excellent service providers. Students are currently having issues due to a scarcity of devices including laptops, desktop computers, and cell phones that are used in online classes. It is a challenge since a learner must keep up with trends and technological advancements. That some kids cannot afford this trend is quite sad.

Learning inspires students when they have all the resources, in this new normal, not every student can provide for themselves a simple gadget for their studies. That is one main problem that the students are experiencing. Even if they have a cell phone or a tablet, another problem is the internet connection which is expensive and mostly cannot be afforded by a common family, sometimes the on and off power supply in some areas. If this problem occurs, how can the student proceed?

Learning inspires when students are inquisitive and interested, but still, there are barriers to learning because of the needs of the students that are beyond our control. Resources are the main condition to engage students in learning.

“It’s a challenge for me to have a smooth flow of discussion face to face because I was not able to fully view my PowerPoint since I need to face with my students. So I need to prepare for my spill/ my point every slide without just reading the text on a PowerPoint presentation.”

“Limited instructional materials like projector and laptop, we need to make a reservation in advance so we can use the equipment.”

“Internet connection and lack of device (laptop).”

1.4. Retrieving of Outputs

There are technical issues, because of the internet connection, most of a family of five with a provincial rate wage earner, cannot afford to install a line or connection for their sons’ and daughters’ studies but some prefer to use data which is cheaper, a promo that gives you a specific amount of data and set a validity period.

Usually, students only have the cheapest data just to accommodate the day’s discussion and so with the submission of the outputs. The problem would be the next day of loading another amount of data, which teachers cannot handle. One of these reasons is why there is a delay in the submission of outputs and not being able to show up during the Gmeet, Zoom, or even webinar.

Computer literacy, everyone is still in the process of learning with these different applications and tools of technology for easy access. Time management is also important because some of the students are working so they need to comply with their schedule and work as well which sometimes leads to incomplete activities.



“Students have been psychologically impacted by school closings, a lack of necessary equipment for class participation, being unable to access internet resources from home, and being unable to leave their homes for an extended period.”

“...most the students turned in their output late because of internet connection.”

“...students who did not take the quiz and examination due to time constraints”

“Multiple submission of output with the same answer.”

1.5. Pedagogies

Modules for advanced reading were provided throughout the online sessions so that students could quickly grasp or adjust to the subject under discussion. Even when online lessons are taking place, students can still share their ideas and views. It just needs to be done in a way that piques their attention and gives them the same sense of participation as in-person sessions.

Adaptability to the new norms, learning is a process, and even teachers are learning with the newest technology in these new normals lastly lack of self-motivation, possibly experiencing of difficulty in their situation for some reason. We can help them by showing a positive disposition, and enthusiasm, being patient, uplifting their interest, give them understanding especially in these difficult times.

I know the different strategies in teaching but I have a hard time during implementation because it varies from one student to the other.”

“I know that the discussion must be student-centered but there are some instances that it will become teacher-centered especially if the students do not

fully understand or have some clarification about the lesson.”

“Transition of online classes to face-to-face classes. We have limited time during online classes because we think about the students’ internet status some of them are using only data. So maximizing the time is not possible”

“Grouping of students online based on their learning style. I neglect to use the differential instructions during online classes.”

1.6. Facilities

The need for kids to have environments that support learning is one of the key concerns of both students and teachers. The institution is responsible for meeting the students' demands as part of school development. A well-organized and ventilated classroom also helps pupils be motivated and diligent in their studies.

“The classroom was not well ventilated around 1-2 electric fans every classroom.”

“The lights are not enough in a classroom.”

“desk for the teacher and there some broken chairs for the students”

2. Action Taken/Solutions

Based on the shared practices, the student practitioner took notes from their instructors and lecturers which was a great help to the start of their practice teaching. One of the most important factors in getting students to stand or respond is for the teachers to give them the impression that they are learning and not to scare them if they provide a false answer.

Making students believe that everyone deserves recognition is an effective tactic for grabbing their attention while they are reciting. If the students who called were unable to respond to the instructor's question, the teacher might rephrase it or provide a clue so that they would not rather sit down without responding. Remember that the teacher's goal is to get students to learn and respond rather than to sit still for the entire lesson without participating or doing anything. If the student is unable to understand the clue, you should usually give them a brief response.

In these situations, students' self-confidence will increase if they can respond to questions or take part in class discussions. As a result, students won't be afraid of the teacher during recitation, which will make them eager and thrilled for every discussion.

“Moving around during the conversation and occasionally calling their names to respond to the question. To avoid being intimidated, I made sure to present myself properly and speak authoritatively in front of the students.”

“I need to establish limits for the students regarding our official hours while discussing their grades.”

“I made certain that my pupils eagerly anticipated the games and prizes during the conversation.”

“Every time a student comes to my class, I have to constantly remind myself that my purpose is to teach them and help them learn. That's why I kept saying things like "very good" to them throughout the conversation. Nice job, or that's exactly the solution, causing them to raise their hands and answer.”

3. Reflection

It was observed that student practitioners exhibit admiration for being a teacher, which is why they intend to carry on with the task at hand. One of the explanations could be the satisfaction they get from the teaching-learning process. They gradually gain confidence as they master the tactics, lessons, and duties of a teacher.

Also, they mentioned how they felt valued when they completed the task that was given to them. The practitioners felt a sense of respect from the students, which increased their confidence in their ability to teach.

If someone has a difficult time and decides to abandon the topic out of dismay or discouragement due to a lack of resources and needs, teachers should never forget to impart excellent values and remind them to continue with their studies.

Our concern and empathy for the students is evident to them. Simple guidance will inspire them and open their brains. It will increase both their interest in coming to our class and in the subject they are studying.

“Since I was a child I have been exposed to the life of a teacher because my father is one of them. I saw that my father was very dedicated to doing his job and happy at the same time. During my high school days, I volunteered to serve as a student teacher during teacher day to teach students on the lower section. Now I can say that I am happy to be called teacher or ma'am. I felt appreciated as my students learned from me, happy at the same time because I knew that I had done the task that was assigned to me”

“I had no idea that I would end up becoming a teacher before I enrolled in this program. From my first through third years of college, it didn't click that I loved what I

was doing or that I might want to pursue a career as a teacher. The struggles and difficulties I am currently dealing with will allow me to be prepared and future-ready after I graduate.”

“I appreciated what I was doing at the moment since I had to work hard to master the topic or course. Particularly when my students were actively participating in class, I felt respected. After graduation, though, I still do not see myself as a teacher; I would like to pursue other interests first.”

“At first I wanted to take the BIT course but during the assessment, they told me that my grade is accepted on the BTVTED course so I go with the flow. Now that I am in this final stage before graduation. I am blessed that I landed on this course because I love what I am doing. It's very rewarding and fulfilling. I will take the LET exam after graduation and I will apply on the private schools first to gain more knowledge and experience before I settle in a public school.”

The student practitioners must experience an actual classroom environment during their observation and practice teaching. They should have been given the chance to be present in a face-to-face class so that they could see what happened within the classroom.

A student practitioner may be able to experience the real scenario. For example, the conversation itself and how the students collaborate with the lessons being provided. It is much better if they can listen to the exchange of insights during a discussion or while asking the students about a topic. Student practitioners may be able to study what are those teaching strategies being used in different topics. They may be able to see and experience the diverse attitudes of the students to better comprehend and manage the class.

The student teachers' learning experiences will always be based on what they have taught and experienced. If the resource teacher provided all of

the essential materials and was well-taught, the student practitioner would be molded into an excellent instructor.

Education is vital everywhere for preparing practice teachers to be able to have successful, satisfying experiences in the field of observation and practice teaching. This includes giving them meaningful educational experiences from their mentors to develop their passions, problem-solving talents, and higher-level thinking skills, such as critical thinking and creativity, in today's society. Teachers, students, schools, and entire communities are all involved in this learning. When it comes to managing classes, student practitioners should accept the level that has been assigned to them. They should be prepared and knowledgeable about the options available since modules have been provided. They should master the topic before presenting it to the students. It is quite difficult if the student teachers will be given a subject that is not their major, however, educators should be prepared and willing to accept and be challenged about the subject or level that was offered.

Assuming that you were already accepted for the teaching position that you applied for, the newly hired teacher cannot request right away the topics that he/she wanted or the grade level that he/she would be handling, especially if a teacher is a fresh graduate. In these scenarios, student teachers should be given ample time to study and prepare for the subjects that were assigned to them so that they will be familiar with the subject given.

Two of those who were interviewed said that they accepted and enjoyed the subject assigned to them because they learned varieties of teaching methods in the food industry which was quite expensive when it comes to the preparation of food as their activity. They don't need to spend money to buy ingredients, all they have to do is research the topic carefully, master the subject that should be taught, and use a strategy that fits the subject.

It was extremely difficult if you were still a student practitioner in front of the pupils. They will only see the student teacher in front of them as a student and may question their credibility. However, if you demonstrate that you are serious about the job that you are doing, you may be able



to gain their attention. The student teacher should establish that confidence in such a way that she/he is respected and students listen to what he/she says. The ship's captain is a teacher, and a manager of the classroom so that he or she can demonstrate authority whether the student is older or younger than she is.

Since blended learning is in use, and Facebook and Messenger are the most convenient ways to communicate with students, student teachers should establish standards for when and what messages should be sent. Private conversations should not be entertained because there are numerous things to consider and check.

One of the issues is that there were problems with the internet connection, and some of the students did not have enough money to purchase data. Is it advisable that they provide a paper copy for individuals who do not have access? That is why blended learning was established, we have synchronous and asynchronous learning modes.

It is always an issue if the camera is turned off since teachers do not know if the students are still awake or listening to the conversation. It is recommended that the camera be turned on if online classes are being used.

If the students are having difficulty answering in a second language, I believe it is best to let them speak in Filipino so that they may communicate their ideas. Remember that our goal is to elicit responses from our students.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that giving diverse teaching experiences to student practitioners may prepare them for their future careers as educators. And these experiences must be well guided by the key actors in the development of these experiences to positive class attitudes. Coordinators of student practitioners, with support from the school administrators, play a vital role in nurturing future educators.

RECOMMENDATION

The triage of teaching practice is the backbone of the success of converting the experiences of student practitioners into meaningful experiences that they may use in the future as educators in real-world scenarios. It is recommended the formulation of policies based on the current needs of the coordinators and student practitioners. Moreover, the conduct of a quantitative study is also recommended to further support the claims of this study.

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