
Pre Service Teachers: Experiences in Teaching Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

Teacher training institutions have a mission of high responsibility to train competitive educators for change and future schools. The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of JHS. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What are the lived experiences of JHS pre-service teacher during internships? (2) How do the lived experiences of the JHS pre-service teacher contribute to the quality and depth of internship experiences?

This study utilizes qualitative research design. This focuses on the lived experiences of the 8 pre-service teachers who are teaching at the JHS Secondary Laboratory School that were given the opportunity to have experiential learning during their 9 weeks in-campus immersion.

The pre service teachers emphasized that they experienced a lot of things. The experiences are not entirely positive, as some challenges and limitations. However, they also felt satisfaction and recognized that experience is the best teacher. Research should be constantly done to investigate the experiences of pre-service teachers' during the internship to analyze the reasons and factors behind the development needed in order to know the specific area that these pre-service teachers' needs to be cultivated. Appropriate training would be created to address these problems and could be a solution for the underwhelming performance of the graduates in the licensure examination for professional teachers.

KEYWORDS: *pre-service teachers, preparedness, junior high school, teaching, experiences, education*

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Teacher training institutions have a mission of high responsibility to train competitive educators for change and future schools. The most complex goal in the field of education is preparing pre service teachers to teach the Junior High School (JHS) students. In order to adequately prepare our pre service teachers for the challenges of diverse classrooms, teacher education programs have to develop a mission to address education equity for all students. Then, teacher education programs must prepare pre service teachers with the appropriate skills and knowledge to ensure equitable academic opportunities and personal growth for all students.

Research indicates that teacher preparation of teaching and learning, subject matter knowledge, experience, and the combined set of qualifications measured by teacher licensure are all leading factors in teacher effectiveness. There are some skills that pre-service teachers

should develop during their undergraduate teacher education programs to be able to be effective teachers in their future careers. Teacher training institutions in the Philippines offering Bachelor of Secondary Education must aim to produce globally competitive graduates ready for the challenge in becoming the next breed of excellent secondary educators in the field.

The national government of the Philippines through the Department of Education (DepEd) had successfully implemented Republic Act 10533 otherwise known as the ‘Enhanced Basic Education Curriculum of 2013’ or simply called as the K-12 Curriculum Act. This remarkable change in the educational system of the country was in compliance with the 12 years basic education curriculum around the world. In effect, graduates of the Philippines educational system would be comparable to the graduates of the other countries of the world and would mean greater chances of employment in the globally competitive world. The ASEAN integration in the year 2015 and beyond would mean member countries of the ASEAN can actually apply for work in the Philippines and vice versa and therefore Filipino graduates should be equipped with the necessary skills and the DepEd K-12 curriculum hoped to fill the gap which the previous 10 years basic educational system of the country did not fully provide to its graduates.

This underwhelming performance of the Filipino students in the international test comparisons motivated teachers to continually find effective teaching methodologies and conduct researches on how to develop deeper thinking and problem-solving skills of students. Teachers play an important role in the development of students’ proficiency and therefore teacher training institutions of the country need to produce well-trained graduates who were excellent in both content and pedagogy. These skills can be developed along with their experience in the actual classroom practice but as much as possible, these pre-service teachers were already school-ready when they will be emerged in the workplace.

Preparing teachers for regular class teaching has undergone a major pedagogical shift in recent years. Training institutions are required to ensure that pre-service teachers are competent enough to cater the needs of an increasing range of diverse learners which include their attitudes, beliefs, expectations and acceptance of people with diverse needs may well be challenged. Although this is such an important area, limited international studies have been carried out to understand pre-service teachers’ concerns and preparedness for teaching diverse learners.

As teachers are required to teach to a broad range of student abilities and within different contexts, there are concerns about the competences of pre service teacher education. These concerns include perceptions of decline in pre service teachers’ classroom management and lesson preparedness, and the excessive academic nature of education for teaching.

Bandura (1977) pointed out that self-efficacy expectations are major determinants of whether a person will attempt a task, how much effort will be expended, and how much effort will be displayed in the face of obstacles. Classrooms are complex systems where many factors influence student learning (Lampert, 2002).

Science teacher is an essential person in structuring and guiding students’ understanding of living in the changing world. They play a role as facilitator and helper students to bridge between nature of science and inquiry practices. They also need to learn new ways of pedagogical sciences to promote scientific literacy based on inquiry-oriented classroom. In

the correlation of scientific literacy, teacher preparation program need to address what they should believe about science. As responsibility of science do, preservice science teachers can help their students to meet real science by leading evidence-based and explanation-based ideas (Crawford, T., et. al., 2000; Duschl and Osborne, 2002).

Real school situations where empowering pre service teachers have proven successful and provide a basis for further guidance. Teaching is perhaps the only activity where pre service teachers bring with them a history of observed practice. They must be given the skills and knowledge to develop a pedagogical content knowledge, to critique practice and challenge traditional pedagogy. As a major role of education development, the faculty of education, the University has been responsible for serving learning community, engage students of learning society in regional services, produce teachers and persons relevant to educational services.

A deeper sense of self-reflection, based on pre-service teacher experiences, must be apparent as a caution to prepare skills for those pre-service teachers within internship experiences. It is through this reflective experiences that PST can construct their own knowledge of teaching.

The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of JHS pre service teachers in order to describe the preparedness in an attempt to heighten the quality and depth of those experiences as they pertain to pre-service teacher preparation prior to student teaching. The result would be of beneficial for the University to know what specific area these pre-service teachers' needs to be cultivated and appropriate training would be created to address these problems and could be a solution for the underwhelming performance of the graduates in the licensure examination for professional teachers.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of JHS pre service teachers in order to describe the preparedness in an attempt to heighten the quality and depth of those experiences as they pertain to pre-service teacher preparation prior to student teaching.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of JHS pre-service teacher during internships?
2. How do the lived experiences of the JHS pre-service teacher contribute to the quality and depth of internship experiences?

Significance of the Study

The result of study can help educators prepare the professional experience environments, allows them learn how to be a good teacher, reflect needs of learning support in school, and some criteria for teacher preparation. The result would also be of beneficial for the University to know what specific area these pre-service teachers' needs to be cultivated and appropriate training would be created to address these problems and could be a solution for the underwhelming performance of the graduates in the licensure examination for professional teachers.

Definition of Terms

Preparedness refers to the quality or state of being prepared to teach the Junior High School (JHS) students at the Laboratory school.

Pre service teacher is a college student involved in a school-based field experience. Under the supervision of a cooperating teacher, the pre-service teacher gradually takes on more classroom management and instructional responsibilities. These pre-service teachers plan to pursue a professional career in teaching.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This chapter presents the procedure of the study which features the methods, research locale, participants and instrument. This also includes the data gathering procedure and data analysis.

Methods

This study utilizes qualitative phenomenological research design using narrative analysis. Narrative research is a term that subsumes a group of approaches that in turn rely on written or spoken words or visual representation of individuals. Narratives or stories occur when one or more speakers engage in sharing and recounting an experience or event. Narrative analysis takes the story as the investigative focus. Narratives or stories may be oral or written; be elicited, for example during an interview, or naturally occurring; be very short or long; be told as a way to share one's bibliography; focus on events and the meaning of those events; focus on the ordinary stories people tell as a way to share experiences (Chase, 2005).

It focuses on the lived experiences of the pre-service teachers who are teaching at the JHS Secondary Laboratory School that were given the opportunity to have experiential learning during their 9 weeks in-campus immersion. PST will be asked to describe the experiences influencing the preparedness during their teaching immersion through directed interviews on their personal experience.

Locale

The study will be conducted at the Bukidnon State University. The said school is located at the heart of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon. It is one of the leading educational institutions serving the people not only in Mindanao but also the country in general. Bukidnon State University offers varied programs of academic excellence along with diverse opportunities. Students can participate in relevant internship in local and international level, field experiences, and community service and leadership development. It is also known as a major supplier of teachers not only in the province but throughout the region. Rigorous improvements are aligned to address the global perspective of the University.

The school was primarily a teacher training institution during its establishment years, it provided Laboratory Schools for its Bachelor in Elementary Education and Bachelor of Secondary School courses. The laboratory schools served as the training ground where the education students of the University will have their pre-service teaching.

Participants

Informants. The informants for the said study are the 8 Pre-service Teachers (PST) enrolled at Bukidnon State University taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education major in biological Sciences during the 2nd semester of the school year 2017-2018. This group of Pre-service teachers are consists of the senior undergraduate. This group of students is also having their 9 weeks in-campus pre-service teaching at BukSU – Secondary School Laboratory.

Sampling Technique. The study utilized the purposive sampling. It is a nonprobability sampling but it is useful especially when randomization is impossible like when the population is very large. It can be useful when the researcher has limited resources, time and workforce.

The eight participants were under the supervision of the researcher, thus making it easier in making observations and have greater convenience during the face to face interviews. The researcher explained to the participants their rights and responsibilities and asked for their consent.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process took place at Bukidnon State University. Data collection occurred via face to face interviews involving 8 PST Biological Sciences major who are having an on-campus teaching at the Secondary School Laboratory for 9 weeks. Over a nine-week period, dates and times for the interviews were scheduled and conducted. Due to the varied schedules of each participant, interviews were conducted at various times and days of the week. All interviews were conducted in a mutually agreed upon time and location, were digitally recorded, and notes were taken.

Kvale (1996) remarks with regard to data capturing during the qualitative interview that it “is literally an interview, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest,” where researcher attempts to “understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold meaning of peoples' experiences” (pp. 1-2). At the root of phenomenology, “the intent is to understand the phenomena in their own terms — to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person herself” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 96) and allowing the essence to emerge (Cameron, Schaffer & Hyeon-Ae, 2001). The maxim of Edmund Husserl was “back to things themselves!” (Kruger, 1988, p. 28).

‘Memoing’ (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 69) is another important data source in qualitative research that will be used in this study. It is the researcher’s field notes recording what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the process. Researchers are easily absorbed in the data-collection process and may fail to reflect on what is happening. However, it is important that the researcher maintain a balance between descriptive notes and reflective notes, such as hunches, impressions, feelings, and so on.

Informed consent was attained prior to the commencement of the interviews. Prior to the start of each interview, each participant was cordially greeted and the digital recording device was tested to ensure that it was properly functioning. Using an interview script, interviewees were informed of the purpose of the study, source of data collection, participation risks and benefits, the digital recordings of interviews, voluntary participation and withdrawal,

confidentiality of the interviewee, and how long the interview will commence. At the end of the interviews, all participants were thanked for their involvement.

Explicitation of the data

The interview will be audio-recorded, with the permission of interviewees. Each interview was assigned a code and each audio record will be labelled with the assigned interview code. As soon as possible, after each interview it will be listened to and made notes.

An open-ended questions related to the central research questions were asked. Questions did not need to be repeated; in some cases, the probing technique was used to obtain responses. No leading questions were asked. To capture the essence of the experiences of participants, open-ended interview questions were employed to examine common themes or patterns that emerged.

Responses from interview questions provided a better understanding of the disparities experienced by the PST. The steps involved in conducting interviews guided the interview process. Since the interview questions were open-ended, they allowed for a variety of answers. When multiple respondents gave the same or similar answers to the questions, patterns began to surface. Such patterns emerged based on the frequency of the same or similar answers.

The heading ‘data analysis’ is deliberately avoided because Hycner cautions that ‘analysis’ has dangerous connotations for phenomenology. The “term [analysis] usually means a ‘breaking into parts’ and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon...[whereas ‘explicitation’ implies an]...investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole” (1999, p. 161). Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 9) regard analysis as the “systematic procedures to identify essential features and relationships”. It is a way of transforming the data through interpretation. Now that the term explicitation has been clarified, we can turn to a simplified version of Hycner’s (1999) explicitation process, which was used.

This explicitation process has five ‘steps’ or phases, which are: 1) Bracketing and phenomenological reduction. 2) Delineating units of meaning. 3) Clustering of units of meaning to form themes. 4) Summarising each interview, validating it and where necessary modifying it. 5) Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary.

To ensure accuracy of the findings, transcribed interview transcripts were sent to participants for member checking. This offers a review and validate the transcribed interviews occurred.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Core themes and patterns were developed by thoroughly examining the transcripts to discover the lived experiences of the participants in this study. Developing themes from the data consisted of answering the research questions and framing a deep explanation of the phenomenon of the lived experiences of JHS pre service teachers. Composite descriptions provide meaning to the themes. The three core themes are presented (1) The pre service teachers experiences in teaching the JHS students; (2) the pre service teachers preparedness in teaching; and (3) contribution to the quality and depth of internship experiences

The Pre Service Teachers Experiences in Teaching the JHS Students

The Challenges. The pre service teachers mentioned that they had a tough and countless challenges which can only be experienced in the real teaching-learning environment. Teacher G concurs with these, she relates that her experience is like a roller coaster ride with full of twist and turns, hardships and shortcomings. These in turn, made her thought on how to become a fully equipped teacher in this century.

Most of them talked about handling different types of learners. According to Teacher B, she experienced handling “true students”, where the teacher handled not only junior high school students but also the senior high school students. Pre service teachers need to prepare activities that can motivate their students. They were pushed beyond their comfort zone as reported by Teacher D and she mentioned that “coming up with a lesson plan was not easy. I also learned that I do not have a good sense of time when teaching, so I know how to make sure to make a schedule of what needs to be done.”

Teacher F pointed out that pre service teachers must be equipped with the skills and knowledge in order to deliver the lesson. In the same way, they must be able to carry out their strength and weaknesses especially in making their lesson plans that should be aligned with their lesson objectives, strategies, activities and assessment.

Strategies are plans to meet certain situation to develop better service to learners (Boiser, 2000). According to Popil (2011) teaching strategies promote critical thinking and active learning. Clearly teaching is an art of employing strategies. Strategies in this study were described as practices that PTs usually do in teaching and those which allow them to rise above the casual and conventional approaches (Boiser, 2000).

The pre service teachers were also worried with their classes. Aside from time management, Teacher C expressed the fear in teaching “One of the field of science that is not the merely focus of our course. We are BSE- major in Biological Sciences, we are focused in Biology. But what happened is that we are teaching Physics. I make this one as a challenge and also as an experience because in real life we are going to teach all the field of Science.”

The Learnings. All the pre service teachers expressed that they learned a lot which is very helpful in becoming a better and effective future educator. They gained countless valuable experiences and insights. One PST conveyed how he managed shyness and increased his confidence and performed better in teaching the students. Another PST confirmed that it is really true that students have a short span of attention. However, once they got to know the students better, the teachers were able to establish a great atmosphere in the class the most of the concerns are manageable.

Quality learning among students needs quality teaching while quality teaching produces quality learning that can only be had if quality methods of handling classes are employed. The quality of teaching refers to the appropriateness of method selected to achieve the identified objectives for a certain subject matter (Duque, 2003).

Teacher A stressed that with the supervision of their Supervising Instructor they were able to write effective lesson plans of different formats, create and recreate different classroom strategies, actual classroom management which were very effective and easy to implement especially for beginners like them. These in turn has a great impact in their experiences as

PST, “ I realized that being a teacher is not easy but when you see your students learning, you would really become fully satisfied”, Teacher B mentioned.

It was emphasized by Teacher H that she gained and enhance a lot of competencies during the internship and these can be used in facing the real word of teaching. This was affirmed by both Teacher G who said “these experiences enlightened my mind to become an effective teacher someday” and Teacher D said “I am glad that I was able to have this experience to prepare in the future”.

Another fulfilling experience was when the PST received a very good constructive criticism from their Supervising Instructors. They accentuated that these experiences will serve as learnings on how to become a better and efficient teachers. They too built a good relationship with other PSTs and sustained a great working relationship with their Supervising Instructors.

All pre service teachers mentioned that they learned how to make exams and generate table of specification, in addition to the various forms used by the school. They were all thankful as they all surpassed all the challenges and now ready to face the real world during their off-campus teaching.

The Pre Service Teachers Preparedness in Teaching

When pre service teachers were ask regarding their preparedness during their internship, half of them answered positively. The PSTs were certain that they all need improvement in all aspects. They admitted that they were not that fully equipped at the start and a lot of things need considerations. Nevertheless, one PST said “Overtime, I was able to gradually fill those gaps and was able to grow and develop teaching and learning on a first-hand basis from my mentor, students, and colleagues”.

The faculty in the Secondary School Laboratory are called the Supervising Instructors (SIs) since they work directly with the pre service teachers. They guide them from the first day of observation up to the test-teaching phase, which may include a lesson-demonstration for students’. The SIs are also responsible for evaluation the development and performance of the student and gives the final rating for the course.

The Supervising Instructors have the important task of helping the pre service teachers develop into the best possible persons and teachers. These were asserted by the PSTs as they relate their experiences during their immersion period. Teacher B mentioned “by the given guidance of my SI, I was able to correct the things I taught to the students. I was able to improve the things I showed to be a better teacher and also being fully equipped. Intern means you stand to be corrected and be humble enough to hear the criticism and advices for the future and better purposes”.

Grossman (2010) who, through the Partnership for Teacher Quality, specified that the mentor and pre service teacher relationship allows for both individuals to build confidence in their teaching, as well as, skill in their methodology of teaching. She states, “the quality of clinical experience depends heavily on the kind of coaching, supervision, and support prospective teachers receive as they develop their practice” (p. 5). In fact, Page et al.’s (2004) research indicates that the pre service teacher candidate may actually display greater “teachability” when working with the mentor teacher rather than the university supervisor (p. 39).

Teacher C said “ We are trained by our SI not just on the different strategies in teaching, but also new format in creating the lesson plan, arranging documents, fill up given forms”.

Another, Teacher G said that the immersion sharpens her experiences and skills with her SI, through giving feedbacks in improving her teaching style and maintaining classroom discipline that deals with students with different abilities.

Further support for establishing this working relationship was Russell and Russell (2011) who asserted the mentoring relationship with the mentee was a two way street in which both individuals learned as a result of the collaborative relationship. This is the predominant facet by which all clinical experiences should be based (Cooperating Teachers' Motivation for Mentoring section, para. 7).

Overall, the success of mentoring in student teaching would be described as unpredictable and complex. Beyond cognitive skills and professional competencies to be developed, there are many interpersonal factors that influence the mentor/mentee relationship. Variation in mentoring practices is both inevitable and desirable.

Contribution to the Quality and Depth of Internship Experiences

There is a growing universal demand for well-prepared professionals in all disciplines. A supervised practical experience of immersion (variously known as practicum, clinical training, internship, depending on the discipline) forms an essential part of the pre-service preparation of teachers. All the PSTs agreed that the in campus pre-service teaching had sharpened their skills, abilities, knowledge and other competencies. It moulded them to be a fully equipped teacher and a valuable member of the society.

They also must consider the vital role of the Supervising Instructors and be ready to be criticized to be able to correct their mistakes and apply recommendations. One teacher said "They should accept criticisms from those who had more experience because in the end, you as a teacher will leave a mark to someone's life"

Pre-service teacher training is one of the most important aspects of every teacher's education curriculum as it prepares student-teachers to become qualified teachers in the future. As they enter the field, being a PST needs dedication. This will change your views in preparation to the real world. Pre service teaching is an opportunity as a launching place for their future careers. The PSTs will also have the chance to work with the students and have the chance to be part of the educational team.

Practicum teaching is an integral part of any teacher education curriculum since it is a good avenue for pre-service teachers to apply the theories they learned in the real classroom setting. Through constant monitoring and guidance from the teacher educators, these pre service teachers will learn how to handle and manage not just their daily lessons but the students and their classroom as well.

Sharing these experiences will contribute to the future PSTs. This will help them to be more prepared and have a better and wider perspective and deeper understanding on what is really happening in the real world of teaching- learning process. It will give insights as to what are the things/skills they must be equipped for them to become a credible and effective PSTs someday. It will give a realization on how to become a real teacher.

CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

The pre service teachers emphasized that they experienced a lot of things. The experiences are not entirely positive, as some challenges and limitations. However, they also felt satisfaction and recognized that experience is the best teacher.

How the mentor teacher perceives his/her role in the clinical experience, based on the University and K 12 school partner, is equally important to the success of the immersion of the PSTs. The viewpoint of the mentor teacher provides important insight into these relationships and how those relationships contribute to the success of the pre service teachers. It is through the relationship the pre service teacher has with the mentor that his/her self-efficacy will take root.

As a course bridging theory and practice, pre service teaching is an important part of teacher education programs, and it plays a significant role in the formation and development of teachers' professional identity.

Research should be constantly done to investigate the experiences of pre-service teachers' during the internship to analyze the reasons and factors behind the development needed in order to know the specific area that these pre-service teachers' needs to be cultivated. Appropriate training would be created to address these problems and could be a solution for the underwhelming performance of the graduates in the licensure examination for professional teachers.

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