



RESEARCH ARTICLE

WHAT ASPECTS OF THE STUDENT TEACHING PROGRAM HELPED THE ELEMENTARY STUDENT INTERNS?

*Maria Nancy Quinco-Cadosales, PhD

Faculty, Cebu Normal University, Osmeña Boulevard, 6000 Cebu City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The study described the aspects of the student teaching program of the Bachelor of Elementary Education curriculum in a Teacher Education Institution. The aspects of the student teaching program include the objectives, content coverage, and pedagogical practices. The study employed the descriptive research method, which utilized questionnaire and open ended questions. There participants of the study were the 68 elementary student interns. The student teaching program had developed the student interns' personal and professional competencies. In the aspect of objectives, the student teaching program developed the affective competencies of the student interns like their attitudes; diligence; resourcefulness; values; and open-mindedness. In the aspect of the content coverage, the student teaching program helped the student interns on the delivery of content knowledge. The coverage of the student program helped the student interns to understand the University's vision-mission; application of theories, techniques and principles of teaching; and competence and skills in lesson. In the aspect of pedagogical practices, regular meetings and conferences were the best practice followed by writing of good lesson plans, delivering the lesson, suggesting appropriate teaching strategies, and constructing good test. However, there are measures that need to be addressed in the plan of actions to enhance the student teaching program of the university.

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INTRODUCTION

Student teaching is the actual observation and guided participation of the interns to experience the real work of a licensed professional teacher. They are exposed to observe the real classroom setting for five months. The student interns closely worked with student teaching mentors who supervise their participation in the classroom. The student interns are about to enter the teaching profession. They are exposed working with students under the guidance of student teaching mentors. The student interns are guided to discover the opportunities and serious responsibilities of teaching (Roe and Ross, 1994). Further, Daniels, Patterson and Dunston (2015) that during the student teaching phase, the student interns learn new rules and navigate new experiences. In this phase, the student interns learn how to fit into the school system and understand the culture which helps them toward a successful experience. The student teaching program refers to the twelve-unit course in the Bachelor in Elementary Education curriculum designed to provide the student interns to provide the student interns the opportunities to concretize its objectives

*Corresponding author: Maria Nancy Quinco-Cadosales, PhD
Faculty, Cebu Normal University, Osmeña Boulevard, 6000 Cebu City, Philippines.

through the application of the course's content coverage and pedagogical practices in actual teaching-learning situations (Cadosales, 2004). Student teaching is the real test of what the student interns had learned in their years of study in a teacher-training institution (Lardizabal and Campos, 1999). In the Philippine context, the Commission on Higher Education Order No. 74, Series of 2017 on the Policies, Standards and Guidelines (PSG) for Bachelor in Elementary Education implements the "shift to learning competency-based standards/outcomes-based education in response to the 21st Century Philippine Teacher Education Framework. Furthermore, the PSG is anchored on the salient features of K to 12 Enhanced Curriculum (RA 10533), the Philippine Qualifications Framework (EO 83, s. 2012), the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards now the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (D.O. 42, s. 2017). This PSG provides "ample space for the Higher Education Institutions to innovate in the curriculum in line with the assessment of how best to achieve learning outcomes in their particular contexts and their respective missions". In this premise, a State University in Visayas, Philippines which a Center of Excellence in Education and level 4 accredited by the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines led in the training of pre-service teachers.

Its graduates are sought after by schools due to its standards in pre-service teacher training. With this, the researcher who is one of the student teaching mentors solicited the feedback of student interns on how to enhance the student teaching program of the university.

Objectives of the study

The study aims to describe the student teaching program in the aspects of its objectives; content coverage; and pedagogical practices. The results of the study were the basis of suggested measures to consider in an action plan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The participants of the study were the student interns enrolled in the second semester of the Academic Year 2017 – 2018. There were 68 student interns enrolled in Bachelor in Elementary Education. These student interns came from one of the external campuses who had their internship in the main campus of the university. The study used descriptive research. It adopted a researcher-made questionnaire of Cadosales (2004). It has 37 item scales with 3 dimensions.

The reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.90. Content and face validity were also established. All measures had a 5 point Likert type response scale (1 – not evident; 2 – seldom evident; 3 – occasionally evident; 4 – often evident; 5 – highly evident). Descriptive statistical measures were computed and analyzed. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, permission was gained from the Student Teaching Coordinator and the student interns. To substantiate the data, open ended questions were asked. Utmost anonymity of the participants was observed to maintain confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The student teaching program equipped the student interns with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will make them effective efficient teachers (RA No. 7722). The student teaching phase is an integration of theory and practice through observation and participation in actual laboratory classes or simulated experiences, which provides early exposure to teaching.

A total immersion in student teaching is done during the last semester of the fourth year (Rationale and Objectives of Teacher Education in the revised Policies and Standards, CMO No. 11, s. 1999) which implies that the student teaching program prepares the student interns to become reflective practitioners and acquire the necessary dispositions and skills that enable them to learn from their practice. The objectives of the student teaching program (STP) describe how the student interns are helped to develop their appropriate personal and professional competencies necessary to actual teaching as shown in Table 1. The student interns rated the objectives of the student teaching program as highly evident. It is noticed the affective competencies/skills of the student interns are developed like their attitudes; diligence; resourcefulness; values; and open-mindedness. In the narration of the student interns, they recommended that the University should have a way to know more their attitudes. They said that the demands in teaching require certain values and positive outlook towards teaching. They recommended that would be more activities to develop their positive attitude and love for teaching.

However, the objective on formulating one's teaching philosophy is the least rated objective. Shulman and Hutchings (1999) said that teaching philosophy identifies an episode of good teaching and analyzes it fully to understand one's standards for "good" teaching. When one is clear of his teaching philosophy, he develops a stronger knowledge of the theories of learning and a fuller repertoire of skills and strategies. One might expect that the teacher will be able to describe more cogently how his teaching philosophy is expressed in practice which Moon (2004) emphasized as important in student work practice. Student teaching coursework includes pedagogy, content knowledge and their integration into the curriculum. Student interns study theories of learning for them to consider available information to make effective instructional decisions. Structured field experiences in student teaching enable them to observe, instruct and transfer theory into practice.

Guided reflection of classroom experiences from a variety of perspectives fosters the self-analysis and evaluation skills essential for continued professional development. Therefore, student teaching is designed to bridge the gap between the theories learned and the practice required in the classrooms. Jacobsen, Eggen and Kauchak (2002) stressed that the contents which are thoroughly discussed increase students' understanding about the teaching profession and their roles as future teachers. Teaching the subject content requires teachers' judicious use of instructional materials (Jerome and Bhargava, 2015). Content knowledge about teaching helps student interns to hone their teaching skills.

The Teacher Education Institution under study determined the contents to be covered in the student teaching as evident in the Student Teaching Manual. The student teaching course provided lessons/activities for the student teachers to develop their teaching competencies as shown in Table 2. The data reveal that the student teaching program discusses the topics on observation and participation in classroom activities both on and off-campus. This STP helped the student interns on the delivery of content knowledge. Every lesson plan is thoroughly scrutinize by the student teaching mentors. Pre and post conferences were conducted to provide proper guidance to the student interns as they perform the actual classroom teaching. The coverage of the student program helped the student interns to understand the University's vision-mission; application of theories, techniques and principles of teaching; and competence and skills in lesson planning. As Carr-Chellman (2010) mentioned that learning activities must match the learning goals and objectives. Appropriate activities mirror the actual expected behavior and assessment whether the test is authentic and reflective of the test items. The inclusion of these relevant course contents into the student teaching program develops the student interns' professional competencies such as proficiency in lesson planning, mastery and delivery of the content knowledge, appropriate use of instructional materials, and ability to manage the class. Similar findings were also stressed by Cadosales (2017). The student interns narrated that the student teaching program provides input to help them on how to manage stress and time. They are in the stage in honing their teaching skills. The demands in preparing the lesson are stressors to them. They need mentoring on how to manage their time. However, the student teaching program needs to strengthen the actual observation and participation in classroom activities both on and off-campus and workshops on job preparation.

Table 1. Objectives of the student teaching program as rated by the student interns

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Description
The student teaching program is designed for student interns to:		
1. develop the different competencies on		
1.1 content knowledge	4.74	Highly Evident
1.2 skills	4.72	Highly Evident
1.3 values	4.76	Highly Evident
1.4 attitudes	4.84	Highly Evident
2. use methods and strategies appropriate to a particular class	4.74	Highly Evident
3. relate and work efficiently and effectively with pupils	4.69	Highly Evident
4. analyze critically demonstration lessons	4.66	Highly Evident
5. accomplish the different school forms neatly and accurately	4.69	Highly Evident
6. display self-confident and self-reliance in working independently	4.68	Highly Evident
7. exhibit the following traits in the accomplishment of their assigned tasks:		Highly Evident
7.1 resourcefulness	4.78	Highly Evident
7.2 creativity	4.69	Highly Evident
7.3 diligence	4.82	Highly Evident
7.4 competence	4.69	Highly Evident
7.5 open-mindedness	4.76	Highly Evident
8. formulate one's teaching philosophy	4.57	
Legend:		
4.21 - 5.00 - Highly Evident		
3.41 - 4.20 - Often Evident		
2.61 - 3.40 - Occasionally Evident		
1.81 - 2.60 - Seldom Evident		
1.00 - 1.80 - Not Evident		

Table 2. Content coverage of the student teaching program

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Description
The student teaching program provides the student interns lessons/activities on		
1. orientation on:		
1.1 school's vision-mission	4.76	Highly Evident
1.2 CTE's vision-mission	4.75	Highly Evident
1.3 scope of the student teaching program	4.75	Highly Evident
2. application of theories, techniques and principles of teaching	4.76	Highly Evident
3. demonstration of competence and skill in:		
3.1 lesson planning	4.76	Highly Evident
3.2 delivery of content knowledge	4.81	Highly Evident
3.3 art of asking higher order thinking questions	4.71	Highly Evident
3.4 communication skills	4.75	Highly Evident
3.5 classroom management and discipline	4.69	Highly Evident
3.6 accomplishment of forms	4.66	Highly Evident
4. observation and participation in classroom activities (on and off-campus)		
4.1 observe classes in designated grade levels	4.74	Highly Evident
4.2 participate in actual teaching	4.57	Highly Evident
4.3 prepare and select instructional materials for a particular lesson	4.63	Highly Evident
5. workshops on:		
5.1 application of the varied methods and strategies in teaching	4.66	Highly Evident
5.2 personality development	4.71	Highly Evident
5.3 job preparation	4.57	Highly Evident
Legend:		
4.21 - 5.00 - Highly Evident		
3.41 - 4.20 - Often Evident		
2.61 - 3.40 - Occasionally Evident		
1.81 - 2.60 - Seldom Evident		
1.00 - 1.80 - Not Evident		

Table 3. Pedagogical Practices in the Student Teaching Program

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Description
The student teaching program requires the students to:		
1. write good lesson plans	4.78	Highly Evident
2. utilize updated references and learning materials	4.71	Highly Evident
3. select appropriate teaching strategies	4.74	Highly Evident
4. utilize student teaching manuals for cooperating teachers, and student teachers' use	4.66	Highly Evident
5. attend regular meetings/conferences	4.79	Highly Evident
6. enrich content through library work	4.38	Highly Evident
7. construct good test	4.72	Highly Evident
Legend:		
4.21 - 5.00 - Highly Evident		
3.41 - 4.20 - Often Evident		
2.61 - 3.40 - Occasionally Evident		
1.81 - 2.60 - Seldom Evident		
1.00 - 1.80 - Not Evident		

The pedagogical practices bring about the development of the competencies among the student interns. Among these pedagogical practices are attending regular meetings and conferences; writing of good lesson plan; and selecting appropriate teaching strategies as shown in Table 3. The student teaching mentors conducted regular meetings and conferences which the student interns find as a best practice. In the meeting, the student interns are mentored on how to improve their teaching skills; do their classroom assignments; and the other aspects in teaching. The second good pedagogical practice is the writing of good lesson plans. The student interns are required to write lesson plans for every teaching demonstration. The lesson plans are written five days before the actual teaching demonstration. This will give the student interns ample time to improve the suggestions given. Most of the time, the student teaching mentors guided the student interns on how to deliver the lesson, suggested appropriate teaching strategies, and how to construct good test. These pedagogical practices enable the student interns to explore on varied ways and means on how to present the lesson in an organized manner. As Strahan (1989) stressed that pedagogical knowledge is the acquisition of teaching skills that are observed in the teachers' ability to use knowledge in strategic ways to bring about student learning. However, the student interns need to enrich lesson content through library work. The ability of the student interns to utilize library resources allows them to relate the topic to other disciplines and makes the lesson more relevant to the lives of the learners. The student interns narrated that they need inputs on the appropriate integration of technology in teaching. As Carr-Chellman (2010) mentioned that selecting and possibly developing media and technology may be useful in supporting the activities and integrating into the lesson.

When the student interns were asked about their over-all impression of the student teaching program, they narrated that

The *student teaching mentors* were very instrumental in their success. Their mentors are all smart and very good role models. They shared their knowledge on how to conduct successful teaching. They conducted conferences to discuss about the strengths and weaknesses they observed during the teaching demonstrations. They met *challenges* along the way of honing their teaching skills including coping with the time schedules, preparations for the teaching demonstrations, attending to learners' needs, and complying with other requirements related to completing their degree program. But, these challenges were overcome with the help of their mentors and had a better view on what awaits in the real-world of teaching. Over-all, the student teachers find the student teaching program as amazing, nice, good, wonderful, beautiful, fulfilling, and high-standard because it prepares them to become the best teacher that they can be in the future. The student teaching experience had boosted their confidence and determination; developed their teaching skills; training them to be more disciplined in everything they do; making them better persons to endure in every challenge met along the way, developing their personal skills like being dedicated to one's work, being open-minded, having courage to overcome the obstacles; developing their professional skills like preparing appropriate instructional materials, lesson planning, choosing appropriate strategies and techniques suited to the lesson; and following the instructions of the student teaching mentors. The findings manifested that there are measures with the lowest mean rating in the student teaching program that need to be

strengthened. An action plan could focus on activities to help student interns formulate their clear philosophy of teaching in the aspect of the STP's objectives. The University may revisit its standard policy on the number of required teachings and workshops on job preparation in the aspect of the STP's content coverage. The student teachers need to be mentored on how to enrich content through library work in the aspect of pedagogical practices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As reflected in the results of the study, the student teaching program's objectives, content coverage, and pedagogical practices were observable at all times. It was noted that student teaching program aimed to develop the student interns holistically. However, there are measures even when observable but had the lowest rating which could be enhanced through enhancement activities. It is therefore recommended that the suggested aspects to be enhanced will be considered in the scaffold of activities. To guarantee holistic development of the student interns, regular evaluation of the student teaching program be conducted.

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