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Pre-Service Teachers' Experiences during Off-Campus Observation: Basis for Improving the Roles of Teacher Education Institutions and Cooperating Schools

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Abstract

Observing experienced teachers is an indispensable part of practicum studies in teacher education. This paper examined the perceptions of pre-service teachers from five major fields of teacher education program on their experiences during off-campus observation in selected secondary schools. This used qualitative content analysis method in order to "subjectively interpret the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shanon, 2005 p. 1278) . Data were taken from 136 pre-service teachers through open-ended questions and two high school principals, 10 cooperating teachers, six student supervisors and 12 pre-service teachers through Focus Group Interview (FGI) and Key Informant Interview (KII). Codes and emerging themes were derived using content analysis. Results showed 18 themes for desirable experiences and 24 themes for undesirable experiences. Pre-service teachers' experiences mostly focused on students' attitudes and behaviors. Suggestions to improve off-campus observation from multi-level participants of the study concentrated on preparedness, orientation programs, supervision and monitoring, personal attributes and roles, values, attitudes and behaviors, deployment, post conferences, supervisory plan, observation policies and guidelines, required documents, seminars, time management, evaluation, coordination, and cultural diversity. To sustain the desirable experiences, both cooperating teachers and student supervisors believed that their roles were to serve as model, guide, leader, monitor, planner, and motivator. The varied experiences of pre-service teachers imply that Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) and cooperating schools should provide opportunities, develop competencies, take responsibilities and strengthen partnership to enhance off-campus observation.

Keywords: *Pre-service Education, Pre-service Teachers' Experiences, Off-Campus Observation, Field Studies, Cooperating Schools*

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Introduction

In the Philippines, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offering undergraduate teacher education programs incessantly train future teachers to perform their functions and sustain excellence and quality in education (RA No. 7722). It is stipulated in the Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 30, s. 2004 that the undergraduate teacher education needs to keep pace with intricacies of global development and to adjust to the evolving nature of curriculum. Accordingly, the policies and standards for undergraduate teacher education programs should be enhanced to uphold “highest standards of objectives, components and processes of teacher education curriculum” (CMO 30, s. 2004, p. 1).

Undergraduate teacher education is the education and training provided to pre-service teachers before they undertake any teaching work. A major focus during the last year in teacher education program in the Philippine context is the field experiences consisting of off-campus observation and practice teaching where pre-service teachers are placed within a school setting either in elementary or secondary level. As adopted in the country and as mandated by CMO 30, s. 2004, off-campus observation in cooperating schools is termed as Field Study (FS) 6 described as On Becoming a Teacher and aligned to the professional education course Teaching Profession. Field Study 6, as one of the Experiential Learning Courses (ELC) of teacher education curriculum, develops pre-service teachers’ competencies specified in the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) and CMO No. 30, s. 2004 (Bilbao, 2010). “Field Study (FS) courses are intended to provide students with practical learning experiences in which they observe, verify, reflect on, and actually experience different components of teaching-learning processes in actual school settings” (Article V. Sec. 13 of CMO 30, s. 2004). The field experiences during the graduating year of pre-service teachers commence with off-campus observation or field-based observation and ends with practice teaching or practicum.

Off-campus observation as a Field Study course is also regarded as one of the required field experiences of undergraduate teacher education in other countries. Field experiences are considered as a foundation in pre-service teacher education programs (Hixon & So, 2009; Haigh & Tuck, 1999) and a significant means to develop prospective teachers’ understanding of the why, what, and how of teaching and learning (Zeichner, 1990). Field experiences allow pre-service teachers to establish a strong link between current theoretical knowledge and school practices (Liu, 2005 from Hudson) and help them assimilate theory and practice through critical observation and analysis of lessons taught by experienced teachers (Genc & Buyukkarci, 2013). Posner (2005) pointed out that field experiences supporting experiential education highlight good teaching practices. Posner (2005) added that such experiences are opportunities which pair pre-service teachers as mentees with cooperating teachers as mentors and as excellent role models who reflect in their teaching practice.

In this study, off-campus observation as a field experience is basically an observation of experienced teachers known as cooperating teachers or mentors. It remains an indispensable facet in teacher preparation program and surfaces as one of the most significant practices to facilitate learning of pre-service teachers (Gonzalez, 2005). In the conduct of observation, pre-service teachers are required to observe, experience and reflect on teaching of mentor teachers in classrooms (Sim, 2006 ; Amobi & Irwin , 2009) aiming to collaborate and reflect on their learning about teaching. Overall, they gain real world experience in real school settings (Amobi & Irwin, 2009). Gonzalez (2005) further noted that teacher education programs generally merge observation and other research activities to train pre-service teachers for their future teaching career. Field observation requires pre-service teachers to be prepared to meet the challenges and standards for teaching. Through observation, they are honed for their practicum teaching and future practice of teaching profession.

Moreover, off-campus observation in teacher education offers opportunities for development, but there are also limitations. During this field activity, pre-service teachers have lots of experiences that are meaningful and challenging. These include both bad or undesirable and good or desirable experiences throughout the duration of field observation in their cooperating schools. Though such field observation proves to be a learning ground, there are constraints along the way expressed through undesirable experiences of pre-service teachers. For these reasons, studying the pre-service teachers’ experiences could be very helpful in their aspiration to succeed in off-campus observation and be useful in improving the roles of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) and cooperating schools.

The present study dealt with the experiences of pre-service teachers known as mentees during off-campus observation as the concluding field experience or ELC of all fourth year pre-service teachers under a four-year degree program, Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd), with five programs or major fields namely English, Islamic Education (IE), Mathematics, Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health (MAPEH), and Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE). This field

experience covers 17-hour off-campus observation period of mentees during the first semester of classes in their graduating year.

However, the research literature in the teacher education program is replete with discussions on off-campus observation component during the final year of pre-service teachers and its contribution to improving their roles in a real-school milieu (Price, 1987; Daresh, 1990; Alexander & Galbraith, 1997; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002) as well as the roles of cooperating teachers and student supervisors. Almost all reviewed articles pertained to field experience as a practice teaching. Studies show that practice teaching of pre-service teachers have been explored more than off-campus observation (Ale, 1981; Brawdy & Byra, 1994; Grootenboer, 2006; Sim, 2006; Charalambous, Philippou & Kyriakides, 2008; Amobi & Irwin, 2009; Chabe, 2009; Taylor & Fields, 2009; Genc & Buyukkarci, 2013).

Furthermore, based on the reviews of published studies, there is scarcity of topics on the experiences perceived by pre-service teachers during off-campus observation. Hence, the present study emphasized the significance of off-campus observation by focusing on the following research questions: (1) What are the desirable and undesirable experiences of pre-service teachers?, (2) In the light of these experiences, how can school principals, cooperating teachers, student supervisors and pre-service teachers help improve the conduct of off-campus observation?, (3) In what way can these experiences improve the roles of cooperating teachers and student supervisors?, and (4) What do these experiences imply to the roles of TEIs and cooperating schools?

Method

This investigation utilized a qualitative content analysis method. Hsieh and Shanon (2005) defined qualitative content analysis method as a “research method for subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p. 1278). In this case, the experiences of student teachers were systematically collected, coded and formed into different categories. It “focuses on creating a picture of a given phenomenon that is always embedded within a particular context, not on describing reality objectively (Domas White & Marsh, 2006 p. 38).

The study was conducted in five secondary schools where a sample size of 136 graduating pre-service education students was taken as main participants of the study. They represented the five major fields of Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) namely English, Islamic Education (IE), Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH), Mathematics and Technical and Livelihood Education (TLE) offered at the Cotabato City State Polytechnic College, a Teacher Education Institution (TEI) in Cotabato City, Central Mindanao, Philippines. The participants comprised of 31(22.8%) males and 105 (77.2%) females. Their ages ranged from 18 to 30 years old, with an average of 23 years old. Secondary participants include student supervisors, cooperating teachers, and school principals for Focus Group Interview (FGI) and Key Informant Interview (KII).

Stratified random sampling technique using proportionate allocation was used to select the pre-service teachers who were distributed as follows: 21 out of 32 (English), 9 out of 14 (IE), 39 out of 59 (MAPEH), 18 out of 27 (Math), and 49 out of 75 (TLE). They were asked to answer the two open-ended questions relative to various experiences during off-campus observations.

In the conduct of FGI, a purposeful random sample was selected (Creswell, 2007; Patton 1990) to describe pre-service teachers’ experiences during off-campus observation, to explain ways on improving off-campus observation and to describe the roles of student supervisors and cooperating teachers to improve such observation. According to Letts et al. (2007) key informant interview “refers to the special nature of the participant being interviewed - he or she is chosen by the researcher because of an important or different viewpoint, status in a culture or organization, and/or knowledge of the issue being studied” (p. 5).

Purposive sampling is “used mainly in qualitative research to select participants or other units of study who can provide or yield data that will address the research problem” (Graff, n.d., p. 54). Citing Geertz (1973), Graff pointed out that “When generating sample for qualitative phase, researchers typically seek to establish samples that will provide information at multiple levels of meaning, or a “thick description” (p. 55).

The sample included two school principals, 10 cooperating teachers, six student supervisors and 12 pre-service teachers. This sample was based on the view that “In general, 12–20 cases are enough when seeking confirming or disconfirming evidence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton 1990). “The purpose of a small random sample is credibility, not representativeness. In a qualitative study, credibility means that the researchers adopt a stance of neutrality in the study and that the data

represents what the participants mean. Thus, credibility can be thought of as an equivalent to internal validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton 1990).

The primary data collection tool was open-ended survey questionnaire. A profile form was given to elicit basic information about the pre-service teachers. As secondary tools, FGI was used for 12 pre-service teachers and six student supervisors while KII was employed to 10 cooperating teachers and two school principals to obtain more substantial information and insights. FGI is utilized “to collect shared understanding from several individuals as well as to get views from specific people” and “are useful when the time to collect information is limited and individuals are hesitant to provide information” (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). Citing Kendall (2008), Harris and Brown (2010) noted that “while questionnaires can provide evidence of patterns among large population, qualitative interview data gather more in depth insights on participants’ attitudes, thoughts and actions (p.1)”

In analyzing the data, Tesch, as cited by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), wrote that it “starts with reading all data repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole” (p. 1279). Pre-service teachers from five major programs were first asked to respond to two open-ended questions describing their desirable and undesirable experiences during off-campus observation. Each pre-service teacher per program was requested to write down at least two good experiences and another two bad experiences. Their responses were encoded and read several times in order to understand these responses contextually. Based on their original statements, the researcher came up with a code for each statement. Those codes that belong together are clustered into one subordinate theme. Then, all similar themes were grouped to form a general theme. According to Morgan (1993), one of the key features of qualitative context analysis is that a “researcher uses a consistent set of codes to designate data segments that contain similar material and one typically counts the frequencies of these codes to get a sense of what is in the data” (p. 114).

All their responses were processed through the FGI and KII. The multi-level participants were interviewed separately in small groups of three to 10 participants. For the FGI, the researcher raised a few general questions relative to experiences of pre-service teachers, ways to improve observation of classes as well as implications of experiences on the roles of cooperating teachers and student supervisors during off-campus observations. This FGI was completed for hours and were characterized by genuine and spontaneous discussion where the participants interacted, shared ideas and responded to one another. A few of the participants were emotionally affected after recalling their experiences. Using KII, the school principals and cooperating teachers from different secondary schools were asked questions related to the responses of pre-service teachers regarding off-campus observation experiences for better understanding. They were finally asked to give recommendations to improve the off-campus observation as well as the roles of TEIs and cooperating schools.

Results and Discussion

Desirable Experiences and Undesirable Experiences

Several themes emerged from the results of analysis of desirable and undesirable experiences of pre-service teachers from five major programs (English, Islamic Education, MAPEH, Mathematics and TLE). Each written statement for desirable and undesirable experiences was coded first by major field. The generated codes were then grouped into themes. The order of presentation of themes depended on the number of codes each theme has.

The overall responses of 136 respondents from all programs produced 18 themes with 200 codes under desirable experiences. Arranged from the highest to the lowest frequency, these were: Good attitudes of students (66), good attitudes of cooperating teachers (38), good supervision and guidance (20), active participation of students in class (18), enhancement of skills of pre-service teachers (16), good social interaction between cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers (8), good interpersonal relationships (7), attentiveness of students (6), high motivation of students (4), appropriate teaching methodology (4), good mastery of subject matter (4), proper reward system (2), good class management (2), good attitudes of a student supervisor (1), good class performance (1), acceptability of pre-service teachers to students (1), good task performance (1), and good class environment (1).

The undesirable experiences of pre-service teachers across all programs had 188 codes grouped into 24 themes such as unpleasant attitudes of students (112), passivity of students (19), undesirable attitudes of cooperating teachers (9), improper time management (9), inattentiveness of students (5), untoward happenings inside classrooms (5), poor communication system (3), indifference (3), lack of classroom facilities (3), intimidation (2), lack of importance to values education subject (2), unsuitable teaching approach (2), lack of mastery of subject matter (2), observation dress code problem (2), small

classroom size (1), incompetence of cooperating teachers (1), lack of knowledge of co-pre-service teachers (1), lack of opportunity to support needy students (1), classroom disorderliness (1), low self-confidence of students (1), poor academic performance (1), unfair task assignment (1), tiring full-day observation (1), unfamiliarity of school security force to pre-service teachers, and poor supervision (1).

From the findings, it is clearly shown that there are similarities and differences in experiences of pre-service teachers in all programs. Most of the experiences involved both teachers and students. Hence, the themes on students' part were separated from those of their teachers. It is evident that most of the themes recorded to desirable experiences had their counterparts as undesirable experiences. For instance, while good students' attitudes (66) topped the list of desirable experiences, unpleasant students' attitudes (112) had the highest frequency as an undesirable experience.

Findings reveal that good attitudes of cooperating teachers and good attitudes of students, good supervision and guidance, enhancement of skills of pre-service teachers, and active students' participation were the top-most experiences identified as desirable by pre-service teachers from the four out of the five major programs. These imply that pre-service teachers were fortunate to have mentors who can guide them well. They also appreciated both students and mentors for their good attitudes and constant assistance to develop their skills in preparation for practicum.

However, unpleasant attitudes of students were the only experience considered as undesirable in all programs. Results of this study show that students' behaviors are still the most dominant problem area in public schools. Pre-service students were almost united in declaring that their bad experiences during off-campus observation were centered on bad students' attitudes. This may hold true because public high schools cater to all types of students with diverse needs, potentials and backgrounds. Since they could not be refused as enrollees, there is a tendency that some classrooms become overpopulated even as many as 60-70 students in one classroom. As such, they may be difficult to manage and sustain their motivation to learn. Also, as they come from different walks of life, they may demonstrate different kinds of behaviors and attitudes towards their classmates and teachers. For instance, pre-service teachers commented on how some students disrespected their teachers even in their presence and became so unruly and disruptive during class sessions.

In general, findings indicate that undesirable experiences were more varied than the desirable experiences based on the quantity of theme categories. But the desirable experiences in terms of number of codes were slightly higher than the undesirable experiences. This implies that pre-service teachers were able to observe more good experiences relative to their mentors and students than bad experiences throughout the duration of their off-campus observation.

Improving Off-Campus Observation

Focus Group Interview (FGI) and Key Informant Interview (KII) were carried out to get the perspectives of multi-level participants of the study regarding the improvement of off-campus observation of pre-service teachers. Drawing from the good and bad experiences, pre-service teachers realized how to get better on their observation tasks. With the merging of all their recommendations, it is evident that the following were prioritized to prevent the occurrence of undesirable experiences and support the enhancement of desirable experiences of all pre-service teachers: preparedness of pre-service teachers, conduct of orientation programs, supervision and monitoring of student supervisors, personal attributes and roles of cooperating teachers and supervisors, values, attitudes and behaviors of pre-service teachers, efficient deployment of pre-service teachers, conduct of meetings/post conferences, formulation of observation workplan/supervisory plan, implementation of observation policies and guidelines, submission of required documents, conduct of seminars for pre-service teachers, time management, evaluation of off-campus observation, coordination of activities, and understanding of cultural diversity.

Below are the results of KII and FGI regarding the recommendations of participants as far as improving off-campus observation is concerned.

Cooperating Teachers

Cooperating teachers believe that many things could be benefited from off-campus observation if only done systematically. Their suggestions were grouped into the following: submission of complete forms (e.g. attendance and observation) and signing of Field Study 6 book per class observation, implementation of timely deployment of pre-service teachers, observance of clear protocol for deployment, formulation of plan of work and schedule of observation, regular conduct of orientation, seminars and workshops, coordination, communication and monitoring of student supervisors, wholesome relationships, recognition of students' diversity, and practice of desirable values (e.g. punctuality, commitment, discipline, responsibility, respect, honesty).

Some cooperating teachers made the following statements when asked how they could improve off-campus observation in their respective schools:

Teacher 1:

“Kung my daily forms kailangan provided na; sa first day palang, ready na yan.” (Daily observation forms should have been provided on the first day.)

“...dapat disciplined sila... may perseverance at emotionally stable...” (Pre-service teachers need to be disciplined...with perseverance and emotional stability...)

“Emphasize values... Kailangang aware sila sa diversity para hindi ma- culture shock sa trabaho.” (Pre-service teachers should be aware of diversity among students so that they won't get culture-shocked in their tasks.)

Teacher 2:

“Totally hundred percent prepared talaga sila sa pag handle ng responsibility hindi lang sa mga bata...sa ibang related works. I-prepare sila through seminars...”(Pre-service teachers should be 100% ready to handle responsibilities not only to students but also to other related tasks. Prepare them through seminars...)

“Dapat flexible... matuto how to prepare visual aids, lesson plan... dapat emotionally prepared lalo na ngayon sa mga unexpected assignments..” (They should be flexible...Learn to prepare visual aids, lesson plan...must be emotionally prepared especially with unexpected assignments...)

Teacher 3:

“Kailangan punctual kasi hindi na nila ma observe ang teacher kung late na...” (They should be punctual because they won't be able to observe their teacher if they come late...)

“...dapat well- informed ang mga bata sa mga gagawin; kailangang may uniformity of rules and guidelines sa lahat ng major fields.” (The pre-service teachers should be well-informed on what to do; there should be uniformity of rules and guidelines for all pre-service teachers in all major fields.)

“Need ang calendar of work; kailangang my target date...i-observe ang schedule...”(There should be a workplan; there should be target dates... observe the schedule...)

Teacher 4:

“I-prepare sila before they will be deployed... ma aware sila kung may orientation.” (Prepare the pre-service teachers before deploying them... They will be aware (about observation) if there is an orientation for the pre-service teachers.)

“Strict implementation of rules .”

“Mas maganda kung observation my monitoring rin sa part ng supervisors... tingnan nila kung may absent ba sa pre-service teachers; dapat weekly monitoring... malaman nila saan weak ang mga bata...” (It is better if there is also monitoring on the part of student supervisors...They should check if there are pre-service teachers who are absent; there should be weekly monitoring...for them to know the weaknesses of pre-service teachers...)

Teacher 5:

“Nan diyan kami mag gabay sa kanila... pero respetuhin muna nila ang sarili nila.” (We are just here to guide them...but they have to respect their own selves first.)

“Wala pakyawan sa pirmahan sa attendance.” (“Attendance form should be signed only right after observation.)

“Follow scheduled observation period or time”.

“Consider the kind of students that we have...different learners.”

Teacher 6:

“Mas maging honest pa ako next time sa pre-service teachers . Sometimes parang I suppress ano ang sabihin kasi I don't want to hurt. I don't want to terrorize ... (I have to be more honest next time to my pre-service teachers...sometimes I just suppress what I have to say because I don't want to hurt...)

“Kung meron mga negative na comments, take them as challenge.” (If there are negative comments...)

Teacher 7:

“The next time... may be ..uh... before they enter the classroom to observe us dapat ipagawa ng summary report of what the teacher is doing ...so that in that way kami as teachers will be trying our best also” (... the pre-service teachers should make a summary report on what the teacher is doing.. so that we as teachers will be trying our best also.)

“Close monitoring of attendance, punctuality of pre-service teachers.”

“I-require sila na they have to bring yung kanilang FS book na doon kami mag sign talaga every meeting... hindi iyong pakyawan” (Require pre-service teachers to bring their FS books where we can sign every after class observation.)

“Yung supervisors nila to supervise the pre-service teachers kasi minsan umaasa lang sila sa aking tulong. (The student supervisors should supervise the pre-service teachers because sometimes they just depend on my help.)

“Observe protocol in deployment.”

Student Supervisors

On the part of student supervisors, their suggestions were addressed not only to themselves but also to the cooperating teachers and their pre-service teachers. These were grouped as follows: determination of place of assignment (cooperating school), orientation program for pre-service teachers and student supervisors, regular meetings, conduct of FS 5 and FS 6 class sessions, discussion of observation needs and issues, drafting of plan of work and observation timelines, selection of student supervisors, designation of overall supervisor, coordination, regular supervision, monitoring, evaluation and building wholesome interpersonal relationships.

Below are student supervisors’ responses as regards improvement of off-campus observation:

Supervisor 1:

“There is a need to monitor (pre-service teachers) during teaching profession course to link actual class experiences to theories learned by pre-service teachers”.

“Maapekтуhan ang quality kung kulang ang monitoring.” (Quality (of observation) is affected if there is insufficient monitoring.)

Sa pagpili ng coordinator, dapat mayroong criteria (LET passer na may passion siya sa ginagawa niya at hindi siya tamad...for quality monitoring. Tapos iyong sa number of (pre-service) students, dapat ma-set kung ilan ang makaya nang isang coordinator.” (In the choice of a pre-service coordinator, there should be criteria like LET passer with passion, commitment to work and diligence to achieve quality monitoring. The number of pre-service teachers to be handled by each coordinator should also be determined.)

“Be friendly kasi minsan aloof din iyong mga bata na lumapit sa supervisor.” (Be friendly because sometimes pre-service teachers tend to be aloof or hesitant to approach a supervisor.)

Supervisor 2:

“Observation lang hindi na iyong task of teaching. Siguro mag-gawa na lng ng MOA with schools during observation. Don’t let pre-service teachers teach... hanggang observation lang sila.” (Maybe, just prepare a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with schools during observation... Don’t let pre-service teachers teach... pre-service teachers should only observe cooperating teachers.)

“Meet pre-service teachers during Teaching Profession class.”

“Mag comment talaga sila (cooperating teachers) to help develop the students.” (The cooperating teachers have to give their comments to help develop the students.)

“Assigning of coordinator sana na in line sa major ng pre-service students para maka-critic siya ng totoo.” (Coordinators to be assigned hopefully should be in line with the major field of pre-service teachers they would handle.)

Supervisor 3:

“After 17 hours of observation, i- discuss kung ano iyong contents (FS book).” (After the 17 hour-observation, the FS book contents should be discussed.)

“Dapat load ng student supervisor... deloaded.” (Student supervisors should be deloaded.)

“Kailangan makinig mabuti, on time sila.. mag- observe sila at magtanong sila sa cooperating teacher kung paano gawin.” (The pre-service teachers should listen well, come on time, observe and clarify from their cooperating teachers on how they are going to do the their tasks.)

“Emphasize more the personality, not so much on intellectual abilities (of pre-service teachers).”

Supervisor 4:

“Dapat bago mag- deploy, punta muna kami sa cooperating schools; ask kami kung ilang rooms, sections at cooperating teachers meron sila”. (Before deploying pre-service teachers, we will go and visit first the cooperating schools and ask them about number of rooms, sections and cooperating teachers.)

“Orientation importante talaga; iyong sa supervisors muna na nag-hahandle ng pre-service teachers. Pag- usapan ano ang mga kailangan. Tapos kailangang may head ang mga supervisors.” (Conduct of orientation is important. It should start first among student supervisors themselves. Talk about the things to be done; then, assign someone to head or lead the supervisors.)

“Mag-set ng meeting agenda about anong dapat mangyari.. issues at concerns.” (Set the agenda for a meeting to have meaningful discussion of relevant issues and concerns.)

“Reinforce pre-service teachers’ orientation with seminars on related concerns,(e.g. K to 12 curriculum).”

“Uniform dapat ang guidelines for observation ng mga pre-service teachers.” (There should be uniformity of observation guidelines for all pre-service teachers.)

“May planning dapat para ma assess. Dapat my evaluation din ang mga student supervisors pagkatapos ng semester para ma address ang problem at para next year may ma-improve...Kung walang evaluation, walang mangyayari .. paulit -ulit na lng.” (Planning should be done to be able to assess (observation). Student supervisors should conduct an evaluation at the end of the semester to address the present problems and to ensure improvement (of off-campus observation) for the next year.If there is no evaluation, nothing will improve... same problem would persist.)

Supervisor 5:

“Strengthen orientation program to address problems on observation policies, etc.”

“We have to avoid late deployment of pre-service teachers.”

“Cooperating schools should also orient the pre-service teachers.”

“Pag may observation mag -set ng schedule true to all; dapat my schedule na i-follow hindi iyong magpunta lang doon kung kelan mo gusto.” (Set an observation schedule that is true to all pre-service teachers in different major programs; follow the given schedule and don’t just go to cooperating schools whenever you wish.)

“Meron talaga dapat workplan; may structured plan din or timetable of activities

para sa observation. Dapat whole duration ng Field Study (FS) my target dates talaga.” (There must be an observation workplan; provide timetable of activities for observation. Field Study must definitely have specific target dates.)

“Monitor FS book episodes to help pre-service teachers in their queries about the questions asked in the book... to clarify questions. Have uniform FS 5 & FS 6 books to be used by pre-service teachers.”

“Dapat cooperating teachers mag-post conference with pre-service teachers; open sila sa teacher to clarify problems... mas maganda na may sharing of insights, ideas.”(Cooperating teachers need to have post-conference with their mentees; the mentees will feel comfortable in clarifying problems to them...it would even be better if they have sharing of insights...)

“Mas maganda rin kung may journal writing maliban pa sa FS books... kasi sa journal writing habang nagsusulat sila marami silang reflection, daily reflection; iyong hindi nila naisusulat sa FS doon nila nasasabi sa journal.” (It would be better if there is also journal writing besides FS books. Through journal writing, pre-service teachers could have daily reflection; those they could not write in their FS books are expressed in their journal.)

“Maganda every week magkita with supervisors tapos may exchange of ideas at ma-share experiences sa observation”. (It would be better if supervisors could meet pre-service teachers every week and then have exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences during observation.)

Pre-service Teachers

For pre-service teachers, they expected that their off-campus observation could really assist them in their needs to have meaningful and successful observation sessions in schools. They wanted the following to be done for improvement of off-campus observation: orientation program for pre-service teachers and student supervisors, regular meetings, conduct of supervisory and capability building

activities, implementation and monitoring, deployment activity, conduct of FS 6 class sessions, formulation and execution of observation plan, time management, observance of values, regular supervision and guidance of supervisors, proper monitoring and assessment system and modelling.

Below are recommendatory statements of pre-service teachers:

Pre-service Teacher 1:

“*Kailangan my unity.*” (There should be unity.)

Pre-service Teacher 2:

“Conduct proper orientation...set rules.Timely and proper deployment must be observed”.

Pre-service Teacher 3:

“It would be better if there is manual (for observation).

“Present FS book to cooperating teachers.”

Pre-service Teacher 4:

“There must be regular meetings ...updates. Provide any training or seminars to help us.”

Pre-service Teacher 5:

“There is a need for our coordinator to monitor (us) randomly.”

“*Iyong coordinator, i- check yung work of coordinator para at least ma aware sila na dapat they have to be responsible enough sa work nila.*” (The coordinators’ work or roles should be checked so that they will be aware of their responsibilities.)

Pre-service Teacher 6:

“Have self-discipline. Observe time management.”

“There should be no copying of Field Study (FS) 5 and Field Study 6 answers.”

“Check FS books efficiently...not during the end of the course.”

Pre-service Teacher 7:

“For me, I should always be prepared and willing to accept suggestions of my mentor. But I expect more guidance from our supervisor and more understanding from my cooperating teacher for my lapses”.

School Principals

The school principals also shared their insights about improving off-campus observation. Based on the qualitative data results, school principals’ responses were categorized into the following themes: modeling, holding of orientation program for pre-service teachers and student supervisors, timely deployment, conduct of regular meetings, partnership with other TEIs, monitoring , feedback giving, technical assistance, use of appropriate teaching strategies, classroom management, invitation during important pre-service teachers’ events, and improvement of communication skills of pre-service teachers.

Below are statements of school principals stressing ways of improving off-campus observation:

Principal 1:

“Observe protocol involved in observation.”

“Cooperating teachers should be facilitating ... *accommodating kasi kung ikaw lang mag istorya jan wala masyadong learning.*” (...because if a teacher will be the only talking, there could be no effective learning.”

“*Use strategies; Good strategies, good outputs. Cooperating teachers... to be a role model.*”

“*Have quality (which) means productive, effective, efficient teaching; then students learn.*”

“*Bago i-deploy ang pre-service teachers kailangan talaga mahasa sila sa communication skills, writing and oral.*” (Before deploying pre-service teachers they must be trained well in communication skills specifically writing and oral skills.)

“Before they will be deployed to our school, they should be introduced to our students...orientation with student leaders and pre-service teachers.”

Principal 2:

“Strengthen modelling in all aspects. It includes punctuality in coming to class, submitting reports. Provide technical assistance...Pre-service teachers expect something (help) from cooperating teachers.”

“Collaboration with TEIs is greatly needed; we need feedbacks.”

“Conduct timely deployment.”

Improving the Roles of Student Supervisors

In this aspect, questions raised during the Focus Group Interview (FGI) and Key Informant Interview (KII) pertained to viewpoints on the roles of TEIs and cooperating schools. Varied responses describing the roles of student supervisors and cooperating teachers were shared by principals, teachers, supervisors, and pre-service teachers in order to capitalize in desirable experiences and avoid undesirable ones.

Student supervisors are key players in the success of off-campus observation of pre-service teachers. Being such, they should pay careful attention to the different experiences of their pre-service teachers from all major programs. Doing this would lead the pre-service teachers to fulfillment during their field observation.

In an FGI with pre-service teachers, they emphasized the need to enhance student supervisors' roles if the College wanted to have quality off-campus observation. For them, supervisors should be a role model not only to them but also to their co-supervisors. Their roles should focus on the following: formation of values and attitudes, adoption of supervisory activities, use of correct mentoring skills, openness to constructive criticisms, planning and implementation of relevant observation activities/events, adoption of effective feedback mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation of pre-service teachers, lifelong learning, and teamwork.

In general, pre-service teachers regarded their student supervisors as model, guide, counselor, leader, planner, communicator, assessor, evaluator, inspirer, value transformer, and collaborator.

For student supervisors, they mentioned the rationale for improving their roles, i.e. to address the problems and needs of their respective pre-service teachers. They were acceptant of whatever shortcomings they had which contributed to undesirable experiences of student teachers. Some identified their roles as guide who leads pre-service teachers and communicates and coordinates relevant information and activities. Failing in the area of plan of activities or work plan schedule, they were convinced to have it as early as possible to accommodate modifications before the start of off-campus observation. They also wanted to activate efficient and effective monitoring and evaluation system and actions to find out weaknesses and improve on them as well as to solve issues on punctuality, attendance, and discipline of pre-service teachers.

Student supervisors took note of sustaining interpersonal relationships with cooperating teachers. They also shared improving the deployment of pre-service teachers through regular supervision and coordination considering that cooperating schools need to do preparatory activities as pre-service teachers are expected to be around for a field-based observation. Due to late sending-off activity and unpreparedness of pre-service teachers, they also suggested conduct of orientation, seminars, meetings and/or post-conferences for both pre-service teachers and their supervisors. Since there was no unified policies or guidelines for all programs in terms of deployment, portfolio, FS books, and orientation, they felt the need to solve these to avoid repeating the same problems of all those involved in off-campus observation. As a whole, they viewed themselves as model, guide, supervisor, helper, communicator, parent, reflective thinker, monitor, time manager, leader, problem-solver, planner and motivator.

Below are some statements of pre-service teachers regarding their student supervisors' roles:

“Serve as guide in general... supervisor”. *“Mag serve sila as guidance counselor... pwede namin silang malapitan to seek advice.”* (They should act as guidance counselor. We can approach our supervisor to seek advice.)

“They need to prepare us in our tasks and do their responsibilities efficiently.”

“Kung my mga challenges na ma encounter, makatulong sila.” (They will help us if there are challenges we encounter.)

“Develop in us good values.”

The following roles were conveyed by the supervisors themselves:

“Unang- una to guide iyong observers kung ano iyong target nila sa observation... ano iyong gagawin nila doon sa school at ano ang di nila dapat gawin ... ano lang limitations nila.” (First of all, we need to guide the observers (pre-service teachers) about their purpose during observation...what they need to do and not do in school... what their limitations are.)

“ Mag monitor ng situation nila at i-follow-up iyong mga observation of classes din nila.” (We will monitor the situation and follow-up class observations of pre-service teachers.)

“Inform pre-service teachers. Give updates. Make use of remaining time with pre-service teachers after complying with observation time. Orient them regarding school records and other documents.”

“Mag-assist. Tulungan sila sa mga problema nila like undesirable experiences nila.” (We will assist . Help them in their problems like their undesirable experiences.)

“Dinidiplina na sila sa first semester pa lang na maging masigasig sa work kasi nakakaapekto sa iba.” (We discipline them to be hardworking because they could influence others.)

“Tingnan din natin iyong attitude nila...iyong behaviour nila. May magagaling pero my behaviour problem.” (We focus on their attitudes and behaviors. There are good pre-service teachers but they have behavior problems).

“Maka -reflect kami din kung ano iyong performance namin.” (We reflect also on our performance.)

“Mas mabigat iyong pag encourage sa kanila na magtuloy sa teaching career nila pagkatapos ma- obserbahan ang hirap sa pagtuturo ng mga estudyante” (It is more difficult to encourage them to pursue their teaching career after observing how hard it is to teach students).

“Role modeling, anong makita nila gayahin nila.” (Do role modelling; they imitate what they see in you).

“Magkaroon ng proper supervisory plan. Mag-submit din kami ng report, monitoring report. Iyong progress report ba with regard to our students observing in schools... at least weekly.” (Have a proper supervisory plan. We will also submit a monitoring report. It is like progress report regarding pre-service teachers’ observation in cooperating schools... at least weekly.)

“Regular meeting with students.”

Improving the Roles of Cooperating Teachers

It is very clear that pre-service teachers (mentees) have certain experiences which may be desirable or undesirable during their off-campus observation. The cooperating teachers (mentors) are influential in the formation of such experiences during the initial stage of their mentees’ first off-campus observation even for a short duration of time. It may be possible that the kind of experiences that their mentees encounter in cooperating schools may be reflective of the kind of mentors they have. One way to gauge such influence is through the effects of their mentees’ experiences under their direct supervision. This is what makes their roles challenging and demanding. They need to perform their roles and adjust when necessary. Mere recognition of their vital roles is not enough. What is more important is to understand and assess which of their roles need to be enhanced and sustained in response to the varied experiences of the pre-service teachers.

Based on the qualitative data from KII, the cooperating teachers acknowledged imperfections in their roles and they were willing to change to avoid further shortcomings as mentors. Additionally, they knew how vulnerable the mentees are when exposed to unpleasant teaching-learning environment. So, they themselves understood how tough it is to handle pre-service teachers aside from their regular teaching functions in schools. Despite all the challenges, they expressed their commitment to perform their roles in a higher level because they wanted only what is best for their mentees. For instance, they wanted to help those who have low self- confidence, low self-esteem, and unmet expectations. They could also guide those who are still unprepared to take the challenges of off-campus observation. Part of their role is modeling in which they emphasized the value of internalizing the principles of “teaching with a heart”, and “walk the talk” to be manifested in words, actions, thoughts and intentions for successful and happy field experiences and practice teaching.

In similar case, the cooperating teachers needed to be more friendly, accommodating and flexible to establish good interaction and interpersonal relationships. They suggested maximizing their roles as adviser, coach, mentor and consultant so that both their students and mentees would receive proper guidance, learn a lot from their teaching and perform well their tasks. They need to be both soft and tough in dealing with their students’ and mentees’ problems. To ensure timely feedback giving and effective problem solving, they should use systematic monitoring. In order to facilitate information dissemination, they need to organize the student teachers per learning area with the help of subject area chairpersons. Lastly, they stressed the practice of desirable values and attitudes (e.g. diligence,

discipline, commitment, self-control) because those are inevitable assets of mentees to succeed in their observation tasks as well as their future practice teaching experience.

Generally, the cooperating teachers believed that their roles to sustain desirable experiences are as follows: model, facilitator, team player, counselor, adviser, motivator, communicator, and guide.

On the part of school principals, they said in an interview that cooperating teachers must enhance their roles to address the pressing experiences of pre-service teachers. They encouraged the teachers to exemplify the value that “sharing is caring.” They stressed the role of teachers as facilitator of learning, making use of good strategies to ensure good performance and outputs. They also regarded the teachers’ role as 21st century teacher to survive in this era of globalization and other technological advancements. Added to this role is their being creative, resourceful, and productive as they assist and guide their mentees to adapt to real classroom setting. Similarly, they motivated their teachers to be more affectionate and loving to motivate diverse kinds of students to learn. Doing everything for the improvement of cooperating teachers’ roles would reduce if not totally prevent undesirable experiences while having off-campus observation.

As a whole, the school principals regarded modeling as valuable role of cooperating teachers who need to set a good example in fulfilling their responsibilities towards pre-service teachers.

The following statements are generated from an interview with the school principals:

“We emphasize to cooperating teachers (that) we respect our pre-service teachers. (They) will not be scolded. Cooperating teachers (need) to love (their) students.”

“*Nakikita nila ang support ng buong school...*” (Pre-service teachers witness the support of the entire school.) “Department heads and other school personnel support readiness of pre-service teachers to practice teaching... It is not a joke to train teachers.”

“Their role is to be a model, classroom manager, counselor... know how to deal with class situations like if there are misbehaviors.”

Some cooperating teachers mentioned some roles they take as follows:

“Serve as model. Checker / monitor.”

“Act as second parents.”

“Change my attitudes to be more open, to be more innovative.”

Below are some roles of cooperating teachers as viewed by pre-service teachers:

“Guide in the classroom observation in particular.”

“*Helper...makakatulong mabago iyong aspeto ng buhay.*” (... They should help develop aspects of life.)

“Their roles are almost the same with our supervisors.”

Implications to Roles of Teacher Education Institutions and Cooperating Schools

Concerns in the past years have been focused on how the practicum could be improved through quality off-campus observation. A challenging part of this observation is the diverse experiences that will be faced by graduating pre-service teachers.

The pre-service teachers should not only learn but also reflect on and enjoy in observation sessions. Classroom activities which they find helpful in strengthening off-campus observation and in preparing for their future practice teaching should be maintained. Happenings in observed classes which may affect them negatively should be avoided. Setting of high expectations from cooperating teachers should be minimized so that it may not bring disastrous effects once those expectations are not fulfilled. For them, a form of consolation is to remain optimistic about off-campus observation which may help them become familiar with transition from on-campus theoretical orientation to off-campus field learning experience.

Good experiences may bring good results. With these, Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) are forerunners of an advocacy on enriching professional coursework to supplement field study courses of pre-service teachers. On one hand, TEIs through the efforts of those in the undergraduate teacher education program should enhance their management and leadership skills, formulate sound policies on off-campus observation, implement doable and realistic plans and adopt relevant monitoring and evaluation tools. On the other hand, to sustain good experiences, the cooperating schools act as a good training ground for all pre-service teachers. They need to facilitate the transition stage so that pre-

service teachers will have an enjoyable observation experiences spent with schools' internal stakeholders, thereby, helping them avoid the ill-effects of undesirable experiences.

As a whole, the realization of the benefits of desirable including undesirable experiences depends not only on the pre-service teachers but also the TEIs and cooperating schools. Both have roles to develop well-prepared 21st century pre-service teachers. Both could complement each other's role for the welfare of prospective teachers. With strong need for competent, knowledgeable, skillful and value-laden pre-service teachers, the TEIs along with cooperating schools should reflect on, take responsibilities and act together to give the best learning experiences to pre-service teachers during their off-campus observation and eventually up to their practicum program.

Conclusion

The present study explored the varied experiences of pre-service teachers and looked at the improvement of the off-campus observation. It also clarified how pre-service teachers' experiences could contribute to improvement of teacher education program particularly the roles of TEIs and cooperating schools from different perspectives, i.e. school principals, cooperating teachers, student supervisors and pre-service teachers. This multi-level approach offers a vast array of suggestions useful for all those involved in teacher education program.

Due to varied experiences during field-based observation, pre-service teachers from different major fields have been made aware of initial adjustments from in-campus experience to off-campus exposures. Whether the experiences are desirable or not desirable, pre-service teachers need to reflect on them. These experiences may influence the prospects of applying the theoretical facets of their field study courses to the real-world classroom milieu. Thus, off-campus observation is crucial in remedying the theory-practice dilemma besetting pre-service education program.

With all those emerging themes, pre-service teachers need to understand the intricacies of off-campus observation in particular. They just have to face every aspect of observation squarely. In fact, the desirable and undesirable experiences are products of several factors that have stake in education. Most importantly, these experiences provide training for them to be, among others, spiritually, physically, mentally, socially and emotionally ready to strive amidst complex observation tasks. On one hand, the desirable experiences are helpful in boosting highly their confidence and sustaining their positive outlook about off-campus observation. On the other hand, the undesirable experiences serve as valuable lessons to become more adaptive individuals in today's unpredictable learning environment.

In line with the shared experiences were the suggestions to improve the off-campus observation given by the multi-level participants. All those suggested ideas regard that the experiences need to be assessed and evaluated so that pre-service teachers along with supervisors, cooperating teachers and principals could determine their current status and give due interventions to their weak areas in terms of off-campus observation. All of their recommendations for enhanced observation suggest what needs to be done, changed and improved in its system and management. It could also be deduced that their concern is on how they could sustain a meaningful off-campus observation where the pre-service teachers' expectations match the demands in cooperating schools and TEIs. They wanted to overcome future undesirable experiences as well as remedy the disconnection of theoretical knowledge to off-campus observation especially that pre-service teachers are sent to different types of schools.

TEIs and cooperating schools are key players in the success of off-campus observation required to pre-service teachers. One vital role of student supervisors and cooperating teachers is to serve as models to continuously develop the pre-service teachers' competencies in off-campus observation as well as their succeeding practicum program. They should set the stage where pre-service teachers could be trained for off-campus tasks. Undoubtedly, if TEIs and cooperating schools could perform well their roles, pre-service teachers will understand classroom realities and be more acceptant of their challenging tasks during off-campus observation.

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