

Untold Stories of Selected Student Teachers in Cebu City, Philippines

Rufina C. Rosaroso

Cebu Normal University, Cebu City, Philippines

Date Submitted: December 15, 2021

Date Accepted: May 08, 2022

Originality: 90%

Plagiarism Detection: Passed

ABSTRACT

This is a narrative research study where the untold stories of selected student teachers are documented and analyzed. The untold stories are specifically focused on challenges student teachers encountered in their practice teaching, namely; mentor-mentee relationship, lesson planning, teaching demonstrations, and classroom management. As student teachers unveiled their stories, these challenges serve as inspirations to continue their journey and explore the world of teaching. This study utilizes narrative analysis where the narrative meaning was interpreted at an informational content level suited for content analysis. Content analysis is used in analyzing the verbatim accounts of the student teacher key informants. Further, coding is utilized in the identification of themes or categories. A homogeneous purposive sampling is used in the identification and selection of ten (10) student-teacher key informants who are chosen from two Teacher Education Institutions in Cebu City; one private and one public. Observations and in-depth interviews are conducted with selected student teachers in gathering detailed information about their on and off-campus practice teaching journey aside from collecting pertinent documents. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are utilized as an additional data-gathering technique. Triangulation is also used as an additional method for data analysis where documents, interviews, and observations were validated. It is recommended that an in-depth study of the same topic be conducted to further disclose the hidden challenges practice teaching provides. A mixed method design is recommended to quantify large samples constituting several teacher education institutions in the country.

Keywords: *narrative research, content analysis, narrative analysis, coding, Focus Group Discussions, homogeneous purposive sampling, triangulation*

INTRODUCTION

In early times, teaching has been considered a noble profession. Its nobility lies primarily in the notion that teaching, being one of the professions commonly observed in middle-class families has received high recognition and respect, particularly in rural areas. A teacher who is seen every day is greeted by the townsfolk and is very much popular in the whole community.

Teaching is a commitment. For Day (2004), teaching involves a personal commitment to increase motivation in everyday endeavors. Such endeavor entails classroom engagements which include hard work, patience, role modeling, and the like. Thus, commitment to teaching is highly significant since it fosters an obligation to mould young minds into productive, honest, and value-laden citizenry. Aside from being a service-oriented

profession, teaching involves touching the students' lives. Moreover, hard work and patience, as parameters of success are always identified with a commitment since engagement in teaching tasks is an endless journey. One must be effective and efficient in the integration of varied class-related activities aside from the implementation of best teaching strategies and resources for knowledge dispensation. Such strategies and resources encompass the commonly termed best teaching practices.

The teaching profession is offered in Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) with pedagogical and professional education courses, in which practice teaching serves as a final requirement for graduation. Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) as training hubs for practice teaching provide instructional

experiences on classroom management and lesson implementation. Moreover, the development of teaching skills and competencies is enhanced as student teachers become familiar with instructional planning, lesson implementation, and the application of appropriate assessment techniques. Thus, student teachers are trained for actual classroom engagements. With this scenario, TEIs are compelled to face challenging tasks in the preparation of student teachers (Scharlach, 2005).

Practice teaching is offered in the education curriculum to fully prepare student teachers in the field. It is often characterized as the most transformative experience in teacher education. Rosaroso & Pañares (2010) posited that practice teaching is the convergence of theory and practice since it provides opportunities for hands-on experience by testing theoretical concepts in a real-life setting. All theoretical concepts learned from the first three years in the teaching curriculum are applied in the actual setting. In addition, the primary purpose of practice teaching is to provide the student teachers with a carefully mentored experience to further enhance their knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Juson (2004) reiterated that experiences gained from practice teaching are very crucial and valuable in the learning process. From this perspective, Barahona (2015) validated that student teachers are expected to undertake and observe a wide range of teaching and non-teaching activities.

Transforming oneself as a teacher is a dream come true for many student teachers. Thinking of challenges and opportunities is prioritized for the realization of their dreams. Thus, student teachers are challenged in all task/s and engagements their mentors are requiring from them. The initial tasks include lesson plan/s preparations, activities integration cascading to teaching demonstrations (Thompson, 2014). With this scenario, Beattie (2000) suggested that it is important to investigate the student teachers' untold stories. These untold stories serve as avenues for the student teachers' quest for quality teaching though at first these were considered as part of their traumatic experiences. Thus, this study was conducted as a response to disclosing the selected student teachers' narratives on practice teaching.

This study unveiled the selected student teachers' stories on practice teaching. Their stories

enhanced the mentor-mentee relationship which was a crucial issue and too difficult to stabilize in practice teaching. Further, the results of the study would serve as additional input in improving Practice Teaching Manual in all Teacher Education Institutions in the Philippines.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a narrative research study where the stories of selected student teachers were documented and analyzed. For Wolgemuth and Agosto (2019), narrative research is a qualitative research method that draws out and analyzes stories to describe people, events, and others.

In addition, narrative research is geared toward life stories addressing how these stories are constructed (Bochner 2007; Trahar 2009) and is anchored on how people realize and interpret the meaning of their lives based on their stories (Andrews et al. 2013; McMullen and Braithwaite 2013). Narrative research was significant in this study since the information from the selected student teachers who comprehended, described, and acted as storytellers and did make sense in their world of practice teaching were investigated (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). Unfolding their stories would provide an avenue for the improvement of practice teaching to meet the existing gap that needs to be resolved.

This study utilized narrative analysis where the narrative meaning was interpreted at an informational content level which was suited for content analysis. Content analysis was used in analyzing the verbatim accounts of the selected key informants. For Bengtson, (2016), the content analysis aims to categorize and draw meaning from the collected raw data and to elicit conclusions where interpretation and coding of verbatim accounts are done (Duriau & Pfarrer, 2007). An interpretation was done by coding the texts and/or descriptions from the data. Further, content analysis is a research design method for formulating inferences from collected data to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2004). These valid inferences were used in the identification of codes that served as themes or patterns that emerged from thick descriptions of data.

A homogeneous purposive sampling was used in the identification and selection of key informants.

This was used as the student teachers had shared characteristics or a set of characteristics (Crossman, 2018). Ten student teachers were chosen from two Teacher Education Institutions in Cebu City; one private and one public.

Moreover, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected student teachers to gather detailed information about their on and off-campus practice teaching journey. Siedman (2006) noted that in-depth interviews provide avenues for understanding the stories of selected individuals. Thus, probing questions were necessary for in-depth interviewing. Aside from in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were utilized as additional data-gathering techniques of the study aside from observations and collecting pertinent documents

Triangulation was also used as an additional method for data analysis where documents, interviews, and observations were validated. For Nightingale (2020), triangulation is validating the results of the same study using different methods of data collection.

Ethical Considerations

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in the study. The key informants in the study are unknown to the researcher; hence, no moral ascendancy may be imposed by the researcher towards them. The study is also conducted through the personal capacity of the researcher and no funding agencies or sponsorships shall be affected negatively in the conduct of the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

In the study, the collected data will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Further, the names and other personal information of the selected key informants will not be disclosed; instead, pseudonyms shall be utilized. Transcriptions shall be encoded in the computer with encryption to limit the access of such to the researcher alone. Such transcription, computer-encoded, and written formats shall be deleted 6 months after the completion of the study.

Informed Consent Process

Respect for persons, who may solicit consent, how and when it will be done who may give

consent, especially in the case of special minors and those who are not legally competent to give consent, or indigenous people who require additional clearances will be observed in the study. The right of withdrawal of participation shall also be respected in the conduct of the study. In case the key informant chooses to withdraw in the course of the interview, the researcher shall respect the decision without prejudice to the key informant. The key informant, however, may not be able to withdraw his/her responses as soon as the paper has been published.

Risks

The level of risk and measures to mitigate these risks (including physical, psychological, social, and economic), including plans for adverse event management will be observed in the study. The selected key informants will not encounter any risk since the venue of data gathering is at the identified teacher education institution where the students are enrolled.

Benefits

The selected key informants will benefit from the study for reason that they will be aware of On and Off-campus student teaching experiences.

Incentives or compensation

The selected key informants will be provided with snacks during the conduct of interviews as compensation for the time rendered in participating in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Before earning a teacher education degree, student teachers are engaged and exposed to practice teaching, an essential undergraduate experience. It is in practice teaching where student teachers are prepared for actual classroom instruction utilizing the pedagogical background knowledge and skills they learned in their years of schooling.

The study is geared primarily toward the untold stories of selected student teachers in Cebu City. The results and discussion are focused on various challenges student teachers have encountered in and out of the classroom.

Challenges Encountered in Practice Teaching

The selected student teachers personally admitted that practice teaching is challenging. These challenges made them feel and realize that teaching will never be fulfilled if these are not encountered by an individual student teacher. Identification of these challenges is presented in the following sections, namely; mentor-mentee relationship, lesson planning, teaching demonstrations, and classroom management.

Mentor-Mentee Relationship

Building a positive mentor-mentee relationship is an essential component in practice teaching. Such a relationship entails establishing rapport and winning each other's hearts for both stakeholders involved in practice teaching, the mentor and the mentee. In line with the mentor relationship, one student-teacher key informant shared:

I had a good relationship with my mentor because I used to consult her about my lessons and follow her instructions. On her end, she also suggested and criticized my instructional delivery and the way I demonstrated in a courteous manner (STKI-1).

Further, two student teacher key informants cordially discussed:

My relationship with my mentor was quite good because she treated me like a real classroom teacher rather than an individual student teacher (STKI-5).

It was very good because my mentor was very helpful and taught me a lot during my time as a student teacher (STKI-6).

With these utterances, it is very clear that the mentor-mentee relationship is well-established. Such a relationship provides an avenue for practice teaching mentors to monitor the student teachers in the development of their professional competencies, attitudes, and behavior (DepEd, 2007). These competencies, attitudes, and behavior are essential in the transformation of student teachers from ordinary students to professional classroom teachers.

Moreover, Calapardo, Balagtas & Dacanay (2016) posited that practice teaching mentors guide, model, tutor, observe, collaborate and analyze the

student teacher's progress. As role models, practice teaching mentors should learn to trust and accept differences of opinions between them and student teachers. These findings are validated by Leshem (2012) affirming that student practice mentors are role models who possess a mastery of knowledge and skills.

On the other hand, some student teacher key informants assessed their relationships with their mentors as not that good compared with the others. This is what student teacher key informants uttered:

My relationship with my mentor was not good. She kept on reprimanding me even if I did not do anything wrong. She did not appreciate sometimes even my little effort (STKI-2).

It was not good because she was very strict. It was difficult for me to approach her due to her reaction every time I approach her (STKI-9).

She was not the kind of mentor that I expected (STKI-3).

Dealing with student teachers is not an easy task. However, treatment with respect is indeed necessary. As mentors, they are expected to observe courtesy, not only with student teachers but with everybody in the school community. Moreover, good mentors are role models on how to become good teachers as well as researchers. They should show interest in the mentee's professional and personal development. They should help mentees grow academically through consistent monitoring and mentoring with constructive feedback. Thus, teacher development is necessary for the individual student-teacher. As emphasized by Kagoda and Sentongo (2015), teacher development implies guiding student teachers to foster their ability to work harmoniously with mentors and learners thereby building their confidence. With teacher development, student teachers build rapport in dealing with both mentors and learners as well.

On the other hand, Hawkey cited in Leshem (2012) contended that mentoring is unique since mentors and student teachers observe in the process a variety of teaching practices that sometimes lead to complicated interactions and multifaceted subtleties. Thus, differences occur which are sometimes too difficult to deal with but required resolutions.

Focus Group Discussions were also utilized as another method of data gathering. Focus Group Discussions are data-gathering tools where small groups of people are interviewed to gather various viewpoints on a particular topic and serve as validating instruments in research (Ary, 2002). As with regard to Focus Group Discussions on mentor-mentee relationships, some of the student-teacher key informants were very vocal in their responses. One student teacher key informant said:

Building rapport with my mentor was the best instrument for my happy memories in student teaching (STKI-1 and 5).

Found my second mother in student teaching (STKI- 6).

FGD results show that the student-teacher key informants have the same feeling of building rapport with their mentors. As revealed from their utterances, a positive mentor-mentee relationship is developed among them.

On the other hand, some student teacher key informants find it quite disappointing with regard to their relationship with their mentors. With FGD as another data collection method, one student teacher key informant reiterated:

It was a journey full of challenges though I felt disappointed most of the time (STKI- 3).

Though the days were considered bad, I just prayed hard; I need to have a good fight (STKI-9).

My mentors' relationships with me were unpredictable, but still, I considered them as challenges and lessons learned (STKI-2).

Despite earning positive relationships with some student-teacher key informants, others find theirs as challenges and lessons to learn. Though they are quite disappointed in some of their interactions, still they continue their journey and keep on praying for a brighter tomorrow.

Lesson Planning

Lesson planning is a challenging task for student teachers. They are expected to design lessons that are aligned with the state-mandated agenda and the institution's vision and mission.

Since lesson planning is a challenging process, it is a task many student teachers find a struggle. One student teacher shared:

I found it very difficult because my mentor had high standards (STKI-4).

At first, I had a hard time planning my lesson because I did not know what activities to use (STKI-5).

My problem in lesson planning is the application of several approaches (STKI-2).

These utterances reveal that some student teachers have difficulties in lesson planning. Some mentors expect too much from the student teachers since lesson planning is taught in pedagogical courses. Others cannot think of feasible activities and approaches fitted to the lesson/s. As posited by Alanazi, (2019) designing an effective lesson plan is not an easy task. Thinking of appropriate teaching approaches, the art of questioning, motivation, and others should be prioritized to sustain learners' interest. Further, student teachers' hard work and dynamism coupled with familiarity with classroom routines and learners' needs should be considered in lesson planning.

With Focus Group Discussions as one form of validating data, some student teacher key informants bravely shared:

Expectations on how to write lesson plans from my mentors are stressful (STKI-2).

Thinking of appropriate class activities makes me stay long in front of my laptop (STKI-5).

Aside from integrating values in my lessons, contemplating on best teaching strategies is really tiresome (STKI-4)

On the contrary, some student teacher key informants positively disclosed:

Based on my experience, it was easy to plan and write my lesson plan (STKI-3).

I usually ask others about the format, and what words to use. (STKI-7).

I just applied what I learned from my mentors (STKI-8).

I did not have any adjustments since we were trained to do lesson plans by ourselves (STKI-1).

These disclosures exhibit positive attitudes toward lesson planning. Student teachers find it easy to plan and write their lesson plans since they really apply what they have learned from their pedagogical courses. With this, effective teaching can be facilitated with well-written lesson plans (Alanazi, 2019). Moreover, Yildirim cited in Gulten (2013) disclosed that lesson planning is an avenue for student teachers to reflect on what to teach, how to teach, and how to evaluate (Ulla, 2016).

Verbatim accounts from the selected student teacher key informants using FGD on lesson planning revealed a positive outlook. One student teacher key informant said:

We really had mastery in terms of lesson planning. Writing effective lesson plans is just as easy as writing a portfolio (STKI-3 and 8).

I always seek my mother's assistance, who is also a teacher to check my lesson plans (STKI-1).

Sometimes my friends and I, work together in writing our lesson plans (STKI-7).

Lesson planning for some student-teacher key informants is just an easy task though laborious. Their family and friends help them conceptualize their lessons. Working with others and helping one another make lesson planning an easier task to do. Thus, complying with student teaching requirements specifically submission of lesson plans becomes an ordinary routine for student teachers.

Teaching Demonstration

Instructional delivery in a form of a teaching demonstration is another challenging task for student teachers. Since they always think they are only student teachers, they are not very confident to hold classes (Ulla, 2016). Based on experience, most of them feel uncomfortable and anxious in front of the learners. As one student teacher claimed:

I had a hard time motivating my students because of learners' non-participation in-class activities (STKI-5).

Some of my students won't use the instructional materials which I provided, they just hold them, without doing anything (STKI-9).

My students were not receptive to my teaching style maybe because of diversity (STKI-10).

Had a problem with providing instructions in class-related activities (STKI-1).

These revelations elucidate problems in teaching demonstration. Student teachers' lack of confidence and uncomfortable facing the learners can attribute to this notion. Gurbuz (2015) cited in Ulla (2016) supported these findings stating that during class observations, it was found that student teachers felt nervous, uncomfortable, and anxious before and during instructional delivery. This results in a disorganized lesson presentation since some student teachers forget the lesson sequence.

In addition, FGD results reveal that student-teacher key informants are hesitant to teach primarily because of non-familiarity with actual teaching scenarios. As one student teacher's key informant disclosed:

When I practiced teaching at home, I was very confident, but when I saw my students and mentor, I forgot my lesson (STKI-9).

Some of my students were playful. That's why they could not follow my instructions (STKI-1).

Student's willingness to learn was my problem since they were not focused (STKI-5 and 9)

Both data from interviews and FGD provide similar results. Teaching demonstrations are the student teachers' big challenge. They still need to enhance their self-confidence and observe the proper mindset for teaching.

Classroom Management

Classroom management is considered one of the requisites of effective instruction. Gan (2013) stressed that the majority of student teachers treated classroom management as the biggest issue during practice teaching. Aside from the big class size, mixed-ability learners pose an additional classroom management problem.

Big class size is uncontrollable. Such a scenario is validated by Ulla (2016) claiming that learners' noise and misbehavior are some of the problems student teachers' experiences. Thus, difficulty in planning appropriate activities and managing the class becomes a problem.

In terms of classroom management, one student teacher key informant revealed:

Getting my learners' attention and providing a positive atmosphere is my problem (STKI-7).

Encountered 65 students in class and it was a headache (STKI-9).

Got problems with learners' diversity and their behavior (STKI-10).

Misbehaving learners really affects classroom management (STKI-6).

These expose' exhibit student teachers' problems in classroom management. Class size has been a problem specifically in rural barangays where classrooms are limited. If the class is big, learners' willingness to learn and participate in class-related activities is affected. As Gan (2013) reiterated, teaching and interacting with students having discipline problems and low motivation need effective and efficient teachers who can handle classroom management problems. This is one instructional skill that student teachers need to master. Moreover, Ulla (2016) contended that some student teachers had difficulty starting the lesson and motivating the learners since they are not real teachers. Learners know that the student teacher in front of them is also a student like them, a misconception that should not be instilled in them.

Classroom management, as an essential component in the teaching-learning process, plays a challenging role for student teachers. Revelations from their verbatim accounts on classroom

management signify countless trials which the student teachers accept. One student teacher key informant shared:

Since some of my students were playful, it was too difficult to get their attention (STKI-7).

The class size was a problem, it was more than 50 students (STKI-9).

Some students misbehaved because they were attention-seekers (STKI 6 and 10).

With all of these findings, it is evident that classroom management is one important factor in teaching that every student teacher should be competent of. However, in classroom management, student misbehavior always exists which poses a problem among student teachers. Such misbehavior includes non-participation in class-related activities, unwillingness to learn, and disrespect among others.

These were some of the problems which student teachers identified with regard to classroom management. Lopes (2017) further validated that classroom misbehavior leads to unproductivity and students' non-involvement in meaningful learning engagements.

As observed on student-teacher key informants, it was evident that their enthusiasm to teach, positive attitude in accepting challenges, and perseverance to continue with their journey were all documented. Their positive outlook revealed enjoyment despite all the challenges they encountered.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The untold stories of selected student teachers primarily geared on challenges they had encountered, namely; mentor-mentee relationships, lesson planning, teaching demonstrations, and classroom management. As the selected student teachers unveiled their stories, these challenges served as inspirations to continue their journey to teaching. This endless journey is always characterized by essential components namely; commitment to work, dedication to serving and touching the lives of the learners who will become the next generation Z and the future leaders of the country.

It is recommended that an in-depth study of the same topic will be conducted to further disclose the hidden challenges student teaching provides. A mixed method design is recommended to quantify large samples constituting several higher education institutions in the country.

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