

An Investigation of Challenges and Response Strategies Among Pre-Service Teachers in Extended Teaching Practice at Dongtha, Bualapha, and Sathid Lower Secondary Schools (2021–2022)

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Abstract

This research aims at determining the problems faced, solutions done when having long teaching practice and suggestions for future improvement. The research participants were 25 pre-service teachers, 14 women who had long teaching practice in three teaching centers. The research instruments were observation, diary, and semi-structured interview. The data was analyzed by using thematic analysis technique. The findings showed that pre-service teachers faced a lot of problems such as: learner discipline and classroom management, procedures of preparing lesson plan, teaching urgently without lesson plans, teaching additional subjects, insufficient teaching materials, difficulty in working with school teachers, arranging time to do school activities, working with staying families and local authority, and unsystematic way of conducting research. And actions pre-service teachers did to solve the problems were: adjusting timetables for every work, discussing problems and ways to solve them with school teachers and other pre-service teachers, talking to students about their behaviors, creating interesting teaching materials and teaching techniques, and using the materials that exist in schools.

Keywords: Problems, Suggestions, Solutions, Fong teaching practice, Pre-service teacher

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Introduction

Teaching practice is known as an activity for pre-service teachers to expose teaching theory to actual practice. During this period, pre-service teachers are given the opportunity to try the art of teaching before actually getting into the real world of teaching profession (Kiggundu and Nayimuli, 2009). The Flinders University in Australia mentions that good teaching practice is a key for pre-service teachers to gain teaching experiences at the end of teacher training programs, and it is an important opportunity for pre-service teachers to experience the actual teaching and learning environment in order to become a teacher (Perry & Power, 2004).

Teaching contains both majors of Art and Science. Therefore, when teaching practice pre-service teachers do not practice only sciences of knowledge and teaching skills, they have to practice other surrounding educational management activities. This means that to become a teacher, one has to have quality of human activity, methodology to convey ideas, emotion, or enthusiasm, transformation of content knowledge and professional skills which can be tested, examined, and verified (Tara M. Mennitt, 2019). For pre-service teachers to have fruitful experiences, teaching practice is not only associated with academic works, it includes all surrounding circumstances such as living and local tradition which combine as a huge challenge for pre-service teachers to deal with, completing class registers, marking the learners' books, attending staff meetings, and helping with extramural activities.

Having known the importance of long teaching practice, Savannakhet Teacher Training College has supported pre-service teachers with the teaching materials, long-teaching practice orientations, teacher supervisors, traveling facility as well as the accommodations. Moreover, Savannakhet TTC sent a TTC teacher to observe and assist pre-service teachers in both academic and daily activities at each school. In addition, the TTC teacher coordinates closely with local school and community educational and authority members in order to observe and report the problems, activities and behaviors of pre-service teachers to respective teacher training colleges.

Although pre-service teachers have achieved a lot of support from their respective teacher training colleges, especially STTC; they had the capacity of doing school administrative work and teaching roles and they had had short teaching experiences many times along the teacher training program, they still faced problems and challenges. And no scientific research or study has been conducted in order to raise the problems faced in long teaching practice that causes pre-service teachers to achieve low teaching experiences. Moreover, understanding of the pre-service teachers' experiences and the awareness of the challenges faced during the school experience could induce a negative attitude on the part of the pre-service teachers towards the profession. In this regard, it is needful for teacher training

programs to reconsider and review ways of overcoming these challenges in order to enable these novice teachers to become qualified teachers in the future. Therefore, this research is designed to seek numerous aspects of long teaching practice, and how they can cope with the problems.

Research objectives

This research has three purposes:

1. To examine the problems that pre-service teachers faced in long teaching practice.
2. To seek solutions that pre-service teachers used to solve the problems.
3. To clarify suggestions for designing future fruitful long teaching practice gathered from real practitioners like pre-service teachers.

Research Methodology

This research was designed step by step starting from discussing the research topic, research instruments, and research processes before having long practice. Then when the pre-service teachers had long practice, their actions, problems were observed and discussed; diaries were written, and then semi-structured interviews were conducted when they returned to Savannakhet TTC. Based on the research processes, quality detailed information about problems and behaviors needs to be collected, therefore, this research used qualitative methods.

Research populations and samples

The research population is 149 pre-service teachers of Savannakhet TTC, 93 females who had long teaching practice in pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools in academic year 2021-2022. They were divided into five teaching practice centers (one school, one center). The total sample is 25 secondary school pre-service teachers, 14 females including 8 pre-service teachers at Sathid, 8 pre-service teachers Dongtha Secondary School, and 9 pre-service teachers at Bualapha Secondary School.

Data collection

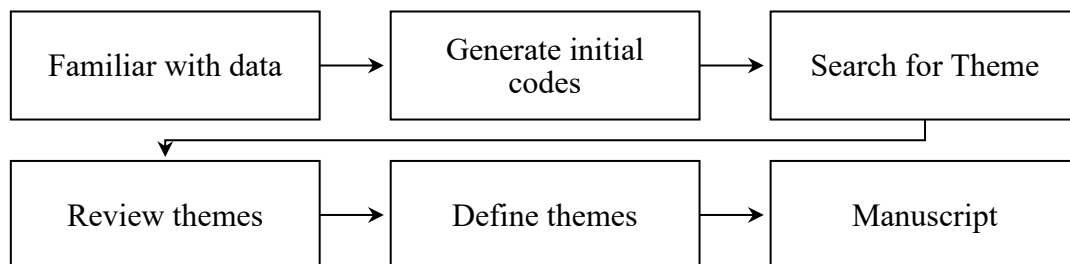
Three research instruments were used to collect data, such as observations, diaries and interviews: (1) observation is an instrument for collecting the behaviors of people. Observations can be in various forms and purposes (Morrow 2007). Observation in this research was used to observe behaviors when pre-service teachers had done different activities during their long teaching practice, especially problems faced and solutions done. It was used

when it was noticed the problems and solutions occurred during the time of long teaching practice. (2) Diary was written by pre-service teachers. Before going to have long teaching practice, the teacher trainer (main researcher) trained strategy to collect data as well as strategy to write the diary. The diary focuses on activities they did during the day, difficulties or problems happened, and solutions used. (3) Semi-structured interviews are useful when it is not possible to draw up a list of possible pre-codes because little is known about the subject area. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was selected to collect information, specifically problems occurred, reactions, solutions used, and suggestions recommended in order for developing relevant long teaching practice plans in the future. The interview was conducted when pre-service teachers returned to TTC.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis is a method used for this process for analyzing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006). There are 6 steps of Thematic Analysis as follow:

Figure1: Steps to analyze qualitative data



All transcript from the interview was printed out for review together with observation sheets and diaries. And then we coded the main information by using different colored highlights to mark each aspect before grouping the themes of issues, solution, and suggestion. The most found issues were arranged to be the main issue respectively. Then each sub-topic was defined and written into a description.

Results and discussions

Research Results

Three research results based on its objectives: (1) Problems pre-service teachers faced in long teaching practice. (2) Solutions pre-service teachers used, and (3) Suggestions for future preparation in long teaching practice.

Problems faced in long teaching practice

Pre-service teachers did five main roles during teaching practice period such as: teaching roles, doing school activities, being an adviser, working with the local community

and staying with family, and conducting action research. Therefore, these aspects were decided to present as the detail below:

Teaching role. Most pre-service faced several teaching problems such as: (1) The implementation of syllabuses was late. It was found that every teaching subject in each grade of secondary schools were implemented slower than they were expected. For example, six units should be complete in semester one, but only four units were complete. Therefore, to complete the content of the syllabus, the school teachers told pre-service teachers to teach quickly; (2) unpredicted replacement teaching: 13 people (52%) of pre-service teachers found it difficult when school teachers asked them to teach instead of him/her occasionally without planning, especially when were asked to teach the subjects that are not their main subjects such as when English pre-service teachers were ask to teach Art, Sport, Sciences etc. (3) insufficient teaching and learning materials: all of them mentioned that they faced a problem of lacking teaching and learning materials, mainly lacking of textbooks, which became the cause of late learning, since teachers had to write the text on board; (4) unmotivated in learning: 20 (80%) of pre-service teachers addressed students were not enthusiastic to learn. They came to school late; they did not do homework, and they did not listen when teachers explained the lessons.

Being a class adviser. The finding showed that 13 (52%) of pre-service teachers could not be fully responsible advisers, since they did not have freedom to organize school activities. One of them gives an example: one day, two activities like playing sports and planting trees at the same time, therefore, I divided students into two teams: one team was for planting and one team was for playing football. Then the old classroom teacher told them to do it together. This made students confused and unhappy', and one also said 'when I planned to do this activity, the old classroom teacher wanted to do another, so she told me to rewrite my plan again' The finding revealed that 11(44%) of pre-service teachers could not get along with the school teachers well because the school teachers always made them do other work or taught other subjects without planning; school teachers did not tell what they should do based on their roles and responsibilities. However, they disagreed when pre-service teachers did something more than their expectation. Therefore, pre-service teachers felt very pressured when they wanted to do things.

Pre-service teachers have to be exposed to, for example, completing class registers, marking the learners' books, attending staff meetings, and helping with extramural activities, to mention but a few duties. In most instances, the pre-service teachers are treated as "visitors" and not involved in schooling activities. They are sometimes not invited to staff meetings and this negatively impacts their knowledge of decision-making strategies and cooperative learning.

Permanent and full-time teachers ignore the fact that pre-service teachers could also make valuable inputs in school activities.

In certain instances, learners know that pre-service teachers are only at the school for teaching practice and as such cannot exert any authority towards them. This requires that discipline in schools be approached thoughtfully and systematically, with the aim of identifying and pre-empting or removing potential causes.

Living Condition. The finding showed that 10 (40%) of the pre-service teachers faced some difficulties living in host families such as readiness of host family, various school customs, house chores. Some of the families were not ready to take care of the pre-service teachers. They did not know what to do to support the pre-service teachers to get success in teaching practice. It can be seen that some families wanted pre-service teachers to come back home early to help with the family chores, some houses wanted pre-service teachers to turn the light of early to save the electricity, and some of the families wanted pre-service teachers to eat the food that cooked in the family that the pre-service teachers have not had eaten before or they could not eat, and wanted them to act under the custom of the families or communities that pre-service teachers could not do. Moreover, it was difficult for pre-service teachers to organize the time for working in families and in schools.

Problems on working with community. In terms of working with communities, the problem of unclear duty nomination and time management were faced. The village committees did not work together cooperatively. For example, one assigned the pre-service teachers to this work, but the other assigned them to do other work at the same time. Moreover, the families where they stayed with wanted them to help with family work at the weekend, however, the pre-service teachers were assigned to work for the communities and some of the pre-service teachers had to do the academic work on the weekend. For example, writing reports, writing weekly plans, checking homework, preparing lesson plans and teaching materials.

Problems on conducting research. It was found that several problems faced for conducting research such as: uncertain numbers of attendees or students when conducting the research. The action research had to be done at least two times, however numbers of students attended were different. For example, 20 students attended this time, but 15 students were attended another time. This different number of attendants made it difficult to find the effective answers. The guideline provided contains unclear instructions, so pre-service teachers did not have clear comprehension about research. Another point was unwell preparation of research team. The research team did not work with each other very well. They did not have time for discussion the time and needs. Moreover, advisor and pre-service teacher did not cooperate very well. The pre-service teachers did not prepare research instruments before going to have long practice, they did not contact to research advisors when they had long teaching practice.

Solutions

Table1: Problems and solutions

| Problems faced | Solutions done |
|--|---|
| Students with inactive behaviors and demotivation in learning | Organized the classroom meeting to talk to students' unwell behaviors and met individual student to talk about his/her problems; met their parents. |
| Lacking of teaching materials | Wrote on board/chart-read and write for students |
| Incompletion the expected course outline | Taught quickly and briefly |
| No freedom for doing school activities and classroom management/lack of communication between pre-service teachers and school teachers | Discussed/planned school activities with former classroom teachers/listened to him or her |
| Unplanned working with local community | Prepared plans with local community and pre-service teachers' team |
| Lack of research skill and coordination between pre-service teacher teams and research advisers | Learnt from guideline, called advisers to discuss the misunderstanding research strategy, and exchanged opinions among themselves. |

The table above shows the solutions implied to solve the faced problems. It was revealed that pre-service teachers used the similar ways to solve the faced problems. For example, the problem of naughty students who did not pay attention to learning, pre-service teachers talked to them individually, told them the effects of wrong actions and more than that, pre-service teachers asked their parents to come to school and then told them the wrong behaviors of their children and sought for a solution together. They asked the parents to help teaching their children in order to improve their behaviors. In terms of the lack of the textbooks, 8 (32%) of them, specifically English pre-service teachers said they wrote the text on chart or board or shorten the text while the other 17 (78%) of them said they read for them to write down in their notebooks. They solved the problem of incompletion the expected course outline by adapting and shortening the lessons. 8 (32%) of them said, they selected only some key tasks for students to practice in order for them to get the knowledge.

Moreover, it was found that pre-service teachers did not have freedom for designing and doing school activities and classroom management. The activities were still controlled by the old

classroom teachers although the responsibility of being classroom teachers was given to pre-service teachers when they had long teaching practice. It was found that the cause of this problem was lacking of communication between pre-service teachers and school teachers. Therefore, the old classroom teachers and new classroom teachers had to work corporately to plan the activities together or pre-service teachers (new classroom teachers) had to plan activities first and then they need to show their planning activities to the old classroom teachers to ask for their opinions and possibilities. For the problems of unplanned working with local community could be solved by preparing plans with local community and pre-service teachers' team. In terms of lacking of research skill and coordination between pre-service teacher teams and research advisers, pre-service teachers said they solved this problem by learning from guideline, calling advisers to discuss the misunderstanding research strategy, and exchanging opinions among themselves.

Suggestions

Here are some suggestions suggested by pre-service teachers: It was reported that before started teaching and doing the school activities, pre-service teachers need to know students' situation clearly. They could ask the school situation, learning environment as well as the situation of students from the school director, former classroom teachers. While they started working as new practicing teachers, they suggested pre-service teachers to work closely to students in order to learn their personalities. In order for students to enjoy learning, pre-service teachers need to create interesting activities to teach. They could use games or interesting activities. Moreover, they said that in order to complete the different activities well while doing the long teaching practice, each pre-service teacher needed to provide time for working with team and others well, and in case, if there were problems faced, pre-service teacher needed to be patient to solve any problems and they could discuss with people in team to solve problems.

Discussion of the research results

The research focuses on long teaching practice, which was called practical teaching activities (National System Overview on Education systems in Europe and Ongoing Reforms, 2011). The same as other teacher institutions in the world, teaching practice is considered the most important part of pedagogical studies, which helps future teachers take a full part in the school life in Savannakhet TTC. Results of the research conducted, in comparison to research data from other countries (Baskan, Yildiz, Tok, 2013; Fook, 2012; Güven, 2010; Li, Lowe, 2006), found both positive and negative experiences from long teaching practice. Teaching practice allows students to develop a distinct attitude towards their future educational activities. Such considerations are predetermined by multiple factors such as the desire to become a teacher, subjective approach towards studies, their goals, results, internal processes, which influence

and comprise studies (Martišauskienė, 2015). The findings from this research showed that pre-service teachers faced a lot of problems while practicing teaching, however, they still had the good attitude at teaching careers. 20 (80%) of them wanted to become teachers after graduation. The pre-service teachers described teacher's activities as very complicated and bearing high responsibility, requiring a good subject related and psychological training, self-dependence, ability to reflect, person's maturity, ability to perceive the importance of teacher's personality in respect of values as it was also found in the research of Barkauskaitė, Pečiuliauskienė, (2009). They also gave very useful suggestions in order to gain fruitful experiences for the pre-service teachers in the following batch.

Pre-service teachers did not gain expected administration experiences because of lacking close relationship with school teachers as it was found in the study of Ozdas (2018). It is true that same problem, such as lacking of textbooks was solved differently by applying concepts and principles derived from past experience in very similar situations (Woodworth and Marquis, 1948) making adjustments in spite of interference (Skinner, 2016). The same problems would be remained unless they were solved or decided to solve by oneself or concerned people like it was mentioned if the organizations and members put an effort to solve problems that they faced systematically, the problems could be disappeared (Blau & Scott, 1962).

Conclusion

This research aims at finding the problems pre-service teachers faced when having long teaching practice, the solutions they used, and suggestions found to solve the problems. Research participants were 25 pre-service teachers in total who had long teaching practice in three secondary school. The research instruments to collect the data were pre-service teacher's observations, their diaries and interviews. The finding showed that pre-service teachers faced the problems of late implementation of all syllabuses, unpredicted replacement teaching, insufficient teaching and learning materials, unmotivated in learning, pre-service teachers did not have freedom to be classroom teachers. Some School teachers ignored the fact that pre-service teachers could also make valuable inputs in school activities, pre-service teachers could not get along with the school teachers well, pre-service teachers said that they were treated as "visitors" and they could not involve in some schooling activities and meetings. Moreover, the findings from diaries showed that pre-service teachers felt uncomfortable to ask school teachers questions in order to learn teaching professional skills and pre-service teachers could not adjust working responsibilities in host family, village communities and in schools; pre-service teachers found it difficult to eat local food in staying families and could not act as the customs of the family or villages. And they could not do all of the work, village committees did not plan the pre-service teachers' activities well. They assigned different activities for one pre-service teacher to do in different places at the same time. They solved the problems

differently depends on the problems and they had given very useful suggestions for future improvement.

Recommendations

In order for improving long teaching practice, it was recommended that TTC should tell pre-service teachers need to know students' situation clearly, they need to ask information of students from the school teachers clearly or to learn each student's personality. Moreover, they need to have capacity of working with team and doing different work.

For future researcher, it would be better if the researcher could interview former teachers and directors of the practical schools about ideas of organizing long teaching practice in order for pre-service teachers to get better and deeper experiences as well as accurate research results.

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