

The Challenges of Pre-Service Teachers in the New Normal Set up of Field Study Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study

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Abstract

The pandemic had a huge impact on many things and situations, particularly the new normal. The researchers decided that field study of pre-service teachers is one of them because no one has ever taken the course under the new COVID-19 setup. The researchers aim to inform their readers about how the COVID-19 pandemic challenge will affect every pre-service teacher in the new setup of education through online learning. Purposive homogenous sampling was used to choose 12 students from Rizal Technological University-Boni and Pasig Campuses. Researchers chose typical students, non-workers, and university scholars as participants. Age, gender, and geography vary among participants. Researchers used interviews and supported by an interview script to gather replies. Pandemic-related preparations have been taken. Thematic analysis is used to understand pre-service teachers' challenges in the new field study setup. Pre-service teachers face challenges in this setting, according to the research most are struggling because of the rapid move from traditional classes to the new typical format, causing unpreparedness and lack of expertise when they face more complex situations. In addition, slow internet and a lack of resources make it difficult to attend classes and meet prerequisites. Some have many restrictions, especially on classroom monitoring because of the pandemic. The findings imply that the study's premise is significant and relevant in today's environment, especially for individuals pursuing an education degree and becoming pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers face new obstacles in the new normal.

Keywords: *Pre-service teachers, new normal set up, field study, COVID-19 pandemic*



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INTRODUCTION

Pre-service teaching is a term for supervised, directed instruction. A mentor or cooperating teacher gradually introduces a college student into the teaching role for a certain class. The resource teachers collaborate with and support the pre-service teacher to take on increasing responsibilities in classroom administration and instruction as the program progresses. The pre-service teacher begins as an observer

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and progresses to become a competent professional by the end of the pre-service teaching experience. But as the COVID-19 Pandemic arrives, everything changed, and everyone is affected, especially the pre-service teachers. The most unexpected thing to happen that startled everyone in the world was the existence and rapid spread of Corona Virus Disease 19 (COVID-19), which put us in a pandemic state. Education is one of the sectors that has been most affected by those changes to its condition (Kusmawan, 2017).

Although the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission of Higher Education (CHED) believe that learning shouldn't stop due to a pandemic, hence learners must continue to have education even if face-to-face classes are being canceled for the safety of the student. The teaching and learning processes that take place face-to-face must be changed to an online system (Lapada A. Miguel F., Robledo D., Alam Z., 2020). As an alternative to face-to-face classes, the DepEd and CHED pursue and introduce distance learning via online virtual classes. Teachers had to change to online teaching, requiring them to use various digital tools and resources to solve problems and implement new approaches to teaching and learning (Eickelmann, B., and J. Gerick, 2020). It is a way to adapt to the "new normal" situation caused by the pandemic.

This research wants to emphasize pre-service teachers that will be challenged by different problems dueling with the new normal set up of field study. This type of setup in the field of study teaching as a new normal is in stark contrast to what face-to-face practice teaching entails in the real world compared to virtual mode. Researchers are interested in finding out about the things that could present difficulties for every pre-service teacher while performing all the major tasks required by their field study course. The researchers considered that these kinds of difficulties needed to be addressed in terms of identifying and determining the potential factors that could have an impact on pre-service teachers participating in an online field study during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

This study proved to investigate and find answers to the following questions: 1) How do the participants describe their learning experiences in the Field Study course? 2) What are the challenges encountered by the participants in taking the Field Study course? 3) How do challenges affect the learning experiences of the Pre-Service Teachers in the Field Study course? This study aims to find out the challenges of "Pre-service teaching" in the middle of the COVID-19 Pandemic together with the new class setup and method of teaching.

Research Objectives

This study proved to investigate and find answers to the following questions:

1. How do the participants describe their learning experiences in the Field Study course?
2. What are the challenges encountered by the participants in taking the Field Study course?
3. How do challenges affect the learning experiences of the Pre-Service Teachers in the Field Study course?

This study aims to find out the challenges of "Pre-service teaching" in the middle of the COVID-19 Pandemic together with the new class setup and method of teaching.

RESEARCH METHOD

a. Research Design

This study is conducted through a qualitative research methodology that focuses on case study particularly an explanatory type. A case study helps to empirically investigate an event, lived experiences, or a unit of analysis. Using various sources of information, it also seeks to answer how and why such things occur. Focusing on interpretation and seeking for a more detailed explanation of every day happenings, it also seeks to understand the state of personal experiences of an individual. The researchers believe that the issues presented in the study of pre- service teachers' challenges can only be described adequately through the qualitative approach and the application of their experience, because the objective of qualitative research is to respond to inquiries regarding the meaning and experience of people's lives and social settings.

b. Source of Data

Since the research uses the purposive sampling strategy, the target participants are exclusively focused in Bachelor of Secondary Education Students specializing in Social Studies. This method allows the researchers to have advanced understanding of the study's purpose. Homogenous purposive sampling is a suitable sort of purposive sampling for the study. A homogeneous purposive sampling is selected for having a shared trait or group of characteristics. It is also focused on a single subgroup in which all sample members share comparable features, such as a specific occupation or organizational level. The participants in this study are undergraduate students enrolled in the online class who have the field study course as an academic requirement for the school year 2021-2022, including twelve students from the RTU Boni Campus College of Education currently enrolled in Social Studies, as well as their name, age, and gender. The participants are divided into three categories based on their division and deployment to observe and teach: four students from Antipolo, four students from Pasig, and four students from Rizal. The participants also include non-working students, normal students with full-time loads in the block section, and scholars.

c. Data Collection and Analysis

To obtain accurate information for the following question asked, to collect data, question lists, or interview scripts are used. The questions are written down before being asked orally by the researchers in order to prevent ambiguities and misleading answers. Filipino language is also being used. The questions are open-ended or unstructured, allowing participants to express themselves to freely express themselves in their responses. This method allows for a greater depth of responses, but it is difficult to grasp, transcribe, tabulate, and summarize the data. Using one or more responses, this instrument is used to generate reliable, deep, and valid assessment of verbal responses from one or more respondent groups. The research was designed following a comprehensive investigation of many web search engines. A search for engines that specialize in scholarly literature and academic resources was carried out. The researchers continued their search give support for and make the study feasible. After deciding to employ the qualitative technique and case study as a research design, the researchers began gathering information on the chosen methodology and design in order to improve the output of the research for relevant information that would form the basis for this investigation in order to give support for and make the study feasible. After deciding to employ the qualitative technique and case study as a research design, the researchers began gathering information on the chosen methodology and design in order to improve the output of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Participants Describing Their Learning Experiences in the Field Study Course

Emerging with different themes, three tables are formulated relative to the problems. Table one contains the participants' descriptions of their learning experiences in the field study course. Breaking it down into seven themes: new normal difficulty, positive impact, insufficient experience, resource unavailability, advantage, difficulty in doing tasks, and restrictions. The findings show that theme one—new normal difficulty—is the most frequently answered in describing the participants' learning experiences.

Due to the sudden change in the system, from the traditional set-up to the new normal set-up, adjusting to a new space is hard, especially if you are taking up your field study. A big adjustment to everything has to be made in order to keep up with the new setting. It is also hard to suddenly move from the usual routine to modular mode, which has also caused problems in terms of meeting regularly online with the students. However, being optimistic will always be present in any situation. For some students, it is somehow helpful and meaningful—giving a positive impact which brings out their potential in this kind of situation. Trying hard for the best, as they say, experience is the best teacher. Even so, insufficient experience is also present, which is described as their learning experience. Students in the education field need strong experience during their college years, which they can use to solidify and improve their teaching strategies once they graduate.

Contrasting their experiences today to the face-to-face classes they took before, it really is hard. Moreover, resources are also hard to provide in these circumstances. Due to the unavailability of resources, learning is much harder to sustain and maintain. Not everyone has the ability to own and afford various gadgets for use in online classes as well as an internet connection. Meanwhile, the same thing as the positive impact, it also gives an advantage to the pre-service teachers. As a result of staying indoors and continuing learning virtually, fewer expenses and more time. Having a competent and good co-teacher is also an advantage that contributes to the overall learning experiences of the pre-service teachers. Furthermore, difficulty in doing tasks is somehow hard to handle. Pre-service teachers find it burdensome to do tasks when learners are hard to approach and reach, which causes late submission and checking of requirements. In addition, due to different circumstances, restrictions are evidently regulated. Though it really is helpful to prevent the spread of viruses, it also comes with limitations in terms of doing tasks. Everything is limited, and you need to comply with the guidelines.

The Challenges Encountered by the Participants in Taking the Field Study Course

Combining and classifying responses of the participants, eleven emerging themes produced (Table 2). In the study, it is evident that Pre-service teachers encountered challenges in taking their Field Study Course. It is classified as follows:

The primary challenges encountered are intermittent (1) internet connection and the availability and capability of having (2) technological tools. It was found that technological tools helps to tighten the possibility of online learning. However, this was more effective with having strong internet connection. Poor internet access will be a substantial hindrance to students' online (Asio, J. M., Gadia, E., Abarintos, E.,

Paguio, D., & Balce, M., 2021). Three from the Participants gave its words concentrated to the (3) limitation of actions due to the guidelines imposed by the authorities. This shows that limitations challenge the field study course in a way that they are deprived of actual and concrete experiences. Online learning reduced interaction of students to the teacher and vice versa (Temmy Thamrin, Diana Chitra Hasan, Nova Rina, Maulid Hariri Gani, and Anisa Maharani Miranda, 2022). Moreover, the CHED published memorandums for conducting distance learning in relation to the pandemic situation. Apart from it, it includes (4) authority of preservice teachers in terms of encountering behaviors of students. They cannot execute strong authority due to virtual interaction. These can be self-difficulties or material problems like the administrative difficulty of procuring and installing appropriate technology (Crawford, J, Butler-Henderson, K, Rudolph, J, Malkawi, B, Glowatz, M, Burton, R, Magni, P and Lam, S., 2020).

It was found that (5) big adjustment emerges from the participants' responses. Since their interaction with the students and resources was limited. They were foretelling that online classes aren't practical unlike traditional set up. The situation demanded adaptation and the resources were limited to internet sources. Including to their adjustment was (6) working station to their respective homes. The preservice teachers do not have proper place to their home wherein it is conducive and appropriate to learning environment. In an engaged learning and observing environment, classrooms become communities wherein learning happens. This sense of community allows students to feel connected to one another and their teachers and to engage in collaborative and active learning. (7) Notifying students also included as the challenge mentioned by the participants. The behavior of students in complying with their responsibility activities gave stressful emotion to preservice teachers. Workload and behavior of the students are considered depression and anxiety predictors (Ferguson K., Frost L., Hall D., 2012). Furthermore, the (8) new set up experiences of preservice teachers revealed that satisfaction was not met. They are deprived of experiencing the real scenario of classroom like observations. The sudden change in the environment of learning and the curriculum and pedagogical reforms have become one of the most common factors for students' being unprepared in their endeavors. All are unknowledgeable of the actual set up of distance learning as the pandemic affected the traditional operation of education, so everyone are new to the situation. When it comes to education and its philosophy as a pandemic, education constantly demands attention, analysis, and shared obligation (He H. and Harris L., 2020). The world is living in an unprecedented epoch. However, the power of education should never be underestimated. Maintaining a high level of educational quality in the midst of a pandemic is critical because it allows students to develop their skills and knowledge through the use of technology and allows preservice teachers to adapt new skills in a new setting even if they do not have enough exposure or involvement in physical class. Most of the participants responses are concentrated on their limitation in terms of how the distance learning set up conducted – (9) limited information. Since everyone is beginners, they are prone to any unpleasant situations. However, it was emphasized that pre-service teachers who are practicing becoming an educator, having limited actions and resources played an important role in self-improvement (Huang, R.H., Liu, D.J., Tlili, A., Yang, J.F., Wang, H.H., et al., 2020).

As the pandemic demanded for the changing of educational set up shifted from traditional to distance learning, time lapses from studying and home hours – (10) time conflict. In the case of preservice teachers who feel burdened by combined obligations as learners and practice teachers that are required for course completion, it is an adjustment for them to be able to complete their work or tasks and adapt to an unfamiliar environment where they are mostly challenged, just as in the new normal set up of field study, teaching, and learning. In line with time conflict. The preservice teachers mentioned that they sacrificed to

resign from their job before the semester begin. Academic overload may be regarded as students' feelings of being overwhelmed by their academic requirements or responsibilities while pursuing a degree at university. So here comes the (11) financial capability treated as challenge they encountered. Not only field study course requires financial necessity, being college as a whole necessitate to have enough capability to financial. Online learning isn't impossible to adapt to and has advantages for keeping students and teachers safe, but the problem is that not everyone has the potential to have their own support devices and internet connection for online learning and teaching. Not all preservice teachers have a good status in life to support their needs just to finish their degree, but behind those instances, many of them still choose to fight for what they started. Financial means to purchase devices such as laptop computers, cellphones, and the like that will allow them to continue their learning, acquire greater learning, and develop activities in a more convenient manner was not always carried by every student.

The Challenges that Affect the Learning Experiences of the Pre-Service Teachers in their Field Study Course

The sudden change in the education system that has been brought about by the global pandemic also affects the learning experiences of the pre- service teachers in taking their field study. Giving both positive and negative impacts, one of those is being resourceful. Due to the limited time and access given, these pushes and drives them to be creative and to utilize what they currently have to provide better materials. As researchers urged to produce research for the earliest period of pandemic emergence, making a conclusion on the quality of online learning needs future studies, as the main target is to continue education regardless of any means (Basilaia, G., & Kvavadze, D., 2020). In addition, it gives them encouragement to continuously learn despite the stressful situation. It affects their learning process by giving them motivation to push through and use the situation to their advantage. This is directly congruent to the further revelations of a study stated that pre service teachers are became more inspired of having observations during experiential learning courses amidst the new normal set up (Afalla, Bonimar & Gabatino, Bryan & Corpuz, Demetria., 2019). Some students are intrinsically motivated to learn in this kind of situation (Gustiani, S., 2020). However, just like a coin, it has two sides. Positive effects also come with negative ones. Time management is one of the things that affects the learning experiences, resulting in procrastination.

The possibility that online learning is provided to pre-service teachers becomes a challenge since it leads to procrastination. They are too comfortable with their situation, which causes them to speed through their activities in order to complete them on time. They get too complacent instead of being productive. On the other hand, lack of resources and materials results in task interruption, which also affects the learning experiences of the pre-service teachers. The new normal set-up is kind of challenging, especially if you do not have enough resources that are necessary to continue learning. There are things that will need appropriate materials that mobile phones are not capable of, such as making lesson plans and PowerPoint presentations. This also results in deadlines being interrupted because of a lack of materials. Majority of students are unable to accomplish their tasks on time due to different circumstances regarding inappropriate and lack of resources (Dayagbil FT, Palompon DR, Garcia LL and Olvido MMJ., 2021).

Moreover, one of the positive outcomes of their learning experiences is self-improvement. Using the situation to find your edge and take advantage of it surely gives benefits for some students. Adaptation in every situation is one of the advantages you can have. The new set-up affects their learning experiences by

preparing them and adapting to the situation. Facing new challenges just makes them emerge into different scenarios, which are, without a doubt, very beneficial. You can adapt and be flexible at all times, even with different hindrances and financial problems. You must adapt and get used to it. However, negative scenarios will always be alongside positive ones. Contrary to self-improvement, self-frustration and self-discouragement are also what affect the learning experiences of pre-service teachers. Financial capability is one of the major problems that the new normal set-up has demanded of everyone. Even if you are working or studying at home, you still have to provide technological equipment to support and continue what you are doing. This leads to frustration because there are pre-service teachers who are facing financial problems. Furthermore, the students that the pre-service teachers handle are, in some ways, difficult to approach. There are students who are not submitting their requirements on time, and it also negatively affects the schedule and time management of the pre-service teachers.

On the other hand, preservice teachers are (7) unsatisfied with the learning teaching and learning process due to new normal set up. It affects the preservice teachers on the learning they will absorb and the setup limit their knowledge on the actual scenario of a classroom. In line with this, the emotion of a preservice teacher was affected especially its motivation. Through (8) Plan interruption it affect the learning experiences of every pre service teacher as their motivation decreased. This was evident to the researchers' discovery wherein the plan of action of preservice teachers are not often follows as the situation served as hindrance together with other challenges. External factors such as learning environment, learning time, and instrumental support are reasons why students have lack of motivation that affected their achievement (Simamora, R. M., 2020). With the challenges mentioned by the participants, (9) self-adjustment was also included. Experiencing various difficulties in the new normal set up of field study, preservice teachers are having adjustment. But, it was found that adjusting affects their learning process as it creates burden to them that makes them pressured and stressed. Then it leads to insufficient knowledge. However, the only way to successfully finish this field study course in the new normal set up is through adaptation and adjustment.

Scrutinizing the responses of the participants discovered the emergence of (10) communication which it affect the learning experiences of pre service teachers through limiting their actions. Difficulties in communication creates barriers of actions as all transactions are made virtually. That is why pandemic demands strengthen the personal relevance of effective communication. Quality pre service teacher education is a key factor in quality education JAY N. et. al 2021 In connection with communication, the participants highlighted the use of social media platforms. The limitation of actions – (11) limited access during the new normal set up field study and other challenges affects the learning of pre service teachers as it limit the access of almost all sources. Limiting interaction to classroom scenarios in observations, communicating with resource teachers, and information from internet. So it was found that the participants are comparing the traditional setup and the new normal situation. The rapid transformation of teaching and learning settings has posed tremendous challenges across the education sector. As long as online learning exists, there are only limited things that you can do that might cause challenges. These can be self-difficulties or material problems like the administrative difficulty of procuring and installing appropriate technology (Crawford, J, Butler-Henderson, K, Rudolph, J, Malkawi, B, Glowatz, M, Burton, R, Magni, P and Lam, S., 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

The Pre-services teachers are facing in the new normal set-up of Field Study and to give emphasis to Pre-service teachers that will be challenged by different problems. Based on the thematic analysis of this study, it can be concluded that the new normal set-up of Field Study has brought challenges to the Pre-service teachers in times of COVID-19.

This study is relevant and helpful as it determines the challenges that are being encountered by the Pre-service teachers in conducting their Field Study, especially in the current situation we are facing. Discovering the underlying reasons as to why these challenges affect them is one reason to comprehend what solutions are applicable. Understanding and knowing other students' struggles and point of views can help us acknowledge the problems with a different frame of reference. Moreover, this study may contribute to the next Field Study takers, especially to the incoming Pre-service teachers for this study will guide and enlighten them how to handle different challenges in this current set-up as they proceed to their course. Definitively, the findings of this study recommend that the hypothesis can be used to encourage future researchers who will also undertake an education program to understand the challenges in the new normal set-up of Field Study and how these challenges affect the learning experiences, teaching strategies, and the experience as a whole.

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