

THE TEACHING PROFESSION: PERSPECTIVES OF FUTURE TEACHERS

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Abstract

Recently, the new set of Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers was circulated for use as lens in measuring the performance of teachers along domains of content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development. Future educators' concern is their preparedness to fulfil their responsibilities in the future as professionals considering the herculean tasks implied in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. To address this concern, the study delved into the perspectives of the future teachers on their readiness to take the realities of the teaching profession through a conduct of a phenomenological study, employing interview and focus group discussion with Thematic Analysis to interpret data. The gathered perspectives on the teaching profession can serve as inputs in providing reinforcement and enrichment activities to provide for the needs of future teachers.

Keywords: Teaching Profession; Perspectives; Future Educators; Phenomenology; Colaizzi Method

1. Introduction

Teachers play a crucial role in nation building. As specified in DepED Order No. 36, s. 2013, it is implied that the Philippines can produce productive and holistic individuals, imbued with the right values, developed with the prescribed 21st century skills through the teachers' delivery of quality services.

It is then of utmost importance that the good teachers are the ones providing instructional services to learners in order to assure quality learning. Hence, the relevance of enhancing teacher quality which is vital in assuring lifelong learning and continuous nation-building.

Recently, the new set of Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers was circulated for use as lens in measuring the performance of teachers along domains of content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, diversity of learners, curriculum planning, assessment and reporting, community linkages and professional engagement, and personal growth and professional development. Future educators' concern is their preparedness to fulfil their responsibilities in the future as professionals considering the herculean tasks implied in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers.

2. Literature Review

It is expected that teachers are competent enough in order for them to provide for the demands of their profession depending on the context for which they are providing instructional services. They are supposed to possess both general and particular competencies that can be applied in certain teaching-learning situations (Rangel, 2015; Rodríguez, Serreri, & Del Cimmuto, 2010). In this study, the ideas provided by Villa and Poblete (2008) regarding what could be considered as a good teaching performance as applied in various settings or learning environment were considered as a guide in interpreting the responses of participants in terms of expectations from the teaching profession, especially with the interplay of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

According to Solano & Campos (2014), part of the findings in the conduct of their research concerning competencies mentioned by the participants as requisites in the delivery of effective educational processes such as instrumental competences, interpersonal competence, and systemic competences. However, cognitive competence was considered relevance in terms of critical and analytical thinking only, hence the implication that the respondents of the study do not see much importance of cognitive competences in the educational processes. Meanwhile, the participants considered sense of morality, resistance to change and environmental adaptation, diversity and interculturality.

Meaning, future teachers are supposed to be competent not only in terms of one or two aspects but they are expected to be multi-skilled in order for them to provide for the demand of 21st century learners and at the same time cater the needs of the end-beneficiaries which can be found in the world of work.

It is non-negotiable that teachers of this generation know how to transfer, not only knowledge but also skills, and the right attitudes and values. Future teachers are also expected to be mindful of the importance of data in identifying learning problems that need instructional adjustment in order to make learning experiences fruitful and meaningful to learners. Teachers of the future need to know also how to interpret data for them to understand strengths and weaknesses of learners which in turn can be used as bases in providing interventions.

It is also believed that, future teachers are good in terms of communicating with others, especially their learners in order to build an open or harmonious relationship with them. Introduction Teachers who can transform their classroom into an environment of trust where learners can express themselves is highly expected. Teachers need to be careful about what they say and do in front of their learners. Hence, they are supposed to be ethical in every way. Aside from these, teachers need to be sensitive about what the learners need to develop in order for them to be responsive in the community and in their future work stations.

Therefore, it is apparent that future teachers make sure to help learners in such a way that they become productive both in their homes and as citizens of one's country, ready to extend hands in order to improve the way of life and the current situation they are in and also conscientious about the situation of others.

Whatever future teacher's experiences matters so much in terms of their journey towards the achievement of qualifications required from professional teachers. Future teachers need to have a clear direction as to what they need to develop or have for them to qualify and be trusted to teach as a professional. In this connection, teacher education institutions need to provide learning experiences that will truly prepare future teachers imbued with requisites expected of professionals.

Improving the quality of education becomes a continuous concern of practitioners and theorists in the educational field. P.Musset (2010) considers, based on the literature review, that changes made in the initial teacher education and recruitment, along with the development of the means of in-service teacher training is the most effective way to increase the quality of education. We consider that raising quality in teacher education means a vision change beyond the organizational change, a vision integrated in the whole learning process and expressed by the construction of the future teachers' learning experiences. The initial teacher education in OECD countries has in common the following dimensions of formation: pedagogical knowledge

(focused on teaching techniques), practical school experience and courses on content knowledge (about specific subject-matter) (P. Musset, 2010).

Teachers being prepared for a changing world implies designing learning experiences both in a dynamic structure and changing context. As a result, the building process of professional identity must be seen as a challenge. The flexibility for a dynamic structure, the variation of approaches, anchored by a core related to a socially legitimated status and linked to a sum of ethical values, must guide teachers' professional behavior. Experiences in learning must make the future teachers develop their authority according to the ethical coordinates of their status to sustain their decisions in the whole teaching endeavors also in building the relationships with students, parents and other stakeholders of the educational field.

Experiences on learning for the future teachers are not only avenues for satisfying their cognitive or emotional needs but also a way of cultivating needs, that helps build the sense of their personal and professional distinctiveness. Perhaps too often the question related to emotional needs is approached, in education systems, in terms of the beneficiaries' requests. We have to focus also on the teachers' emotional needs that build the frame of their teaching. According to the literature findings, the quality of teaching is related to the feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction of teachers and these are sustained by the specific traits of teacher-student relationship and by the support received from the part of the professional community. For this reason, people think that learning experiences of would be teachers have to value study groups as learning communities, viewed in terms of possible professional learning communities.

In teacher education, it is suggested (Malm, 2009) that there is a necessity to give attention to the personal processes involved in becoming a professional teacher, with a harmony between the emotional and cognitive dimensions of acquiring knowledge to teach. To be effective in that cross fertilisation, says Hansen (2007), it requires a synergy between track based on evidence and track based on existence and norms. The latter is concerned with how teachers understand themselves, which in turn depends on a little help from their friends – coaches, mentors, or friends who not only aid with adjustment to the strains of the organization but assist to push their charges beyond their comfort zone. As Fives et al. (2007) found in their study of beginning teachers, those who gain from 'high guidance' from their mentors, demonstrated lower levels of stress and were less likely to leave teaching than their colleagues who experienced 'low guidance'.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Philippine Standard for Teachers which covers 7 domains which are bases in evaluating the performance of teachers as professionals. These domains are as follows: 1.) Content knowledge and pedagogy; 2.) Understanding the learning environment; 3.) Knowing the diversity of learners; 4.) Curriculum/Instructional Planning; 5.) Assessment and Reporting; and 6.) Community Linkages and Professional Engagement; 7.) Personal Growth and Professional Development.

4. Problem Statements

Today individuals invest time, effort and money to become professional teachers. Even those who have graduated already in other four-year courses like to enrol in Teacher Education. To address the following problems are the concerns of this study. What interest them to become a professional teacher? What do they look forward to as future educators? What qualities do they want to develop among themselves to be ready for the world of work? Are these qualities aligned with those specified in the Philippine Standard for Teachers?

5. Purpose of the Study

The study intends to understand why students embraced the teacher education program and to know

how the students see teaching as a profession. The study seeks to provide the Professional Education Unit some bases in designing classroom experiences which are aligned with the expectations of the future teachers. Through this study, inputs can be provided to enhance the Practice Teaching Program of the university.

6. Research Questions

The following are the specific questions that the study answered through the responses of the teacher-participants.

1. How do future educators view teaching as a profession?
2. How do future educators prepare to become a professional teacher?

7. Methodology

This section presents the research design, research setting, research participants, sampling, data collection tools, data gathering procedure, data saturation, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

7.1 Research Design

This research adheres to the interpretive- hermeneutic phenomenology designed by Heidegger who believed that the emphasis of phenomenological inquiry is between the relationships an individual and the world he or she is in by describing core concepts, essences, and meanings embedded in common life practices (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

7.2 Research Setting

The locale of the study is Leyte Normal University, an institution of higher learning having Teacher Education as a Flagship Degree Program. The school is situated at Paterno St., Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines.

7.3 Research Participants

There were ten (10) student-participants in this study. These students are taking up Bachelor in secondary Education, major in Music, Art, Physical Education and Health. This is a degree program leading towards teaching as a profession that is highly focused on a particular major field.

7.4 Sampling

The participants were identified purposively. They must belong to the College of Education taking up a Teacher Education Degree Program and enrolled in the course "The Teaching Profession."

7.5 Data Collection Tool/s

The tool utilized in this study is an interview guide comprising three questions such as follows:

1. Why did you take teacher education?
2. What do you have to learn so that you will become an effective teacher someday?
3. What do you have to do in order that you will become a professional teacher?

7.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The following steps were employed in gathering the desired information needed by the study. 1.) Asked permission to involve the concerned students from respective authorities; 2.) Set a schedule for the

individual interviews and FGD; 3.) Actual conduct of the individual interviews; and 4.) Actual focus group discussion (FGD) to validate the individual responses.

7.7 Data Saturation

The responses which are already repetitions of the coded responses were not anymore covered in the coding. Meanwhile, responses which were of low frequency were also included because they are considered relevant information that can add meaning to the findings of the study.

7.8 Data Analysis

Each participant's responses were coded and analysed through the use of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A process that cut across data and search for patterns, categories and themes. Thematic analysis was performed through the process of coding in six phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data were analyzed using the following steps:

- (1) familiarization with data,
- (2) generating initial codes,
- (3) searching for themes among codes,
- (4) reviewing themes,
- (5) defining and naming themes, and
- (6) producing the final report- to create established, meaningful patterns In analysing qualitative data, thematic analysis offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach.

7.9 Ethical Considerations

The consent of the participants were sought prior to the conduct of the actual data collection and the researcher assured them that their identity will not be disclosed in writing the research paper.

8. Results and discussion

After going through analysis of the collected data, themes emerged with respective categories and indicators. Theme one pertains to reasons for taking teacher education, theme two is on the requisites of an effective teacher, and theme three is on becoming a teacher.

THEME 1: Reasons for Taking Teacher Education

As to the first theme derived by the study, there were ten sub-themes identified revealed in Figure 1 such as parental influence, ambition, willingness to share one's talent to others, financial constraints, accessibility, nobility of the profession, influence of a teacher, family tradition, capability, and economic benefit.

parental influence, vocation, willingness to share one's knowledge and skills to others, financial constraints, accessibility, nobility of the profession, influence of a teacher, family tradition, capability, economic benefit, suitability, and peer pressure.

Accessibility. One of the sub-theme that emerged from the responses of the student-participants is the accessibility of the teacher education course. It has something to do with the wide possibility of finding a job because in every town and barangay, teachers are needed. The identification of this sub-theme was based on these following responses of the student-participants. *"This is the most flexible degree that could enter any job."*, *"Teacher is the most in demand and beneficial job here in the country."*, *"This is the most flexible degree that could enter any job."*, and *"Teacher is the most in demand and beneficial job here in the*

country.”

Capability. Another sub-theme that came out was on the perception of student-participant that they have selected or decided to enrol in the teacher education program because of the assessed self-capability, as evidenced by the following direct response of the student-participant: *“It is where I am good at.”*

Economic Benefit. Most of the respondents considered teacher education for economic purposes as implied by the following responses: *“I take teacher education for practicality”, “there are schools who lack teachers.” “I am looking forward to the good future I want.” “The salary is high.” “To help my family improve economic condition.” “I take education because of the salary of teachers.”*

Family Tradition. There were two student-participants who selected teacher education because it’s a family tradition as reflected by the following responses: *“My mother and grandmother are teachers.” “Two of our family members are graduates of this profession.”*

Financial Constraints. Two of the student-respondents do not really like to become teachers but they have enrolled in the teaching program because of financial constraints as implied by their answers, as follows: *“My parents can’t afford to send me to a school that has a high tuition.” “This is the only course that my parents can afford.”*

Influence of a Teacher. There were also those which were influenced by their previous teachers that is why they enrolled or decided to pursue a teacher education degree program, these were based on the following responses of the student-participants: *“I was inspired by my teachers to teach the young generation.” “I want to bring back the favour of what my teachers taught me.” “One of my teachers inspire me to take this kind of degree.”*

Nobility of the Profession. One of the participants considered teaching as a noble profession that is why she has enrolled in the bachelor in secondary program.

Parental Influence. *“My mother motivated and inspired me.” “My mother suggested me to take this course.” “To make my parents proud.” “To fulfil my mother’s dream.” “My parents told me to take teacher education as my course.” “According to my parents, Teacher Education has financial stability.” “My parents wants me to take this course.”* Based on the foregoing responses of the student-participants that the sub-theme Parental Influence came out or was identified. There really are a lot of students who would take the degree program that their parents want them to pursue for different reasons.

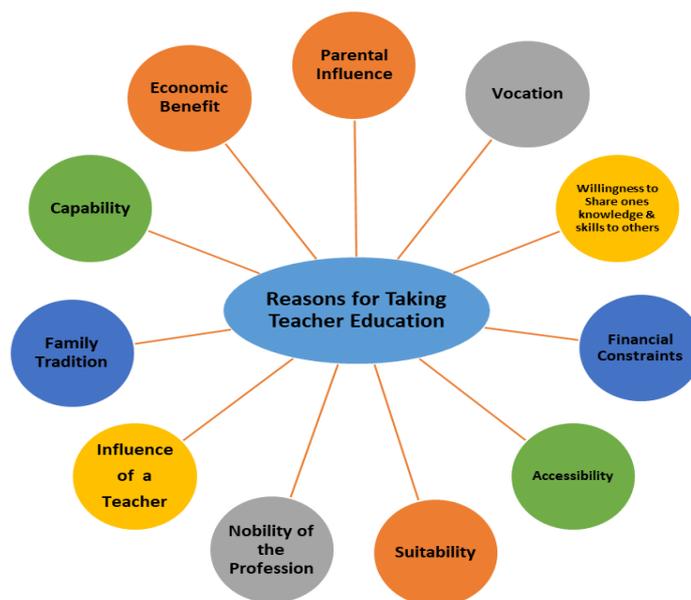
Peer Pressure. *“I am not sure if this course is for me, I just take it because my friends are taking it.”* This response is obviously pointing to peer pressure because the student have selected the degree to take based on the one that his friend has decided to take.

Suitability. *“I am suited to this kind of profession” “I am sure that this degree fit my personality.”* These statement came from two student-participants who considered that the teaching profession is the most suitable degree for them because it is where they are good.

Vocation. Most of the student-participants see teaching as a vocation, they have enrolled in the degree program because they really envisioned themselves of becoming a professional teacher someday. The identification of this sub-them was based on the following responses of the student-participants: *“I see myself as a teacher in the future” “It is where my heart beats.” “It is my dream.” “I want to teach.” and “I am willing to do everything to finish this degree.” “I have to pass this course in order to teach.” “I want to teach, especially in music.” “I want to share my learnings.” “I want to improve the quality of education.” “Since high school, I want already to become a teacher, it is my passion.” “I don’t see it as a work but a passion.”*

Willingness to Share One’s Knowledge and Skills to Others. There were also student-participants who selected the teaching profession for the following reasons: *“I wanted to share my gift to others.” “To impart every drop of what I learned in my program.” “I want to share my knowledge to others.” “I want to share my skills, knowledge and talents to others.”*

Fig. 1. Theme 1 and Sub-themes



THEME 2: Requisites of an Effective Teacher

In terms of the second theme that resulted from the study, there were nine sub-themes identified as shown in Figure 2 such as mastery of content, good leadership, knowledge on the theories and principles, inspiring/motivating, understanding, innovative, faith in God, talented, skills in utilizing teaching strategies.

Faith in God. The student-participants consider faith in God as a trait that a professional teacher should possess, that a teachers should not only possess pedagogical competence. These are their direct responses: *“Shows that she/he is God-loving” “Thankful to God.” “Caring the students because they are children of God.” “Always believe in the help of God to finish the degree.”*

Good Leadership. One of the traits that the student-participants identified as an important quality of an effective teacher is good leadership as implied by the following responses: *“Is an effective leader to his/her students.” “Take a lead by passing all the requirements needed.” “Join organizations.” “Show leadership by being self-disciplined.”*

Innovative. The also considered that being innovative should be possessed by teachers to become effective as implied by the following direct responses: *“Knows how to invent new systems, techniques and means to teach his/her students.”*

Inspiring/Motivating. *“Inspire students by motivating them to do good and study.” “Motivates the students to focus on their studies.” “A role model to the students.” “Helps students build their self-esteem.” “A powerhouse of respect.”*

Knowledge on the Theories and Principles. *“Has enough knowledge on the theories and principles of teaching and the teaching process.”* The aforementioned responses point toward the trait which is the capability of a teacher to inspire and motivate learners. According to the participants if a teacher is able to inspire and motivate learners, teaching becomes effective and more meaningful.

Mastery of Content. This quality is not only identified by the participants. This trait is really being

required from professional teachers for them to effectively deliver the instructional practices in the classroom and make permanent learning happen to students. The following were the direct responses of the participants that points to this sub-theme. “Confident about what concepts and skills she is teaching to his/her students.” “Applies or practice the concepts and skills learned.”

Skills in Utilizing Teaching Strategies. As implied by the following response: “Have acquired and practice the different teaching strategies.” It was identified by the participants that for a teacher to be effective she/he needs to be skills in utilizing teaching strategies which are suitable or appropriate to the learners and the subject matter being taught.

Talented. “Talented enough to take the lead in honing the talents of the learners.” “Be good in academics.” The participants said, “how can a teacher teach some skills such as singing and dancing, if they themselves do not know how to do them. So, it was implied that a teacher need to have talents to share to their learners.

Understanding. “Shows understanding of the feelings and condition of the students.” One of the participants gave this response. The participant believes that a teacher need to be sensitive to the feelings of the learners or how the learners feel about the learning environment and the experiences they are having with their teacher, classmate and schoolmates. According to the participant, if a teacher is understanding, the learners will feel that the school is second home and will always look forward to attend classes.

Fig. 2. Theme 2 and Sub-themes



THEME 3: Becoming a Professional

In terms of the third theme that resulted from the study, there were nine sub-themes identified as shown in Figure 3 such as being faithful to the teaching profession, learning to follow rules, continuing to obtain relevant information, developing self-discipline, passing the licensure examination, finishing the teacher education degree.

Being Faithful to the Teaching Profession. Becoming a professional is being associated to the following: “Love the profession.” “Do all the responsibilities of a teacher.” “Be faithful to the teaching

profession.” “Be dedicated to my work as a teacher.” “Instill a burning passion for teaching.”

Continuing to Obtain Relevant Information. According to the participants, a professional teacher should not stop learning, they need to augment knowledge in whatever they could as long as the means are within the bound of ethics and law. The following were the responses for which this sub-theme was based from. “Continue to obtain relevant information.” “Attend seminars to enhance knowledge and skills.” “Do not stop learning.”

Developing Self-discipline. “Be disciplined in doing work.” “Manage the time very well.” Another identified quality is being self-disciplined, so efforts must be spent to develop this trait and be considered a professional teacher.

Finishing the Teacher Education Degree. “Graduate in a teacher education course.” “Pass all the subjects in Professional Education.” These responses coming from one of the participants emphasized that it to pursue to pass and finish endeavors related to education by graduating in a teaching program in order to earned a degree and be qualified to take the licensure examination and become a professional teacher someday.

Learning to Follow Rules. “I will make sure to follow rules and regulations.” “Do what is right.” It is important for a professional teacher to strictly follow rules and regulations. How can a teacher teach learners if she could not be a possible role model to them.

Passing the Licensure Examination. “Do one’s best to pass the LET.” A teacher could ne be considered a professional teacher if she/he was not able to pass the licensure examination for teachers. So, in the journey towards the teaching profession, a student need to see-to-it that he/she has gained enough knowledge, skills and experiences that will lead them towards passing the licensure examination for teachers.

Fig. 3. Theme 3 and Sub-themes



9. Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions derived from the findings of the study and the recommendations associated with the findings and conclusions are provided in this section.

Conclusions

The following are the conclusions formulated based on the findings of the study.

1. Future teachers have different views towards teaching as a Profession.
2. They still do not have a clear perspective/picture of what an effective teacher is all about as implied in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST).

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations drawn to improve the pre-service training being provided to future teachers.

1. Continuous career development orientation.
2. Expose future teachers to experiential learning activities to hone their skills in teaching.
3. Intensify the practice teaching program and the Field-Based Learning
4. Introduce the PPST as a framework in preparing future teachers.

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