

Original Research Article

Challenges and Experiences of Pre-Service Teachers in Teaching Internship During the New Normal

ABSTRACT

Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in the Philippines were enjoined to implement the necessary modifications in the delivery of teaching internship given their context and available resources during the global Covid- 19 pandemic. Teaching internship courses were made experiential, using the different new normal learning modalities; developmental through coaching and mentoring, and aligned with the Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) and Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs). This study aimed to determine the challenges and experienced encountered by the Apayao State College (ASC) pre- service teachers in their internship during the pandemic. The study made use of the mixed approach or combination of qualitative and quantitative approach of research. Results revealed that the mean age of the respondents is 24 years old and pre- dominantly female respondents. They were involved in the various activities of the schools during their internship. They had encountered challenges such as ICT integration, new modalities of teaching- learning, social interactions, internet connectivity and instructional material preparations. Furthermore, they identified positive learning experiences during their internship but encountered problems along ICT skills and usage, time management, skills of the students with new platforms and adjustment to no face-to-face classes during their teaching internship.

Keywords: Pre-Service Teachers, Practice Teaching, New Normal, Education

1. INTRODUCTION

The pandemic challenged and changed the conduct of many aspects of teaching and learning (1, 2). Even though physical restrictions are imposed to prevent the spread of the virus, many school activities need to continue as an essential part of students' learning experience. One of which is the school internship program. In the Philippines, implementation of the Practice Teaching in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offering teacher education courses were guided using the Joint Commission on Higher Education (CHED) – Department of Education (DepEd) memorandum, series of 2020 entitled “ New Normal Policies and Guidelines on The Deployment of Pre-Service Teachers for Field Study and Teaching Internship”.

In response, many aspects of teaching internship programs were altered in accordance to quarantine and health protocols. However, the continued delivery of education in all levels, more than ever, was of paramount importance. Teacher education institutions (TEIs) responded positively to the distinctive challenge and opportunity presented by the unusual circumstances by delivering courses in innovative and flexible ways suitable to the context of educational institutions, teachers, and students.

CHED released the Guidelines on the Implementation of Flexible Learning to ensure continuity of learning at the tertiary level, while DepEd issued an order on the Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan considering the Covid-19 Public Health Emergency (3). TEIs and Cooperating Schools strived to sufficiently prepare the next batch of teachers to teach in the post-pandemic, new normal environment given the threat of Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to the delivery of courses by means of flexible modalities, teaching internship courses were redesigned by TEIs in ways that are compatible with the pandemic. The need to shift from residential or face to face teaching to flexible learning (FL) in higher education and learning delivery modalities (LDM) in basic education guided pre-service teachers taking the experiential learning courses under CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) 30, s. 2004 entitled "Revised Policies and Standards for Undergraduate Teacher Education Curriculum". However, in view of the risks posed by the global pandemic, Teacher Education Institutions such as Apayao State College and cooperating schools were advised to adhere to the requirements on Student Internship Program in the Philippines per CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 104, series of 2017 and the Guidelines on the Required Health Standards in Basic Education Offices and School per DepEd Order No. 014, series of 2020 and Joint CHED-DepEd Memorandum, series of 2020 "New Normal Policies and Guidelines on The Deployment of Pre-Service Teachers for Field Study and Teaching Internship".

The main objective of this study was to determine the challenges and experiences encountered by the pre-service teachers in their internship during the School Year 2020-2021 amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Specifically, it sought answer to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 age
 - 1.2 sex
2. What is the frequency of teaching execution and weekly home learning plan (WHLP) prepared by the pre-service teachers during their teaching internship?
3. What is the extent of participation of the respondents in school activities in their teaching internship?
4. What are challenges encountered by the pre-service teachers in teaching internship?
5. What are experiences of the pre-service teachers in teaching internship?
6. What are problems encountered by the pre-service teachers during their internship program?

2. METHODOLOGY

The study made use of the mixed approach or combination of qualitative and quantitative approach of research. The study was conducted at Apayao State College Luna Campus. The respondents of the study were 30 pre-service students of Apayao State College during the School Year 2020-2021. The main instrument used in this study was a questionnaire based on Joint Ched-Deped Memorandum, Series of 2020 : New Normal Policies and Guidelines on the Deployment of Pre-Service Teachers for Field Study and Teaching. Descriptive statistics were employed in the study like frequency and percentage on the profile of the respondents, teaching executions and number of WHLP prepared during their teaching internship using Microsoft Excel.

On the other hand, weighted mean was computed on the extent of participation of the respondents in school activities during their teaching internship using the 4-point Likert Scale:

Scale	Mean	Range	Descriptive Interpretation (DI)
4	-	3.25- 4.00	Always (A)
3	-	2.50-3.24	Sometimes (S)
2	-	1.75-2.49	Rare (R)
1	-	1.00-1.74	Never (N)

Ranking was employed on challenges encountered by the pre service teaching during their internship program in the new normal and thematic analysis on experiences and problems encountered during their teaching internship in the new normal.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Pre-service Teachers

Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents in terms of age and sex. There were more pre-service whose ages belong to age bracket 22-24 years old and mean age of the respondents is 24 years old. Furthermore, there were more female respondents (24 or 80.00%) compared with male (6 or 20.00%). This implies that there were more female pre- service teachers enrolled in the College of Teacher Education (CTE).

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents According to Profile

Profile	Freq	Percentage
1. Age		
22-24 years old	20	67
25-27 year old	6	20
28-30 years old	1	3
31-33 years old	3	10
Mean Age= 24 years old		
2. Sex		
Male	6	20
Female	24	80

Frequency of Teaching Execution and Weekly Home Learning Plan (WHLP) Prepared by the Pre-service Teachers during their Teaching Internship

Based on figure 1, 23 or 77% respondents had less than 5 teaching execution during their teaching internship due to the quarantine status of their community and Covid- 19 cases. The other respondents had more than two executions during their internship. The other pre service teachers had more that 5 teaching executions. All the pre- service teachers had their final demonstration executed during the school year.



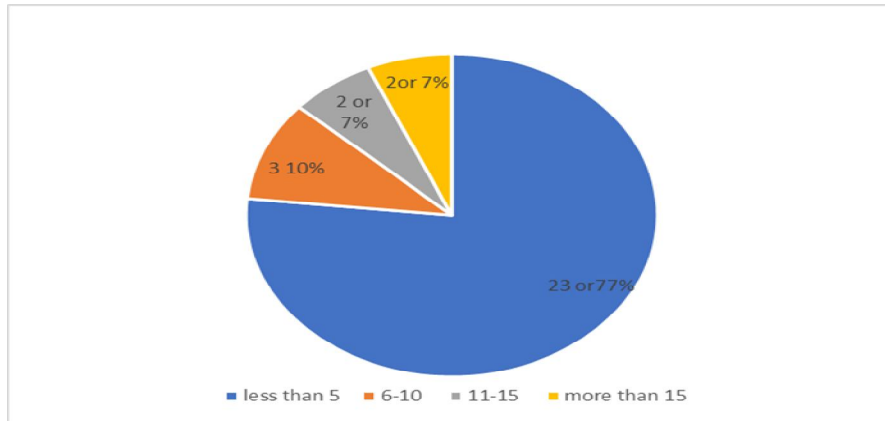


Figure 1. Number of Teaching Execution conducted by Pre- service Teachers

Weekly Home Learning Plans, or WHLPs, are designed to help instructors monitor daily general learning processes both in and outside of the classroom as they apply the most appropriate and practical alternate learning modality based on the circumstances of their school. The pre- service teachers were required to submit WHLPs as part of their internship. Based in Figure 2, many of the respondents had prepared 11- 15 WHLPs during their teaching internship. Ten or 33% respondents prepared more than 15 WHLPs.

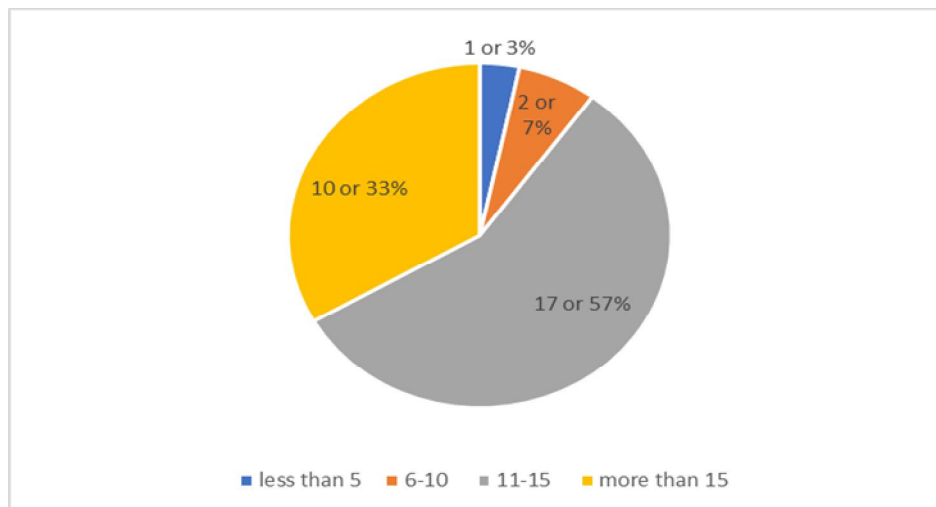


Figure 2. Number of WHLPs prepared by Pre- service Teachers

Extent of participation of Pre- service Teachers in the Different School Activities during their Teaching Internship

The pre-service teachers participated in the different activities of the schools during their deployment for SY 2020-2021. They had participated in the observation of classes, pre-observation, and post-observation activities. Based on Table 2, they had always observed the teaching-learning process in flexible learning and in different distance learning delivery modes via modular approach, assisted in class routines, assisted in the preparation of Instructional Materials (IMs), prepared WHLPs, monitored implementation of WHLPs, assisted in class activities, assessment practices, assisted the cooperating teacher in accomplishing school forms, assisted during parent-teacher meeting/ conferences, and provided support by being volunteer tutors as part of auxiliary service for learners with difficulties as needed. However, they sometimes observed the teaching-learning process in flexible learning and in different distance learning delivery modes (2.87), participated in webinars and other online professional services (3.23), and prepared an electronic portfolio of various teaching-learning experiences and processes (3.23). Meanwhile, they rarely observed the teaching-learning process in flexible learning and in different distance learning delivery modes via radio-based (2.00) and TV-based (2.40). This implies that the delivery of teaching internship was carried out in innovative and flexible ways suitable to the context of the schools, teachers and students as Joint CHED-DEp-Ed Memorandum, series of 2020.

Table 2. Extent of participation of Pre- service Teachers in the Different School Activities during their Teaching Internship

Teaching-Learning Experiences	Extent of Participation	
	X	DI
1. Observe the teaching-learning process in flexible learning and in different distance learning delivery modes:		
1.1. Modular	3.97	A
1.2. Online	2.87	S
1.3. Radio-based	2.00	R
1.4. TV-based	2.40	R
2. Attend pre-observation conferences with the cooperating teacher.	3.67	A
3. Attend post-observation conferences with the cooperating teacher.	3.50	A
4. Attend to orientation on protocols on module	3.70	A
5. Assist the cooperating teacher in the preparation of presentations and learning materials to be used in classes.	3.93	A
6. Develop contextualized instructional materials appropriate for the teaching demonstration modality.	3.73	A
7. Assist the cooperating teacher in the printing & packaging of instructional materials/modules	3.97	A
8. Prepare Weekly Home Learning Plan (WHLP)	3.97	A
9. Submit the WHLP to the cooperating teacher for further input and recommendation	3.93	A
10. Finalize the WHLP based on the cooperating teacher recommendations.	3.93	A
11. Assist the cooperating teacher in the monitoring and implementation of the WHLP.	3.90	A

12. Prepare report in the implementation of the WHLP to be noted and reviewed by the cooperating teacher	3.87	A
13. Assist the Cooperating teachers prepare class activities/ WHLP	3.90	A
14. Facilitate learning delivery modalities (LDM) class activities with minimum supervision from the cooperating teacher	3.63	A
15. Design contextualized learning activities aligned with the MELCs	3.57	A
16. Assist the cooperating teacher to create assessment materials related to the lessons, applicable to various distance learning delivery modes.	3.77	A
17. Design templates for various assessment tools with suitable scoring rubrics.	3.40	A
18. Design templates for reflection activities on the teaching-learning process.	3.53	A
19. Assist the cooperating teacher in checking students' outputs.	3.93	A
20. Assist the cooperating teacher in accomplishing school forms	3.40	A
21. Assist the cooperating teacher in parent-teacher meeting/ conferences.	3.20	A
22. Provide support by being volunteer tutors as part of auxiliary service for learners with difficulties.	3.33	A
23. Participate in webinars and other online professional services	3.23	S
24. Prepare an electronic portfolio of various teaching-learning experiences and processes.	3.23	S

Challenges encountered by the Preservice Teachers.

Table 3 presents the challenges encountered by the pre-service teachers. The challenges included the non-readiness of preservice teachers on the use of alternative learning modes especially on modular, virtual interaction and they were not exposed with Gmeet usage and Zoom usage. Other challenges encountered by the pre-service teachers included challenges in hand-on activities via online, struggles in technological integration, inadequate experience in utilizing technology such as the delivery of content via videos, limited social interactions since the cancellation of face-to-face classes, limited internet access faced by students and stability of internet connection. During the pandemic, most educational institutions were unprepared for the absence of in-person classes particularly affecting internship programs like practice teaching using remote learning. The need for strategies to prepare pre-service teachers to integrate technology into their lessons is vital (4). The preparation of pre-service teachers (e.g., using teacher educators as role models, learning technology by design, scaffolding authentic technology experiences), and (b) conditions necessary at the institutional level (e.g., technology planning and leadership, co-operation within and between institutions, training staff). On the other hand, other study shows pre-service teachers' attitudes towards computer use (5). A Singapore survey pointed out that the success of any initiatives to implement technology in an educational program depends strongly upon the support and attitudes of teachers involved. It has been suggested that if teachers believed or perceived proposed computer programs as fulfilling neither their own or their students' needs, they are not likely to attempt to introduce technology into their teaching and learning. In many developed countries, nearly all schools are equipped with the infrastructure to conduct ICT mediated teaching and learning. Positive teacher attitudes towards computing are critical if computers are to be effectively integrated into the school curriculum.

Table 3. Challenges encountered by the Pre-service Teachers during their Teaching Internship

Challenges	Freq	Rank
1. Not all pre-service teachers projected a high level of readiness in different learning delivery modes (LDM).	29	1
2. Stability of internet connections	28	2
3. Mobile data pack to use the platform for virtual classrooms	25	3

4. Limited micro-teaching where some of them also acted as students.	24	4
5. Limited social interaction	23	5
6. Technological integration and usage	22	6
7. Videotaping and broadcasting lessons	21	7
8. Limited personal development	20	8
9. Conduct enough hand-on activities online	19	9
10. Limited skills in using digital materials	18	10
11. Instructional materials preparation like videos	17	11
12. Create different activities to cater for students	16	12
13. Use of social media	14	13

3. Experiences of Preservice Teachers

The pre-service teachers identified positive experiences during their internship or practice teaching, while other respondents faced difficulties. Four respondents mentioned that their practice teaching experiences were challenging since having unstable internet during online class. However, generally, their internship program was exciting and joyful journey as future elementary or high school teachers. The respondents also had actual experiences printing learning modules including attendance in In-Service Training of Teachers and Red Cross Training. Despite the pandemic, the pre-service teachers experienced preparing WHLPs, conducting test assessment and summative examinations, and video-based demonstration. They also had first hand portfolio preparation with the guidance of the school principal, cooperating teacher and supervising instructor. The pre-service teachers were also exposed to action research. Other experiences included feeling nervous during their demonstration, health issue, networking and linking. In terms of alternative modalities, some claimed that radio-based instruction, video lesson preparation, modular approach were new experiences as pre-service teachers. There are a variety of experiences that preservice teachers have as they prepare to enter the teaching profession (9). Some may complete field experiences or student teaching placements, where they can observe and work with experienced teachers in a classroom setting. This can be a valuable learning experience, as it allows preservice teachers to see firsthand the challenges and rewards of teaching, as well as to develop their own teaching skills and techniques. The experiences of preservice teachers can be both challenging and rewarding, as they work to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become effective teachers (10, 11). It is important for preservice teachers to be proactive in seeking out opportunities for learning and professional development, as these experiences can be critical to their success as teachers.

Problems Encountered by the Preservice teachers during the new Normal

The respondents encountered problems during the internship along four areas: Information Communication Technology (ICT) problems, time management, skills in using new educational platforms and adjustment to no face-to-face classes.

For ICT-related problems, the respondents encountered poor internet connection; lack of ICT gadgets and equipment like printers, laptop; skills on the use of video editing. Pre-service teachers may have concerns related to integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) into their teaching practices (12). The effectiveness of use technology to support student learning or how to troubleshoot technical issues may arise in the classroom. Additionally, pre-service teachers may be concerned about their own technological skills and knowledge and may feel that they need to improve

in this area to effectively integrate technology into their teaching (13). It is important for teacher education programs to address these concerns and provide pre-service teachers with the support and resources they need to integrate ICT confidently and competently into their teaching.

Time management was identified by five respondents as problem particularly the need for more time to prepare the video- based lessons. Another problem was on limited knowledge and skills of the pre- service teachers on online delivery of education and modular instruction. The respondents also claimed that adjustments doing actual teaching executions with no pupils or students in attendance and class routines.

4. CONCLUSION

The pre- service teacher- respondents were generally young and mostly female students. They were involved in the various activities of the schools where they had their teaching internship. They had identified positive learning experiences during their internship but encountered challenges and problems along ICT skills and usage, time management, skills of the students with new platforms and adjustment to no face-to-face classes.

5. RECCOMENDATION

1. Training Program for Pre-service Teachers should be conducted by the College of Teacher Education of Apayao State College to capacitate the students for teaching.
2. Periodic monitoring should be conducted by the supervising instructors to the cooperating schools during duration of teaching internship.

Consent

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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