

COMPETENCIES OF COOPERATING TEACHERS AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

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Abstract: This study determined the competencies of cooperating teachers and the school climate in the perspectives of the pre-service teachers of Iloilo Science and University- Miagao Campus, Miagao, Iloilo. Furthermore, a significant difference in the level of cooperating teachers' competencies in the areas of personal skills, Technology management skills and instructional competence was found out. As output of the study, a feedback mechanism was formulated. This was participated by 199 randomly chosen pre-service teachers assigned in the varied schools in the First District of Iloilo. A validated researcher –made evaluation form was utilized in obtaining the data. Mean and SD were used in the descriptive analysis while the Mann Whitney U was used to obtain the inferential data. Findings of the study revealed that the cooperating teachers' level of competency when taken as a whole and in areas such as personal skills, management skills and instructional competence was outstanding and the school climate was excellent. Notably, the strong points of the cooperating teachers revolved into the following themes namely: Having effective communication, being collegial, being flexible to difference, being organized and being understanding while lacking pedagogical support and technology expertise, low voice are among their weak points. There was no significant difference noted in the level of cooperating teachers' competencies in the areas of personal skills, management skills and instructional competence as perceived by the pre-service teachers when categorized as to elementary and secondary school. The qualitative part of the study made use of the thematic analysis. It is recommended that ISAT U key officials, Student Teaching Division and Dep Ed may continually formulate effective policies and strategies to maintain the standard of education, especially as regards teaching internship, thereby, producing quality teacher education graduates and prospective teachers.

Keywords: Competency, Cooperating Teachers, School Climate.

I. INTRODUCTION

People desiring to become teachers, upon completion of their college coursework, participated in the field observation and experiences, supplemental teaching, and culminating in student teaching in a mentored environment under the guidance of the cooperating teacher, one who has had considerable experience teaching in the field (Abrahams, F. 2009). It is during this time that fledgling teachers begin to apply their university coursework, ideals, and experiences from 16 or more years as students into a personal pedagogy to help their students learn. The student teaching practicum involves a complicated triad between the student teachers, who are responsible for acquiring the knowledge in content and developing dispositions about teaching (Duling, 2000); the university supervisors, who are responsible for teaching the skills and content and monitoring dispositions toward teaching (Conway, 2002); and the cooperating teachers in the public schools who mentor and guide pre-service teachers through a controlled student teaching experience with the aid of the university faculty (Zemek, 2008). Presumably all of whom want the student teachers to have positive experiences and to leave the practicum with the abilities necessary to be effective classroom teachers.

The role of cooperating teachers cannot be understated, for this person has the day today responsibility of mentoring and guiding a prospective teacher, with the hopes of helping to train a quality educator (Rike, C., & Sharp, L. 2009). There is little disagreement that the cooperating teachers have great influence on student teachers; many actually put forward that the cooperating teacher is the single biggest influence during the student teaching experience .

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to determine the competencies and qualities of cooperating teachers and the school climate in the perspectives of the pre-service teachers as basis for feedback mechanism among the fourth year BEED and BSED students of ISAT U Miagao Campus for Academic Year 2017- 2018.

1. What is the cooperating teachers' level of competency when taken as a whole and in the areas of personal skills, management skills, and instructional competence in the perspectives of the pre-service teachers and when classified as to their course?
2. What are the strong and weak qualities of the cooperating teachers in the perspectives of the pre-service teachers?
3. What is the school climate of the partner schools in the perspectives of the pre- service teachers?
4. Is there a significant differences in the level of the cooperating teachers' competency in the areas of personal skills, management skills and instructional competence as perceived by the pre- service teachers and when classified as to their course?
5. What feedback mechanism can be implemented to enhance the competencies of the cooperating teachers?

Related Literature Studies

Future teachers spend years forming their attitudes, beliefs, and values about the types of teachers they hope to become and culminate their university coursework with the seminal activity of their teacher education: student teaching. As student teachers transition into their teaching careers, it is unlikely they will observe or cooperate with other teachers as intensely as they did with their cooperating teachers during their student teaching practicum (Guyton & McIntyre, 2000). In large part, a derivative of the isolated, one-room school house still exists as teachers work alone with little or no collaboration or interdependence. Seldom do teachers visit other teachers' classrooms to observe teaching and to discuss what could be learned from one another (Glickman, 2001).

Since one-third of the total time students spend in teacher education is made up of the student teaching practicum (Clarke & Bariteau, 2005), it is critical that we seek to understand the influence cooperating teachers have in shaping teacher perspectives. For many, the student teaching practicum will be the one and only collaborative teaching partnership in which they will participate. There is much to learn about how "players affect the landscape and process of learning to teach". The title itself, "student teacher", reveals the paradoxical nature of the experience. Student teachers are expected to have enough competence to teach effectively from the beginning of their student teaching placement; yet, they lack the experiences of seasoned teachers, which is reflected by the insertion of the term student in how they are classified. Feiman Nemser (2001) suggested that novice teachers have to teach and learn how to teach concurrently. While nearly all teachers are still students learning the craft of teaching—taking risks, and bridging the theories of their university coursework with the practicalities of an actual classroom of students – student teachers have the unique opportunity to work closely and intensely with a role model their cooperating teacher.

The need for quality teachers in the classroom is at the heart of every preparation program and pathway into the teaching profession. The quality of teaching is known to be directly attributed to the pre-service preparation that teachers receive. This need for quality teachers has its own special challenges. These challenges present difficulties for pre-service teachers when they aren't sufficiently prepared, and can lead to an experience known as 'praxis shock'; a result of what is expected in school life and the teaching profession versus the realities of the classroom. When teachers experience the classroom realities and these realities are not what was expected, the teacher usually moves into 'survival mode' rather than learning how to better cope with the responsibilities and work to become a better teacher (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 2008). This is not the best outcome for the pre-service and shows the need for more study into how best to incorporate known teaching realities into teacher preparation.

The most common path into the teaching profession starts with a preparation program at the undergraduate level in college. In an excellent teacher education program, prospective educators are provided with experiences that help them form their own opinions and understandings of education. Coupled with the content knowledge of their specific field of study, pre-service teachers work to solidify their attitudes and abilities in preparation for a career in teaching. There is

more to teacher education than understanding subject matter and how people learn, suggesting that prospective teachers must also learn how these two elements interact. In short, to become a teacher, one must learn content, methods, and specific pedagogy.

Teacher educators - those people responsible for overseeing the training of pre-service teachers and their induction into the workforce - often find themselves dealing with the challenge of striking a balance between educational theory and the reality of what happens in the classroom (Lind, 2001). Many different learning strategies for the pre-service teacher during this time and beyond, while sounding quite rooted in common sense, have also been agreed upon as important by many educators responsible for training student teachers.

Cooperating teachers value the importance of a personal relationship with their student teachers and feel that they should take responsibility for creating the environment that fosters a positive rapport (Koerner, 2002). In a study of interpersonal relationships between cooperating teachers and their student interns by Veal & Rikard (2008), there was an atmosphere of “power sharing” where the cooperating teacher assumed responsibility for the growth of the student teacher. Cooperating teachers continued to emphasize the interpersonal relationship with their student teachers to mitigate the tension created by this power shift. This led to increased mutual respect and learning between the student teachers and cooperating teachers, and also diminished the feeling of isolation the cooperating teachers were experiencing.

This nurturing quality was found to be the dominant perspective in the majority of cooperating teachers surveyed by Clarke & Jarvis-Selinger (2005). These teachers believe that learning has a “significant emotional component,” and demonstrates that they care about their students, promote a climate of trust and caring, help establish realistic goals, and support learners’ efforts and achievements. As this extends to the student teacher practicum, the perspective of nurturing provides for an atmosphere of trust and safety, where the student teacher is comfortable in being able to express concern, doubt, and confusion, and can ask questions within a safe learning environment.

One important role of the university supervisor is to assist in matching the student teacher with the cooperating teacher. Cooperating teachers who are eager to learn from the experience as well as be a guide to the student teacher are preferable, due to the importance of the interpersonal relationship and the building of a collaborative as well as mentoring experience (Liebhaber, 2003). When putting the “triad” together, it is vital to remember that the student teacher is the most important member. The intern should communicate with the members of the triad, ensuring that questions are asked and help is sought throughout the internship. Though the university supervisor and cooperating teacher, owing to their experience, take on leadership roles, the student teacher must actively participate in the triad (Lind, 2000). The student teacher must also remember that he/she is entering an established classroom, ostensibly complete with its own classroom management procedures, rules, and routines. With this in mind, the student teacher should bring with them the ability to realize that they may not always agree with everything they observe. Many things about the class are probably pre-planned and it is wise to remember this is a learning laboratory situation, where it is possible to collaborate.

In conclusion, potential teachers face a paradigm of confusion that manifests itself between the time they decide to be teachers and the time they are exposed to the realities of the profession. Between dispositions that form throughout the undergraduate training program and attitudes that grow as part of the development of educational philosophies, teacher candidates go through a maturation process that can be complex and confusing. Dispositions can be crucial to developing the successful attitudes needed to be effective teachers, but it is important to remember that these dispositions are not necessarily “hard-wired” or built into the candidate; they are subject to change as more is learned about the craft of teaching. Discoveries have been made that show all of the elements that make up the pre-practicum experience tend to influence each other; that is, dispositions are often altered as the student teacher experience progresses; the experience gained in the classroom during student teaching often helps to prepare the candidate for the obstacles that are known to exist in the beginning years of working in the teaching profession. It also follows that these experiences combine to help modify the teacher candidate’s dispositions so that there is a greater potential for success. When all of these elements are considered in the undergraduate teacher education program, the student teacher practicum is optimized.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on symbolic interactionism theory developed by Herbert Blumer (1986). Symbolic interactionism is a pragmatic approach of ecological human development that was developed as a way of studying human conduct and life in general with the understanding that reality is constructed as the result of social interactions

Blumer named three premises of symbolic interactionist theory in play as people create meaning through social contact in their worlds. First, people act on things if they are meaningful to them. Second, this meaning comes from social interactions. Lastly, individuals process meaning as they encounter people and concepts over time (Blumer, 1986). Personal meaning, therefore, is a product gained through social interactions with others that are laden with symbolic interpretation, and is adjusted as new interactions occur. Symbolic interactionists view the healthy individual as a developing and learning person capable of forming a self-image interpreting situations, taking the role of others and negotiating interpersonal transactions—all because of and through symbolic learning. (Abrell & Hanna, 1978).

By the nature of their jobs as teachers who spend their days interacting with students and adults, cooperating teachers are constantly encountering new information through their relationships. This emphasized the aspects of diversity and human perspective that are essential parts of understanding how people construct their realities and how the realities of others are interpreted and an understanding of how individuals interact when teaching and how their professional identities are formed.

Conceptual Framework

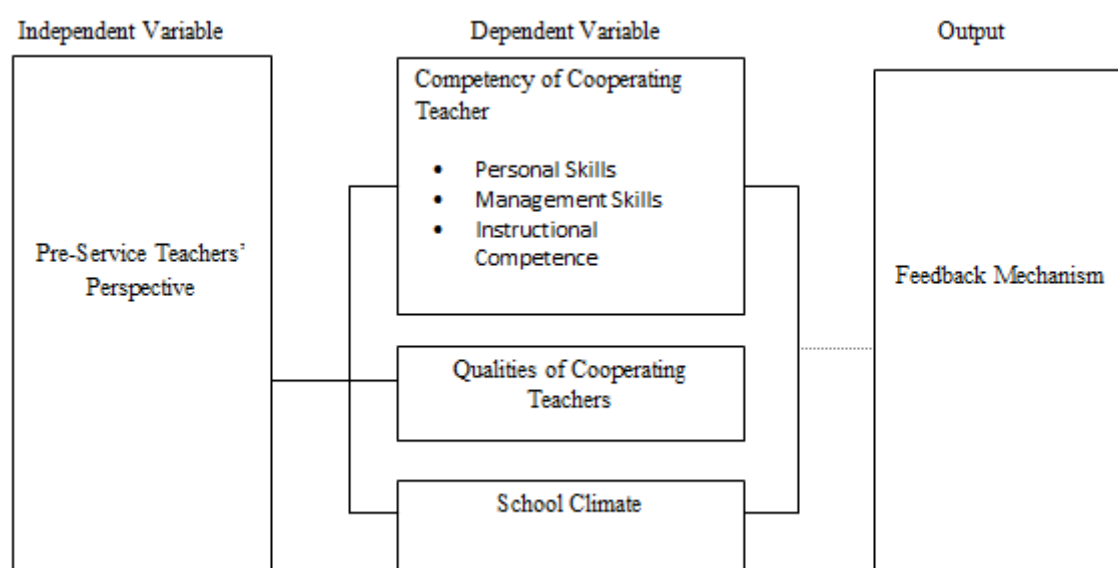


Figure 1. Cooperating teachers’ competency, qualities and school climate in the perspective of the pre-service teachers

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive - qualitative design was used in this study. It involves the description, recording, analysis and interpretation of data. This study employed qualitative for the cooperating teacher’s qualities and quantitative method for the cooperating teacher’s competencies and the school climate.

The Participants

The participants of the study were the 199 pre-service teachers purposively taken, 77 from Bachelor of Elementary Education and 122 from Bachelor of Secondary Education of Iloilo Science and Technology University Miagao Campus for Academic Year 2017- 2018.

Data Gathering Instrument

A validated researcher-made instrument was used to obtain the data. The instrument was composed of three parts: Part I was the cooperating teachers’ competencies such as, personal skills, management skills and instructional competencies, Part II was the narrative report that determined the strong and weak qualities of the cooperating teachers and Part III was the pre-service teachers’ perception of the school climate.

Data Gathering Procedures

Permission and approval from the school administrator and cooperating teachers was obtained regarding the administration of the questioners to the respondents. Purposive sampling method was used. The researchers personally distributed and retrieved the questionnaires the individual pre-service teacher.

Data Analysis Procedure

Upon retrieval of the accomplished instruments, the data were tallied, computerized, and results were described and interpreted Mean and Standard Deviation for descriptive analysis, Mann Whitney U – for inferential analysis and Thematic Analysis for qualitative part.

III. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULT

Table 1: Level of Competencies When taken as a Whole and in the Areas of Personal Skills, Management Skills, and Instructional Competence in the Perspectives of the Pre -service Teachers and when Classified as to their Course

Characteristics	N	M	SD	Description
Personal Qualification				
BEED	77	4.67	0.4614	Outstanding
BSED	122	4.66	0.4887	Outstanding
Total	199	4.66	0.4781	Outstanding
Management Skills				
BEED	77	4.60	0.5490	Outstanding
BSED	122	4.56	0.5521	
Total	199	4.57	0.5509	Outstanding
Instructional Competence				
BEED	77	4.65	0.3834	Outstanding
BSED	122	4.58	0.4729	Outstanding
Total	199	4.61	0.4382	Outstanding
As a Whole				
BEED	77	4.64	0.4646	Outstanding
BSED	122	4.60	0.5046	Outstanding
Total	199	4.62	0.4891	Outstanding

Table 1 revealed that the level of competencies of the cooperating teachers as perceived by the respondents when taken as a whole was outstanding, (M= 4.62, sd= 0.4891). When classified according to the areas, personal skills, BEED (M=4.67, sd= .4614) while BSED (M=4.66, sd=0.4887). Meanwhile, BEED (M=4.60, sd=0.5490) and BSED (M=4.56, sd=0.5521) in management skills. Furthermore, in instructional competence, BEED (M=4.65, sd= 0.3834), BSED (M=4.58, sd= 0.4729). Results showed outstanding in all areas.

Table 2: Level of Perception of Pre-service Teachers as to the School Climate of Cooperating School as a Whole and When Classified as to their Course

Type of School	N	M	SD	Description
BEED	77	4.77	0.3834	Excellent
BSED	122	4.62	0.4250	Excellent
As a whole	199	4.68	0.4910	Excellent

Table 2 showed that the school climate of cooperating school was excellent as a whole (M=4.68, sd=0.4910). When classified as to grade level both BEED (M=4.77, sd=0.3834), BSED (M=4.62, sd=0.4250) was excellent.

Table 3: Differences in the level of the cooperating teachers' competency in the areas of personal skills, management skills and instructional competence as perceived by the pre- service teachers and when classified as to their course

Variable	<i>M</i> rank	<i>Σ</i> rank	<i>MWU Value</i>	<i>P</i>
Personal Qualification				
BEED	99.53	7663.5	4660.5	0.922
BSED	100.3	12236.5		
Management Skills				
BEED	103.65	7981	4416	0.46
BSED	97.7	11915		
Instructional Competence				
BEED	103.7	7985	4412	0.465
BSED	97.66	11915		

The differences in the level of cooperating teacher's competency when classified according to their course in the areas of personal skills, BEED has a mean rank of 99.53 and BSED has a mean rank of 103.3, the U-test was 4660.5 with the p-value of 0.922. In the areas of management skills, BEED has a mean rank of 103.65 and BSED has a mean rank of 97.7, the U-test was 4416 with the p-value of 0.46. Furthermore, in the areas of instructional competence, BEED has a mean rank of 103 and BSED has a mean rank of 97.66, the U-test was 4412 with the p-value of 0.465. The p-value of all areas were greater than 0.05 level of significance means that there was no significant difference in the level of the cooperating teachers' as perceived by the pre- service teachers and when classified as to their course. The result was supported by Clarke & Jarvis-Selinger (2005), that cooperating teachers believe learning has a "significant emotional component," and demonstrates that they care about their student teachers, promote a climate of trust and caring, help establish realistic goals, and support learners' efforts and achievements. As this extends to the student teacher practicum, the perspective of nurturing provides for an atmosphere of trust and safety, where the student teacher is comfortable in being able to express concern, doubt, and confusion, and can ask questions within a safe learning environment.

Findings

Cooperating teachers' level of competency when taken as a whole and in areas such as personal skills, management skills and instructional competence was outstanding.

School climate was excellent.

The strong points of the cooperating teachers revolved into the following themes namely: Having effective communication, being collegial, being flexible to difference, being organized and being understanding. While lacking pedagogical support and technology expertise, low voice are among their weak points.

There was no significant difference noted in the level of cooperating teachers' competencies in the areas of personal skills, management skills and instructional competence as perceived by the pre-service teachers when categorized as to elementary and secondary school.

IV. CONCLUSION

Cooperating teachers had high level of competencies in the conduct of their student teachers training that leads to the improvement of their teaching performance.

Cooperating teachers may influence student teachers' profession related socialization, career satisfaction, perceptions of professional roles, instructional practices and perhaps even in their decision to stay in the profession.

Interplay of cooperating teachers' competencies, school climate and pre-service teachers preparedness and readiness.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

ISAT U key officials, Student Teaching Division and DepEd may continually formulate effective policies and strategies to maintain the standard of education, especially as regards teaching internship, thereby, producing quality teacher education graduates and prospective teachers.

Monitoring and evaluation of both student teachers and cooperating teachers during the pre-service teachers training should consider impacts on teaching performance of and meaningful learning outcomes.

Sustainability of effective practices of pre-service training of education graduating students should be quality and excellence education through provisions of a series of experiences such as student teaching, classroom observation, lesson planning, classroom management, and student guidance.

Cooperating Teachers in DepEd should attend seminars and training for them to be fully equipped with the necessary competencies needed in the personal and professional development of the student teachers.

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