

Crossing Boundaries: Pre-service Teachers' Perspective on Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

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ABSTRACT

Addressing the needs of the multicultural classrooms is one of the challenges facing the education sector globally. The insufficient training and experiences of the teachers in handling a diverse group of learners created a cultural gap between teachers and learners. This study was conducted to assess the pre-service teachers teaching practices in a culturally diverse classroom. Anchored on the Social Learning Theory and the Indigenous Peoples' Educational Framework, this quantitative study used descriptive-evaluative inquiry. A survey questionnaire was drawn to the 45 pre-service teachers. Using descriptive statistics, the result revealed that the respondents claimed that they lack the knowledge, skills, preparation, and experiences that build their requisite for professional competency in multicultural classrooms. The absence in the conduct of seminars and trainings on the pedagogical skills needed to address cultural sensitivity and on the use of effective instructional practices and materials made them less efficacious on their instructional engagement. The lack of discussion and integration of multicultural issues in the curriculum limited the respondents in understanding other culture and languages. To fully equip the pre-service teachers, a Curriculum Enrichment Plan was made to strengthen the Teacher Education Program.

Keywords: Multicultural, culturally responsive teaching practices, descriptive-evaluative design, Kidapawan City, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

The legislation on culturally responsive teaching practices among teachers has captured consideration in the educational landscape globally. Teachers should possess specific skills that are effective in teaching the academic subjects to diverse learners

(United States Department of Education, 2004). To close the cultural gap in connecting with the students, teachers should be culturally sensitive and must be skilled in engaging with multicultural group of students (Walker,2011). In a study about Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) to construct students' identity in the Malaysian classrooms, it was revealed that students' interpretation of CRT was influenced by a conventional perception of their identity in the classroom and in the teaching and learning process, while teachers were more doubtful and reserved in developing CRT (Idrus,2014). Exposure to culturally responsive teaching will benefit students to prepare individuals in multicultural society (Gay,2000).

Today's classroom should provide an edge where individuals from several different cultural backgrounds have the potential for sharing a rich place of learning that facilitates the practice of culturally responsive pedagogy relevant to all learners (Young and Sternod, 2011). Many teacher education programs have turned their attention towards preparing tomorrow's teachers for a classroom that is insightful of the cultural and linguistic diversity (Villegas, 2015) and create a multicultural education which requires teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2012). The true focus of a multicultural education both for pre-service teachers and their students is to develop cross-cultural competency that aides them in acquiring the understanding to see themselves as part of a global society where their fate is embedded in the fates of all people (Artiles and Mc Clafferty, 2016).

A multicultural education may become a vehicle for pre-service teachers in valuing a culturally responsive pedagogy that requires the teachers to explore their own beliefs about minority groups, learn about culture other than their own, and develop strategies for educational equity (Gay & Kirkland, 2013). It is reported that some teachers were incapable to teach students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2013). In addition, researchers noted that many prospective teachers have low feelings of self-efficacy in their ability to teach in culturally and linguistically diverse learning environments and execute the practices of culturally responsive teaching (Villegas and Lucas, 2014). Most culturally diverse students and their teachers live in different worlds, and they do not fully understand or appreciate one another's experiential realities (Gay, 2012). In addition, many students from culturally diverse backgrounds in Hawaii do not learn (Reed, 2013) because of the cultural discontinuity they experience in school and achievement gaps continue to be widest for indigenous,

economically poor, and ethnically diverse minority student groups (Tyler, Uqdah, and Dillihunt (2013) due to the lack of understanding and knowledge of the teachers to respond (Hammond, 2011). In the Philippines, records show that the academic performance of indigenous people are relatively low due to the difficulty of adapting to the mainstream since there was no specific design for indigenous peoples education before they attended to college (Cornelio and De Castro, 2014).The need for culture-based education is being sought by many of indigenous cultural communities as the primary means of strengthening culture and engaging with great equity in society. Marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, face multiple barriers to education and are being left behind in terms of educational achievement (UNESCO,2014).

After a thorough review on related literature, the researcher noted only a limited number of related studies dealing on Cultural Responsiveness among teachers and most importantly the researcher was not able to come across a study about the preparation of the pre-service teachers to be culturally responsive in their practice teaching. Very importantly, the author of this paper is a member of the Manobo Indigenous Tribe and an educator who realized the need to conduct the study. In addition, this study also aimed to inspire every pre-service teacher to appreciate learners' diversity in the classroom. Moreover, this study determined to find out the level of pre-service teachers' perspective on culturally responsive teaching practices and a curriculum enhancement plan was proposed.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of culturally responsive teaching practices as perceived by the pre-service teachers. The problems identified by the respondents in their teaching practices were also taken consideration. A curriculum enrichment plan was prepared to enrich the curriculum of the Teacher Education Program in order to raise the competency of the pre-service teachers to respond to a multicultural classroom.

Framework of the Study

This study was anchored on Bandura's Social Learning Theory which posits that effective intercultural relations are created through imitation and modeling processes.

The way people behave was acquired through his cultural

frame of reference (Bandura,1977) as cited by Awang, Awang, Sahari and Ali (2011). Also, the Indigenous Peoples Education Framework (1997) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) emphasize the right of the indigenous children's access to decent basic social services and the culture-responsive basic education.

The study focused on assessing the culturally responsive teaching practices of the pre-service teachers. As shown in Figure 1, the input is the Level of Perception of the Pre-service Teachers on Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices. The process includes the data gathering and analysis of the result through the survey questionnaire. The output is the proposed curriculum enrichment plan based on the findings of the study.

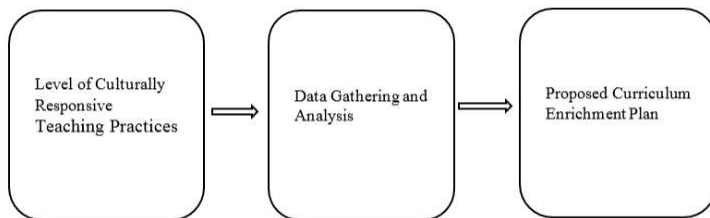


Figure 1. The arrows between the boxes show the process of the research.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-evaluative research design. The research was conducted to the pre-service teachers enrolled during the second semester of 2017-2018 at Central Mindanao Colleges, College of Education. Twenty respondents were included in the pre-trial of the questionnaire and 45 pre-service teachers were included in the study.

The survey instrument of Skepple (2011) was modified and used for this study which measured the pre-service teachers' perceptions concerning their professional preparation to implement a culturally responsive teaching practice. The reliability testing of the instrument was .95 as estimated by Cronbach's Alpha.

Regarding the data collection, the proper protocol was followed and ethical considerations in the conduct of the research were observed. The researcher informed the pre-service teacher candidates that their participation in the study was voluntary,

anonymous and that no adverse effects will result from their decision not to participate. All respondents of the study signed the informed letter of consent.

Before the data were gathered, a letter seeking for permission to conduct the study was sought from the Dean of the College of Education, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the School President. Having been granted the permission, the researcher conducted the survey and immediately retrieved the instrument.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency count and percentage, and mean to summarize the information.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Level of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices among the Pre-Service Teachers

The result indicates that the pre-service teachers got a grand mean score of 3.71 (moderately agree) for the 21-item measure. The respondents' perception concerning professional preparation to implement culturally responsive teaching practices in the classrooms was highest for "raised my awareness for the need to attend professional development activities or events regarding teaching and learning about diversity (M=4.40-moderately agree). Item-specific mean for pre-service teachers' perception concerning professional preparation was lowest for "teach a diverse group of students, particularly those in the IP and Muslim dominated areas (M=2.50-agree). This means that the more seminars attended by the pre-service teachers would likely increase their awareness and preparation in the culturally responsive teaching practices.

The result revealed a grand mean score of 3.71 (moderately agree) for the 21-item measure. The highest mean was "raised my awareness for the need to attend professional development activities or events regarding teaching and learning about diversity (M=4.40-moderately agree) implied that the Teacher Education Program has already done initiatives in the preparation of the pre-service teachers regarding diverse classrooms. It implied further that pre-service teachers appreciated the different activities that helped enhance their knowledge in dealing with cultural diversity. The lowest mean was "teach a diverse group of students, particularly those in the remote areas (M=2.50-agree). This meant

that the respondents lack the experience to be exposed in the IP or Muslim classrooms since most of their field experiences were done in the urban areas dominated by less diverse culture. This further implied that pre-service teachers lack to value the culture of these diverse learners since they do not have the immersion in the different IPEd and Muslim dominated schools. This result of the study was supported by Rhodes (2015) who stressed that human experience should be noted by educators as sources of data to become culturally responsive. Siwatu (2011) also supported the findings when he suggested that teacher educators can intentionally foster pre-service teacher's teaching efficacy for populations of diverse learners through the implementation of specific curricular activities and experiences and opportunities to observe and examine culturally responsive teaching. Villegas and Lucas (2002) also noted that culturally responsive teachers understand that schools are often agents for producing such social inequities and should have a clear vision for developing achievement in their students (Gay,2000).

2. Proposed Curriculum Enrichment Plan for the Culturally Responsive Teaching Competency among the Pre-service Teachers

The researcher presents a proposed Curriculum Enrichment Plan that addresses the problems identified by the pre-service teachers to be culturally responsive in the multicultural classes.

Rationale

A continuous challenge to teachers in the classroom is understanding how children learn. One explanation might come from the culturally responsive curriculum. Culturally responsive education can be defined as using the cultural orientations of students to make learning experiences effective for them. Achievement gap of indigenous children and those in multicultural classrooms continue to deteriorate. This has turned the attention of the Teacher Education programs to note if they have tooled the pre-service teachers with the competency expected of them to handle multicultural classrooms. Prospective teachers should be competent on this area so that they will be able to understand how these children learn and how their culture affects their learning.

Although the findings of this study have manifested a little concern since some of the activities in the Teacher Education Program are evident to address some of the issues, however, the need to prepare the pre-service teachers in the multicultural classrooms is presumed to help the diverse learners to achieve academically.

General Objectives:

The Curriculum Enrichment Plan has the following objectives:

1. To provide an opportunity for the pre-service teachers to be exposed in the multicultural classrooms during their student teaching experience.
2. To prepare the pre-service teachers with the teaching competency needed to be culturally responsive in their practices.
3. To enrich the curriculum of the Teacher Education Program through the integration of some discussions and meaningful activities.
4. To pose a challenge to the pre-service teachers, the Teacher Education Program, and the school administrators to address the readiness of the pre-service teachers in the field of teaching.

Categories	List of the Problems identified by the Respondents	Strategies
Cross-Cultural Communication	Lack of opportunity to interact with people from IP and Muslim culture	Advocating Immersion in the IP and Muslim dominated communities
	Difficulty in understanding the other students' language	Learning the Basic Language through MTB-MLE exposure
Multicultural Classrooms	Lack of knowledge, skills and experiences that will prepare students to be working in multicultural classrooms	Providing inputs for cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity in the classrooms
	Learning styles of the students are not explored	Inquiring through research about the learning styles of learners
	Limited field experiences in IP and Muslim classrooms	Providing classroom exposure on the IP and Muslim dominated areas
Instructional Engagement	Discussions about cultural diversity is not included in the subjects	Inclusion of multicultural education topics in the different subjects
	Pedagogical skills for handling multicultural classrooms are not given emphasis	Conducting trainings on pedagogies for multicultural classrooms
	No cultural sensitivity seminar was held	Conducting seminars on cultural sensitivity
	Lacks the confidence to teach in multicultural classrooms	Providing proper training and mastery in handling multicultural classrooms

CONCLUSION

The pre-service teachers believe that the Teacher Education Program has somewhat prepared them to become responsive in multicultural classrooms confirming the Social Learning Theory of Bandura. However, the lack of exposures of the pre-service teachers in the IP and Muslim classrooms for an immersion, the need to learn the basic language of other tribes, the need for the inclusion of cultural sensitivity topics in the Teacher Education Curriculum, and the need for providing seminars and pedagogical skills training for multicultural learners were some of things that need to be addressed in this inquiry. To fully equip pre-service teachers to be responsive in multicultural classrooms, the school should provide for professional background or training in dealing with diverse learners is the best strategy a Teacher Education Program can offer.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of the study may be best translated to various media communication for information dissemination if not, further awareness campaign. Indigenous materials such as wall newspaper, one-act play, among others may be designed for stakeholders from the remote areas, and social media, mass media (TV, newspaper, and radio) may be used in the information dissemination.

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