Research Article

Exploring Learning Ownership and Learning Traditions of Pre-Service Teachers During Teaching Internship

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ABSTRACT

The Teaching Internship Program is the culmination of the knowledge gained from the academe and its application to natural settings of education. Its success accurately measures pre-service teachers' competencies and the relevance and effectiveness of teacher education curricula. However, there is a difference between the learning experiences acquired in the academe and those in the actual classroom environment. This study aimed to explore the pre-service teachers' meaningful experiences, development of learning ownership, and their learning trajectory during the internship period. Qualitative research design was employed and narrative reflections of the forty-four (44) Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) pre-service teachers were used as the primary data source. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings revealed solid evidence of the participants' ownership of learning in the aspects of understanding learners as the center of the educative process, understanding acts of professionalism, and the teacher's professional identity. An alignment of learning ownership to professional standards for teachers is a trend observed from the results. Transformational Learning Theory was used to analyze the different learning phases demonstrated by the participants during the internship period. Implications for pre-service teachers internship program discussed

INTRODUCTION

In today's era of education, emphasis on discovery and problem-solving is imperative, and learning should be self-directed, collaborative, meaningful, and transferable. From this perspective, teacher education cannot be limited to training future teachers but to developing future professional leaders in education.

The teaching internship program is the culmination of the competencies acquired by the pre-service teachers in the academy and how they will be applied in the educational

setting. This experiential learning develops an in-depth and holistic understanding of the teaching profession in the actual education setting. This opportunity allows the teaching interns to prepare for job skills and real-world work to ensure a high employability rate. The success of teaching internships manifests the relevance of the curriculum to society's demands on teachers in the education sector.

Therefore, it is imperative to assess the impact of teaching internship practices to serve as a guide to the teaching internship program. Differences were found among pre-service teachers before and after their immersion in terms of pedagogical beliefs, meaningful experiences, challenges, and changes in pedagogical beliefs (Talitha & Marasigan, 2024).

Many researchers have extensively used narrative texts in investigating the aspects of the teaching internship for meaningful experiences and how these promote teacher awareness, developing a better understanding of the teaching profession and constructing teacher identity (Eksi & Gungero, 2018; Kong, 2017). Through the analysis of the pre-service teachers' narrative texts, it is also possible to understand how they learn about the teaching profession throughout the trajectory of the internship program (Marquez-Garcia, 2020).

This study uses the participants' narrative reflections as the primary data source to explore the development of learning ownership and meaningful experiences that characterized their learning trajectory during their teaching internship

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized narrative research, a form of qualitative research design. Qualitative research focuses on the subjective assessment of the participants' attitudes, opinions, and behaviors. In narrative research, the researcher describes the lives of individuals, collects and tells stories about people's lives, and writes narratives of individuals' experiences. At the same time, the participants share their stories, making them feel that their stories are important, and telling them helps them understand the topics they need to process (McEwan and Egan, 1995, cited in Creswell, 2015).

The study was conducted in partner cooperating schools wherein the participants were assigned. The locations of the cooperating schools are in the Division of San Jose City and

the Division of Science City of Munoz in the province of Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The researcher collected the narrative reflections after the five-month-long internship period. The teaching interns as the participants were forty-four Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students. The university deployed them to partner cooperating schools under the two school divisions in nearby cities. Narrative reflections embodied their insights for the five-month-long internship experience. It is not directed nor restricted. The participants were free to decide how to write their narrative reflections.

Data analysis comprises the following steps: data collection, transcription, coding, thematic analysis, contextual analysis, interpretation of data, and presentation of the results. The researcher collected the participants' narrative reflections at the end of the five-month teaching internship. Collected narrative reflections were transcribed. Language experts translated those written in the Filipino language into English for coding. Coding consists of putting codes to the ideas as constructs that symbolize or translate data (Vogt et al., 2014, p13 cited in Saldana, 2015, p. 4). The researcher coded the ideas and information for similarities to show unifying characteristics and patterns. The coding techniques used to analyze the data are descriptive and in vivo. The researcher then aggregated similar codes to form a single unit or theme (Creswell, 2014, p.245). Themes were then put together by the researcher and interconnected to form and interpret into a meaningful body of knowledge. The synthesis process formed the psychological language to answer the research questions in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Learning Ownership

Learning ownership is the outcome of the learner's active involvement in educational processes, resulting in developing a sense of connectedness, understanding context, goal, and application of knowledge learned through personal investment in learning. It facilitates understanding and retention and promotes a desire to learn (Voltz & Damiano-Lantz, 1993). The ownership of learning is the product of reflection, clarified or confirmed assumptions, and propositions as a product of learners' direct experiences and immersion in the actual context, manifested through self-proclaimed perspectives and actions used as guides in

dealing with future experiences. It is filtered by the learners' challenges and coping mechanisms, trying out new roles, integrating and enriching such roles in performing duties and confirming their effectiveness. The study of Liu (2023) reveals the four pillars of teacher education in the modern-day era of education, and one of these focuses on the ownership of learning and inquiry that deepen professionalism to develop thinking professionals.

Learning ownership results from a long learning process that develops over time. A classroom condition that demonstrates students' ownership of learning starts when a learner faces a challenging task requiring prolonged involvement, exploring other options to deepen knowledge, using structured inquiry or guide questions for doing the task, an initiative to personally assess the correctness of the output and the knowledge of benefits from doing the tasks. This transition is only made possible with the available opportunities for the agency, that is, the capacity and propensity to take purposeful initiative (*The Learning Professional | Learning Forward's Journal*, 2019).

Surveys, reflective blogs, essays (Banegas et al., 2024), portfolios (Schram et al., 1995), and journals (Bowen, 2011) were used to reflect on experiences during the internship. The use of language in all these media mediates learning to represent their experiences. They take ownership of these connections and make meaning by appropriating these ideas as part of who they are and who they are becoming as future professional teachers (Bowen, 2011). The study of Banegas and colleagues (2024) reveals results show that the student's teachers progressed during their internship, and so did the degree of their confidence, and they believe that their future agency was harnessed through the course, developing the willingness to use teacher agency as a tool for professional development. Moreover, ownership over the students' experiences can lead to making their connection with what they are learning (McMullen et al., 2013). Two significant assertions emerged from McMullen and colleagues (2013), such as the fact that increased ownership was fostered through the nature of the course and the way it was taught and that the development of a team or group atmosphere encouraged feelings of ownership among the interns.

This study's participants' learning ownership comprises their perspectives formed during the teaching internship experience. These statements and assertions are confirmed and proven through the participant's experience in the educational context. The researcher

classified the participants' learning ownership into two significant themes. These themes form the perspectives of the participants during the internship experience. These are 1) understanding the learners as the center of the educative process, and 2) understanding acts of professionalism and the teacher's professional identity.

The formed perspectives of the participants relate to the competencies of teachers in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). The first theme is the understanding of learners as a center in the educative process, which is a competency that is associated with four domains of teacher professional standards, namely: 1) content and pedagogical knowledge, 2) curriculum and planning, 3) learner's diversity, and 4) positive learning environment.

The perspectives formed by the participants during the internship experience are embodied in the second theme, understanding acts of professionalism and the teacher's professional identity. This competency is associated with two domains of teacher professional standards: 1) personal growth and professional development, 2) community linkages, and professional engagement.

Theme 1. Understanding Learners as the center of the educative process

The learners are at the center of the educative process. Their interests and characteristics are the basis of how instruction should be tailored to ensure meaningful lesson learning. Doyle and Zakrajsek (2023) described navigation as a learner-centered approach in teaching in terms of addressing affective concerns of students, on proven approaches to improve students' comprehension and recall, on transitioning from "teller of knowledge" to "facilitator of learning" on designing authentic assessment using real-world experiences; and successful communication techniques. Kilic and Prof (2010) found that using a learner-centered teaching model improved teacher candidates' teaching behaviors in the subject area, planning, teaching process, classroom management, communication, and evaluation. Learners' active class participation measures the teacher's effectiveness and mastery. The learner's participation and engagement in learning activities demonstrate the teacher's ability to facilitate learning, manage the appropriate instruction in the teaching process, and be mindful of the learners' interests and characteristics. The purpose of teaching

is to develop learners holistically. Teaching aims to develop learners holistically by engaging them in varied learning activities that develop multiple domains, such as cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, sometimes referred to as knowledge, skills, and values.

The formed perspectives of the participants in understanding the learners as the center of the teaching process is a competency associated with two teachers' professional standards. These standards are 1) content knowledge and pedagogy and 2) curriculum and planning. Content knowledge and pedagogy emphasize mastery of content knowledge, interconnectedness across curriculum areas, and understanding of applying theories and principles in teaching and learning. The curriculum and planning encompass translating curriculum content into learning activities relevant to the learners (*DO 42, s. 2017 –National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers | Department of Education*).

Positive relationships inside the classroom reinforce success in learning. The study participants emphasize the impact of the kind of relationship that exists in the classroom. Participants explained that learners can be a teacher's inspiration and motivation. The teacher's everyday mission is the learners, who are the teacher's source of inspiration and motivation.

This is similar to the study of Asbari (2024), which delineates the four levels of teacher performance within the classroom leadership context, emphasizing interpersonal relationships and strong emotional bonds with students, colleagues, and the broader learning community. Zou and colleagues (2024) also found that teachers' intrinsic motivation for teaching was significantly positively correlated with students' intrinsic motivation to learn, and the former has a significant direct effect on the latter. A good relationship between teachers and students inspires them to study well and motivates the teacher to be better and more competent in teaching.

Teacher knowledge of learners promotes better relationships, and a positive learning environment is conducive to learning in class. Building trust and seeing students as a whole, with the size of the body, mind, and heart, create that positive relationship. Moreover,

principles such as love, respect, honesty, courage, empathy, and kindness are important for teachers in establishing peaceful schools (Calp, 2020).

The participants reported that witnessing the learner's progress is rewarding and creates a sense of satisfaction for them. This perspective demonstrates the participants sharing joy and satisfaction as part of the learner's success.

The participants' perspectives formed in understanding the importance of proving an inclusive and positive learning environment and inclusive practices for learners' diversity are competencies related to two professional standards for teachers: 1) *Learning Environment and 2) Learner Diversity.* The learning environment highlights the teacher's role to provide a safe, secure, fair, and supportive learning environment to promote learner responsibility and achievement. The learner's diversity emphasizes teachers' role in establishing learning environments responsive to learner diversity (*DO 42, s. 2017 –National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers | Department of Education).*

Theme 2. Understanding Acts of Professionalism and Teacher's Professional Identity

The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) is a public statement regarding the knowledge, values, and competency teachers should apply in their practice (*Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers*, 2024). Based on teacher education curricula, the teacher's professional identity is emphasized in the course Teaching as a Profession and commonly offered during the entry years of the teacher education program. A teacher's professional identity is one of the fundamental knowledge that an education student must have. One of the measures of a teacher's professional identity is the recognition by law of the teacher's vital role in nation-building and development of its citizenry (Republic Act No. 7836, n. d.). Moreover, the other vital measure is passing the National Board Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers.

The period of the teaching internship is the focal point that connects the teacher education curriculum to pre-service teachers, forming an understanding of the teacher's professional identity and professionalism. The actual engagement in the educational context

characterizes the teaching internship experience. This experience in the actual education setting has provided the participants with formed perspectives that shaped their understanding of the two assertions: 1) acts of professionalism and 2) the teacher's professional identity.

Acts of Professionalism

The acts of professionalism comprise two categories: 1) instruction-related responsibilities such as writing an instructional plan, designing and using instructional materials, fostering a nurturing and inclusive environment, and mindedness on the use of words and actions in communication, and 2) exigency of service.

Instruction-related responsibilities

Writing a lesson plan is like making a blueprint and how to put it into a structural perspective. Writing lesson plans and mastery in implementing them in class is one of the primary duties of a teacher. The study participants elaborated on the importance of writing an instructional plan for teaching and planning what competencies should be demonstrated by the learners and how to get there. A requirement for a successful teaching-learning process to occur is planning (Baraat Ismael Faqe Abdulla, 2024). In the rigorous writing process, one must begin with the end in mind.

The participants highlighted that in designing and using instructional materials, one must consider the appropriateness or suitability corresponding to the lesson objectives, learners, available resources, and the teacher's mastery are vital in using them productively. The change in teaching delivery modality requires different types and formats of instructional materials. Van Doorsselaere (2024) used the world as an educational resource to provide an in-depth understanding of the target lesson. The participants had positive opinions towards the use of heritage as a source of educational resources, and their evaluation of educational materials from heritage and museums provided detailed information addressing teacher's desires and needs in this regard. A study in pedagogical approach trans languaging and the development of appropriate instructional materials in teaching conducted by Orcasitas-Vicandi and Perales-Fernandez-de-Gamboa (2022) emphasized the characteristics of learners in terms of multi-language use.

The participants emphasized the importance of fostering a nurturing and inclusive learning environment that enhances productive learning. Establishing a welcoming atmosphere, a sense of belonging, and fair treatment of everyone ensures success in learning. Through culturally responsive teaching practices incorporating content, perspectives, and instructional approaches that resonate with students' lived experiences, educators can leverage students' diverse backgrounds to enhance learning experiences (Eden et al., 2024).

In doing so, a teacher's mindedness in using words and actions is imperative. The participants argue that misusing words and actions in communicating ideas and information may deter learners' successful learning and motivation. The teacher's communication through words and actions is vital to the learner's understanding of the lesson and establishing a positive learning environment. Teachers must develop strategies to structure a positive learning environment for effective classroom management (Alasmari & Althaqafi, 2021).

Exigency of service

The participants in the study had observed the teachers' daily routines and performance in the exigency of service. The term exigency of service refers to a situation where services (of a teacher) are urgently needed to render services during the days they are not typically expected to work to ensure that the educational needs of students are met (*What Is DepEd's Exigency of Service - I Love DepEd*, 2018). The performance of duty, which extends beyond the limit of time and setting, is evident in fulfilling the teacher's functions. These duties are not limited to the following examples: coaching, coordinating, planning, and facilitating programs, projects, and school activities.

Teacher's Professional Identity

The teacher's professional identity consists of two categories: 1) the teacher's characteristics, and 2) the teacher's philosophy of teaching.

Teacher's characteristics

The participants in the study formed perspectives about the observed teacher's characteristics during the teaching internship. These comprise teachers as motivators and inspire learners, respect authority, promote cooperation, and establish harmonious

relationships with the community in advancing education. A teacher motivates the learners at all times. They are the primary source of learners' inspiration to learn and to discover knowledge. The teacher's ability to motivate develops the learners' positive attitude toward paying attention to and participating in learning activities. Respect for authority and promoting cooperation also characterize a good teacher, such as demonstrating professionalism by respecting authority and promoting cooperation among colleagues. The teacher demonstrates high integrity in doing one's duty and can perform both as a leader and a follower. Finally, a teacher establishes harmonious relationships with parents and education stakeholders as partners in advancing the learners' education.

The participants formed perspectives *and self-proclaimed assertions* characterized by communicating their views about teaching. These statements are proven and tested and believed to be accurate by the participants:

1. Teaching is a rigorous and complex process. The vast preparations for instruction-related responsibilities make it an iterative process. It entails personal adjustment and professional advancement. The primary measure of success in instruction is the learners' quality of learning outcomes.

2. Teaching extends beyond a profession. It is a noble vocation, witnessing the sacrifices of teachers in trying to attend to every learner's needs, providing intervention classes, monitoring learners' performances, giving feedback to parents, and making themselves available at the exigency of service.

3. Believe in the transformational power of education. Evidence-based data provides the participants with proof that education can transform every learner. From the teaching internship experience, the participants believed that every learner has the potential to learn.

4. Celebrating diversity and empathy gives learners a sense of belongingness and increases learning outcomes. Being welcomed and having a harmonious classroom relationship are composites of a positive learning environment.

Learning Trajectory During Internship

Learning among the participants during the teaching internship passes through different phases characterized by the challenges and coping mechanisms associated with the time, the goal, and the context. The learning phases are arranged chronologically from the time of deployment until the end of the teaching internship duration. The learning trajectory of the participants during the teaching internship is analyzed using Mezirow's transformational learning theory. This theory is based on the principle that personal experience is integral to the learning process. It is used for adult learning that utilizes disorienting dilemmas to challenge students' thinking. It is then encouraged to use critical thinking and questioning to consider if their underlying assumptions and beliefs about the world are accurate (*Transformative et al. (Mezirow) - Learning Theories*, 2017).

Phases of Learning

The different phases of learning consist of the following:

1. A Problematic Situation Challenging Assumptions

When transformational learning occurs, a learner may undergo a "paradigm shift" that directly impacts future experiences (Mezirow, 1991b, as cited in Kokkos, 2022). The unfamiliar context during the teaching internship provided a disorienting dilemma for the participants. The familiar context in the academe and the new context of internship in the actual setting created a culture of shock and disorientation among the participants. This new situation challenged their assumptions, beliefs, mindsets, and behaviors.

2. Experiencing Self-Doubts to Assumed Capacity

The next phase in the Transformational Learning Theory is self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame, a critical assessment of assumptions, and recognition of one's discontent (Mezirow, 1991).

The challenges of an unfamiliar context brought a feeling of self-doubt among the participants. They doubted their capacity to handle situations around them. At this phase, the participants experienced self-doubt regarding their choices, decision to choose the degree, and ability to perform. The challenges that brought self-doubts to the assumed capacity of the participants are the following:

2.1 Challenges

2.1.1 Physical Exhaustion. The participants are experiencing extreme fatigue and tiredness associated with the new roles as teaching interns, commuting to the cooperating school from their residence, attending classes at the university, and preparing for their teaching load.

2.1.2 Culture Shock. This is due to the participants' need to adjust to the current situation of the actual teaching and learning environment during the internship. The common reason for the participants' culture shock is the learners' behaviors and their teaching load.

2.1.3 Adjustments. Most participants adjusted their sleep and waking schedule, ensuring they were at school earlier than the pupils and cooperating teachers. They also stayed at the cooperating school eight hours a day, five days a week.

2.1.4 Disappointments. The participants experienced disappointment in themselves due to their inability to adjust immediately, mainly when the teaching strategies used were inappropriate to maximize the learners' learning potential and the lack of classroom management skills.

3. Exploring and trying-out new roles

Subsequent phases in the Transformative Learning Theory involve exploring options for new roles, planning a course of action, and acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans (Mezirow, 1991).

In this learning phase, the participants tried to solve the challenges they encountered while exploring new expected roles as teaching interns. The participants engaged in careful observation of the school and classroom contexts and implemented the following coping mechanisms:

3.1 Self-Talk and Self-Reflection. The participants allotted time for self-reflection. They tried to motivate themselves to continue. The participants had their time to reflect and realize what

had happened in a day's teaching. Most participants used journals to write their reflections and as a medium for self-talk.

3.2 Pause and Bounce Back. The participants inculcated in themselves the attitude that everyone deserves a pause and rest when overwhelmed by tasks and that one should return to one's objective after that.

3.3 Focus on Goal. The participants tried to focus on the educational goal at the end of the teaching internship. Some participants focused on the short-term goal, which is to finish the internship days successfully; others focused on the long-term goal, which is to finish the education degree, of which the internship is a significant part.

3.4 Pupils-driven motivation. The majority of the participants viewed the learners as their source of motivation every day. They were looking forward to meeting their students, felt that their efforts were appreciated by their students, and felt valued. These feelings they get from the pupils drive them to be motivated.

3.5 Social Support. The social support consists of the participants cooperating teachers, group mates, students' parents, family, teachers in the cooperating schools, supervisors from the academe, and friends.

4. Exhibiting Emerging Competence

In this phase, the participants obtained knowledge on performing duties and responsibilities associated with the delegated role of teaching interns. It is also where they exhibited emerging competencies.

5. Knowledge Construction and Integration

The participants implemented didactical practices and instructional decisions based on the learning needs to achieve objectives. In this phase, the participants' instruction became flexible, consistent, and skillfully executed. The participants described that the rapport between them and the learners became automatic. The participants discerned any changes in the learners' behavior as the effect of instruction.

6. Recognizing Roles and Assumed Responsibilities

As time progressed, the participants flourished as they built competence and self-confidence in performing their roles as teaching interns. Their knowledge, skills, and values influenced their instructional decisions and actions. This phase demonstrated the Transformative Learning phase of building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships.

At this phase, the participants recognized the vital role teachers play in the lives of their students. Due to their deep involvement and observation of the class every day, they recognized the duties of their cooperating teachers. These duties comprised providing meaningful instruction and developing self-confidence and encouragement among the learners.

7. Developing Sense of Being A Teacher

The participants started showing a sense of being a teacher by putting learners at the center of instruction and being happy with every learner's progress. This is demonstrated in all their plans and actions. They became sensitive to their roles and responsibilities in performing their duties as teaching interns, hence capturing a sense of being a teacher in the class.

8. Internalizing Newly-Constructed Knowledge for Further Application

The last phase is characterized by the participants' ownership of learning and the self-proclaimed perspectives formed and shaped by their experiences during the teaching internship program. This knowledge proved compelling and accurate and will likely be applied to the participant's future endeavors. This Transformative Learning phase demonstrates the reintegration of transformed learning into one's life based on conditions dictated by one's perspective (Mezirow, 199b as cited in Kokkos, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence and insights into the critical period of the teaching internship. The empirical evidence revealed from the study is that 1) the learning

ownership is based on meaningful experiences during the teaching internship, and 2) the phases of the learning trajectory during the teaching internship provide ample opportunities for ownership of learning. The transformed knowledge is the change resulting from the differences in assumptions, beliefs, mindsets, and behaviors before and after the teaching internship experience.

Learning ownership can be developed after an in-depth engagement in the cycle of the learning process. The challenges and coping mechanisms embedded in the learning experiences during the teaching internship provided continuous exploration and testing, resulting in filtered knowledge that was functional and effective.

In this sense, the learner's discovery of first-hand knowledge that underwent testing to prove its functionality is a discovered knowledge by the learner. The participants' learning ownership in the study comprised two major aspects: 1) understanding learners as the center of the educative process; and 2) understanding acts of professionalism and teacher's professional identity.

Moreover, the study revealed that the participants' learning trajectory manifested is in congruence with the Transformational Learning Theory of Mezirow (1991) The participant's learning trajectory is comprised of eight phases. It is arranged in chronological order and begins with 1) a problematic situation challenging assumptions; 2) experiencing self-doubt to assumed capacity; 3) exploring and trying out new roles; 4) exhibiting emerging competence; 5) knowledge construction and integration; 6) recognizing roles and assumed responsibilities; 7) developing a sense of being a teacher; and 8) internalizing newly-constructed knowledge.

To conclude, learning ownership is achieved after learners' autonomy in the discovery of knowledge is practiced and by passing through the different phases of the learning trajectory with time.

Research about teaching internship provides a significant understanding of the learning process that occur during the experience. Results can be used to enhance the internship program by exploring varied methods for developing learning ownership and support mechanism for challenging times.

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