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Research Article

Difficulties in Field Study of Education Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the challenges faced by Education students during their Field Study (FS) courses in the second semester of the 2016-2017 academic year. Focusing on three specific FS courses—Field Study 2: “Experiencing the Teaching-Learning Process,” Field Study 5: “Learning Assessment Strategies,” and Field Study 6: “On Becoming a Teacher”—the research utilized a descriptive survey method, incorporating documentary analysis of grading sheets and workbooks. The findings highlighted three primary issues contributing to the difficulties experienced by students: challenges with resource teachers, learner behavior, and self-related issues among the FS students. To address these challenges, participants proposed several solutions, leading to the recommendation that both the Teacher Education Institution (TEI) and the Department of Education (DepEd) revisit their Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) prior to the commencement of Field Study courses, ideally through a formal ceremony.

Keywords: *Field Study, Teaching-Learning Process, Learning Assessment Strategies, Cooperating School, Support Intervention Strategies*

Introduction

Field Study (FS) is an outdoor education method (Hammerman) as cited by Vassala (2006) intended to provide students with practical learning experiences. The FS students could observe, verify, reflect on in actual settings, (Mayuga, 2016). This is in accordance with Memorandum Order no. 30 of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to enable students to connect theories learned with practice prior to the next stage of pre-service education which is practice teaching. Before

the Field Study Students were deployed in their respective cooperating schools, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into between the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Higher Education Institute (HEI) pursuant to DepEd Order no. 3, s. 2007.

Though there was an extra care in the deployment of the FS students in terms of distance, selection of cooperating schools, school heads and resource teachers, still there were some problems encountered by these students which this study determined to enable them to

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get the maximum benefits of the experiential learning courses.

Methods

The descriptive survey method (Calmorin, 2007) was used to describe the performance of the FS students culled from documents like the grading sheets and workbooks. Their performance was based on the grading system for the Experiential Learning Course composed of Attendance (25%), Class Participation (25%) and Written Outputs (50%) (Concepcion, L.D.L, J.M. Lagasca, D.V. Rigor 2013)

The data on performance was analyzed and interpreted using the Rubrics for Experiential Learning (Experiential Learning Courses Handbook, 2009).

The survey questionnaire was used to determine the difficulties encountered by the FS students. In the same questionnaire, the FS students proposed solutions to address these difficulties. Unstructured interviews were also conducted to validate data gathered.

In terms of difficulties these were tallied and ranked in three categories: namely, resource teachers' issues, learner behavior issues, and FS student issues.

As to the ethical consideration in this research study, no real names were mentioned to safeguard the confidentiality of information. The researcher likewise observed the basic ethical rule to acknowledge the sources of information or data used throughout the text. (Almeida, et.al 2016).

Result and Discussion

The Field Study were rated SATISFACTORY in the three (3) field study courses (Grading Sheets). The FS 2 Students' performance (1.97) is described satisfactory, the FS 5 had an average performance (1.95) also SATISFACTORY and FS 6 (2.07) SATISFACTORY. This implies that there are something missing in terms of expected teaching-learning experiences from the resource teachers, learners and FS students themselves. The FS students failed to see some strengths and weaknesses of observed behaviors in their workbooks. Moreover, they find difficulty in analyzing and reflecting on the different activities in their perspective Field Study Courses.

Table 3 shows the performance of the FS students in Field Study 2 (FS 2). This is all about experiencing the teaching-learning process (Corpuz, 2015). The activities include principles of learning, levels of learning activities, teaching approaches, questioning and reacting techniques.

Satisfactory means that there are some examples of experiences, with few explanations of strengths and weaknesses and statement of what has been achieved (Handbook, 2009). This implies that not all expected activities of teaching-learning process were experienced by the FS 2 students. This is reflected in the workbooks. Some could hardly express their observations and other lack the pre-requisite knowledge and skills for FS 2 which is about Principles of Teaching 1 and 2.

Table 3: Performance of FS 2 Students

Final Grade	Frequency		
	Male	Female	Total
1.00	0	0	0
1.25	0	4	4
1.50	1	6	7
1.75	1	8	9
2.00	0	3	3
2.25	3	7	10
2.50	1	4	5
2.75	0	0	0
3.00	0	0	0
Total	6	32	38
Gen. Weighted Ave.			1.97
Verbal Description			Satisfactory

The performance of FS 5 Students is presented in Table 4. FS 5 embraces the different learning assessment strategies, specifically assessment for learning as learning and of learning. There are activities on guiding principles, assessment methods, tools and tasks. Also, the K to 12 grading system and reporting students' performance is included here.

The performance of FS 2 students, as indicated by their final grades, reveals a satisfactory general weighted average of 1.97, suggesting effective learning outcomes in the context

of the course. Research supports that structured assessment strategies, such as those employed in FS 5, enhance student engagement and understanding, particularly when aligned with learning objectives (Cáceres-Nakiche et al., 2024). Furthermore, studies emphasize the critical role of formative assessment practices in promoting higher-order thinking skills and improving overall student performance, which aligns with the observed outcomes in FS courses (Kaur & Bhatia, 2022).

Table 4: Performance of FS 5 Students

Final Grade	Frequency		
	Male	Female	Total
1.00	0	2	2
1.25	1	2	3
1.50	2	8	10
1.75	0	9	9
2.00	1	5	6
2.25	2	10	12
2.50	2	4	6
2.75	0	3	3
3.00	0	0	0
Total	8	43	51
Gen. Weighted Ave.			1.95
Verbal Description			Satisfactory

Again, the performance of FS 5 students is satisfactory (1.95). This means that these students fall short in their experiences to evaluate assessment practices against the guiding principles of assessment. They are rated satisfactory in distinguishing the different methods and forms of assessment. As gleaned from the workbooks, some have not constructed their table of Specifications (TOS). Others could not describe the meaning of computed grades in terms of proficiency. Similarly, they are rated satisfactory in identifying the instructional decision to use after computing the class proficiency level.

The last Field Study course that education students have to undergo is FS 6 called "On Becoming a Teacher". FS 6 includes activities like the teacher as a person in society, the teacher's philosophy of education, the global

teacher and as a professional. The teacher is also described in a school setting and in the community setting.

Satisfactory outcomes but reveals gaps in their understanding of assessment practices aligned with guiding principles. It shows that effective assessment strategies, such as formative assessments and clear grading criteria, significantly enhance student learning and engagement by providing timely feedback and promoting higher-order thinking skills (Kaur & Bhatia, 2022). Furthermore, studies emphasize the importance of aligning assessment methods with learning objectives to ensure that students can accurately interpret their grades and understand their proficiency levels, which is crucial for their development as future educators (Cáceres-Nakiche et al., 2024).

Table 5: Performance of FS 6 Students

Final Grade	Frequency		
	Male	Female	Total
1.00	0	0	0
1.25	0	2	2
1.50	3	10	13
1.75	0	12	12
2.00	1	12	13
2.25	3	5	8
2.50	1	6	7
2.75	0	1	1
3.00	0	0	0
Total	8	48	56
Gen. Weighted Ave.			2.07
Verbal Description	Satisfactory		

With a general weighted average of 2.07, the performance of the FS 6 students is described as satisfactory. This implies that these students exhibit only some evidences in performing the activities to achieve the course objectives. They have not completely identified the competencies that make up a professional teacher in the classroom, in the community and in the world. Likewise, they have not completed the documentation of the best practices of outstanding teachers and in clarifying one's personal values, attitudes and beliefs about teaching.

Satisfactory outcomes but highlights gaps in their understanding of the competencies necessary for effective teaching. This suggests that students' ability to identify and articulate the roles and responsibilities of a professional teacher is crucial for their development and success in the field (Cáceres-Nakiche et al., 2024). Additionally, the importance of documenting best practices and personal values in teaching, as these elements are essential for fostering reflective practice and continuous improvement among future educators (Kaur & Bhatia, 2022).

Difficulties Encountered by the FS Students

Mendoza (2016), mentioned the significance of field study as a provision of hands-on

experiential learning that will contribute to the professional growth of prospective teachers and basically help them grow and become highly competitive in their chosen field. However, there are difficulties encountered by the FS students attributed to three (3) main issues like the resource teacher issues us "busy teachers performing related tasks" which includes administering the fourth quarter examination, computing grades, filling out of report on promotions, doing rehearsals for the upcoming graduation programs and attendance to meetings and seminars. This was added by the learners who were not listening, often create noise, and sometimes bully their classmates where the resource teacher does not demonstrate any reacting behavior to scold or do something to call their attention. On the other hand, the FS students themselves are the problem. They experienced conflict on time to observe classes, had inadequate time to interview the students, resource teachers, retired teachers, parents and barangay chairman. Moreover, the FS students had poor communication skills and they have not fully mastered the prerequisite learning outcomes for the Field Study. Table 6 reveals the difficulties of FS students in terms of resource teacher issues. Resource teachers are the selected teachers of cooperating school where the FS students are assigned to observe.

Table 6: Resource Teacher Issues

Indicators	Rank
Busy teachers performing related tasks	1
Insufficient record of actions on how they manage the problems of the community (security of students, peace and order, provision of water and electricity, juvenile delinquency, pollution...)	2
Rare demonstration of questioning and reacting behaviors in teaching (Calling on volunteers, using HOTS, soliciting questions, scolding for misbehavior or for not listening)	3
Inability to improve discipline to misbehaved students	4

The FS students considered these issues as their difficulty because they failed to observe the application of concepts and theories in actual setting. They wonder what teaching-learning process should have taken place if there was a specific time for the related tasks. Rank 2 on insufficiency of record of actions would also deprive them to answer the activities in the workbook relative to security, water and electricity, delinquency and pollution. Rank 3 likewise on rare demonstration of questioning and reacting behaviors in teaching disappointed the FS students to see how teachers should handle misbehaviors and encourage high order thinking skills (HOTS). They too failed to observe the appropriate discipline for misbehaved students.

The Field Study students encountered some learner behavior issues in the classroom as shown on Table 7.

The cooperating school is not exempted from learner behavior issues. Some children are not listening. They often create noise. Others come to school late. There are those who bully their classmate. They throw their food wrappers, pieces of paper anywhere. The Fs students observed that only a few resource

teachers scold for misbehavior or for not listening. Again, the learner behavior issues posed a problem to the FS students because they did not observe the application of the principles of learning to arrest the learner behaviors issues. The FS students wanted to experience a better teaching-learning process to come up with more meaningful outputs.

The issues identified by FS students regarding resource teachers highlight significant challenges in the teaching and learning environment, particularly the impact of busy teachers on student observation and learning experiences. Teacher workload and insufficient support can hinder effective teaching practices, leading to a lack of engagement and management of student behavior in the classroom (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Furthermore, the rare demonstration of questioning and reacting behaviors by teachers can negatively affect students' critical thinking development and their ability to handle misbehavior, emphasizing the need for enhanced teacher training and support systems to foster a more conducive learning environment (Ertürk & Keçecioglu, 2015).

Table 7: Learner Behavior Issues

Indicators	Rank
Not listening to the teachers	1
Often creates noise	2
Habitual tardiness	3
Habitual littering	4
Bully his classmates	5

Lastly, the FS students themselves expressed their own issues and concerns that affected their performance in the Field Study as shown in table 8.

The learner behavior issues identified by FS students, particularly regarding noise and attentiveness in the classroom, are supported by literature emphasizing the detrimental effects of excessive noise on student learning and engagement. It has shown that high noise levels

can significantly impair students' ability to focus and absorb information, leading to increased distractions and reduced academic performance (Klatte et al., 2013). Furthermore, implementing effective classroom management strategies, such as structured behavior interventions, can help mitigate these issues by promoting a more conducive learning environment and encouraging positive student behaviors (Parsonson, 2012).

Table 8: FS Student Issues

Indicators	Rank
Conflict in FS students time to observe classes	1
Inadequate time to interview (students, parents, resource teachers, retired teachers, barangay officials)	2
Not fully mastered the prerequisite learning outcomes for Field Study	3
Poor Communication Skills	4

It is revealed in Table 8 that rank number one (1) among the FS students' difficulties is conflict in their time to observe classes. One said, "The teacher is not free and you are". This means, the FS student is there in the cooperating school to observe by the teacher is so busy with other things to do, so she cannot teach. Literally, "the teacher is missing" as quoted by a few of the FS students.

Hence, the general observation of teachers in the department about overlapping activities is true. This is one of the reasons why the FS students have limited time to observe. The course requires an interview with students, parents, resource teachers, retired teachers and barangay chairman/officials.

This allows the FS students to reflect on the relationship of teachers in the community. However, with the limited contact time between resource teacher and FS students, these students find it difficult to perform the suggested tasks. Moreover, the retired teachers in the locality are not around. Only a few have come up with their reports, as to barangay chairman/officials interview it took the FS students some time to finally meet them. The barangay officials are busy people, but these are the focal persons to contact on official matters about the community.

Rank 3 of the FS student issues is not fully mastered the prerequisite learning outcomes

for the field study. The FS students admitted that they have not fully developed understanding of the prerequisite skills needed before they deployed in the Field Study. For example, in FS 2, the students must have mastered Principles of Teaching 1 and 2. The FS 5 students must have an understanding of assessment of Student Learning 1 and 2. And the FS 6 students must have studied about the teaching profession. Of equal significance is the issue on poor communication skills. The FS students lack these skills evidenced by their written outputs. They could hardly express their observations particularly the application of theories in the actual teaching-learning process. They find it difficult to give their reflections on the different experiences in the FS 2, FS 5 and FS 6.

Issues faced by FS students, particularly conflicts in observation time and inadequate opportunities for interviews, reflect broader challenges in field study experiences that have been documented in the literature. Pre-service teachers often struggle with scheduling conflicts that limit their ability to engage meaningfully with classroom environments and community stakeholders, which can hinder their professional development (Bekkering et al., 2015). Additionally, the lack of mastery of prerequisite learning outcomes and poor communication skills among students can significantly impact their effectiveness in field studies, as

these competencies are crucial for successfully navigating real-world educational settings and articulating their observations (Gelles et al., 2015).

Proposed Solutions

Some solutions were proposed to address the difficulties encountered by the FS Students in terms of support intervention strategies.

Table 9: Support Intervention Strategies

Issues	Support Intervention Strategies
Resource Teacher Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a Pre-Conference and re-Orientation based on the MOA on experiential learning courses. - Develop a Calendar of Activities to guide FS students. - Adjust observation schedules accordingly. - Allow observation of related tasks. - Implement a reduced class Friday program.
Insufficient Community Problem Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revisit the functions of the Guidance Counselor for record-keeping on community support. - Schedule one-on-one talks between resource teachers and FS students about community problems. - Use the State of the School Address (SOSA) as a reference.
Lack of Questioning and Reacting Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assign the best teachers as Resource Teachers and observe classes regularly. - Conduct post-observation conferences. - Empower FS students through research on questioning behaviors.
Discipline Issues with Misbehaving Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage students with Differentiated Activities to minimize misbehavior. - Utilize reflective practices to address reasons for misbehavior.
Learners Behavior Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seat non-listeners in front and motivate them. - Use alternative teaching strategies to minimize noise. - Conduct home visits for habitual tardiness. - Provide trash bins and remind students of rules for littering. - Employ differentiated instruction for bullying issues.
FS Students Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Orient FS students with class schedules and school calendars. - Prepare signed observation schedules. - Develop itineraries for interviews with various stakeholders, ensuring appointments are secured. - Ensure prerequisite courses are completed before FS participation. - Include proper communication skills training in orientations and promote English usage in class.

The result of the study implies three (3) things to education. First is revisit on the Law of Readiness (Thorndike) as cited by Zulueta and Sevilla (2012) which emphasizes the need for adequate motivation and preparation of the

learner by way of setting the proper mind-set and fostering the level of aspiration. Second is time management to minimize overlapping activities. Third, from Ellis (1986) as cited by Agno (2016) is “Keep the focus on people” - a

guide in developing Teachers Competence. Abas (2016) agrees that field study as pre-service training trains the FS students to become role models in terms of discipline, passion, commitment, diligence, readiness, flexibility, self-confidence, responsibility, culture-sensitivity, perseverance and reflective skills. These are skills and values of a global teacher.

Conclusions

The performance of FS students across various field study courses has been rated as satisfactory, indicating that while some learning objectives have been met, significant gaps remain in their understanding and application of essential teaching competencies. The challenges faced by these students, including conflicts in observation time, inadequate opportunities for interviews, and deficiencies in prerequisite knowledge and communication skills, suggest a need for improved support systems and structured interventions. Addressing these issues through targeted strategies, such as enhanced teacher training, better scheduling practices, and the implementation of effective classroom management techniques, can foster a more conducive learning environment and ultimately enhance the professional development of future educators.

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