

Pre-service Teacher Training Programs in the Philippines: The Student-teachers Practicum Teaching Experience

Mark B. Ulla

*King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi
Ratchaburi Campus, Ratchaburi, Thailand
mark.ulla1985@gmail.com*

Abstract

Pre-service teacher training is one of the most important aspects of every teacher's education curriculum as it prepares student-teachers to become qualified teachers in the future. This paper explored the pre-service teacher training programs in the Philippines through the practicum experience of the 21 junior and senior BSEd and BA English student-teachers from a private university in Mindanao, Philippines. Data were taken from classroom observations, group interview, and modified questionnaire. The findings revealed that there was a different standard policy of pre-service teacher training programs for BSEd and BA English. While BSEd-English concentrated on developing professional teachers for secondary schools, BA-English focused on developing not just teachers but professionals with exceptional communication skills. The student-teachers also reported some challenges in practicum teaching; classroom management, teaching confidence, and lack of teaching resources. Some solutions to overcome the challenges were suggested.

Key-words: *ESL classroom; practicum teaching; student-teachers; teaching English; teaching experience*

1. INTRODUCTION

Practicum teaching is an integral part of any teacher education curriculum since it is a good avenue for pre-service teachers to apply the theories they learned in the real classroom setting. Although, according to Haigh, Pinder, and McDonald (2006) practice teaching in education is still a challenge since it does not fully prepare student teachers for the actual classroom teaching, Starkey and Rawlins (2012) mentioned that these student teachers should be well-monitored, supervised, and guided by their supervising teachers through “online discussions” and classroom teaching observation for them to become prepared. Through constant monitoring and guidance from the teacher educators, these student-teachers will learn how to handle and manage not just their daily lessons but the students and their classroom as well. Because of this, Tuli and File (2009) described practicum teaching experiences among pre-service teachers as the “most important part of teacher education program”.

In the Philippine context, all teacher education curriculum in all higher education institutions included practicum teaching as one of the requirements for the degrees of Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) and Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) and for some degrees in the Bachelor of Arts (BA) programs. No teacher education and arts programs students are allowed to graduate without finishing the required number of hours for both actual classroom observation and practice teaching. Pre-service student-teachers usually take their practicum teaching experience out of the campus, in the nearby public elementary and high schools or in-campus at the basic education department of their university or college. Although the practicum experience of the teacher education students is more systematic and formal as it is guided with the policies and guidelines from the Department of Education (DepEd) compared with the practicum experience of the Bachelor of Arts students, these pre-service teachers are trained to become well-prepared and qualified teachers who can pass on their knowledge to the next generation of students.

Thus, it is the purpose of this paper to explore and present the nature of pre-service teacher training programs in the Philippines through the practicum experience of the 21 junior and senior BSEd and BA English language teaching education and arts students in one of the private universities in Mindanao, Philippines. It is believed that through this paper, the result will shed light on the issues and the challenges, including ways how to cope with those challenges; and how the actual practicum teaching programs for both BSEd and BA English curriculums in a teacher education institute (TEI) were conceptualized in the context of pre-service teacher education program in the Philippines. It is expected that the findings of this study will contribute to the literature; and to help the department heads, university and college officials of both teacher education and arts programs to design a better practicum plan.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of pre-service teacher training has always been highlighted in the literature. In fact, some previous studies which explored some areas within practicum teaching and teacher-teaching development include the studies of Starkey and Rawlins, 2012; Haigh, et.al, 2006; Genc and Buyukkarci, 2013; Tuli, and File, 2009; Ralph, et.al, 2007; Coskun, 2013; Gurbuz, ret.2015; Cheng, 2013; Gan, 2013; Hamaidi, et.al, 2014; Leke-ateh, et.al, 2013; Bosnyák and Gáncs, 2012; Jusoh, ret., 2015; and Yusof, et.al, 2014. All of these mentioned studies have specific focused with regards to actual practicum teaching; from practicum experience, to assessment, strengths and weaknesses, these related studies are proof that practicum teaching research has become more interesting in the field of teacher education.

In the Philippines, there are three important governing bodies of education that are responsible for the implementation, development, and monitoring of the education programs in the country. The Department of Education (DepEd) supervises the basic education in both public and private institutions. The other two education agencies being the Commission of Higher Education (CHED) oversees the tertiary and graduate education of both public and private institutions; and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for technical-vocational and middle-level education (CHED Historical Background). Likewise, the two agencies; CHED and DepEd work together for the development of teacher education in the country. CHED monitors, evaluates and sets all the programs/curriculums and the performance of all higher learning institutions. DepEd on the other hand, sets the guidelines and policies specific only for both BSEd and BEEd program on student teaching or teaching internship curriculum. In other words, DepEd has no direct mandate over the Bachelor of Arts program's teaching curriculum; it is CHED that evaluates its program. However, should BA graduates decide to teach in the public schools, they need to take and finish the teaching certificate course which includes 18 units of professional teaching courses; and they should take and pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). Furthermore, when these pre-service teachers passed the licensure examination for teachers conducted by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), and would apply to become teachers in the government schools, DepEd screens and determines their qualifications.

Believing that quality pre-service teacher education is the key to quality education in the country, the CHED and the DepEd released a joint memorandum order no. 39 of 2005 in which it stated some "guidelines on the deployment of student teachers". Among the guidelines provided were the roles of teacher education institution and the school division superintendents in the practicum teaching of the pre-service teachers; selection of cooperating schools, cooperating mentors/teachers and their duties and functions; and the responsibilities of student-teachers (DepEd memo 39, 2005). The CHED memorandum order no. 30 of 2004 or the "revised policies and standards for

undergraduate teacher education curriculum” was also attached in the joint memorandum. This CHED memorandum order detailed the program specifications of the degrees Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd), and Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd). This was addressed to the higher education institutions in the country to revisit their teacher education programs.

Furthermore, aside from DepEd and CHED as the two most important agencies in education monitoring in the country, several other accrediting agencies (i.e. PAASCU, AACUP, PACUCOA) also give evaluations using different standards with regards to the performance of teacher education institutions (TEI) and their different programs (Mahinay, 2013). These accrediting agencies help the education institutions to reflect on, measure, and evaluate certain programs for quality education by assessing their own program strengths and weaknesses. They are authorized by CHED to ‘certify the levels of accredited programs for the purpose of granting progressive deregulation and other benefits’. These accrediting agencies however, do not intervene the TEIs as to the implementation of the programs, nor give policies and guidelines for a specific degree; they only accredit and identify the level of a certain program.

2.1 Related Studies on Pre-service Teacher Education

Practicum teaching as is a terminal stage for every teacher education programs in the Philippines. It is on this stage that student-teachers are trained, and exposed to the real classroom teaching for them to become prepared and qualified teachers in the country. In the literature, a number of studies emphasized the nature and importance of practicum teaching. For example, Nunan (2009) gave an overview of the classroom practices in teaching. He said that “classrooms informed by current views on language pedagogy will involve a change in teaching approach away from a high-structure orientation towards a more low-structure orientation”. While Haigh, Pinder, McDonald (2006) noted that if student-teachers were active on the actual practice teaching experience and with the constant guidance from their associate teachers, they would learn the art of teaching, Gan (2013) said otherwise. Gan (2013) found out that the pre service teachers’ practicum experience was not that good as they encountered difficulties applying the theory they learned in their BEdEl program in the actual classroom teaching.

Considering what it is to be in practicum teaching, Coskun (2013) investigated the causes of stress in English language teaching practicum on various stakeholders, such as mentor teachers, supervisors, teacher trainees, school administrators and students. In his study, it was found out that a high volume of paper work, no motivation and interest in the practicum, student-teachers’ poor classroom management, unfamiliarity of students’ levels of English, classroom observation, lack of support from the supervisors, and mentor-student misunderstanding were the stress generating factors among mentor teachers, teacher trainees, supervisors, administrators and students. Comprehensive as it

is however, his study does not deal with classroom's problems and challenges. He dealt only with stress generating factors in English language teaching.

Starkey and Rawlins (2012), in their study, emphasized that understanding the teaching environment in which the student-teachers would be exposed is a significant factor towards learning during practice teaching. In this way, student teachers already knew what they were supposed to do and why they were supposed to do it. The concepts and theories that were in their minds were not put to waste as they got to practice them in a real classroom setting. This idea was supported by Tuli and File (2009) who argued that practicum teaching experience among student-teachers provides students the necessary experience towards understanding the responsibilities of a teacher. Cheng (2013) also supported the finding that indeed practicum is important in teacher education. In his study, he reported that teaching practicum is a tool that helps teacher educators become competent in teaching.

In the Philippines, one study that assessed the pre-service teacher training and performance of teacher education institutions (TEIs) in 17 regions in the country was done by Mahinay (2013). In his study, he emphasized that in order for the teacher education institutions (TEIs) to perform better, pre-service teacher training should be given an utmost importance. It was also revealed that the more PhD holders in a given institution, the better is the teacher education institute as it means more knowledge and expertise on the part of the teachers. Ganal, et.al, (2015) also made a study on the problems and difficulties encountered by student teachers. In their study, they revealed that the problems and difficulties were mostly related to classroom management, communication skills, and instructional skills, among others. It was then suggested that a seminar on conflict management should be conducted by the DepEd.

Based on the cited literature above, most of the research studies clearly focused only on teaching practicum and teacher education, behavior, perceptions, challenges, and causes of stress in language practicum. None of the above mentioned studies dealt with the nature of pre-service teacher training programs of BSEd and BA English curriculum through the student-teachers' practicum experience in the Philippines. Although some of the studies discovered the challenges and issues faced by the pre-service teachers in their actual classroom teaching, no studies focused on overcoming the challenges from the actual practicum teaching in the Philippine context. Furthermore, no single studies concentrated on the practicum teaching programs of BSED-English and BA-English as conceptualized by the higher education institution (HEI) in the context of pre-service teacher training programs in the Philippines. Thus, this present study is being called for in order to have a literature about the concept of the actual student-teachers practicum experience in the Philippine setting.

2.2 Research Questions

1. How are the practicum teaching programs of BSED-English and BA-English conceptualized by the HEI as experienced by the 21 pre-service teachers?
2. What are the issues and challenges that these student-teachers faced in their actual classroom teaching? What solutions can be offered to the problems and issues faced by these student-teachers in their actual classroom teaching?
3. What can be described of the pre-service teacher training program in the Philippines as reflected in the practicum experience of the pre-service student-teachers?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design and Respondents

Since this study is a qualitative in nature, a descriptive method of research was employed to record the experience, as well as the problems and issues faced by the ELT pre-service teachers in their actual language teaching practicum experience; and to describe the kind and nature of the pre-service teacher education programs in a higher education institute in Mindanao, Philippines. There were a total of 21 pre-service ELT teachers (15 females and 6 males) who took part in the study. They were junior and senior students in one of the private universities in Mindanao, Philippines. The choice of the university and the participants of the study was made in the convenience of the researcher as he was an English teacher, teaching these student-teachers in one of their major courses at the time when this study was conducted in the same university. Twelve student-teachers (7 juniors, and 5 senior students) were from the program of Bachelor of Secondary Education in English (BSED-English), and nine student-teachers (5 juniors, and 4 senior students) were from the program of Bachelor of Arts in English (BA-English). All of these student-teachers were enrolled in practice teaching courses (Theory and Application) in their respective programs.

3.2 Research Instruments

Three research tools were used in order to gather the data for this study; a modified questionnaire, adopted from Gujjar, et.al, (2011); a group interview, and a classroom observation.

The modified questionnaire was used to probe into the nature of how the TEI conceptualized the pre-service teacher education practicum program and how does this practicum program in ELT reflect the kind of pre-service teacher training in the Philippine context. The questionnaire had two parts; part one was the demographic profile of the respondents; part two dealt with the items on the nature of pre-service teacher training program.

The group interview which was conducted to 21 ELT student-teachers was done in four different time schedules; one group interview for the 7 junior BSED-English student-

teachers, one for the 5 junior AB-English students, one for the 5 senior BSED-English students, and one for 4 AB-English student-teachers. All the student-teacher respondents were asked about their practicum experience in their respective programs; the challenges and the ways how to address and overcome those; and their perceptions on the practicum programs in their respective degrees. The group interviews lasted for an hour.

Lastly, the classroom observation was made in order to qualitatively describe the practicum teaching experience of the 21 ELT student-teachers. The researcher conducted the classroom observation only once for each student-teacher in a class period of 1.5 hours. The focus of the observation was on the manner how these student-teachers deliver their lessons; the strategies, the methods used in the classroom, and how they address the challenges in the actual classroom teaching.

3.3 Procedure

Before gathering the necessary information and data for the study, the researcher through a written letter, had asked the permission from the English department chairman, supervising teachers and the deans of the two programs (Teacher Education and Arts programs) to conduct the research with the ELT major students as the participants of the study. Having granted the permission, the researcher then proceeded to identify the individual course teachers/cooperating teachers; informed them about the conduct of the research and asked them if he could observe the take-over classes of these 21 ELT student-teachers. After given the permission, plotting of the individual classes' take-over schedules followed to check that all of the student-teachers were observed and no conflict of schedule happened. After the classroom observation, the researcher met all the 21 ELT student-teachers and had informed them about the research and proceeded to distribute the questionnaire. Lastly, after the distribution and collection of the questionnaire, the group interview was set and analysis of the data followed.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained from the modified questionnaire, group interview, and classroom observation are presented in this section.

Research questions 1 and 2 are presented in tables 1 and 2, respectively. However, for the purpose of this presentation, the percentages of *both strongly agree* and *agree* were combined; as well as for *strongly disagree* and *disagree*. These combined percentages are contrasted with the percentage from *never* and are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1. The percentage distribution on the nature of the pre-service teacher education training program in the host Teacher Education Institute (TEI).

Items/Indicators	Responses		
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Strongly Disagree/disagree	Never
1. Orientation on practice teaching was given before the start of the actual classroom teaching.	100%		
2. Practice teachings in class were given before the actual classroom teaching.	100%		
3. Classroom management and student participation reinforcement were developed in the practice teaching.	57.14%	42.86%	
4. Planning and preparing of lesson plans as well as developing and using AV teaching aids were also taught during the practice teaching.	19.05%	23.81%	57.14%
5. There was a proper evaluation of student-teachers who can proceed to the actual classroom teaching.	19.05%	14.28%	66.67%
6. Student-teachers were properly supervised during the teaching practice and in the actual classroom teaching.	42.86%	38.09%	19.05%
7. Demonstration lessons were given in all core teaching subjects.	57.14%	42.86%	
8. The teacher helped in the preparation of the lesson plans both in the practice teaching and in the actual teaching.	47.63%	38.09%	14.28%
9. Guidance about the strong and weak points of the practice lesson and in the actual was given at the end of the lesson.	42.86%	33.33%	23.81%
10. The supervisor observed the whole practice lesson and in the actual teaching.	61.91%	23.81%	14.28%
11. Teacher educators continuously monitored student-teachers during practice teaching and in the actual	42.86%	42.86%	14.28%

classroom teaching.			
12. The duration of the teaching practice and the actual classroom teaching was appropriate to develop teaching skills.	57.14%	19.05%	23.81%
13. Teaching practice and actual teaching were helpful in developing teaching skills.	100%		
14. Teaching practice and actual teaching enhanced my confidence in actual classroom teaching.	100%		
15. There was a balance between theory and teaching practice in the TEI pre-service teaching program.	57.14%	19.05%	23.81%

Based on the presented data on table 1, the student-teachers strongly agreed on the importance of giving an orientation on practice teaching before they were sent out for the actual classroom teaching. They also believed that in-class teaching practice and the actual classroom teaching helped and enhanced their teaching skills and confidence in teaching. As emphasized by Tuli and File (2009); and Cheng (2013), practicum teaching is indeed the best avenue for pre-service teachers to apply the theories into the real classroom teaching. Based on the interview, the student-teachers revealed that they learned from their experiences and they were challenged to take the profession.

However, it can also be noted that the responses that were obtained from the study came from the two groups of ELT student-teachers; the BSED-English and the BA-English, who had a different practicum teaching programs. For example, while there were 57.14% of the respondents stated that they strongly agreed on that classroom management and student participation reinforcement were developed in the practice teaching, there were 42.86% of the student-teacher respondents who strongly disagreed on this. Based on the interview conducted, the respondents revealed that the teacher education ELT practicum program had a more emphasis on classroom management and student participation reinforcement than the ELT practicum program of the BA-English. According to them, while the BA-English program focused mainly on the core English courses, the BSED-English program dealt with both the core English courses and the teaching methodologies and strategies. In the CHED memorandum order (CMO) number 30, of 2004, it was emphasized that the program BSED was structured to meet the needs of professional teachers for secondary schools in the Philippines. On the other hand, the BA-English program, according to the catalogue of the College of Arts and Letters of the University of the Philippines-Diliman, was aimed to train students in the theoretical and practical aspects of language use. Although teaching comes a part of the BA-English program, its importance is not as significant as in the BSED English. Thus,

this also explained the items which had higher percentages tabulated under “never”; planning and preparing of lesson plans as well as developing and using AV teaching aids (57.14%); and, proper evaluation of student-teachers who can proceed to the actual classroom teaching (66.67%).

On the other hand, the BSED and AB English student-teachers had shared different views and responses on several items in the questionnaire. For example, some of the student-teachers during the interview revealed that they were not properly supervised by their supervising teacher during the teaching practice and in the actual classroom teaching. They also stated that some of their course teachers did not help them in the preparation of the lesson plans both in the practice teaching and in the actual teaching. There was also no proper guidance given at the end of the lesson about the strong and weak points of the practice lesson and in the actual they had. Some student-teachers also said that some of their supervising teachers did not observe the whole practice lesson and in the actual teaching; and that some teacher educators did not continuously monitor them during practice teaching and in the actual classroom teaching. Lastly, some of the student-teachers revealed that the pre-service practicum teaching program was too short to acquire the necessary skills in teaching.

Furthermore, based on the interview conducted and from the data presented in table 1, it was found that although the two programs which prepare students to become qualified teachers in the future were in the same TEI, their pre-service practicum teaching curriculum were different. Both the BSED and BA English curriculum had no uniform teaching practicum policy standard.

4.1 Issues and Challenges

In the interview conducted, and based on the classroom observation, student-teachers had given the following challenges and how they coped with them during their actual classroom teaching.

4.1.1 Classroom Management

One of the challenges that the student-teachers faced in their practicum teaching was classroom management. Since they were just practicing teachers, they did not have enough knowledge on how to manage a number of students in the class. This is the same result found by Gan (2013); Coskun (2013); and Yusof et.al (2014) in their studies. Controlling the students’ noise, dealing with misbehaviors, and the likes are just few of the problems that student-teachers experienced during their actual teaching. Some student-teachers found it difficult to start, to motivate and to prepare their students for the day’s lesson since their students were not enthusiastic upon seeing them in the classroom. Coskun (2013) said that student-teachers have difficulty managing the classroom because of the fact that they are not considered to be real teachers. Although, the real course teacher was in the classroom, students knew that the one taking over their class was also a student like them.

4.1.2 Confidence in Teaching

Since the practicum teachers were only student-teachers, they were not very confident to hold classes. The same findings revealed in the studies of Yusof et.al (2014); Gürbüz (2015); Hamaidi et.al (2014); and Jusoh (2015) where some of their respondents also felt worried and nervous because of lack of self-confidence. In fact in the classroom observation, all of the student-teachers were shaking and their voices were obvious that they were nervous. Gürbüz (2015) who supported this finding reported that teacher candidates in his study also felt nervous, uncomfortable, and anxious before and during the lesson which resulted to being able not to use their voice effectively while teaching. These feelings were common and were felt by the student-teachers in their actual teaching. Some of them forgot the lesson sequence and they had to look at their guide notes to keep their teaching on track. In the interview, the student-teachers revealed that they lack the necessary gears of the language and the pedagogical skills in teaching English, which is the reason why they were not confident in their actual classroom teaching and in delivering the English lessons to their students. Jusoh et., (2015) also had the same findings in her study. According to her, this problem is a result from their inability to apply and put into practice the theory they learned.

4.1.3 Lack of Teaching Resources and Teaching Strategies

During the classroom observation, the researcher was able to take note of the following activities and strategies that the 21 student-teachers employed in their actual classroom teaching. These strategies and activities are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2. Some of the Teaching Activities and Strategies that were used in the Classroom

Warm-up Activities (Motivation) Method/Strategies used	
Guessing Game	Paired Activity
Describing Picture-location	Small Group Activity (3 members/group)
Describing the process of cooking one's favorite food	Big Group Activity (2 big groups)
Telling one's favorite movie in the class	Handout sheets (photocopies material)
Reading an article	Role play/Dialogues
Singing one's favorite song	Lecture/Discussion
Showing a video clip from YouTube	Message relay

When these student-teachers were asked in the interview as to the reason why they used those techniques and strategies in their actual classroom teaching, they revealed that they only imitated what they observed from the other English teachers in their actual classroom observations. They did not have other resources to make their lessons effective and enjoyable other than what they already knew and learned. The lack of teaching resources and teaching ideas prompted the student-teachers to recycle the strategies and methods they learned during their in-class practice teaching.

4.2 Addressing Classroom Teaching Challenges

In the focus group discussion conducted, student-teachers laid down some of the solutions and ways to cope with and address some issues and challenges they had in their own classroom teaching experience.

4.2.1 Sufficient time for in-class practice teaching

For pre-service student-teachers based on the interview conducted, having enough time to do the in-class practice teaching before taking the actual classroom teaching would help them build their confidence to become more effective teachers. They stated that during their pre-practicum program, they did not have enough time for practice teaching exposure as they were also in rush to finish other course requirements. Çapan, S. (2014) and Naylor et al., (2015) in their studies stated that pre-service teachers should be given more opportunities to be involved in teaching practices to prepare them in the actual classroom teaching. Thus, giving an ample time for the student-teachers to do practice teaching should be considered.

4.2.2 Emphasis on Classroom Management and Student Participation Reinforcement

As student-teachers are still students who are teaching another group of students, emphasis on classroom management and student participation reinforcement in the practicum program should be considered importantly. As revealed by some student-teachers, they struggled on classroom management and student participation reinforcement. Some of their students during their actual classroom teaching did not listen to them and respect them as teachers. Therefore, they stated in the interview that a course on classroom management and student participation reinforcement should also be given importance in order to have a knowledge on how to handle classes.

4.2.3 Planning, Preparing, and Developing Teaching Aids

Student-teachers also stated that course teachers and supervising teachers should monitor, help, and teach them how to develop teaching materials to be used in class. In the interview, they revealed that knowledge on how to plan, prepare and develop teaching materials in the class is an important skill that should be learned. They further said that the lack of skills in planning and preparing a lesson, and developing teaching materials can lead to ineffective teaching.

4.3 The Pre-service Teacher Education Practicum Program in the Philippines as Reflected in the Practicum Experience of the Pre-service Student-teacher

Based on the data gathered for this study, the curriculum of BSED and BA English have a different program as to pre-service teacher training. While the curriculum of BSED English is aimed at preparing professional teachers for the public secondary schools in the Philippines, BA English program is focused on preparing future graduates who cannot just do teaching but can also do other professional jobs that require exceptional communication skills. Thus, both curriculum have a pre-service teacher training program which prepares pre-service teachers to become qualified and trained classroom teachers. In the revised policies and standards for the undergraduate teacher education curriculum in the Philippines (CMO 30, 2004), a pre-service teacher education student should be able to finish a credit of 174 units before he can be conferred the degree; 54 units of these are for the professional education courses. These professional education courses are targeted for the development of both knowledge and skills needed in the teaching profession. These include theory/concept courses, methods/strategies courses, field study courses, and special topics courses.

In the TEI from where these pre-service student-teachers took their BSED-English degree, it followed the total number of credits mandated by the Commission of Higher Education (CHED). The student-teachers revealed during the interview that they had a total of 6 field study courses which they were trained in an in-class practice teaching and were made to observe classes, and create lesson plans. In the sixth and final field study course was the actual takeover classroom teaching. They had to have a total of ten actual takeover classroom teachings before they could complete the field study course. According to the, 10 lesson plans, 10 takeovers, and an evaluation rating from their supervising teacher were the requirement in order to pass the final field study.

On the other hand, the BA-English program aside from its required general education courses and professional courses, it had only a credit of six units for pre-service teacher preparation program; 3 units of which was for the approaches to college teaching, and another 3 units for the actual practicum teaching. The student-teachers from the BA-English program stated that these courses in preparation for becoming a teacher are not enough for them to learn the skills of teaching. They said that they wanted to study more courses that aim at learning the strategies, methods, and classroom management to better prepare them as teachers in the future.

5. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this paper was to explore and present the nature of pre-service teacher education programs in one of the private universities in Mindanao, Philippines; the issues, the challenges, and the ways to address them through the practicum experience of the 21 junior and senior English language teaching education and arts students; and the TEI's concept of practicum teaching in the context of pre-service teacher education program in the Philippines.

This study, although attempted to present the pre-service teacher training program in the Philippine context, was very limited in many aspects: data were gathered from a small sample size of respondents; it concentrated only on ELT pre-service teacher programs of BSED and BA English curriculum, and it focused only on one teacher education institute. However, with all these limitations, the study still serves as the basis for further research on greater number of respondents not only ELT student-teachers but all practice teachers. It is also recommended that a study on the relationship between the teacher-trainer and student-teachers should be conducted to identify the factors affecting the teaching practices of the student-teachers.

Learning to teach is a complex process because of the roles and responsibilities that teachers have to play, the nature of schools and classrooms, the diversity of students (Naylor et al., 2015) and the kind of pre-service teacher training they have. However, as practicum is a shared journey between the mentor teacher and the pre-service teacher (Ambrosetti, 2014), proper pre-service teacher training, strong teaching practicum foundation, and a good guidance and monitoring from the mentor teachers should be well-considered in order to better prepare the student-teachers become qualified teachers in the future.

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