

Pre-Service Teachers' Teaching Anxiety, Teaching Self-Efficacy, and Problems Encountered During the Practice Teaching Course

Joanne D. Gorospe¹

¹ College of Teacher Education, Occidental Mindoro State College, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, Philippines

Correspondence: Joanne D. Gorospe, College of Teacher Education, Occidental Mindoro State College, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, Philippines.

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Abstract

Practice teaching represents authentic experiential learning and culminating experience to better prepare the prospective teachers for actual teaching experience. However, pre-service teachers who go through the practicum have a number of worries and anxieties which could lower their teaching self-efficacy and consequently their performance. This study aimed to determine the relationship between the pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety and teaching self-efficacy, the possible reasons for such teaching anxiety, and pre-service teachers' suggestions to lessen, if not totally eliminate it. For this purpose, student-teacher anxiety and self-efficacy scales have been used for data collection as well as interviews among the pre-service teachers. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety significantly relates to their teaching self-efficacy and among the factors of teaching anxiety, classroom management best predicts pre-service teachers' teaching self-efficacy. It was also found that there is a significant difference between the levels of teaching anxiety of the pre-service teachers depending on their grade level placement. As perceived by the pre-service teachers, the main cause of their teaching anxiety is high expectations from cooperating teachers and students; hence they recommend better planning and preparation for internship.

Keywords: practice teaching, pre-service education, teaching anxiety, teaching self-efficacy

1. Introduction

Practice teaching is a critical component of prospective teachers' training (Alvi, Nausheen, Zulfiqar, & Moeen, 2015). The practice teaching course represents a stressful transition for teacher education students. Despite a multitude of social, academic, and emotional stressors, pre-service teachers must successfully cope with this complex new life role and achieve academic success. Other students are less able to successfully manage this transition and decide to leave higher education even during the practice teaching course.

From the activities that the university is providing, pre-service teachers get experiences from these. Out of these experiences, pre-service teachers gain insights that help them how to assess their progress or learning. Additionally, from the experiences that they get inside and outside the campus, they are able to acquire the ability to identify their needs, weaknesses, and strengths in academic and non-academic programs (Guiab, 2014). This experience and exposure and even gradual immersion would enable pre-service teachers to discover whether they really want to teach and intensify their desire to teach. It would also enable them to see the relevance or irrelevance of the pre-service program and provide them with a greater understanding of their uniqueness in preparation to teach.

As prospective teachers, pre-service teachers observe, practice, and engage with different kinds of teaching duties from planning to evaluating learning during the practice teaching course. Aside from applying what they have learned such as the pedagogical knowledge of teaching methods, strategies, and principles to different activities in the internship, they also deal with complex student behaviors and the multifaceted context in which teaching and learning take place. In effect, they experience various challenges such as anxieties, and complexities, as they adjust to the teacher's role (Alvi et al., 2015).

Teaching anxiety is defined as feelings that restrain teachers from being able to start, continue or finish a teaching task (Thomas, 2006), thus, affecting the performance and effectiveness of the teacher. Based on Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, anxiety could be negatively linked to self-efficacy due to thoughts of

possible failure. Furthermore, research on teacher self-efficacy revealed that teacher self-efficacy is one of the teacher characteristics that have been significantly linked to teaching behavior and performance as well as instructional strategies (Holzberger, Philipp, & Kunter, 2013).

The complexities that student teachers must master in order to become qualified as future teachers and to attain the practice teaching goal are immense. However, the attainment of such is dependent upon how well the pre-service teachers' needs are met in a timeline suitable to their readiness. According to Senler (2016), one of the necessary components of teacher development is affective development and it is also one of the key features of teaching effectiveness. In order to monitor teacher development and teaching effectiveness, it is required to understand teachers' affective development. Teachers' teaching anxiety and teaching self-efficacy are considered affective attributes of teachers that influence their teaching practice; therefore, the researcher believes that investigating these attributes should begin as early as the pre-service years.

It is in this context that this study was conducted. Problems that pre-service teachers encounter and their proposed solutions during the practice teaching course may give the Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) the idea of seeking for more effective integration of theory and practice. This is for the fact that the future of teacher education is inextricably interwoven with the performance of its pre-service teachers.

2. Objectives

Generally, this study aimed to determine the relationship between the pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety and teaching self-efficacy and the possible reasons for such teaching anxiety. More specifically, this study aimed to:

- 1) determine pre-service teachers' level of teaching anxiety in terms of pedagogy, evaluation, classroom management, and staff relation;
- 2) identify pre-service teachers' level of teaching self-efficacy in terms of personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy;
- 3) test if pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety significantly relates to pre-service teachers' teaching self-efficacy and which factor of teaching anxiety best predicts teaching self-efficacy;
- 4) test if there is a significant difference in the pre-service teachers' level of teaching anxiety when they are grouped according to grade-level assignments;
- 5) identify the perceived causes of teaching anxiety of the pre-service teachers; and
- 6) determine the recommendations that the pre-service teachers propose to eliminate teaching anxiety during the practice teaching course.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted in the College of Teacher Education of Occidental Mindoro State College, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, Philippines. The respondents of the study were the 100 pre-service teachers from the four (4) programs of the college. Probability sampling was used, specifically proportional random sampling, due to the fact that the population consists of subpopulations. To determine the number of respondents per program to be included in the sample, proportional allocation was used.

In view of the nature of this study, mixed methods were utilized to address the problems of the study. Descriptive design was employed to investigate the relationship of pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety to pre-service teachers' teaching self-efficacy. Similarly, this design was used in investigating which factor of teaching anxiety best predicts pre-service teachers' teaching self-efficacy and whether pre-service teachers vary in their levels of teaching anxiety when they are grouped according to their grade level assignments.

There were instruments that were used in order to gather the needed data. To investigate the pre-service teachers' level of teaching anxiety, the Student-Teacher Anxiety Scale (STAS) developed by Hart (1987) was used. To measure pre-service teachers' level of teaching self-efficacy, the Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) by Gibson and Dembo (1984) was utilized.

To determine pre-service teachers' levels of teaching anxiety and teaching self-efficacy, mean was used. To verify the correlation between the variables and which factor of teaching anxiety is the best predictor of teaching self-efficacy, regression analysis was used. However, to test whether pre-service teachers vary in their levels of teaching anxiety when they are grouped according to grade-level assignment, t-test analysis was utilized.

On the other hand, a qualitative method of research was utilized to investigate the problems being encountered by the pre-service teachers during their immersion in their respective cooperating schools. In this connection, the phenomenological research design was employed as it focused on determining the overall evaluation of the

pre-service teachers' experiences, specifically the reasons for their teaching anxiety, and their recommendations to overcome such. To identify the causes of anxiety of the respondents and their proposed recommendations to address such, interviews were done by the researcher among the respondents. Since the focal point of phenomenological research is to study how humans experience the phenomenon and how they make sense of their experiences, the researcher believed that problems will be better answered and understood using the method. Moreover, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to elucidate vague answers and seek follow-up questions. This data collection tool was used to delve deeply into the pre-service teachers' perceptions and beliefs about their experiences, rather than a questionnaire that might provide a limited understanding of participants' beliefs and experiences. Generally, due to the open-ended and interpretive nature of qualitative methods, data collection tools such as interviews and data analysis procedures such as thematic data analyses seemed to be more appropriate choices.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Teaching Anxiety of Pre-Service Teachers

A successful internship entitles a stress-free atmosphere not only for pre-service teachers but also for all the others directly involved with it. Understanding the sources of anxiety pre-service teachers experience during their teaching experience could help educators create an effective practicum environment in order to reduce the anxiety pre-service teachers feel (Barahmeh, 2016).

Table 1 shows the level of teaching anxiety of the pre-service teachers. Two of the factors of pre-service teachers' anxiety namely, evaluation (3.82) and classroom management (3.56) are interpreted as high. While the other two factors, pedagogy (3.47) and staff relation (3.39), are interpreted as moderate. With an overall mean of 3.56, the pre-service teachers have a high level of teaching anxiety.

It can be seen from the table that the factor with the highest mean is evaluation (3.82). This indicates that pre-service teachers are anxious when their cooperating teacher or principal evaluates their performance as they perform during the internship period. This usually happens when they are being observed and evaluated while they teach. It can also be noted that pre-service teachers have a high level of anxiety in terms of classroom management (3.56). This means that the pre-service teachers are anxious about class control and about the possible problems in the class with individual disruptive students.

Table 1. Level of teaching anxiety of pre-service teachers

Teaching Anxiety	Mean	Interpretation
Pedagogy	3.47	Moderate
Evaluation	3.82	High
Classroom management	3.56	High
Staff relation	3.39	Moderate
Overall Mean	3.56	High

Note. Scale: 1.00–1.49: Very Low; 1.50–2.49: Low; 2.50–3.49: Moderate; 3.50–4.49: High; 4.50–5.00: Very High.

The finding of the current study corroborates with the findings of the study conducted by Ekşi and Yakışık (2016). In their study on pre-service teachers' anxiety, they have found out that the student-teachers experienced anxiety due to the stress of being evaluated, as well as problem behavior in the classroom. Their study also revealed that helpful and supporting staff at the host school reduces teaching anxiety. Student-teachers were found to feel at ease with a supervisor that whom they had a partnership from the micro-teachings in their methodology courses through to supervision in their practicum. According to Oral (2012), classroom management anxiety is experienced while a student-teacher tries to control the classroom. It is estimated this is caused by a lack of necessary knowledge about classroom management and student-teachers do not have enough experience and still lack field knowledge.

4.2 Teaching Self-Efficacy of Pre-Service Teachers

According to Pendergast, Garvis, and Keogh (2011), teacher self-efficacy is an important motivational construct that shapes teacher effectiveness in the classroom. Teachers with a high level of teacher self-efficacy have been shown to be more resilient in their teaching and likely to try harder to help all students to reach their potential.

Table 2 presents the level of teaching self-efficacy of the pre-service teachers in terms of personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy. With an overall mean of 3.94, the pre-service teachers have a high level of teaching self-efficacy. Based on the results, the participating pre-service teachers have a high level of general

teaching efficacy (4.16) which means that they have the belief that they can make a difference regardless of a student's background. Similarly, the pre-service teachers are also found to have a high level of personal teaching self-efficacy (3.71) which implies that they have their own feeling of confidence in regard to their teaching abilities.

Findings support the study conducted by Gavora (2010). In his study, pre-service students' scores on both teaching self-efficacy and general teaching efficacy exceeded the midpoint of the scales, indicating they had positive self-efficacy.

Table 2. Level of teaching self-efficacy of pre-service teachers

Teaching Self-Efficacy	Mean	Interpretation
Personal teaching efficacy	3.71	High
General teaching efficacy	4.16	High
Overall Mean	3.94	High

Note. Scale: 1.00–1.49: Very Low; 1.50–2.49: Low; 2.50–3.49: Moderate; 3.50–4.49: High; 4.50–5.00: Very High.

4.3 Relationship Between Pre-Service Teachers' Teaching Anxiety and Teaching Self-Efficacy and Factor of Teaching Anxiety That Best Predicts Teaching Self-Efficacy

Table 3 presents the regression analysis between the pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety and teaching self-efficacy. As revealed in the table, the pre-service teachers' teaching self-efficacy could be predicted well by the level of their teaching anxiety in terms of pedagogy, evaluation, classroom management, and staff relation. The F value of 6.49 is found significant at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, there is a significant relationship between the pre-service teachers teaching anxiety and teaching self-efficacy.

Further, the multiple R-value of 0.612 could verify the relationship between the variables. Approximately 37.5% ($R^2 = 0.375$) of the variability of the level of pre-service teachers' teaching self-efficacy could be attributed to the level of their teaching anxiety. The independent variables, namely, pedagogy, evaluation, classroom management, and staff relation obtained beta coefficients of 0.136, -0.397, -0.430, and 0.297 respectively. As the data disclose, pre-service teachers' teaching self-efficacy can be best predicted by classroom management followed by evaluation. However, pedagogy is found to be the weakest among the predictors.

This implies that the lower the level of anxiety of the pre-service teachers in terms of classroom management, the higher the level of their teaching self-efficacy ($\beta = -.036$). This means that when pre-service teachers are not that anxious about incidents of misbehavior in class and about how to handle problematic students, they have a high level of belief in their ability to plan instruction and accomplish instructional objectives. In addition, the lower the level of anxiety of the pre-service teachers in terms of evaluation, the higher the level of their teaching self-efficacy ($\beta = -.042$) which means that being not anxious about the assessment by their cooperating teachers means a higher level of teaching self-efficacy on the part of the pre-service teachers.

Similarly, in the study of Merç (2015), student-teachers mentioned certain dimensions of their state of anxiety and efficacy. They felt particularly efficacious in their professional growth even though they have experienced anxiety in terms of their classroom management skills. They are also anxious when the university supervisor comes to observe their lesson and when their cooperating teachers interrupt the lesson. However, though they are anxious about the matter, student-teachers feel competent enough to understand and internalize the mentors' comments, not make similar mistakes in future practices, and work hard to develop their own strategies and in return make pupils acquire and use them effectively.

Table 3. Regression analysis between pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety and teaching self-efficacy

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Multiple R	R^2	Beta Coefficient	p-value	F
Pedagogy	Teaching self-efficacy	.612	.375	.136	.430	6.49
Evaluation				-.397	.042	
Classroom management				-.430	.036	
Staff relation				.297	.080	

Note. $p < .05$ = significant.

4.4 Significant Difference in the Pre-Service Teachers' Level of Teaching Anxiety When They are Grouped According to Grade Level Assignments

To find out whether the pre-service teachers differ in the level of their teaching anxiety, they were divided into two groups depending on their grade level assignments, elementary and secondary. Shown in Table 4 is the t-test analysis of the pre-service teachers' level of teaching anxiety when they are grouped according to the grade level that they handled.

As it was revealed, generally, there is a significant difference in the levels of teaching anxiety of the pre-service teachers with respect to their grade level assignments ($p = .054$). This means that the pre-service teachers who are handling elementary pupils, or the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) pre-service teachers, tend to have a higher level of teaching anxiety when compared to those who were assigned to teach in high school, the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd), Bachelor of Technical Teacher Education (BTTE), and Bachelor of Physical Education (BPE) pre-service teachers. Moreover, among the factors of teaching anxiety, only one factor is found to be significant, and this is evaluation ($p = 0.39$). This implies that the pre-service teachers who are teaching elementary pupils are more likely to experience anxiety when being evaluated by their cooperating teachers, that is, they are anxious about how their cooperating teachers would react to how they present or teach lessons.

On the contrary, the findings do not support the findings of Merç (2015) which revealed that there is no significant difference among the pre-service teachers in terms of overall teaching anxiety and the type of practicum school, either primary or high school.

Table 4. t-test analysis on the pre-service teachers' level of teaching anxiety when they are grouped according to grade level assignments

Factors of Teaching Anxiety	F	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Pedagogy	.001	-1.372	.174	Not significant
Evaluation	1.847	-1.598	.039	Significant
Classroom management	.995	-.893	.065	Not significant
Staff relation	.667	-1.229	.223	Not significant
Difference on teaching anxiety	1.353	-1.506	.054	Significant

Note. $p .05 < =$ significant.

4.5 Perceived Causes of Teaching Anxiety of the Pre-Service Teachers

A high level of teaching-related anxiety is believed to lead to high levels of stress, failure, and disappointment in pre-service teachers (Ekşi & Yakışık, 2016). With this, effective supervision and guidance from supervising professors and cooperating teachers at the cooperating schools can play an important role in reducing anxiety among the pre-service teachers.

Table 5 presents the thematic analysis of the causes of teaching anxiety as perceived by the pre-service teachers which resulted from interviews conducted among them. As it is shown in the table, four themes emerged. Causes of pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety include high expectations from cooperating teachers and students (48%), lack of self-confidence (21%), lack of preparation for the internship (19%), and difficulty adjusting to a new learning environment (12%).

It can be noted that the majority of the pre-service teachers perceive that high expectation from their cooperating teachers and students is the cause of their teaching anxiety (48%). One of the interviewed pre-service teachers said, "I think it is because of the expectations of my cooperating teacher and my students since I am from CTE and OMSC is known for quality teacher education." Another pre-service teacher mentioned, "The cause of my anxiety is my thinking of failing the expectations of the people around me, my teachers, cooperating teachers, and principal."

The finding is substantiated by the study of Paker (2011) which revealed that student teachers' anxiety before and while undergoing their teaching practicum may be caused by the varying expectations of mentors and supervisors related to their performance in class, lack of conformity among mentors regarding their approach to teaching practice, and finally, the poor quality of feedback given to student-teachers by their mentors and supervisors.

21 percent of the pre-service teachers said that it is their lack of self-confidence which made them anxious

during the internship. This is verified by the statement of one of the pre-service teachers who says, “I think the cause of my teaching anxiety is that I am not that confident about my own ability.” Another added, “The reason is my lack of confidence especially in dealing with the different attitudes of my students.”

Another cause of teaching anxiety as experienced by the pre-service teachers is a lack of preparation for the internship (19%). This is validated by the answer of one of the pre-service teachers who states, “I am not yet prepared for off-campus training.” One pre-service teacher seconded, “and I am anxious when I am not prepared in doing the task assigned by my cooperating teacher.”

Lastly, 12% of the pre-service teachers said that they have this difficulty adjusting to a new learning environment. This is supported when one of the pre-service teachers answered during the interview, “I think it is the working environment, and I don’t know how I am going to deal with the people in my new learning situation.”

Table 5. Pre-service teachers’ perceived causes of teaching anxiety

Theme	Perceived Causes of Teaching Anxiety	Frequency	Percent
1	High expectations from cooperating teachers and students	48	48
2	Lack of self-confidence	21	21
3	Lack of preparation for the internship	19	19
4	Difficulty to adjust to a new learning environment	12	12

4.6 Recommendations of the Pre-Service Teachers to Eliminate Teaching Anxiety During the Practice Teaching Course

As the pre-service teachers are the ones who experience teaching anxiety, they are the best to suggest recommendations to eliminate such. Right after pre-service teachers were asked about the reasons for their anxiety, their suggestions and recommendations to eliminate their teaching anxiety were sought.

Table 6 shows the recommendations of the pre-service teachers to eliminate their teaching anxiety while having practice teaching. The result of the thematic analysis shows that three recommendations were given by the pre-service teachers namely, better planning and preparation for internship (42%), boosting one’s self-confidence (36%), and consultation with cooperating teacher and supervising professor (22%).

As the thematic analysis has revealed, the majority of them suggest better planning and preparation for internship (42%). This is validated by a pre-service statement that says, “It would be better for student-teachers to know beforehand what could happen, they could get it from the experiences of the past student-teachers. They should prepare for the real-life scenario that awaits them in their respective cooperating schools.”

Boosting one’s self-confidence is suggested by 36% of the pre-service teachers interviewed. During the interview, one of the pre-service teachers answered, “Pre-service teachers should be confident enough and they should study the lesson that they will be teaching so that they can deliver the lesson very well.” Another pre-service teacher added, “Be confident, just conquer your fear and teach with compassion.”

Lastly, pre-service teachers also suggested consultation with cooperating teachers and supervising professors to eliminate teaching anxiety (22%). During an interview, a pre-service teacher said, “The interns should have more consultation classes with the supervising instructors.” Her classmate added, “Consultation should also be done with other teachers not only with the cooperating teacher.”

While teaching practice provided them with a platform where they could combine theory and practice, and develop professional and practical knowledge, they also experienced a number of challenges. Consequently, they learned new ideas and skills, related theory to practice, reflected on the education system, and developed the personal passion needed for effective teaching (Alvi et al., 2015). Since the importance of practicum experience is crucial in developing would-be teachers, prospective teachers’ experiences during this period should be documented in greater detail including sources of pre-service teachers’ anxiety while doing their practicum courses which should be highlighted. With this, recommendations could be proposed which would benefit student-teachers in having a more fruitful experience.

Table 6. Pre-service teachers' recommendations to eliminate teaching anxiety during the practice teaching course

Theme	Pre-Service Teachers' Recommendations	Frequency	Percent
1	Better planning and preparation for internship	42	42
2	Boosting one's self-confidence	36	36
3	Consultation with cooperating teacher and supervising professor	22	22

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn. The pre-service teachers have a high level of teaching anxiety in terms of evaluation and classroom management while a moderate level in terms of pedagogy and staff relations. In line with this, supervising professors, cooperating teachers, and pre-service teachers may hold joint orientation sessions which include discussion of assisting pre-service teachers to deal with the fear of evaluation and make practice teaching less anxious. It was found that pre-service teachers have a high level of personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy which is a good finding since it is believed that efficacious teachers are better risk-takers who instigate higher levels of standards in their classes, which in turn results in better student achievement. The pre-service teachers' teaching anxiety significantly relates to their teaching self-efficacy and among the factors of teaching anxiety classroom management best predicts pre-service teachers' teaching self-efficacy. With classroom management as a major concern of pre-service teachers, lack of field experience in handling classroom situations must be considered in improving the student teaching program by teacher education institutions. It was also found that there is a significant difference between the level of teaching anxiety of the pre-service teachers who are teaching in elementary and those who are teaching in secondary, that is pre-service teachers in elementary are found to be more anxious, especially in terms of evaluation, than those who were assigned to teach in the secondary level. As perceived by the pre-service teachers, the main cause of their teaching anxiety is a high expectation from cooperating teachers and students. The nature of the relationship between the pre-service teacher and cooperating teacher is important to professional development, thus, both the student and the mentor should examine alternative relationship models which support professional development. Finally, to eliminate teaching anxiety during the practice teaching course, the pre-service teachers recommend better planning and preparation for internship. Consequently, additional research is needed regarding the critical perspective and relationships which support the professional development of pre-service teachers including the school setting as well as university structures and practice teaching programs.

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