

# Exploring Pre-Service Teachers' Field Study Experiences Through Doodling

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## ABSTRACT

Symbols speak the mind of a person, expressing an individual's perceptions toward something that he/she encounters. This qualitative study utilizing thematic approach explored the field study experiences of the thirty-two third year Bachelor of Secondary Education students of Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College-Barotac Viejo Campus. Data were collected through interviews and doodles drawn by the participants. The results showed that pre-service teachers' FS experiences were influenced by: (1) "I wanted to be like her/him!" attitude of the participants toward the cooperating teachers, (2) cooperating school's learning environment, (3) relationship with the cooperating teachers, and (4) recalling past experiences of the participants. Actual observations of the teaching-learning process in the field, development of interpersonal relationships and exposure to various learning environments were the significant experiences of the participants while students' unfavourable behaviour, not conducive learning environment, unapproachable teachers and unavailability of classes to be observed were the problematic experiences encountered by the participants. Based from the results of the study, it was recommended that conduct of proper orientations on the objectives of the FS courses may be done among pre-service teachers, cooperating school heads and teachers to remind them of their roles and functions in this academic endeavor.

## Keywords

Doodles, education, field study experiences, pre-service teacher, symbols

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## Introduction

Becoming a teacher is a more complex process than many pre-service teachers may have initially thought [2,5]. In the Philippines, pre-service teachers are exposed to various pedagogical approaches making them versatile and knowledgeable in their own chosen fields. Setting new benchmarks for teacher education institutions were also done to improve teacher performance and advance the development of both the pre-service and in-service teacher education [3].

In addition, the Commission on Higher Education Order No. 30, s. 2004 (CMO 30, s. 2004) was promulgated for the purpose of rationalizing the undergraduate teacher education in the country to keep pace with the demands of global competitiveness [6]. This CMO is in accordance with the pertinent provisions of Republic Act No. 7722, the Higher Education Act of 1994. CMO 30 embodies the policies and standards for the undergraduate teacher education curriculum. Article 5, Section 13 of CHED Memorandum Order No. 30 states that, "Field Study courses are intended to provide students with practical learning experiences in which they can observe, verify, reflect on in actual school settings. The experiences will begin with field observation and gradually intensify until students undertake practice teaching." During this time, pre-service teachers undergoing FS courses are exposed to various experiences in the field [23].

In the international setting, several researches have been conducted to document a positive effect of doodling on individuals' ability to recall information [1,4]. For example, in the research conducted by Andrade [1] participants were allowed to listen to a mock phone conversation about an upcoming party and were asked to write down the names of people who could attend the party and ignore the names of

those who could not attend. Half of these participants were instructed to fill in little squares and circles on a piece of paper while writing down names; the other half just listened to the messages and only wrote down names. Afterwards participants were given a surprise memory test, after being specifically told they didn't have to remember anything. The doodlers performed better in memory retention-- almost thirty percent better. The study of Boggs, Cohen & Marchand [4] also showed that there was a drop in recall performance for those who were in the unstructured doodling condition compared to those in the note-taking and structured doodling conditions. This is also supported by several studies showing that performance on information processing and/or recall tasks (e.g., memory tasks, listening to a lecture or video) can be increased when one engages in low attention-demanding tasks simultaneously, such as doodling, in situations where the learner experiences boredom [24,26]. The related literature would tell us that researches conducted on doodling were more on psychology and recalling information and learning [1,11,12,17,30] but no study had been conducted utilizing doodles in exploring experiences of pre-service teachers in the field.

Doodles are scribbled drawings or markings that are spontaneously produced absent-mindedly, when one's mind is preoccupied with something else rather than concerned solely with the process of drawing itself. Thus, the process of doodling is only a partially conscious activity, or at least one that involves varying levels of conscious intent [28]. The Oxford Dictionary defines doodling simply as "to scribble or draw, especially absent-mindedly."

Doodling has many purposes. Doodling is said to be an unconscious form of art that one performs outside of one's own awareness during times of mental, emotional, or psychological stress [25] that allows repressed thoughts, feelings, and expressions to come to the surface to be

released [28]. This was supported by Petrovsky [21] who agreed that people sometimes use visual symbols to replace speech as indirect forms of conscious expressions.

## Objectives

This study focused on the exploring and describing the experiences of pre-service teachers who are enrolled in Field Study courses through the use of doodling.

In order to shed light on the research purpose, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do pre-services teachers express their FS experiences through doodling?
2. What experiences of pre-service teachers are identified as significant or problematic?
3. How do pre-service teachers cope with these experiences in the field?

## Methods

A qualitative research design utilizing thematic analysis [15] and narrative inquiry [7,22] was used in this study. Creswell [8] defines qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting.”

This study was underpinned by the epistemology of phenomenology [8] because the main purpose of this endeavour is to explore and understand the FS experiences of the participants in their own point of views. The theoretical perspective of interpretivism [9,15,27] guided the researcher in the collection and interpretation of data. In particular, interpretation of results was influenced by several specific theories and frameworks such as Crotty [9] and Papert's [19] constructionism theory and Kolb's [13] Model of Experiential Learning Theory.

### Sources of Data

Data were collected through interpretive research methods [9,14,18,27] using data sources such as doodles, classroom observations, researcher's journal and interviews.

The data focused on exploring the FS experiences of pre-services teachers. Below is the table showing the research questions vis-à-vis data sources.

**Table 1.** Matrix of Data vis-à-vis Research Questions

| Data Sources         | RQ1 | RQ2 | RQ3 |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Doodles              | X   | X   | X   |
| Observations         | X   | X   |     |
| Interviews           | X   | X   | X   |
| Researcher's Journal | X   | X   | X   |

### Doodles

In this research study, doodles made by the pre-service teachers are the main source of data. The participants were requested to express their field study experiences through doodling using paper, pencil, pens or other materials they

wanted to use. This activity was done a month before their field study ends. The researcher selected this schedule because she believes that the data she can obtain from the participants are already sufficient at this time.

### Observations

The researcher observed the participants three times during their FS experiences. While doing the observations, she took detailed field notes of what she had observed on the activities of the pre-service teachers during their FS, the classroom and school environment, and how the learners and students interact with the pre-service teachers.

### Researcher's Journal

A researcher's journal was also made at hand for the researcher to record all important details during the observations and interviews which she considered important in exploring pre-service teacher's FS experiences.

### Interviews

To validate the doodles made by the participants, the researcher randomly selected fifteen participants who were interviewed. For each interview, the researcher used a general interview guide [20], or a list of general themes or questions she wanted to explore during the course of the interview. However, the researcher allowed the conversation to flow in the direction the participants chose, which meant that the researcher had to ask questions not included in the interview guide or the researcher may skip the question listed if the situation calls for it.

## Data Analysis

Thematic analysis and narrative inquiry were utilized in this study. Thematic analysis according to Marks and Yardley [15] is considered the most appropriate for any study that seeks to discover using interpretations. It allows the researcher to associate an analysis of the frequency of a theme with one of the whole contents.

Further, the researcher utilized a cluster map to categorize the doodles of the participants. These helped the researcher in classifying and interpreting the data that she collected from the doodles.

For the narrative inquiry, this was done by interviewing the selected participants based on the results of their doodles. Interview was done for the purpose of clarifying vague portions of doodles. They were allowed to explain their works by answering the interview guide questions. Through this, the researcher identified the common themes and descriptions from the verbatimly transcribed interviews.

### Results

This study utilized the narrative inquiry and thematic analysis in exploring and determine the FS experiences of the pre-service teachers. Analysis of the doodles showed that each participant showed unique and varied experiences while undergoing their field study among the laboratory

schools where they were assigned to conduct their FS observations. Wenger's [29] citation in his work has helped much in realizing the purpose of this study "In everyday life it is difficult – and largely unnecessary – to tell exactly where the sphere of the individual ends and the sphere of the collective begins" (p. 146).

Below are the common themes on how pre-service teachers express their FS experiences through doodling.

#### Expressing FS Experiences through Doodles

Thematic analysis was utilized in the analysis of doodles made by the participants in this study while narrative inquiry utilizing interview was only done if the researcher feels that there is a need for some clarifications in the doodles. Cluster mapping was done to categorize doodles with the common themes. This helped the researcher in classifying and interpreting data that she collected. From these, the researcher came up with the following common themes on how pre-service teachers expressed their FS experiences through doodling:

"I wanted to be like him/her!"- Pre-service Teachers' Goal in Life!

Based on the analysis of the study, ten out of thirty-two participants showed goal setting as one of the the significant factors that influenced their FS experiences. They looked up to their cooperating teachers as somebody to follow. They wanted to follow the footsteps of the teachers whom they have observed and admired of. It showed that despite of the difficulty's teachers is facing in the field of education these experiences motivated them more to become model teachers with great achievements in the near future. They believed that teaching is not always a bed of roses, that roses even have thorns. The analysis of doodles and transcribed interviews shows that teaching requires great passion and sacrifices and it takes time to be successful in this field so they need to set goals and targets in order to succeed just like their cooperating teacher.

Participant 2 expressed experiencing ups and downs during their FS but these served as training grounds to set her goals in becoming an effective teacher someday.

Moreover, they believed that having conducive learning environment is a great factor in achieving effecting teaching-learning process.



**Figure 2.** An empty classroom for learning

#### Pre-service Teachers' Relationship with Cooperating Teachers

Field study is a required course for pre-service teachers. Engaging in FS will really help them to become fully-equipped individuals in preparation for their teaching career. One thing about FS course is that pre-service teachers can learn a lot from observations and from their cooperating teachers. Therefore, having good relationship with cooperating teachers is of great importance.

Based on the analysis of the doodles and interviews, pre-service teachers expressed their FS experiences by focusing on their relationship with their cooperating teachers. Thus, they tried their best to come to observe classes on time. They believe that if they will show good attitudes as pre-service teachers, their cooperating teacher will also treat them well. They will enjoy observing and will learn from their FS experiences. For example, from the doodles made by Participant No. 6 it shows that the pre-service teacher has a good relationship with the cooperating teacher.



**Figure 1.** A teacher holding an award

#### Learning Environment

Fourteen out of thirty-two participants expressed learning environment to be one of the factors that could contribute to the success or failure of FS experiences of pre-service teachers. Learning environment could either give positive or negative experience on an individual. They believed that teachers can create either an environment which could encourage or discourage learners to learn.



**Figure 3.** A pre-service teacher's encounter with her cooperating teacher

#### Recalling Past Experiences

Field study gives pre-service teachers the chance to be exposed and experienced the reality in the actual field. Through this, they can get ideas and experiences that will make them ready and be oriented on what is really happening in the field. Moreover, observing classes will help them reflect about their experiences from the past when

they were just high school students. This is the result of the analysis of the doodles drawn by the participants. They tried to recall the moments when they were still in high school and their classes were the ones being observed also. Participant No. 7 even said that “my best moments from the past as a student inspired me more to pursue teaching as my profession.”



Figure 4. I know how it feels being observed

Pre-service Teachers’ Significant and Problematic FS Experiences

After a thorough analysis of the doodles made by the participants, it was found out that various factors could affect the FS experiences of pre-service teachers. These experiences could either be significant or problematic. Various FS Experiences, Development of Interpersonal Relationship and Learning Environment

In this study, the participants were exposed to a situation where they have to observe the actual learning process and application of theories learned. One of the significant experiences of the participants was that they were able to observe how teachers impart knowledge and facilitate the learning process to the students. These observations motivated more the participants to pursue teaching as their profession for they believe that teaching can give them fulfillment of their dreams.

Moreover, they considered the development of their social skills as a significant FS experience because they were given a chance to interact with diverse and unique individuals – be it teachers or learners. For example, there were schools where respect for everybody is observed. And they could feel that their self-esteem increases everytime learners would greet them and acknowledge their presence. On the other hand, there were also cooperating schools where learners would not mind their presence as FS observers. Furthermore, the kind of learning environment greatly affects the participants during their FS course thus, they considered this as a significant experience. The type of environment the cooperating school and the classroom where they observed gave them various experiences worth remembering when they become teachers in the near future.

Learners’ Behavior, Learning Environment, Unapproachable Teachers: Problematic Experiences

Experiences can give us lessons in life. In this study, negative or problematic experiences opened the minds of the participants to the real and actual learning that is not learned inside the four walls of the room.

One of the problematic experiences that the participants encountered was the learners’ behavior. For example, there were cases that pre-service teachers could observe unfavourable behavior of the learners such as coming to

school late, cutting classes and causing disruptive noises and activities during classroom activities.

In addition, the participants also were able to experience having hard times finding approachable teachers to be observed and to be interviewed.

Below are the common themes explored by the researcher based on the doodles and transcribed interviews.

Table 2. Common Themes vis-à-vis Key Participants

| Common Themes  | Key Participant                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Goal Setting   | 3, 5, 9, 11, 13, 15, 19, 22, 28, 31  |
| Learning Environment   | 6,7,12,17,18,20,21,24,25,26,29,30,32 |
| Pre-service Teachers’ Relationship with Cooperating Teachers | 1,4,8,10,27                          |
| Recalling Past Experiences                                   | 2,14,16,                             |

How do pre-service teachers cope with these experiences?

The various experiences that pre-service teachers experienced during their FS course motivated them more to pursue their dreams of becoming a teacher. They considered these experiences as challenges which they will encounter when they become professional teachers someday; that the success or failure of learning greatly depends on teachers because they believe that teachers could either encourage or discourage students to learn. They wanted to follow all the good things that they were able to observe from their respective cooperating schools and they wanted to disregard if not to change all the not-so good things that they were able to see and experience. It did not discourage them to pursue their dream to become teachers. Instead, these made them think that they will not follow the negative attitudes of teachers which they have experienced but instead they promised themselves to help and extend hands to FS students if they will become cooperating teachers someday.

Discussions

Revisiting the doodles (including the transcribed interviews), the researcher found that various factors could affect the FS experiences of the pre-service teachers. These experiences may either be significant or problematic. But one thing is sure, these experiences served as motivation and encouragement to our pre-service teachers to become better teachers someday. It served as a challenge on their part on how to overcome all the challenges and difficulties they met during their FS course. The experiences they encountered be it either positive or negative gave them the idea that being a teacher is not an easy task but rather a challenging one which needs patience, determination and commitment to the profession.

The doodles they made expressed so much of their desire of becoming an effective teacher – the goal setting, providing conducive learning environment for learners and being teachers who are approachable and ready to help students who are in need. This is the reason why, the doodles also showed that as they conduct their FS observation, the participants also were recalling their past experiences as

learners being observed inside the classroom. Meaning to say that they were also given the chance to do self-reflection during this activity. This conforms with the study of Andrade [1] which states that people become more capable of remembering if they doodle.

### Conclusion(Times New Roman, bold, 12)

The Field Study course of the pre-service teachers had given them various significant experiences in their respective cooperating schools. These significant experiences may either be positive or negative depending on how the participants dealt with them. Throughout this course, pre-service teachers must consider Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, that self-reflection should be a part of themselves for them to form and affirm concepts which they have observed. They must develop this attitude because the experiences they encountered in the field may affect their way of learning as pre-service teachers and their way of teaching when they become teachers someday. The FS experiences of the participants may develop or discourage them to continue their course, thus cooperating teachers in the field must help them as they undergo observations, interviews and other activities related to their FS course.

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