

Challenges and Opportunities Encountered in the Teaching of Special Topics Courses in the Bachelor of Elementary Education Program

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Abstract

This qualitative research endeavored to determine the different challenges and opportunities encountered by the Professional Education teachers in teaching Special Topics (ST) courses among the Bachelor of Elementary Education Program. The 110 respondents composed of the students and professional education teachers identified their respective challenges and opportunities in the teaching of ST subjects. There were ten (10) criteria identified in determining the challenges and opportunities such as availability of textbooks, accessibility on specific online references, adequacy of discussion/lecture time, relevancy of the topics discussed, proper scheduling of ST Classes, application to their daily activities, availability or adequacy instructional materials resources, curriculum planning/preference, student classroom interaction, and meeting the need of the LET. It has been found out that in the teaching of the ST in the BEED program, the greatest challenge teachers encountered is the availability of text books, followed by the adequacy of instructional materials and the LET relevance. However, for the opportunities, they considered teaching ST to have more opportunities in curriculum planning/preference, relevancy of the topics discussed to the needs of the students, and application to their daily activities.

Keywords: Challenges, Opportunities, Elementary Education Program

Introduction

Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) is a four year degree program designed to prepare students to become primary school teachers. The program combines both theory and practice in order to teach students the necessary knowledge and skills a primary school teacher needs. There are several major fields of concentration in the BEED program, namely Early Childhood Education, Special Education, General Education, English, Mathematics, Science, Filipino, Social Studies Music, Arts and Physical Education (MAPE) and Technology and Home Economics (THE). As stipulated in the CHED MEMORANDUM ORDER (CMO) NO 30 SERIES 2004, the curriculum herein is designed to prepare professional teachers for practice in primary and secondary schools in the Philippines. The design features include various components that correspond to the basic and specialized knowledge and skills that will be needed by a practicing professional teacher: foundational general education knowledge and skills, theoretical knowledge about teaching and learning methodological skills that allow them more options and greater flexibility in designing and implementing learning environment that will maximize their students' learning, once they are in the teaching service. In the same CMO, SECTION 14 discusses the details on Special topics courses which comprises the three (3) requirements of the curriculum. In this course, students will have the opportunity to explore

special topics and issues related to their field by taking three one-unit elective seminars on a range of topics chosen by the teacher education institution, based on their perceived needs of the students and the expertise of their faculty. Some of the possible topics of these one-unit elective seminars are, but are not limited to the following: Teaching Multigrade Classes, Environmental Education, Teaching Multicultural Classrooms, Integrative Teaching Strategies, Topics on Distance Learning, Problem-Based Teaching, the Eight-Week Curriculum, Addressing Learning Gaps, Teaching Indigenous Peoples, among others. Considering that in the BEED curriculum, a three unit course of Special Topic is included and the topic is to be identified on the needs of the learner or on the expertise of the teacher. This provision gives rise to be a potential avenue for research issue and concern. For the possibility of the three topics to be used will be aligned to the national level particularly in the enclosure of the topics in the Licensure Examination. The result of this qualitative research may be an opener to the curriculum planner to look into the details of offering the special topics in the BEED program.

Research Questions

In order to determine the fulfillment of the purpose of the study, the following problems are taken into considerations:

1. What are the challenges in the teaching of the

Special Topics encountered by the Professional Teachers in the BEED program?

2. What are the opportunities in the teaching of the Special Topics encountered by the Professional Teachers in the BEED program?

3. What suggestions/framework action can be prepared in order to enhance the enclosure of ST in the BEED program?

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored along the concept of SWOT analysis (credited to Albert Humphrey) which can be carried out for a company, product, place, industry, or person. It involves specifying the objective of the business venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieve that objective. For in this study, the researchers focused on identifying the factors which are the challenges and opportunities that contributed to the effective delivery of the instruction in the teaching of the Special Topics Classes. The baseline issues or concerns were availability of textbooks, accessibility on specific online references, adequacy of discussion/lecture time, relevancy of the topics discussed, scheduling of ST Classes, applicability to their daily activities, availability or adequacy instructional materials resources, curriculum planning/preference, student classroom interaction, and Alignment of the contents for the LET.

Results and Discussion

Based on the interview conducted among professional teachers handling Special Topics courses in the BEED program, the following issues were identified as challenges in the teaching of the ST courses such as:

1. Inavailability of Textbooks. Most SUCs in particular is offering BEED Program and such one of the worries being encountered by professional teachers handling special topics are the textbooks to be used in teaching. Considering that topics are based on the needs of the learners or on the expertise of the teacher, textbooks to be used are not readily available in the library.

2. Adequacy of the Instructional Materials. The inavailability of books goes with it is the inadequacy of instructional materials. Due to limited or inavailable textbooks which served as basis for transmitting knowledge or concepts to the learners, the teacher found it more difficult to source out the needed materials for instruction. This served as a challenged on how teacher could be able to cope with the need of the course.

3. Content relevance to the LET. A challenge in the sense that among the several topics listed in the CMO as part of the Special Topic only three of it can be included in the curriculum. The choice of the topic is based on the need or expertise of the teacher. The issue thereon is there is a possibility that there might be other topics not chosen that are included in the LET. Thus it might affect the performance of the learners in the LET or by the school in general.

Among the identified issues, there were some which were considered as opportunities such that:

1. Curriculum Planning. On the basis of this study, the result may be utilized for the revision of the BEED curriculum. There will be a chance to revisit the curriculum and to revise in order to improve and to enhance the needed competencies of the students.

2. Relevance to the Needs of the Learners. If the topics chosen are along the needs or interest of the learners, the learner will become more participative and cooperative in the delivery of the lesson. Thus instruction would become more efficient and effective.

3. Application to their Daily Activities. The learners are opportuned to apply these in their day to day activities thus making them more knowledgeable and responsible of their role as elementary teacher. What they have learned can be applied in their daily activities and such that these make the lesson more significant to the learners.

Conclusion

In accordance with the above discussion, the following conclusion were identified: (1) Special Topics courses are limited to three units only considering that there are lots of topics listed or enumerated in the CMO. (2) No available textbooks in the teaching of the selected Special Topics. (3) Some of the topics are beyond the needs of the learner. (4) In the entire curriculum, some of the special topics included are not relevant to their day to day activities.

Along with the challenges are the opportunities in the teaching of the ST courses such as (1) The curriculum will be revisited and revised for improvement and to suit the needs of the learner. (2) Students can be more responsible of their role as elementary teachers. (3) The learners can extend their knowledge to the community based on what they have learned from the courses.

Based on the conclusions made, the following ideas or activities are recommended: (1) Due to the limited number of units, there is a need to increase the number of topics to be included in the curriculum to ensure that there could be more percentage for the inclusion in the LET. (2) Consider the availability of text books before the topics are to be offered. This would make the lesson or delivery of the lesson more effective for both the teachers and the learners. (3) Survey needs be conducted to the learners in order that topics be more relevant to the needs and interest of the learners to make the discussion more meaningful and interesting to the learners.

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