

# RESEARCH EXPERIENCES OF THE ELEMENTARY PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS: A PHENOMENOLOGY

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## Abstract:

Research is like embarking on a fascinating journey of exploration, where students uncover new domains of knowledge. This journey is not just about stumbling upon fresh ideas; it's also about refining existing concepts and theories, ultimately leading to a significant understanding that was previously undiscovered. For college students, engaging in research is a remarkable and enriching experience, offering the opportunity to explore the depths of discovery and emerge with a newfound appreciation for the complexities of the world around them. This study critically analyzed the research experiences of the elementary pre-service teachers in a local City College for the Academic Year 2023- 2024. The researchers utilized the qualitative approach based on Huserlian's Descriptive Phenomenology with the use of Colaizi's method to explore our informants' experience and acquire insights from their research journey. This study was conducted through the ten (10) informants carefully selected through the convenience sampling technique. The findings indicated that the experiences of our informants have enabled them to unlock their skills, seize opportunities, and acquire knowledge for future use, particularly in teaching. They have also overcome hurdles and challenges and developed strategies as a result. They also have shared the readiness and the help of their advisers contributing to their journey. Our informants have shared recommendations based on their learning and the entirety of their research experiences. The recommendations are addressed to future researchers and their upcoming ventures.

Keywords: Research Experiences, Skills Unlocked, Opportunities, Challenges, Future use, Strategies, Advisers' Readiness, Recommendations for future researcher

## Introduction:

Information alone is not knowledge but experiencing an explicit wisdom. The more experience they go through in their personal and professional lives, the more they realize what motivates and what does not. If they do not have much personal experience, it could be challenging to establish a clear vision for their life and profession. Research subject is a vital experience in a student's study life especially during college. Through this, it may provide hands-on training and exposure to the research process, allowing individuals to develop practical research skills, including data collection, analysis, and

interpretation. This firsthand experience fosters a deeper understanding of research methodologies. Participating in research is frequently essential for graduate education, playing a crucial role in shaping upcoming scholars and aiding the advancement of their specific fields. In essence, the significance of research experiences was rooted in their capacity to cultivate skills, inspire intellectual curiosity, and propel the advancement of knowledge and comprehension.

This study aimed to explore the experiences of elementary pre-service teachers during their Research 301 and 302 courses. The focus was on understanding their experiences in relation to research methodologies, hands-on training, and the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The study emphasized the significance of research in shaping pre-service teachers' professional development by fostering skills, intellectual curiosity, and critical thinking. These experiences were considered vital for improving the teachers' preparation for the workforce or graduate school, allowing them to discover the types of work they enjoy and enhance their problem-solving abilities.

The gap in this study lies in understanding the specific challenges and opportunities that pre-service teachers face during their research experiences, particularly in areas such as accessibility, materials, and teacher preparation. To address this gap, the study recommends developing targeted support programs, mentorship initiatives, and adjustments in teacher education curricula. These initiatives would help improve the research experiences of pre-service teachers, better preparing them for future careers in elementary education and enhancing the overall quality of teacher preparation programs.

### **Atheoretical Stance:**

This qualitative study aimed to explore the research experiences of elementary pre-service teachers using Husserlian descriptive phenomenology, deliberately avoiding connection to any pre-existing theories to prevent bias. By suspending prior assumptions and not defining a theory at the outset, the researcher sought to allow themes to emerge naturally from the participants' narratives and lived experiences. The study's goal was to establish reliable philosophical and scientific knowledge through an unprejudiced examination of the participants' backgrounds and experiences, with the understanding that the conclusions could not be predetermined and were shaped by the participants' personal insights.

### **Research Method:**

A phenomenological research design was utilized for this qualitative study exploring the research experiences of graduating elementary pre-service teachers at Mandaue City College. Using transcendental phenomenology, the study aimed to capture participants' lived experiences through semi-structured interviews, guided by Husserlian principles. The research environment was the School of Education at Mandaue City College, focusing on graduating students who were selected through convenience sampling. Data was collected via face-to-face interviews, transcribed, and analyzed using Colaizzi's method to identify themes and ensure validity. Ethical considerations included respecting participant sovereignty, ensuring confidentiality, obtaining informed consent, and managing potential conflicts of interest. The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the reliability and integrity of the findings, emphasizing transparency and participant well-being throughout the research process.

### **Findings and Discussion:**

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#### **THEME 1: SKILLS UNLOCKED**

The study revealed that unlocked skills are continuously developing, improving tasks, and enhancing communication. The participants were amazed by the discovery of their hidden abilities during the research experience.

##### **Sub-theme 1.1: Communication Skills**

*"In my case, communication skills were challenged when there were unresolved issues among us. Instead of letting tensions simmer, we initiated an open forum to address and resolve the problems." – Honest Researcher, Line 270*

Good communication was central to social work practice (Koprowska, 2020; Lishman, 2009). Also, listening intently can make every communication much more productive. This not only honed their communication skills but also improved their listening skills as they actively listened to each other's perspectives and worked toward solutions.

#### Sub-theme 1.2: Listening Skills

*"Simultaneously, my listening skills have improved. I have to listen to my groupmates' input because we need to revise our work accordingly. They, along with Sir, provide valuable advice. This has helped develop my listening skills. Additionally, our writing skills have been enhanced through these experiences."* – Research Oriented Researcher, Line 10

According to (Kate Murphy, 2023). "It is only by listening that we engage, understand, connect, empathize, and develop as human beings. It is fundamental to any successful personal, professional, and political relationship." Throughout their research journey, most of the informants improved their listening skills and it proved to be successful since it reduced the amount of time needed for planning and carrying out tasks and boosted their interest in learning by having them actively participate in the educational process.

#### Sub-themes 1.3: Firmness and Honesty

*"Opportunities? Same as her that my knowledge was widening, and in our research study also we gained insights like I can say that"* - Economical Researcher, Line 307

After all, the firmness and honesty of informants were gained by doing their research study. Even though there were a lot of challenges during their research journey, it was beneficial to them to become more courageous.

#### Sub-theme 1.4: Critical Thinking

*"It equips me with valuable skills like critical thinking, communication that help me to prepare for the future academic and professional pursuits."* – Creative Researcher, Line 227

The Informants showed that through the research, their critical thinking was enhanced to communicate and create their titles and other tasks. (Critical thinking skills for education students, Leslay Jane et al., 2013). Critical Thinking Skills for Education Students is a practical and user-friendly text to help education students develop their understanding of critical analysis. It outlines the skills needed to examine and challenge data and encourages students to adopt this way of thinking to enrich their personal and professional development.

#### Sub-theme 1.5: Technical skills

*"I am also the technicalities of our group. So, I am the one who made the lay out or some edit, handling to our group, also the PowerPoint. Somehow it enhances my skills in those areas."* – Creative Researcher, Lines 233- 234

Technical skills were important for a various reason. They can help them work more efficiently, boost their confidence, and make them more valuable candidate for employers. Candidates who have a technical skill was often more confident when applying to certain industries than those who don't." (Bhattacharya, 2021). The informants shared that the technical helped them enhance their works and developed their creativity with the use of technology.

#### Sub-theme 1.6: Finding alternatives

*"It's no need to depend on websites. We need to look for other proves like we will go to the library searching related articles for the study."* -Economical Researcher, Line 303

And because of the collaboration, finding ways to resolve the problem became successful in their study. In this study, finding alternatives has improved.

#### Sub-theme 1.7: Writing skills

*"Additionally, our writing skills have been enhanced through these experiences."* – Research Oriented Researcher, Line 14

Writing allowed them to express their expertise, their goals for the future, and their personal objectives. Writing allowed them to preserve their experiences while explaining every view to both themselves and others. They cannot get it done by anyone else. Writing helped them establish this connection with themselves.

## THEME 2: EDGE AND GAINS

Informants' involvement in research has fueled excitement and reward, leading to continuous learning and improvement. They eagerly explore every aspect of their work, acquiring new skills and fostering valuable relationships, ultimately achieving greater success and enhancing their research journey.

#### Sub-theme 2.1: Empowered by Experience: Enriched by Knowledge

*"Fulfilling that we are able to gain more knowledge and experiences that we can use in the future especially in the field of education, research is useful"* - Active Researcher, Line 58

Research was important because it enhances knowledge, leads to innovation and success, improves the quality of education and life, helps find truth, and allows for continuous improvement. (G. Rathnakar, Feb. 2018)

#### Sub-theme 2.2: Collaboration Fuels Success

*"Working as a part of your research team thought me the importance of effective communications, collaboration, and as we brainstorm ideas, troubleshoot challenges, and shared insight." - Creative Researcher, Line 223*

Research showed that collaborative problem-solving leads to better outcomes. Working in a team encourages personal growth, increases job satisfaction, and reduces stress. (The importance of teamwork, Tracy Middleton, Jan. 2024.)

Sub-theme 2.3: Harnessing Opportunities Through Research

*"Opportunities arise when we engage in activities like presenting at the research congress. For instance, someone approached me, asking if I could teach at another specific school and sharing insights about our research. Our research focused on the school's facilities, and Sir Baunsit suggest we could potentially publish our research. He mentioned that we are quantitative, so we need to change as qualitative aspects are needed for publication." Research- Oriented Researcher, Lines 18-21*

These opportunities have not only enriched their knowledge in research but also facilitated personal growth. Many mentioned gaining confidence and stepping out of their comfort zones, leading to significant self-improvement. Overall, these experiences have not only broadened their horizons but also empowered them to excel in their academic and professional endeavors.

### THEME 3: ADVISERS' READINESS

Informants shared their experiences and observations with advisers, highlighting their guidance and assistance in various situations, and the guidance and recommendations provided influenced their research.

Sub-theme 3.1: Discussions

*"Discussion. It was very well discussed, informative, and organized because Dr. Vestal is knowledgeable enough and an expert in the research field." -Resourceful Researcher, Line 229*

The available time that advisers gave to their students already has a big impact on their willingness to help and give feedback. According to Charlie Nutt, Executive Director of NACADA, the global community for academic advice aimed to teach students appropriate strategies with regard to learning. "We need to focus more on student learning as opposed to helping students," he says. The available time that the advisers give was a big help and a big contribution to its success.

Sub-theme 3.2: Resources Given

*"Regarding in resources, doc is our research teacher at the same time adviser. So, the resources provided is like doc will really find way to provide us resources that are related in student assistance. So, resources are given. We did not spend a lot of time but, doc provided resources that we can use." - Active Researcher, Line 193- 196*

Research showed that the advisers helped them give the resources to have time, and they provided the sites that fit their corresponding research. With the help of the advisers, guidance on where to find information and resources is given. (Providing Adequate Resources to Our Students, IvyPanda, 2019)

Sub-theme 3.3: Guidance.

*"We don't really have any problems with the because they're very hands-on, and they're always available to answer questions no matter how busy they are. Even if you chat them at night saying, "Sir, we have a problem..." , they'll reply. They're very approachable. Doc Vestal would also provide additional insights. Of course, as an adviser, she handles a lot of sections, so Doc Vestal fills in the gaps. If there's anything lacking, you just have to talk to your adviser again." - Effective Researcher, Line 89- 94*

It showed that advisers were attentive and willing to help to their students and they were hands-on to the tasks that they give to them in the process by asking. There were parts where they were confused about what advice they should follow but, in the end, they found a way to connect all the ideas that were being advised to them.

### THEME 4: ROUTINES AND STRATEGIES

Strategy is a planned, organized approach to achieve a goal, involving resource allocation and utilization. Informants used group strategies for task assignment and financial provision, demonstrating perseverance throughout their journey.

*"We have many more payments to make, but it's time to pay now, Charr! We have so many payments but were having agreement and techniques on how to pay or like if someone said that we need to pay for that so others gave 20php, 50php. Then our group before has a little*

*sideline which is selling and that money is what we are using for our needs but there's troubles about it. Hahaha."*- Scientific Researcher, Line 126- 128

## **THEME 5: CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS**

Challenges are essential in any journey, enriching experiences and showcasing resilience. Collaborating with diverse individuals, overcoming challenges offers valuable growth opportunities. Research experiences tested resourcefulness, adaptability, and communication skills. Physical resources, search for relevant studies, and teamwork also presented challenges.

### **Sub-theme 5.1: Challenges in Resources.**

*"We don't have a printer so we always go to printing outside even it's very expensive every print. It's difficult and struggling especially we don't have our own laptop, printer. We connect internet in our cellphone, it's different when you have your own laptop."*- Resourceful Researcher, Line 217- 219

The informants overcome challenges by seeking alternatives, using resources like printers, computer shops, and bond papers, and utilizing Google Scholar, advisers' links, and library information. They also tapped into networks, sought assistance from peers, and collaborated with colleagues. Online platforms and industry professionals provided guidance and support.

### **Sub-theme 5.2: Challenges in Collaborative Efforts**

*"Groupings? well, conflicts are inevitable; they can't just disappear because, of course, when assigning tasks, there's always a potential for conflict to arise if someone feels they not getting enough time or if they don't meet a deadline and have to redo their work. There's also the conflict that arises when you don't understand each other, but if you're open to communication, it's you'll like always come together."*- Effective Researcher, Line 69- 70

It implies that challenges may arose due to differences in perspectives, communication styles, or roles within the team. The phrase "challenges in working as a team" encapsulates the complexities and obstacles that could hinder effective teamwork, such as conflicts, coordination issues, or balancing individual contributions with collective goals. In the end, everything feels worth it especially when tasks were done successfully and research was successfully presented.

### **Sub-theme 5.3: Juggling Time**

*"Yes, time... research is very time constraining, especially in third year because our schedules are packed with numerous subjects, and most of our major subjects are often simultaneous. We don't really have the opportunity to meet face-to-face because of our conflicting schedules. So, we communicate about our research mostly online- either through calls or chats. When it comes to personal meetings, we just pass on our parts because it's difficult to coordinate due to everyone being far and having jobs."*- Effective Researcher, Line 71- 74

Time management plays a vital role in improving student's academic performance and achievements. Every student should have time management ability which includes setting goals & priorities, using time management mechanisms and being organized in using time. (The Impact of Time Management on the Students' Academic Achievements Shazia Nasrullah\_PhD1, 2015.)

### **Sub-theme 5.4: Financial Hurdles**

*"So, indeed, so we need paper and ink, so we really need to pool our resources. Only one of us has a job, and the rest of us are students. We all rely on our mothers."* - Reliable Researcher, Line 366- 368

Despite the challenge of overcoming financial hurdles, the informants were able to survive. Overcame it by pooling resources, implementing giving little amounts from time to time until they reached the budget, surviving as working students, and mostly, asking for financial from their parents.

### **Sub-theme 5.5: Assumptions**

*"So, we need to have an understanding since we have different views during research. We should not listen to one side only, we have to be open to their perspectives, your approaches and do not be bias in judgement"*- Creative Researcher, Line 258- 259

Assumptions are beliefs or expectations based on past experiences, cultural influences, personal biases, or logical deductions. They can be helpful for quick decision-making and efficient daily life navigation, but can also be problematic if incorrect or lead to misunderstandings.

### **Sub-theme 5.6: Inexperience**

*"For me, starting was tough because I had no prior experience during my senior high school years. ... So, in my case, I was lost because I didn't know what research was all about before, making it more difficult for me now." - Honest Researcher, Line 293 & 296*

The Honest Researcher overcomes limited experience to gain significant knowledge, demonstrating courage, confidence, and resilience. This experience emphasizes the importance of perseverance and self-assurance in overcoming initial limitations and thriving in knowledge pursuits.

## **THEME 6: HORIZONS OF A TEACHER-RESEARCHER**

The study of new teaching methods, educational theories, and research findings improved practice and contributed to the broader educational community, fostering scholarly inquiry and collaboration.

Sub-theme 6.1: Pinpoint Researchable Gaps in Education

*"As an elementary educator, research is very helpful because it helps us identify the gaps between education and the skills of the children" - Resourceful Researcher, Line 232*

Collaborating with educators, students, and schools is crucial for aligning educational methods with children's success skills, enabling informed decisions and continuous improvement in teaching practices.

Sub-Theme 6.2: Abreast of Educational Advancement

*"Help me to stay updated as the latest educational theories, methods, findings, and classroom management techniques... you are updated of the new methods like how to use ICT" - Creative Researcher, Line 283- 284*

Keeping up with the latest trends and methodologies allows educators to adapt their teaching to meet the changing needs of students and society. It empowered educators to be more effective in their teaching, ultimately benefiting both students and the education system as a whole.

Sub-theme 6.3: Professional Development

*"I see an important part of research, as a future teacher it can enhance my teaching strategies because of research" - Efficient Researcher, Line 146*

Research is crucial in understanding educational strategies' effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. Investing in professional development allows educators to refine skills, adapt to trends, and implement innovative teaching methods, fostering a culture of excellence in education.

## **Conclusion:**

To effectively advance research and mentorship, it is recommended to publish findings in reputable journals or conferences for broader impact, ensure equitable distribution of mentorship through transparent allocation systems, and transition to electronic manuscript submission for greater efficiency and sustainability. Additionally, securing targeted funding for printers, enhancing referencing skills through training and software use, and strengthening data analysis capabilities with training and hands-on practice are essential. Emphasizing problem identification, fostering curiosity, and promoting interdisciplinary collaboration will also drive innovative and impactful research outcomes.

## **Limitations and Further Research:**

The informants of the study gained valuable skills and knowledge through their research experiences, encountering both challenges and opportunities. They emphasized the importance of selecting research topics that are relevant to real-world problems and that researchers are passionate about. This helps maintain motivation and ensures that the study benefits both the school and the community. Effective time management, teamwork, and collaboration were highlighted as crucial, as was the need for patience and self-control throughout the research process.

Additionally, the informants recommended staying organized, ensuring each chapter of research is completed before moving to the next, and seeking guidance from mentors who provide essential insights. Celebrating small achievements and milestones was also encouraged to foster a positive research environment and sustain motivation. Lastly, they advised avoiding pressure by setting realistic goals and focusing on personal progress, while taking the time to conduct thorough research and enjoy the process of discovery.

Overall, the recommendations focus on maintaining a balanced, well-organized, and collaborative approach to research, ensuring both personal growth and high-quality results. This fosters a productive and fulfilling research journey, promoting the development of practical skills and deeper intellectual curiosity.

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