Simulated teaching: Towards a policy framework for pre-service teacher preparation

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Abstract. A major focus in education programs is the practicum where the pre-service teacher is placed within a school setting shadowing an experienced teacher. The limited time spent for practicum hinders student teachers from acquiring quality training. After graduation, many of them face their students quite unprepared, inexperienced and lacking in confidence. This paper aims to propose a policy framework designed to help education students experience practicum as early as their second year while completing their academic requirements. This can be done through simulated teaching, a pedagogy in the form of a role play which allows students to simulate teaching in a college setting. Anchored on the model-centered instruction, transfer of learning and embodied cognition theories, this method has undergone a four-year intensive study confirming a creative way to develop communication and heuristic skills in teaching. In an earlier exploratory study, majority of the 352 participants showed a highly positive attitude towards simulated teaching and strongly believed they should be exposed to teaching prior to practicum. They agreed that the earlier they undergo practicum, the earlier their weaknesses could be addressed and their skills enhanced. Another experimental study indicated that students who had prolonged exposure to simulated teaching obtained a higher academic performance (p-value=.000) compared to those who went back to the traditional *lecture/reporting* method. Moreover, the first batch of graduates who underwent simulated teaching prior to practicum unanimously reported that they overcame their fears and gained confidence in facing their students. Currently, the fourth year students who started simulated teaching in their second year have testified that the pedagogy has transformed and made them confident persons. These findings strongly point to the adoption of a policy utilizing simulated teaching as a viable alternative in teacher training which can directly address the challenge of producing quality teachers. The paper outlines the scope and purpose of the policy; its principles, context and evaluation schemes. With the implementation of this policy, students will experience practice teaching in a consistent, wider framework resulting in a more solid preparation for the actual pre-service training.

Keywords: Simulated teaching, policy framework, pre-service teacher preparation.

INTRODUCTION

The delivery of quality education requires qualified, trained, and motivated teachers. However, Kruijer (2010) reported that many developing countries today are facing an over-supply of ill-trained teachers who are deficient in communication skills, classroom management and instructional delivery (Ferber and Nillas, 2010:63). This could be due to the widespread education system's tendency to focus more on theory rather than on practice (Dionnet et al., 2013; McLaughlin, 2014; Marcus et al., 2013).

Over the past decades, a number of pre-service and in-service trainings and researches have been conducted to upgrade and evaluate education programs. For instance, Toshalis (2010) examined how pre-service teachers have experienced being disciplined through their training and by their trainers and how that discipline is reproduced in their relationships with students. The participants were found to be obsessed with maintaining class control, which compel them to fixate on discouraging misbehaviour instead of promoting learning. Toshalis (2010) identified

this as a practice that produces symbolic violence. This observation echoes the inadequacy of reflective training among pre-service teachers. They undergo teaching without receiving proper guidance and feedback sufficient for them to make modifications in their practices and behaviour. Echoing Toshalis's (2010) sentiments, Kruijer's (2010) investigation on the pre-service programs in sub-Saharan Africa established the quality of mentoring as a crucial factor in the success or failure of teacher training. He advocates for the contextualization of learning and the strengthening of face-to-face contact between student teachers and their mentors. In this process, curriculums should provide students with authentic activities and materials that are relevant to them, in particular, pre-service training or student teaching.

Pre-service training is a significant area in education programs. It serves as a bridge between professional preparation and practice which aims for the practical applications of knowledge, learning principles, skills and techniques in teaching. However, the limited time spent for practicum hinders student teachers from acquiring quality training. After graduation, several beginning teachers face their students quite unprepared, inexperienced and lacking in confidence. Although induction programs and in-service trainings count for some progress, studies have established that long years of proper training still stand as an effective guarantee for capacity building. An intensive review of a theoretical framework on the relevance of deliberate practice has unveiled a revolutionizing idea that expert performance is the end result of the individuals' prolonged efforts to improve performance and not merely due to innate abilities (Marcus et al., 2013). They argue that the differences between expert teachers and normal teachers reflect a life-long period of deliberate effort to enhance their skills in a specific domain. This implies that if teacher training institutions are envisioning to produce expert teachers, then one pragmatic way to do it is to season students with long periods of practice in teaching which can be done not just during practicum but as early as they reach their second year- a time when they focus on their major fields of specialization. This idea may be made possible through a role play- inspired pedagogy called *simulated teaching.*

What is simulated teaching?

Simulated teaching is a creative pedagogy held in a synthetic environment where students in the lower years are given opportunities to teach the topic instead of simply reporting or listening to it through the traditional lecture delivered by the teacher. Likened to a rehearsal, the student plays the role of the teacher, wears a teacher's attire, prepares quality materials and delivers the lesson to the class as if he/she were the real teacher. Meanwhile, the classroom teacher takes the serious role of a mentor who facilitates and guides the student-

teacher in teaching while serving as arbiter and mediator between the difficult lesson and the student, between the student assigned to teach and his/her classmates. The mentor models the correct way of teaching, supplies whatever content information was overlooked in the duration of the lesson and provides a conference where the experience is processed and immediate feedback is given for modification or enhancement purposes. Thus, students acquire not only the content information but the actual teaching skills.

The skills in lesson planning, classroom management and communication skills are behavioral skills that cannot be totally developed through knowledge-based training methods alone. They can be acquired best through practice (Salas et al., 2009:561; Goldstein, 1991). Traditional lecture-and paper-based technique may be effective in terms of imparting factual and conceptual knowledge; yet, student teaching experience remains to be most influential when it comes to learning how to teach (Caires, 2007). Empirical evidence indicates that as early as in the lower years prior to practicum, students should be active participants in the learning process and learning should occur in a meaningful or relevant context (Bell and Kozlowski , 2007; Cannon-Bowers and Bowers, in press; Moreno and Mayer, 2005). From this perspective, simulation is projected as a powerful tool for creating more realistic, experiential learning environments; thereby helping schools and universities meet the emerging demands for teacher training (Shami et al., 2014; Bell and Kozlowski, 2007).

The need for a policy framework

For the past four years, simulated teaching made its way to the lower year classes of the teacher-researcher. Although findings in exploratory and experimental studies (Espada, 2014) ascertained its multifarious benefits, the fact that only a few students experienced it in one or two of their classes meant students' potentials could not be fully maximized. While students would teach in one class, they reported or listened to lectures in seven or six other classes which could have potentially weakened some insights and skills they gained from simulated teaching. This implies that if majority of the teachers will utilize simulated teaching in their classes, students' competencies will be strengthened and regular, prolonged practice in teaching will lead to expertise in teaching. This paper therefore proposes a policy framework promoting the use of simulated teaching more specifically in teacher education courses. Specifically, it outlines the scope and purpose of the policy; its principles, context and evaluation schemes. With the implementation of this policy, students will be able to rehearse teaching for a longer period of time in a more consistent and wider framework resulting in a more solid preparation for the actual pre-service training.

Scope and purpose of the policy

This policy recommendation for pre-service teacher preparation and professional development is designed to promote the use of simulated teaching as a pedagogy in college teaching which allows education students to play the role of teachers as early as in their first or second year in the university. This is an intensive, creative and comprehensive practicum experience within a synthetic environment- the college classroom setting that intends to elevate students' self-esteem and level of confidence in meeting the future challenges of teaching. This radical move emanates from the underlying principle that expertise is built by practice in a variety of contexts (Kruse and Gibson, 2011; Girod et al., 2007). The policy will bring clarity and coherence to the complex but critical function of the education teacher as mentor and facilitator of learning. This singularity of purpose intends to bring about a concentrated, collaborative effort among the administrators, teachers and students in producing educators equipped with knowledge, demonstrable skills and positive values in teaching.

Significant researches on simulated teaching

Exploratory study on simulated teaching

The policy draws strongly on the results of studies on simulated teaching recently conducted. After three years of applying simulated teaching in the preschool department, the author conducted an exploratory study where 352 students indicated their beliefs, attitudes and responses to simulated teaching (Espada, 2014). The most relevant findings indicated that students strongly believed they should be exposed to early teaching *(Mean = 4.22);* that simulated teaching is an opportunity for growth; that the mentor plays a crucial role in the success or failure of teaching and that it makes them more aware of their future role as teachers. Moreover, the students displayed a positive attitude towards simulated teaching *(Mean = 3.78).* They liked being called "teachers" not "reporters"; felt good when called "Ma'am" or "Sir" by their classmates; enjoyed teaching and felt good thinking and acting like a teacher. The respondents were also found to have highly positive responses to simulated teaching *(Mean = 4.05)*; gained confidence in teaching; were able to transfer skills to other contexts; mastered assigned topic; constructed appropriate materials; projected voice and used English; and appreciated classmates who taught well.

Prolonged exposure to simulated teaching and the academic performance of education students

An experimental study examined the effect of prolonged exposure to simulated teaching on the academic performance of education students who were learning a college content course (Espada, 2014). Using random sampling a total of 88 third year college education students enrolled in Personal and Social Development were divided into two classes with 44 participants in each section. The teacher-researcher handled the two classes in order to monitor the behavior and performance of both groups. This was also done to compare behavior patterns and responses between the two groups as they expressed their teaching and reporting skills in their own unique ways.

Prior to the conduct of the study, the participants underwent simulated teaching for one year. During the conduct of the study, the control group went back to lecture and reporting method, while the experimental group continued to use simulated teaching. In handling both classes, only the method of teaching differed. The same content was used for both classes which were the topics found in the syllabus of the course Personal and Social Development. The course was designed to acquaint students with certain aspects that promote self-awareness, confidence, and personal well-being. Classes were held twice a week with one hour and a half every session making a total of 6 h per week. In one session, there were about 4 to 5 students who were able to teach or report depending on the length and complexity of the lesson. In both lecture and simulated classes, the teacher conducted a 10 to 15 min post conference with the students The use of instructional materials in both classes varied according to their creativity and availability of resources.

The main instrument used was a pretest/posttest comprising 120 items which tested their knowledge and understanding on the principles of development, emotional, social, moral and psychological development, social adjustments, children's interests, family life and personality development. The test was tried out on another group of preschool students not involved in the study tested for reliability with a coefficient of 1.00 using Kuder-Richardson 20, and then examined and improved by some colleagues in the academe.

The data were analysed using three types of T-Tests: the One–Sample T-Test to determine the pre-posttest levels of both control and experimental groups; the T-Test for Dependent Means to find the Pre-Posttest mean gain difference in both groups; and the T-Test for Independent Means to verify whether there was a significant mean gain difference between the students who had prolonged exposure to simulated teaching and those who had less exposure to the method.

The posttest results disclosed a difference in the actual means of the two classes. Compared to the control group who attained a mean score considered to be a little below average (M = 57.4), the experimental group obtained a higher mean score (M = 75.4) which is above average and highly significant. This finding suggests that an

effective method in teaching places students in a context where they can work actively together who talk through the course concepts in their own words.

The failure of the lecture/reporting group may be attributed to an inhibiting factor in learning identified as preoccupations of one's own knowledge or viewpoint and the inability to lead another person to a new insight. This is because in delivering the topic, they did it in the context of being students; a requirement to pass the subject. Furthermore, they might have been too shy to ask for clarifications from their teacher when they found the topic too difficult. From a pedagogical point of view, the crucial variable in teaching is active involvement of the learner as opposed to the passive exposure to the material. In a typical traditional classroom the setting consists of one person who simply presents facts and concepts orally to students whose own participation is often limited to note-taking or purely listening. Thus, there is limited engagement on the part of the learners. In simulated teaching, students are normally encouraged to be others-oriented and contribute intellectually or affectively because they assume the role of *teacher*. They need to do well because beyond the content mastery, they have to know what happens to the learner after being exposed to the information. The active participation of the learners leads to the development of critical thinking.

Overall, findings indicated that the simulated teaching group significantly achieved a significantly higher mean gain compared to the lecture/reporting group (p-value = 0.000). Based on the result, it may be concluded that the use of simulated teaching proved to be more effective in bringing out a higher academic performance than the traditional method of teaching. It likewise increases expertise in teaching, motivation, self-confidence and self-esteem. It confirms John Piaget's long-held assumption that knowledge originates from action, not in simple associative responses but in assimilating reality with action. To know is therefore to integrate reality into constructions of transformation, and these are the structures built by intelligence as a direct extension of our actions (Lillard et al., 2013; Burton, 2012).

Other studies

Using journals, structured interviews and Student Teaching Rating Scale as data gathering tools, 12 student teachers who underwent simulated teaching prior to actual practicum unanimously reported that they overcame their fears and gained confidence in facing their students. With moderate modifications and adjustments, they were able to transfer experiences in classroom management, communication and construction of appropriate instructional materials from the college setting to the actual classroom setting. This circumstance is in consonance with Fine's (2002) reminder that in performing a character in a larp (live action role play) players actually use attitudes and solutions that have been acquired in previous experiences instead of simply playing the assigned role (Lankoski, 2011). It goes without saying that the end result of longer training is a set of attitudes, solutions and experiences which students have gained earlier and which they can use during their actual pre-service training.

Based on direct observations, interviews and data from the Simulated Teaching Rating Scale the current fourth year students who were found to be overly shy when they were in second year have become more confident and outspoken after a longer exposure to simulated teaching. Compared to the previous graduates who had fewer subjects taken under the teacher - researcher, the current batch had more chances of exposure to the pedagogy; hence, their training was more intensive. During the latest student-mentor conferences, they noted how their voice, eye contact, materials, methods and even their grooming have tremendously improved. The increase in their academic performance has also been noticeable. Since role play allows for independent, creative and strategic shifts in solving a problem it explains that when students are investing more personal effort into learning they achieve mastery of the subject matter and attain a higher level of retention (Stokoe, 2014).

Ogawa (1997) challenged his ESL students learning English to teach their class with focus on solving communication problems while teaching. He believed that after watching their teachers teach for 14 years, the college students must have gained authentic references or models in teaching. He argued that if students will be able to imitate how their teacher explains and expounds ideas, use strategies and manage the class they will develop communication skills at a rapid pace. Fine (2002:4) contends that a game works best when players set aside their natural selves, put on the mask of a fictional self and lose themselves to the game in order to experience fluency in articulating their thoughts.

Although the method generally applies best for education students, teachers handling other courses can use this method for specific functions like focusing more on public speaking, communication and other skills characteristic of the course where students belong. As previously experienced, the researcher used the same pedagogy successfully with tourism and hotel and restaurant management, social work and IT students. After a semester of exposure, the students expressed how they gained confidence in talking in front and declared regrets of not having a continuous exposure to it. The policy can therefore be applied to both education and non-education students.

Principles

This policy speaks for all education students especially

those who lack confidence in teaching. It draws on our own observations and experiences in the context of college and student teaching as well as on empirical findings. It intends to re-align students' views of their role as individuals who are undergoing training to become dynamic teachers, not reporters or passive listeners.

The policy is governed by certain principles relevant to teacher training. The first principle states that e*xpertise is built by practice in a variety of contexts* (Gibson and Kruse, 2011). More experiences are equated with more knowledge and skills. A number of behavioural skills cannot be acquired by simply listening to lectures or reading books but are learned best through practice (Salas et al., 2009:561; Goldstein, 1991). Although lectures may prove to be effective in terms of knowledge transfer, it is only when the student really teaches that he learns how to teach (Caires, 2007). Since normal experiential learning that leads to proficiency in any field is associated with prolonged exposure to that practice, students intending to become teachers ought to be exposed to teaching long before they engage in formal practicum (Girod et al., 2007). The fastest and easiest way to develop this skill is through the use of simulated teaching.

Secondly, *learning should occur in a meaningful context.* Meyer et al. (2014), advocate that simulation studies should impose greater demands for more interaction and integration of real life experiences into the simulated setting. Empirical evidence indicates that as early as in the lower years prior to practicum, students should be involved in the process of learning and learning experiences should be provided in a meaningful or relevant environment (Bell and Kozlowski, 2007; Cannon-Bowers and Bowers, in press; Moreno and Mayer, 2005). This feature predicts behavior that goes beyond the exploratory environment compared to those with very low involvement. Furthermore, Greenberg (1993) proposes that role playing should create experiences that simulate salient attributes of that setting. From this perspective, simulation is projected as a powerful tool for creating more realistic, experiential learning environments; thereby helping schools and universities meet the emerging demands for teacher training (Bell and Kozlowski, 2007). Bound by the principle of constructivism, students experience the reality of the scenario making decisions within its context and obtaining meaning from it.

Thirdly*, learning should be fun and enjoyable.* Simulated teaching is just like doing a rehearsal in a socio-dramatic play or like playing "teacher" to one's classmates. The more seriously students take their roles the better their performances are and the more pleasurable and interactive those experiences become. Because simulations are game-based and hands-on, proper motivation allows students to attain both training and enjoyment (Dionnet et al., 2013) than other passive methods; (that is, lectures) thereby providing an inner

motivation that encourages a high level of retention of the content under study (Tharenou, 2001). Simulations increase interest, involvement and enthusiasm toward the educational material (Dionnet et al., 2013; Lillard et al., 2013).

The fourth principle emphasizes that *the goals of learning should be clear.* "Do you know where you're going to?" is the first question teachers usually ask students. The question seeks to clarify whether students understand their target destination after graduation. The mentor-facilitator directs and restructures their visions and align them with the real agendum of their entrance into the university- that is, to be teachers- not reporters, attendants, sales people, or domestic helpers. They should be oriented on which knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes they should acquire to function excellently as teachers. Simulated teaching may be a deviation from a conventional perspective of fieldwork to something unorthodox as requiring students to "teach" a topic, not to "report" it, but it sounds pragmatic in the sense that it allows them to meet the challenge creatively. They are constantly conditioned and reminded about their goals and the means of achieving them. Integrating fieldwork with coursework subsequently results in a high level of awareness of their future role as teachers.

The fifth and last principle accentuates the idea that *excellent mentors produce excellent teachers.* The college teacher plays the role of the arbiter who provides immediate feedback and reinforcement to the student engaged in simulated teaching. Aldrich (2003) and Gibbons (2001) assert that the presence of the mentor makes simulation instructional because it allows the learner to immerse in the key system of the environment. The actions become true in the fiction at an instant they are performed. How the mentor will handle the students will determine to a large extent the outcome of the pedagogy. Research findings highlight the crucial role of the mentor as guide in the classroom. Ferber and Nillas (2010) reported that student teachers' difficulties were closely associated with mentoring and supervisors' feedback. In fact, honest feedback from mentors was most helpful in improving the classroom practices of student teachers. In a close scrutiny of student teacher-mentor relationships, Grimmett and Ratzlaff (1986) observed that student teachers are often placed under the care of supervisors and cooperating teachers who are unprepared for their role as mentors. Their incompetence, lack of confidence and insufficient experience added to conflicts and poor communication skills prevent them from giving valuable feedback to the students. Edwards (1997) also reported that other mentors often refrain from communicating observed strengths and weaknesses in order to avoid upsetting the student teachers. Student teachers have found this behavior a great deterrent in their growth as future teachers (Ferber and Nillas, 2010). This perspective makes the presence of a highly competent and confident

mentor in a simulated teaching environment inevitable. In simulated teaching, students get a first-hand feedback from their teachers in an informal mode which makes the process less-threatening and more enjoyable. It is therefore imperative that all teachers handling education students be made aware of their significant role as mentors and guides in the teaching-learning process.

Foundations of simulated teaching

This policy is anchored on the model-centered instruction, embodied cognition and transfer of learning theories. Gibbons's (2001) *model-centered-instruction (MCI) theory* proposes that the major function of instruction is to encourage learners to build knowledge about objects and events in their environment (Gibbons, 2001). Knowledge is represented by models that learners construct as they process information through interactions and observations. Learners then focus attention on information or activities that will activate their learning processes. In the absence of real objects, events or environments, teachers create representations called models (Gibbons, 2001). In applying this principle, simulated teaching activates students' learning processes while teaching the class. It includes a problem component which acts as stimulus designed for learners to focus attention on specific information about the model teacher which is partly or fully conceptualized by the learners themselves. There are major problems assigned in simulated teaching such as instructional delivery, materials construction and classroom management. The students' available skills determine how they solve problems, process information, construct mental models, and develop heuristic skills.

While the model-centered instruction works on the cognitive side, the *embodied or grounded cognition theory* stretches towards the psychomotor aspect which holds that the process of cognition is not only a facet of the brain, but the body as a whole and its interaction with the environment where it operates (Collier, 2013; Stokoe, 2013; Kinena, 2014: in Lankoski and Jarvela, 2012). Everything has a meaning which is strongly connected to possible actions dictated by the physical body in particular settings. Teaching, in general, is a concept that has certain meanings for certain people. It could be facilitating, imparting of knowledge, touching lives or showing an example. Salas et al. (2012:20) emphasize that the brain operates under amodal symbols as representations of perceived objects. In grounded cognition, knowledge is organized and tightly grounded on systemic beliefs. For instance the teacher's manner of dealing with students is stored and processed in the auditory systems. As a student interacts with the teaching environment, a certain meaning of teaching is produced. In line with this thinking, Pierce (2012) suggests that habits are established by beliefs; and varying beliefs are

portrayed by varying modes which give rise to varied actions.

The policy is likewise supported by the transfer of learning theory. The live action role play of Ogawa (1997) and table top or computer-generated simulated teaching experiments of Gibson (2009) and Schnurr (2014) indicate positive transfer from a simulated context to the real setting (Lowyck, 2014; Lander and Whatman, 2011). *Positive* transfer occurs when learning in one context improves the performance in another; while *near* transfer takes place when contexts and performances are closely associated with each other. Perkins's findings suggest that transfer may happen through two mechanisms: *reflexive* or *low road* transfer, which is the triggering of well-practiced routines by stimulus conditions similar to the learning context while the other is the *mindful* or *high* road transfer which involves effortful abstractions and a search for connections. Positive transfer occurs further when players provide more percentage of the features of the characters they are portraying. Salomon and Perkins (1998) propose "*hugging*" as a vehicle for promoting positive or near transfer. It organizes lessons in a way that initial skills and knowledge "*hug*" the most desired transfer task closely. It demonstrates that when the learning experience *hugs* the target performance, the likelihood of an automatic transfer of the experience is maximized. What is learned in one classroom about a certain subject leads to the attainment of related goals in another setting (Lowyck, 2014) simply because students' learning and achievement levels depend primarily on initial learning which enables subsequent transfer (Kinena, 2014).

The aforementioned theories confirm that the success of simulated teaching depends on the players' active involvement in executing the pedagogy. Lankoski (2011) asserts that in a role playing game the fictive world that players imagine is inadequate; thus players need to constantly add details or information available to them. The details filled are more or less aligned with the information about the game world and characters. Fine (2002) noted that it is easier to fill details to a character or to a fictive world that resembles the player and his or her everyday environment.

Walton's (1993) *reality principle* proposes that people will naturally assume the fictional world to be similar to the day-to-day experience except for those parts explicitly stated in the fiction to be different. McLaughlin (2014), Nakamura (2001) and Nephew (2006) assert that students should not be required to portray the role of someone who is unfamiliar, which results in a tendency to perform stereotypical portrayal. They suggest that games should have rules to ensure that characters behave according to the game fiction and not fall back to familiar behaviors. However, this should not stop players from adding more enriching details to make an effective portrayal. What makes game and simulated teaching more powerful is the fact that with a virtual environment
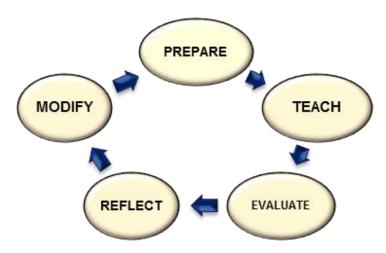
Figure 1. The simulated teaching process.

there is no damage to real children or people. You can work with all kinds of virtual or live students including those with special needs. You play, create, and explore different strategies and you get to experience freedom from financial, time and administrative constraints of physical classrooms and fieldwork (Wiboon et al., 2014).

Simulations help build a community through crowd-sourced knowledge, shared content creation, and forums that promote dialogue and mentorship (Stokoe, 2014; Gibson, 2009). Despite evidence of positive effects on learning, simulation models have their own limitations. There are reasons of cost, reluctance to adopting new methods of teaching and the skepticism that what was learned from a simulator may never be transferred to actual learning. A harder challenge to meet is the fact that simulations can never fully replicate real life experience and may even fail to include something essential in their systems (Dionnet et al., 2013; Bell et al., 2008; Greenberg and Eskew, 2009). Thus, this policy recommendation promotes the use of a simulation model where exposure to the real environment may not be possible.

Policy recommendation for the use of simulated teaching

Based on the foregoing premise, the following provisions of the policy are therefore endorsed for implementation: (1) The Commission on Higher Education shall encourage the use of simulated teaching as one of the pedagogies in college teaching prior to pre-service training; (2) The policy shall be implemented in state colleges and universities offering teacher education courses; (3) The use of simulated teaching in other courses or fields shall be optional; (4) The school administration and other officials shall confirm support by providing facilities and materials needed in the implementation of the policy; (5) The faculty involved shall be afforded with liberty to make modifications in the focus, mechanics and schedules of

teaching based on the students' needs, interests and abilities; (6) The faculty involved shall activate their roles as mentors and shall show support and encouragement by constant appreciation of the students' efforts; (7) The course syllabus shall be the basis for the selection and assignment of topics to be taught by every student; (8) The students undergoing simulated teaching shall be given the leeway to interpret the implementation of the lesson according to their creativity and resourcefulness but within the framework of the standards in teaching; and lastly, (9) In the conduct of mentor-student conferences, the faculty shall observe propriety in giving comments and feedback to students, always promoting the positive side and working towards improving their performance.

Goals and objectives of simulated teaching

Simulated teaching primarily intends to prepare students for pre-service training by equipping them with skills and competencies in teaching alongside the acquisition of content knowledge around the subject being taken. In the implementation of the policy, the students are specifically expected to do the following to a high degree of proficiency: (1) demonstrate adequate knowledge of the different topics found in the course syllabus; (2) acquire teaching skills and competencies with focus on delivery of the lesson, mastery of content, methods and materials, classroom management and interactive skills; (3) increase their level of confidence and build up positive self-concept; and (4) develop awareness of their future role as teachers.

The implementation scheme

Figure 1 shows the process students follow when engaging in simulated teaching. It illustrates the guidelines in the implementation scheme of Simulated

Teaching. It is a cyclical process which promotes a gradual transformation of student-teachers' practices and behaviors as they repeatedly undergo the process.

The following procedures are to be followed when conducting the simulated teaching process:

First, the teacher *prepares* the students by orienting them on the goals, objectives, expected performance, as well as the implementation and evaluation schemes of the pedagogy. Each student is then assigned a topic found in the syllabus. The student looks for the content of the topic, studies it and prepares all materials (outline of the lesson, instructional materials, teacher's attire, cue cards, etc.) for the lesson proper.

In the second or *teaching* phase, the student executes the lesson based on the prepared plan and the time allotted for him/her to teach the lesson. Usually, a student would present in 10 to 15 min only depending on the length of the topic. In the absence of multi-media materials, the appropriate graphic organizer is encouraged to be used as a guide in the discussion. The mentor-facilitator can choose to give comments and feedback, demonstrate a part of a lesson, or supply the missing or inadequate content during or after the session. The teacher regulates the display of instructional materials. Only those that are developmentally appropriate shall be posted or used. This is done to encourage excellence in materials preparation.

The third or *evaluation* stage requires the teacher/mentor to observe the student assigned to teach and assess his/her teaching performance using the Simulated Teaching Rating Scale (STRS) (found in the item Assessment and Evaluation Scheme), which measures the students' competencies in the following areas: 1) delivery of the lesson; 2) mastery of content; 3) methods and materials, 4) classroom management; and 5) interactive skills. This tool, adapted from the Practice Teaching Rating Scale of the Leyte Normal University Integrated Laboratory School (2009), chose only items that were applicable to the context. Lesson planning and the more complex assessment of learning were excluded from among the performance indicators because there are particular subjects allotted specially for developing those areas. However, it doesn't mean that the students will not plan for their lessons. The result of lesson planning is implicit in the execution of the lesson. The mentor will be able to see how the lesson was carefully planned as the student delivers the lesson.

The fourth or *reflection* phase points to a special student-mentor conference where the teacher/mentor processes the teaching experiences of the students and helps them to identify their strong and weak points. They are given opportunities to reflect and share ideas on the choices they made when confronted with different situations in the teaching-learning process. The mentor explains, models, illustrates, clarifies, supplies missing information and makes recommendations for improved teaching practices based on the data gathered from the Simulated Teaching Rating Scale.

The final phase pertains to the *modification* of teaching practices behaviors, and perspectives as a result of the insights, feedback and comments provided by the teacher/mentor. The application of these changes will occur in their next teaching assignment. The portfolios of the rating scales will help both teachers and students monitor performance in teaching.

Role of mentors in simulated teaching

From a broader perspective, mentoring is a complex and multi-dimensional process of guiding, teaching, influencing and supporting a beginning teacher. The mentor leads, guides and advises another teacher who is less experienced in a work situation characterized by mutual trust and belief (Wiboon et al., 2014; Koki, 1997). In consonance with the framework of simulated teaching, the mentor is regarded as one who values the worth and dignity of students; whose attitude towards education is focused on passing the torch to the next generation of teachers; one who is a helper, not a supervisor or evaluator; a very special person and a model of professionalism. The heart of mentoring is borne out of a commitment to education, a hope for its future, and a respect for those who enter into its community.

Eller et al. (2014) assert that the major aspects that contribute to the complexity of mentoring include the multiple needs of students - their developmental issues or concerns, their stock of knowledge of content and teaching skills as well as their culture that may impact positively or negatively on the mentoring process. Research indicates that mentoring is more demanding than teaching because it involves objective assessment of the students' or peers' teaching performance (Tan et al., 2014; Eller et al., 2014).

Adapted from Hawaii's guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs (Office of Personnel Services, 1993) here are the following essential qualities of mentors: (a) a range of interpersonal skills to fit a variety of professional encounters and situations; (b) good working knowledge of a repertoire of teaching methods, alternative modalities of learning, and styles of teaching and learning that affect student achievement; (c) ability to use coaching processes that foster increased self-direction and self-responsibility of the student-teacher; (d) effective communication skills that facilitate the understanding of the student and accommodate the students' emotional, social and cognitive needs; (e) understanding the stages of teacher development within the context of how students learn; (f) positive attitudes that promote appreciation of students' creativity, talents and skills.

For effective mentoring purposes, the teacher in simulated teaching should observe the following guidelines: (1) be a positive role model to the students in all aspects. Model the messages and suggestions being taught to the students; (2) demonstrate a range of cognitive coaching competencies, such as posing

carefully constructed questions to stimulate reflection; paraphrasing; probing; using wait-time; collecting and using data to improve teaching and learning; (3) Mentoring, like coaching, is a collaborative process so it should encourage a reflective sharing of ideas and experiences among students (Eller et al., 2014).

Continuing development of the pedagogy

Simulated teaching is a product of the writer's divergent thinking emanating from a genuine concern to address the need for a stronger, more solid preparation for education students' pre-service training. Just like any other pedagogy, it has its own potentials and limitations. It has a flexible nature which mentors can adjust to suit their purposes. However, planned activities should be aligned with the learners' needs, interests and abilities. Teachers will find no harm in applying it in their own milieu. They can observe, investigate and document students' reactions and responses to simulated teaching; and likewise examine its impact on academic performance and the actual pre-service and in-service training. With more researches on simulated teaching, more empirical data can be generated to validate, enhance and broaden its usability and applicability in a wider range of contexts.

CONCLUSION

The policy recommendation for the use of simulated teaching is envisioned to empower even students who are perceived to have the least indications of becoming teachers. Because it advocates for the early establishment of sound practices in teaching, it requires the commitment and dedication of the mentor to hone young minds and bring out the best in them. Within this policy framework is a philosophical mixture of two mantras - *'prevention is better than cure'* and *'prolonged practice builds expertise.'* The mantras illustrate further that instead of allotting millions of money trying to undo teachers' ill practices we can reverse the process by starting to build up high-quality teaching performance years before they embark on actual teaching and nip their flaws in the bud before time stiffens them. Once they harden, it would be impossible to twist and bring back their elasticity without hurting or breaking them. It is therefore recommended that this policy framework be implemented in teacher training institutions. Simulated teaching guarantees a simple, expense-free, innovative and enjoyable way for students to learn to teach.

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Assessment and evaluation scheme

The following tool will be used to assess the simulated teaching performance of the students.

	SIMULATED TEACHING RATING SCALE (STRS)					
Name of Student:			Course & Section:			
Name of Mentor:			Date:			
School Year:	Semester:					
Direction: Check the appropriate column that best describes the competencies of the student-teacher.						
COMPETENCIES			Description			
		Excellent 5	Very Satisfactory 4	Satisfactory 3	Fair 2	Poor 1
A. **Delivery of the Lesson** In this area, the student-teacher						
is well- prepared with the lesson.						
is neat, well-groomed and wearing appropriate attire.						
is free from mannerisms that tend to disturb the learner's attention.						
uses appropriate language in teaching.						
shows dynamism and enthusiasm.						
maintains a pleasing eye contact with the students.						
possesses a well-modulated voice.						
displays a pleasant disposition, emotional stability and discipline.						
acknowledges responses from students by giving immediate feedback for questions and answers.						
is open to suggestions and constructive criticism.						
SUB TOTAL		50				
B. **Mastery of Content** The student-teacher is expected to:						
demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the subject matter.						

Contd

give sufficient and concrete examples to create meaningful learning experience.					
SUB TOTAL	10				
C. **Methods and Materials** The student-teacher					
applies methods and strategies appropriate to the needs, interests and abilities of the learners.					
constructs and utilizes varied instructional materials which adhere to the principles and guidelines of materials construction and utilization.					
SUB TOTAL	10				
D. **Classroom Management** The teacher uses a systematic way of doing the following:					
practice exercises					
group works /activities					
correcting, distributing and collecting papers					
Order and discipline are present in the classroom					
Instructional materials are within easy reach of the teacher during his/her teaching					
SUB TOTAL	25				
E. **Interactive Skills** The teacher's interactive skills stimulate discussion in different ways such as:					
appreciating student participation in the discussion					
probing for learner's understanding					
helping learners articulate their ideas					
promoting risk-taking and problem solving to facilitate factual recall					
encouraging convergent and divergent thinking					
stimulating curiosity					

Contd

helping learners to ask questions					
SUB TOTAL	35				
OVERALL SCORES	130/26				
FINAL RATING	5				

Procedures in computing the final rating of the student:

1. Add the scores of every competency to get the sub total.
2. Add the subtotal of every column to get the overall scores.
3. Divide the overall scores by the total number of competencies.

Example:

Overall Scores	115/23				
Final Score	5				
Final Rating	1.0				

Final score	Equivalent rating	Interpretation
5	1.0	Excellent
4	1.5	Very Satisfactory
3	2.0	Satisfactory
2	2.5	Fair
1	3.0	Poor

Note: When the decimal point is 5 and above, round off to the nearest whole number.
Example: 123/25= 4.92 Round it off to 5.0.