

# INTERCULTURAL TEACHING EXPERIENCES OF A SELECTED GROUP OF FILIPINO PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN AN OVERSEAS PRACTICUM IMMERSION

Florante D. Garcia

*Adamson University, Philippines*

---

## **Introduction**

Quality pre-service teacher training is a key part of Basic Education in the Philippines. As such, it is of great significance that the highest standards are achieved by the pre-service teachers. These standards are reflected on the seven (7) domains that represent the desired features of the teaching-learning process as stipulated in CMO 30 s. 2004.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008: p 4), cited that global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging. This heightens the need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship.

White and Toms (2009) stated that globalization is not entitled only to business courses, but is relevant to all courses that are qualified for higher education. Therefore, classroom instructors for all disciplines must shift their teaching philosophy from a domestic pedagogy to a global perspective. Educators must equip students with knowledge about global economics that will have a direct impact to students' future job choices (Dowling & Welch, 2005).

The Education Department of the Adamson University conducted overseas teaching immersion because this program achieved PACUCOA Level III accreditation and CHED recognized as Center of Development based on the CHED Memorandum Order No. 22, series 2013 which stated that only higher education institutions (HEIs) as defined under Article II are allowed to conduct internship abroad for CHED recognized programs with practicum subject in their curriculum.

The Education Department of Adamson University conducted overseas teaching immersion as part of the ASEAN Integration to produce high quality and competitive educators, and in the same way, to ignite the beginning of an educational crusade towards global excellence in accordance to the agreement with Bangpleeratbamrung World Class School. Both parties signed the official Memorandum Agreement for International Practicum last January 2016. Through this agreement, both schools got the chance to conduct exchange programs promoting knowledge and culture that would benefit their students.

Bangpleeratbamrung World Class School is the oldest and famous secondary institution in SamutPrakan, Thailand. The Ministry of Education approved the implementation of Matthayom 6 in 1955 and it became a special school by the year 1994. Furthermore, it has been developed continuously for providing high quality education for Thai youth.

The course framework supports the Education Department in the effective planning, implementation and integration of student overseas learning experiences into school programs. It draws upon the work of schools that have successfully incorporated such experiences into whole-school programs for international education.

The study was conducted to describe the understanding of inter-cultural experiences of a selected group of Filipino Pre-service Teachers of Adamson University who conducted a 3-week overseas teaching immersion in Bangpleeratbamrung World Class School in Samutprakan, Thailand.

The scope and limitation of this study focused on understanding the intercultural experiences of the pre-service teachers of Adamson University during the implementation of overseas practice teaching immersion in Bampleratbamrung World Class School in Samutprakan, Thailand in school year 2016-2017.

The study is further limited to what transpired in the reflective journal of the eight pre-service teachers.

The research design of this study made use of the descriptive qualitative design of research that involved personal judgment as the prime basis for assertions about how something works (Stake, 2010). The study also utilized phenomenological approach to describe the practice-teaching immersion learning intercultural experiences of the pre-service teachers.

This study was conducted based on the intercultural learning experiences of eight pre-service teachers during their practice teaching immersion in Bangpleeratbamrung World Class School in Samutprakan, Thailand to provide and expose them to different avenues of the world of teaching in public schools locally or internationally. This immersion equips them to acquire the vital competencies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers in order to respond to global demands.

In a more profound perspective of study, a survey conducted by Wilson (1984) shows that short-term international travel has a positive effect on elementary and secondary teachers. It improves their teaching about the places they visited, engenders responsibility for passing on the experience, and encourages them to try more cross-cultural encounters. Teachers with international experience know more and want to share that knowledge, are aware of and accept differences in peoples and cultures, and often act as cultural mediators.

The data presented in this study were extrapolated from the actual comments and reflection journal of the eight pre-service teachers who conducted teaching practice teaching immersion in Thailand.

To analyze the narrative report and journal of reflections of the pre-service teachers and the chairperson, the researcher utilized Colaizzi's process for phenomenological data analysis. Specialize and Carpenter (2007) present the usual steps done as introduced by Colaizzi in 1978 under the supervision of Giorgi:

In this method, the researcher read the transcription of each pre-service teacher's narrative report on their reflective journal and underlined and extracted significant statement from the transcript that directly pertained to the investigated phenomenon the learning intercultural experiences of the pre-service teachers.

Having accomplished the preliminaries of the transcription procedures, the researcher formulated and analyzed the meanings of each significant statement. These meanings were categorized into clusters or themes. The researcher integrated the results of the data analysis into exhaustive description of the study resulting to concrete and significant themes anchored on the intercultural learning experiences and immersion of the pre-service teachers.

The findings shed light on the eight emergent themes drawn from the intercultural learning experiences of the pre-service teachers at Bangpleeratbamrung School, Samutprakan, Thailand.

## **Themes**

### ***First Theme: The feeling of winning after overcoming an obstacle***

Teaching is both rewarding and challenging profession. Through it, people can become more ethical, cultured and well-rounded individuals. In the same manner, the process of making human to become more humane is one essential part of this profession. The expression of pre-service teacher 1 evokes that the way to obtain the teaching profession entails obstacles that need to go through in order to refine the totality of one's behavior and attitude. He testified that meeting problems like rebooking their flight to Thailand and encountering some unexpected shortcomings along the way brought them much distress and discomforts. The road along its way was not smooth, but just like what an old adage said "there is a rainbow after the rain", they made it to resolve the obstacles that obstructed their ways and they finally arrived in Thailand. Problem is part of life and things may go above and beyond one's control. At the end, it is the faith and courage that a person strongly holds to conquer and overcome the giant obstacles of life.

### ***Second Theme: The goal of establishing culture of awareness of the overseas teaching immersion and learning experience from the school community***

There is no substitute to genuine feeling of realizing the importance of one's community and its citizenry. Culture diversity, spectrum of rich customs and exchange of academic intelligences among neighboring countries have posed great gains and importance in all institutions and different organizations. This is made possible through internships and immersions across the Asian countries.

Five of the pre-service teachers stated that they came to Bangpleeratbamrung School as ambassadors of their institution and of their country in general. They have been given a hearty welcome and immense family-atmosphere embrace to build rapport, establish awareness of Thai's customs, familiarity and appreciation of their cultures and traditions. Filipino and Thai people were both hospitable and treat visitors with heart-warming accommodation.

The teaching immersion and learning experience of the students served as their training ground to see the real world of delving to and dwelling in other territories. These five teachers stated that orientation of pre-service teachers before they get deployed to their respective schools must be thoroughly emphasized among the interns. They should be ready to adopt and learn other cultures and become flexible to adjust to language barriers and climate differences.

All pre-service teachers must appreciate by heart that active exchange of culture diversity is extremely important in order to allow understanding, appreciation and adaption of the country's best practices, policies and progress. Indeed, traveling to other countries and learning their way of living is one of the best ways to inspire curiosity about other cultures. In effect, this provides the pre-service teachers vicarious and worthwhile experiences beyond the tenets of educative principles and the pages of professional subjects.

### ***Third Theme : Honoring oneness and interconnections as one Asian family***

The good advantage of partnerships and interconnectedness of the ASEAN countries is the benefit of strengthening the workforce of their respective nations. The greater part of elevating the kind of enforcement is to provide equal opportunities for expansion of one's horizon through immersion, exploration and innovation. Through this intercultural exchange of academic efforts and development, community-based researches and other economic endeavors, educational landscape in the Philippines is more achievable. This is one of the strong thrusts of Adamson University – to establish more linkages in the international academe and to provide students with more profound teaching experience that is world-class and competitive.

The significant statements of pre-service teachers on their learning experience in Thailand gave an important result that collaboration with other races allow a realistic and concrete experience how to adjust with different behavior of learners in consonance with their religions, creed and family background. The students observed that Thai and Filipinos are similar when it comes to politeness. Thai would religiously make greetings, give smiles and social grace in many places even at public areas. They testified that this kind of warm acceptance gave them a feeling like they were in their own country. They observed a very strong interconnectedness of Thais giving due respect and honor to one another even to the other Asian people.

***Forth Theme: Developing good communication and social skills for successful intercultural teaching and learning experience.***

The Philippines is recognized globally as one of the largest English-speaking nations with majority of its population having at least some degree of fluency in the language. Proficiency in the language is also one of the country's strengths that has helped drive the economy and even made the Philippines the top voice outsourcing destination in the world, surpassing its Asian neighboring countries.

Improving one's intercultural communication skills helps interact with individuals of different cultures and expands viewpoint on life. In today's society, for a majority of people, it is difficult to avoid interacting with others outside one's own culture. The statements of the pre-service teachers made a significant note that having good communication skills are vital tools to link oneself to others. It is the only means to make teaching possible with foreign learners. Acquiring the necessary skills to communicate with other people is ensuring a successful teaching practicum to ASEAN countries. Indeed, the more one communicates with other people, the better he/she will become good at it.

***Fifth Theme: Gaining intercultural teaching experiences for higher perspectives on the teaching profession***

Gaining an international teaching experience not only enhances student teachers' pedagogical skills and appreciation of other cultures but also their professional and personal development. It allows greater benefits of realizing and understanding the very heart of the teaching profession in the context of cultural diversity.

The pre-service students testified that they benefitted from the pre-teaching experience in many ways. They believed that it improved their self-confidence, helped them to develop and shape teaching strategies and gain more insight about teaching. Moreover, according to them, the overseas teaching practice increased their cultural and world awareness and let them to set world citizenship.

As Day (2000) points out:

*“enthusiasm for teaching, learning and pupils is not something that can be sustained without personal commitment – to the pupils who, through force of circumstance or past experience, may not always be highly motivated, whose confidence needs to be encouraged and who need to be challenged and cared for; and to the moral purposes of education to work for the betterment of both the individual and society as a whole”*

The pre-teaching experience of the students strengthened their beliefs about the integration of different teaching methods, use of technology, authentic and modern materials in lessons. The program enhanced their awareness about the impact of culture, classroom management and discipline policy in teaching. These acquired skills and experiences deepen their knowledge on how to perform and provide teaching tasks effectively, elevated their enthusiasm and eagerness to teach, and empowered them to become catalysts of revolutionized and culture-based education in local and international context.

***Sixth Theme: Establishing rapport to build learning environment that responds to the aspirations of the community***

Forging people-to-people contacts through cultural exchanges, academic immersions, teaching practicum and student-exchange programs are some of the core goals of integration among Asian nations. This cross-cultural exchange of workforce and nation's rich resources entails to build strong ties and establish rapport that will open for greater heights of business investments, infrastructures and other businesses, attract other nations to forge tourism, culture upliftment and gain other nation's supports for stronger economy.

With enormous potential given to such kind of thrust, strengthening the value of building bridges to other nations and their regions will yield great benefits. In the education sectors, this partnership will spring out innovations in pedagogical reformation, international linkages for faculty development programs, world-class student services and relevant trainings and seminars that address issues in community, school-related problems such as curriculum enhancement, research-based classroom management procedures, syllabi enhancement and alignment of course requirements to international trends and demands.

The student-teachers who were deployed at Bangpleeratbamrung World Class School in Samutprakan, Thailand admitted that there is still a need to strengthen the tie-ups of the school and the Adamson University. Nonetheless, they observed that there have been established links for exchange of school procedures, administrative systems and better delivery of education to students.

***Seventh Theme: Creating openness that shows character of caring and empathy***

Distance has been no barrier for teachers and students across Philippines and other Asian countries like Thailand who have been sharing knowledge and learning together as part of the student-exchange school partnerships program where students render their teaching practicum. It is a whole school program that builds teachers' capability through international school partnerships to develop intercultural understanding, enhance information communication technology skills, and establish sustainable school partnerships.

The pre-service teachers were deployed with the learning objective of increasing their global skill set of students in Thailand and across the region by assisting schools to facilitate student collaboration on projects, practice language skills and develop life-long friendships with students at their partner school. Openness and care for students are the core elements to continuously show empathy and sincere devotion to teach them by heart. Students' academic needs are catered with thorough understanding of their cultural background, interest and needs and through compassion given by the teachers.

At the end of their teaching practicum, the students revealed that they gained the global perspectives of teaching and this perceptive served as an eye-opener that the way to expand one's horizon is to see and experience the real world of learners and appreciate imminent potentials they possess. Learning then takes place when a teacher becomes responsive to the diverse needs of students.

***Eighth Theme: Promoting equal rights of human race and building a strong sense of nationalism and unity among the ASEAN countries***

A plethora research indicates that understanding one's own cultural traditions, values and beliefs and engaging with the experiences and ideas of others, is the foundation to becoming a responsible local and global citizen. Providing school communities with immersive, first-hand teaching and learning experience and equal opportunity to build strong sense and spirit of nationalism supports students to develop and explore their interest in the region, and alerts them to further opportunities available, including scholarships, involvement with youth organizations, and government initiatives.

The intercultural exposure provided to students allowed them to gain opportunities and appreciation that generate for education, science and innovation and the arts to work with partners among ASEAN countries. The pre-service students learned the value of understanding gender equality, building friendship among all nations including indigenous people regardless of their racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic orientations and most importantly the essence of elevating their country, the Philippines to school where they immersed. Having been chosen as ambassadors of Adamson University to Bangpleeratbamrung World Class School, the students took pride of their roles as the chosen representatives of their school. They stated that Thais and Filipinos have good social and cultural relationships. The spirit of nationalism is observed as they give high respect to their king. The portrait of their king is seen everywhere as a sign of honor. Gender difference is not an issue and everyone is free to express themselves. There is acceptance to everyone's fashion, rights and privileges.

### **Conclusions**

The overseas teaching immersion program is considered very meaningful practicum experience that bridges between mentor teachers and foreign student teachers. This global teaching experience equipped students with increased understanding and appreciation of other country's history, culture, education and tradition. Moreover, the immersion of the eight pre-service students emphasized the interrelatedness of diverse populations and broaden their perspective on diverse learners, curriculum, and school settings. This experience illumined them how to better apply the teaching and learning researches and theories on education into more realistic and skill-based approaches. It likewise gave them significant implications on instrumental preparation to become globally competitive teachers.

As reflected in the intercultural learning experiences of the pre-service teachers, most of them acquired more global outlook in life, a higher sense of engagement with others students and appreciation on diversity of cultures. They gained deeper understanding of their own cultures as divergent from others.

The immersion program is ultimately and professionally relevant program of the Adamson University as it enables the students to have clearer view point of educational system before they enter the arena of teaching as their lifetime profession.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were formulated based on the perspectives that emerged in the study.

To address the need for the misconception of classification for the overseas teaching immersion, the institution must set rules and guidelines for this kind of program.

The practice teaching curriculum must broaden global and intercultural components so that the pre-service teachers have a wide range of understanding the multidimensional perspectives of teaching locally and internationally.

The overseas teaching immersion is most effective if facilitated using reflections provided with different forms of activities as guided by the pre-service teachers before pre-departure learning and teaching; during their learning and teaching on the school and post learning and teaching to develop the holistic understanding of intercultural teaching immersion.

The Commission on High Education (CHED) should consider formulating specific guidelines pertaining to the time frame in the conduct of their practice teaching immersion abroad in consonance with the CMO No.22 s.2013, the revised policies, standards and guidelines (PSGs) on Student Internship Abroad Program.

The host school and the institution that conduct overseas teaching immersion should strengthen their partnerships in order to produce globally competitive students who possess the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and who are equipped to handle students in different countries.

Guidelines for Practice Teaching Immersion can be enhanced to establish the parameters for the conduct of learning intercultural experiences in the host school. It may also include the guidelines on the assignment of pre-service teachers to guide them in the implementation of the regulations of the program.

## References

- Atherton, J.S. (2013). *Learning and teaching:Experiential learning* (Online:UK) retrieve 11 September 2013 from <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/experience.htm>.
- Guest, Greg, MacQueen, Kathleen M. and Namey, Emily E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. Los Angeles:Sage.
- Baliao, Maria Elisa D. and Parcon, Cristabel Rose F. (2011). *Society and culture in a changing world*.Manila: Rex Book Store.
- Barners, J. (2011). *Cross-curricular learning 3-14, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. London Sage.
- Roe, Betty D., Smith, Sandra H. and Ross, Elinor P. (2010). *Student teaching and fieldexperiences handbook*. Pearson.
- Fahim, M. & Haghani, M. (July 2012). *Sociocultural perspectives on foreign languagelearning*. Retrieved from <http://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/jltr/vol103/04/14/pdf>
- Hartas, D. (Ed.). (2010). *Educational research and inquiry: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- O' Neil, N. (2010). *Internships as a high impact practice. Some reflections on quality*. Peer Review,12(4),4-8.
- Tulio, Doris D. (2010). *Psychological, anthropological, and sociological foundations of education 1*. Mandaluyong: National Bookstore.
- Brenes-Carvajal, M.G.del C. (2009) *Initial development of English language teachers in Mexico*, Doctorate in Applied Linguistics Thesis, Macquaire University, Sydney, Australia.
- White, G. & Toms, L., (2009). *Preparing college of business students for aglobal world*. The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin. Summer.
- Colbert, J. A., Brown, R. S., Choi, H., & Thomas, S. (2008). *An investigation of the impacts of teacher-driven professional development on pedagogy and student learning*. Teacher Education Quarterly, 35(2), 135-154.
- Fochtman, D. (2008). *Phenomenology in pediatric cancer nursing research*, *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing*, (25(4),185-192.
- Farrell, T.S.C. (2007). *Failing the practicum: narrowing the gap between expectation and reality with reflective practice*. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(1), 193-201.
- Fook, J. and Gardner, F. (2007) *Practicing Critical reflection: A resource handbook*. Maidenhead:OUP/McGraw Head.
- Borg S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. London:Continuum.
- National Research Council. (2005). *How students learn: History, mathematics and science inthe classroom*. Washington, DC: National Academic Press.
- Dowling, P. J., & Welch, D.E., (2005). *International human resource management:Managing people in multinational context*. Thompson-South-Western.Australia.
- (Goethals, M. Serra, Howard, A. Rose, and Sanders, Marie M. (2004). *Student teaching a process approach to reflective teaching*. Pearson.
- Kedall, Diana. (2003). *Sociology in our times*. Australia: Thomson Learning, Inc.
- Zeichner, K. (2003). *The adequacies and inadequacies of three current strategies to recruit, prepare, and retain the best teachers for all students*. Teachers College Record, 105(3), 490-51Watts, R. J. (2003). *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eby, J.W., and Martin, D.B. (2001). *Reflective planning, teaching and evaluation for the elementary school (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill / Prentice Hall.

Cloudsley, M., (2001). *The importance of International education. Inquiry: The Journal of Virginia Community Colleges*, 6 (1). 53-60.

Goethals, S. and Howard, R. (2000). *Student teaching : A process approach to reflective practice*. Upper Saddle River.

CROSS-BORDER TERTIARY EDUCATION – ISBN-978-92-64-03363-4 © OECD AND IBRD/THE WORLD BANK 2007

*Plan of Action of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004)*, para.

**Online source:**

<https://www.eduweb.v>

[https://ac.els-cdn.com/S1877042809004509/1-s2.0-S1877042809004509main.pdf?\\_tid=6b1df9c6-f60e-11e7-91fc-00000aacb362&acdnat=1515592924\\_a511139a7c9a708629e4c04b9118534a](https://ac.els-cdn.com/S1877042809004509/1-s2.0-S1877042809004509main.pdf?_tid=6b1df9c6-f60e-11e7-91fc-00000aacb362&acdnat=1515592924_a511139a7c9a708629e4c04b9118534a)