

Graduate Education Learned Experiences: A Case of Masteral Students Teaching Social Science

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Abstract

Professional growth is essential in upgrading skill sets and being more proficient in the respective field of work. This is a qualitative case study focused on the application of learning experiences of graduate students enrolled in Master of Arts in Teaching Social Science to their profession and the possible inputs to improve the masteral degree program. Furthermore, this study is anchored on Theory of Generalization of Experience by Charles Judd. The primary focus of the study is on the experiences of the graduate students in their masteral degree that were used to their in-service teaching. Seven graduate school students who are currently teaching as their profession participated in the study. Individual interviews and focus group discussion were conducted to gather the necessary data. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes relevant to the study. The findings of the study include the use of classroom management strategies, incorporating new methods and ideas in teaching, and integration of contemporary issues and concerns in discussions.

Keywords: Graduate education; Professional development; Social Science; Classroom management; Teaching; Integration

1. Introduction

Since people spend the majority of their time engaging in educational activities, education has a tremendous impact on how people conduct their lives. The graduate's career planning, professional growth, and skill set are all shaped by graduate education, which is a significant component of higher education (Austin, 2022; Ertem & Gokalp, 2022). Graduate education is essential for the production of new knowledge and for maintaining national competitiveness (Montero-Hernandez & Drouin, 2021). Graduate school in particular provided a chance for self-authorship, which required recognizing their roles as community leaders and facilitators (Montero-Hernandez & Drouin, 2021). But a lack of knowledge of the distinctions between what is taught in undergraduate courses and graduate programs may result in serious misunderstandings among incoming graduate students (Stock, 2021).

Graduate education is a crucial part of the new, contemporary university, and changing the graduate education system may help the university evolve and educate future academics, scientists, and administrators to run the university in the twenty-first century (DePauw, 2019). Graduate schools and departments should provide workshops and training for a variety of humanities careers as well as for the variety of opportunities within the academic job market, working with offices of career services, offices of development and alumni relations, and other institutional offices (Brazier et al., 2021). According to studies on the strengths and weaknesses of the human cognitive system, Chew and Cerbin (2021) proposed framing teaching and learning in terms of cognitive obstacles. In order to assess teaching and learning issues, choose the best teaching strategies, and perform and interpret research on successful pedagogy, they expect that a cognitive challenges

method may assist teachers.

It is crucial to close the theory-to-practice gap and make sure our graduate level experiences have ecological value when working with licensed, in-service teachers in general education settings so that student learning is translated into better instructional practices and decisions in the classroom (Spies et al., 2021). It is crucial to clearly explain the relevance of teaching to graduate student education in general as well as the benefits of student agency in the design of these courses for graduate student professional growth (Corrales & Komperda, 2022). Graduate students may show their knowledge, comprehension, and abilities (Akinde, 2020). It is important to discuss how the graduate program has changed their life, such as the transition from theory to practice (Rhee, 2020).

The study intends to look into the experiences of graduate students enrolled in Master of Arts in Teaching Social Science (MAT) and how they applied it in their in-service teaching. Furthermore, this study aims to discuss possible inputs for the improvement for the MAT program. Also, this study is anchored on Theory of Generalization of Experience by Charles Judd. According to this idea, learning is transferred largely via generalization, and the degree of transfer relies on how well the original situation's experiences are comprehended and turned into generalizations (Judd, 1915; Judd 1927). Because the learner learns a general principle while studying a specific task, theory of generalization postulates that what is learned in that specific task transfers to another task in some way (Judd, 1915; Judd 1927).

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

Yin's (2011) qualitative descriptive single-case study is used in this study. The researcher wanted to find out more about the MAT students' viewpoints and reactions to their experiences in relation to their subjects. Four stages comprise the case study methodology used: (1) designing the case study protocol, which was done in the first phase of the study; (2) conducting the actual case study; (3) analyzing the case study evidence; and (4) developing conclusions, recommendations, and implications based on the evidences gathered (Yin, 2011).

2.2 Research Participants

Selection criteria were used to identify the participants for this study: (1) The participant is enrolled in Master of Arts in Teaching Social Science, and (2) The participant is a professional teacher teaching high school Social Studies. There were seven (7) MAT students who qualified and participated in the study. Furthermore, they were classmates and on the same year level during their MAT program. These students are enrolled in the Graduate School taking up Master of Arts in Teaching Social Science.

2.3 Data Gathering Procedure

The following steps were employed in gathering the desired information needed by the study: (1) Asked permission to involve the concerned students from respective authorities; (2) Set a schedule for individual interviews and focus group discussions; (3) Actual conduct of the individual interviews; and (4) Actual focus group discussion to validate the individual responses.

2.4 Data Analysis

Each participant's responses were coded and analyzed through the use of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A process that cut across data and search patterns, categories and themes. Thematic analysis

was performed through the process of coding in six phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The responses which are already repetitions of the coded responses were not assigned differently in the coding. Meanwhile, responses which were of low frequency were also included because they are considered relevant information that can add meaning to the findings of the study.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The consent of the participants was sought prior to the conduct of actual data collection. They were not coerced to participate in the study and the researcher assured them that their identity will not be disclosed in writing the research paper.

2.6 Triangulation

The researcher obtained permission to conduct interviews with the participants from the appropriate authorities, scheduled interviews and focus groups, and finally used focus group discussion to verify the accuracy of the information gleaned from the interviews.

2.7 Reflexivity

The researcher is an instructor at the graduate level. In addition, the researcher believes it crucial, useful, and fascinating to do this study for the program's improvement. To eliminate biases and inconsistencies, the researchers used a methodical procedure wherever feasible while performing this study.

3. Results and Discussions

This section discusses the findings of the study on the experiences of the MAT students and their relevance to their actual delivery of instruction in their respective classes. There were five themes identified in this study such as follows: Emphasis on classroom management, Insights in CUES found effective in teaching, Contemporary concerns and issues for integration, MAT classroom experiences relevant to the field, and Suggestions to improve the MAT Social Science.

Theme 1: Emphasis on Classroom Management

The first theme identified in the study pertains to the lessons across the MAT subjects which are helpful in the delivery of classroom management in the respective classroom of the MAT graduate students. Under this theme, sub-themes were identified such as the content knowledge they have acquired from the different subject areas they have taken, the classroom management-related topics and activities, and modular approach to teaching.

"Strategies, it teaches us a lot, how would we be able to adapt certain strategies and techniques that could be used in four corners of the classroom." (P3)

"CUES, deals with how would you utilize those materials and how would you be able to be ready using traditional and the use of technology that would be used in the classroom, and how would you be ready during brownouts." (P4)

"Helped me lot in delivering good classroom management." (P1)

"Employed in class (collaborative group work for students; interactive teaching experience; student to student interaction) strategies." (P2)

"The major subjects or lessons that are helpful during my classroom discussion are those subjects like CUES, the strategies. The techniques and methods that was taught to us, especially the modular type of discussion or modular type of discussing lessons to our students can actually learn more through this method." (P1)

Theme 2: Insights in CUES found Effective in Teaching

The second theme identified in the study pertains to the insights learned by the graduate students in the MAT subject Construction, Utilization, Evaluation and Storage of Instructional Materials in social Science (CUES) which they have applied in their own classrooms and found effective in facilitating learning. Under this theme, sub-themes were identified such as non-conventional teaching strategies, interactive lessons, skills in organizing, modular instruction, performance-based assessment, and multimedia approach to teaching.

"For my CUES, I usually have this gamification of activities." (P1)

"Before when I have test in geography. So, blank map on bond papers. And now we already the applications. So, we can use the application in teaching Geography." (P2)

"In CUES we were taught to create instructional materials that would be helpful in delivering our lessons. A lesson in History for that to be interactive, because History has been known to be boring, like you will be sleepy if you take History subject." (P7)

"I really learned about organization because I'm not really the type of very, very organized, but now that I have learned much about this then, that really helped me. Specially in organized skills." (P5)

"The thing that really helped me in this subject (CUES) that I applied in the actual teaching process is the use of module it made instruction collaborative for it integrate activities that would allow students to collaborate, socialize and to learn from each other." (P6)

"Then evaluation, sometimes it is better for the students to, if you assess the learnings of your students, it is better if you're going to use outcome-based performance, you're going to measure their performance using rubrics and the IMs." (P5)

"I am usually using the new media because students right now, especially in college, they are more on computerized or power point presentation, then videos, they can understand everything through visual presentations." (P3)

Theme 3: Contemporary Concerns and Issues for Integration

The third theme identified in the study pertains to the contemporary concerns and issues discussed in the MAT major subjects which can be integrated in teaching Social Science by the students in their own classrooms. Under this theme, sub-themes were identified such as gender awareness and LGBTQ, religion, terrorism, bombing, citizenship education, self-awareness, extra-judicial killings, politics and politicians, and children in conflict with the law.

"We integrate this topic like for example the LGBTQ, in every subject we also integrate gender awareness and development that girls can do the following things not only boys. Specifically, in Social Sciences, we should teach the students the knowledge." (P2)

"In my elementary classes, about terrorism, when we talk about religion of Filipinos before, when they hear about Islam, they would talk about terrorism. We tried to integrate as well the Five Pillars of Islamic Faith; the Islam people are peace loving people. These people are not Muslims they are called extremist, terrorists are extremist." (P1)

"Citizenship Education starts with how one would be responsible; the self-awareness is there so that they would be able also to have these full grasps about what his certain role in the specific society. I have shared that also to my class that they should have this self-awareness so that they would be aware of their social responsibility among others." (P6)

"So, I teach them about how would one be able to have this self-expression regardless of their sexual orientation, but more on accepting the gender expression of how would they come up with their sense of self, the gender and the self." (P4)

"I integrate in our subjects, specially that I'm teaching Contemporary World, maybe is the idea about issue on Extra Judicial Killings (EJK), for example, this topic is very much relevant in discussing with my students because they are so-called hope of the nation." (P2)

"They need to be aware of the current trends, or something about upcoming election that these politicians

already starting to flaunt their highlighted beauties and everything in order for them to be appealing to these students and I should integrate and teach them that we should be meticulous in choosing of whom to vote.”

(P3)

“Then Civic Education, is one of the issues now, is the behavior of the learners, so it is a must for us to integrate a specific value, like how to take good care of your environment and the proper waste disposal.”

(P7)

“Now if we will try to know the historical background of globalization like different conflicts, then if we will talk about nation and the states, ideally, Philippines, we are considered as one state, one nation.” (P2)

“Since we have Christianity and Muslim, so we have two Nations. So, what is happening now, like what happened in Mindanao, actually there is a particular study that says, they are not Filipinos, they are just living in the Philippines. So now, what they want to say is the National Government is not allowed to intervene with their activities, their decisions. So, I think that is also the reason they are into some terrorism act, because they don’t want how the government manage the state. So, it is one of the Contemporary issues.”

(P5)

Theme 4: Classroom Experiences Relevant to the Field

The fourth theme identified in the study pertains to other graduate students’ classroom experiences in the MAT major subjects which they found relevant to the actual delivery of Social Science instruction in the field. Under this theme, sub-themes were identified such as strategies and methods of teaching, construction, utilization of instructional materials, selected topics, and evaluation schemes.

“Since I am taking up Master of arts in Teaching, it’s more on the strategies that I have learned, or teaching-learning process that I have learned not only from my classmates but also from my teachers.” (P1)

“So, through the CUES, I’ve learned more techniques on how I can deliver my way of teaching. In CUES, we made instructional plan, these are very important, we are using it in my other classes.” (P2)

“We also discussed history, geography in the selected topics, and in-depth content of the Social Science discipline.” (P6)

“Using appropriate assessment tools, for example, if you will allow these students to have this role playing, make sure that you have is rubric, may it be holistic or analytical.” (P2)

Theme 5: Suggestions to Improve the MAT Social Science Curriculum

The fifth theme identified in the study pertains to the suggestion of the MAT graduate students to improve the curriculum implementation for Master of Arts in Teaching Social Science. Under this theme, sub-themes were identified such as creating module, concept paper writing, conduct of simulations, integration of values clarification, provision of more real-life activities, more content inputs from teachers, and community immersion.

“The things that I could suggest is more in doing or creating modules. We were taught how to do modules, to teach in modular form, but one thing I would like is also to learn how to do module not only to depend on their resources like existing books, but to make our own books.” (P7)

“I strongly suggest that every subject, there should be concept papers, on specific things or issues that is related on the course or subject.” (P3)

“Then in terms of research, because the university is into research, so I suggest also that let’s involve our MAT students to the actual setting of presentation of papers. Like they are in an international conference or a simulation of an international conference so they will feel like, okay, this is how to present papers, so it will not be a foreign feeling, and no longer new to them, because even during MAT, they have really been exposed to that.” (P1)

“So maybe we should inject more of what is happening in the actual so that it is more feasible, because sometimes are having this dilemma, this is the ideal yet, the one we are practicing in actual is different which tends to question, where are we going to stand? In the ideal or in reality?” (P2)

"I could suggest to improve the curriculum, is we should inject more of what is actually happening in the actual." (P4)

"So, I want that teacher give us inputs which are relevant to the field, more relevant for us, for sometimes, what's the use of attending classes, and then it's still the same discussion, then after that nothing." (P5)

"Since we are Social Science teachers and we really need an additional knowledge, or input so we really need a teacher that is serious about handling this particular major subject. So, I think in the selection of teachers who are expert, or they have this passion for teaching." (P3)

"What I have observed in MAT Social Science, supposed to be, we are the ones who should be more involved in the community, I mean, we should be, like, wherein we can say Social Science majors are really helping, we should apply our knowledge in each major subjects in the community because we are Social Science majors." (P1)

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Graduate students found several classroom experiences in the MAT Social Science Program to be applicable to their real delivery of Social Science courses across school levels. Classroom management-related subjects and activities, as well as a modular approach to teaching, assist them in improving classroom management. Furthermore, non-traditional teaching tactics, interactive lessons, organizational skills, modular learning, performance-based evaluation, and multimedia were beneficial in their in-service teaching. In-service class discussions included topics such as gender awareness and LGBTQ, religion, terrorism, bombing, citizenship education, self-awareness, extra-judicial murders, politics and politicians, and children in confrontation with the law. There was progress in teaching tactics and methods, construction, use of instructional resources, chosen themes, and assessment. However, there was a focus for development in the MAT program on producing modules, writing concept papers, conducting simulations, integrating values clarification, providing more real-life activities, more material input from instructors, and community immersion.

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