



“Stepping into the Spotlight”: Pre-Service Teachers’

Final Demonstration Teaching Experience

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the lived experiences of pre-service teachers during their final demonstration teaching, emphasizing the challenges they encountered, coping mechanisms employed, and how these shaped their professional development. Anchored in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, this qualitative research utilized a phenomenological design to capture the experiential realities of pre-service teachers. Data were collected through a face-to-face focus group discussion with purposefully selected participants from Marikina Polytechnic College, Philippines, who had recently completed their final demonstration teaching. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the narratives. Findings revealed multiple domains of challenge including planning constraints, classroom engagement readiness, instructional planning and design, technological and logistical hurdles, and psychological and emotional struggles. In response, pre-service teachers applied coping mechanisms such as professional support and preparation, professional adaptability, emotional resilience, peer and contextual support, and reflective learning and development. These experiences fostered growth in confidence in handling classes, instructional competence and planning, classroom leadership and control, professional presence and communication, learning through feedback and reflection, professional flexibility and adaptability, readiness for the teaching profession, and career orientation and decision-making. The results affirm that final demonstration teaching is not merely evaluative but an essential experiential platform where theory and practice intersect, facilitating the development of professional identity and readiness for the teaching profession. The study calls for more structured support, mentorship, and reflective integration in teacher education programs. This extends to educational institutions and policy makers in fostering sustainable, responsive, and reflective practices in teacher training.

RESUMO

Este estudo investiga as experiências vividas por professores em formação durante sua demonstração final de ensino, com ênfase nos desafios enfrentados, nos mecanismos de enfrentamento utilizados e em como essas experiências moldaram seu desenvolvimento profissional. Ancorada na Teoria da Aprendizagem Experiencial de Kolb, esta pesquisa qualitativa utilizou um desenho fenomenológico para capturar as realidades vividas pelos professores em formação. Os dados foram coletados por meio de uma discussão em grupo focal presencial com participantes selecionados intencionalmente do Marikina Polytechnic College, Filipinas, que haviam concluído recentemente sua demonstração final de ensino. A análise temática foi empregada para interpretar as narrativas. Os resultados revelaram múltiplos domínios de desafio, incluindo restrições de planejamento, prontidão para o engajamento em sala de aula, planejamento e design instrucional, dificuldades tecnológicas e logísticas, e lutas psicológicas e emocionais. Em resposta, os professores em formação aplicaram mecanismos de enfrentamento como apoio e preparação profissional, adaptabilidade profissional, resiliência emocional, apoio entre pares e contextual, e aprendizagem e desenvolvimento reflexivo. Essas experiências promoveram crescimento na confiança para conduzir aulas, competência e planejamento instrucional, liderança e controle em sala de aula, presença e comunicação profissional, aprendizagem por meio de feedback e reflexão, flexibilidade e adaptabilidade profissional, prontidão para a docência e orientação e tomada de decisão de carreira. Os resultados confirmam que a demonstração final de ensino não é apenas uma atividade avaliativa, mas uma plataforma experiencial essencial onde teoria e prática se cruzam, facilitando o desenvolvimento da identidade profissional e a prontidão para a carreira docente. O estudo recomenda apoio estruturado, mentoria e integração reflexiva mais consistente nos programas de formação de professores. Isso se estende a instituições educacionais e formuladores de políticas, incentivando práticas de formação docente sustentáveis, responsivas e reflexivas.

Introduction

The transition from pre-service training to professional teaching is a defining phase in teacher education, requiring a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical application. This transition is often referred to as practice teaching in which there are expected to hold their own classes with the guidance of an actual teacher that will last for at least a whole semester. Practice teaching exposes pre-service teachers to actual teaching allowing them to apply pedagogical strategies (Jarrah, 2020), classroom management techniques (Sohil et al., 2023), assessment approaches (Doyle et al., 2024) and instructional delivery in an authentic classroom setting (Davis et al., 2022). This phase, however, is not merely an evaluation of competency but also a deeply personal and transformative experience that shapes pre-service teachers' beliefs (Qiu et al., 2021), confidence (Maijala, 2021), resilience (Mpate et al., 2021), and professional identity (Ardi et al., 2023).

In the Philippines, pre-service teachers undergo a rigorous practice teaching program, which serves as their culminating experience before earning their Bachelor's degree. Under the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 79, s. 2017, Technical-Vocational Teacher Education students are required to implement internship programs where pre-service teachers engage in off-campus practice teaching in partner schools. The internship program, commonly lasting for one semester, places student-teachers under the supervision of cooperating teachers and university/college supervisors, ensuring they gain hands-on teaching experience. Final demonstration teaching, a culminating requirement, is an essential aspect of this internship, where pre-service teachers are assessed based on their lesson planning, instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement skills.

Existing studies emphasize the significance of practicum experiences in preparing future educators. Field experiences, such as practice teaching, serve as critical bridges between coursework and real-world teaching (Nielsen et al., 2024), allowing pre-service teachers to internalize effective instructional strategies. Studies have highlighted that pre-service teachers often face challenges such as lesson planning (Ratih et al., 2021), classroom management (Dube et al., 2023), and performance anxiety (Anton et al., 2023). Furthermore, factors such as mentor support (Nikoçeviq-Kurti, 2022; Raymundo & Ignacio, 2023), student engagement (Baba Rahim, 2022), institutional expectations and school environment (Narayanan et al., 2021), ability to utilize effective technological application (Salansan et al., 2023; Salvador-Peñalosa, 2024) significantly influence their teaching experiences and self-efficacy. These studies have highlighted the experiences of pre-service teachers during their practice teaching. However, the lived experiences of pre-service teachers specifically their final demonstration teaching remains an underexplored area in teacher education research.

Theoretical Framework

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) provides the foundational framework for understanding how pre-service teachers develop teaching competencies during final demonstration teaching. Emphasizing that learning is an active and continuous process rooted in experience, reflection, and application, Kolb's four-stage cycle—Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation—mirrors the journey of pre-service teachers as they engage in real classroom instruction. In the Concrete Experience stage, they apply pedagogical theories under the guidance of mentors, encountering the practical complexities of lesson delivery, student engagement, and classroom management. This is followed by Reflective Observation, where they critically assess their performance using feedback and self-evaluation. In the Abstract Conceptualization phase, they refine instructional strategies by integrating insights to improve lesson planning and teaching techniques. Lastly, through Active Experimentation, they implement these improvements in subsequent teaching opportunities, demonstrating growth in adaptability and competence. As such, final demonstration teaching is not merely evaluative but a transformative experiential process that cultivates instructional skill, reflective practice, and professional readiness.

The primary objective of this study is to explore and understand the lived experiences of pre-service teachers from Marikina Polytechnic College during their final demonstration teaching. The study focuses on examining the challenges they encounter, the coping mechanisms they adopt, and how these experiences shape their professional development for full-time teaching. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What challenges do pre-service teachers from Marikina Polytechnic College face during their final demonstration teaching? (2) How do they cope with the difficulties encountered throughout their final demonstration teaching? and (3) How does the final demonstration teaching experience contribute to their professional growth and preparedness for the teaching profession?

Methodology

Research Approach

This study adopts a phenomenological research design, a qualitative approach aimed at understanding the lived experiences of pre-service teachers during their final demonstration teaching. Phenomenology seeks to uncover the essence of shared experiences through participants' narratives while researchers bracket preconceived notions (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021). Purposeful sampling was employed to select pre-service teachers who had recently completed their final demonstration teaching and were willing to share in-depth reflections

(Pahwa et al., 2023). This approach enabled a rich, authentic exploration of their perceived challenges, coping mechanisms, and professional growth during this culminating phase of teacher preparation.

Description of Respondent

Participants were chosen using purposeful sampling (Pahwa et al., 2023), ensuring that only those with direct experience in final demonstration teaching contribute to the study. This selection process allows for rich, in-depth insights into the challenges, coping mechanisms, and professional growth of pre-service teachers. All participants will be required to provide written informed consent, and their identities will remain confidential in adherence to Republic Act 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The key participants of this study were pre-service teachers from Marikina Polytechnic College, Philippines who have recently completed their final demonstration teaching. They were selected based on the following criteria: (1) they must be enrolled in the teacher education program at Marikina Polytechnic College; (2) they must have successfully completed their final demonstration teaching; and (3) they must be willing to share their experiences through a face-to-face focus group discussion (FGD).

Data Collection

This study employed a face-to-face focus group discussion (FGD) as the primary method of data collection (Geampana & Perrotta, 2024) to explore the lived experiences of pre-service teachers during their final demonstration teaching. The FGD followed an unstructured interview format (Elhami, & Khoshnevisan, 2022), allowing for open-ended discussions centered on the challenges, coping mechanisms, and professional growth of pre-service teachers as they navigate their final demonstration teaching experience.

Ethical Consideration

This study undergone an approval process from the Research Ethics Committee of the college to ensure that all applicable research ethics are strictly followed. Written informed consent were obtained from all participants before data collection, ensuring that they fully understand the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. To comply with Republic Act 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, all collected data were handled with utmost confidentiality and were never shared with third parties unless explicit consent was granted by participants. To protect participants anonymity, pseudonyms were used which are not linked to the real names of the participants in any part of the data.

The researcher ensured secure storage of all data to protect participants' privacy. Only the primary researcher had access to confidential records, ensuring that no unauthorized

individuals could review participant data. All physical documents were kept in a locked storage drawer, accessible only to the researcher. Any electronic or digital data, including audio recordings from the focus group discussions (FGDs), were stored on a password-protected storage. The gathered data were only retained after the completion of the study. After publication of this study, all data were permanently deleted.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the face-to-face focus group discussion (FGD) were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative approach that enables the identification and interpretation of recurring patterns, concepts, and themes within participants' narratives (Wiltshire & Ronkainen, 2021). This process supports the study's aim to uncover the lived experiences of pre-service teachers during their final demonstration teaching, focusing on the challenges they encountered, the coping strategies they adopted, and the professional growth they experienced.

The audio recordings from the FGD was transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the participants' responses. The researcher then read and examine the transcripts repeatedly to gain a deep understanding of the data. Meaningful segments or units of information were highlighted and coded manually, allowing the researcher to identify significant ideas and patterns relevant to the study. These codes were grouped and organized into broader categories, which will then form the basis of the emerging themes.

Throughout the process, the researcher remained guided by the lens of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, focusing on how the participants describe their experiences across the four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Themes were refined through constant comparison and careful analysis to ensure that they accurately reflect the shared and individual experiences of the participants.

Result and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study and integrates them with relevant analysis and interpretation. Guided by Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), the discussion explores the lived experiences of pre-service teachers during their final demonstration teaching, focusing on the challenges they encountered, the coping mechanisms they employed, and how these experiences contributed to their professional growth. The findings are organized thematically and supported by participant narratives, directly translated to English language, to highlight how real-world teaching engagements shape the development of instructional competence, emotional resilience, and professional identity.

Table 1.

Challenges experience by pre-service teachers during their final demonstration teaching

Themes	Codes	Transcript Excerpts
Planning Constraints	Inflexible scheduling	Gary: "... So, this is challenging for me... what if there are only two or three days to prepare... the lesson would need to be adjusted"
	Last-minute changes and lack of contingency planning	Gary: "...for example, if there was a day when classes were suspended... you would have to prepare all over again."
Classroom Engagement Readiness	Limited interaction with assigned students	Rhonald: "...I didn't really know them well... I couldn't teach them effectively."
	Lack of prior teaching exposure with demo class	Rhonald: "It was my first time handling them... I didn't really know them well."
Instructional Planning and Design	Weak background in subject content	Geraldine: "...I only had limited knowledge in programming... it became one of the biggest challenges I faced."
	Sudden subject reassignment	Geraldine: "...I taught ethics... then I was suddenly switched to programming..."
	Difficulty constructing detailed lesson plans	Marianne: ...nahihipan ako kasi detailed siya... word by word mo siyang ilagay...
	Struggles in integrating programming with other subjects	Marianne: "...it's difficult to relate programming to other subjects..."
Technological and Logistical Hurdles	Malfunctioning or unfamiliar teaching tools	Geraldine: "...I used a microphone for teaching... there were video presentations... but I wasn't able to fully utilize them..."
	Classroom and material setup failures	Marianne: "...the remote wasn't working... I uploaded the code to their laptops at the last minute..."
Psychological and Emotional Struggles	Performance anxiety, stuttering, and voice issues	Rhonald: "My cooperating teacher noticed that I was teaching too fast and mentioned that I didn't include a generalization in my lesson."
	Overthinking mistakes and lack of self-confidence	Geraldine: "...I gave in to my nervousness... there were things I wanted to say that I ended up forgetting..."

Planning constraints

One of the core challenges pre-service teachers faced during their final demonstration teaching was navigating the demands of planning within rigid and often disrupted schedules. The fixed nature of demo teaching dates required them to deliver specific lessons regardless of prior class cancellations or instructional delays. This created pressure to compress or adjust lesson content in a short amount of time, often leaving little room for thorough preparation or alignment with prerequisite topics. Despite this, the experience became a meaningful test of their developing competencies. Being placed in these high-pressure scenarios allowed them to engage fully in the planning process, but also revealed how vulnerable effective teaching can be to external scheduling constraints. The challenge was not only logistical, but pedagogical—how to maintain the quality and coherence of instruction when time is limited and content must shift unexpectedly.

This difficulty reflects a broader instructional challenge commonly encountered in real classroom settings (Chen et al., 2022), where educators must adapt without compromising learning objectives (Wala, 2024). For many, this was their first exposure to the complexities of

aligning theory with practice under tight timelines. Yet, these experiences also encouraged reflection and adaptability, a critical skills for future teachers ((Davis et al., 2024). Through such encounters, pre-service teachers began to recognize the importance of contingency planning, pacing flexibility, and resourcefulness (Ratih et al., 2021).

Classroom engagement readiness

Another critical challenge that emerged from the experiences of pre-service teachers was the limited opportunity to build familiarity and rapport with the students assigned to them for their final demonstration teaching. Several interns expressed difficulty in managing the class effectively or tailoring their instruction because they had minimal prior interaction with their demo class. In many cases, the class had been primarily handled by the cooperating teacher, with pre-service teachers only stepping in as lead instructors shortly before the scheduled demonstration. This lack of prior teaching exposure created a sense of disconnection and uncertainty. Without the benefit of observing or interacting with the class over time, the interns struggled to anticipate students' learning needs, behavioral patterns, and engagement preferences. As a result, they found it challenging to adjust their instructional approach or facilitate smooth classroom management during the actual demonstration.

This limitation is significant because it affects not only lesson delivery but also the overall learning environment. Building student rapport is a fundamental aspect of effective teaching (Roshanbin et al., 2022). It contributes to motivation, participation, and classroom climate (Assali & Davenport, 2024). For pre-service teachers, the absence of this relationship made the final demonstration feel less authentic and more performance-based, limiting their ability to demonstrate their full instructional potential.

Instructional planning and design

Beyond scheduling concerns, pre-service teachers also encountered substantial difficulties in terms of content knowledge and curriculum alignment. Some participants shared that they had limited background in the specific subject assigned to them —particularly in technical areas such as programming. In certain cases, interns were suddenly reassigned to teach content that did not match their previous teaching experiences or academic strengths, such as shifting from ethics to programming. This abrupt transition limited their ability to deliver lessons with confidence and depth, and it required them to self-learn or relearn complex material within a short time. Another prominent challenge involved the construction of detailed lesson plans. Interns noted that creating a fully scripted, standards-aligned plan was a rigorous process, particularly because it demanded both pedagogical structure and fluent English expression. For those teaching technical subjects, like programming, the difficulty was

further compounded by the requirement to integrate their lessons with other subjects (e.g., applying cross-curricular strategies). Many struggled to find natural connections between programming and subjects like mathematics or values education, especially in ways that would meaningfully engage learners.

These experiences point to a broader concern in teacher preparation: the need for more scaffolded support in subject-specific pedagogy, especially for content-heavy and skill-oriented disciplines (Vereijken & Van der Rijst, 2021). The challenge was not due to a lack of effort, but rather a gap between content mastery and pedagogical application (Moh'd et al., 2022). Pre-service teachers needed more time and guidance to translate technical knowledge into teachable concepts that were developmentally appropriate and instructionally engaging.

Technological and logistical hurdles

A recurring challenge among the pre-service teachers during their final demonstration teaching was managing technological and logistical difficulties that disrupted lesson delivery. Many interns encountered issues with malfunctioning or unfamiliar teaching tools, such as remote presenters that failed during instruction or laptops that did not run prepared programs. These technical setbacks interrupted the flow of teaching, required on-the-spot improvisation, and occasionally caused delays or confusion in class activities. In addition to equipment failures, some pre-service teachers faced problems related to classroom setup and material preparation. This included tasks like rearranging furniture, setting up instructional displays, or transporting borrowed items such as projectors and laptops. These logistical demands were often left solely to the intern to manage, sometimes under time pressure or without institutional assistance. As a result, pre-service teachers found themselves juggling both instructional responsibilities and behind-the-scenes tasks that could have been mitigated with better support or preparation time.

These experiences are particularly important because they reflect the real-world demands of teaching, where technology and logistics are not always seamless (Eden et al., 2024). Pre-service teachers were placed in authentic situations that required them to troubleshoot, adapt, and make quick decisions—important indicators of teaching readiness (Pazilah et al., 2021). The presence of such challenges did not only test their technical familiarity but also their ability to maintain composure and redirect their lesson flow when plans failed.

Psychological and emotional struggles

The emotional landscape of final demonstration teaching proved to be a significant challenge for many pre-service teachers. A number of interns experienced performance

anxiety, which manifested in physical and vocal signs such as shaking hands, stuttering, or strained voice projection. Even those who felt well-prepared academically admitted that nervousness impacted their delivery, timing, and ability to recall parts of the lesson. In high-stakes situations where they were being observed and evaluated, the pressure to perform flawlessly often intensified their stress responses. Beyond real-time anxiety, many also struggled with overthinking their mistakes after the demonstration. Some pre-service teachers reported being caught in cycles of self-criticism, replaying moments where they felt they could have done better, or regretting small slips during the lesson. These feelings sometimes led to temporary dips in self-confidence, as they internalized feedback or perceived lapses in performance as personal shortcomings rather than part of the learning process.

These emotional and psychological responses are not uncommon in the journey of becoming a teacher (Lindqvist et al., 2022). However, their intensity during final demonstrations underscores the need to address the affective domain of teaching more explicitly in teacher education. Managing anxiety, building self-confidence, and developing strategies for emotional regulation are just as critical as mastering content and pedagogy (Albasin-Lacaba et al., 2022).

Table 2
Coping Mechanism of Student Interns

Themes	Codes	Transcript Excerpts
Professional Support and Preparation	Seeking feedback and guidance from mentors	Gary: "...I coordinated with them to get the right schedule so that there would be no conflict... I made adjustments."
	Practicing lessons in advance	Rhonald: "...I practiced, and at the same time, the flow of my lesson went well."
Professional Adaptability	Adjusting plans and improvising during disruptions	Geraldine: "...I got new laptops again... so that I could still provide."
Emotional Resilience	Using physical actions or rituals to reduce stress (e.g., breathing, walking)	Brent: "...I was just doing something with my pen, spinning it to help reduce my stress."
	Focusing on tasks and ignoring distractions	Marianne: "...I ignore other people so that I won't lose my focus."
	Maintaining a positive mindset and self-talk	Geraldine: "...don't give in to nervousness... you might forget the things you want to say."
Peer and Contextual Support	Delegating or asking for help from peers or students	Brent: "...I just asked the student to carry it for me... because I could no longer manage it on my own."
Reflective Learning and Development	Reflecting on performance for future improvement	Brent: "...I realized that tasks should be done one at a time... I should be more prepared next time."

Professional support and preparation

In managing the complexities of final demonstration teaching, one of the most relied-upon coping strategies by pre-service teachers was seeking professional support and engaging in thorough preparation. This theme captures the proactive efforts of the interns to equip themselves both emotionally and intellectually by practicing their lessons ahead of time and

by reaching out to mentors, cooperating teachers, and observers for guidance. The act of practicing lessons in advance served as both a pedagogical and psychological tool (Mishchanchuk, 2022). For many, rehearsal allowed them to refine their pacing, strengthen their familiarity with content, and anticipate classroom scenarios that might occur (Lindstrom et al., 2021). This practice helped reduce uncertainty and build confidence in lesson delivery, particularly in situations where technical subjects or detailed scripts were involved. Repeated rehearsals gave them a clearer sense of control over the flow of their teaching, enabling smoother transitions during the actual demonstration.

Additionally, seeking feedback and logistical alignment with mentors and observers emerged as a strategic coping mechanism (Raymundo, & Ignacio, 2023). Interns communicated early with panelists to ensure that schedules matched, classroom setups were coordinated, and expectations were clarified. This type of communication not only minimized logistical stress but also helped the interns feel supported and validated (Duldulao et al., 2023). It positioned them within a community of practice, where learning is shared rather than isolated (Guberman et al., 2021).

Professional adaptability

One of the most evident coping strategies exhibited by pre-service teachers was their ability to adapt to unforeseen classroom challenges—particularly when disruptions affected their lesson delivery. This theme centers on how interns responded to real-time obstacles by modifying their plans and improvising instructional decisions, demonstrating a growing sense of professional adaptability. Many interns encountered situations where their planned use of technology failed, materials became unavailable, or time constraints forced them to revise their instructional flow. Rather than allowing these issues to derail the lesson, they adjusted on the spot—replacing tools, reordering content, or simplifying tasks to maintain lesson coherence. These adaptive responses reveal the development of instructional agility, a vital quality for any practicing teacher. For example, when technical equipment malfunctioned during a demo, some interns quickly sought alternative resources or adjusted the activity design, ensuring that learning continued with minimal disruption. In doing so, they exhibited problem-solving skills under pressure, the ability to reprioritize lesson objectives, and the foresight to have informal backup strategies in place (Thant Sin, 2022).

Emotional resilience

In the emotionally charged environment of final demonstration teaching, emotional resilience emerged as a vital coping mechanism among pre-service teachers. This theme reflects the strategies they used to manage stress, calm anxiety, and maintain mental clarity before and during their teaching performance. Rather than being immobilized by pressure,

many developed personal techniques to regulate their emotions, enabling them to stay composed and focused in the face of high expectations and unfamiliar challenges.

One of the most commonly used strategies was the application of simple physical actions or rituals to reduce stress. Some interns shared how they would manipulate objects like pens or breathe deeply to ground themselves emotionally before teaching. These self-soothing gestures helped them release nervous energy and maintain a sense of control amidst performance anxiety. Another effective approach was task-focused coping—choosing to focus intently on the immediate demands of the lesson and blocking out distractions from observers or unexpected classroom occurrences. By redirecting attention to their instructional goals, these teachers were able to maintain their composure and keep the lesson on track, even when technical glitches or time constraints arose.

Pre-service teachers also relied on positive self-talk and mindset framing to keep doubt and overthinking at bay. Reassuring themselves that it was acceptable to make minor mistakes, they used affirmations and intentional reframing of their experience to remain confident and present. This form of cognitive reframing helped lessen the emotional weight of the demonstration and allowed them to focus on growth rather than perfection (Karnovsky et al., 2021).

Peer and contextual support

An important yet often understated coping mechanism among pre-service teachers was their ability to seek help and collaborate with peers or students when managing the logistical and instructional demands of final demonstration teaching. This theme captures how emerging teachers utilized the immediate social support available to them whether by delegating tasks to students, asking peers for assistance, or leaning on the cooperative environment of the school for practical solutions.

In several instances, interns found themselves overwhelmed by non-instructional responsibilities such as transporting materials, setting up classrooms, or managing time-sensitive technical preparations. Rather than handling these alone, many learned to delegate minor tasks to their students, such as setting up equipment, moving furniture, or distributing materials. This simple yet effective strategy not only helped them reduce pressure, but also fostered a more interactive, learner-centered environment where students felt involved in the lesson process (Wakke & Heller, 2022).

Asking for help also extended to cooperating teachers, peers, or school staff, especially when handling last-minute challenges. Instead of perceiving this support as a sign of inadequacy, interns began to recognize that teaching is a collaborative profession, where

drawing on the strengths of others is a form of professional wisdom rather than weakness (Zhan et al., 2021).

Reflective learning and development

At the heart of professional growth during final demonstration teaching was the pre-service teachers' ability to reflect on their performance and draw meaningful lessons for improvement. This theme encapsulates how self-assessment and post-lesson reflection served not only as a coping mechanism but also as a bridge toward long-term teaching competence.

After their demonstrations, many interns engaged in critical self-reflection, replaying their lesson delivery, noting areas for enhancement, and mentally restructuring parts of their performance they felt could be improved. This reflection often involved acknowledging moments of anxiety or technical setbacks, but instead of dwelling on the mistakes, they used the experience to reframe these events as opportunities for growth. They recognized the importance of being more organized, emotionally prepared, and instructionally flexible in future teaching encounters. In doing so, pre-service teachers cultivated a habit of intentional reflection, which not only helped them process the immediate emotional and instructional challenges but also prepared them to enter the teaching profession as adaptive, self-aware practitioners (Miulescu & Tacea, 2023). They began to shift their focus from performing for evaluation to evolving through experience—a key milestone in developing a sustainable and resilient teaching identity (Astuti & Drajiati, 2022).

Table 3

Contribution of final demonstration teaching experience to professional growth

Themes	Codes	Transcript Excerpts
Confidence in Handling classes	Increased confidence in teaching after overcoming challenges	Rhonald: "...now, I will improve myself so that I can become an advisable teacher and be effective in that role."
Instructional Competence and Planning	Enhanced lesson planning and instructional decision-making	Brent: "...I realized that tasks should be done one at a time... I need to be more prepared next time."
Classroom Leadership and Control	Improved classroom management through real-time experience	Geraldine: "...the challenges during the demonstration helped me improve my classroom management."
Professional Presence and Communication	Growth in communication and public speaking skills	Geraldine: "...I was able to improve in public speaking... I used to be a shy person."
Learning Through Feedback and Reflection	Appreciation of feedback and professional advice	Marianne: "...I realized that you really have to take the suggestions and recommendations seriously."
Professional Flexibility and Adaptability	Realization of the importance of adaptability in teaching	Gary: "...you have to prepare for the worst-case scenario... you always need to be flexible."
Readiness for the Teaching Profession	Stronger sense of preparedness for real-world teaching scenarios	Marianne: "...if I end up teaching in the future... the preparation for the demonstration teaching was helpful."

Confidence in handling classes

Final demonstration teaching served as a powerful catalyst for personal and professional growth among pre-service teachers. One of the most transformative outcomes reported was a noticeable increase in confidence, particularly after navigating and overcoming the multiple challenges encountered during the experience. The act of standing before a class, delivering a carefully prepared lesson, managing classroom dynamics, and responding to real-time situations significantly boosted their self-efficacy.

The transition from theory to practice, moving from planning on paper to teaching in front of students, allowed interns to validate their capabilities (Machin et al., 2023). Initially burdened by anxiety, doubts, and uncertainty, many participants reported that successfully completing their final demo marked a turning point in how they perceived themselves as future educators. The experience gave them a sense of accomplishment that extended beyond technical skill—it fostered belief in their ability to lead learning effectively (Qiu et al., 2021).

Instructional competence and planning

One of the most significant professional gains observed among pre-service teachers during their final demonstration teaching was the development of stronger instructional planning skills and pedagogical decision-making. The process of preparing for a formal, observed lesson pushed interns to engage deeply with the planning cycle—from designing coherent objectives and sequencing content to anticipating time management and student engagement strategies. Faced with real classroom conditions and time-bound delivery, interns learned the importance of prioritizing key content, adjusting lesson activities based on pacing, and making informed decisions in response to classroom dynamics. These moments required them not only to apply what they had learned theoretically but also to exercise instructional judgment in context, such as modifying group work, reordering tasks, or condensing content when needed (Palacios & Reedy, 2022).

The experience also helped them understand how to align lessons more purposefully with learning goals and assessments. Many reported becoming more intentional in their planning—ensuring that their instructional materials, questioning strategies, and assessment tools supported both the flow of the lesson and the diverse needs of learners. Through these tasks, pre-service teachers began to build a more structured, strategic approach to teaching (Grecu, 2022).

Classroom leadership and control

The final demonstration teaching experience played a vital role in shaping pre-service teachers' abilities to manage classrooms effectively. One of the key takeaways from their reflections was the significant improvement in classroom management, made possible through

direct, real-time teaching experience. Unlike simulation-based practice or peer teaching, being in charge of an actual class required them to assert leadership, maintain order, and make quick decisions to address varying student behaviors and learning needs.

This hands-on exposure allowed interns to test different classroom management strategies and observe how students responded (Duldulao et al., 2023). They encountered typical classroom challenges—such as distractions, uneven participation, and time management issues—and were required to act in the moment. These experiences cultivated their ability to create structure, deliver clear instructions, establish routines, and adjust on the fly. It also helped them internalize the importance of presence, tone, and rapport in maintaining a respectful and engaged classroom environment. More importantly, these management experiences moved them beyond reactive behavior control and toward proactive classroom leadership. They began to view classroom management not just as discipline, but as a function of clear communication, thoughtful planning, and relational trust with students (Karagianni et al., 2023).

Professional presence and communication

Final demonstration teaching also served as a pivotal space for developing the professional presence and communication skills of pre-service teachers. One of the most frequently cited areas of growth was in public speaking and classroom communication—skills that, for many, were previously undeveloped or a source of anxiety. The act of delivering lessons in front of a live audience, which included students, mentors, and evaluators, created a powerful learning environment that challenged interns to strengthen their verbal delivery, tone modulation, and non-verbal presence. Initially, several participants expressed self-doubt about their speaking abilities, noting nervous habits such as voice trembling, stuttering, or pacing. However, through repeated exposure and real-time feedback, they gradually became more comfortable with speaking clearly, projecting confidence, and maintaining composure. For many, this growth was not just about fluency in language but also about developing a commanding presence in the classroom (Herdiawan & Rofi'i, 2023)—being able to engage attention, explain ideas effectively, and communicate authority while remaining approachable.

These skills are central not only to instruction but also to establishing teacher identity and credibility (Brubacher & Harper, 2024). As pre-service teachers discovered the importance of clear and confident communication, they also began to understand how this influences classroom management, student motivation, and learning outcomes.

Learning through feedback and reflection

A central component of the final demonstration teaching experience was the integration of feedback and reflection, which pre-service teachers recognized as instrumental

to their growth and professional readiness. Throughout the process, they engaged with mentors, cooperating teachers, and panel observers who provided critical insights into their instructional delivery, classroom management, and overall teaching performance. Rather than viewing feedback as purely evaluative, many pre-service teachers came to value it as a learning tool—a resource for refining their practice and strengthening their teaching identity. Their growing appreciation for professional advice was reflected in their openness to critique and their ability to identify specific areas for improvement (Raymundo & Ignacio, 2023). Participants acknowledged how feedback allowed them to adjust not only technical aspects of their teaching (such as pacing, questioning strategies, or material use) but also more subtle elements like tone, presence, and transitions. This process helped them view teaching as a dynamic and continuous act of improvement, rather than a one-time performance (Templeton et al., 2021).

The reflective responses elicited by feedback also signified a shift from passive learning to active professional engagement (Iraj et al., 2021). Interns moved beyond compliance with feedback and began to internalize it as part of their reflective cycle—assessing their teaching choices, rethinking their strategies, and setting goals for future improvement. This mindset cultivated habits of critical self-awareness and fostered a culture of lifelong learning (Matsumoto-Royo et al., 2023).

Professional flexibility and adaptability

One of the most meaningful realizations reported by pre-service teachers was the importance of being flexible and adaptable in real classroom settings. The final demonstration teaching experience exposed them to situations that required rapid adjustment—whether due to technical glitches, unexpected student behavior, time constraints, or changes in classroom setup. These moments served as pivotal learning points that shifted their understanding of teaching from a rigid, scripted activity to a dynamic, responsive practice.

Interns came to recognize that no matter how well-prepared a lesson may be, teaching always involves variables that are beyond one's control. This led to a deeper appreciation for adaptability—not as a backup plan, but as an essential professional skill. The ability to think on their feet, revise instructional steps mid-lesson, or shift strategies to re-engage learners was not only a coping mechanism but a marker of teaching competence.

This growth also reflected a transformation in mindset. Pre-service teachers began to embrace the unpredictability of the classroom as an opportunity to be creative, resourceful, and reflective (Jones et al., 2023). They learned that flexibility is not a sign of weakness or failure, but rather a strength that empowers them to meet learners where they are, and to uphold learning goals even under pressure.

Readiness for the teaching profession

As pre-service teachers navigated the demands of final demonstration teaching, many developed a stronger and more grounded sense of preparedness for the realities of full-time teaching. The immersive nature of the experience—requiring them to plan, instruct, manage, adjust, and reflect within a single teaching cycle—offered a condensed but powerful simulation of what it truly means to be a teacher. This gave interns a clearer understanding of the multifaceted roles they are expected to perform and how theory translates into actual practice.

What began as a requirement often transformed into a formative experience that validated their capabilities and deepened their professional resolve (De Groot et al., 2021). Pre-service teachers described how the process helped them become more comfortable with daily teaching routines, instructional decision-making, and the need for ongoing problem-solving. Through real-time experiences, they developed greater confidence in their ability to handle various scenarios—whether managing student behavior, addressing diverse learning needs, or responding to logistical interruptions.

Importantly, this sense of preparedness was not about achieving perfection, but about becoming equipped to respond to complexity with competence and care. Interns walked away from their demo teaching not just with a checklist of what they accomplished, but with the insight that they could adapt, grow, and perform under pressure—an awareness that fosters readiness for the long-term demands of professional teaching.

Conclusion

This study examined the lived experiences of pre-service teachers during their practice teaching demonstration, focusing on the challenges they encountered, the coping strategies they adopted, and how the experience shaped their professional growth bridging the gap in literature on pre-service teachers' final demonstration teaching. Anchored in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), the findings reaffirm that demonstration teaching is a powerful experiential platform where future educators translate theory into practice. The data reveal that this phase of teacher education is not only about content delivery but is also a dynamic process of learning through action, reflection, and continuous adjustment. It is through these real-time encounters—both successful and difficult—that pre-service teachers begin to build instructional competence, emotional resilience, and professional identity.

The demonstration experience exposed interns to authentic classroom conditions that tested their ability to plan, improvise, manage, and adapt. Despite facing issues such as limited classroom familiarity, technical disruptions, and performance anxiety, the participants emerged with clearer insights into the demands of the teaching profession. Their growth was evident in their improved lesson planning, stronger classroom management, and heightened

self-confidence. More importantly, the experience fostered a shift from seeing teaching as a performance to viewing it as a reflective, learner-centered practice. This reinforces the value of structured reflection, supportive mentorship, and gradual immersion in building professional readiness and long-term teaching efficacy.

Beyond individual growth, the results have broader implications for the education community. Institutions, cooperating schools, and teacher education programs must recognize the practice teaching demonstration not merely as an assessment tool but as a critical developmental experience. A system that integrates mentorship, emotional support, feedback mechanisms, and adaptive training can help produce future educators who are not only competent but also reflective and responsive to the complexities of modern classrooms. By enhancing how practice teaching is implemented and supported, the education community can ensure that pre-service teachers are empowered to enter the profession with confidence, clarity, and a strong commitment to the transformative role of education.

Future studies could explore how structured mentorship programs impact the long-term instructional competence of pre-service teachers, as well as examine how demonstration teaching experiences vary across different educational institutions.

Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing

The author declare that ChatGPT, was utilized to support the development of this article. ChatGPT were employed primarily for language enhancement, language translation, grammar refinement, and formatting assistance. The core ideas, interpretations, research design, data analysis, and all scholarly insights presented in this study were conceived, analyzed, and critically reviewed by the author. All factual content, thematic interpretations, and conclusions are original and remain the responsibility of the author.

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