

A FIVE-YEAR TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM, IN BUSINESS EDUCATION, CAN PREPARE FUTURE EDUCATORS TO COPE WITH THEIR FRUSTRATIONS, DEVELOP THEIR PERSONALITIES AND PROFESSIONAL TEACHING SKILLS, BETTER THAN A FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM

หลักสูตรศึกษาศาสตรบัณฑิต 5 ปี สามารถเตรียมพร้อมศักยภาพความเป็นครูธุรกิจเพื่อรับมือกับความผิดหวัง พัฒนาคูณลักษณ์ และทักษะการสอนได้ดีกว่าหลักสูตร 4 ปี

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ABSTRACT

This article draws on the questionnaire responses of 41 education students at Kasetsart University. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed in this study. The data were collected from 22 graduate Business Education students and 19 Business Education students enrolled in the Bachelor's degree program in Business Education were interviewed, and data were collected using a questionnaire survey in the 2008 academic year.

During the data collection, Business Education students were taking a Field Experience Course, a requirement course for graduation. The undergraduate students were to teach in the actual classroom settings in various participating schools, ranging from elementary to secondary levels. There were two student conferences organized for student teachers in exchange of teaching methods and strategies, to share their personal experiences, and to contribute their concerns towards classroom research. Student teachers were interviewed for an additional in-depth data collection after the course was completed.

This study presents an argument in that a five-year teacher education program, in Business Education, can prepare future educators to cope with their frustrations, conduct classroom research, develop their personalities and professional teaching skills, better than a four-year program

KEYWORDS : Student teacher, Teacher education program, Business education

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยมาจากข้อมูลจากนิสิตคณะศึกษาศาสตร์จำนวน 41 คนที่ตอบแบบสอบถาม การวิจัยใช้แบบเชิงปริมาณและเชิงคุณภาพ โดยนิสิตที่สำเร็จการศึกษาไปแล้ว จำนวน 22 คน และกำลังศึกษาอยู่ในระดับปริญญาตรีในขณะที่เก็บข้อมูลอยู่ จำนวน 19 คน การเก็บข้อมูลใช้แบบสอบถาม การสัมภาษณ์ การสังเกต ซึ่งเก็บข้อมูลในปีการศึกษา 2551

ช่วงที่เก็บข้อมูลเป็นช่วงเวลาที่เป็นนิสิตในสาขาวิชาธุรกิจศึกษากำลังฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพ ซึ่งเป็นวิชาบังคับ นิสิตจะต้องฝึกสอนในชั้นเรียนจริง ซึ่งนิสิตแต่ละคนอาจจะฝึกสอนในระดับชั้นที่แตกต่างกัน ตั้งแต่ระดับประถมศึกษาถึงระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนปลาย ในแต่ละภาคการศึกษา นิสิตจะต้องเข้าประชุมเพื่อแลกเปลี่ยนประสบการณ์การสอน ประสบการณ์ที่ได้รับจากการสอนในแต่ละสถานศึกษา และการวิจัยในชั้นเรียน ผู้วิจัยสัมภาษณ์นิสิตฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพเพื่อเก็บข้อมูลเชิงลึกหลังจากที่นิสิตผ่านการฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพเสร็จสิ้นแล้ว

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้เสนอข้อโต้แย้งว่าหลักสูตรศึกษาศาสตรบัณฑิต 5 ปี สาขาวิชาธุรกิจศึกษา สามารถเตรียมครูให้สามารถรับมือกับสถานการณ์ที่ซับซ้อน สามารถทำวิจัยในชั้นเรียน พัฒนาศักยภาพที่เหมาะสม และทักษะการสอนได้ดีกว่าหลักสูตร 4 ปี

คำสำคัญ : นิสิตฝึกสอน ฝึกประสบการณ์วิชาชีพ ธุรกิจศึกษา

Introduction

The Thailand Education Reform of 2003 has altered the Thai Educational system nationwide (National Education Act, 1999; 2004). Formerly, the undergraduate education programs were a four-year program. The Thailand Ministry of Education brought into effect the change to improve education in Thailand. After the major changes in the Educational Reform of 2003, all undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education are facing a challenge of a new and improved curriculum (Office of Higher Education Commission, 2003). This initiative was to ensure that every new teacher must complete a five-year education program. The major concern in Thailand is that we are experiencing qualified teachers shortages in all areas (UNESCO, 1999). It raises a critical question whether we need to retain our students in school another extra year when we are facing teacher shortages in the nation!

The Thailand Education Reform resulted in major changes in the Thai Educational Systems especially in a teacher preparation program. Many scholars have

suggested that to strengthen the teaching professional standards, the qualified teachers are the key element (McLaughlin, 1995; Burden, 1996) that will direct the new wave of the Thai Educational System. This simply means that the successes and failures of the future of Thai Educational System lie upon the teacher development program. Moreover, the research of the implementation of the new five-year program has never been investigated before. Therefore, in an effort to understand student teachers' experiences and determine the best practices in student teachers' supports and retention, this research aimed to evaluate the five-year education program as required by the Teachers' Council of Thailand (2007).

One avenue of advancing teacher education program is through the Student Teaching Field Experience (STFE), which is a 6-credit hour course for all students in the Faculty of Education at Kasetsart University. The STFE is equivalent to a professional internship program (a teacher professional development), in which all students in their fifth year will spend two semesters of school-based experiences (Business Education Curriculum, 2003).

The goal is to assist undergraduate students in developing their teaching skills, professional ethics, and relationships among students, colleagues, supervising teachers, mentors, and administrators. The STFE is a professional internship, which is a required course in which the students have to spend two semesters (equivalent to 8 months) of school-based experiences in their fifth year. The student teachers are responsible for up to two third of the teaching load in their internship school (Secretarial Office of Teachers' Council of Thailand, 2003). The student teachers were required to teach 8-12 hours per week, with a special project, such as website competition in the first semester. The second semester, student teachers needed to work on classroom research and a teaching load of 4 to 6 hours per week (Manowalulou, 2009).

The Ministry of Education and the Teacher's Council of Thailand assured that in order to raise the Thai Education Program Standards, it was necessary for the future educators to possess such content knowledge, pedagogy, motivation, and classroom management (Newsome & Lederman, 2001). More importantly, the new requirement for the educational program was extended from three months long to twelve months long (Secretarial Office of Teacher Council of Thailand, 2003). However, these student teachers have never had any working or teaching experiences prior to the STFE program; they were frustrated and struggled with the challenges and expectations. Most student teachers were under huge pressures of having had high expectations on their shoulders.

This research was conducted in conjunction with a first five-year program which required teacher education students to have a field experience in teaching and classroom research for one year as required by the Teachers' Council of Thailand (Teachers' Council of Thailand, 2007). The Teachers' Council of

Thailand was "incorporated with the principal objective to determine professional standards, issue and revoke licenses, supervise and monitor compliance with the profession standards and code of ethics, including professional development, so that education professional practitioner shall have knowledge and understanding in the practice of education profession which is a licensed profession under the National Educational Act" (Pilanthanonond, 2007)

The objectives of the STFE were for the student teachers to gain teaching experiences, relationships, perceptions, understandings, communications, and underlying self-motivation through the overall student teaching process; and to build teaching experiences upon their skills. The STFE provided student teachers with opportunities to practice teaching methods, create teaching aids, and to elaborate on study plan. The student teachers practiced their teaching, created media, teaching aids, teaching strategies, and program of study. The duration of the student teaching field experience was a one-year long (Secretary Office of Teacher Council of Thailand, 2003).

It was always challenging for inexperienced student teachers to develop their teaching skills, and classroom management. According to Srisuantang, et.al (2009), the professional practice of student teaching is to enhance teaching and learning in their academic areas and balance between teacher training, and learning by doing.

Limitations of the study and alternative explanations for these differences are discussed.

Teaching Environment

There are schools enlisted with the university. Most of the schools enlisted were schools that former student teachers have had internship with. The list of

schools were given to students in order for the student teachers to select their schools to teach. The grade level of the teaching schools were selected by the school administrators and/or mentors. The number of student teachers were varied according to the number of internship acceptance. Public and private schools had different school policies, resulting in the admission of the numbers of students in each school. Therefore, the public schools with higher number of students' enrollment were likely to get supported from the government. Although, the public schools have great deal of support from the government, people viewed public schools as being of lower standards, especially the treatment school teachers received were lower than most private schools in the same areas, which leads to an inferior quality in teaching and instruction.

Mentoring and Supervising

The cooperative teachers required to have seminar from the university in order to align the objectives of the program among supervising teachers, administrative, teacher education program, and the cooperative teachers. The cooperative teachers were assigned by the school administrators and under an agreement with a business education program coordinator, and school administrators. Cooperative teachers had up to five student teachers to supervise. Courses and teaching loads were discussed prior to the beginning of the first semester began. Student teachers worked closely with the mentors and academic advisors to collaborate teaching instruction, evaluation and classroom research.

Classroom Research

Classroom research was an important part of the STFE, since it enhanced student teachers to understand both classroom research and classroom problem-solving

skills. The student teachers would be able to conduct a useful classroom research that responded to the needs of the schools and classroom issues. The student teachers would learn the process of classroom action research from planning, reporting and presenting their data (Sirsuantang, et al., 2009), and involve in data collecting process, analyzing data and finalizing their findings. The overall process ensured that student teachers would develop critical thinking skills, planning skills, problem solving skills, and teamwork.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study were threefold, which was 1) to evaluate the five-year teacher education program in Business Education after the first year implementation, 2) to study the factors that influence the decisions that future educators used for coping with their frustrations, and developing their personalities and professional teaching skills, and 3) to investigate the factors that influence their attitudes towards the teaching profession.

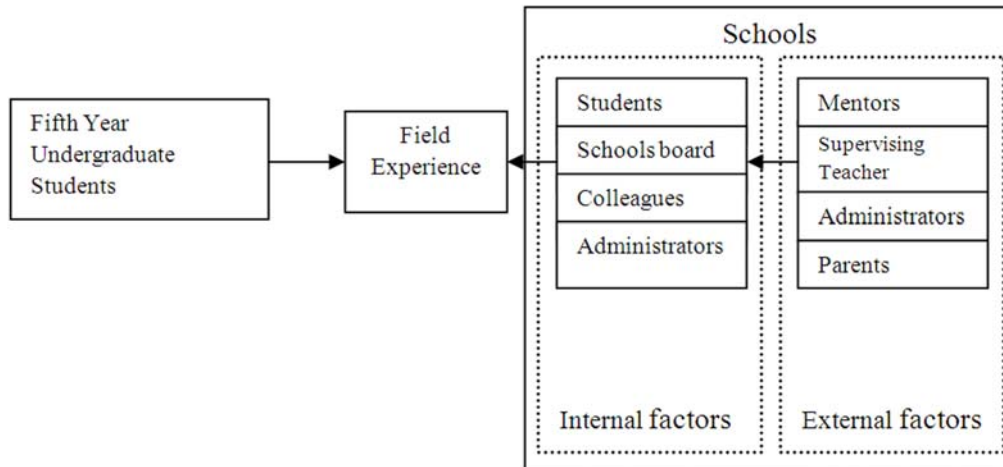
Research Questions

1. To what extent does the five-year Education program enable the student teachers to enhance their profession.
2. To what extend does the five-year Education program enable the student teachers to develop their capability in teaching and classroom research.

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed in this study. The questionnaire surveys, semi-structured interviews, and participatory observations were conducted in this study. The total of 22 students participating in the four-year education program, and

Conceptual Framework



26 students participating in the five-year education program participated in this study. All Business Education students enrolled in the Bachelor's degree program were interviewed and data were collected using a questionnaire survey in the 2007 academic year. Interview data were collected during the conferences and outside of classroom. The observation was conducted in an actual classroom teaching to obtain the genuine classroom environment. During the data collection stage, the Business Education students (five-year program) were taking the first half of the Field Experience course, a required course for graduation.

Results and Discussions

According to the interview questions, student teachers enrolled in Student Teaching Field Experience (STFE) at Kasetsart University responded that they often had numerous issues regarding the length of the program and the classroom management. Most student teachers expressed that some cooperative teachers and their students had lower level of respect towards student teachers. There were several upsetting incidents that the student teachers were experienced.

Most student teachers participated in many curricular activities within schools, which led to inadequate preparation of teaching and instructional time. "When it comes to class preparation, I was asked to assist cooperative teachers or other school teachers in preparation for school activities," stated by few of the student teachers. Some school teachers and cooperative teachers thought of student teachers as "additional helping hands" rather than student teachers. Very few student teachers were engaged in discussions about the curriculum, instruction, and classroom management. They raised the questions what was expected of them at the school? What could they expect from their students? How should they organize their classrooms or their grade books? And how will they know if their students were learning?

Frustrations

According to the open-ended questions, student teachers enrolled in Student Teaching Field Experience at Kasetsart University responded that they have often faced with a number of problems, which were the length of the field experience, classroom

management, attitudes towards student teachers, teaching loads and incidents that upset the student teachers. Most of the responds were not recognized as important by the administrative levels of the institutions.

Most student teachers perceived that the five-year education program was too long. Most preferred to have a shorter period of field experience. However, the student teachers from the 2007 academic year who graduated in 2008 disagreed since they believed that the student teachers would be professionally trained when they have had at least a year long training. Some student teachers admitted that they took one semester to get used to the school environment, pupils and overall teaching responsibilities.

Most student teachers were involved with many curricular activities within schools, which lead to inadequate amount of teaching and instruction time. When it comes to class preparation, most student teachers were asked to assist the mentors or other school teachers in preparation for classes. Some school teachers and mentors were arguing whether whom have more student teachers to supervise, since student teachers were seen as "additional helping hands" rather than student teachers in some schools.

To no surprise, these questions were similar to the student teachers were considered assistants in some schools. Whereas, some cooperative teachers expressed their attitudes towards student teachers as burdens since they needed to supervise, assist, and teach student

teachers and require extra amount of time and energy to do so. Many student teachers responded that their cooperative teachers encouraged them to "put extra effort to help out as much as possible". If the student teachers were willing to go extra mile and spend extra effort on learning to work in school, this yielded a better result.

According to the interview, most student teachers were satisfied with the academic assistant of the cooperative teachers. Many cooperative teachers were reported to not be as supportive to some student teachers. In contrary, some student teachers were thought of as burdens; they were discouraged to become a good teacher. The appreciation could positively develop student teachers' attitudes towards their teaching careers.

Teaching Loads

Prior to the field experience, the academic supervisors agreed with the university, Field Experience Center, school administrators and mentors the hours of teaching. Student teachers are required to have a teaching workload of 8 to 10 hours per week for the first semester. The second semester, student teachers were required to do a classroom research. Therefore, the workload would be 5-7 hours per week. However, some student teachers responded to the questionnaire survey, they had less than 5 hours teaching load per week (Table 1) which was lower than a minimum requirement set by the Field Experience Center.

Table 1 Profiles of Student Teachers' Teaching Load in 2008 Academic Year (N=23)

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 hours per week	3	13.6
Between 5-7 hours per week	8	36.4
Between 8-10 hours per week	11	50.0
Total	22	100.0

Conduct a Classroom Research

Most student teachers responded to the questionnaire survey that they did not have adequate research background. They stated that the curriculum inadequately provided the knowledge in classroom research and other related topics, therefore some student teachers struggled to get started especially during the first stage, finding the topics. In addition, student teachers had no previous experience in conducting classroom research when discussing with the mentors who did not have the background knowledge in classroom research, they were unable to assist the student teachers.

Personality Development

Some student teachers reported that they were alums in the schools. Thereafter, most of their students did not respect or pay attention to the student teachers while teaching. The student teachers were perceived as immature by their regular teachers. This led to the student teachers' inability to control their classrooms. The student teachers stated that when they were unable to control their classroom, they yelled and expressed unpleasantly to their students. When the class was over, the student teachers were frustrated and tired since students did not pay attention in the classroom, and/or did not work on their assignments.

According to the first student teacher conference, one of the student teachers was furious with her class. She was upset with her school, cooperative teacher, and students. Therefore, the research was conducted an observation during her class period. From the observations, the student teachers were unable to control her classroom. Some of the students were chatting, and coming to class 30 minutes late. The student teachers had to yell in front of the classroom to get the students' attention. After awhile, the student teachers were still

unable to control the classroom. So The student teachers were frustrated and developed an aggressive behavior towards the students. It led to a more negative experience for both students and student teachers. In this situation, the mentor allowed the student teachers to have a total control over her classroom. Later, her supervising teachers suggested that she should integrate the use of technology and improved her teaching strategy accordingly. In the second conference, she had developed a more positive attitude towards her students, and cooperative teacher. She discussed that she took the advices from the cooperative teachers and integrated the computer into her teaching. Therefore one of the most important components to prepare qualified teachers was through the advising, encouragement and understanding of experienced supervising teachers and veteran cooperative teachers.

Professional Teaching Skills

The results of this study showed that most inexperienced student teachers had developed their teaching experiences and developed positive attitudes towards their teaching careers. Although at the beginning, most student teachers were struggled and frustrated, they were able to adjust themselves while teaching and they also learned to adapt themselves at the same time. This indeed had become an "authentic learning" for the majority of the student teachers. Almost all student teachers expressed a true affection towards their teaching profession when the semester was nearly over.

Some student teachers who already graduated and become teachers believed that some of the field experience contributed to the decision to become teachers. Student teachers were asked whether the five-year program (one year internship) was better than the a four-year program (one semester internship), most student teachers reported that the one year internship

program equipped them with classroom management, knowledge and skills necessary for teaching careers, and attitudes toward teaching profession. Most student teachers have learned to adapt themselves thoroughly once the first semester being almost over. For some student teachers, the one-year student teaching program was an appropriate time for the student teachers to become a professional teacher.

Student teachers had gradually changed from negative attitudes to positive attitudes with the help of the supervising teachers and cooperative teachers. The student teachers themselves also learned from their own experiences how to cope with frustration and burdens. When student teachers spent over a year in the school settings, school teachers, and students; they no longer felt like strangers in the schools.

Conclusions & Implimentation

What were indicators of development in these areas? Student teachers had gradually changed from negative attitudes to positive attitudes. There were some student teachers who were fond of the teaching profession after the STFE was over. Almost all of the student teachers shied away from this career because "the remuneration is very little compared to other professions". However, there was one exception. Few of the student teachers mentioned that they would stay in teaching profession regardless of the low salaries. One of the student teachers stated that, "I'd love to be a teacher. I have seen very good example from my father whom I look up to." She was likely to pursue this career. What specifically in the five-year program (versus the 4-year program) enabled you to enhance these area? For example, in relation to conducting classroom research you could discuss the opportunities in the five-year program to add a course in research and to

extend the field experience component to include a full fifth year.

These aforementioned reasons resulted future teachers' shortages. Many student teachers were unable to fulfill their teaching career goal, since they did not receive support from former educators, mentors, and academic supervisors. When student teachers had shared their failures, negative experiences during the conferences, the academic supervisors provided the solutions and possible feedbacks. The student teachers changed their attitudes and developed positive ones. Since student teachers were new to the teaching arena, they were struggled at the beginning. Once they learned that in any career, failure is a part of learning process and the outcomes do not always pleasant, they are able to accept the fact and continue their internship smoother.

A more experienced cooperative teacher stated that "it takes at least five years for a new teacher to find her feet"; this statement concluded the overall experiences of this student teaching program. The only way that we could teach our student teachers to be qualified teachers is by actually doing it. Research, theories, and conceptual frameworks are meaningful, however they could also be worthless when the student teachers are unable to apply them into real life situations. All pedagogy techniques are collected through years of experiences and what works for one might not work for others. New teachers require helps to manage their lesson plans, and endless list of tasks. Therefore, new student teachers should be paired or accompanied by qualified veteran teachers in "team-teaching" effort. This way will ease the student teacher's ways through all frustration and hurtful experiences.

In order to truly solve the problems of lacking qualified teachers, the Thai government could indeed support their teaching professional environments and

their "pocketbooks". The job that many prospect teachers entered for altruistic and humanitarian reasons was never to be perceived as a competitive-salaried profession. Yet, these prospects required to participate in a five-year program. Lastly, through qualified cooperative teachers and supervising teachers and in-school support for student teachers; the qualified teachers would be retained.

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