

Young Criminologists in the Teaching Practice: Plight and Aspirations

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study ascertained the plight and aspirations of young criminologists who were engaged in teaching practice. Two research questions were answered: (1) What is the plight of young criminologists in the teaching practice; and (2) What are the aspirations of young criminologists in the teaching practice? It involved ten research informants presently employed with higher education institutions (HEIs) within Central Visayas, Philippines. The collection of information techniques used were in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. The research participants shared their plight in the teaching

practice and their aspirations in their career. Nine themes surfaced in this study: low confidence, difficulties in oral and written communication, a teacher by accident, lack of preparation for teaching practice, job satisfaction, professional status, technical skills, professional & personal growth, and support to enhance teaching competence.

Keywords — Criminologists, Teaching Practice, Teaching Competence, Plight, Aspirations, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Talking with friends and colleagues in the academe and our active involvement in evaluating HEIs offering Criminal Justice Education, we realized the significance of the Criminal Justice Education: Policies and Standards for the Criminology Program, specifically Article I, Section 1, which stipulated that the mission of the Criminology Program is to provide graduates who are morally upright and professionally competent in law enforcement, crime prevention, crime detection and investigation, and custody and rehabilitation of offenders, among others. It further emphasizes that the HEIs are envisioned as significant educational institutions actively and continually involved in producing graduates who have the knowledge and skills in addressing the problems of criminality in the country and the competence to meet the challenges of globalization in the field of criminology (CMO No. 21, 2005).

To achieve this mission statement, we are convinced that major areas should be given more emphasis, like but not limited to the quality of instruction, the laboratory facilities and equipment, the library holdings and other important services, most importantly on the preparation of young criminologists for a teaching career. Teachers as instructional experts are expected to be credible facilitators who bring the real world in the classroom and lead learners to the real world, ensuring the essence of learning by doing among students. Such contextualization, experiential methods and aims of learning affirm that teaching is related to learning (Corpuz & Locido, 2008; Piantanida & Garman, 2009).

FRAMEWORK

There has been a substantial theoretical and practical shift of emphasis, mostly in mainstream education, towards acknowledging that teachers are

among the principal components of any pedagogical program. In the past ten years, a burgeoning research base has increasingly shown that teachers are among the most important players influencing student achievement, holding the key to sealing the gaps in students' achievement outcomes (Goldhaber, 2002; Sanders, 2000).

Anchored on David McClelland's Acquired Needs Theory, an individual may have a predominant need that triggers or develops an aspiration to achieve, to affiliate and to have power. McClelland theorized that a strong need for achievement – the drive to succeed or excel – includes the individual's performance of their work tasks. The needs of one indicate his plight. Thus, those in intense plight are motivated to take any challenge, to compete, and to perform in work situations (Schermerhorn, 2007).

Alexander & Fuller (2005) believes that “few educators, economists, or politicians would argue with the contention that all things being equal, highly qualified teachers produce greater student achievement than comparatively qualified teachers.”

Various studies on Criminal Justice Education have been conducted in Asia. In an investigation in India, Khan & Unnithan discovered that there are several key similarities and differences in comparison to the US Criminal Justice Education. They raised four questions which emerged from the comparison: the national government's influence over criminal justice education; the gap between academic education and job-related training; the influence of level of economic development on crime-related education; and, the circumstances surrounding the influence of outsiders and outside agencies on criminal justice education (2008).

But very few studies have focused on young criminologists in the teaching practice. Hence, the researchers were motivated to investigate this phenomenon.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This phenomenological study aimed to come up with qualitative analyses of the experiences and suggestions that were solicited from young criminologists for them to be well-equipped as teachers in the Criminology Education Program. Two research questions were answered: (1) What is the plight of young criminologists in the teaching practice; and (2) What are the aspirations of young criminologists in the teaching practice?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The phenomenological design was utilized in this study. The purpose of the phenomenological interview is to attain a first-person description of some specified domain of experience. The researcher becomes the learner, and the participant who has the experience becomes the expert. Therefore, the interview becomes a conversation with the participants leading in the discussions of particular experiences in whatever way he/she chooses (deMarrais, 2004).

Research Site

We selected ten young criminologists as research participants who have been actively involved in teaching practice, in any of the higher education institutions offering Criminology Education Program, for at least one (1) year but not more than three (3) years. We have intentionally chosen young criminologists as research participants in this phenomenological study because they are young professionals engaged in teaching and possess no prior training and preparations for the teaching career. In addition, they have very limited pedagogical skills. The participants represented the different higher education institutions (HEIs) offering criminology education program in the major cities and provinces of Cebu, Bohol and Negros Oriental. The participants were a combination of male and female faculty and selected by employing the purposive sampling technique.

The participants were classified into two (2) sets. The first set was for the in-depth interview consisting of three (3) young criminologists and the second set was composed of seven (7) young criminologists for the focused group discussion. For purposes of confidentiality, the study participants have pseudonyms as presented in Table 1.

Data Collection

We utilized an interview guide to bring together the experiences, plight, and aspirations of young criminologists who were engaged in teaching. It was utilized in both in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. The interview guide was submitted first to the panelists for content validation and approval prior to the actual conduct of interviews.

Upon the approval of the participants to be part of the study, they were asked to answer questions personally presented by the researchers within 60-90 minutes. A consent form was signed first by the informant before an interview was conducted. With their prior approval, the interview was audio-recorded. This

helped the researchers to analyze the exact words and to keep the informants' statements in context. The informant participation was voluntary. The decision to join or not to join did not affect their current or future relations with any institution, agency, or any person. The informants were informed that they could withdraw from the study anytime. If feeling stressed during the study, they could choose to stop. They may also skip personal questions. If they withdraw, they were assured that the data collected are to be returned or destroyed, whichever the participants preferred. The researcher used a tape recorder along with a notebook to record notes from the interview and focus group discussion as suggested by Boyce & Neale (2006).

Data Analysis

The researchers reviewed the notes and audio recordings. The informants' responses were analyzed with the intention of recognizing important themes. In sorting out and categorizing using the coding system of the recurring themes, the researchers compared and contrasted responses, and link up information to unverified criteria (Colton and Covert, 2007 as cited by Cuizon, 2013). The audio-recorded interactions were transcribed, interpreted and analyzed. We established the result by presenting the information gathered in a matrix form as shown in Table 2 for the themes and core ideas on the plight of young criminologists, and Table 3 for the themes and core ideas on the aspirations of young criminologists.

Table 1. Distribution of Participants' Information

Pseudonym	Gender	Location
<i>Individual Interview</i>		
Lombroso	Male	Negros Oriental
Goddard	Female	Tagbilaran City
Osborn	Female	Mandaue City
<i>Focus Group Discussion</i>		
P1	Male	Tagbilaran City
P2	Male	Dumaguete City
P3	Male	Tagbilaran City
P4	Female	Tagbilaran City
P5	Male	Cebu City
P6	Female	Cebu City
P7	Male	Cebu City

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of information gathered was outlined using three classifications. The first was the general which means at least 50% of the participants mentioned the item in their response during the interview or focused group discussion; the second classification was the type which means that at least 25 to 49% mentioned the item and finally the third classification was the variant which means that less than 25% mentioned the item. The research questions were answered using major themes (Amparo, 2011).

The Plight of Young Criminologists in the Teaching Practice

Taken from the information gathered on the plight of young criminologists in the teaching practice, there were seven main themes which surfaced, and we categorized those themes as personal and professional plights which are presented in Table 2. These themes facilitated us to decide which core ideas to describe.

Low Confidence

Our informants uncovered that they experienced difficulties and had an apprehension towards their teaching career from the very first day they stepped inside their classrooms. Up to the present, there were times that they felt uncomfortable. That is because of their very limited knowledge, skills, experiences and insecurities with regards to teaching. The statements revealed in this segment were all about the issue on their low self-confidence. Some of them expressed that in most cases they encountered awkward feelings considering that their students' age is almost like their age.

The feelings experienced by the young criminologists having low self-confidence in teaching were expected especially those who were not trained to become teachers. Bauml (2014) emphasized teachers who actively participated in planning meetings during the first year of teaching would accumulate knowledge on curriculum, pedagogy, and professional contexts. Findings showed that both participation and collaboration with colleagues on planning meetings were centered on the teachers' knowledge development and sense of efficacy as new teachers who would develop and increase their self-confidence.

Additionally, teachers equipped with teaching programs felt significantly better prepared across most dimensions than those who entered teaching without preparation. The extent to which teachers felt well prepared when they entered teaching are significantly correlated with their sense of teaching efficacy, their

sense of responsibility for student learning, and their plans to remain in teaching (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002).

Difficulties in Oral and Written Communication

The participants admitted that in many instances inside the classroom, they experienced problems on their lack of capability in expounding and elaborating further the lessons for the day and the giving of examples and scenarios on the topics being discussed. The predicament encountered also includes difficulty in the construction of test questionnaires due to lack of oral and written communication skills.

Table 2. Themes and Core Ideas on the Plight of Young Criminologists in Teaching Practice (Personal Plight)

Major Themes	Frequency of Responses	Core Ideas
<i>Personal Plight</i>		
Low confidence	General	Awkward feelings Age gap
	Typical	No trust Capability issue Physical appearance
	Variant	Boring and not interesting An inefficient and ineffective teacher
Difficulties in oral and written	General	Not fluent Oral communication problem Not able to elaborate
	Variant	Written communication problem
Teacher by accident	General	Did not expect Never a plan Don't know what to do
	Variant	Quit teaching Keep on studying Feel insecure

Table 3. Themes and Core Ideas on the Plight of Young Criminologists in Teaching Practice (Professional Plight)

Major Themes	Frequency of Responses	Core Ideas
<i>Professional Plight</i>		
Lack of preparation for teaching practice	General	No knowledge and skills in teaching methodology No background on techniques in teaching Not adequately prepared Difficulty in delivering the topics
	Typical	Difficulty in instilling discipline Compliance on paper works
	Variant	Hard to deal and cope with so many pressures Encounter hard headed and stubborn students
Job Satisfaction	General	When they say “Thank you” Passed the board examination
	Variant	Great time in our class Become members of the tri-bureau
Professional status	General	Enrolled in a master’s degree Low income
	Variant	Employment status Politics in loading and selection Limited skills developed during college days
Technical skills	General	Lack of laboratory facilities and equipment Limited supplies in consumable materials No specialization training
	Variant	Last priority in outside/industry exposure Limited laboratory activity Finish master’s and doctoral degree
Professional and Personal Growth	General	Tenured status Model and best teacher To become a dean
	Typical	To have a happy and successful family life
	Variant	Develop expertise in forensic science High salary package
Support to enhance teaching competence	General	Improve students’ oral and communication skills Complete laboratory facilities Technology-driven instruction
	Typical	More financial support from the administration Complete and updated library collections Learn and adopt new teaching methodologies
	Variant	Produce higher board examination passing percentage Less teaching preparation

Teacher by Accident

The study participants shared that in the early years of their teaching, they did not know what to do inside the classroom. The informants added and narrated that when they started to teach, a lot of difficulties were encountered considering that they do not have industry experience and their knowledge acquired were only based from the information shared to them by their mentors. To reinforce the previous learnings gained from the school and mentors, they read and studied their reference materials/books. If there were topics that they did not understand, it triggered and developed into insecurities and thoughts to quit teaching.

Lack of Preparation for Teaching Practice

The informants revealed that one of the major plights they were in was the feeling that they were not fully prepared for the teaching practice. They did not undergo formal training acquiring the pedagogical knowledge and skills. Chong, Choy & Wong (2008) stated that the teacher requires the basic and advanced skills and knowledge on lesson preparation, discussion facilitation, classroom management, student care, and student assessment. We agree with Chong, Choy & Wong regarding these competencies required of teachers. However, aside from this, we believe that the teaching practice goes beyond classroom performance. Teaching is not just a profession but a mission, hence, teachers are teachers twenty-five hours a day, eight days a week and thirteen months per year.

Apart from these weaknesses, the study participants found themselves at the middle of nowhere in terms of doing research, mentoring the students, and extending oneself in the service of the people in the community, which are all considered as part of the total mission of one who is in the teaching profession.

Similar to the study of Amparado, Bediña & Agbay (2017), teaching staff requires the following training needs: preparation of syllabus and modules (2.94), developing teaching materials and tools for instruction (2.85), research and other application of research methodologies (2.84), and time & financial management (2.83).

Job Satisfaction

Though the young criminologists had encountered several obstacles in their teaching practice, on the other hand, they were also challenged and inspired by some career episodes that kept them to hang around and go on with the self-sacrificing journey of their professional plight. Some of our study informants shared that the most rewarding part of their career, which gave them the feeling

of great satisfaction, was when their students said to them “thank you for the knowledge” and most especially when they passed the criminologist licensure examination.

Professional Status

Most of the informants were consistent and agreed that they need to pursue and finish a master’s degree in order to have an assured and more stable career in teaching.

Technical Skills

The study participants honestly admitted on their lack of confidence in handling technical courses due to lack of exposures, orientation, and training. The situation greatly affects their teaching performance and motivation. According to Campbell and Pritchard in 1976, job performance is a function of ability and motivation. Performance is regarded as almost any behavior, which is directed toward task or goal accomplishment. Good performance among employees in an organization has many implications such as high motivation, outstanding abilities, good organizational climate and infrastructure, and excellent leadership that can sustain rapport, productivity and good relationship among staff. Teachers need information and training to feel more confident and effectively teach in inclusive classrooms and differentiate instruction (Jenkins & Yoshimura, 2010; Ross, 2002; Schleicher, 2011).

Professional and Personal Growth

Majority of the study participants aimed and wished the following: to pursue and finish their graduate studies, to have permanent employment status, to become a good mentor, to be qualified and become a college dean, to have a successful and happy family life, develop expertise or become a forensic specialist, and to be recognized for their efforts, and receive a high compensation package.

Young criminologists who serve as teachers to students are a novice in terms of industry experience and translating concepts and theories to real-life situations. It is with this premise that relevant education and skills are essential to augment this gap. The university is sending the young criminologists to graduate studies for them to finish their master’s degree. On the other hand, efforts are made by the university to expose the young criminologists to various entities that will increase their skills acquisition.

In the Philippine setting, young criminologists who serve as teachers may be new graduates from their four-year college degree. They are hired by various

universities to supply the academe with the needed manpower who shall teach the student population taking up the Bachelor of Science in Criminology degree. Because of this scenario, continuing education is a must with frequent exposures to industry-based skills.

Moreover, the Master of Science in Criminal Justice degree allows them to master the theories and concepts in the discipline. It also enhances their research skills and teaches them various teaching methods and strategies.

Teachers and the instruction imparted are the keystones to educational reforms and the need for more exact standards of instructions that leads to greater demand for teacher preparedness. Schlauch (2003) discusses the significance of teacher education and preparation, and the impact that teachers and instruction have on students and the nation. According to Dodge-Quick (2011), self-efficacy is noted as personal judgment concerning one's abilities to carry out and perform as expected.

Support to Enhance Teaching Competence

The second and the last identified major theme under the aspirations of young criminologists in teaching practice was on their desire to attain quality education in the field of criminology and criminal justice. Quality Education should be advocated through continuous improvement on the core areas of the criminology and criminal justice education program like the faculty, instruction, library, and the laboratory areas to meet or exceed the minimum standards as required by government agencies and instrumentalities. Concerned individuals need to submit for quality assurance through accreditation. Hence, the criminology program will be able to develop a formalized structure of continuous improvement, positively impact the teaching strategies (teacher-learner relationship), produce competent graduates, gives prestige to the school, provide guidance for parents and students in the choice of criminology school, and avail of financial assistance from the government.

CONCLUSION

There are nine themes which emerged in this study. These nine themes are low confidence, difficulties in oral and written communication, a teacher by accident, lack of preparation for teaching practice, job satisfaction, professional status, technical skills, professional and personal growth, and support to enhance teaching competence. These themes are closely related. These themes can be re-grouped into three major categories which are all contributing factors to their

performance as young teachers. This includes motivation to sustain their teaching profession, the capability to deliver what expected of them, and the opportunity to grow and develop as professionals and individuals.

The findings of this study are not generalizable beyond the 10 research informants. Future researches may be conducted, exploring the plight and aspirations of young criminologists in the teaching practice with another group of informants in order to substantiate the findings.

Future researches may also be considered as researchers to ascertain the plight and aspirations of young criminologists in the teaching practice in other parts of the country and to enhance the knowledge base as well as address the issues, and concerns related to the present study.

Furthermore, research may be conducted to re-interview some of the research informants in the present study to see whether their views and perceptions have changed over time. In addition, researches may be done to discover the students' and school administrators' observations on the plight and aspirations of young criminologists in the teaching practice to authenticate the findings of this investigation.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of this study can be translated as a training and development manual for the Human Resource Department and the College of Criminal Justice. The manual may consist of five sections in the aspects of continuing education, research, industry immersion, teaching methodologies and strategies, and sustainable extension programs. The Human Resource Director, the Dean of the College of Criminal Justice and the faculty members, shall craft policies related to these aspects in order to equip the young criminologists who serve as faculty in the department. The manual shall serve as a guide to develop the young criminologists and shall be evaluated on a periodic basis.

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