

# Bridging Campus Courses and Field Experiences in University-based Teacher Education Program Using Online Diaries

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**Abstract:** New teachers who are shocked by real-world classroom situations - such as rules of the local school, human relationships in a shielded environment, and the reality of teaching children - tend to leave the workforce within a few years, and it has become necessary to educate student teachers in the universities with a focus on adaptive professional socialization of teachers (Zeichner & Gore 1990) to overcome this problem. We have provided a weblog community where pre-service teachers can have a dialogue based on their report of experiences during their practice teaching. However, in order to promote the professional socialization of teachers, we have designed a new weblog community where experienced teachers can participate. Through comparative analysis, we have pursued the effectiveness of this change in design. In this study, we referred to Hong (2010) and categorized their diaries and comments within the weblog community into nine factors, and analyzed the features of their communication. We revised the design of the pre-teaching from the year 2010, and altered the lesson design of the pre-teaching for the year 2012 so that pre-service teachers could exchange their opinions focusing more on the ways of schools and teachers. The class design was changed so that experienced teachers provided hints during pre-teaching to motivate pre-service teachers to think about the issues, and the pre-service teachers were made to take the initiative in using the weblog. From the results, we found that the number of entries of diaries and comments into the weblog community differed between the years 2010 and 2012. Moreover, it became relevant that the ratio of the diary entries about “commitment towards work,” “value and standpoint as teachers” and the like increased.

**Keywords:** Lesson design, pre-service training, weblog community, teachers’ professional identity

## 1. Introduction

In order for teachers to adapt to tackle big complex problems at schools, there is a need to focus on teachers’ adaptive professional socialization (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). The reason behind this is that the turnover rate within a few years of new teachers is high due to the reality shock they face, such as rules of the local school, human relationships, and the reality of the children (e.g. Hong, 2010). As one of the reasons, a previous research pointed out that there is a gap between the teacher education at universities and the actual work at the schools, such as the teacher of the course not overlooking the pre-service teachers during the practice teaching. (Zeichner, 2010).

We have provided a weblog community where pre-service teachers could have a dialogue based on their reports on experiences during their practice teaching, as a part of the preparation and reflection of the practice teaching. (Mochizuki & Kitazawa, 2009). However, the closed community of pre-service teachers lack real-life experiences, so a course design where experienced teachers can participate, such as in pre-teaching and the weblog community, and motivate pre-service teachers to adapt professional socialization is needed.

This previous research suggested that the weblog community became an important resource about professional socialization through not only providing opportunities to discuss and review mutually the practical knowledge which they learned during their practice teaching, but also through exchanging information regarding how to communicate to children and other teachers which they

could not learn at their universities, and about ways of adapting to problems at school. In this research, the authors have provided a weblog community that serves as a bridge between pre-service teachers during practice teaching and the university. In order to promote the professional socialization of pre-service teachers, we designed a new weblog community that allows the participation of experienced teachers, and through comparative analysis of the years, we studied the effectiveness of the change in design.

## **2. Outline of the Course**

### *2.1 Objectives of the Study*

The target course was the “Teacher Training II,” which was a course held at a private university in Japan from April to July 2010, and at the same time in 2012. This course was a lesson held before and after practice teaching. In the sessions held prior to the practice teaching, the aim was for the pre-service teachers to acquire step-by-step the necessary teaching skills and to brush-up their skills to create teaching plans, blackboard writing plans, and educational materials, through mutual evaluation of the teaching plans and trial lessons with the practice school.

### *2.2 Weblog Community*

The weblog community used was an open source system called “OpenPNE (<http://www.openpne.jp/>)” provided by Tejimaya Inc. in Japan. Pre-service teachers could informally discuss their various experiences as student teachers through their online diaries (Figure 1).

### *2.3 Changing the Design of the Course*

We changed the design of the course because we aimed to enhance the sophistication of discussions among pre-service teachers within the weblog community as follows.

(1) K who was a teacher for seven years participated in the face-to-face course, and K also provided some comments to pre-service teachers about their trial lessons. K advised not only teaching techniques, but also made inquiries that made pre-service teachers think about perspectives on teaching and teachers.

(2) Both the teacher of the course and K waited to submit comments until pre-service teachers submitted their comments first, and they also did not submit too many comments. They submitted comments when pre-service teachers request them to, but basically, the pre-service teachers were made to discuss with the weblog community among themselves.

## **3. Research Method**

### *3.1 Objectives of Pre-Service Teachers*

In the year 2010, fifteen fourth-year students (eight male and seven female) participated in this study. In 2012, eight fourth-year students (five male and three female) and a female student the second year the master’s program student participated. However, a fourth-year male student in the year 2012 only submitted comments to others, because he did practice teaching until November.

### *3.2 Period of the Study*

From April to July 2010, and from April to July 2012.

### *3.3 Analysis*

As the reasons for teachers leaving their jobs, Hong (2010) analyzed to focus the relationship among six factors: 1) commitment, 2) value, 3) emotion, 4) micropolitics, 5) efficacy and 6) knowledge and



Figure 1. A sample of a dairy about practice teaching submitted to the weblog community.

beliefs. Therefore, in this research, we defined six categories: 1) commitment towards work, 2) value and standpoint as teachers, 3) emotion, 4) micropolitics, 5) efficacy and 6) knowledge and beliefs for teaching. Furthermore, to analyze the contents of reality shock and job adjustment, we focused on two additional categories: 7) expectations and the reality of schools, and 8) social behavior as professionals. In this research, we focused on a total of nine categories (eight categories above-mentioned and 9) others), and we also analyzed the contents of the diaries and comments which was submitted to the weblog community.

The first author and the second author independently analyzed the categories of the diaries and comments of the year 2010 and the year 2012. If the diary and the comment had multiple categories, we counted each category. Additionally, when opinions regarding categorization did not match, we decided through discussion.

Table 1: Results of the number of diary entries and comments within the weblog community.

Number of students each year	Diary entries	Comments
15 students the year 2010	105 diary entries. Average number of entries was 7.0 per student teacher.	356 (teachers' comments were 198). Average number of comments was 10.53 per student.
8 students wrote diaries and 9 students wrote comments in the year 2012	84 diary entries Average number of entries was 10.5 per student teacher.	443 (teachers' comments were 62). Average number of comments was 42.3 per student.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Analysis of the Number of Diaries and Comments

Table 1 indicates the results of number of diaries and comments with the weblog community. From the results, we found that the diaries per student teacher slightly increased (the year 2010 was 7.0 and the year 2012 was 10.5), and the comments per student teacher largely increased (the year 2010 was 10.53 and the year 2012 was 42.3).

### 4.2 Analysis of Contents of Diary Entries and Comments

Table 2 indicates the results of analysis of diary entries and comments which students by category. The details of the diary and the comments, and the results of each category are as follows.

#### 4.2.1 Commitment towards Work

Diary entries about commitment towards work increased 17.8 points (the number of the diaries in the year 2010 was 18 (17.6%), and the number of the diaries in the year 2012 was 29 (35.4%)). Comments decreased 0.2 points (the number of the comments in the year 2010 was 5 (3.2%), and the number of the comments in the year 2012 was 11 (3.0%)).

#### *4.2.2 Value and Standpoint as Teachers*

Diary entries about value and standpoint as teachers increased 10.9 points (the number of the diaries in the year 2010 was 20 (19.6%), and the number of the diaries in the year 2012 was 25 (30.5%)). Comments decreased 1.9 points (the number of the comments in the year 2010 was 10 (6.5%), and the number of the comments in the year 2012 was 17 (4.6%)).

#### *4.2.3 Emotion*

Diary entries about emotion increased 13.9 points (the number of the diaries in the year 2010 was 48 (47.1%), and the number of the diaries in the year 2012 was 50 (61.0%)). Comments decreased 1.6 points (the number of the comments in the year 2010 was 27 (17.4%), and the number of the comments in the year 2012 was 58 (15.8%)).

#### *4.2.4 Micropolitics*

Diary entries about micropolitics decreased 2.9 points (the number of the diaries in the year 2010 was 3 (2.9%), and the number of the diaries in the year 2012 was 0 (0%)). There were no comments in both years.

#### *4.2.5 Efficacy*

Diary entries about efficacy increased 9.4 points (the number of the diaries in the year 2010 was 34 (33.3%), and the number of the diaries in the year 2012 was 35 (42.7%)). Comments decreased 0.6 points (the number of the comments in the year 2010 was 9 (5.8%), and the number of the comments in the year 2012 was 19 (5.2%)).

#### *4.2.6 Knowledge and Believes for Teaching*

Diary entries about knowledge and beliefs for teaching increased 21.6 points (the number of the diaries in the year 2010 was 39 (38.2%), and the number of the diaries in the year 2012 was 49 (59.8%)). Comments decreased 2.9 points (the number of comments in the year 2010 was 29 (18.7%), and the number of the comments in year 2012 was 58 (15.8%)).

#### *4.2.7 Expectation and Actuality of Schools*

Diary entries about expectation and actuality of schools decreased 4.4 points (the number of the diaries in the year 2010 was 38 (37.3%), and the number of the diaries in the year 2012 was 27 (32.9%)). Comments increased 0.1 points (the number of the comments in the year 2010 was 13 (8.4%), and the number of comments in the year 2012 was 31 (8.5%)).

#### *4.2.8 Social Behavior as Professionals*

Diary entries about social behavior as professionals increased 6.9 points (the number of the diaries in the year 2010 was 49 (48.0%), and the number of the diaries in the year 2012 was 45 (54.9%)). Comments increased 1.1 points (the number of comments in the year 2010 was 33 (21.3%), and the number of comments in the year 2012 was 82 (22.4%)).

#### *4.2.9 Others*

Diary entries about others decreased 5.7 points (the number of the diaries in the year 2010 was 17 (16.7%), and the number of the diaries in the year 2012 was 9 (11.0%)). Comment increased 13.4 points (the number of the comments in the year 2010 was 58 (37.4%), and the number of the comments in the year 2012 was 186 (50.8%)).

**Table 2: Results of analysis of diary entries and comments which students submitted in each category.**

Categories	Year 2010		Year 2012	
	Diaries	Comments	Diaries	Comments
1) Commitment Towards Work	18 17.6%	5 3.2%	29 35.4%	11 3.0%
2) Value and Standpoint as Teachers	20 19.6%	10 6.5%	25 30.5%	17 4.6%
3) Emotion	48 47.1%	27 17.4%	50 61.0%	58 15.8%
4) Micropolitics	3 2.9%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
5) Efficacy	34 33.3%	9 5.8%	35 42.7%	19 5.2%
6) Knowledge and Beliefs for Teaching	39 38.2%	29 18.7%	49 59.8%	58 15.8%
7) Expectation and Actuality of Schools	38 37.3%	13 8.4%	27 32.9%	31 8.5%
8) Social Behavior as Professionals	49 48.0%	33 21.3%	45 54.9%	82 22.4%
9) Others	17 16.7%	58 37.4%	9 11.0%	186 50.8%
Total	102	155	82	366

Note 1: The value of upper stand indicates the number of submit, and the value of lower stand was percentage.

Note 2: Total indicates the total number of submitted diary entries and comments.

## 5. Discussion

Based on the results of diary entries and comments by the pre-service teachers, we found that the number of diary entries about “commitment towards work,” “value and standpoint as teachers,” “emotion” and “knowledge and beliefs for teaching” increased in 2012 from 2010. In 2012, K participated in the face-to-face course, and gave advice hinting at the values of classroom and teaching. Students may have kept this in mind as they participated in the training, and as a result, lead to the increase in diary entries regarding “knowledge and beliefs in teaching” and “value and standpoint as teachers” This result was the effect of changed lesson design for preparing pre-service training, where face-to-face lessons included not only teaching techniques, but also advices hinting at the values of classroom and teaching (Hewitt, 2002).

On the other hand, diary entries and comments about “commitment toward works” and “value and standpoint of teachers” increased, while there was not much increase in “social behavior as professionals.” We need to reconsider the modality of the lesson before practice teaching, so that pre-service teachers can become aware of the diversity of communication in various schools in the future. Furthermore, the reason for the increase in the number of comments per pre-service students in 2012 was most-likely due to the fact that the teacher and K waited until the students submitted their comments first, and tried to keep their comments minimal. It is important that teachers wait for the students for their comments, in order to promote the students externalizing their experience and thoughts.

One thing that has become relevant from the 2012 classroom is that, as Heweitt (2002) points out, instructions in the face-to-face classroom is effected by the activities offline. From this, we can say that in the course design of practice teaching in universities, it is important to create opportunities for experienced teachers to directly provide advice to pre-service teachers. An example of a course design would be for experienced teachers to participate in the mock classes by the pre-service teachers held in the university, having them throw questions that is associated with adaptive professional socialization of teachers, in addition to comments regarding the mock class. Furthermore, it is possible for the pre-service teachers to take notice of the atmosphere of the school or the diverseness

of the coaching teacher, through sharing the report of the meeting with the practicum schools before the practice teaching during the class. Also, as a way to promote the professional socialization of pre-teachers during practice teaching, it is possible to create a community utilizing the weblog community. In this case, while waiting for the pre-service teachers to comment, the course teachers and experienced teachers can follow-up with comments that is anticipated to promote social adaptation to the work environment of the pre-service teachers.

## 6. Conclusion

In this study, the authors have provided a weblog community that serves as a bridge between pre-service teachers during practice teaching and the university. In order to promote the professional socialization of pre-service teachers, we designed a new way that allowed the participation of experienced teachers, and through comparative analysis of the years, we studied the effects of the change in design. Specifically, the course design was changed so that the experienced teachers would be able to provide a foothold that would allow such discussions, and the pre-service teachers were made to take the initiative in using the weblog.

To evaluate, we referred to Hong (2010) and categorized their diary entries and comments within the weblog community into nine factors. From the results, we found that there was a difference between the ratio of their diary entries and comments with the weblog community between the years 2010 and 2012, where the number of the diary entries and the comments per pre-service teacher was greater in the year 2012. It became relevant that diary entries about “commitment to work,” “value and standpoint of teachers,” “emotion” and “knowledge and beliefs of teaching” increased. Based on these findings, methods have been suggested for a course design to promote social adaptation to the work environment of teachers, such as the participation of experienced teachers in the pre-teaching asking about the perceptions of real-world classrooms, and facilitating the weblog community during pre-teaching and waiting for the pre-service teachers to comment, with follow-up comments by the teacher of the course and experienced teachers regarding social adaptation.

For future works, we need to reconsider the modality of the lesson before practice teaching, so that pre-service teachers can become aware of the diversity of communication in various schools. Additionally, need to analyze the types of contents within “others” in the future.

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