



Developing a Sustainable Community Extension Program in Teacher Education Through Longitudinal School-To-School Work Immersion

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Abstract

This study presents the school-to-school Work Immersion Program of FAITH Colleges, designed for Grade 12 students aspiring to become teachers. Guided by the ADDIE model and aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), the ten-day program immerses participants in key domains, including pedagogy, learning environment, curriculum, community linkages, and professional growth. Implemented for three years with eleven batches, the program was evaluated through post-tests and focus group discussions. Results consistently showed Very Highly Attained ratings, particularly in orientation to school culture and operations. Across cohorts, no significant differences were found ($p = 0.218$), confirming program stability. However, ICT integration emerged as a recurring challenge, while Year 2 revealed gaps in content knowledge and classroom management. Qualitative analysis highlighted three themes: experiential learning, supportive mentorship, and teacher identity formation. Moving forward, program refinements will prioritize ICT training and pedagogy while sustaining community partnerships. Overall, the FAITH Colleges Work Immersion Program demonstrates how structured immersion fosters competence, reflection, and professional identity in future teachers.

Keywords *Teacher education, community extension, work immersion, preservice teachers*

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-changing world, teacher preparation must blend theory with experiential learning. School-to-school immersion provides preservice teachers with authentic classroom experiences that strengthen their pedagogy, foster professional growth, and promote community engagement (Smith & Thompson, 2020; Jones, 2021). While immersion improves competence and efficacy (Harris & Lee, 2020), its long-term role in fostering sustainable community extension programs remains underexplored. Few studies have examined how such experiences build lasting partnerships between schools and teacher education institutions (White & Zhang, 2020).

This study addresses that gap through a longitudinal analysis of immersion's impact on preservice teachers' identity, competencies, and community involvement, emphasizing sustainability as central to teacher preparation (Kwon & Park, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Field immersion is a vital component of teacher preparation, connecting theoretical knowledge with classroom realities. Structured immersion enables preservice teachers to strengthen pedagogical competence, reflective practice, and professional development across diverse contexts (Smith & Thompson, 2020; Jones, 2021). It also deepens their understanding of school culture and organizational structures, which shape professional readiness (Zhang et al., 2020).

Research shows that immersion enhances teacher efficacy and classroom management (Harris & Lee, 2020; Bailey & Loughran, 2021) and promotes reflection through mentoring and journaling (Farrell, 2019a; Hattie, 2021). Beyond skills, immersion supports identity formation and long-term commitment to teaching (Beijaard et al., 2004) while fostering socially responsible

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teacher preparation through community partnerships (White & Zhang, 2020). Embedding programs in community engagement further contributes to sustainability (Kwon & Park, 2022).

Despite these benefits, challenges remain. Preservice teachers often struggle with integrating information and communication technology (ICT), despite its central role in 21st-century teaching (Reimers & Chung, 2021; Nguyen & Le, 2022a). Research emphasizes the need for deliberate preparation and systematic ICT training (Tondeur et al., 2017; Aguirre & Hernandez, 2020).

Overall, immersion programs effectively link theory and practice, enhancing competence, reflection, identity, and school–community ties; however, persistent ICT challenges necessitate continuous refinement to strike a balance between pedagogy and digital literacy.

RESEARCH METHOD

A longitudinal mixed-methods study was employed for a community extension program at FAITH Colleges. This study was conducted at FAITH Colleges as part of a community extension program supporting Grade 12 HUMSS students aspiring to teach. Conceptualized in 2022 and aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), it combined qualitative and quantitative data to assess outcomes. Using the ADDIE model, the program analyzed participant needs, designed PPST-based activities, implemented a 60-hour immersion, and evaluated effectiveness through surveys and FGDs. The Teachers for the Future (T.F.T.) Cycle further structured the program into five phases: analysis, design and development, immersion implementation, evaluation, and redesign for continuous improvement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data from post-test evaluations and focus group discussions were analyzed using statistical and thematic approaches. Conducted after each batch and consolidated yearly, the results included:

Quantitative Phase

A five-point evaluation tool was utilized to evaluate the success of the program. The indicators are based on the crafted objectives of the immersion program, referenced from the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers.

Table 1. Year 1 Post-Test Evaluation Tool of Grade 12 Preservice Teachers' Work Immersion Program

Objectives of the Preservice Teachers Work Immersion Program	Mean	SD	VI	Rank
I am introduced to the immersion program, the school community, school operations, and the policies.	4.85	0.36	VHA	1
I can demonstrate content knowledge, principles of teaching and learning, teaching strategies, and classroom management.	4.82	0.39	VHA	2
I can recognize the school facilities that promote learner security, a fair learning environment, classroom structure, and learner participation.	4.75	0.44	VHA	6
I can observe classroom diversity and handling of learners' genders, needs, strengths, backgrounds, and circumstances.	4.78	0.42	VHA	4.5
I can positively utilize ICT, and different technological, interactive tools/websites throughout my teaching and learning process.	4.70	0.52	VHA	8
I can self-monitor and evaluate my progress, realizations, and achievements through my daily journal writing.	4.68	0.47	VHA	7

Objectives of the Preservice Teachers Work Immersion Program	Mean	SD	VI	Rank
I can engage the wider school community in the education process through job interviews and participation in the FAITH College of Education.	4.80	0.41	VHA	3
I can visualize my philosophy of teaching, reflection to improve practice, and professional development goals through FAITH-CoEd's seminars, activities, and art-making sessions.	4.78	0.42	VHA	4.5
Overall Mean	4.77	0.28	VHA	

Note: 5= 4.21 - 5.00 Very Highly Attained (VHA); 4= 3.41 - 4.20 Highly Attained (HA); 3 2.61 -3=.40 Moderately Attained (MA); 2 1.81 - 2.60 Low Level of Attainment (LLA); and 1= 1.0 - 1.80 Not Attained (NA). SD is the Standard Deviation.

Results from Year 1 (February–May 2023) showed that preservice teachers' professional growth benefited from immersion in school communities, operations, and reflective practice. The highest-rated objective (mean = 4.85, VHA) was introduction to school community, operations, and policies, confirming the value of exposure to school culture and structures (Zhang et al., 2020; Johnson & Kivinen, 2021). High scores in content knowledge and classroom management also highlight immersion's role in linking theory to practice (Harris & Lee, 2020; Bailey & Loughran, 2021).

The program's reflective activities align with findings that emphasize reflection as essential to teaching efficacy and professional growth (Shulman, 2020; Hattie, 2021). However, ICT integration ranked slightly lower (mean = 4.70), suggesting limited confidence in applying technology in practice. Prior studies confirm this as a common challenge (Reimers & Chung, 2021; Nguyen & Le, 2022b). These results underscore immersion's value in teacher preparation while pointing to the need for stronger ICT-focused training.

Table 2. Year 2 Post-Test Evaluation Tool of Grade 12 Preservice Teachers' Work Immersion Program

Objectives of the Preservice Teachers Work Immersion Program	Mean	SD	VI	Rank
I am introduced to the immersion program, the school community, school operations, and the policies.	4.74	0.44	VHA	1
I can demonstrate content knowledge, principles of teaching and learning, teaching strategies, and classroom management.	4.51	0.56	VHA	8
I can recognize the school facilities that promote learner security, a fair learning environment, classroom structure, and learner participation.	4.59	0.55	VHA	3
I can observe classroom diversity and handling of learners' genders, needs, strengths, backgrounds, and circumstances.	4.54	0.55	VHA	5.5
I can positively utilize ICT, and different technological, interactive tools/websites throughout my teaching and learning process.	4.54	0.55	VHA	5.5
I can self-monitor and evaluate my progress, realizations, and achievements through my daily journal writing.	4.69	0.47	VHA	2
I can engage the wider school community in the education process through job interviews and participation in the FAITH College of Education.	4.56	0.55	VHA	4

Objectives of the Preservice Teachers Work Immersion Program	Mean	SD	VI	Rank
I can visualize my philosophy of teaching, reflection to improve practice, and professional development goals through FAITH-CoEd's seminars, activities, and art-making sessions.	4.54	0.55	VHA	5.5
Overall Mean	4.59	0.44	VHA	

Note: 5= 4.21 - 5.00 Very Highly Attained (VHA); 4= 3.41 - 4.20 Highly Attained (HA); 3 2.61 -3=.40 Moderately Attained (MA); 2 1.81 - 2.60 Low Level of Attainment (LLA); and 1= 1.0 - 1.80 Not Attained (NA). SD is the Standard Deviation.

Results from Year 2 (March–April 2024) showed that preservice teachers continued to benefit from exposure to school operations, community dynamics, and policies, with the highest-rated objective (mean = 4.74). This underscores the value of familiarizing preservice teachers with institutional structures as a foundation for professional growth (Smith & Thompson, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Engagement in school activities, such as interviews and participation in FAITH-CoEd programs (mean = 4.56), also highlighted the importance of connecting teacher education with the wider community (Johnson & Kivinen, 2021; Shulman, 2020).

The lowest score (mean = 4.51) was in demonstrating content knowledge, pedagogy, and classroom management, reflecting ongoing challenges in translating theory into practice. Prior studies confirm that immersion helps but is not always sufficient for building confidence in applying teaching strategies (Harris & Lee, 2020; Bailey & Loughran, 2021). Despite these challenges, the Year 2 findings affirm that the program continues to strengthen reflection, professional competencies, and engagement with the school community.

Table 3. Year 3 Post-Test Evaluation Tool of Grade 12 Preservice Teachers' Work Immersion Program

Objectives of the Preservice Teachers Work Immersion Program	Mean	SD	VI	Rank
I am introduced to the immersion program, the school community, school operations, and the policies.	4.82	2.30	VHA	1
I can demonstrate content knowledge, principles of teaching and learning, teaching strategies, and classroom management.	4.65	1.92	VHA	4
I can recognize the school facilities that promote learner security, a fair learning environment, classroom structure, and learner participation.	4.71	2.10	VHA	6
I can observe classroom diversity and handling of learners' genders, needs, strengths, backgrounds, and circumstances.	4.67	2.11	VHA	4
I can positively utilize ICT, and different technological, interactive tools/websites throughout my teaching and learning process.	4.51	1.90	VHA	8
I can self-monitor and evaluate my progress, realizations, and achievements through my daily journal writing.	4.73	2.12	VHA	2
I can engage the wider school community in the education process through job interviews and participation in the FAITH College of Education.	4.67	2.12	VHA	4
I can visualize my philosophy of teaching, reflection to improve practice, and professional development goals through FAITH-CoEd's seminars, activities, and art-making sessions.	4.62	1.98	VHA	7

Overall Mean	4.48	0.13	VHA
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Note: 5= 4.21 - 5.00 Very Highly Attained (VHA); 4= 3.41 - 4.20 Highly Attained (HA); 3 2.61 -3=.40 Moderately Attained (MA); 2 1.81 - 2.60 Low Level of Attainment (LLA); and 1= 1.0 - 1.80 Not Attained (NA). SD is the Standard Deviation.

Results from Year 3 (March–April 2025) again showed the highest-rated objective as introduction to the school community, operations, and policies (mean = 4.82, VHA). Consistent with earlier years, this highlights the importance of grounding preservice teachers in institutional culture to support professional socialization (Zhang et al., 2020; Johnson & Kivinen, 2021). The lowest-rated objective was ICT integration (mean = 4.51, VHA), reflecting ongoing challenges in applying technology effectively in teaching. This aligns with studies noting preservice teachers' limited confidence in using ICT for meaningful instruction (Reimers & Chung, 2021; Nguyen & Le, 2022a). Overall, Year 3 results affirm the program's strength in orienting preservice teachers to school structures while emphasizing the need for stronger digital literacy training to prepare them for 21st-century classrooms.

Table 3. Comparison of Year 1, 2, and 3 Post-Test Evaluation Tool of Grade 12 Preservice Teachers' Work Immersion Program

Comparison	Test Statistic	p-value	Interpretation
Year 1 VS. Year 2 VS. Year 3	1.519	0.218	No significant difference

Comparison of Year 1–3 post-test evaluations showed no significant differences ($p = 0.218$), indicating consistent outcomes across cohorts. The Mann-Whitney U test, appropriate for non-normal data (Field, 2018), confirmed program stability despite variations in participant numbers. This aligns with research showing that well-designed immersion programs yield steady results when grounded in clear goals and reflective practice (Jones & Harris, 2020; White & Zhang, 2020). While stability could be viewed as a lack of progress, within a design-based research lens, it reflects the strength of a consistently effective structure.

Qualitative data revealed growth over time: by Year 3, preservice teachers showed deeper reflection, stronger professional identity, and greater intentionality than in Year 1. Thus, although quantitative scores remained uniformly high, the substance of participants' experiences matured. Future research may examine subtler benefits of extended or varied immersion, as well as individual and contextual factors influencing outcomes (Shulman, 2020).

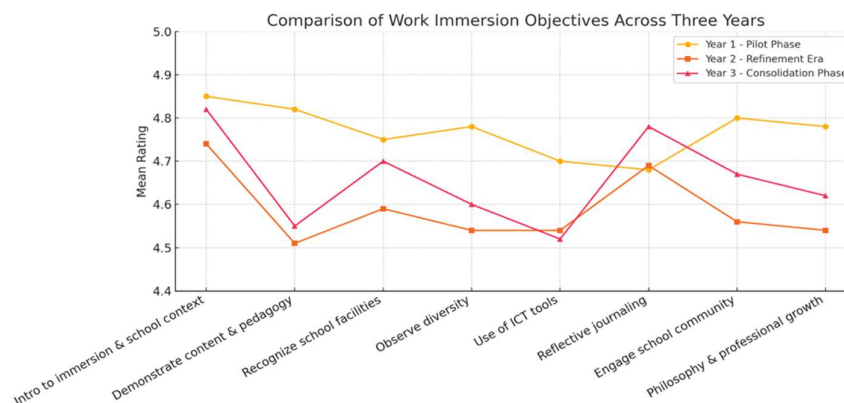


Figure 1. Comparison of Work Immersion Objectives Across Three Years

Across three years, the TFT Cycle showed both stability and developmental growth. In Year 1 (Pilot Phase), students engaged strongly with the school environment but reported lower confidence in ICT integration, reflecting persistent challenges in digital competence (DepEd, 2017; Tondeur et al., 2017). Year 2 (Refinement Phase) introduced journaling and post-immersion seminars, leading to improved reflection and professional goal-setting, consistent with PPST's focus on personal growth and reflective practice (Farrell, 2019b). By Year 3 (Consolidation Phase), refined modules supported clearer teaching philosophies and stronger professional identity, underscoring the role of identity formation in long-term commitment to teaching (Beijaard et al., 2004). Quantitative results consistently yielded Very Highly Attained ratings, reflecting a robust program structure (DepEd, 2017; McKenney & Reeves, 2019). Qualitative data highlighted deeper reflections and stronger professional identity, though ICT integration remained a recurring challenge.

Qualitative Phase

Reflections from Grade 12 students in the FAITH College of Education work immersion highlighted three themes: Experiential Learning and Skill Development, Interpersonal Relationships and Mentorship, and Desires for Future Enhancements, showing both the program's positive impact and their aspirations for further growth as future teachers.

Theme 1: Experiential Learning and Skill Development

Students emphasized the value of hands-on opportunities such as demo teaching, classroom observation, and exposure to diverse subjects in building competence and confidence.

1. Demo Teaching and Classroom Management: Many wanted more chances to teach directly, highlighting authentic practice as crucial for developing confidence (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Borko et al., 2021).
2. Hands-On Observation: Students sought additional observation time to learn varied methods and classroom dynamics, supporting the role of observational learning in pedagogy (Grossman et al., 2021).
3. Diverse Learning Opportunities: Requests for exposure to different subjects reflected the importance of varied teaching contexts in enhancing preparation (Tobin & McNally, 2022).

Theme 2: Interpersonal Relationships and Mentorship

Students emphasized the importance of supportive relationships with mentors, peers, and faculty, which enriched both their professional and personal growth.

1. Supportive Mentorship: Many valued guidance from facilitators like "Doc J" and the Dean, showing how strong mentorship fosters belonging and motivation (Robinson & Goss, 2020; Smith & Ingersoll, 2022).
2. Connection with Peers and Faculty: Students expressed the need for more bonding opportunities, highlighting the role of peer collaboration in building a supportive learning community (Bennett et al., 2021).
3. Building Relationships for Professional Growth: Mentorship and collegial support were seen as essential for teacher identity formation and long-term success (Wang et al., 2022; Vick & Rudd, 2021).

Theme 3: Teacher Identity Formation

Students highlighted mentorship, peer support, and guided experiences as central to shaping their professional growth and emerging teacher identity.

1. Realization of Future Teaching Role: Many wished for a longer immersion, reflecting the value of extended field practice in strengthening competence (Freeman & Garret, 2020).
2. Growing Passion for the Profession: Students expressed the need for more face-to-face observations, which offer unique challenges and learning opportunities in classroom management and engagement (Hargreaves et al., 2020).
3. Reflections on Purpose and Calling: Requests for exposure to diverse subjects underscored how subject-specific experiences support teaching aspirations and align with research on the benefits of varied preparation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Harris & Wood, 2021).

Overall, these findings affirm that immersion fosters identity formation, passion, and professional purpose, while pointing to the need for longer and more diverse experiences in teacher preparation (Borko et al., 2021; Darling-Hammond, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the Year 1–3 Work Immersion Program showed consistent feedback across cohorts, with school orientation rated highest each year. The lowest ratings varied: ICT integration in Years 1 and 3, and content knowledge with classroom management in Year 2. It is recommended to strengthen the use of ICT by incorporating activities such as gamified assessments and hands-on sessions with technological tools. Furthermore, focused sessions on content knowledge, pedagogy, and classroom management should be provided through discussions, practice sharing, and reinforced application in teaching demonstrations.

LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

Despite valuable insights, this study has several limitations. Reliance on self-reported data may have introduced bias (Field, 2018), while the two-week immersion limited sustained teaching exposure. Conducted in a single institution, findings may not be fully generalizable. Recurring ICT challenges also point to gaps in digital teaching preparation.

Future research should extend immersion periods, explore blended and face-to-face modalities, and conduct cross-institutional comparisons to test adaptability. Strengthening ICT training is essential, along with longitudinal studies to track preservice teachers into higher education and classroom practice, to assess the long-term effects on their competence, identity, and engagement.

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