

Journey of Male Educators with Young Learners: Inputs to Teacher Education Management

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of male teachers of kindergarten in the public school, province of Tarlac, Philippines. Using qualitative approach, it attempted to recognize male involvement in the field of early childhood education as a journey toward gender equality and setting value on male nurturing behavior. Initially, it determined their motivations toward early childhood education career and the teaching profession. If teachers are motivated, they would have the desire to work for the all-round development of learners and can-do justice to their professional obligations. Consequently, it highlighted on four important areas of experiences specifically on classroom management, teaching strategies, colleagues' relationship, and parental involvement. The participants tried to break the stigma or male stereotypes by providing young learners with the sense of warmth and emotional security. They also believed that the task of laying the first foundation of learning is a source of fulfilment, and it is seen as an opportunity more than a responsibility. Furthermore, the participants' crucial experiences served as essential inputs to the pre-service early childhood teacher education program. The pre-service teacher education program should explicitly address issues of equity and diversity within its curricula as to help dismantle stereotypes and misjudgment towards men in the teaching profession. Likewise, pre-service education program may need to better support and provide professional development exposure as to better recruit and retain male teachers in the field of early childhood education.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Kindergarten, Male Educators, Young Learners, Teacher Education Management

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is said to be the period of greatest growth and development as the brain develops most rapidly and almost at its fullest, and the self-esteem, the vision of the world and moral foundations are established [1]. This stage is considered as the exploratory stage [2]. It implies that children want to know what their environment is, and how they can actively explore the world as well as construct an understanding of it.

Early childhood programs are responsible for creating a welcoming environment that respects diversity [3]. The quality of the early childhood education has a direct impact on positive child development. The school has a great responsibility, allowing children to achieve their fullest potentials. Gender imbalance in the pre-school teaching profession and feminization of the profession has been a common practice world over [4]. It is viewed as women's work [5], naturally and intrinsically better at [6].

Early childhood education is organized by images, symbols, and social understandings [7]. In the rare instance when men are shown, the men are presented in less nurturing positions than the women [8]. Many jobs have been labeled according to the gender lines [9], women are encouraged to become teachers [10], whereas men face a stigma of being homosexual, effeminate, and/or pedophiles [7].

The education profession could benefit from an increase of males by bringing new perspectives and opportunities to the field [11]. Children see positive images of men and are cared for and taught by fathers, they learn that caregiving and teaching are attitudes and activities typical of men [12].

To develop mechanisms to bring this about, this study attempted to showcase and highlight vital experiences of men as early childhood educators focusing on their motivations, classroom management, teaching strategies, colleagues' relationship, and parental involvement with the intent of generating inputs to pre-service early childhood teacher education. Early childhood education needs to be reframed as a rewarding and socially meaningful career option for men, they need to be acknowledged for challenging restrictive traditional gender role stereotyping.

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the qualitative approach in analyzing and exploring the experiences of men as early childhood educators. Further, this kind of research is used to gain deeper insight into a phenomenon, validate earlier findings, or gather more deep-seated data [13].

This study was conducted among the public-school kindergarten classes in the two divisions of Tarlac, Philippines namely; Tarlac City and Tarlac Province divisions. The participants in the study had specializations or relevant trainings in early childhood education with at least three years of experience in teaching young children. Involvement in the study was voluntary and the researcher obtained a signed form as evidence of informed consent from each participant.

In this study, the thematic analysis approach was used. It goes beyond simply counting phrases or words in a text and moves on to implicit and explicit ideas within the data [14]. The researcher analyzed the data in a two-cycle coding process. In the first cycle of the coding process, interview results were analyzed individually. The second cycle allowed the researcher to look for commonalities among all the data. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and NVivo coding was used to assign labels to a section of data from the transcribed interviews. Afterwards, the data were analyzed through meaning analysis until the research came up on the emerging themes from the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Motivations of Male Teachers

Table 1. Motivation to choose teaching profession

Emergед themes	Theme definition
Considering opinions of parents and other significant others	The opinions of parents and other significant others has an influence in choosing a career.
Seeing economic status and financial capability of family	The family's socio-economic status has a definite role in career-decision making.
Following personal interest	The personal desire is the basis in choosing a career/profession.
Conforming with peer interest	The peer has an influence in choosing a career.

Table 1 indicates the motivation of male teachers in choosing the teaching profession. The decision to become a teacher is driven by numerous motivational factors. Occupational choice can profoundly affect one's life and the lives of many young individuals. Teaching is something that not everyone can do, it is a profession that requires total dedication.

Considering opinions of parents and other significant others

The opinions of parents and other significant others is another important factor why teaching is considered as a

vocational choice. There are six teachers who claimed that the opinions of parents and other significant others influenced them why they chose the teaching profession.

As a social and economic unit, the elders of the family and its extended members are still the primary decision makers in several significant matters concerning each member such as the choice of course in college. This is even more distinct if it is the parents or other relatives who are supporting one's college education. They certainly have "the right" or a "say" in the decision especially if the parents or relatives are teachers themselves. The usual answer parents give when asked of their strong career recommendation is because they've been there, it is familiar territory and whatever investments they've made such a personal and professional tie with those in the position during the application and hiring process would equally be both helpful and valuable.

The influences of the parents and other significant others as well as the early exposures to teaching profession are factors that astound them to go into teaching [15].

Seeing economic status and financial capability of family

The participants' motivation to choose teaching as their profession is based on their economic status and financial capability of their families. There are two teachers who became practical, open-minded, and realistic in pursuing a college course as congruent to their status financially and ended up choosing the teaching profession.

The family's socio-economic status had a definite role in career-decision making. For practical reasons, ECE male teachers were encouraged to take a course in college which will not cost much money, but at the same time a stable source of income. The interest to take teacher education course is motivated by the family's socio-economic status, as the participants considered the difficulty their parents would encounter financially if they chose a more expensive course.

Following personal interest

There is nothing more important than to fulfill one's personal desire and do what you enjoy and love the most. The teaching profession becomes more rewarding if it is your own personal choice and not out of pressures from others.

During career day in schools, there are students dressed as teachers because they told their parents they wanted to be teachers when they grow up. Young as they are, these children already show a strong inkling on what they want to pursue in college.

Conforming with peer interest

During the adolescence period, one important task is achieving a new level of closeness and trust with peers and there is a tendency that an adolescent decides in conformity with the peer group. One teacher-participant admitted that he chose teaching as his profession due to the influence of his peer group during his adolescence stage.

Before the addition of senior high school, the age of those going to college ranges from 16 to 18 generally. This stage is middle adolescence where these young students face a variety of challenges such as self-identity crisis and peer pressure. The desire to conform and to belong is so strong that these young people tend to do things by group or by clique. If in a particular group, majority would be pursuing education as a college course either by choice or for any other reason, chances are that the rest of the group would do the same thing to profess loyalty to the group.

Table 2. Motivation to choose and stay in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Emerg ed themes	Theme definition
Contribute to the foundation of learning and development of children	Male teachers have special role and significant contributions to children's future success.
Witness the enthusiasm and obedience of children	Male teachers believed that teaching young children are easier to handle than those in the higher level.

Teaching young children is not an easy task. It is intellectually challenging as well as emotionally and physically exhausting. Table 2 shows the motivation of male teachers in choosing and staying in the field of Early Childhood Education.

Contribute to the foundation of learning and development of children

If a teacher has a positive view about children, then he will provide experiences and opportunities appropriate and contributory to children's learning and development. There are seven teacher-participants who chose and stayed in the field of early childhood education because they believed that they could contribute to the foundation of children's learning and development. Their responses show that they are motivated to teach in the ECE level because they have special role and significant contributions to children's future success.

The thought of being the first formal teacher of very young students seems to be both exciting and challenging to the participants of the study. It is more like striking the first paint in a blank canvass. More than a responsibility, this is seen as an opportunity more than a responsibility. It is an opportunity because it provides the teacher "fresh minds" that have not yet developed bad study habits that needed to be unlearned.

In addition to this, the task of laying the first foundations of learning is a source of fulfillment for ECE male teachers. Being the first formal teacher means it is one's influence on whether the kindergarten learner would love going to school or not. It is both an honor and huge responsibility to be the first teacher who will assist the learners as they began their initial steps of their educational journey. Male teachers are needed as role models and have a crucial part to play [16].

Witness the enthusiasm and obedience of children

Children are considered innocent and vulnerable, but they always manifest eagerness and willingness to learn and experience new things. To experience the innocence and vulnerability of children is another motivating factor for teachers to choose and stay in the field of ECE. There are three teacher-participants who were motivated to stay in the field because of children's innocence and vulnerability.

This can be rationalized by saying that these ECE male teachers are trained in the psychology of children and understand well how and why children behave the way they do. For some kindergarten teachers, seeing and experiencing the innocence of children everyday remains enough reason to stay as early childhood educators.

2. EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPANTS AS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

2.1 Classroom Management

Table 5. Maintenance of classroom conducive for learning

Emergед themes	Theme definition
Seeking support from stakeholders	Work in partnership with parents and members of the community.
Showing personal initiatives and concern	Extend personal effort.
Recognizing ideas from colleagues	Collaborate with co-teachers.

The learning environment can meet the needs of children, support their acquisition of knowledge, and development of potentialities. The environment for children needs to be safe physically as well as psychologically. Table 5 signifies the maintenance of classroom conducive for learning.

Seeking support from stakeholders

Maintaining a creative, safe, and stimulating learning environment for children requires a total dedication of a teacher with the support of stakeholders especially that there is an increasing demand for quality and effectiveness in an early childhood classroom. There are five teacher-participants who admitted that seeking support from

stakeholders particularly from parents is essential way to provide the most satisfying learning environment for young learners.

Having a classroom and having a well-structured kindergarten classroom are two different things for an ECE teacher. The kindergarten curriculum is play-based and thus requires a “playroom-like” classroom with kiddie chairs and tables for writing and other activities, and an open space, preferably with rubber mats, for play and other physical activities. Often, the teacher would have to rely on the school stakeholders to provide for the materials needed to improve the classroom and make it conducive to learning. Therefore, male teachers bring a multiplicity of talents to the classroom from which all children can benefit [11].

Showing personal initiatives and concern

The learning environment must provide essential opportunities and experiences for children to maximize children’s potentials and talents. There are four teacher-participants who openly shared that they took personal initiatives to make their classroom appropriate and conducive for children’s learning.

Some say a classroom is a home away from home, they even call it a class-home. These lines are for the learners to treat the classroom as their home and keep it clean and orderly. This is also sometimes the case of teachers; they want their rooms to reflect themselves and rely on personal initiatives to improve their working spaces.

It is not uncommon that it is the teacher’s personal funds that are used in the improvement of the room into a conducive learning area. The main reason of most teachers is that it is alright to spend their own money since they are the ones staying in the room and would surely benefit the learners as already assured of a return of investment.

Recognizing ideas from colleagues

It is an important idea when a teacher works collaboratively and harmoniously with colleagues as a mechanism to work for the development of young learners. There is one teacher-participant who believed that recognizing ideas from colleagues is an essential practice to maintain the classroom conducive for learning.

Creativity and imagination are one of the demands of a 21st century classroom. The present-day teacher needs to practice creativity not just in terms of instruction but also in looking for sources of ideas to improve the conditions of his/her classrooms. In this case, they don’t need to look very far from inspiration and look at their colleagues who have been in that situation before and have so far been able to achieve their objectives.

The wisdom of experience provided by experienced colleagues who encountered the same predicament is a valuable mine of ideas. The applicability of the strategy may vary but given that the context and need may be very similar is already enough reason to give this initiative a chance.

Table 6. Maintenance of gender-fair learning environment

Emerg ed themes	Theme definition
Recognizing learners’ individual potentials and strengths	Providing opportunities, lesson examples applicable for both sexes.
Promoting healthy psychological climate	Avoiding favoritism, maintaining a healthy non-threatening atmosphere.

Table 6 presents the maintenance of gender-fair learning environment because the teacher needs to be involved in nurturing the development of the whole child. The relationship that can develop between the teacher and the children as well as the experience that the children can get from the learning environment influence children’s developmental process.

Recognizing learners’ individual potentials and strengths

Teachers of young children have a lasting and tremendous impact on the children they teach. There are seven teacher-participants who manifested profound recognition of learners’ individual potentials and strengths as a means of maintaining a gender-fair learning environment.

One of the lines in the DepEd mission statement is the protection of a Filipino child's right to learn in a child-friendly, gender-sensitive, safe, and encouraging environment. This is a recurring theme in all the efforts put forth by the department.

Developmentally appropriate practices emphasize the identification of the potentials, strengths and needs of individual learners through suitable assessment methods. This ultimately leads to the recognition of a young learner as an individual, irrespective of gender, capable of learning and development. Therefore, educators set good examples for how to make classrooms that are free from gender bias and barriers, including the use of gender-neutral materials, and even individualized activity [17].

Promoting healthy psychological climate

One of the dimensions to create a safe environment for children is the psychological aspect. Psychological safety involves the children's perceptions wherein children can tell when and where they are welcome, when their needs are cared for and when adults listen and talk to them with fairness, courtesy, and respect. There are three teacher-participants who maintained a gender-fair learning environment by means of promoting a healthy psychological climate.

Together with the physical environment, a classroom's psychological climate equally affects a child's well-being in terms of the emotional and social experiences that directly affects them. Children who feel they are treated with courtesy and respect learn these values firsthand and better than when they are lectured on these traits, regardless of gender.

The conscious maintenance of a healthy non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom enables children to freely express how they feel, make them feel safe and secure. This ultimately leads to better learning outcomes, and generally, children who are generally comfortable with their self-identities because their teacher makes them feel accepted for who they are and in what they can become in the future.

2.2 Teaching Strategies

Table 9. Utilized teaching strategies

Emerg ed themes	Theme definition
Individual Differences/ Diversity of learners	Integrating differentiated activities/ differentiated instruction.
Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)	Providing activities congruent to the children's age, level, and developmental needs.
Constructivism	Applying actual and real-life experiences relevant to children.

Knowledge and understanding about the development of a child provides a teacher the avenue to plan, organize and implement an appropriate strategy to support a child's developmental domains and learning experiences, and table 9 indicates the utilized teaching strategies in teaching young children.

Individual Differences/ Diversity of learners

Working with children entails sufficient knowledge and understanding of their differences or their multi-cultural diversity. There are four teacher-participants whose teaching strategies recognize individual differences and respect diversity of learners.

As children enter the classroom, they bring with them a unique background. Diversity in the classroom is diversity in skills, knowledge, and needs. Learning is creating a sense of belonging. For such learning to take place, teachers must have the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to make their classrooms effective and relevant learning environment for all learners.

Differentiated teaching comprises teaching-learning processes involving a wide variety of texts, tasks, processes, and products suited to the diverse students [18]. As such, ECE male teachers recognized the importance of having an enlightened knowledge and understanding on learners' diversity which is contributory to the learning of children

positively and abundantly. They understand that the growing diversity in the early childhood program necessitates the development, use and evaluation of diverse teaching strategies. It is the teacher who is in the best position to know the children, what they excel in and what they struggle with, what they are eager and ready to learn [19].

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)

It is important that all implemented strategies and curricular activities are congruent to the developmental needs of children. There are three teacher-participants whose teaching strategies are considered developmentally appropriate practices.

ECE male teachers integrated the DAP by providing experiences suited to children's learning and development and promoting their progress and interests as they plan, organize, and implement the learning content. Understanding the meaning and intentional practices of DAP is essential in guiding the decisions for children to grow and for children relies on building knowledge about individual children and child development principles combined with knowledge of effective early learning practices. Teachers must get to know the children well, to reach goals that are both challenging and achievable [20].

Constructivism

Children discover things as they interact with the environment. Teachers are recognized as important instruments to help children construct knowledge through actual and real-life experiences. There are three teacher-participants who used constructivist strategy or by using real-life experiences where children can relate and adapt easily to different situations.

ECE male teachers manifested the quality of being advocates of constructivist approach in teaching, an approach in which a teacher guides children and gives them opportunities to make discoveries and understand concepts as they interact with the world. The most effective ways to promote the child's construction of knowledge is through allowing for active experimentation.

The role of the teacher based upon these beliefs is one of a guide, a co-developer of understanding with the learner. They value long-term involvement in problem-solving, as problems provide context and purpose for learning [21]. Moreover, it is important for an early childhood educator in a constructivist classroom environment to adapt instruction to suit children's interests and understanding in which they can construct their knowledge.

Table 10. Tools or techniques in assessing children's learning and development

Emergед themes	Theme definition
Multiple and holistic assessment	Focusing on the totality of children, emphasizing children's learning as integrated and interconnected.
Cognitive assessment	Concentrating on the mental capabilities or academic development of children by identifying their learning strengths and weaknesses.

Assessment involves gathering information systematically with the purpose of making some kind of appraisal or evaluation of children and their development. It is also an essential activity to identify children with possible developmental and learning concerns or problems. Table 10 denotes the tools or techniques in assessing children's learning and development.

Multiple and holistic assessment process

Teachers of early childhood program take a holistic approach in assessment as they pay attention to children's physical, personal, social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing as well as cognitive aspect of learning. There are eight teacher-participants who utilized multiple and holistic assessment to get the richest and fullest picture of each child.

The connectedness of mind, body and spirit is considered as holistic approach to teaching and learning. ECE Male teachers took a holistic approach as they focused their attention to the totality of children- physical, social, emotional,

spiritual as well as cognitive aspect of learning. They emphasized children's learning as integrated and interconnected. It is an important endeavor for early childhood educator to take a responsibility for the assessment of the whole child [22].

Cognitive assessment

The results of cognitive assessment can provide an essential information for the development of possible individualized or group learning intervention plan. There are two teacher-participants who utilized cognitive assessment as a mechanism to identify potential learning concerns or problems.

It is important that conducting cognitive assessment can be useful in identifying the presence of a learning difficulty among children and to help teachers make appropriate actions for children in the classroom. Further, it provides information to develop applicable intervention plans in the classroom that are designed to meet a child's specific needs particularly children who are experiencing academic issues at school.

The ECE male teachers learned to integrate cognitive assessment to check purposefully the learning progress or difficulty of children or to determine needs and concerns about their academic development in preparation for formal instruction.

2.3 Colleagues' Relationship

Table 11. Colleagues' Relationship

Emergед themes	Theme definition
Building professional links with colleagues to enrich teaching	Professional working relationship with colleagues which concerned on sharing, analyzing, and discussing issues on teaching-learning process.
Creating a mutual give-and-take relationship with colleagues	Professional working relationship with colleagues based on mutual respect to have a peaceful working environment.

Table 11 implies the colleagues' relationship as part of male teachers' experiences in creating a positive learning environment for young children. The professional learning environment and collaboration with co-teachers contribute to the enrichment of the teaching-learning practice.

Building professional links with colleagues to enrich teaching

Teachers strive to interact with their colleagues to establish a professional working relationship to contribute to the school system's goals and for the development of children. There are seven teacher-participants who are openly willing to build professional links with colleagues to enrich teaching vis-a-vis affects children's learning.

The ECE male teachers acknowledged the importance of establishing a professional link with colleagues to accomplish the demanding task of teaching young learners. With a positive and strong relationship with colleagues, creates momentous achievements satisfying children's developmental needs and aspirations. Building positive and harmonious relationship with colleagues will result to a positive school environment that will benefit the school and the learners.

In addition, ECE male teachers strive to interact effectively with one another. They value professionalism which concerned on sharing, analyzing, and discussing issues about the curriculum and the teaching-learning process. They are also concerned with how they can work with their colleagues to create an environment that maximizes learning and produce accomplishments.

Creating a mutual give-and- take relationship with colleagues

Teaching is a kind of relationship. It will be more rewarding if teachers know how to deal with colleagues with sincerity. There are three teacher-participants who were able to create a give and take relationship with colleagues.

The ECE male teachers recognized the importance of working with colleagues out of collegiality, caring and concern. They established an open communication and honest expression of thoughts and ideas to avoid getting hurt and offend someone.

Further, they believed that a relationship is based on a mutual give-and-take if they selflessly work together, offer to help colleagues. A colleague relationship which is positive in nature is also based on mutual respect for each other's work and a willingness and enthusiasm to take advice when necessary or follow the example of more experienced teachers. Teachers can learn so much more when they get the opportunity to work together through mutual concern [23].

2.4 Parental Involvement

Table 12. Parental Involvement

Emerg ed themes	Theme definition
Establishing protocol	Maintaining a good system of communication with parents but biases and favoritism are avoided.
Enhancing parents' understanding of children	Helping parents to gain a better perspective of their own children.
Promoting shared responsibility and accountability for children	Involving parents by discussing issues and concerns affecting their children.

Table 12 signifies parental involvement as an important concern on the relationship of male teachers with children's parents. It relates with the kind of participation of parents to various school activities and program towards their children's growth and development.

Establishing protocol

Parents are concerned for the welfare of their children, and they want to keep informed. However, teachers of young children need to establish a proper system of communication where there is a limitation or boundary in dealing with parents. There are six teacher-participants who are considered under the theme establishing protocol.

Developing good communication with parents requires creative planning. Plan to use all avenues that are available. It is important that an open communication is established for parents and teachers can share valuable insights into children's performance and behavior particularly on information about how the child adjusts with the classroom and school environment for proper guidance.

The ECE male teachers recognized the significance of establishing protocol or a good system of communication while biases or favoritism are avoided. They encouraged meaningful exchange of views and open for queries but no compromise of personal requests and demands. It is important that teachers develop a healthy relationship through meaningful and unbiased conversations with parents to maintain an early childhood program supporting children's developmental needs.

Enhancing parents' understanding of children

While the primary challenge of teaching is to create learning experiences that support children's development, relating to parents has its own unique challenges and demands that needs to be observed properly. There are two teacher-participants who are categorized in the theme enhancing parents' understanding of children.

Building partnership between teachers and parents is an essential way to help parents gain a better understanding and a deeper perspective about their children's development. The efforts of teachers to relate to the parents about their children's strengths and weaknesses would bring a higher level of relationship as they enhance the task of parenting based on the valuable information provided to them.

The ECE male teachers accentuated the idea that they are the important instruments to facilitate in helping parents to be positive and active towards their children's learning. If important information on children's school performance and behavioral characteristics are properly and pleasantly explained and discussed with parents, they would fully recognize their vital roles as parents.

Promoting shared responsibility and accountability for children

Dealing with parents can be gratifying if teachers can establish proper communication and enrich the task of parenting. There are two teacher-participants who are classified in the theme promoting shared responsibility and accountability for children.

Engaging parents to children's programs by inviting them to visit, speak, share, and participate foster enormous sense of pride and connectiveness. With open lines of communication, the teacher and parents can connect what's happening at school with what's happening at home. In this case, it can develop and promote shared sense of responsibility and accountability for children.

The ECE male teachers acknowledged that partnering with children's parents can have a powerful impact. It is important to discuss and share issues and concerns affecting the development of their children. Both parties need to understand and accept their vital contributions and their limitations as well.

3. INPUTS TO PRE-SERVICE EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

As to teachers' motivation to choose the teaching profession and the field of Early Childhood Education, an input is to provide a strong orientation process upon admission for pre-service male students to increase their interest, awareness and understanding the breadth and depth accorded to the teaching profession. This is also to foster pre-service male students' value and love for teaching and working with children by providing them early exposure and opportunities in dealing with young learners. It relates to the NAEYC standard that well prepared candidates understand the nature of a profession and in well-designed programs, they develop professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions in a community of learners.

In terms of classroom management as to maintaining classroom conducive for learning that stakeholders' support was highlighted, an input is that pre-service male students may be provided an exposure to community extension program as a laboratory in enhancing social and interpersonal skills. On the other hand, as to maintenance of gender-fair learning environment, an input is to uphold gender sensitivity among pre-service male students by strengthening it in various professional education courses where gender and development is integrated. It is considered as standards by the NAEYC that well-prepared candidates possess essential skills to involve families and communities, and that candidates' competence is demonstrated in their ability to use developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, and supportive learning environments.

With regards to teaching strategies, the highlighted principles such as growing diversity in the early childhood program, providing experiences suited to children's learning and development, and constructing children's knowledge based on their own experiences are inputs for pre-service male students by integrating these as special topics in the different major courses of the program. In respect to the tools or techniques in assessing children's progress, it focused on holistic approach. An input is to give exposure to pre-service male students in the actual planning, organizing, and utilizing different assessment tools and techniques through their practice teaching. These ideas are connected to the NAEYC standards where students prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that teaching and learning with young children is a complex enterprise, and that child observation, documentation, and other forms of assessment are central to the practice of all early childhood professionals.

In the aspect of colleagues' relationship, the participants valued the importance of establishing a professional link with co- teachers. This is an input to provide a socialization opportunity for pre-service male students with other students. As integrated by the NAEYC standard, early childhood candidates demonstrate involvement in collaborative learning communities with other candidates, higher education faculty, and experienced early childhood practitioners.

In terms of parental involvement, the participants developed a healthy relationship or a good system of communication with parents. An input is to integrate parent education in the major courses of early childhood

education program. This is reflected in the NAEYC standard by which students prepared in early childhood degree programs understand that successful early childhood education depends upon partnerships with children's families.

CONCLUSION

Teaching in the ECE level is also a rewarding, fulfilling and socially meaningful career option for men. The thought of being the first formal teacher of very young learners and the task of laying the first foundation of learning is a strong source of motivation for male teachers. The presence of male teachers in ECE exhibited flexibility, creativity and innovation in the way things are done in the classroom but at the same time address different kinds of learners.

The development of a professional link with colleagues is a mechanism to work stronger for the learning and development of young learners. The engagement of male teachers in the ECE can help female teachers come up with different perspectives in discussing issues about the curriculum and in improving the teaching-learning process. It is important that working with colleagues out of collegiality, caring and concern maximize learning and produce accomplishments.

Furthermore, developing good communication with parents requires creative planning. It is important that an open communication is established for parents and teachers can share valuable insights into children's performance and behavior.

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