

## Understanding the Influence of Teacher Beliefs in Shaping Filipino Professoriate's Signature Pedagogy for Teacher Education<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** - *Using the phenomenological design of qualitative inquiry, this study sought to describe how teacher beliefs become instrumental in shaping a distinct pedagogy for teacher education. Interestingly, this investigation surfaced the trilogy of influence typologies that shape Filipino professoriate's distinctive teaching approaches for teacher education, namely: contextualizing, configuring and concretizing power. Findings concurred with literature which recognizes the strong impact of teacher beliefs on instructional practices, highlighting the influence of beliefs in shaping signature pedagogies. To deepen understanding of teacher education's signature pedagogy and how it is shaped by teacher beliefs, further research along this line of inquiry is recommended, particularly in other educational and cultural communities.*

**Key Words** - Filipino professoriate, teacher beliefs, teacher education, signature pedagogy

### INTRODUCTION

Teacher beliefs refer to “the highly personal ways in which a teacher understands classrooms, students, the nature of learning, the teacher’s role in the classroom, and the goals of education” (Kagan, 1990, p. 423). Teachers interpret their experiences with learners and content based on their beliefs (Hativa, 1998) and develop distinct teaching strategies in accordance with those beliefs (Northcote, 2009). In short, beliefs inform teachers’ choice and use of instructional strategies (Kagan, 1992), causing a strong impact on quality of student learning (Northcote, 2009).

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<sup>1</sup>Dissertation submitted to the University of Sto. Tomas in 2011; the study was one of the publishable papers comprising the author’s dissertation-by-article. The author also investigated the influence of teacher’s knowledge and reflection on shaping the signature pedagogy for teacher education.

Pajares (1992) argued that research on teacher beliefs is an essential aspect of educational inquiry, claiming that “attention to the beliefs of teachers and teacher candidates can inform educational practice in ways that prevailing research agendas have not and cannot. The study of beliefs is critical to education” (p. 329). Accordingly, educational research has focused on teacher beliefs as factors that greatly affect teaching and learning. As Nespor (1987) emphasized, “to understand teaching from teachers’ perspectives we have to understand the beliefs with which they define their work” (p. 323). Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, and Nevgi (2007) maintained that only by addressing teacher beliefs about teaching and learning can meaningful development be truly actualized.

Shulman (1987) explained that teacher beliefs are derived from accumulated knowledge of subject matter, educational materials and structures, formal teacher training, and “wisdom of practice,” i.e., from actual teaching experience. Refining their earlier study on academics’ beliefs about teaching and learning, Samuelowicz and Bain (2001) enumerated nine dimensions of teacher beliefs, namely: desired learning outcomes, expected use of knowledge, responsibility for organizing or transforming knowledge, nature of knowledge, students’ existing conceptions, teacher-students’ interaction, control of content, professional development and interest and innovation.

In an effort to summarize research on beliefs, Pajares (1992) endeavored to clear disagreements about the exact meaning of beliefs and how to distinguish the former from knowledge resulting in unsatisfactory conceptualizations and divergent interpretations of beliefs and belief structures, provided a definition of beliefs based on the best studies on the construct, discussed the nature of belief structures as described by major scholars, and synthesized research findings about the nature of beliefs. He summed up studies on teacher beliefs by suggesting “a strong relationship between teachers’ educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom practices” (p. 326).

Thus, researchers and practitioners’ understanding of teachers and teaching has been enhanced by inquiries into teacher beliefs and how they impact practice (Speer, 2008). As pointed out by Mansour (2009), research on teacher beliefs has become part of the process of understanding teacher concepts of teaching and how they influence pedagogical decisions and practices.

However, despite general agreement that teacher beliefs strongly impact practice, Speer (2008) expressed concern that research has focused on general explications of teacher beliefs linked with equally gener-

al descriptions of pedagogical practices, failing to fully explore the influence of beliefs on situation-specific teaching strategies and establish “the connections between particular beliefs and specific moment-to-moment instructional practices that teachers are encouraged to adopt” (p. 219). This study was designed to contribute to the understanding of the influence of teacher beliefs on specific teaching approaches by describing the contribution of beliefs to the development of Filipino teacher educators' distinct pedagogy. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following central question: In what way are beliefs instrumental in shaping signature pedagogy for teacher education?

Shulman (2005a) defined signature pedagogies as “the characteristic forms of teaching and learning...which organize fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions” (p. 52). Inextricably associated and identified with preparing people for a particular profession (Shulman, 2005c), these teaching and learning approaches eventually become “idiosyncratic, habituated, and completely embedded in a particular discipline” (Golde, 2007, p. 346).

Woeste and Barham (2006) pointed out that signature pedagogies of the different professions develop among students the knowledge, skills, disposition and habits they will need as they pursue their duties and responsibilities as professionals. Since teacher education does not have a pedagogical signature and a distinct personality as a profession, it can be argued that students might find difficulty in internalizing the values and character of the discipline because these are best learned through signature pedagogies (Shulman, 2005a). Focusing on beliefs as factors that influence teachers in their choice of teaching strategies, this study intended to offer insights into how teacher education may form and finally establish its own distinct Filipino pedagogy.

## METHODOLOGY

Since the inquiry calls for an eidetic description of a phenomenon, specifically the influence of beliefs in shaping the participants' distinct pedagogy for teacher education, the phenomenological design was used in this study.

Originated by Husserl, the acknowledged founder of modern phenomenology (Giorgi, 2008), and commonly used to describe “as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 5) phenomenological research is generally recognized as appropriate for gaining greater understanding of human experiences (Schweitzer, 2002). By describing

how individuals carry out the activities of their daily living, phenomenology seeks to understand the world as encountered in experience (Küpers, 2009). In short, phenomenology is the study of human experience and how things are perceived in and through experience (Fochtman, 2008).

Teacher educators (N=24; 6 males, 18 females) from various colleges and universities in the National Capital Region of the Philippines, particularly Manila and surrounding cities were the respondents in this phenomenological inquiry. Teaching either professional education or specialization courses under the teacher education program, the participants held various positions in their respective schools, ranging from faculty member to dean of the teacher education department. All teaching full-time at the time of this study, the participants' educational attainments ranged from bachelor with units in masterate to full-fledged doctors. They had an average of 14 years in service.

Data for this study were gathered through the use of multiple operationalism which included semi-structured interviews and videotaped classroom ethnography, a descriptive approach involving detailed observations of classes (Clemente-Reyes, 2002). Demographic data such as names, gender, number of years in service, academic ranks and educational attainment were likewise gathered from the participants through the use of a questionnaire.

Prior to actual data gathering, informed consent from the participants and their deans were obtained, explaining to them the purpose of the research. Copies of the video and audio data from the class observations and interviews were given to the participants and their deans as soon as the materials were burned into compact discs. To avoid ethical breaches, the principles of confidentiality, protection from harm, privacy and truthfulness were strictly observed during the conduct of this study.

Data explication for this study was guided by the principles of qualitative analysis described by Fagerberg and Norberg (2009), thus: preliminary reading of the verbatim transcription of interview data to gain naïve understanding of the text, structural analysis in which data were grouped into meaning units to form sub-themes and themes, comparing themes with naïve understanding and related studies, and finally reflecting on the themes to gain comprehensive understanding of the data.

The principles of phenomenological reduction (Gray, 1997) were observed by "bracketing a priori theories, hunches and suppositions" (Van der Mescht, 2004, p. 5) to obtain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon.

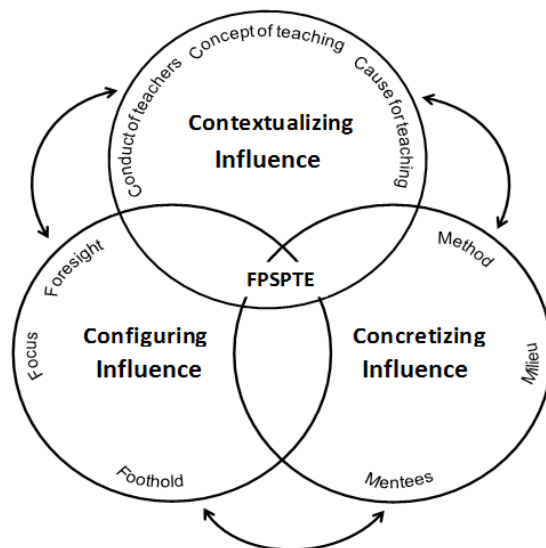
Whenever possible, the participants' statements were compared with their corresponding classroom ethnography video data to ascertain consistency. Generally, their statements of beliefs were reasonably consistent with their "pedagogising" moves recorded on tape.

As a final measure to enhance the study's credibility, which depends, to a large measure, on eidetic and faithful description of the phenomenon under investigation (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003), the categories and themes that emerged during data explication were subjected to further verification procedures.

## RESULTS

Analyses of the participants' articulations of beliefs disclosed a trilogy of power typologies that the former appeared to be instrumental in the formation of Filipino professoriate's signature pedagogy for teacher education (FPSPTTE). To preserve the authenticity of responses, the respondents' statements were not edited but were printed verbatim, except for a few very minor corrections for grammatical integrity.

Teachers' beliefs possess a contextualizing power that emanates from their conception of teaching, as well as from contentions that delineate the conduct of teachers and reinforce their motivations and aspirations, or cause for teaching. Similarly, teachers' beliefs have a configuring power which, derived from beliefs, give their pedagogy a strong foothold, foresight and focus. Lastly, teachers' beliefs have a concretizing power which stems from their contentions regarding instructional methods, the teaching-learning environment or pedagogical milieu and the learners, or mentees. As shown in Figure 1, the three typologies of influence interact with one another as indicated by the double arrows, and to a certain extent also overlap with one another as indicated by the intersecting circles. The whole configuration represents a system whereby the distinct teaching approaches of select Filipino teachers are influenced by their pedagogical beliefs.



**Figure 1.** The trilogy of influence typologies that shape Filipino professoriate's signature pedagogy for teacher education.

### Contextualizing power of teacher beliefs

The data gathered indicate that one source of the contextualizing power of beliefs is teachers' clear conception of teaching as a profession. Their beliefs tend to give them a clear pedagogical perspective of their teaching practices in relation to other concerns of teaching and learning. For one, having firm beliefs regarding the essence of teaching crystallizes their understanding of how teaching relates to other aspects of their personal and professional lives and how their influence as teachers will impact the learners. The following words from a participant show a clear concept of teaching and a deep understanding of a teacher's place in the educational process:

*Teaching is simply sharing your life with other people, building something that would last for eternity. If a teacher does something stupid, it will multiply and will last until eternity.*

Teachers' beliefs regarding teaching enable them to comprehend their role in the educative process, exerting a strong influence on their pedagogical decisions and actions. The power of teachers' conception of teaching to contextualize their pedagogy is further illustrated in the fol-

lowing explanation of a history teacher:

*I would compare a teacher to somebody who's molding. You're really the one who molds the students and I believe that teachers should closely guide the students. You really have to take into consideration the nature of the one you are molding.*

Having a clear conception of teaching enables teachers to understand and appreciate not only their role but also their responsibility as professionals, enhancing their awareness of how they relate to other factors in the educational process such as the learners and the community. This is exemplified in the following words from a participant:

*Because teaching is a noble profession, we really show our best – do our best. We try to serve as a model, a model to our students, a model to the community.*

The collected data further show that like concepts on teaching, teacher beliefs regarding motivations and aspirations, or cause for teaching, are factors that help contextualize pedagogy. Teachers' convictions regarding their reasons for teaching apparently determine how they view themselves in relation to other circumstances that surround teaching and learning, as implied in the following words from a participant: *Motivation of mine – I'm helping the country to have citizens who would help alleviate poverty and improve people's lives and help them become better persons.*

Apparently, teachers' beliefs about their motivations for teaching exert a strong influence on their pedagogy. This influence is so powerful that it practically governs teachers' actions in front of the learners. This is another aspect of the contextualizing power of beliefs pertaining to teachers' cause for teaching.

Conduct of teachers which is another aspect of pedagogy influenced by beliefs, also helps to contextualize teaching, as the data gathered show. Likewise, since behavior is beliefs-driven and teaching practices are greatly influenced by teachers' beliefs, it can be inferred that beliefs regarding teachers' conduct place pedagogy in proper context in relation to teaching's moral and social dimensions. This is demonstrated in a participant's reply when asked about his guiding philosophy regarding his conduct as a teacher:

*Knowing your responsibility as a teacher, your moral, your social obligation, you should know that it is not a job but a vocation.*

Evidently, the participants' beliefs pertaining to the conduct of teachers and their causes for teaching, as well as their concepts on teaching, constitute a meaningful framework that helps clarify the context of their pedagogy.

### **Configuring influence of teacher beliefs**

Data obtained from the interviews suggest that the configuring influence of beliefs allows teachers to see clearly how their pedagogy relates to relevant philosophical, social and educational variables, enabling them to see how these diverse elements may be made to work harmoniously toward the attainment of desired educational outcomes.

Moreover, data gathered imply that the respondents' educational beliefs enable them to anchor their teaching approaches to philosophies they believe will work best for them, giving their pedagogy a strong foothold. How teachers' beliefs influence this particular aspect of pedagogy is best captured by the following sharing from participants regarding the process by which they design their course syllabus:

*We always start off with the purpose of the course and which philosophies will work with it and what's needed in the field. So we would always look at it not only from the point of view of the content itself but how it would influence other factors surrounding every individual considering that they would be teachers. So it's more on the reality of teaching.*

Teachers' understanding of the purpose of the curriculum is another aspect of pedagogy influenced by beliefs. Such understanding enables teachers to see how their pedagogy relates to the world outside the classroom, giving them a clear picture of the interrelationships between and among social institutions and their respective needs. Thus, teachers' beliefs regarding the purpose of the curriculum are windows into their pedagogy, as demonstrated by a participant's contention:

*The curriculum should really be responsive to the needs of the society, otherwise, it's useless. There must be what we call complementation between the needs [of the society] and the curriculum.*



Interestingly, statements of philosophies, mission, vision and goals from colleges and universities seem to serve only as benchmarks but ultimately it is the teachers' beliefs that govern their actions inside the classroom. This is best demonstrated by a statement from a science professor:

*They serve as guide, but basically teaching comes down to one thing: we try to equip our students with knowledge and skills. So statements of visions and goals just differ in wordings but basically, the bottom line is still the welfare of the students and that is what I always prioritize. I always strive for excellence.*

Nevertheless, teachers' beliefs still give their choice of teaching methods a resilient foundation, giving them a clear and stable basis for their classroom practices, which in turn configures their pedagogy.

Providing clarity of focus to pedagogy is another dimension of the configuring power of teacher beliefs. Beliefs regarding the focus of instruction enable teachers to systematically address the multifarious concerns in education, facilitating the attainment of educational goals and objectives.

In the Philippines all institutions of higher learning operate under the supervision of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Consequently, instruction in Philippine higher education institutions tends to center on CHED-issued policies, including course descriptions. However, the influence of personal beliefs still plays a major role in determining what actually happens inside the classroom. When asked whether she prepares her own syllabus, a participant replied that she does and explained:

*I check out what's expected in the course depending upon the description given by the CHED and then what's described by the [name of university] curriculum. When I'm assigned a course, I check out the description and see what's needed in the field. I have to tie them up and see what available resources I could make use of.*

The Philippine government requires graduates of teacher education programs to pass a licensure examination before they are allowed to practice professionally. The effect of this requirement on Philippine teacher education programs particularly on instruction can be gleaned from the following statements:

*Here in the college of education we are – the school is expecting our graduates in education to pass the licensure examination so we really do our best so that they will be equipped with enough knowledge.*

*I want my students to pass, or even top, the licensure examination. That would mean that they really learned.*

The desire to have as many licensure examination passers as possible apparently influences the beliefs of the participants. These beliefs in turn shape their pedagogy and practically dictate what happens inside the classroom. As a participant explained: *That is always my endpoint when I teach. I ask myself: "Will my students pass the licensure exam? Will they be as competitive as students from other universities?"*

Foresight is likewise an aspect of teaching that is strongly influenced by beliefs, which in turn configures pedagogy by fashioning it after a specific vision. Although the short-term goal is for students to pass the licensure examination, evidently the teacher informants look far beyond it ---- to something more lasting and far-reaching. As a professional education professor explained:

*I really want my students to become good teachers, not just board passers but effective teachers. I tell them that as [name of school] graduates, they would probably be in the teaching area for a maximum of five years. After that they'll find themselves in higher positions already.*

The participants' beliefs regarding their students' future needs as teachers definitely play a major role in their pedagogy which apparently aims to prepare the students not only for teaching but also for life. Their teaching is imbued with elements intended to develop students not just as teachers but as human beings who will face greater challenges than those they will encounter inside the classroom. As an informant explained:

*I want to produce graduates who would be able to face challenges in life. I don't teach them just so I can add something that they don't know yet. More than that, I want them to be confident of the knowledge I give them. I want them to be able to speak out and stand for whatever they believe in.*

The teachers' pedagogy even goes beyond the future concerns of students as teachers and as individuals and extends to what they may

contribute to the society. Seemingly, the participants' pedagogical foresight includes social transformation as a dimension of their teaching, as reflected in the following words from an informant:

*They're my hope to improve the system so I'm very hopeful that as a result of whatever effort we could do in the class, there would be a certain change that we could contribute – transformation probably in the society, in a way, because they will be teachers.*

Truly, the participants' beliefs give their teaching a strong foothold, focus and foresight, organizing the different elements and dimensions involved in the educative process into a meaningful whole. Hence, the configuring power of teachers' beliefs.

### **Concretizing power of teacher beliefs**

Analysis of the qualitative data further reveal that the concretizing power of beliefs stems from their ability to influence teachers' choice of specific pedagogical strategies and the kind of atmosphere they want to prevail in their classrooms and to guide them in their interaction with the learners. In short, teachers' beliefs determine the actual teaching methods that teachers adapt in their classrooms, giving their pedagogy a concrete and operational form.

Method of teaching is an aspect of pedagogy that is strongly influenced by teachers' beliefs. While most colleges and universities prescribe course content, what is actually taken up inside the classroom depends to a great extent on the teachers' decision. This is even more so with regard to instructional modalities which are completely determined by teachers' choices, as these two statements show.

*Everything that we take up in the classroom has to be seen fresh in reality. If they would not have any use for it in the future, I wouldn't teach it. It's very important to me that my students develop their thinking skills. They have to be very critical and they have to think beyond the surface of things.*

*I do not follow the sequence of topics in the book because I'm not using a single book. I'm using different books. So I have to arrange the subject matter (sic) based on my own decision or perception of how it should be arranged.*

Instructional milieu, or the environment in which teaching-learning takes place, is another aspect of pedagogy influenced by beliefs. Undoubtedly, the kind of atmosphere that prevails inside the classroom depends primarily on teachers' beliefs on what the setting of the teaching-learning process should be like. Like its effects on the choice of methods, the effects of beliefs about the conditions under which teaching and learning should take place tend to concretize teachers' pedagogy, as can be inferred from the following verbalizations from a participant:

*I want them to be noisy. I want my classroom to be like a marketplace where people buy and sell. But this time they will be buying and selling ideas. I want my classroom to be a place where ideas are freely exchanged and discussed.*

The teachers' rapport with the mentees, or the students, is another aspect of pedagogy influenced by teachers' beliefs. Because of their beliefs regarding how teachers should interact with the learners their teaching approaches assume specific forms and character which, in turn, concretize their pedagogy. The following articulations from two informants illustrate how the power of beliefs concretizes pedagogy by defining teachers' interaction with learners:

*I deal with different students in a different way. I believe that a person is unique. They have different needs, different learning styles. So I see to it that my teaching style would help them and cater to their needs.*

Without doubt, beliefs are powerful influences on the formation of distinct teaching modalities because of the ability of teachers' convictions to contextualize, configure and concretize pedagogy.

## DISCUSSION

According to Yero (2002), there is power in how people view the world around them. Considering that "beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives" (Pajares, 1992, p. 307); this argument appears difficult to refute.

Utilizing the mechanisms of phenomenological inquiry this study has drawn out the contextualizing, configuring and concretizing power of selected Filipino teacher educators' beliefs and how they shape their distinct teaching practices which, by extension, may also offer valuable insights into how teacher education may develop its signature pedagogy.

## Contextualizing power of teacher beliefs

Teachers' beliefs and their complex relationship with teaching practices are defined by context and can only be understood when examined in relation to specific circumstances because teachers' practices are basically reflections of their culture which serves as framework through which experiences are given meaning (Mansour, 2009).

Since beliefs are vital elements of the process by which people filter information and assign value judgments (Mansour, 2009), it would follow that they enable people to structure their experiences and contextualize them in a meaningful way. Thus, authors who refer to beliefs as cognitive or mental "maps" (Pajares, 1992; Yero, 2002) are accurate in their descriptions in as much as beliefs enable individuals to navigate and make sense of their experiences in accordance with their convictions and ideologies.

Teachers' actions are motivated by their understanding of the various aspects of educational context such as "school and society, organizational imperatives and debate on pedagogical ideas" (Carlgren & Lindblad, 1991, p. 512), among others. Teachers' beliefs enable them to meaningfully relate their pedagogy to numerous variables that form the backdrop of education, hence the contextualizing power of teachers' beliefs.

Concepts on teaching is one factor that places pedagogy in proper perspective. Their personal views of their work enable teachers to see their pedagogy not as an isolated activity but as an integral part of a larger whole. This is important because effective teaching arises from teachers' clear understanding of the interrelationship between and among educational variables.

In a study conducted by Parpala and Lindblom-Ylänne (2007) regarding teachers' concepts of good teaching, "putting teaching into a larger context" (p. 360) emerged as one of the sub-dimensions of the dimension "teaching practice", illustrating the importance teachers place on contextualizing pedagogy to connect it to a larger framework. Considering that our responses to situations are mediated by our concepts (Pratt, 1992), it becomes apparent that teachers' concepts on teaching exert a strong influence on how they contextualize their pedagogy. As pointed out by Pratt (1992, p. 204), people "view the world through the lenses of [their] conceptions, interpreting and acting in accordance with [their] understanding of the world." Thus, teachers should have clear concepts on teaching and meaningfully connect it to the larger picture because it is only by so doing that they can become good and effective

teachers. As pointed out by Fives and Buehl (2008), effective teachers, in addition to having immense content knowledge, understand the contexts, among other things, that influence teaching practice.

Similarly, teachers' motivation, or cause, for teaching contextualizes pedagogy. To the extent that beliefs shape individual systems of values that determine behavior (Mansour, 2009), teachers' primary reasons for teaching exert a strong influence on their pedagogy, prompting them to use distinct teaching strategies that are consistent with their motivational orientation.

Their motivational beliefs enable teachers to locate themselves in the overall educational scheme, contextualizing their pedagogy and defining their distinct teaching approaches. Thus, teachers should be fully cognizant of their motivations for teaching to fully understand how they contribute to the teaching and learning process.

Similarly, teachers' beliefs pertaining to conduct place their pedagogy in context. According to Clark (1988), teachers acquire beliefs about responsibilities and proper conduct, among other things, as early as the pre-service years. This implies that even before professional practice, teachers already have personal schemata for appropriate teacher behavior or conduct. Since beliefs tend to resist change (Kagan, 1992), teachers generally continue to hold on to these behavioral beliefs until in-service years, they become even more unbending with the passing of time.

The General Teaching Council for England (GTC), the professional body for teaching in England, described teachers' work as one "shaped by...important values of public life, including: selflessness; integrity; honesty; objectivity; accountability; openness; and leadership" (2009, p. 2). Given this argument, it can be assumed that teachers' personal beliefs regarding professional conduct contextualize their pedagogy, to the extent that their values mediate their encounter with the teaching profession.

### **Configuring power of teacher beliefs**

In a parallel manner that beliefs contextualize teaching, teachers' ideologies also configure pedagogy. The word "configure" is used in this study as it is defined by MSN Encarta (n. d.), an online dictionary: a verb that means to "arrange parts for particular use: to set up, design, or arrange the parts of something for a specific purpose." Teachers' beliefs enable them to structure the different elements and processes of education from a relatively broad context and confine it to a more specific and more defined framework, especially beliefs pertaining to educational founda-

tions, focus and foresight.

Teachers' beliefs play a significant role in the process by which pedagogy and other educational components gain a strong foothold. For one, teachers' beliefs determine, to a large measure, the successful implementation of educational programs. As pointed out by Vacc and Bright (1999), a curricular design has greater chances of full implementation if teachers' beliefs are compatible with its philosophical underpinnings. For another, teachers tend to support educational reforms if such changes are consistent with their ideologies or beliefs (Datnow & Castellano, 2000).

To the extent that teachers respond to educational changes based on their beliefs, pedagogy gains stability because of teachers' convictions, facilitating its efficient integration into the overall framework of the educational structure. The systematic organization of this structure is a prerequisite to the attainment of its goals and objectives. Thus, it is of foremost importance that teachers' beliefs be considered in professional development programs because the success of such programs depends to a great extent to teachers' beliefs and knowledge (Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2002).

Focus of instruction, which is also strongly influenced by teachers' beliefs, likewise contributes to optimum configuration of pedagogy. Teachers are constantly faced with social realities that affect teaching (Carlgren & Lindblad, 1991), and teachers schematize these realities through the lenses of their beliefs. As Speer (2005) averred, beliefs influence teachers' decisions regarding what knowledge should be taught, what teaching methods to employ and what goals to achieve.

As pointed out earlier by one of the respondents, the focus of instruction in their teacher education program is generally to achieve the highest possible level of success in the board examinations. Although the ultimate goal is to equip the students with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they will need as teachers, passing the licensure examination appears to be one of the immediate concerns, as revealed by several participants during the interviews. Arguably, this emphasis on instruction oriented toward government-sponsored licensure examinations has become the common yardstick for teachers' assessment of their teaching practices. It also provides them a frame of reference for positioning their pedagogy where it can give the greatest contribution to organizational success.

Pedagogical foresight is likewise a factor that configures teaching. According to Diakidoy and Kanari (1999, p. 226), "teachers' beliefs influence their perceptions and evaluation of outcomes". This implies

that teachers' beliefs determine their concept of the ultimate purpose of education, for how will teachers evaluate educational outcomes without clear personal criteria for evaluation?

Although majority of the participants in this study identified passing the licensure examination as their immediate goal for the students, their statements of beliefs reflected a profound awareness of a higher purpose for their pedagogy. More important than passing the board examination, the teacher participants expressed the desire to produce graduates who will eventually become effective teachers and make significant contributions to society. This vision of the kind of teachers they want reflects pedagogical ideologies that go far beyond the practicality and immediacy of licensure examinations. Obviously, this projection of their pedagogy into the future influence the participants' teaching practices. This, in turn, configures their pedagogy to the extent that it gives them a clear perspective of how their teaching approaches interface with other aspects of education as it performs its function in society.

### **Concretizing power of teacher beliefs**

Teachers' beliefs contextualize pedagogy by delineating its framework and configuring it by assembling it together with other educational components to constitute systems for obtaining educational goals. Additionally, teachers' beliefs also concretize pedagogy by dictating the teaching maneuvers or the "concrete operational acts of teaching" (Shulman, 2005a, p. 54) that teachers use inside their classrooms. Specifically, teachers' beliefs about method, milieu of instruction and their mentees concretize pedagogy.

According to Northcote (2009) teachers' beliefs influence their choice of specific teaching methods which, in turn, affect quality of learning. This is supported by Mansour (2009) who said that teachers' beliefs are strong predictors of behavior inside the classroom. In short, teachers' beliefs generally indicate the actual features of instructional methods that they use (Kagan, 1992), justifying the claim that beliefs are "far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks and problems and are stronger predictors of behaviour" (Pajares, 1992, p. 311).

Similarly, teachers' beliefs pertaining to instructional environment or milieu determine their behavior inside the classroom. According to Austin and Reinhardt (1999), there exists a strong relationship between and among teachers' beliefs, class practices and learning atmosphere. Relatedly, Fang (1996) maintained that teachers' beliefs are determined by situations and demonstrated in teaching practices in accordance with the



intricacies of classroom instruction.

The relationship between beliefs and the learning environment is symbiotic: situations or settings shape teachers' beliefs (Fang, 1996) and beliefs shape the learning milieu. As pointed out by Alexander and Dochy (1995, p. 414), "beliefs are evident in the way teachers define the learning environment." A study by Hativa, Barak, and Simhi (2001) reported teachers' awareness of the need for a classroom climate that is conducive to learning and to show affection and respect for the learners by providing feedback and making themselves available. Raymond (1997), for his part, described a teacher's preference for classrooms where students are quiet, stationary and attentive at all times.

Despite the apparent differences in teachers' beliefs pertaining to the atmosphere under which instruction should take place, the fact remains that their convictions exert a strong influence on their choice of teaching methods. This, in turn, concretizes their pedagogy, determining the actual teaching moves that they execute during instruction.

Lastly, teachers' beliefs regarding the learners or mentees give definite form to pedagogy. Since students are the direct recipients of instruction, teachers usually view them as the primary consideration in instructional planning and implementation. As Tatto (1996) stressed, teachers' impression of their teaching approaches is strongly influenced by their assessment of its adaptability to particular needs of the learners. This implies that teachers' beliefs regarding the learners inform their choice of specific instructional strategies, concretizing their pedagogy. Since beliefs are highly personal (Kagan, 1990), it can be assumed that teachers' beliefs regarding learners lead to a person-specific pedagogy, i.e., pedagogy that is distinct to an individual teacher and tailored to specific group or type of learners. This assumption is supported by Nathan and Koedinger's (2000) assertion that "teachers' beliefs about students' abilities play a central role in shaping teachers' judgments and instructional practices" (p. 226).

## CONCLUSION

This study intended to eidetically describe the way teachers' beliefs are instrumental in shaping a distinct pedagogy for teacher education. Interestingly, the participants' statements of their educational beliefs gave rise to the trilogy of power typologies that shape their distinct pedagogy namely, contextualizing, configuring and concretizing power which, in turn, may offer insights into how teacher education may develop its own pedagogical signature.

This study has shown that beliefs exert a profound influence on teachers' pedagogical decisions and choice of instructional strategies and therefore strongly impact student learning. The findings in this study concur with literature which generally recognizes the strong impact of teachers' beliefs on their teaching practices, highlighting the power of beliefs to shape signature pedagogies. Thus, teacher education programs should take beliefs into account during program planning and implementation because they tend to remain unchanged once adopted, making it difficult for teachers to change beliefs even if they do not appear contributory to effective and meaningful learning. Furthermore, it is imperative that teacher educators hold beliefs consistent with the principles of effective pedagogy because their students' behavior inside the classroom when they finally teach professionally will be influenced by their own experiences as students. In other words, teacher educators should set good examples of beliefs for students to emulate.

By drawing out the powerful effect of teachers' beliefs on Filipino teacher educators' characteristic teaching practices, this paper hopes to contribute to the understanding of teachers' beliefs and how they shape distinct pedagogies for the professions, particularly teacher education.

Since beliefs are context-based, inquiries into their influence on the teaching practices of teacher educators in other cultural and educational communities may offer invaluable insights into how beliefs shape unique teaching repertoires and, by extension, how teacher education may form its own signature pedagogy.

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