The Challenges of Pre-service English Language Teachers: A Reflection of Their Teaching Practicum

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Article Info

Abstract

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This research was conducted to explore some of the probable issues encountered by pre-service English teachers when conducting teaching practicum (PPL) activities at schools. The research focuses on (1) how do the practitioners practice their language skills (English) and pedagogical competencies to teach at schools while conducting their teaching practicum? (2) what obstacles or challenges do they encounter during PPL at schools? The researcher employed questionnaires and interviews involving PPL practitioners, teachers and field supervisors to explore the problems faced by the practitioners. The research findings reveal that there are several potential obstacles encountered by practitioners while conducting PPL at schools. The interesting Issues revealed problems accentuating the teaching planning process, pre-teaching activities, core activities and post-teaching activities. The results of this study are indeed valuable for pre-service English teachers as evaluative paces to improve their teaching competencies and English language skills in carrying out PPL activities at schools to be professional English teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Conducting teaching practicum (PPL) for students of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty (FITK) is one of main activities that must be carried out by all students as professional teacher candidates. In general, the purpose of implementing teaching practicum is to provide real involvement for FITK students regarding actual situations and conditions of the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Therefore, the students are able to train and develop their teaching skills and pedagogical competencies in teaching practicum process. In addition to that, the students are also not merely required to practice their skills and competencies obtained while learning at campus but also must be able to analyze the real problems encountered so that they are able to prepare and anticipate difficulties when becoming a teacher later.

To meet the increasingly challenging strains, English Language Teaching Department (ELTD)/ Jurusan Tadris Bahasa Inggris (TBI), which is one of the departments at FITK, orient its students to conduct PPL in order that they must be competent in locating

and implementing mastery of English skills and pedagogical competence obtained at campus comprehensively and professionally at schools. Fundamentally, Hashona (2014) reinforces that when implementing PPL a student must be aware of, evaluate themselves, and have the desire to change for the better quality in the real situation, students' understandings, teaching and learning methods, and to possess noble attitudes and personalities. Therefore, Al-Maliki (2016) asserts that PPL activities can be used as a basic reference to assess whether students are ready and eligible to be professional teachers' candidates.

This issue is also in line with Mutlu (2014) who states that the implementation of teaching practicum is the most significant component and is at the heart of the development process of becoming an educator. Thus, in the face of the real fields and situation, all students (prospective educators) will certainly acquire currents complications and various problems that must be solved. Hence, through PPL students can also analyze how far the boundaries and description of the teacher's work they will carry out later.

In addition to that, Debreli (2016) revealed another important thing related to knowledge and teaching experience through PPL, namely the beliefs of the practitioners related to learning and learning in the classroom to the changes they gained before implementing PPL. According to him, it is believed that this change benefits the development of teaching skills and competencies.

In fact, teaching practicum (PPL) activities of conducted by ELTD students at schools still encounter some issues and might not run perfectly as expected even though ELTD students have been prepared and equipped with knowledge, skills and teaching experience when they are in campus. Based on the results of preliminary research conducted by previous researchers through interviews to those who have conducted teaching practicum, school tutors, and Field Supervisors, it revealed several potential impediments experienced by the practitioners. In general, there are two main constraints related to language skills (English skills) and pedagogical competencies of ELTD practitioners.

Based on interviews with several school tutors and Field Supervisor (*Dosen Pembimbing Lapangan*), language skills are still serious obstacles experienced by PPL practitioners. Some expressed their uncertainty over the linguistic competence of the practitioners when teaching in class. According to them some PPL practitioners still have teaching competencies and English language skills that are not standardized both in oral and written skills. Whereas teaching competency and English language skills are the main modalities of PPL practitioners as prospective English educators because they are role models for their students in class.

Meanwhile, the results of interviews with alumni volunteers revealed that the biggest obstacle they experienced when teaching in class was classroom management (classroom management). They revealed that inviting students to be actively involved in every activity of the learning process was very draining the energy and time of the students in the class. Therefore, class management which is a small part of the competence of this pedagogy becomes a serious problem for them.

In addition to the preliminary research conducted by researchers, several potential obstacles and crucial gaps between the campus and the school regarding the experience of PPL practice have been examined by other researchers beforehand. Nashruddin (2015) revealed important matters related to the significant gap between what students learn when studying to become prospective educators with ideal and quality competence and what is needed by practitioners in school. First, the English Tadris (TBI) majors still have not adequately adjusted matters related to the

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needs of the practitioners to do more for getting better performances

According to Hosana (2014) and Genca (2016), the guidance of Guru Pamong /school Teachers and DPL which is very effective will have positive implications in PPL activities, which will improve the teaching abilities of students practicing. In line with that, in the implementation of PPL in schools, students are required to get guidance from supervisors and tutors. The task of supervisors and tutors emphasizes more on the educational aspects, which play a role and provide color in the formation of competencies and professional attitudes of prospective teachers / education personnel.

More specifically, the supervisors are tasked with carrying out the guidance of PPL activities in the form of syllabus and RPP guidance, establishing effective communication with practitioners and the school, monitoring practice activities, as well as being part of the PPL practice examiner (PPL Guide, 2017).

Mahmoudi & Ozkan (2016) stated that there are four obstacles that are most often experienced and trigger stress by the practitioners when teaching in class. The first is related to the less optimal role of tutor teachers and supervisors. The second, class management is less effective done by practitioners when teaching in class. The three things related to school administration are too many. Finally, related to the affective factors of the practitioner.

According to Trujillo & Hernández (2018) prospective educators will be able to develop their pedagogical competencies through teaching practices in their classrooms. They explained that teaching practices could develop practitioner's competencies related reflections on understanding related to the educational context. There are three important patterns he obtained including: a) prospective educators will have competence related to class conditions; b) absorb the skills and competencies learned from the tutor teacher and the supervisor; and c) development related to language learning and teaching.

Relevant research on the role of the PPL supervisor can be found in the Al-Maliki study (2016). The study reported 10 experiences of PPL supervisors in using the PPL practice assessment format / prospective English teachers in Oman. This qualitative research, driven by interpretive phenomenological studies, conducts individual semi-structured interviews with the supervisors. Their understanding of both practice and theory is presented and discussed in relation to the relevant literature on good and standardized assessment practices.

Al-Maliki (2016) found that the supervisor had their respective criteria when assessing PPL practices. In fact, having an assessment criterion that certainly helps supervisors and tutors to have a clear assessment focus and be able to evaluate practitioners for their improvement is indeed the aim of school-based teaching practicums. In addition, the researchers found that providing feedback to improve the performance of the practice participants was very important. In addition, standardization of judgment is also important in providing feedback. Whereas the tutor teacher's task in detail is to guide practitioners in preparing PPL programs in schools both regarding teaching programs and outside teaching programs, facilitating practice in obtaining school documents such as curriculum, learning resources, etc., guiding practice in making syllabus and PPL monitoring practitioners' activities while at school, as well as being a test practitioner together supervisor (Guide PPL, 2017).

Judging from the role and function of both the supervisor and tutor, it can be said that the tutor and supervisor are the spearhead in achieving the goal of establishing practice competencies is through PPL activities, so that the quality of graduates will

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be influenced by the quality of the process and the coordination of the parties involved and responsible in PPL activities. Meanwhile, from the point of view of the practitioner, a study was conducted by Kuswandono (2014). He tried to find out the motivation that was reflected from the practices during the PPL. His research collected empirical data through reflective journals practicing PPL, questionnaires, individual interviews, focus group discussions, and autobiographies. This study examines the problems faced by practitioners, namely their motivation to become teachers. Kuswandono (2014) found that most participants did not seem to have intrinsic motivation to learn in their field even though they were entering the final stages of their final year. It is interesting to note that part of their reflection is not to become a teacher.

METHOD

To obtain accurate and reliable data and information, certain research methods are needed in accordance with the characteristics of the problem to be solved. The method in this study employed a survey design that explores a problem by means of qualitative and qualitative data collection that includes various relevant information sources. The subject of this research was carried out by the method of purposive sampling, which is probing people who are most able to provide information about all information related to this research. The subjects of this study were all students conducting teaching practicum (PPL) of the Tadris Bahasa Inggris English Department in semester 7.

To obtain data truths, researchers also conducted data triangulation and cross checks by involving English tutors from junior high, high school / vocational school and Mts / MA and Lecturer Field Guidance (DPL) from the Department of TBI.

This research was conducted for 4-5 months in the city and district of Cirebon. Data collection in this research was carried out through questionnaires and in-depth interviews in order to explore more information from informants conducted to students practicing PPL Jurasan TBI which is the main source. For data triangulation, interviews were also conducted with English tutors and field supervisors. In addition, other data are also obtained through analysis of learning documents both administrative and daily teaching activities / journals of students' practice. These data are used as supporting and complementary data of primary data of relevance to the research needs.

To obtain the data needed researchers used several instruments including; 1) Questionnaire is open and closed to all students practicing on TBI's PPL; 2) in-depth interviews with all key informants by approaching and scheduling in advance so that the information obtained is truly reliable; 3) Document analysis / analysis, namely reviewing / studying students' administrative documents and documents from tutors and supervisors. (4) Focus group discussion (FGD) is conducted to representatives of tutors and field supervisors.

Quantitative and qualitative information and data collected through questionnaires, in-depth interviews and document review / analysis are then processed by organizing the data. For data analysis, the questionnaire will be processed statistically by looking at the respondents' answers and the results obtained are then calculated according to the purpose of the research. Whereas qualitative data and important matters will be recorded and organized (field notes, interview transcriptions, and researchers' notes) and analyzed through stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the results of data analysis conducted by researchers, it is found that the

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results are very interesting and important to be explored more deeply, especially the results that are very relevant to the purpose of this study. Especially the obstacles students put into practice when teaching at school. The results include constraints related to pedagogical and professional competencies / areas of study (language) perceived and faced by students when carrying out PPL activities at school.

Pedagogical Competence

Interesting issues related to the obstacles faced by students include; stages of teaching preparation (preparation of lesson plans), stages of skills to begin lessons, stages in the learning process, and stages of closing / evaluating learning activities.

Teaching Preparation (preparation of Lesson plan/RPP)

Obstacles or problems faced by students in the preparation phase of teaching / preparation of lesson plans, there are five obstacles that are most difficult for most students to practice. Nearly 64-68% of students still experience problems related to the understanding and implementation of the latest curriculum and syllabus changes and the completeness of assessment instruments. Another obstacle, between 57-58% of the volunteers stated that they were still experiencing problems related to the selection of learning resources / media that were appropriate for the learners and the suitability of the techniques and learning objectives. This is also in line with what was expressed by most of the tutor teachers and the field supervisor.

Skills to Start Lessons

Serious problems experienced by the practitioners through the reflection that is delivered, which is related to the activity of opening lessons, including apperception activities and conveying the objectives and learning indicators. The results show that 17-22% of the practitioners stated that they did not experience significant obstacles in this regard. While 24-47% of students stated that

they needed repairs and needed repairs and only a small proportion of students in practitioners still felt that they experienced obstacles in the activity. The data obtained from the tutor teacher and the supervisor of the field reinforce these which states that they do not see a big obstacle when observing the practitioners.

The Learning Process

From the research results of the researchers, there are some important things that are still experienced by the practitioners during the learning process in the classroom including the related approach / learning strategies, questioning skills or interaction between the students, and the use of instructional media in the classroom.

Learning Approaches / Strategies

From the data obtained, more than 80% of students stated that they still experience obstacles in carrying out learning in accordance with the competencies (goals) to be achieved and the characteristics of students and they need improvements to be more skilled with it. In addition, 53% of student practice shows that implementing learning in sequence also requires improvement and practice. Class mastery is also a skill that needs to be improved because it is still considered an obstacle by more than 70% of practicing students. Another issue considered which is constrained by the practitioners is how to foster active participation and positive attitudes towards students. This was stated by 45% of students practiced.

The last thing is related to the use of a variety of appropriate learning methods and techniques. There are only less than 9% of practitioners that are not constrained related to the method of learning techniques while teaching. Based on the results of interviews with tutors and supervisors. It is true that the foregoing shows that practitioners still face many obstacles related to learning approaches / strategies in class. Therefore, much wider opportunities are needed and appropriate

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improvements so that students are able to minimize these obstacles.

Questioning Skills and Interactions

From interviews with some of the tutors, they stated that most of the practitioners had no problems with interaction skills with students in the class. This is confirmed from the results of the questionnaire which revealed that only 32% of students were constrained in relation to the clarity of giving instructions to students. Another interesting thing shows that only 12.4% practice had difficulty in terms of clarity of giving the substance of the questions given by practitioners. Giving bridges thinking and turn to students does not become a serious obstacle for the practitioners because only 10.3% of them stated that they were problematic or constrained. Appreciation and enthusiasm for students' answers is also not an obstacle for students when they teach and only 6% stated that they were constrained in this regard.

The Use of Instructional Media

Based on the results of interviews with tutors and supervisors, most did not experience major obstacles in the use of instructional media in the classroom. In detail the results of the questionnaire distributed to students of practice, showed that only 14.4% of the practitioners stated that they really needed improvements related to skills in using instructional media, 6% were constrained to show an interesting impression in the use of media, 13.4% who stated constrained related to the compatibility of the media with indicators and teaching materials and the use of media effectively and efficiently. Finally, only 15.5% of students experienced problems related to students' involvement in the use of instructional media in the classroom.

Learning Evaluation Activities

It is not only related when pre-activities and core activities are important in the learning process. Stages or learning evaluation activities are also very crucial because of the instructional activities for teachers to determine and assess learning outcomes that have been implemented. The results show that less than 30% of the practitioners are constrained in reflecting or drawing conclusions by involving students. While related to the accuracy of the assessment instruments, 56.7% of the volunteers stated that they were constrained in adjusting and making the right instruments so that they still really needed to improve these skills. It is also similar (55.7% of practice is constrained) related to skills in compiling instruments in accordance with indicators of competency achievement. While 41% and 47% practitioners assume still experience obstacles related to activities monitoring students' progress during the learning process conducting final assessments according to competencies.

Professional Competencies / Language skills (linguistics)

As the candidate of professional English teachers, teaching skills are not the merely important skills required to be mastered. The language skills (English) are also very significant and crucial as an indication that a student majoring in English is ready and standard to become a qualified and competent teacher in his field. In this case the competence of this field of study includes the quality of mastery of the material (English language) and the quality of mastery of English in class.

Teaching Material Mastery

The results showed that only a small proportion (between 7-9%) had experienced serious constraints related to the use of instructional substance teaching materials in class, the satisfaction of teaching materials with relevant knowledge in teaching, using concepts and explanations that were easily understood and conveying material and examples with clear and tiered. Instead, 13-20% of the practitioners believe that they are not at all constrained in terms of mastering linguistic material while teaching in class although most practitioners still claim that

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they need a little improvement and more opportunities to develop. This is justified by the data obtained from the interviews of tutors and supervisors who stated that the practitioners did not have substantive constraints related to the quality of mastery of teaching material (language).

The Quality of English Language Mastery in the Classroom

Based on data collected from several sources related to mastering English in class, 37% of the practitioners still experience problems related to the use of clear and precise English instructions, 46% of them only need a little improvement and practice and the rest do not need improvement in that regard. In addition, the data collected also revealed that 12.4% of the practitioners were constrained in using fluent and fluent English, 34% still needed improvement, 43.3% of the practitioners needed a little improvement and 10.3% did not need improvement.

CONCLUSION

In profiling professional and competent teacher candidates (Pre-Service Teachers), teaching practicum (PPL) in schools is a very crucial activity for Tadris Bahasa Inggris students, the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FITK) to train and explore their competencies in the real educational environment. Some difficulties felt and experienced by the practitioners when doing PPL at school become a very substantive and effective experience to equip practitioners to be ready to jump into the real context. Then, tangible limitations related to the implementation of PPL faced by practitioners are expected to be accommodated so that it can improve the readiness of prospective teachers, especially TBI students before conducting PPL at school. However, obstacles or challenges faced by practitioners can only be resolved in the form a virtuous system and the well-thought-of collaboration from related parties such as the campus (FITK and Field Supervisors, as well as the practitioners) and the school (PPL coordinators and tutors).

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