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Shifting from Theory to Practice: EFL Student Teachers' Readiness in Online Practicum

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Abstract

A practicum is a study program designed to prepare pre-service teachers where they apply the theory they have learned previously. This practicum also intends to give pre-service teachers a chance to practice their teaching skills. Pre-service teachers are affected significantly by the shift from offline to online learning. The goal of this research was to discover the reflective practices of EFL pre-service teachers' readiness in an online practicum, particularly their readiness to use technology in their learning. This research is qualitative research with a case study approach. The setting of this research is an online practicum at the Department of English Education, Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang. The participants in this research were pre-service teachers who took part in an online practicum. Seven pre-service teachers who teach English participated in this research. The data collected through reflective practice guided by the Gibbs reflective cycle was then analyzed using thematic analysis. The results of this research revealed that the participants had no problem with technology because they were used to using technology in their daily life and also in their learning life as well as pedagogical and professional aspects.

Introduction

Pandemic COVID-19 spreads all over the world and successfully attacks all aspects of our life, such as social, economic, and education. Education is one of the fields affected by Pandemic COVID-19, especially in teacher education. Almost two years of teaching and learning have been done online. Online teaching has created unprecedented barriers for teachers, forcing them to adjust to online teaching. Lockdowns in school create an entirely new situation for teachers, students, and parents (König et al., 2020). A typical situation in schools where students usually gather in class and meet face-to-face now changes automatically. Teachers, students, and parents must also adjust to this situation. Alternative schools are the only way to keep the teaching and learning process going. Various platforms have been used to support learning activities. Pre-service teachers are affected significantly by the shift from offline to online learning. Online learning requires a lot of preparation. Teachers should be prepared in three competences; pedagogical competence, professional competence, and technological competence. Teachers must adapt to online teaching, which demands them to address challenges and embrace new teaching and learning practices using a variety of technology and digital resources.

Almost two years ago (2020), learning in schools was carried out fully online. Teachers have to repeatedly design new programs to support students in the online learning process. This is because teachers have never dealt with online learning before, so they have to design a new program.

This has necessitated a complete change in the pedagogical approach to teaching and learning, as well as the implementation of a variety of new technologies (Howard et al., 2020).

School closures occurred in almost all countries starting in March 2020. Although schools have begun to reopen, they are still given restrictions, not immediately open in their entirety. Teachers confront great difficulties in adapting to online learning, maintaining communication with learners, and assisting learners in their learning and development. With the closure of this school, teachers, students, and even parents are required to be open to technological developments. As a result, digital technology has become an important issue, especially during this pandemic.

A practicum is a study program that is designed to prepare pre-service teachers where they apply the theory that has been learned previously. Teaching practicum has an important role for pre-service teachers. It means that pre-service teachers share their knowledge with students. It is a good opportunity for pre-service teachers to share their knowledge that they have learned in a teacher education program at a university (Noguera & Mccluskey, 2017).

Practicum, which is usually carried out offline for schools, is now changing online. Students and teachers utilize Internet-based learning technologies to communicate with one another and interact with course information in online learning (Downing & Dyment, 2013). The use of technology as a medium in this online learning is the media itself. Today's schools are often associated with technology, therefore ICT (Information and Communication Technology) should become more integrated into the educational

curriculum, and students should be given opportunities to employ modern technology tools and digital resource to solve problems (König et al., 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to prepare pre-service teacher students to carry out online practicum by utilizing ICT so that the learning process can take place well.

The point at which you are ready to accept or practice a new behavior is called "readiness". In other words, readiness is the competence that a person processes when they are physically and mentally ready to do something. Teacher readiness is described as the condition in which a teacher has adequate physical, social, and emotional competence or aptitude. Teaching readiness is defined as a teacher who must have an attitude of teaching readiness because it is his responsibility. In online teaching, not only physical and non-physical readiness must be prepared, but also the ability to master ICT is an important aspect. Readiness to use ICT in learning means that a teacher uses technology as a medium of learning. And in this online practicum, pre-service teacher students are required to master ICT.

Pre-service teachers' readiness includes three aspects of competence: pedagogic competence, professional competence, and competence in using technology. There are several studies that have examined pre-service teachers' readiness in teaching practicum. The first study is on students-teachers' strategies in engaging classroom interaction in the context of the teaching practicum (Heikonen et al., 2017). In the framework of the teaching practicum, the goal of this research is to get a better understanding of the tactics used by pre-service teachers in classroom engagement with students. The study focuses on the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional methods that

pre-service teachers describe utilizing in both challenging and empowering classroom occurrences. The next is readiness in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and teaching (Park et al., 2020). This study examines pre-service teachers' readiness to use CALL in their teaching, and the results of this study indicate the importance of language teacher education in CALL as well as strategies for enhancing pre-service EFL teachers' knowledge and skills in CALL implementation. However, this study did not explore the readiness of pre-service teachers to teach in an online practicum. And there is little that discusses the readiness of pre-service teachers to teach in an online practicum, such as the COVID pandemic and its effects on teacher education in England: how teacher educators moved practicum learning online (Kidd et al., 2020). Unfortunately, this study focuses on the challenges that arise from school closures during the pandemic and how they impact educators. This study explores how to adapt and transfer learning to the online space. This research has not explored the readiness of pre-service teachers in the use of technology. Therefore, this study is underexplored so this study must explore the readiness of pre-service teachers to teach in an online practicum, especially their readiness to use ICT in their learning process.

Reflective practice can be used as a tool to determine the readiness of pre-service teachers in an online teaching practicum. Reflective practice is important to maintain good and quality teaching and learning practices (Roberts et al., 2021). Reflective practice has a positive impact on teacher education in ensuring that pre-service teachers reflect on their teaching practice. The purpose of this reflective practice is to make pre-service teachers better prepared for teaching practice, especially in online teaching

practicum. The other purpose is to prepare pre-service teachers to become professional teachers in the future.

Method

Research Design

This research is qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to comprehend the phenomenon of what the research subject is experiencing, such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, and so on. This research uses a case study approach according to Robert K. Yin, which intends to describe the results of research and try to find a comprehensive description of a situation (Yin, R. K, 1984). Using this method is because the phenomenon to be studied is a case that requires an in-depth descriptive study, namely to determine the readiness of pre-service teachers to teach in an online practicum, especially using technology. A case study is effective when the researcher want to understand a specific problem or situation in detail and where people can identify cases with a variety of information. In general, a case study is more appropriate for research related to how or why questions.

Setting and Participants

The setting of this research is an online practicum at the English education department of UIN Walisongo Semarang. Practicum is one of the courses that must be taken as a graduation requirement at a university, especially for teaching education. Practicum is offered in the seventh semester and

students can take it after they have taken microteaching. The practicum was initially carried out offline but is now online due to Pandemic COVID-19.

The participants of this research were pre-service teachers who took an online practicum. Seven pre-service teachers volunteered to participate in this study, including six females and one male. These pre-service teachers are majoring in the English education department.

Data Collection Method and Research Procedure

Data collection techniques through interviews and questionnaires allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth information about the readiness of pre-service teachers in online practicum. This method was chosen because the interview a useful data gathering tool in which participants' preparation could be revealed through their actions, feelings, and attitudes (Park et al., 2020). The questionnaire also aimed to collect data and find answers to questions about the readiness of pre-service teachers to teach online, especially their readiness to use technology. The goal of this study was to get a thorough understanding of the subject, it was conducted qualitatively. Through reflective practice data was collected. This technique aimed to reveal the readiness of EFL pre-service teachers to practice teaching in online practicum.

Reflective practice is a method of learning from experience (Arslan, 2019). From experience, teachers can learn about their teaching learning and it will make a professional teacher. This technique of collecting data through reflection is considered appropriate because it helps pre-service teachers to learn from personal experience, especially bad experiences. With this

reflection, pre-service teachers can correct their shortcomings and will improve their teaching. The participants can write down what they feel when teaching online practicum according to the prepared questions.

The data reflection was taken in August 2021. This reflection was distributed via *WhatsApp* in the form of word or PDF file. The researcher contacted the participants personally because the responses were confidential. The researcher asked to participants to fill the reflection.

Reflection consists of six questions according to the Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988). These stages include the following: description of the situations and conditions, feeling about the experiences, **e**valuation good and bad experiences, analysis to understand the situation, conclusion about what you have learned and done in the teaching, and action plan about what will you do in the future if you face the same situation.

Data Analysis

This research adopted a qualitative research methodology by utilizing thematic analysis. Interviews are a great method for generating insight that includes attitudes, experiences, and feelings (Park et al., 2020). By using qualitative study will provide the potential to find out various views and experiences. The data collected from the reflection was then analyzed based on Gibbs Reflective Cycle. The findings of this study will be analyzed and presented based on them.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the answer from the reflection data provided by participants, the following is an explanation of their readiness in teaching practicum.

1. Learning Conditions while Online
   The pandemic COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on all aspects, including education. Education that was originally carried out face-to-face has now shifted to online. Online learning or distance learning surprised everyone, not only students but also teachers. It was a challenge for teachers to create an effective classroom atmosphere. This reflection was used to determine the extent of the readiness of pre-service teachers in the online teaching practicum. In addition, the reflection also contained several main points, among others, to find out how they felt before and after carrying out the online teaching practicum at school/madrasa, and whether they had anticipated the situations that would be faced during the online teaching practicum, as well as good and bad experiences during the online teaching practicum.
   Participant F
   I felt little pressured because when I asked the teacher for corrections related to learning materials in the form of power point, learning videos and Google assignment forms, there were any revisions, because these were adjusted to what the previous teacher had made, while I did not know it. For the next meeting, I have anticipated all the problems I experienced before, prepared a Google form according to the teacher's wishes and prepared a network to facilitate the learning process. Before studying I prepare everything I need.

The good experience that I got during PPL, I was given a mentor teacher who was very helpful and paid attention to what I was doing, so I knew what was right and what was wrong. I can understand how to teach well, prepare lessons well, create efficient and organized learning, know how to use applications that are very helpful in the assessment process such as Google forms and score recaps with spreadsheets. [7]
The bad experience I had was the response of students who were less active in learning, I have tried to provide interesting learning media but only a few students were active, then some students also did not take part in learning through Google meeting for various reasons, such as having no quota and bad signal.

2. Skills in Online Learning
   Participant Z
   I learned to be more patient in dealing with situations like this and I understand that online teaching and learning activities are more difficult for both teachers and students. The teacher cannot control students directly and students do not get detailed material and explanations so that students' understanding is reduced. What I can do to make teaching and learning activities more effective is to do a Google meet in every meeting, and I have to be more assertive with lazy students. I can use some of the rules to make students feel that learning online must also obey the rules. And I will always give an evaluation at every meeting or I will hold a question and answer or quiz directly using Google meet to find out the level of students understanding. At the end of each material I will hold a test and for students who get the best score will get a reward.

From the reflection data above, it can be concluded that a teacher must be alert and responsive in dealing with everything that happens in the classroom. Skills in teaching also need to be prioritized in teaching because with that teaching and learning process will be carried out as expected.

3. Efforts in Carrying Out Online Learning

Participant K

To become a competent teacher candidate, there are many things that must be improved and prepared. Changes in my attitude and behavior will take precedence. This is because as a pre-service teacher, I will interact with various school/madrasa residents. Moreover, students will imitate me a lot as their educator. I will also improve my teaching skills and innovate according to the times. This is so that students still feel at home in the learning process and feel that learning is becoming an addiction. This is important so that students do not feel burdened by the current developments.

4. Organize Online Learning Activities

Participant L

To manage and control classroom conditions to remain conducive during online learning, a good strategy is needed. The teacher cannot control directly and students do not get an understanding of the material and explanations in detail so that student understanding is reduced. The way that I did to make the class more effective was to do a Google meeting in every meeting and also I have to be firm with the students. A firm attitude sometimes needs to be applied when teaching. It means that sometimes relaxed and sometimes serious.

The researcher concluded from the reflection data above that implementing online learning requires some effort. Efforts can come

from teachers and their efforts to facilitate the teaching and learning process. The quality of teaching from a teacher can be improved through reading, looking for several reference sources that are relevant to the material, and always being updated with educational developments.

5. Utilizing the Use of Media/Platforms to Support Online Learning
   Online learning or distance learning cannot be separated from technology. Along with the times, technology is getting more sophisticated. Therefore, educators must follow these developments so that the learning process can run optimally. In carrying out online learning, we need several platforms to support the learning process. There are some platforms that we may already know about, but there are also some platforms that we may not know about. As teachers, we must know how to use the platform properly and correctly. This reflection aims to determine the readiness of pre-service teachers to use various platforms to support online learning.

   Participant I
   In this lesson, I only used Google meeting platform to support online learning. But in the future, I will learn and improve more about various platforms that can be used in online learning. Maybe a web such as linktree, making digital e-books, or you can also use a discord and quizziz platforms during the learning process. And I still have to continue to study and find out about platforms that might be interesting for students to understand the learning material.

   Based on the answer data given by participants above, they have used several platforms to support online learning. In the use of technology, they were quite mastered, but there was one participant who wanted

to learn more about using the platform. The participant wanted to try other platforms that could attract students' attention. The use of technology should be used to the maximum extent possible.

Conclusion

In a teaching practicum, what the teacher must prepare is not only master the material being taught but also the ability to manage the class and the ability to use technology in learning. Mastery of the material is indeed a priority in teaching, but if it is not supported by other abilities, the learning process cannot run smoothly.

This research reveals that the teaching readiness of pre-service teachers includes three aspects; pedagogical, professional, and readiness to use technology in their learning. Based on the findings from the reflective practice data provided by the participants, in their teaching readiness, they stated that they were ready to practice teaching online. They have prepared various things, such as teaching materials, media, and techniques that they have to prepare for an online teaching practicum. But there are some participants who think that offline learning is more effective than online learning because it allows participants to practice teaching directly. They have made various efforts and preparations so that the learning process can run as optimally as possible. In addition, they have also arranged learning activities in the form of lesson plans so that learning runs in a structured manner. They tried to create classroom conditions to remain active and effective even though learning is done online.

Online teaching requires special skills, especially in using technology in their learning. All participants have applied the technology well. In the use of technology, the participants had no problems because they were accustomed to using technology in their daily life and also in terms of learning. And there are also participants who have a desire to develop their skills in using technology.

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