

ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH TEACHER PERCEPTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

Many pre-service EFL teachers still face challenges in developing pedagogical competence during field practice. However, limited studies explore their real teaching experiences using a retrospective approach. This study aims to investigate the challenges faced by pre-service teachers in designing, implementing, and assessing instruction during the Innovative Field Learning Practice (IFLP), and how personal characteristics affect their competence development. Using a qualitative retrospective design, data were collected through interviews with four 7th-semester English Education students and analyzed thematically. Findings show challenges in instructional design, classroom management, and assessment. Participants applied various strategies, including technology use and collaboration. Prior teaching experience, motivation, and cultural background also influenced their development. The study concludes that pedagogical competence is shaped by both teaching challenges and individual factors. Strengthening practical teaching and reflective activities is recommended to better prepare future teachers.

Keywords: Challenges, Strategies, EFL Pre-service teacher, Pedagogical Competence

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the main pillar in the education process, and teacher competence greatly influences student achievement. It is common knowledge that the teaching and learning process is complex. The emphasis is on how teachers impart knowledge and what students should know or learn (Syamdianita & Cahyono, 2021). In the EFL context, the way foreign language is taught and learned has changed a lot thanks to research and experiences that enrich our understanding of how students learn foreign languages (Moeller & Catalano, 2015). Nonetheless, this discussion is ancillary to the pedagogical concerns that English teachers ought to prioritize (Ubaidillah, 2018).

As part of the teacher education program, pre-service EFL teachers are assigned to undergo an innovative field learning practice (IFLP) program, which requires direct contact with students in addition to teaching as students. However, this teacher training process often faces various challenges while teaching that require special attention (Ghufron et al., 2022). Teachers must be able to plan lessons to be taught in the classroom creatively and innovatively (Mahmud, 2023).

Law Number 14 of 2005 about teachers and lecturers states that teachers must have four basic abilities to support their ability to teach effectively and correctly, namely: pedagogical competence, personality competence, professional competence, and social competence. However, the development of prospective teachers' pedagogical competencies is one of the main issues in education (Nabila, 2016).

Pedagogical competence includes: 1) knowledge of educational theory or foundations, (2) knowledge of students, (3) curriculum or syllabus development, (4) learning implementation, (5) applying educational and dialogic learning in practice, (6) using learning technology, (7) assessing learning, and (8) encouraging children to reach their full potential.

Professional Development (PD) has long been viewed as a mechanism for developing and preserving teachers' professional knowledge. However, teacher PD approaches often fall short of providing the learning that teachers need (Fairman et al., 2023). According to Bugti et al. (2024) future educators can enhance their professional identity while managing various barriers.

According to Maharani and Fithriani (2023), prospective teachers often face several obstacles in teaching practice in developing their teaching competencies. Interactive digital devices and online platforms are gradually replacing traditional classroom devices. As a result, language teachers must adapt to this dynamic environment by developing digital skills that extend their core pedagogical knowledge (Insani et al., 2024). For various reasons, including lack of confidence and inadequate preparation, some students are unprepared to carry out classroom teaching practice (Sukarni & Rokhayati, 2023).

Previous research has revealed that an inadequate curriculum can cause prospective teachers who are not fully prepared, especially in English language skills and pedagogy, to be unable to continue their profession as teachers after completing their education (Hadi, 2019). A study by Pertiwi et al. (2022) showed that participating teachers faced various challenges in their teaching implementation. Another study also presents a new curriculum-based research competency development model in teaching English as a foreign language. This study only explains in depth its theoretical foundation, guiding principles, and structural elements, but this study still does not examine its actual implementation in a specific educational environment (Tuchyna & Kamynin, 2022).

Based on previous observations and research findings, many EFL teacher candidates, especially in the IFLP program, still experience difficulties in developing their pedagogical competencies. Most previous studies were not specific to how EFL teacher candidates develop pedagogical competence through real teaching experiences and did not use retrospective methods.

Therefore, this study aims to explore more deeply the pedagogical challenges experienced by prospective EFL teachers, especially in designing, implementing, and assessing learning during the Innovative Field Learning Practice (IFLP) program using retrospective design.

METHOD

Research Design

This study explores the challenges of IFLP for students during teaching practice using a qualitative approach with a retrospective research design. Retrospective design is a type of research

design in which information or past events are used to collect data, meaning that data collection begins with the results or consequences that have occurred.

Data Sources

This study focuses on 7th-semester English Education students who have participated in an IFLP program. The researcher selected these participants to explore the challenges they faced during their teaching practice in developing their pedagogical competence. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to collect data by selecting the subjects according to the participant's ability level and gender selection from the results of their IFLP scores.

Data Collection

The data collection process in this study used semi-structured interviews with PPL students who had been selected through data on the value of IFLP. Each participant was interviewed for approximately one hour, which was conducted online and audio-recorded to ensure data accuracy. The interview questions were focused according to the research questions.

Data Analysis

It was analyzed using thematic analysis following the steps of Braun and Clarke, (2006): familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and compiling the report. Member checking was used to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed several challenges faced by pre-service EFL teachers in developing pedagogical competence during the Innovative Field Learning Practice (IFLP) program. These challenges were categorized into three main components of pedagogical competence: designing instruction, implementing instruction, and assessing instruction.

Challenges in Designing Instruction

Participants reported difficulties in aligning materials with students' levels, ensuring curriculum relevance, choosing appropriate teaching methods, and dealing with limited resources in schools. For instance, Participant 1 stated that she faced some obstacles in the learning design process, especially in "adjusting the material to the students' ability level." She also highlighted "material relevance/making materials interesting and relevant to students' needs" as key concerns. Although learning objectives were generally guided by the curriculum, difficulties persisted in maintaining engagement and balancing theory with practice. Participant 2 expressed that "the main challenge is adjusting to the new curriculum," and noted technological limitations such as "there was no wifi." Participant 3 added that "my challenge is like adjusting the learning to what is in the school because each school is usually different," particularly in ensuring that students understand and apply the material. Participant 4 emphasized challenges in "adjusting learning with classroom activities" and mentioned the necessity of developing many classroom activities to engage students effectively.

Challenges in Implementing Instruction

The participants experienced various issues when implementing instruction, including differences in student abilities, low motivation, classroom disruptions, and time management.

Participant 1 stated that “students' abilities vary, some are quick to understand the material, some need a lot of time,” and faced difficulties such as “distractions during class such as talking to themselves, playing cellphones, and being sleepy.” To overcome discrepancies between lesson plans and actual classroom situations, she prepared alternative strategies, saying “I always have a plan B.” Participant 2 highlighted the need to “understand the character of each student,” and emphasized adapting lesson delivery through structured activities. Participant 3 observed that students “lean towards grammar” or “lean towards speaking,” requiring her to create balanced groupings and flexible teaching approaches. She noted that being a practicing teacher made students underestimate her authority. Similarly, Participant 4 remarked, “students don’t listen and pay attention... they underestimate because the practicing teacher is not the real teacher.”

Challenges in Assessing Instruction

When conducting assessments, challenges included adjusting rubrics to established criteria, integrating assessment types, and managing time constraints. Participant 1 said, “maybe during the process of assessing on the assessment rubric that must adjust the criteria,” and explained her assessment process using “quizzes” for formative and “essay exams” for summative assessment. Participant 2 admitted to facing time management issues, while Participant 3 found difficulties in determining how to correct student writing errors such as typos. Participant 4 noted, “there are obstacles because sometimes time is limited,” though she relied on comprehensive assessments including “reading, writing, speaking.”

Strategies Used to Overcome Challenges

In facing various challenges in designing, implementing, and assessing learning, each prospective teacher has different strategies in adjusting to learning conditions in the classroom. The strategies used include the use of technology, application of interactive methods, student-centered learning approach, as well as discussion and collaboration with other teachers. To address the identified challenges, participants adopted various strategies. All four participants used technology to support the design and delivery of lessons. Participant 1 explained, “to make it easier to design I use technological assistance,” and incorporated “various applications” for assessment and engagement. Participant 2 applied a student-centered approach by “involving students in learning,” and used applications like Word Wall to avoid monotony. Participant 3 stated, “I use technology because the visualization is there and makes students interested,” and utilized interactive techniques such as ice breaking. Participant 4 employed games and time-limited activities using Quizizz, emphasizing the importance of “using technology so that students are not bored.”

Participants also discussed, collaborated, and reflected with fellow pre-service teachers and mentor teachers. They emphasized the importance of adjusting teaching styles to students’ needs, engaging directly with learners, and continuously refining their instructional methods based on student feedback and classroom dynamics.

The Effect of Personal Characteristics on the Development of Students’ Pedagogical Competence

In addition to academic factors, personal characteristics such as previous teaching experience, motivation, and cultural background also play an important role in developing

prospective teachers' pedagogical competence. As explained in the background of this study, the process of developing prospective teachers' competencies is not only influenced by learning in college, but also influenced by the personal characteristics of each individual. These personal characteristics can influence how students face challenges in the field and how they develop their teaching skills.

The Effect of Prior Experience

All participants stated that previous experiences, especially micro-teaching, were very helpful in preparing for field practice. Participant 1 said that the micro teaching experience “helped me when practicing in the field” and “my experience of getting mistakes so that the lecturer provides feedback so that it can be corrected when in the field directly.” Participant 2 added that because he had already taught in private and micro-teaching, “at that time I was more confident in micro-teaching, so there were no obstacles during PPL.” Participant 3 also stated, “I have practiced in micro teaching and it really helped me to practice in school directly.” Participant 4 also revealed that her experience was “very helpful to jump in/practice teaching to schools directly.”

The Effect of Motivation

High motivation is proven to encourage increased enthusiasm in undergoing field practice. Participant 1 stated that his motivation “makes me more enthusiastic and better and improves pedagogic competence.” Participant 2 expressed that his motivation “makes me more enthusiastic.” Although participant 3 stated that he had “no aspirations to become a teacher,” he still tried because he was “embraced and encouraged by friends.” Meanwhile, participant 4 said that his motivation was because he “liked English and wanted to be a teacher,” which made him “continue to be enthusiastic during PPL.” However, changes in motivation also occurred. Participant 3 stated, “I became more convinced not to become a teacher.” Participant 4 also said, “I was immediately down” because she felt the challenge of organizing learning and dealing with students.

The Effect of Cultural Background

The majority of participants stated that their cultural background did not affect the learning and teaching process. Participants 1 and 2 said that there was “no” influence because they came from the same culture as the students. Participant 4 also mentioned, “nothing because I have studied Java for a long time, so I can adjust the way of learning.” However, participants 3 and 4 identified cultural barriers. Participant 3 said that “at school, most of them use Indo and Javanese, while I cannot speak Javanese because my previous environment was from Madura.” Participant 4 stated that “at home we use Madurese while the PPL has to interact using Bahasa Indonesia.”

Based on the interviews with four EFL student teachers, it was found that personal characteristics such as previous experience, motivation, and cultural background had diverse influences on the development of their pedagogical competence during the innovative field practice program. Prior experience, especially experience in micro teaching, generally had a positive influence on their readiness to face challenges in the field, increased confidence, and helped in designing lessons. Motivation is an important factor that encourages enthusiasm in developing pedagogical competence, although in some participants, the motivation changed during the practice. Cultural background mostly does not have a significant influence, but there are differences in

experience for students who come from different cultures, with students in the school where they practice gradually.

DISCUSSION

This study examines the challenges faced by prospective teachers during the Innovative Field Learning Practice (IFLP) program and relates these findings to previous research. Through interviews with four participants, the study identifies challenges in designing, implementing, and assessing learning; strategies used to address these challenges; and the influence of personal characteristics like prior experience, motivation, and cultural background.

In designing instruction, prospective teachers struggled with adjusting to the curriculum, student abilities, and selecting interesting and effective learning methods. This aligns with Pertiwi et al. (2022) that the way the teacher conveys information, chooses the learning approach, and selects the right learning media is crucial to the teaching and learning process. Although many people can understand material in English easily, not everyone can convey the material clearly to students. Therefore, prospective teachers must improve their quality as teachers, as stated by Arista et al. (2022) the quality of education can be improved by having qualified teachers and a good learning environment. In the field of education, improving the quality of teachers is very important. The standard of a teacher can be articulated through his/her skills.

In implementing learning, challenges included managing varied student abilities and maintaining motivation. Most of these challenges occur because of the students themselves, as with the results of research by Pertiwi et al. (2022) they faced technical problems such as limited time to learn English, poor classroom conditions, and a lack of educational and learning tools. In another study by Maharani and Fithriani (2023), it was found that prospective teachers faced several challenges during teaching practice. Among these challenges are the tension between vision and reality, teaching practice combined with lectures, classroom management, and a lack of supervision.

Assessment challenges included aligning rubrics with learning objectives, managing time, and ensuring fair evaluations. While rubrics can support objective assessment Olson and Krysiak (2021), variations in practice were noted. Participants 2 and 4 found existing guidelines helpful, while others experienced difficulties in application. These insights support the idea that teacher evaluation should inform instructional improvement (Permendiknas No. 35/2010).

To overcome challenges, all participants utilized technology, consistent with findings by (Prayudi et al., 2021). Additionally, methods like ice breaking and games were used to maintain focus and motivation (Mahmud, 2013). Differences emerged in pedagogical approaches: Participants 1 and 2 emphasized student-centered learning (Hayati et al., 2021), while Participants 3 and 4 focused on technological tools.

Regarding personal characteristics, prior experience—especially in micro-teaching—proved valuable (Mahmud, 2013). Motivation influenced persistence, though it varied during the program (Klangou & Sougari, 2021). Cultural background had limited but notable effects, highlighting the need for cultural sensitivity in education (Wang, 2011).

Overall, integrating experience, motivation, and cultural awareness contributes significantly to developing pedagogical competence. The IFLP program supports this by encouraging reflective practice and personal growth in future EFL teachers.

CONCLUSION

it can be concluded that the development of pedagogical competence in EFL teacher candidates is influenced by the challenges they face during the innovative field practice program, the strategies they apply, and their personal characteristics. Therefore, to prepare teacher candidates who are ready to teach, it is necessary to strengthen teaching practice.

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