COMMON PROBLEMS FACED BY STUDENT TEACHERS IN THEIR TEACHING PRACTICUM

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan

Firdany Aprilly Candra.
112012110

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAM
FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND ART
SATYA WACANA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
SALATIGA
2017
PERNYATAAN TIDAK PLAGIAT

Saya yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini:

Nama : Firdany Airilly Candra
NIM : 11.2012.110  Email : Firdangc@gmail.com
Fakultas : Bahasa dan Seni  Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Judul tugas akhir : Common Problems in Teaching Prach Com

Pembimbing : 1. Prof. Dr. I Gusti Gde Astika, MA
                 2. Indri Retno Setyowinata, M.Pd

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Saya yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini:

Nama : Firdony Arielly Candra
NIM : 112911117 Email : firdonyc@Gmail.com
Fakultas : Budaya dan Seni Program Studi : Pendidikan Seni
Judul tugas akhir : Common Problems in Teaching Practicum

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Firdany Aprilly Candra

Approved by

Thesis Supervisor

Prof. Dr. I Gusti Gde Astika, MA.

Thesis Examiner

Indri Retno Setyaningrahayu, M.Pd.
COMMON PROBLEMS FACED BY STUDENT TEACHERS IN THEIR TEACHING PRACTICUM

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan

Firdany Aprilly Candra
112012110

Approved by

Supervisor,
Prof. Dr. I Gusti Astika, M.A.

Examiner,
Indri Retno Setyaningrahayu, M.Pd.
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Firdany Aprilly Candra:
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Firdany Aprilly Candra

112012110

ABSTRACT

This research is about the problems occurred in teaching practicum. The data were collected from student teachers’ journals about their progress throughout their teaching practicum. From the journals there are problems that hinder their performance in teaching practicum. Guidelines in the teaching practicum were used as research instrument as this was a descriptive-qualitative research. The data were analyzed through coding process and then classified into several themes and subthemes. This research found out that there were several problems: student teachers, students, mentor teachers, and system or context of teaching.

Keywords: teaching practicum, challenges, pre-service teacher

INTRODUCTION

Teaching practicum becomes the crucial part of pre-service EFL teacher program to practice their theoretical knowledge they got in EFL education. Bezzina & Michalak (2009), in his study stated that teaching practicum becomes a critical aspect in the development of student teachers because in this practicum student teachers can apply practical pedagogical knowledge. Teaching practicum is a course that requires the student to master the teaching skills and apply them in the real teaching situation (Richard & Farrel, 2005). Teaching practicum is seen as a great opportunity for pre-service teachers to apply their theoretical understanding in school practices (Hudson, Nguyen, Hudson, 2008). To gather the data regarding challenges in teaching practicum is sometimes difficult due to the gap between EFL preparation program and the school
where the practicum takes place. Hudson et al. (2009) pointed out several issues in teaching practicum that may affect pre-service teacher’s performance in their practicum. It stated that the existing research around teaching practicum mainly revolves around these topics: Teachers’ beliefs and perceptions, attitudes toward teaching and learning, understanding of the subject matter, needs and challenges, perceptions of initial teaching practice, and mentoring processes. Research under this topic is necessary in order to find out the solution and to ensure the effective purpose of teaching practicum.

This study was aimed to find out the common problems or challenges in teaching practicum by analyzing pre-service EFL teacher’s journals based on their own experiences. It is necessary to conduct this research as it will help EFL teachers’ preparation institution like university to design such a program that cover this issue about challenges in teaching practicum to make sure pre-service EFL teachers are well-prepared before dealings their teaching practicum. This research also aimed to make pre-service EFL teachers to be able to get the idea of what they will face in their teaching practicum. The question that this study attempt to answer is: what are the common challenges or problems that are faced by pre-service EFL teachers in their teaching practicum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning to teach is a complex process that involves social interactions within a school context (Vélez-Rendón, 2006). In order to achieve the ideals of a good teacher, pre-service EFL teachers need to practice their teaching theory in the real school situation. The experience that pre-service teachers acquire during their teaching practicum has a great influence on developing their images of teachers (Hudson et al., 2009). Teaching practicum holds a critical role to ensure
that the criteria of becoming a good pre-service teacher are achieved. Therefore there are some factors that become obstacle in achieving these goals. Hudson et al.(2009) comes up with the idea of preservice teachers who suffer high levels of stress during teaching practicum due to the challenges to teach and learn to teach at the same time. Pre-service teachers start with high expectation in facing their practicum but they are often “shattered by exposure to certain realities of schools, classroom, and teaching” (Presswood, 1994).

**Teaching Practicum**

Teaching practicum is also defined in a variety of terms, such as “practice teaching, field experience, apprenticeship, practical experience, and internship” (Gebhard, 2009). Teaching practicum is a chance for pre-service teachers to practice their teaching. In their practicum, student teachers can practice particular teaching skill and various teaching skills (Ogeyik, 2009). In their practicum, student teacher will be able to enhance their professionalism in teaching skill that can only be achieved through the practice in real classroom situation (Wallace, 1991). This idea was also supported by Mukhibad and Susilowati (2010) who said that teaching practicum is one of curriculum’s components that combine students’ understanding and the practice. However, related to the role of teaching practicum as a crucial part of EFL teacher’s preparation program, a challenge emerges to ensure that the process of this practicum is running smoothly. There are many factors that can affect the result of practicum for the student teachers such as technical and psychological problems.

In a study by Brinton and Holten (1989) they found that pre service student teachers were able to develop themselves in their teaching practicum such as in mastering classroom control, being a role model for their students and correcting techniques.
According to Zeichner’s (1993) the purpose of conducting teaching practicum is to help student teachers to act as serious learners in and around their practice. Teaching practicum helps student teachers to gradually build up their persona to be professional teachers, by reflecting to their own teaching experience.

In teaching practicum there is also a mentor teacher to help student teachers with their teaching. Mentor teacher expected to give feedback toward student teacher’s teaching. As said by Fung (2005) “Mentor or cooperating teachers take the role of reflection facilitator by posing examples, analyzing and interpreting teaching practice, challenging student teachers for value justifications and encouraging positive dispositions in teaching”

Mentor teacher can also give some input toward a student teacher about everything that a teacher need to do such as doing administrative things, disciplinary procedure, and working hand in hand with other teacher (Wallace, 1991). Despite all of the advantages in teaching that facilitate student teachers to face their teaching practicum, several problems do occur along the way. Teaching practicum course need to be improved as the time goes by because there are some problems occurred when the student teacher deals with their teaching practicum.

**Problems in teaching practicum**

In teaching practicum there are many aspects that need to be considered in order to achieve the goals of the practicum. In teaching practicum, it is important to examine how EFL university and mentor teachers can assist pre-service teachers to have better understanding about their practicum experience (Trent, 2012). From the previous study by Sarıçoban (2010) he found that the first problem in teaching is the student teachers need to perform certain teaching skills that they are lacking. This problem occurs because there is a gap between academic institution
and current real teaching situation. This idea was supported by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992) who stated that, “Many of the Teaching Practice problems can also be attributed to a gap between the theory taught in universities and what is taught in schools and a general lack of understanding of the social contexts in which schools are located”. This problem can become the main reason for educators to have an opinion that student teachers are inadequate in terms of being a good teacher. The next problem in teaching practicum identified by Wang and Odell (2002) is psychological and emotional stress. This factor can affect student teacher performance in teaching and need to be examined thoroughly.

**Classroom management**

Classroom management becomes one of the common problems faced by student teachers. According to Hirschkorn (2009) Oberski, Ford, Fisher (1999), this problem most likely occurred because pre-service teacher’s inadequate information or skill to deal with classroom management. Facing this problem, student teachers need to overcome the problem as a part of challenge to be recognized as a professional teacher. What is needed by pre-service teachers is the ability to build the decent relationship toward their pupils to achieve the recognition of a professional teacher (Oberski, Ford, Fisher, 1999).

Managing classroom situation is an important task of a teacher because it will affect the overall teaching and learning situation. This problem needs to be solved to make sure that the teaching and learning process is not interrupted and at the same time a teacher can practice their skill in giving instruction (Arrend, 2014). Classroom management issue occurs in several forms such as student being so noisy when teaching takes place or being arrogant and ignoring their teacher or act with bad attitude.
Student Teacher Anxiety

Anxiety is “A subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system (Horwitz et al., 1986). Teaching practicum is known as the most influential aspect of teacher education, that in the same time it also becomes the most challenging and frustrating activity for pre-service teachers (Waxman, Padrón, Franco-Fuenmayor, & Huang, 2009). Anxiety becomes a common problem among student teachers in their teaching practicum because they may not have sufficient background information on what they will face in the real classroom situation and what to do when teaching. The study by Fung and Chow (2002) shows that in teaching practicum, student teachers always feel that they are not well prepared for what will happen in their practicum. In their first time teaching in a real classroom situation, they face a situation which requires them to demonstrate teaching skills which they don’t have due to the gap between their education background and the classroom situation (Feinman-Nemser, 2001). This can lead into their failure in delivering teaching material to their student and makes their students think that the teachers are not ready for teaching.

THE STUDY

Context of the Study

This study involved student teachers from Satya Wacana Christian University, Faculty of Language and Arts who already passed their teaching practicum in different school settings. The participants spent one semester for their practicum, and their experiences were summarized into teaching journals. The teaching practicum sites were Junior High School, Vocational School and
an English Language Course. In addition, pre-service teachers in each teaching practicum sites taught different grade levels

**Participant**

This study involved 11 student teachers from Satya Wacana Christian University majoring in language education who were doing teaching practicum in several teaching practicum sites. Those students were in their final year and placed in teaching practicum sites beginning from September 2016 to December 2016. The participants were chosen from three different teaching practicum sites to allow the variability of the data. The participants were asked to write teaching journals after the practicum was over.

**Research Instrument**

The method used in this research was descriptive-qualitative. The aim for this research was to find out the problems in teaching practicum reported by student teachers. The instrument used was the guidelines from teaching practicum handbook. In this research, several points from the guidelines were used to indicate problems in teaching practicum. The guidelines sought to answer the following questions.

1. Which goals did you achieve?
2. Which one did you not achieve? Why?
3. Which activities could work well?
4. Which one could not work well? Why?
The Data Collection Procedures

First, the teaching practicum coordinator collected teaching journals from student teachers after their teaching practicum was over. Those teaching practicum journals were then retrieved from the coordinator to be used in this research. After gathering all of the teaching reflections needed to conduct this study, the journals were analyzed as described in the data analysis section.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis of the data focused on the problems faced by student teachers during their practicum. Coding was an initial process of data analysis. First, the data were numbered and grouped based on the decided themes. The themes were set based on the problems mentioned in the transcript. The themes were: student teacher problems, student problems, mentor teacher problems, and system or educational context problems.

The data processed through further classification and divided into several sub themes. In student teacher problems there were: anxiety, classroom management, time management, preparation, and teaching techniques. Under each theme there were several sub themes. Under student problems there were student's motivation, attitude and background knowledge. Mentor problems didn’t have sub theme because it was limited. Under system or educational context problems there were: technical problems, time allocation, and classroom situation. The classification of the data into several theme and sub theme allowed the researcher to interpret the phenomenon accurately and answer the research question. the data were presented according to the themes and sub themes.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to find out the problems faced by student teachers during practicum. The data gathered from teaching reflections and journals were analyzed to answer the research questions of this study. In teaching practicum, student teachers were expected to teach their pupils and at the same time learn how to deal with every challenge in teaching practicum. Based on these findings, the source of problems in teaching practicum could be categorized as: student teacher problems, student problems, mentor problems, and system or educational context problems.

A. Student Teacher Problems

Problems in teaching practicum emerged from student teachers and caused the teaching and learning unable to achieve the desired goals. Problems related to this student teacher were: anxiety, planning and preparation, classroom management, time management, and applying teaching techniques.
From the figure above, it can be seen that problems in teaching techniques was the highest in number of occurrence, followed by classroom management, preparation, anxiety and time management. The following sections describe the analysis of the findings in the figure.

A.1 Student Teachers’ Anxiety

After reading the student teachers’ entire teaching journals I found that anxiety was on the fourth rank of the problems from student teachers. Anxiety was caused by many factors which stated implicitly in the journals. To prevent these problems to occur in the future teaching practicum, the factors that caused the anxiety of pre service student teachers must be examined thoroughly. Below are the excerpts of student 1 and 5.

In the introduction to the lesson I got very nervous and confused to handle the students, because they turned shy and quiet and I did not know how to handle it (student teacher 1)
I had not known what kind of jungle that I would be in. Many thoughts about what would I face during my teaching practicum for these three months came out and did not stop right after I entered the class (student teacher 5).

From the excerpts above the first factor that caused anxiety was the feeling of unpreparedness about what they would face when teaching practicum started. This problem could be caused by they not having enough information about the situation in their practicum site before taking the practicum. This problem shows the need of adequate information about teaching practicum site such students’ behavior, and other task that needs to be done by student teachers in their practicum. Below are the excerpts from student teachers 8 and 11 about the failure to attempt to get rid of anxiety.

I scare if my student didn’t understand about my explanation. Every problem come automatically to my mind, but I think I just doing everything same with my lesson plan that I have done before. (Student teacher 8)

I came to the class X-TAV A on Friday morning to teach for the first time…. Personally, I was very nervous of teaching the students in front of the class. My heart was beating faster than before when I started the lesson (student teacher 11)

Student teacher never get the right information about teaching practicum and what they need to do when practicing their teaching for the first time in the real classroom situation. The feeling of fear about what would happen next could drag student teachers down from dealing with teaching and learning process of the teaching practicum. From the excerpt above the student teacher failed to get rid of the anxiety and resulting in the bad experience during teaching. The above student teacher was afraid in delivering his teaching as he felt nervous whether his explanation would be understood by the students or not. The fear of doing a mistake needed to be
overcome as soon as possible to ensure the teaching would run smoothly. Below is excerpt from Student teachers 6 reported that anxiety could be harmful for their teaching performance.

Every time before I entered the classroom, I always suffered from nervous because for me, had to deal with many people made me feel sick that I forgot major things I would like to deliver. It affected my performance in teaching (student teacher 6)

In this situation, the anxiety can be a troublesome factor that will interrupt the process and prevent the best result of teaching practicum to be achieved. Some student teachers might overcome this problem overtime though the others retain their anxiety for the entire teaching practicum. Anxiety could also be resulted by other problems as said by student teachers’ 2 excerpt below.

On my first teaching I felt so nervous, I’m not confident when I explained the material to the students. At the same time, the students were noisy it make me angry and uncomfortable to start the lesson. I needed two minutes to make some rules for them. Moreover, when I used English they confused (student teacher 2)

As mentioned above, when student teacher failed to manage the classroom, anxiety took over his focus and interrupts the teaching. There are more problems in practicum that may lead to student teachers’ anxiety and will be discussed in the following part.

A.2 Classroom Management

The next frequent problems in teaching practicum were classroom management. Classroom management became the focus of teaching for a long time as the phenomenon always occurred in every teaching practicum. Student teachers 2,3 and 9 excerpts below, describe their inability to manage the classroom.
When I entered the class, the students were noisy it make me angry and uncomfortable to start the lesson. It took me several minutes to make the class conducive. I had to count and threatened them to make them silent (student teacher 2)

The class was so crowded and noisy even I asked them to take attention to me. Students in the back seat still talked each other. Until I was quiet, and it took 10minutes to make them realize and become silent (student teacher 4)

It spent extra time because the class was so noisy and we had to wait them until they kept silent again (student teacher 9)

From student teacher’s self-reported problems above, the most emerging form of classroom management issue was the students who were noisy and lead into distraction while teaching material was being delivered. This problem caused the time in teaching to be wasted in order to make a conducive teaching situation. Furthermore, failing to perform the classroom management may lead into student teacher anxiety as shown in the excerpts below by student teachers 5 and 1.

The class was so noisy since the first time I came; I felt it so hard to handle them, as the result I lost my voice after the teaching. (Student teacher 5)

In the introduction to the lesson I got very nervous and confused to handle the students, because they turned shy and quiet and I did not know how to handle it (student teacher 1)

Student teachers may build up anxiety after they face a lot of troublesome students due to bad classroom management. From the journals, most student teachers were able to deal with this problem following the progress of teaching practicum. However, there were couples of student teachers who failed to overcome the problem for the entire teaching practicum. EFL preparation
institutions need to design the program as prevention toward this problem, by preparing future student teachers with skills to manage a classroom.

**A.3 Time Management**

From the student teachers’ portfolio there were small numbers of case about time management. This data was taken from student teachers’ journals. The causes of this problem vary from the lack of preparation, anxiety, and failure in classroom management. In other words this problem may be caused by other problems that were previously mentioned. Below are the excerpts from student teachers 4 and 3 related to these ideas.

Because I asked them to take note and added games in the middle of my teaching while the allocation times was only 2x35 minutes, those made me run out of times. Thus, the students didn’t have enough time to create a news item text. Then, I decided to make it into their homework. Maybe if I teach in this class again, I would manage the time well or I just copy the material to them to make more effective. (Student teacher 4)

My mentor teacher told me that I have to be careful with the pattern from the expressions of capabilities. Also, I have to be careful with the time allocation, 10 minutes before end teaching should start closing and give summary of the lesson. (Student teacher 3)

From the excerpts above most of student teachers spend the available time without finishing their teaching materials and often skipped activities that are essential in the teaching. Student teacher 4 above stated that, he didn’t prepare the materials and activities that results in bad time management. The class would sometimes end without giving clear explanation or some materials cannot be delivered at that time. There were also several situations where the student
teacher needed to change the order or added more activities that take longer time than the usual. However this will be a problem if student teacher did not carefully manage the time.

In most cases time management issues were in the form of the class ended with some of the materials cannot be delivered in time. There was a case when student teachers finished the class sooner than the schedule because they spoke too fast but students seemed to be unable to follow the teaching pace. These are samples from student teacher 4.

The explanation was too fast and the students cannot follow with you teaching pace. You need to slow down your explanation next time as our class today ended sooner than the expected schedule (student teacher 4)

I finished my teaching ten minutes before the bell was ringing. I think I should have plan B or backup materials if I still have much time for teaching. I could say that my teaching goes smoothly by the time (student teacher 4)

The class finished before the time allocation over, indicated that student teacher failed in dealing with time management. The teaching materials were poorly delivered due to student teacher spoke too fast and his students unable to follow the teaching.

A.4 Preparation Problem

This problem was placed on the third rank of problems from student teachers. They admitted that lack of preparation before teaching caused problems in their practicum. Below are the excerpt from student teachers 1 and 3, regarding their lack of preparation.

Next point I want to tell in this journal is I need to prepare and check the materials before teaching (student teacher 1)

For the first time I also got difficulty to follow the audio but I still used it for listening section because I thought that it will be challenge for them.
However, all of them looked confused and got difficulties to follow the audio.
(Student teacher 3)

Student teachers often have problems when preparing all of the teaching materials because they haven’t getting used to do it. To overcome this problem became the challenge for student teachers. Lack of preparation may also lead into anxiety as reported by student teacher 1 and 8 below.

I need to get prepare earlier, so I won’t be late and be nervous in preparing the lesson. When I prepared the lesson in the very limited and short time I got nervous in preparing the lesson and it affected in the beginning of the class (student teacher 1)
I felt so excited and also a little bit nervous because of I should plan every single thing by myself. (Student teacher 8)

Lack of preparation was a problem that may lead into student teacher anxiety. This could happen because when student teacher realized that they didn’t prepare their teaching well enough, they felt that their teaching would be ruined and they would have difficulties in solving it and blame themselves. There were many ways to overcome this problems based on student teachers journals. Some student teachers tried to make sure they have prepared all of the material required for their teaching and from doing this they feel much more confident and their anxiety was washed away. The other student teachers even rehearsed their teaching a moment before the class began. They felt the need to master all of the materials and teaching strategy before starting their teaching.
A.5 Teaching Techniques problems

In the excerpt below a student teacher fails in dealing with student’s grammar. This particular student teacher was unable to correct his student’s error.

But I only able to revise in the word level, but in clause or sentence level I could not. When I tried to revise the students’ grammar when they were speaking I could not revise it well. (Student teacher 1)

There are so many teaching techniques that student teachers needs to perform during their practicum. Therefore great numbers of student teachers reported that they failed in performing those techniques during teaching and regretted it. On the excerpt below student teacher 7 confessed his inability to perform certain teaching techniques.

I forgot the steps and handle the students who loses their focus on the teaching and learning process (student teacher 7)

So my lesson in that time was a mess and I kept asked my friend what I should do next. Whereas all of the responsibility and decision is on me. (Student teacher 7)

This student teacher wrote on his journals that he failed in some occasion when performing certain teaching technic. Student teachers who failed when perform teaching technic sometimes regret it and it would lead into anxiety if he not be able to solve it in the next teaching. From the excerpt below, student teacher 3 realized his failure and tried to solve it in the next teaching. This is the example of an attempt of a student teacher to improve his teaching.

The pre teaching and summary not well presented. I should give them moral feedback and compliments after the students answer the right one. I should give the instructions more than one so the students could understand with my explanation. (Student teacher 3)
However, there was a case when a mentor teacher asked a student teacher to perform a particular teaching technique that he didn’t get in his study. In this case the student teacher had no idea about the asked teaching technique and tried to solve it. As said by student teacher 10 on the below excerpt, she was given a task to teach TOEIC preparation to her students but she confused and tried to browse the topic on the internet and do the task with not enough preparation.

In my second teaching, I assigned to teach students in grade 12th. This time, the material was not taken from the syllabus or book. I should teach and review some questions that commonly appear in TOEIC test because all students of 12th grade will have TOEIC test which held by the school, and they have one week to prepare this. My mentor teacher asked me to prepare the material and browse some TOEIC exercise in internet. At first, I was surprised because I didn’t know anything about TOEIC and I was asked to teach this thing (student teacher 10)
B. Student Problems

Problems caused by the student in teaching practicum include: students’ motivation, familiarity with teacher, students’ participation, and students’ disruptive behavior.

Figure 2 shows that motivation and attitude problems were in even number of 12, and background knowledge problems was reported in 7 cases. The analysis of these findings are presented in the following sections.

B.1 Motivation

The first student-based problem is the students’ lack of motivation in following the teaching. Less motivated students was indicated by the tendency of being passive in the classroom. As reported by student teachers 3 and 5 below.

From my observation in that class I realized that some of them were passive learners and less motivation to learn English (student teacher 3)
Many of them didn’t really pay attention to my explanation and some of them thought that this was the easy material so that they seemed lazy to study. Besides, some students prefer to be silent and some students talk to other friend or busy with themselves. (Student teacher 5)

Student teacher felt that the less motivated students tent to be passive in the classroom and refused to join the classroom activity. In this situation student teachers needs to motivate their students to join the teaching situation. Students’ motivation in learning a subject is a crucial matter in the process of the practicum. Other forms of passiveness were reported by student teachers 2 and 10 in the below excerpts.

Both of the students not participated in share their background knowledge, they were passive. When we started to doing the exercise in-group, most of the students refused to do it. They claimed that the exercises were too difficult for them (student teacher 2)

On the other hand, there were some students who just saw their friend and not participate at all (student teacher 10)

Another student-based problem is the students who tend to show the passiveness when asked to join teaching activities as shown in the excerpts above. The aim of developing teaching activities was to engage the learners and to avoid students of getting bored when learning. However, when there are students who are not interested in joining the teaching activities student teachers should find a way to solve this problem by approaching the passive students.
B.2 Students’ Background Knowledge

This problem was placed on the second rank in the chart of student problems. Some student teachers reported that their students have limited ability in English. Student teachers realized that this problem was hard to solve as they needed to plan an effective strategy in teaching. Below are the excerpts from student teachers 1 and 6.

I also felt little bit shock when the first time I teach first grade until sixth grade, because almost all of the student cannot understand all of the words that I said in English, most of them also cannot speak in English, their attitude toward English is bad, and nervous to answer my question or express their mind. (Student teacher 1)

I got confused which part that my students could not handle when they learnt English. I asked them to write what was easy and difficult in learning English since their first time learning up to now, and mostly they answered they did not know the meaning and they did not know the concept of Basic English such as noun, be, verbs, etc. (Student teacher 6)

As seen on the excerpts above, when entering the classroom for the first time, student teachers found that their students had limited knowledge on the subject. This problem occurred in school that is located in rural area and there were small number of English teacher on that school. This issue forces the student teachers to work more with their students’ basic knowledge, and often they didn’t know where to start.
B.3 Attitude

Students’ bad attitude was stated in student teachers’ journals and was on the same position with student’s motivation in figure 2. Several teaching practicum sites such as vocational high school were reputable of having troublesome students. This phenomenon could be considered as normal because of the nature of a person in that range of age that still struggle with their identity. However, student teachers may build anxiety as they would feel inferior toward their own students when unable to overcome this problem. Student’s bad attitude in teaching practicum was not a rare phenomenon. It was a common problem in practicum instead. Below are the excerpts from student teachers 6 and 2 regarding this problem.

Not all girls in this class were very talkative, but the one who was like the dominant in the class could not obey me like the others did. She searched for attention by speaking loudly and singing (student teacher 6)

When the students did the exercise, some students won’t to do the exercise, maybe because she got bullied from her friends before. I and my partner still persuade her to do the exercise (student teacher 2)

Just like in the excerpts above, when student teachers do their teaching, sometimes there were several students who talked with their classmate. If the teacher did not take precaution, and simply ignored this issue, the number of these noisy students would increase. These noises would cause distraction in teaching. This problem becomes a challenge for student teachers to handle. Some student teachers tried to discipline their students who addressed bad attitude toward them while the other prefers to ignore these students and later report the student with bad attitude to their mentor teacher.
Most classes that we teach made us experiencing a situation in which the students were uncontrollable and quite hard to be taught. This issue indeed effects on our teaching to deliver the English material. Based on our teaching practicum experience, the classroom management issue in the classes exists because the students are lack of motivation, students’ attitude toward the English learning are less interested, and the less effort to learn English showed by the students. (Student teacher 5)

The excerpt above indicates that students’ bad attitude may be the result of students’ lack of motivation. For example the students’ shows bad attitude caused by students’ lack of motivation in learning. This specific case occurred in teaching practicum that was located in rural area. The students in this particular institution showed the signs of being less motivated to follow the teaching and learning process by simply being passive or arrogant toward the student teachers. The example of this case can be found in these student teachers’ journals:

On my first teaching I felt nervous, because that was the first time I taught school student. I also felt little bit shock when the first time I teach first grade until sixth grade, because almost all of the student cannot understand all of the words that I said in English, most of them also cannot speak in English, their attitude toward English is bad, and nervous to answer my question or express their mind (student teacher 1)

At first, I was confused what language should I use. When I talked in English they all screamed “Yes, No, Yes, No” it seemed mocking me. I decided to mix my language became bilingual to make them understand what I said (student teacher 9)

From those excerpts above, student teachers 1 and 9 proposed the idea of student being less motivated because of inadequate background knowledge when these student teachers came into their school. Student teacher 1 above, mentioned that his students couldn’t follow his
teaching and being passive. This could be the results of the fact that their former teacher didn’t motivate their students. Furthermore, the students felt inferior when they were taught by teacher who use English extensively in class. From student teachers 9 excerpts’ above, students being arrogant indicated by mocking their teacher. Motivation is surely an important thing in the teaching and learning activities. As Williams & Williams (2011) said "Student motivation is an essential element that is necessary for quality education". Student teacher should be equipped with skill to motivate their student to study. This is the aspect that until today has not been covered in the curriculum of EFL preparation program.

C. Mentor Teacher Problem

The role of mentor teacher in teaching practicum was crucial. Mentor teacher would benefit student teachers in building their persona as a professional teacher among their students. There were only 2 cases reported by a student teacher in her journal that her mentor teacher didn’t give enough input on them.

When my teacher said that he could not attend to school, he asked three of us as his student-teacher to replace him during his absence. It did not matter for me actually, but after the week of his absence, there were no information about how long we had to do teaching because we told him that our teaching responsibilities was to teach for 10-12 times throughout these three months teaching practicum in the school. (Student teacher 6)

In this practicum site there was a mentor teacher who perform unprofessional act by letting the student teachers to cover all of his responsibilities to teach several classroom. Actually, mentor teacher should act cooperatively and give input or feedback toward student teachers’ teaching. Mentor teacher also needs to help student teacher dealing with problems in
their practicum. This mentor teacher has been doing the same unprofessional act for several times as reported by student teacher 6.

However he replied by saying, “You do your job (teaching) and I believe everything will be fine.” Well, it implied that we were “forced” to teach for the entire months we were here. Plus, the former batch who previously had been here doing their teaching practicum said that my current mentor teacher would not be teaching and his responsibility would be handed to student teacher. (Student teacher 6)

If this mentor teacher keeps doing the same thing in every practicum, it will give student teachers bad experience in practicum. EFL preparation program need to examine this issue and decide whether this particular mentor teacher should be avoided in the future practicum.
D. System or Educational Context Problems

The situation where teaching practicum takes place also sometimes becomes the problem that interrupts teaching and learning process. This may due to the teaching aids that was not sufficient or sometimes unavailable and the classroom being not conducive for a teaching to be done.

From figure 3 it can be seen that, time allocation holds the first rank with number of cases of 14 compared with technical and classroom situation / teaching distraction. The following sections present deeper analysis of figure 3.

D.1 Technical Problems

This sub theme is under the topic of contextual issues, with limited cases in teaching practicum. There was a case where a student teacher was given a chance to use the language laboratory and unable to make use the facility to help with his/her teaching. Below, was the excerpt from student teacher 10 journals.
I found difficulties in teaching because I was asked by my mentor teacher to teach in the language laboratory and using the TOEIC application in the computer. It was so complicated for me to teach in language laboratory because this is the first time I taught and I should operate all the things in laboratory by myself. I didn’t have a chance to prepare and learn how to operate it before the lesson. There was no white board in the laboratory, so that I should type it in the computer and explain to the students and then back to the application, turn on the speaker, turn on the monitor to show the students, etc. (student teacher 10)

This phenomenon happened because there was no preparation about the extensive use of teaching aids such as audio and video as media of delivering teaching materials. Anxiety can also emerge due to the mentor teacher expected them to perform certain teaching skills or method which student teachers might don’t have any information at all about it. The anxiety emerges as student teachers lose their confidence due to their mentor giving them bad feedback that may results in deduction of their teaching practicum grades. Like in the excerpt above the student teacher was asked to facilitate a TOEIC materials and she was confused about everything that was needed to be done because she didn’t have any idea about it before. There was also a case where a student teacher was unable to get teaching peripheral when they needed it to explore their teaching technique. This case was reported by student teacher 6 in the excerpt below.

The reason why I used traditional teaching way using whiteboard and a marker and not using AVA such as slide show was, two out of three classes did not have LCD projector. I once borrowed portable LCD projector from teacher’s office but sometimes it was borrowed by other classes or it went of and could not be used. I hate wasting time just for dealing with technical problems that would disturb my precious time to deliver the materials. Hence, I choose traditional and friendly-use aid in my teaching. (Student teacher 6)
The excerpt above described that the student teacher decided to switch her teaching technique as a spontaneous act to overcome the problem. Basically, all student teachers need to be trained about how to overcome technical problems to avoid wasting time while teaching if facing problem like this

D.2 Time Allocation

I thought it is easy because I have to teach only for a short time, but in reality it was more complicated when there are so many things I need to deliver but I only have one meeting. (Student teacher 10)

I wish I could have more time with them since English was only one meeting in a week. How students could achieve the goals to be able to speak English fluently if they were not accustomed to it? The curriculum needed to be altered if the government did not want to see their future generations were lack of English ability in this advanced era. (Student teacher 6)

As seen on the excerpts from student teachers 6 and 10 above, time allocation becomes one of the most reported problems in this theme. Student teachers felt that schools should provide more time for English subject as this subject was often considered as unimportant subject. Student teachers thought that the allocated time was not sufficient for the students to understand all of the materials. The placements of English subject on school schedule also affect the teaching and learning situation. In the excerpt below, student teacher 10 reported that the schedule became an obstacle of his teaching.

The afternoon class was a challenge in teaching because sometimes students were lazy to follow the lesson. Many of them were sleepy, hungry, and talk with other friends (student teacher 10)
Several schools provided 2 hours every week for English, and sometimes it was placed in the afternoon so students felt too tired to follow the teaching and learning situation. The allocation of this subject on the school schedule can affect the student’s performance on the particular subject.

D.3 Classroom Situation/ Teaching Distraction

Unfortunately, since the location of the class was in the middle of noisy classes, it caused my voice couldn’t be heard well. I should scream to make the students at the back be able to listen to my explanation. Although I had talked aloud, but the classes next to us was so uncontrolled. Some girls screamed, some boys made sounds using table, and many more. (Student teacher 9)

Situation near the classroom also affect the teaching and learning situation. As seen from the excerpt by student teacher 9 above, a classroom that was surrounded by noisy environment would give bad impacts on the teaching and learning process. Students might get distracted and find it hard to follow student teacher’s explanation.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to describe the problems in teaching practicum based on the student teachers’ reports in their journals. These problems need to be examined for the sake of future student teachers to be able to solve these problems and make sure they could pass their practicum. Student teachers problems consist of anxiety, classroom management issue, time management, preparation, and teaching techniques. Furthermore, student teachers’ anxiety was mentioned by majority of the participants in their teaching practicum journals. The next big problem in teaching practicum was classroom management. As discussed in the literature review
this was the most occurred problems in teaching practicum. Based on the findings, there were so many samples of classroom management issue which came in different forms. They were likely to occur as students’ behavior of being passive and arrogant. This can be viewed as a natural action of students who still struggle to find their identity. The challenge was for the student teachers to take the right action to prevent the interruption of teaching and learning process. Time management also mentioned in decent numbers in student teachers journals. This problem was caused from student teacher delivering the material too slow or too fast that affecting student’s comprehension. Rehearsing and preparing teaching plan well are believed as the best solution about this issue.

Students also become the source of problems in teaching practicum. Misbehaved students or passive students could affect the practicum results. Most students had less motivation in learning English as they considered English as a difficult subject. Less motivated students tend to be passive in classroom. Sometimes students show bad attitude toward their teachers or their friends. Student teachers need to motivate and discipline their students to actively learn the subject they taught

Mentor teachers should be a great help for student teachers in their practicum. However, there was a case where mentor teacher demonstrated unprofessional act that discouraged student teachers to perform in their practicum. This mentor teacher should be avoided in the future practicum, otherwise it will cause the same problem to occur.

The next problem was contextual or surroundings situation that interrupts teaching and learning process. The first issue was technical error like the absence of teaching peripherals, the poor quality of institutions’ facilities or the situation being not conducive for teaching. This issue
cannot be predicted to happen and it needs to be solved in time as it will waste student teachers’ precious time. The EFL program just need to warn their student teachers, that these situations could happen any time and that they need to think fast to overcome this problem.

This study still needs further examination as different teaching practicum site would have several specific problems. The differences of level of education and location also have different kinds of problems. From urban to rural area there might be different problems that have not been recognized by researchers. Studying under this topic of challenges in teaching practicum would benefit EFL preparation institution to design their program, so these problems can be minimized and future student teachers will be fully prepared to face these problems.
References:


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