Preparing the pre-service teachers to meet the teacher qualification standard: Potencies and challenges

Debora Tri Ragawanti
Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana
Corresponding e-mail: dera03@yahoo.com

Abstract: To response to challenges of teaching English for communication, teacher education programs are urged to prepare the student-teachers to meet the challenges. As a part of the preparation, an evaluation on the student's performance before they graduate is necessarily to be done. This study attempts to weigh up the capacity of student-teachers from the English teacher education Program, Satya Wacana Christian University, Indonesia using the teacher qualification standard. This involved 26 mentor-teachers from 10 local schools where the student-teachers were doing teaching practicum. The findings from the questionnaire and interview interestingly revealed that the student-teachers are viewed to be good in performing pedagogical knowledge (2.92), pedagogical skills (2.86), personality (3.27), social (3.17), and professional competence (3.10). Apart from the opportunities, teachers, curriculum designers, and policy makers will be taken to examine their challenges in meeting the standard and to consider the proposal on what a teacher education can do to improve the pre-service teachers capacity to teach English.

Keywords: *teacher qualification standard, student-teacher preparation*

1 INTRODUCTION

When I became a teaching practicum coordinator, I experienced organizing students to do their teaching practicum in some neighboring schools. For that matter, I also had to deal with the schools that set some conditions for the students who would do the teaching practicum there. For example, they requested for students with good English command, minimumly 3 for GPA, good teaching skills, etc. Such demands indeed made me realized how the real work field really concerns with quality. This incident also reminded me at what Richards called "Quality teaching" which emphasizes on the qualification of language teachers. He urged that it is essential since the field of TESOL has become more professionaly demanding of itself and has sought to develop standards for language teacher.

The importance and ever-increasing demand of the teacher qualification has drawn some teacher educators' attention to research on this area. For example, a study on new teachers in the Ontario College of Teachers (2003) was conducted to examine how the service teachers perform as a language teacher especially to meet the qualification of language teacher. the research finding revealed that beginning teachers still need to learn situationally-relevant approaches to subject matter; how to think on their feet about how to size up situations and decide what to do, and to study the effects of their decisions; and how these will affect their planning (cited in Casey & Childs : 2007).

Such an assessment to the beginning teacher's performance may lead to an objection for some people. Feian-Nemser (2003), for example, urged that beginning teachers need about three or four years to gain competence and several more years to attain proficiency. Therefore, they are not supposed to be treated as "finished product." Instead, they need time to learn how to teach in a particular context and acquire knowledge about the school community (as cited in Casey & Childs : 2007). She is right about that but in this case, such an assessment is not absolutely used for the judgment to the overall performance of the beginning teacher. Instead, this is as an instrument for them to be aware of their ability and know about the level of ability. Furthermore, such an evaluation can be useful for the teacher educators and/or English teacher education program to provide views on the effective teaching for English language learners and to flourish their own teaching beliefs and knowledge of what and how to teach English language learners (Kim: 2011).

It is obvious that such an evaluation can help teacher-educators prepare the pre-service teachers to meet the teacher qualification standard. Unfortunately, studies on that issue, especially on indonesian teachers is hardly found. Hence, I was motivated to is to see

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examine that issue from the context of indonesian student-teachers studying at The English Language Education Program, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga. The students are doing their teaching practicum in some schools nearby and during the pracaticum, their mentor-teachers in the school assessed their performance. Referring to the assessment, this paper is aimed at finding out what are the potentials and problems of the student-teachers in meeting the teacher qualification standard and what the teacher education program can do to improve their qualifications as a language teacher?

This study is beneficial for students taking English teacher education program to know what competencies they need to know and able to do and what competencies are expected by languae education stakeholders. Besides, it is useful for the language teachers and the teacher education program to know what to equip to the students in order to prepare them entering the real world of education.

2 THE EFL TEACHER QUALIFICATION STANDARD

This section presents the standards of what EFL teachers should know and be able to do cited from different sources. The first source is from The perspective of Second language teacher education curriculum (SLTE). In this curriculum, what language teachers need to know and be able to do in order to educate language learners effectifely is characterized as the knowledge base of SLTE. Fundamentally, the knowledge base of SLTE was conjured up as as a "content/pedagogy"," theory/practice", and "knowledge/skills". Knowledge here refers to knowledge of language, both as proficiency in the target language and knowledge about its structure, phonology, etc. Initially such knowledge was considered adequate for teaching. However, because language teaching as a profession kept growing and became more varied along the history, the content component of the knowledge base amplified beyond linguistic and cultural knowledge. It then included some other subject areas such as discourse analysis, second language acquisition, language testing, and so on. Besides knowledge, the knowledge base of SLTE deals with the study of language teaching method and/or training in discrete teaching skills. In another word, knowledge base of teaching consists of *a content component* and *a method/skill component*. The role of teacher-education programs was to impart the two-part knowledge base and to prepare teachers to use skills (Richards and Burns, 2009: 117).

Almost similar to SLTE, the TESOL Guidelines for developing EFL Professional teaching standards also developed a standard for teacher qualification. The first similarity is the *Content standard.* It involves teacher candidate's knowledge about the content of the subject and and their ability to explain important principles and concepts. For instance, linguistics, language acquisition and development, and culture. The second similarity is *pedagogical standard* or what The TESOL guide calls as a method/skill component. This emphasizes more on how to teach, how students learn, what is taught (the curriculum), effective teaching strategy, etc. The third standard, which is not addresssed in SLTE, is *performance standard*. This gives a picture of how well or to what extent standards are met, and to what extent standards show the level of performance expected to determine progress, etc (Seufert et al. : 2005 as cited by Kuhlman & Knezevic).

Thirdly, Casey & Childs (2007) tried to compare the EFL professional teaching standards from several sources and came up with four aspects required by beginning teachers. The first one is *content knowledge.* Here, the teacher needs to understand the subject matter they are to teach (Monk, 1994; Shulman & Sykes, 1986). The second one is *pedagogical knowledge* or *"how to" knowledg*e. For example, understanding how children learn and how to teach children with a variety of needs, lesson planning approaches, instructional strategies, and assessment techniques. The third one is p*edagogical skills or "what to do" skill.* This includes knowing what to do in a situation and being able to do it. For example, having a good communication skill (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Murnane, 1983; Stronge, 2002; Wenglinsky, 2000). Last but not least is *attitude*. Stronge (2002) argued that to be sucessful teacher, ones should have attitude such caring, fairness, respect for students, peers, parents and the general

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community, enthusiasm, motivation, and dedication to teaching.

What Casey and Childs brought up here is actually parallel to the SLTE curriculum and the TESOL Guidelines above. Three of them seem to agree that content and pedagogial competence are necessary for the pre-service teachers to possess. The difference here lies in the specific division on the pedagogical standard. Casey and Childs categorized it into two: pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical skill. In contrast, the other two only addressed one—method/ skill component/ pedagogical knowledge. Another difference is in the aspect of attitude. The first two did not address this aspect as what Casey and Childs did.

As discussed previously, the teacher qualification standards have been presented from the view of Second language teaching education generally used in the field. More specifically in Indonesia, such teacher competency standard is stated in Minister of national education Regulation no. 16, 2007. The standard is categorized into four: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competence. *Pedagogical competence* requires teachers to understand the students from all phisical, moral, social, cultural, emotional, and intelectual aspect. In addition, they are expected to master the theory and principles of learning; to be able to develop curriculum; to use information and communication technology in the teaching and learning process; to be able to convey an effective, emphatic, and polite communication; and to be able to assess and evaluate learning process and product and to do reflective practice to improve the teaching and learning quality.

Secondly, *Personality competence* expect teachers to behave well conforming the religious, legal, social, and cultural norms in Indonesia. Besides, they are also expected to perform as an honest, righteous, mature, and wise model for the students and society. Furthermore, they should have good work ethics, responsibility, and sense of belonging and should hold the ethical codes of teacher.

Thirdly, *Social competence* demands teachers to be inclusive, objective, and not discriminative toward students in terms of religion, race, physic, family and social background. Additionally, teachers are expected to be able to have effective, emphatic, and polite communication to other teachers, school staffs, student's parents, and society.

Lastly, *Professional competence* demands teachers to master his/her own field of study including material, structure, concept and the paradigm of the field study that support the subject they teach. Additionally, they are expected to master competency standard and basic competencies of his/her field of the study. Furthermore, they need to develop their professionalsm continuously and make use of information and communication technology for communication and self development.

As a comparison to the previous standards discussed, this standard basically have some competencies in common. First, pedagogical competence here corresponds to pedagogical standard/method in the TESOL guideline, to method/skill competence in SLTE, and to pedagogical skill or in Casey's and Childs's summary. Second, personality and social competences seem to correspond to attitude in Casey's and Childs's summary. However, professional competence seems not to be covered in any of the previous standards.

This study attempts to summarize the theories above to set up a criteria or standard of what teachers (in this case pre-service teachers) need to know and able to do in the EFL professional teaching.The first one is pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical skill, personality competence and social competence (coresonding to attitude), and professional competence.

3 THE STUDY

3.1 Participants

The participants for this study involved 25 mentor-teachers from 10 education institutions in Salatiga, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia. They have supervised the student-teachers from the English Teacher Education program, Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga when doing teaching practicum in their school. Among them, 1 comes from a kindergarten, five come from elementary schools, 8 from junior high schools, 5 from a senior high school, 4 from a vocational school, and 2 from an english course institution. All of the schools are located in Salatiga where this study took

place. Each institution commonly receives around 8 teaching practicum students to be supervised.

3.2 Research Instrument

Research instruments used in this study were questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was used for the mentor teacher-participants to assess the student-teachers' qualifications as an EFL teachers. Principally, the items constructed in the questionnaire were based on teacher qualification standard stated in Minister of national education Regulation no. 16, 2007 and from the sources used in the theoretical review above. In the questionnaire, there are five competences used as a standard to look at the student-teachers' qualification. i.e, pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical skill, personality competence, social competence, and professional competence.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first one is close-ended items in the form of Likert scale which was used to assess student-teachers qualification as an English Language teacher. The second one is open-ended items used to find out the rationale of giving such evaluation in the close-ended items and to find out what the participants think the Department can do to improve the student-teachers' qualification. The second research instrument was interview. This was used to dig out further information about the participants' answers as stated in the questionnaire. To be more convinient for the participants in expressing their ideas, the questionnaire and interview were designed in Bahasa Indonesia.

3.3 Data collection and analysis Procedures.

As the first step of collecting data is preparing and piloting the questionnaire. It was piloted to two lecturers whose major is in Teacher Education program. Secondly,v it was distributed to the participants and collected back right after they finished completing the questionnaire. Thirdly, an interview was done to seek more information or to clarify unclear statements. After all procedures are done, the data was analyzed. The answers in the close-ended item part were counted to get the mean

score of each type of competency. As for the open-ended item, the data were classified according to the emerging theme.

3.4 Finding and Discussion

This section discusses the finding and discussion to answer two research questions: what are the potentials and problems of the student-teachers in meeting the teacher qualification standard? And what can the teacher education program do to improve the student-teachers' qualification as an English teacher? The discussion of the finding is preceded with the result of evaluation to the student-teachers given by the mentor-teacher participants:
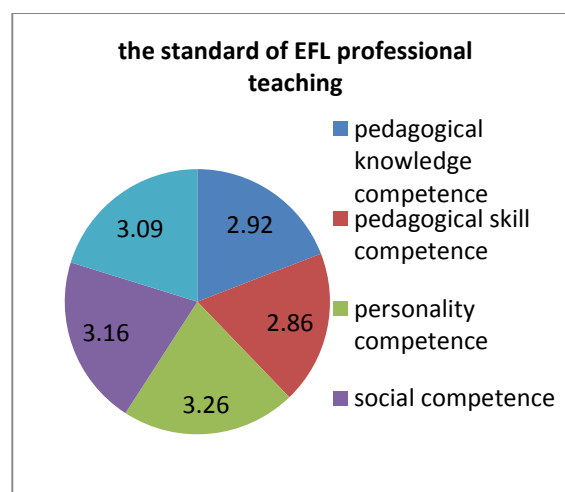
The pie chart represents the mean score of the mentor-teachers' evaluation on the student-teachers' performance in meeting the standard of EFL professional teaching. It is apparent that the mean score of the personality competence is 3.26, of social competence is 3.16, of professional competence is 3.09, of pedagogical knowledge competence is 2.92 and of pedagogical skill competence is 2.86. Needless to say, the findings suggest that the student-teachers' competencies in all aspects of EFL professional teaching standard are considered good and can turn out to be potencies in preparing pre-service teachers. Inspite of this, what to be lack from the students in each competence also needs to be explored since they may suggest challenges in preparing pre-service teachers.

3.4.1 What are the potentials and problems of the student-

teachers in meeting the teacher qualification standard?

Based on the questionnaire and interview result to what extent the pre-service teachers meet the standard can be seen from how potential the student-teachers are in attaining the standard of EFL professional teaching, as what so called potencies, and what sorts of problems they have, or what so called challenges.

a. Personality competence

To point up how the student-teachers are potential to meet the standard of EFL professional teaching in terms of *personality*, the opinions from the mentor-teacher participants are valuable to look into. First, 45% of the answers in the opend-ended items acknowledged that the student-teachers are enthusiastic. I am convinced that this quality is pivotal for teachers to possess. As urged by Biggs and Moore, 1993, cited in Huang: 2010, enthusiastic is considered as one of personality traits that can make someone a successful EFL teacher. Second, around 27% of the answers agree that they respect their students by treating them justly no matter what their religion, race, and individual background. Third, they also show good work ethos. It is showed from the responsibility they have in performing their job. Apart from this strong points, however, there is a concern addressed by the mentor-teachers such as appearance and etiquette especially the ones related to our [Javanese] culture.

b. Social competence

In meeting the standard of social competence, the student-teachers are perceived to have good communication with the mentor-teachers well. As confirmed by 47% of the answers in the open-ended questionnaire, they regularly consulted their lesson plan, and teaching and learning process. Nonetheles, a grave concern on socialization is also necessary to take into accout. As indicated by 38% of the answers, the student-teachers did not really socialize with the other school community members and not really participate in school acitivies such as morning exercise, flag ceremony (14,2%). In response to the matter, Participant 9 observed that the student-teachers have limited time to stay in school because they are also taking courses and busy with their work at campus.

Hence, they do not have time socialize with the non-English teachers and staffs.

c. Professional competence

In terms of professional competence, 60% of the answers show that the mentor-teacher participants percieve the student-teachers to have good knowledge on aspects of English language and able to use English well. Then again, language problems is also important to be noted because 30% of the answers address the student-teachers' problem in pronounciation, diction, spelling, and Grammar such as "are you agree?" "speak more louder." This problems seems to be close to the issue of speaking accuracy which involves the correct use of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar and valuable to be taken into account because accuracy is believed to be crucial for learners' oral proficiency (Saunders and O'Brien : 2006 as cited by Wang: 2014).

d. Pedagogical knowledge competence

The mean score for this apect is considered lower that the previous ones. This result is matched to the answer in the open-ended questionnaire. 42% of the answers suggest that the student-teachers have good pedagogical knowledge in the way they understand the theory of learning, principle of material and curriculum development. However, half of the respondents suggested for improvement. As indicated by 30% of the answers, this pedagogical knowledge still needs to be improved. This point is supported by the other 26,9% of the answers stating that they do not understand the principle and application of the prevailing curriculum ("KTSP" and "2013" curriculum). As a result, they got could not make RPP dan evaluation based on the principle of curriculum.

e. Pedagogical skill competence

In pedagogical skill competence, the student-teacher participants are considered to be good in employing creative and innovative teaching and learning techniques such as by using technology in the classroom (44%). More to that, 16% of the answers indicated that they also can develop material well. Apart from these opportunities, some improvement are

required since they still have problems in classroom management skill (16%) and in understanding the students' characteristics (16%).

In relation to understanding students' characteristics, From the individual interview, participant 23 discovers a connection between this issue to the problem of socializing, as stated in discussion of social competence. Because they did not spend too much time at school, they did not really mingle with many school community members, nor did with their students. Consequently, they did not really understand the characteristics of their students. Such observation is supproted by Jennings and Greenberg (2009) in *Review of Educational Research* saying that teacher's social competence will enable him/her to develop raising his/her relationship with their students.

To sum up, to what extent the student-teachers fulfill the standard of EFL professional teaching is summarized in the potencies and challenges below:

3.4.2 Contextualizing the research findings to the real practice in the research setting

In attempt to contextualize the finding into the real situation and practice in our faculty, I would say that mentor-teachers' thorough evaluation is agreeably matched with what we have and have not equiped to the students. As revealed in the finding, the student-teachers are viewed to have good knowledge on theory of learning, principles of curriculum and material developmet. Besides, thay are also capable in designing material well, create innovative and creative teaching techniques, especially using technology.

In our faculty, we offer several teaching courses like Introduction to language education, Curriculum and material development, Teaching and learning strategies, Teaching English as a foreign language, Language assesment, and Micro teaching. Besides, we provide AVA (Audio and visual aids) course. From those courses, the students learn the principles of teaching and learning, and theories of English Language teaching. More to that, they are also exposed to practices of designing materials for teaching English skills and aspects using a variety of resources,

techniques, approaches, and visual aids. Therefore, it seems to be right if the student-teachers perform well in those aspects.

On the other hand, some concerns were also addressed to the student-teachers due to their appeareance, etiquettes, quality of socialization with school community members, and less understanding toward the characteristics of the students. Additionally, they are also found out to struggle to make lesson plan and evaluation based on the prevailing curriculum. Such findings go closer with the real situation in our faculty. We do not offer courses on ethical codes for teachers and students development in our curriculum but just practically address them in our daily contact with our students. Similarly, soft skills that support the profession of teacher is slightly addressed. Only Public speaking is offered. Hence, again, these concerns conform the real practice in our faculty.

3.4.3 What can the teacher education program do to enhance the student-teachers' qualification as a language teacher?

In response to the opportunities and challenges above and in order to improve the student-teachers capacity to meet the teacher qualification standard, the mentor-teacher participants recommend some insightful input. First, regarding with personality competence, character building should be reinforced. It also includes knowing teacher's personality standard starting from appearance to attitude as a teacher. Second, to enhance their social competence, the duration of teaching practicum should be added from three months to one month full. This will help the student-teachers to increase the quantity and quality of socialization with students, teachers, and all staffs. I think this will also help them to understand the students' characteristics as witnessed by the mentor-teacher participants to be lack of.

Third, to improve students' professional competence, the teacher education need to equip the students with more soft skills (socializing with colleagues, attire, attitude) and some others related to working skills (condition of real work situation, public speaking, leadership training). The other thing

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is to improve their speaking skill and/or language competence especially Grammar and pronunciation. By so doing, they will be ready to deal with the real work situation. Lastly, the teacher education program would be better to add credits for micro teaching course in order to prepare them for their teaching practicum.

Fourth, to build up the student-teachers' pedagogical competence, the student-teacher needs to be equipped with Psychology of Learning and with current issue of teaching and learning theories and methods and teachniques. More to that, it would also be more realistic and useful to prepare them with the principles of the prevailing curriculum (2013), how to make RPP, lesson objectives and indicators. Furthermore, it would be a good idea to hold "student teaching" program for teaching and learning English and/or encourage them to do mini research and have it published in ELT journals or ELT conferences or to attend seminars. Last but not least, equipping them with the competence of being a teacher is also pivotal so they master teacher's preparation, classroom practice, and evaluation. In this case, emphasis on the notion of being a teacher needs to be given.

4. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

Based on the research findings which has been contextualized in the the researh setting, there are some important points to be highlighted in preparing the pre-service teachers to meet the teacher qualification standard in the following five competence areas: *Personality competence.* Character building is essential so the student-teachers will understand culturally and socially accepted-behaviour and perform good manner as an individual as well as a teacher. *Social competence,* the teacher eduction program needs to empashize the importance of building a good cooperation with the mentor teachers and good socialization with the school community member. *Professional competence*, the teacher education program need to make sure that the student-teachers have good knowledge and proficiency of English Language. *Pedagogical knowledge competence.* It is crucial to equip the student-teacher with knowledge on approaches, methods and teachniques in TEFL, curriculum

and material development, language assessment. More importantly, current issues and implementationn on those areas are also necessary to be exposed. Therefore, the teacher education program should encourage the student teachers to attend and/or present in ELT conferences. Similarly, the implementation of prevailing curriculum in Indonesia also needs to be taught so the students know how to deal with the curriculum when teaching in local schools. *Pedagogical skill competence.* In this area, the teacher education program needs to enforce the student-teacher to be innovative and creative in teaching. The use of technology must be emphasized in order to achieve the purpose. More to that, skills for managing calassroom and understanding students' characteristics is also necessary to be cultivated. Therefore, courses like Psychology of Learner and Classroom Management must be offered.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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