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Teaching Competencies of Students Practice Teaching at Elementary Schools and Kindergartens: A Teacher Supervisor's View

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to describe the teaching competencies of English Education students practising at elementary schools and kindergartens based on the teacher supervisors' view. The teaching competencies include the students' competence on writing the lesson plan and their competence on practice teaching. To reach the objectives of the study, the researcher collected the data by distributing a questionnaire to the supervisors at schools. There were 41 schools consisting of *TK ABA*, *SD Muhammadiyah*, *SD Negeri* located in Yogyakarta (24), Sleman (1) and Bantul (16). The questionnaire used was based on the official assessment form published by Indonesian government for teacher's certification. It contains some indicators of teaching competence, it uses Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5. The criteria are as follows: 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = rather poor, 4 = good, and 5 = excellent. The data were taken from proportionally random sampling of the supervisors. From the total number of 103 teacher supervisors, the researcher distributed 61 questionnaires. The supervisors represented the ones from different educational backgrounds. The findings show the following results. The competence of English Education students in composing the lesson plan, according to the teacher supervisors, is classified good (actual mean = 3.858, SD = 0.685, ideal mean = 3, ideal SD = 0.750). Further, their competence on practice teaching is also good (actual mean = 3.867, SD = 0.688, ideal mean = 3, ideal SD = 0.966). The two aspects of composing the lesson plan to improve are teaching material organization and the completeness of assessment instrument. The other two aspects to improve in teaching practice are contextual teaching and learning and class management.

Keywords: *teaching competence, lesson plan, learning, teaching, supervisor*

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Introduction

There has been some routines in the teaching practice at schools every year. The students together with the lecturer come to school at the first day of the teaching practice period to meet the school principal, teachers and staff. Then, after the opening ceremony, the students have their class observation, consultation with the teacher supervisor and practice teaching there. The lecturer visits them twice or more frequently to share with the school the progress of the teaching practice and to meet the students at school as well. The other activities taking place are the end of the teaching practice and the submission of the grade or mark of the students taking teaching practice. It will be processed later on at campus to issue the final grade for the subject – practicum.

In about 10 years there haven't been systematic data to help English Education Study Program evaluate the teaching practice. There has been no official written report in English Education Study Program of FKIP of Ahmad Dahlan University on the feedback from schools about the students' teaching competencies. The researcher views that such data are important to get the stakeholders' feedback and to improve the teaching practice activity as well as the students skills in teaching before they deal with their future work.

This research is on the teacher supervisors' view on the students' competencies in teaching. Two things to prepare for the success teaching are preparing the lesson plan and conducting the process of teaching and learning in class. Therefore, the researcher asked the teacher supervisors' view on these two points.

B. Literary Review

1. Teaching and Learning Process

Both teaching and learning processes occur at relatively the same time. The teacher and students collaboratively have the activities in the class. The term learning tends to refer more to the students and teaching is to the teacher (see Cameron, 2001).

During the process, the students can get the inputs from different sources. They can learn from their teacher, classmates and their environment. Rich exposure environment helps the students to learn the language. It can be in the form of teaching and learning media and aids, verbal expressions or attitudes, body movements, mimic when communicating.

Scholars have different angles of view on the process of teaching and learning. There are various terms of approach: *teacher-centred*, *learner-centred*, dan *learning centred* (see Hutchinson (1986), Nunan (1991), Cameron (2001)). The three approaches are also applied in the language teaching. Slattery dan Willis (2001) recommended teacher-led activity. Young learners have limitations so that the teacher guidance is very much needed.

During the teaching practice at schools, the process of teaching and learning also takes place. Students taking their teaching practice interact with the teacher supervisor as their teacher and the learners at school. In this case, the three of them can learn one another.

2. Children as Young Learners

Teachers of English for young learners need to understand the characteristics of children. They are not adults, they have their own features. Children, according to Piaget, are active learners. They actively construct the knowledge and information from their environment. Vygotsky emphasizes the role of adults that help children to learn and Bruner views how adult use language to mediate the world for children and help them to solve problems. He introduces the activity of *scaffolding*, routines and formats for language teaching (Cameron, 2001: 2 – 8). In addition, Coltrane (2003: 1) states that children has not reached the complete development of their first language.

Further, Slattery dan Willis (2001: 4) share some characteristics of children as learners. They are naturally curious but they have quite a short attention span. Therefore, they need a variety of activities in learning, for example, by watching, listening, imitating or doing things.

Language games in the teaching and learning process can be one of the activities to make the learning enjoyable and educational. Through the language games, children can develop their language skill(s) as well as their affective, psychosocial and psychomotor skills (Fatimah, 2007: 11).

The learning and teaching activity can help the children develop their competence. One of the children's strengths is that they can imitate the sounds they hear quite accurately. However, they can't understand grammatical rules and explanations about language (Slattery and Willis, 2001). The teacher needs to employ different teaching methods to enable the children learn the language more effectively.

Oxford (1990) states the importance of learning strategy. The teacher needs to understand the learning strategy adopted by the students. Some students prefer individual work, some are more social.

Information on the students' learning strategy will help the teacher to design the teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

3. Teaching Practice

One of the parties related to the teaching practice (practicum) is the teacher supervisor. He or she has some responsibilities. According to the guideline issued by *UP3L FKIP UAD* (2007) the teacher supervisor is to give orientation to the teaching program. He or she also provides opportunity for the students to observe the teaching and learning activity, to share the lesson, schedule and guide the students in preparing the lesson plan. In addition, the teacher is to monitor, give feedback and assess the students taking the teaching practice.

Assessment is a systematic effort to reach the quality of the educational process and the students' competence (Cullen (2003) in Kusnandar (2007): 379). In the teaching practice, the teacher supervisor assesses the students' performance. The assessment is the teacher's reflection on the students' teaching competencies.

UP3L as a unit controlling and monitoring the teaching practice at FKIP UAD sets an instrument to assess the students' teaching performance. There are 12 indicators. They include the teaching preparation, appearance, opening, delivery of the lesson, students-teacher interaction, mastery of the lesson, motivating the students, classroom language, time management, media, movement and closing.

The practice of teaching at school share things in common with the real practice of teaching. A student taking teaching practice teaches at school. He or she meets and teaches in an elementary school or kindergarten. One of the distinctive features is that a students practising teaching at school is directly supervised by the teacher supervisor employing a certain instrument of assessment. The campus (of FKIP) provides the instrument.

The teaching competencies of the students taking their teaching practice at the elementary schools and kindergartens should reflect the teaching competencies of the 'real' teacher. They should be able to take their roles as teacher, educator, motivator, evaluator, etc. (Mulyasa, 2005: 37-65). This makes the requirements of being a good teacher not easy to fulfill.

To transfer skills and knowledge, an English teacher in the class for young learners needs to be skillful in some aspects. He or she must have a good mastery on the teaching materials, suitable teaching method, appropriate media, language testing, rewards and punishment, etc. as stated by Richards (1998) and Harmer (2001). In practice, before teaching, the teacher is required to make a teaching preparation in the form of lesson plan.

In short, there are two important points in the practice of teaching. The first is administrative preparation, i.e. making the lesson plan and the second deals with the teaching and learning activities in the class.

The Indonesian government via the Department of National Education has set an official instrument to assess the teacher's competencies as provided in Book 3 – the Guideline of Portfolio. This instrument includes some indicators to see the teacher's competencies as reflected in the teaching performance.

The feedback of the teacher supervisor in the teaching practice at schools help the study program (English Education Study Program) evaluate the activity and the students' competencies in order that the graduates will be better in mastering the language and teaching the students.

C. Research Method

This research is a survey. The researcher collected the data using proportionally random sampling. A questionnaire was used to collect the data from teachers supervising English Education students of Ahmad Dahlan University. They were asked their feedback not only for the last period of the teaching practice but for all the periods they have supervised the students of English Education of FKIP UAD.

There were 41 schools consisting 24 schools in Yogyakarta city, 16 schools at Bantul Regency and 1 school at Sleman Regency. Were there more than one teacher guiding the practising students, the researcher sampled them. The criteria to represent were the educational background of the teacher, whether they were from Diploma or Graduate degree (English or non English Graduate).

The questionnaire used was based on the official assessment form published by Indonesian government for teacher's certification. It contains some indicators of teaching competence, it uses Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5. The criteria are as follows: 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = rather poor, 4 = good, and 5 = excellent. The data were taken from proportionally random sampling of the supervisors. From the total number of 103 teacher supervisors, the researcher distributed 61 questionnaires. The

supervisors represented the teacher supervisors from different educational backgrounds (graduates of English Education, of non English Education and diploma). The researcher also conducted an interview to the principal and teacher(s).

D. Results and Discussion

Based on the questionnaire replied to the researcher (98, 36 %), it is found out that female teachers are more than the male ones (85 %). All supervisors at te kindergarten are female. At the elementary level of education, there were 9 male teachers (21.95%) out of 41 teachers under investigated.

The data show that in relation to the lesson plan making, English Education practitioners reaches the means of 3.858 and deviation standard of 0.685. With the ideal means of 3 and ideal deviation standard of 0.750, the empirical means is 3.858. It is classified **good**.

There are 8 aspects to consider in making the lesson plan. They are:

1. clarity of the objectives,
2. teaching materials (suitable with the objectives and characteristics of the students),
3. organization of the teaching materials (sequences and the time allotted)
4. media (suitable with the objectives, teaching materials and characteristics of the students)
5. clarity of the learning scenario (procedure: opening, main learning activities and closing)
6. details of the learning scenario (strategy / methods and time allotted for each learning activity)
7. relevance of the teaching techniques and learning objectives
8. instrument of assessment (questions, key answers, scoring criteria)

The research result shows that there are two aspects to improve. It is found out that the students taking their teaching practice need to improve the way they organize the teaching materials (sequences and the time allotted). They also need to improve their instrument of assessment (questions, key answers, scoring criteria).

In relation to the subjects delivered in teaching English to young learners at campus, the organization of the teaching materials is discussed in the subject of CLTPD (*Children Language Teaching Program Development*). In CLTPD class, the students learn how to design a course including the teaching materials. The materials to deliver must be designed to facilitate the young learners to reach the learning objectives in the learning time (30 – 40 minutes).

Next, the research reveals the following results. On the indicators of conducting the teaching and learning activities, students of English Education Study Program of FKIP UAD has the means of 3.867 and deviation standard of 0.688. With the ideal means of 3 and ideal deviation standard of 0.966, the empirical means is 3.867. It is then, classified **good** for the teaching and learning activities conducted by the students taking their teaching practice at the elementary schools and kindergartens.

There are three teaching stages to be paid attention to. They are pre-teaching, whilst-teaching and post teaching. At the stage of pre-teaching, a teacher needs to facilitate the students to lead them in the materials to learn so the students have enough time to adapt themselves to the lesson.

At the stage of whilst-teaching, the student as the (prospective) teacher need to focus on 6 important points. They are mastery of the teaching materials, approach or strategy to teach, use of media, involvement of the students, assessment (of the process and product) and the use of the language in the classroom.

At the stage of post-teaching, there are two activities to do. The first is making reflection or conclusion by involving the students and the second is doing the follow up by giving recommendation or assignment as exercises or enrichment.

This research shows that there are two aspects to improve in conducting the teaching and learning activities. The students' ability to relate the teaching materials to real life and their class management should be improved. The first aspect can be related to the students' ability in realizing the contextual language learning so that the teaching materials in the classroom can be linked to the learners' situation outside the classroom. Learning a language is not only learning vocabulary. The language learning should bridge the learners, to use the language to communicate with other people and deal with information around them.

The ability of the teacher to use classroom English and to have the knowledge of the world will support the teacher's competence to relate the teaching materials to real life experienced by the young learners. Those two factors influence the teacher's skill in managing the class. Also, the students can design a variety of learning activities and of teaching materials or questions, especially for the heterogenous class. During the teaching practice, team teachers can be recommended, too.

Conclusions

Based on the research data, it is found out that according to the teacher supervisors, the teaching competencies of the students of English Education Study Program of FKIP Ahmad Dahlan University is in the category of "good." This category is for the students' competency in making the lesson plan and their teaching skills in teaching English to elementary school and kindergarten students.

In relation to the lesson plan, the students taking their teaching practice need to improve the way they organize the teaching materials (sequences and the time allotted). They also need to improve their instrument of assessment (questions, key answers, scoring criteria). Two other aspects to improve the teaching and learning process are the students' ability to relate the teaching materials to real life and the class management.

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