

Impact of Teaching Practicum Experiences on the Development of Cultural Sensitivity in Pre-Service EFL Teachers in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of teaching practice experiences on pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' cultural sensitivity, specifically their sensitivity to school culture, and examines how this cultural sensitivity impacts their teacher identity formation. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research involved interviews with three pre-service EFL teachers. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, revealing several key findings. The study found that teaching practice significantly enhanced pre-service EFL teachers' awareness of school culture, encompassing the distinct academic environment and customs encountered in schools compared to their campus experiences. Additionally, this experience improved their classroom management, selection of teaching methods, and fostered greater patience and confidence in their teaching roles. Moreover, increased cultural sensitivity positively influenced the development of their professional identities, highlighting the importance of emotional factors such as a sense of belonging to the teaching profession, preparedness for the classroom, and self-assurance. Overall, the study underscores that teaching practice not only deepens pre-service teachers' understanding of school culture but also equips them emotionally and professionally for their future careers.

Keywords: Cultural sensitivity, teacher identity, teaching practice, pre-service EFL Teacher

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the impact of teaching practice experience on pre-service EFL teachers' cultural sensitivity, and also the impact of cultural sensitivity on pre-service EFL teachers' teacher identity formation. In this study, the cultural sensitivity highlighted is cultural sensitivity to school culture. The purpose of this study is to find out the impact of pre-service EFL teachers' teaching practice experience on their cultural sensitivity, and also to find out the impact of cultural sensitivity on pre-service EFL teachers' teacher identity formation. This study used qualitative research with case study approach. Data were

obtained by conducting interviews with 3 pre-service EFL teachers. This study used thematic analysis by coding several quotes from the participants. This study selected students who had already practiced teaching in schools. The findings of this study are that the pre-service EFL teachers' teaching practice experiences have increased their awareness of culture, namely school culture. The school culture here is the different academic atmosphere between campus and school, and also the customs practiced at school. The teaching practice experience also helps pre-service EFL teachers in managing the classroom, choosing appropriate learning methods, and increasing their patience and confidence in teaching. This cultural sensitivity also contributes to the development of pre-service EFL teachers' professional identity. It emphasizes the importance of affective aspects such as a sense of belonging to the profession, preparation for teaching, as well as increased self-confidence. Overall, the teaching practice experience enriches teacher candidates' understanding of school culture and prepares them emotionally and professionally to face challenges in their future teaching careers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pre-service teacher education is critical because it plays a critical role in the success of an education system (Barrett, 2007). Due to this, pre-service teacher education must focus not only on content knowledge and competencies but also on the values and attitudes required to teach in diverse classrooms which is important for teachers and learning (World Bank 2017). Teaching students is important to teacher education. For effective teacher training, the theory learned in education faculties must be put into practice in schools (Ateşkan, 2016). The best way to educate teachers is to give them real-world experiences about schools and students. In practicum, prospective teachers will understand the socio-cultural, political, and economic factors that underlie education, and from practicum activities, prospective teachers can have direct experience and knowledge about the school environment (MoE, 2003). Cultural awareness needs to be integrated into teacher education (Atay, 2005). Interaction in the cultural context such as the behavior of the interlocutor, emotions, and speech acts (Aysegul, 2021).

Cultural sensitivity can be an essential aspect to explore and understand when studying teacher identity (Golzar, 2020). The professional identity in the research that is

found about focuses on pedagogical aspects. The pedagogical aspect does not develop a full professional identity (Meijer et al., 2014). In other studies the aspect of pedagogy is very important for teacher identity because it helps prospective teachers to integrate practical, theoretical experience and develop a sense of ownership, agency, and ownership in their professional development (Graus et al., 2022). In several studies, it is generally discussed the importance of knowledge or pedagogical aspects possessed by teachers or prospective teachers in the formation of teacher identity, seen from the side of the teacher's abilities and knowledge. Therefore, here examine aspects other than the pedagogical aspect, namely the affective aspect. There are still rare studies examining the importance of affective aspects in the formation of teacher identity. The affective aspect that will be examined here is cultural sensitivity. The purpose of this research is to find out how practical teaching experience can shape the cultural sensitivity of pre-service EFL teachers.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Design

This research finds out how practicum experience influences pre-service EFL teachers' awareness of cultural diversity and sensitivity. To answer these questions, this study will use qualitative methods. According to (Merriam & Merriam, 2009) qualitative research is well suited to researchers who are more interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation than hypothesis testing. The qualitative approach used in this research is case study. According to (Merriam & Merriam, 2009) case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a limited system, with particularistic features, descriptions, and heuristics. The context of this study focuses on the impact of practical experience on the development of cultural sensitivity among prospective English teachers. This research finds out how this practicum experience influences the development of cultural sensitivity in pre-service EFL teachers. It aims to explore specific aspects of the practicum that contribute to or hinder the development of cultural sensitivity among teacher candidates.

2.2. Data Collection

The data collection in this study will use the interview method, then the results of the interview will be coordinated. According to (Merriam & Merriam, 2009) Interview is a data collection method which the researcher asks questions to the participants to collect information about a topic or phenomenon being studied.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data is analyze within the case. After we have a overall view within each case, then we will compare those three cases to see the similarity and the difference of each case. In this research, the data analysis process has several processes based on (Creswell, 2012) namely : (1) prepare and organize data, (2) familiarize the data, (3) generating theme, (4) coding the data. Trustworthiness in this research uses triangulation.

2.4. Thrustworthiness

In this study, theoretical triangulation was employed to enhance trustworthiness. According to Miles et al. (2014), triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources, methods, researchers, theories, or types of data to cross-verify and enrich findings, thereby leveraging diverse and complementary strengths. Specifically, theoretical triangulation involves applying multiple theoretical perspectives to analyze and interpret data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research phenomena (Miles et al., 2014). This approach allows for a deeper and more nuanced analysis by integrating various theoretical frameworks to validate and support the study's conclusions. (Miles et al., 2014).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings here describe how the teaching experiences of three pre-service teachers (Rose, Angela, Harmony) contributed to their cultural sensitivity. This includes the way they perceive the new culture, namely school culture, adaptation to the school environment, awareness of the practices and rituals found in the school.

3.1. Contribution of Pre-Service Teachers' Practical Teaching Experience in the Development of Cultural Sensitivity

In this study, it was found that the pre-service EFL teachers' teaching practice experience can have an impact on the cultural sensitivity of the culture in the school. In the study (Sahin, 2008) It was found that the teaching practice experience undertaken by Turkey's international students in America had a positive impact on them. This positive impact is the professional and personal development of teachers. In addition, international students who do practice teaching provide an increase in American students' understanding of other countries and cultures. Their teaching practice experience also has an impact in terms of their cultural awareness. In the findings of this study, the participants felt cultural awareness. Cultural awareness in this study is awareness of the culture in the school. But not only that. In contrast to research (Sahin, 2008), the teaching practice experience in this

study also had an impact in terms of classroom management. The experience of teaching practice gives them knowledge in terms of choosing the right learning methods for students with different characteristics. In addition, this study found that the experience of teaching practice has an impact on how prospective English teachers here can manage the class and has an impact on emotional matters such as patience and confidence in teaching in the classroom.

The research findings by (Chasanah & Sumardi, 2022) The research findings show that Indonesian prospective teachers' teaching practice experience in Thailand had an impact in terms of language barriers as well as cultural adjustment. In the findings (Chasanah & Sumardi, 2022) emphasizes the importance of socializing with a community of professional teachers and providing more preparation for prospective teachers such as observation, simulation, or discussion with experienced teachers. The same thing with this study. The findings of this study also reveal that the teaching practice activities that prospective teachers carry out have an impact in terms of language barriers. There was one participant who experienced the Javanese language barrier in his teaching practice activities. But it is different from the location where teaching practice is carried out. In the research (Chasanah & Sumardi, 2022) teaching practice is carried out in Thailand, in this study teaching practice activities are carried out in Indonesia, namely precisely in Yogyakarta.

3.2. The Impact of Cultural Sensitivity on The Formation of Teacher Identity Among Pre-Service EFL Teachers

The findings of this study also discuss the impact of cultural sensitivity (culture in schools) on the formation of teacher identity by prospective English teachers. In the research (Meijer et al., 2014) It was found that to develop teacher identity, this research focuses on the pedagogical side of teachers, especially in the context of supporting prospective teachers in understanding and overcoming the challenges that arise in professional development. Reflective practice, subject autobiography, and professional identity development are important aspects of this pedagogy. This is different from the findings of this study. If the research (Meijer et al., 2014) While this study focuses on the pedagogical side of developing teacher identity, this study focuses on the affective side of teachers. The affective side here is cultural sensitivity to school culture as a way to develop the teacher identity of pre-service EFL teachers. In this study, it was found that cultural sensitivity to school culture has an impact on the sense of professionalism as a teacher, and

also has an impact on professionalism in teaching in class, including preparation of materials, preparation of appropriate methods and also other teaching preparations. The findings of this study also reveal that the impact of cultural sensitivity in schools affects the self-development of pre-service EFL teachers, such as increasing confidence in teaching. This is certainly important for prospective teachers. The improvement of communication skills with school community such as teachers and students is also an impact of cultural sensitivity on the formation of pre-service EFL teachers' teacher identity.

It can be concluded that the teaching practice experience has an impact on the development of English language teacher candidates' cultural sensitivity. This experience increases the prospective teachers' cultural awareness of the culture in the school. In addition, the teaching practice experience also helps prospective teachers in managing the class, choosing appropriate learning methods, and increasing their patience and confidence in teaching. Language barriers, such as difficulty communicating in Javanese, are one of the challenges in teaching practice. This cultural sensitivity also contributes to the development of prospective English teachers' professional identity. It emphasizes the importance of affective aspects such as a sense of professional belonging, teaching preparation, and also increased self-confidence. In addition, cultural sensitivity also has an impact on their communication with the school community. This is certainly also the formation of teacher identity in the affective aspect. The knowledge that has been obtained on campus by pre-service teachers is the theory needed to prepare for carrying out teaching practice activities in schools and also prepare for them (pre-service teachers) to work later. However, there are some aspects that are not provided by the university as needed in schools. therefore, the need for universities to provide aspects that are more adapted to the situation in schools, for example by providing several additional courses, so that prospective teachers can understand the real situation in the place where they work later. Overall, the practice teaching experience enriches teacher candidates' understanding of school culture and prepares them emotionally and professionally for the challenges of their future teaching careers.

4. CONCLUSION

Addressing the first research question—How does practical teaching experience contribute to the development of cultural sensitivity among pre-service EFL teachers?—the findings indicate that a two-month practical teaching experience significantly enhances cultural sensitivity towards school culture. Based on interviews with three pre-service EFL teachers, it is evident that this experience fosters an awareness of essential school practices, such as greeting students and engaging in literacy activities before starting lessons. Additionally, it improves their ability to manage classrooms effectively and select teaching methods that align with students' needs and characteristics. Regarding the second research question—What is the impact of cultural sensitivity on the formation of teacher identity among pre-service EFL teachers?—the study concludes that cultural sensitivity acquired through teaching practice plays a crucial role in shaping the teacher identity of pre-service EFL teachers. This heightened cultural awareness helps them understand the role of an English teacher, including their responsibilities, and aligns with their vision and mission as future educators. Overall, the practical teaching experience not only develops cultural sensitivity but also supports the formation of a well-defined teacher identity.

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