

## **TEACHING WITHOUT STUDENTS: EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES TEACHING IN PANDEMIC TIME**

*Dwi Riyanti*  
*English Study Program, FKIP Universitas Tanjungpura*  
*dwi.riyanti@fkip.untan.ac.id*

Submitted: 2021-04-10

Accepted: 2021-07-05

---

**Abstract:** Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, teaching and learning activities have changed dramatically. Within the Indonesian context, for example, beginning March 2020, the Indonesian government applied a social distancing policy. The situation forced both students and teachers to study and teach from home as the schools were closed to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. This included how pre-service teachers learnt to teach. Intended to explore pre-service English teachers' experiences related to their teaching practicum in this pandemic time, this paper focuses on gaining in-depth information related to how the research participants view their experiences during a microteaching class at an Indonesian university. The study involved six pre-service teachers who took the microteaching class. The main data were collected from pre-service teachers through written reflection and from an open-ended questionnaire. In addition, recorded videos of participants' teaching practices were also used to triangulate the data. Data analysis was qualitatively to see the emerging themes. The findings indicates that teacher candidates in the study view their microteaching experiences as both positive and negative ways. They consider it as a positive experience as they could have high confidence in teaching. It is a negative experience because they did not have experience managing the classroom. Despite their mixed experiences, the participants in the study still consider their teaching practice experiences to be useful in preparing their teaching practicum at schools.

**Keywords:** microteaching, teacher candidates, pandemic

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

In many teacher education programs, teaching practicum is recognized as an important component in preparing teacher candidates to teach within school settings (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Beeth & Adadan, 2006; Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009; Levis & Farrell, 2007; Santoro, 1997). There has been a lot of research that addresses how teaching practicums contribute to pre-service teachers' professional development of (Caires & Almeida, 2005; Canh, 2014; Choy et al., 2014; Kabilan, 2013; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Kuswandono, 2013; Leijen & Kullasepp, 2013; Moussay et al., 2011; Schoeman & Mabunda, 2012; Vetter et al., 2013). Yet, most of the research focuses on teaching practicums in school contexts. Little is documented on teaching practicum within a university context such as in microteaching class where the students practice teaching with their peers.

While there has been previous research highlighting the pre-service teachers' perspectives on microteaching (He & Yan, 2011; Şen, 2009), the studies took place in China and Turkey contexts respectively. While there has been previous research related to learning to teach in microteaching in an Indonesian context (Riyanti, 2020; Riyanti & Sarroub, 2016), there is still a dearth of research in microteaching experience in pandemic time. Thus, this current research

addresses the gap by investigating the experiences of pre-service teachers who learn to teach in microteaching class during the pandemic time. Furthermore, since the pandemic has changed the way teaching and learning are structured, it is crucial to get insights into how teacher candidates view their experience during the pandemic.

While teaching practicum in university setting such as in microteaching class has long been a part of teacher education program in Indonesia, the investigation on how pre-service teachers learn to teach in this setting is scarcely done. Furthermore, as the pandemic started to hit Indonesia in early March 2020, the teaching and learning process changes dramatically. Students and teachers were no longer allowed to meet face to face. The rapid spread of the coronavirus forced the government of Indonesia to make regulations to restrict the movement of people. As a result, teachers and students were advised to stay at home. All teaching and learning activities were done remotely. Students in the microteaching class who were supposed to practice teaching to their peers with the supervision of an instructor were no longer able to meet their peers face to face in the classroom settings. Looking at this situation, the instructor of the microteaching who was also the researcher of the current research changed the mode of microteaching class from an offline to an online mode. She assigned the six pre-service teachers in her microteaching class to video record their teaching performance. As the pre-service teachers have never taught their peers before, and that it was not possible to teach online among them, they were teaching to imaginary students in their video-recorded teaching performances. Since this mode of microteaching is done for the first time in Tanjungpura university, it is important to know how the pre-service teachers view their learning to teach moments in university setting. Additionally, it is also important to know how this mode of teaching practice impact on the formation of teacher identity of the pre-service teachers. In particular, the current research seeks to answer the following research questions: How do pre-service EFL teachers view their teaching practicum during the pandemic time?

## **METHOD**

The design of this research is a qualitative study in which the researcher is interested in gaining in depth information related to how the research participants view their teaching activities without having students during microteaching class and is framed by using activity theory. As the researcher is the instructor in microteaching class, she directly asked the pre-service teachers to video record their teaching performance and asked them to reflect on each of their teaching moment.

The participants of the research involved six pre-service teachers who took Microteaching class. The information related to the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' Background Information

Participant's Pseudonym	Age	Year Of Study	Teaching Experience
AW	22	3	No
FF	21	3	No
HF	22	3	No
KF	21	3	No
LA	21	3	No
RV	21	3	No

The data for this study were obtained through indirect observation and interview. The indirect observation was done through looking closely on the participants' teaching performance that has been video-taped and through open-ended questionnaire. While the main data was collected through participants' written reflection on their teaching activities and the questionnaire.

One of the main tools of data collection is written reflection by the participants. In applying this tool to collect the data, the researcher assigned pre-service teachers to write reflection on three teaching performances they did during microteaching time with the duration of 20-30 minutes. The open-ended questionnaire was distributed soon after the microteaching class ends to find out how they view their learning to teach in microteaching class which is done without having real students, the challenges that they face when teaching without real students, as well as how they identify themselves as teachers to be after practicing teaching without students.

The obtained data were then analyzed qualitatively. The data from students' written reflections and questionnaire were first read carefully. The next stage was codifying the data by putting labels which were then grouped into categories as the emerging themes were identified. The recorded teaching performances were also transcribed and analyzed to triangulate the data from questionnaire and students' written reflection.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

From analyzing student reflection and the result of the questionnaire at the end of the microteaching, it is found that pre-service teachers view teaching practicum in pandemic time as both positive and negative experiences.

a. Positive experience

Most of the participants considers teaching without students as a positive experience as it reduces their nervousness. AW, for example, claims that she became less nervous as she did not have to face the real students. Similarly, LA and FF consider having no students in their teaching as a positive experience. LN wrote, “The thing that I like is because there's no students in the class so that the presenter must be less nervous”. In addition to being less nervous, the participants also consider teaching without students makes them feel confident. FK, for example, mentions that “in teaching demonstration without students, I can be more confident and can also focus more material and I only imagine that students are real in front of me and also I can increase my potential by teaching without students. In the same vein, VS also claims, “For me it’s a good starting before you face the real student because the situation would be so different. The reason I like teaching without students because I feel more relaxed and I don’t afraid if I make a mistakes while the learning process because I can retake or do it again and again till it’s perfect”.

b. Negative experience

Despite the positive experience, the participants in the study consider teaching without real students as a negative experience. One of the participants, for example, wrote:

Teaching without students is difficult because the names of those who teach must have those who "teach" and those who are "taught". There is nothing that I like if teaching without students, because it looks boring and like people are confused, such as when teaching requires the response of students who are taught so that the teaching atmosphere does not become boring.

(FF, questionnaire)

As shown in the above excerpt, FF complains that teaching without students cannot be called as teaching. For her, pretending to face real teachers without having one is difficult and boring as there is no response from the students when teaching.

In a similar vein, other participants have negative impression on teaching without students. Partly because it is such a strange experience, and strange. In the questionnaire, HF wrote, “I have to speak for myself and when I ask no one to call, I feel very confused and strange. I have to turn on the atmosphere myself without any response from students”. In addition to the weirdness, other participants consider teaching without students is difficult especially for measuring students’ understanding as explained by one of the participants below:

it is hard for me to measure the students' understanding of my material delivery and also the lack of experience in gaining students’ responses. It is indeed a challenge to have teaching demonstrations without having real students in front of me. I have to make plans for students' responses and

possible questions to be asked and answered in my demonstrations, and I have to be prepared to face students as well as their questions or response, to not be surprised in the real practicum at school.

(AW, questionnaire).

Similar tone of experience is expressed by another participant, FF, wrote, “to be honest having teaching demonstrations without facing real students were quite challenging because even though I didn't face the real one, I still needed to be able to acts and faced them and performed as I really taught them.” In the similar vein, other participants view teaching without students as a challenging. For KF, it is challenging because he had to imagine both the students and the class situation. He claims that he had hard time imagining students while he was trying to focus on the materials being taught. Additionally, having no students' responses is another factor that make teaching without students challenging.

c. A mix of positive and negative experience

While some participants tend to consider teaching without students as mostly positive or negative, there are still participants who consider the experience as a mix of positive and negative. LA, for example, explicitly mentioned that the experience makes her feel both experiences. In the questionnaire, LA wrote:

I think it's could be hard and easy. It's hard, in terms of when we teach students, we have to think about how students respond us. And it's easy because the demonstration is not done in class directly, so the presenter must be less nervous. Also, because we can prepare all of the things that we need, so that the activities based on lesson plan could be running good

(LA, questionnaire)

As indicated in the excerpt above, LA consider teaching without students as both hard and easy, indicating a mix of both positive and negative experience. In addition to LA, FF considers teaching without students makes her fearless and boost her confident, yet it also makes it hard for her to practice speaking to students as there are no responses. The situation makes her not sure whether she was right or wrong.

## **DISCUSSION**

In relation to the experience of pre-service teachers in learning to teach during the pandemic time, the findings support previous research (Caires & Almeida, 2005) in which the teaching experience helps students become more skillful as a teacher to be. However, since the context of teaching practicum in the current study was different form the study by Caires and Almeida (2005), the benefits that the participants get is slightly different. Because the teaching practicum in the current study occurred during pandemic time where face to face interaction is not possible, the pre-service teachers did not have experience in managing classroom as in the

classroom where the participants meet the students face to face. Even so, the participants in the current study still view that their experience is beneficial for making them more prepared as teachers to be. For them teaching imaginary students made them more confident since they did not have to face the real students. Yet, they think their managing classroom skill is still insufficient.

In terms of the artificiality of the experience in microteaching as pointed out in the previous research by He and Yan (2011), the findings of this study somewhat confirms that. However, in the current study, the participants consider teaching intended students when they taught their imaginary students. For example, when they practiced teaching junior high school, the participants were imagining that they have that level of students in front of them, not their peers in the university classroom. Thus, the way they taught the students was different teaching university students.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that preservice teachers have both positive and negative experience in having teaching practicum without students. However, two of six participants have a mix experience of it. They view the experience from both positive and negative side. In terms of the challenges they encounter during the teaching practicum, the participants mostly have challenge with teaching activities and in creating video recording of their teaching. In relation to the implications of their teaching practicum experience toward their teacher identity formation, the experience makes the participants aware of the unexpected teaching situations that they may encounter in their future teaching situations. The experience also makes them think critically and make use of technology as an alternative way of teaching in unexpected situations like Pandemic.

In line with the findings that pre-service teachers have both positive and negative experience related to teaching practicum without students, lecturers that handle microteaching class need to socialize this to upcoming pre-service teachers who are about to have microteaching class that teaching situations may change unexpectedly and that they have to be ready with that. In addition to the lecturers, future researchers should consider the findings of the current study. As the current study is narrow in scope and only involved six participants, further research involving more participants and larger study is important to be conducted in order to better understand how in-service teachers do reflection on their teaching.

## **REFERENCES**

- Atay, D. (2008). Teacher research for professional development. *ELT Journal*, 62(2), 139–147.

- Avalos, B. (2011). Teacher professional development in Teaching and Teacher Education over ten years. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 10–20.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An Agentic Perspective. *Annu. Rev. Psychology*, 52, 1–26.
- Beck, C., & Kosnik, C. (2002). Components of a good practicum placement: Student teacher perception. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 29(2), 81–98.
- Beeth, M. E., & Adadan, E. (2006). The influences of university-based coursework on field experience. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 17, 103–120. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10972-006-9013-8>
- Caires, S., & Almeida, L. S. (2005). Teaching practice in Initial teacher education: Its impact on student teachers' professional skills and development. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 31(2), 111–120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607470500127236>
- Canh, L. V. (2014). Great Expectations: The TESOL Practicum as a Professional Learning Experience. *TESOL Journal*, 5(2), 199–224.
- Choy, D., Wong, A. F. L., Goh, K. C., & Low, E. L. (2014). Practicum experience: Pre-service teachers' self-perception of their professional growth. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 51(5), 472–482.
- Corbin, J. M., Strauss, A. L., & Strauss, A. L. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Evans, L. (2002). What is Teacher Development. *Oxford Review of Education*, 28(1), 123–137.
- Gaudelli, W., & Ousley, D. (2009). From clothing to skin: Identity work of student teachers in culminating field experiences. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 931–939. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.017>
- He, C., & Yan, C. (2011). Exploring authenticity of microteaching in pre-service teacher education programmes. *Teaching Education*, 22(3), 291–302.
- Johnson, B., Pawan, F., & Mahan-Taylor, R. (2005). The professional development of working ESL/EFL teachers: A pilot study. In D. J. Tedick (Ed.), *Second language teacher education: International perspectives* (pp. 53–73). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Johnson, K. E. (2006). The Sociocultural Turn and Its Challenges for Second Language Teacher Education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 235–257.
- Kabilan, M. K. (2013). A phenomenological study of an international teaching practicum: Pre-service teachers' experiences of professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 36, 198–209.
- Kayi-Aydar, H. (2015). Teacher agency, positioning, and English language learners: Voices of pre-service classroom teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 45, 94–103.

- Kelly, P. (2006). What is teacher learning? A socio-cultural perspective. *Oxford Review of Education*, 32(4), 505–519.
- Kuswandono, P. (2013). *The journey of becoming a teacher: Indonesian pre-service teachers reflecting on their professional learning* [Ph.D Dissertation]. Monash University.
- Leijen, A., & Kullasepp, K. (2013). All roads lead to Rome: Developmental trajectories of student teachers' professional and personal identity development. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 26(2), 104–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2013.759023>
- Levis, J., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2007). Failing the practicum: Narrowing the gap between expectations and reality with reflective practice. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41, 193–201. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2007.tb00049.x>
- Loughran, J. (1996). *Developing reflective practice: Learning about teaching and learning through modelling*. Falmer Press.
- Moussay, S., Flavier, E., Zimmermann, P., & Méard, J. (2011). Pre-service teachers' greater power to act in the classroom: Analysis of the circumstances for professional development. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 34(4), 465–482.
- Reeves, J. (2009). A sociocultural perspective on ESOL teachers' linguistic knowledge for teaching. *Linguistics and Education*, 20, 109–125.
- Rozimela, Y. (2015). Understanding Student-Teachers' Concerns in EFL Teaching through Reflective Practice. *International Journal of Science and Research*, 4(4), 68–74.
- Rozimela, Y., & Tiarina, Y. (2018). The Impact of Reflective Practice on EFL Prospective Teachers' Teaching Skill Improvement. *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, 1, 18–38.
- Santoro, N. (1997). The Construction of Teacher Identity: An analysis of school practicum discourse. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 25(1), 91–99.
- Schoeman, S., & Mabunda, P. L. (2012). Teaching practice and the personal and socio-professional development of prospective teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 32, 240–254.
- Şen, A. İ. (2009). A Study on the Effectiveness of Peer Microteaching in a Teacher Education Program. *Education and Science*, 34(151), 165–174.
- Shawer, S. (2010). Classroom-level teacher professional development and satisfaction: Teachers learn in the context of classroom-level curriculum development. *Professional Development in Education*, 36(4), 597–620.
- Shoffner, M. (2009). Personal Attitudes and Technology: Implications for Preservice Teacher Reflective Practice. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 143–161.
- Vetter, A., Meacham, M., & Schieble, M. (2013). Leveling the field: Negotiating positions of power as a preservice teacher. *Action in Teacher Education*, 35, 230–251.

Walkington, J. (2005). Becoming a teacher: Encouraging development of teacher identity through reflective practice. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(1), 53–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866052000341124>