

WONDERFUL OR AWFUL? STUDENT-TEACHERS' CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCES IN PRACTICUM TEACHING

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Abstract

This study is aimed at probing the strengths and weaknesses of classroom management experienced by student teachers at Department of English Language Education, UIN Ar-Raniry during the internship program at designated schools. Data collection was based on qualitative semi-structured interview with 8 student teachers chosen by purposive sampling from the 250 student teachers at the English Language Education Department in 2017/2018 academic year. The findings of the current study indicated that group discussion method applied in the classroom enable more efficient classroom management. On the other hand, it is found that student teachers still experienced great deal of anxiety in managing the classroom. This may cause serious problems when facing real classroom management following their graduation as real teachers.

Keywords: *Classroom Management, Student Teachers, Experiences*

INTRODUCTION

Internship program in school (practice teaching) is an integral part of any teacher education curriculum (Cheng, 2013). Because of this, Tuli and File (2009, p. 132) described practicum teaching experiences among pre-service teachers as the “most important part of teacher education program”. Although, according to Haigh, Pinder, and McDonald (2006: 16), practice teaching in education is still a challenge since it does not fully prepare student teachers for the actual classroom teaching, it is still a good avenue for pre-service or student teachers to apply the theories they learned in the artificial classroom setting to be a more prepared and qualified teachers. Starkey and Rawlins (2012: 34) mentioned that these student teachers should be well-monitored, supervised, and guided by their supervising teachers. Eventually, the student-teachers will learn how to handle and manage not just their daily lessons but the students and their classroom too.

A number of studies have emphasized the nature and importance of internship program in school. For example Nunan (2009: 48) gave an overview of the classroom practices in teaching. He said that “classrooms informed by current views on language pedagogy will involve a change in teaching approach away from a high-structure orientation towards a more low-structure orientation”. While Haigh, Pinder, and McDonald (2006) henceforth noted that if student-teachers were active on the actual practice teaching experience and with the constant guidance from their associate teachers, they would learn the art of teaching. This idea was supported by Tuli and File (2009) who argued that practicum teaching experience among student-teachers provides students the necessary experience towards understanding the responsibilities of a teacher.

Hastings (2004) mentions that all students experience a great deal of concern and anxiety regarding the school

environment, their roles, relationships with mentors and most importantly the effect of all of these on their classroom teaching performance. The difference between student teachers' expectations and the actual reality of a school environment could be experienced, in some cases, as a shock (Stokking et al. 2003). This might be due, in this context, to the fact that student-teachers' entire teaching experience, prior to their actual school experience and practice teaching courses, is confined to microteaching sessions at the university. In most microteaching sessions, the role of student's language is acted by classmates. However, no matter how hard one tries to simulate a real classroom it is still an artificial context in comparison to the language classrooms for young learners in which student teachers are expected to teach after their graduation. Thus, micro teaching can give the student teachers a false confidence, leading them to think that everything will run as smoothly when they are teaching in a real classroom. On the other hand, micro teaching has an awareness-raising effect for students (I'anson et al. 2003) and is also important because to some of them, this is perhaps the first teaching experience they have.

Current Trend of Research on Classroom Management

As it is clearly observed in the studies investigating the teaching problems of student teachers, classroom management has been one of the most frequently stated problem areas. A limited number of empirical research studies have also been conducted on Classroom Management in the field of teacher education. The following prior studies are specifically discussing Classroom Management

problems of the student teachers and their coping strategies.

The first study is the one conducted by Macías & Sánchez (2015). They analyzed the qualitative research techniques to investigated classroom management and a persistent challenge for pre-service foreign language teachers. The study considered participants' views initially gathered through a questionnaire and then further explored them via semi-structured interviews. The study involved the participation of 34 pre-service teachers, 10 practicum supervisors, and 17 cooperating teachers in the EFL teacher education program. This study aimed to ascertain the extent to which classroom management constituted a problem among pre-service foreign language teachers in a teacher education program at a public university in Colombia. The study also sought to identify classroom management challenges, the approaches to confronting them, and the alternatives for improving pre-service teachers' classroom management skills. The results revealed that classroom management is a serious problem with challenges ranging from inadequate classroom conditions to explicit acts of misbehavior. Establishing rules and reinforcing consequences for misbehavior were the main approaches to classroom management, although more contact with actual classrooms and learning from experienced others were alternatives for improving classroom management skills.

Recently, in their study, İnceçay, & Dollar (2012) analyzed two interrelated aspects: the efficacy of pre-service teachers and its relation to their readiness to manage their classrooms. Furthermore, the relationship among their efficacy beliefs, CM readiness and their implementation in a real teaching environment was also

examined. A total of 36 senior students in the ELT department of a university in Istanbul, Turkey participated in the study. The findings of the study indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between the pre-service teachers' CM efficacy and their readiness to manage the challenging classroom behaviors. Moreover, no significant difference was found in the implementation of CM skills of pre-service teachers in a real teaching environment. The researchers explained the reason of this result by stating that there was lack of practical knowledge. That is to say, although the students had declarative knowledge about the construct of classroom management, they did not have an adequate level of procedural knowledge, they were not good at putting the theory into practice.

The Context of This Research

Based on The University Guide Book of UIN Ar-Raniry-Banda Aceh (2013), the objective of Department of English Language Education is to train the English Language teacher candidates to be professional, competent, conscious, and compassionate and having a strong character as educators. The Department of English Language Education has prepared some subjects which help the students to understand the learning teaching process. One of them is from Micro Teaching Subject. In this class, the students practice to prepare the lesson plans and to teach the classmate who acts as high school students. Micro teaching class also serve as preparation subject before internship program in school.

Furthermore, after passing the Micro Teaching class, the students are allowed to conduct the internship program in school once they have admitted as the

final year students. The internship program in school is prepared to train the student teachers to develop their competencies in teaching. It has three major objectives: to help the student teachers to understand the school environment as detailed; to apply the student teachers competences holistically and integrated in the real school; and to take the benefits of their experiences to become the professional teachers. The internship program in school is a compulsory subject. The rule in this program is that the students can take the block systems where they have to be in the school from Monday to Saturday. It usually takes times around two or three months to accomplish the program. The experiences which the student teachers received from the internship program in school are various.

One of the challenges that the student-teachers faced in their internship program in school was classroom management. Since they were just practicing teachers, they did not have enough knowledge on how to manage a number of students in the class. This is the same result found by Gan (2013); Coskun (2013); and Yusof et.al (2014) in their studies. Controlling the students' noise, dealing with misbehaviors, and the likes are just few of the problems that student-teachers experienced during their actual teaching. Some student-teachers found it difficult to start, to motivate and to prepare their students for the day's lesson since their students were not enthusiastic upon seeing them in the classroom. Coskun (2013) said that student-teachers have difficulty managing the classroom because of the fact that they are not considered to be real teachers.

Those are challenges of classroom management practice in this research.

Given all of challenges from current trend in classroom management research and its actual reflection, this research is interested to address the following issues regarding the ST experiences of classroom management in their practicum teaching. The first issue is regarding the strengths of practicum teaching experienced by STs that contributed to their classroom management skills. The next is concerning the weakness they felt during their practicum teaching in their classroom management experiences with the students.

METHOD

Participants

This study applied qualitative approach to find out the strengths and weaknesses of Classroom Management student teachers during their practicum teaching at the designated schools. The participants of this study were students of Department of English Language Education Department of State Islamic University of Ar-Raniry who already completed the practicum teaching. Therefore, 8 students sample from 2013 cohort were chosen purposively out of 250 students who completed the practicum teaching in 2016. There were four male and four female student teachers selected as participants to have an equal gender representation of the participants.

Methods of Data Collection

For the purpose of collecting data to find the strengths and weaknesses of classroom management of student teachers, a phase study was conducted based on the principles and assumptions of the sequential design method. The data collection phases of the study were

conducted by using one type of instruments: student teachers' semi-structured interview consisted of ten major questions. Selected student teachers presented their experienced of the phenomenon investigated along with other positive and negative experiences of classroom management to the educational system from their own points of view. It helped to note the similarities and the differences of responses of participants.

Methods of Data Analysis

The main method of analysis is qualitative descriptive analysis. The collected data of semi-structured interview were analysed and then concluded narratively. The data were divided into several sections. Each section were arranged into sub-sections. The researcher analysed the data by reading it several times and conducting an analysis each time. As well as, digital recording were used to ensure the data fully transcribed. The analysis mainly focused on strength and weaknesses of classroom management experienced by student teachers in their practicum teaching period.

The data analysis was conducted by using coding. Transcripts of interviews were analysed meticulously. This process of coding is called line-by-line coding which is important to build concepts and categories. But based on the research requirement, the researcher also look into a slightly broader scale and code against a sentence, paragraph, chapter and etc. Open coding is generally the initial stage of qualitative data analysis. After completing the open coding, depending on the methodology used, then the continued with axial coding and selective coding. At the later stage of the research, these coding help to build theories in an inductive

process. The first one is when open coding is used to read through the data several times and then started to create tentative labels for chunks of data that summarize the entire information (not based on existing theory – just based on the meaning that emerges from the data). Then, axial coding is used to identify relationships among the open codes. The last step, the selective coding is exercised to figure out the code that includes all of the data. Then reread the transcripts and selectively coded any data that relates to the code that have been identified.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the reviews above, key results emerged in this study are twofold. The first one is the positive experience student teachers experienced during their practicum teaching regarding their classroom management. The next is the opposite one, participating student teachers in this study also revealed negative experiences they encountered in the practicum teaching with regard to the classroom management skills.

Positive Experiences

1. Interesting and wonderful experience

The first positive experience the student teachers experienced during their practicum teaching is the sense of joy and excitement. Participants perceived that teaching the students is wonderful. They claimed that they feel wonderful, happy, awesome, and interesting. This is as expressed by participant 1 in the following statement:

“Ok, talking about the internship program in school last year. It is actually, very interesting experiences”

In line with this, participant 6 also adds on this positive feeling. The student teacher said that the wonderful experience is perhaps caused by the familiarity of the school to him. He knew the environment of the school quite well. It was a bit of surprise in the end, but he started to like it:

“My experience is wonderful, hmm.. It is because I got school with their bad categorized, they famous because the student very naughty, you know. The teacher always push them to come to class and take a note and study but they don’t do that, and at my first teaching experience and I get that school that is very wow. Very confusing to me, very amazing to me, something like that”

It can be thus concluded that some participants feel that teaching experience was one of their strength. Such feelings, they admitted are very positive to build confidence. These show that the first-hand experience they have had during their practicum teaching placement are central in the process of becoming real teachers following their graduation. As Timoštšuk, & Ugaste (2010) put it, it is essential for applicative teaching to become student teacher with strong professional identity

2. Time usage is important

Our findings on this study also at least hint another promising evidence about effective time management experience from student teacher. All participants agreed that time management is important part in teaching activities, and it is more than enough for the lesson to take effect in the right direction. The following quote from participant 1 says:

“It depends on the subject, actually effective or not is quiet clear for the

time being, it's enough actually. But less or more effective time management very much depend on the situation on the classroom itself"

Participant 7 also mentions the same thing:

"It depends on the topic, sometimes I need more time to explain the topic"

It is by now generally accepted that all participants agreed that time is an important necessary condition but far from the whole teaching. In line with this finding, it is central to highlight that as Rosenshine (2015) pointed out that academic achievement was moderately affected by the efficient use of time spent in the classrooms.

3. Clear rules and discipline is inevitable

The present study confirmed that participants believe that their experiences of the students' attitudes requires clear rules outlined from the very beginning. It is also worth noting that some participants defined list of do's and don'ts' in the class to discipline students. Below is what participant 4 says;

"So I make some rules. For example, student who did not show up in my class, let's say late for five minute. I would not allow them to sign the attendance list, so I would just put some notes. Sometime for my student who like singing during the class, I just remember their name, so next when they sing (again), I ask them to sing in front of the class, if they don't want to do it. I let them out of the class and sing alone"

Participant 1 agreed and furthermore elaborates:

"Right... that's the attitudes I found in the classroom. Some of them become so friendly and polite to the teacher but some of them are so rude and not discipline and very noisy, becoming the trouble maker in the classroom and when I found that. I usually make something for them, for example I would like to use.. hmm not use.. I will call their name as many as possible in the classroom so they can pay attention. That makes they listen to me more carefully ..."

Participant 8 also said that:

"I give a reward for student who came earlier..."

Together, the present finding confirm that clear rules and regulation imposed consistently from the outset of the class meeting are very important to discipline students in the classroom. Similarly, discipline involves employing guidance and teaching techniques to encourage students to become self-directive and thus to create an atmosphere conducive to learning. Way (2011) furthermore elaborates that assuring discipline can handle disruptive classroom environment is one that results in efficient learning.

4. Using group discussion can activate student participation

Our results demonstrated that some participants exercised group discussion to get student actively engaged in classroom activities. It is like the participant 5 said during the interview:

"maybe the strength is when they sit in group, they want to pay attention to the teacher more, then they work

more, because maybe when they work in group their friend can help each other..."

This gives clearly clear evidence that a more efficient classroom management cannot exclude student active participation through group discussion. In this case, the students will be more attentive to the student teachers because such activity may well satisfy student, increase their overall performance in the knowledge construction (Zhu, 2012).

Negative Experiences

1. The material preparation or lesson plan is complicated

Not All of participants agreed that the materials or lesson plans is important part of teaching activities, almost all of them rarely used lesson plan. When we asked them why they rarely used lesson plan, participant 1 said that:

"Talking about the lesson plan, I think for me lesson plan is little bit complicated, because I don't really understand about it, and I think it has so many paper, I have to make it, that actually the lesson plan is not the most important, because what we write in the lesson plan and what we do is not the same."

Participant 5 seemingly supported the idea:

"I made a lesson plan, I have a lesson plan. But it is not really easy, because we have to find the materials and we have to prepare the topic related to the text books"

The implications of these findings have found evidence that lesson plan and material preparation is simply a burden for some student teachers. This section it is

clearly illustrated how difficult is for them to conclude and to implement the lesson plan. Content-wise, they admitted that this is extremely important thing to prepare, but in reality such guidelines in scaffolding their pedagogical competence. Student teacher integration into the classroom and its management is often enhanced through the intensive lesson planning practice (Lee and Lee, 2014).

2. Improper sitting arrangement

This interview found evidence from participants for their difficulties in making sitting arrangement. Some of them rarely used sitting arrangement, because they have very limited students in the class, especially in vocational schools as complained by participant 2:

"I think the classroom management you know SMK (vocational school). It is only limited number of students. In my class its only 5 until 10 students ..., so that why I don't really think about class management or sitting arrangement. ... some of them is very naughty, come and get out repeatedly from the class, I have to call them and ask them to come back to class"

This leads to the clarity that "classroom geography" of "who sit where" or sitting arrangement can be a crucial factor to manage classroom environment (Çinar, 2010). The more positive environment the students have, the better effect on student learning outcome will be.

3. Speaking in front of the students is not easy

It is worth discussing that participants had problems in standing and speaking in front of the real students in the

classroom. They were very nervous when delivering lesson, and even forgot what to say although they have prepared it beforehand. In this realm, participant 3 argued:

"hmm.. the most challenging part is when I taught for the first meeting. It is a little bit hard for me. The other challenges is to speak English well. Sometimes I speak English well, sometimes ... very bad".

The statement gives clearly an insight that to speak in front of audience is a very challenging task. It needs some big effort such practices and experiences. That is why, the teacher talking time can be a perfect practice for many student teacher in their first teaching assignment. Hasibuan (1999) also acknowledged that teaching in the real classroom is a complex job to do.

4. Dealing with disturbing students in the classroom is rather difficult

The participants also encountered some difficulties in front of classroom. This is because of the students; skipping the classes, singing and making noises, as participant 3 describes:

"I found it in some classrooms, for example in social science class. They just like they don't want to come on time in classroom, sometime they sing in my classroom, just like making some noises"

This implicates that as Oliver, Wehby & Reschly (2011) said that these problems will always be present in teacher classroom management practices. Aggressive students do disruptive talking, persistent inaudible responses, sleeping in class, unwillingness to speak in the target language and many more are things the

student teacher should be able to handle in their class.

CONCLUSION

A difference between these two opposing experiences: wonderful or positive and awful or negative can only be attributable to the fact that have been discussed and analyzed in the previous section of this article. At this stage of understanding, we believe that the participating student teachers have absorbed fruitful experiences from their practicum teaching especially in enhancing their classroom management skills. Nonetheless, the extent to which it is possible to make a careful consideration that the negative experience are the utmost encounters perceived by the participants. Also, one concern about the findings of their experiences are the fact that this is somewhat against the expectation of the mainstream thinking that the practicum teaching shall generate a more positive perception from the participants. One limitation is due to the restricted scrutiny of the present research such as it did not explore the "why" questions and it is only paying attention to the "what" inquiries.

It is also interesting to note that, based on the findings the student teachers should improve themselves with their contextual learning ability. As discussed earlier these findings still support the notion that practical teaching, no matter what the student teacher participants experience, either both wonderful or awful experiences, can be regarded to be one of the most influential approach in preparing professional teachers. This maybe the reason why some other explanation regarding student teacher experiences in doing practical teaching were and are equivalently important in teacher training education.

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