

'IT IS UNEASY, AM I READY TO TEACH?': THE PERSPECTIVES OF EFL STUDENTS ON THEIR READINESS IN ONLINE TEACHING PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Practicum is a university-based teacher education program that provides prospective teachers with hands-on experience in classroom instruction. The transition to online learning has had chaotic consequences for both teachers and students due to their unpreparedness for the online learning rigors. Unfortunately, several previous studies did not investigate pre-service teachers' readiness to teach in online practicum. Additionally, the studies examining readiness particularly in foreign language education programs through practicum are limited. Therefore, the present study intends to investigate pre-service teachers of foreign language programs' readiness to carry out the teaching-learning process in online practicum. The study employs a qualitative research methodology. The setting of the study is an online practicum in a teacher education program in Semarang, Indonesia. The participants of the study are pre-service teachers taking online practicum, estimated 130 participants based on the total population of the department selected. The data collection technique adopts an online open-ended survey which is conducted via Google Forms® and synchronous/asynchronous interviews. The data collected from questionnaires and interviews are then analyzed utilizing a thematic analysis. The finding showed that 70 percent of the participants were ready for the online teaching practicum. The results of this research are supposed to contribute practically and pedagogically.

Keywords: *EFL Students, Online Teaching Practicum, Professional Aspect.*

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected education in various aspects, especially teacher education. One of the consequences of closing universities and schools is forcing teachers and students to be able to adapt to distance teaching-learning. In this context, teacher education is required to meet the needs while creating a learning environment for prospective teachers to prepare for their teacher education. These preparations include decisions, choices, and adaptations to meet not only student expectations but also teacher education requirements and the conditions in which universities and schools operate.

Practicum is an important stage in the teacher education program. In this stage, the pre-service teacher gains experience to improve the teaching experience. because

pre-service teachers get supervision and mentoring from experienced teachers (Lilach, M, 2020). Practicum is a university-based teacher education program that prepares prospective teachers with teaching skills. So far, teacher education has been the party that is responsible for assessing prospective teachers and deciding whether they are ready to teach or not. The assessment discusses the future of the practical experience to assess whether prospective teachers are ready to teach independently in their classrooms. This program requires attention from all parties because prospective teachers have provided valuable time, energy, and money by involving teacher preparation programs, supervising teachers, and university supervisors. They all have great consequences and responsibilities to prospective teachers, the profession, and especially prospective teacher candidates.

These consequences and responsibilities are even greater as most of the teaching-learning processes are forced online during the Covid 19 pandemic. The transition to online teaching gives chaotic consequence for both teachers and students due to online learning is not yet clearly and operationally defined. In addition, this condition gives evidence that there is limited good learning practice that guides the online teaching transition. Furthermore, in many cases, teachers do not do not know online pedagogy or how to support online learning because, so far, these aspects have not been widely accommodated by teacher training programs. Howard et al. (2020) reported that many school teachers have limited knowledge and experience regarding online learning and teaching. With this fact, it is crucial to assess the readiness of prospective teachers to teach in online practicums.

Teacher candidates' readiness covers their pedagogical capability, professional competence, and teaching media mastery, including technology (Tiba, C., & Condy, J. L., 2021). Studies on teacher readiness have been published in a variety of areas, including readiness to teach, readiness for computer-assisted language learning and teaching, and readiness for online secondary education teaching. Unfortunately, these studies did not investigate pre-service teachers' readiness to teach in online practicum. Additionally, the scholarship examining readiness, particularly in foreign language education programs through practicum, is limited. To fill this gap, the current study will look into the readiness of pre-service foreign language program teachers to carry out the teaching-learning process in an online practicum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The present study is elaborated and inspired from the previous relevant studies, which become the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical foundations. The first study is conducted by Howard, Tondeur, Siddiq, and Schrer (2020), which identifies the extent of secondary teacher profiles to understand perceptions of both individual and institutional readiness to transition to online teaching. The findings of the study report how the limited time provided for teaching preparation and skill development cannot result in better timeframe to transition, especially in online teaching-learning. The study also suggests in maximizing teacher's education role in supporting and meeting the general expectation in online teaching and learning. Findings from this study contribute valuable insights into four teacher profiles readiness that can be used as models for institutions and teachers, particularly in equipping online pedagogies, teaching, and learning.

The second study is by Park and Son (2020), which examines EFL pre-service teachers' experiences and self-efficacy regarding evaluating the current English teacher education curriculum for CALL and factors affecting their acceptance and willingness to use CALL. The study was undertaken at a university in Hong Kong. The findings report that the success of technology integration should be supported by mandatory technology-related courses offered in the teacher education programs. Therefore, assisting pre-service teachers with skills related to extensive hands-on technology and teaching-learning methods, specifically planning the lesson and CALL-based learning activities.

The third study is by Cutri, Mena, and Whiting (2020), which reports the mix-method measuring and elaborating constructs of faculty online readiness from pre- COVID-19 pandemics literature. The findings indicate that the experience of participants or teacher educators in transitioning online twists normal longitudinal perceptions of preparation and readiness in a context of a crisis. The new sense of temporary found was closely related to unexpected benefits that guided them to build stronger cooperation with students. Yet, the quantitative and qualitative results interpreted show how the assessment of students' equitable access to online teaching-learning claimed the need for further research in the view of professional development designers and policymakers.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The study employs a qualitative research methodology. The adoption of a qualitative approach in accordance with the perspective of phenomenology, intends to obtain knowledge "by understanding the direct experience of others" (McMillan & Wergin, 2006, pp. 5–6). The study is epistemological critical and interpretive. It is because the present study endeavor to understand the extent of foreign language pre-service teachers' readiness in terms of what it means to be ready to teach online practicum during the Covid-19 pandemic. The readiness components of the online practicum program focus on pedagogical capability, professional competence, and teaching media mastery, including technology.

Setting and Context

The setting of the study is an online practicum in a teacher education program in Semarang, Indonesia. Practicum is a compulsory course which must be taken as a graduation requirement. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the practicum is held online where the teacher candidates should search for the school for their teaching practice.

Gaining and Negotiating Access

When conducting research at a formal organization, such as a university, researchers must negotiate access with various parties, such as campus administrators who serve as gatekeepers. This gatekeeper is in charge of the research site's access door and serves as a liaison with participants. In short, this gatekeeper is an actor who connects, influences, and has power over the decision of whether a researcher can conduct research or not. In the current study, the university administrators' gatekeepers include the Dean, Head of Microteaching Laboratory, Heads of Department, and Field Supervisor.

Participants' recruitment and profile

After gaining access, the researchers communicated with the Field Supervisors to distribute questionnaires to the pre-service teachers. We limit only participants from the Department of English Education. Then, we distributed the questionnaire online, and the students could fill it out online as well. Because this is an online practicum, we cannot communicate with the pre-service teachers directly. As a result, we began the questionnaire with a description and a consent form.

Research procedures

The data collection technique adopts an open-ended online survey conducted via Google Forms® and synchronous/asynchronous interviews. The technique is attended to assess foreign language pre-service teachers' readiness for online teaching practicum. Additionally, a semi-structured individual interview is used to seek and gather further data for individual participants who are recruited purposefully. Participants' actions, feelings, and attitudes can reveal how ready they are for an interview by observing their responses.

Data Collection Method

An online questionnaire, reflections, and interviews are used to gather empirical data for this research.

Questionnaire

Pre-service teachers were tested on their initial readiness in three areas: their professional readiness, their pedagogical readiness, and their technological readiness. This questionnaire becomes the basis for the other data collection methods, including interviews and reflection.

Interview

The interviews become the verbal justification of participants' answers regarding their readiness for online practicum, especially their answers in online questionnaires that have been distributed previously. The interview is conducted after they agree with the consent form and done asynchronously in Bahasa Indonesia due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Reflective journal

The pre-service teachers' reflection becomes another support for the data gained from questionnaires. To facilitate reflection, the researchers' employes Gibbs (1988) reflection model, including description, feeling, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan.

Data Analysis

The data collected from questionnaires and interviews are then analyzed utilizing a thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). This thematic analysis becomes an analytical tool aimed to analyze, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (p.79). The analysis is subjected to analyze the themes, particularly readiness, under pedagogical, professional, and technological use criteria. These criteria will

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be extended to rich the insights as it further investigates participants' attitudes, experiences, feelings, and values (May, 2001).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Pre-service teachers' feelings on the teaching materials taught

Material content is one of the important points that can affect the success of the teaching and learning process. Therefore it is necessary to know how ready students prepare the material that they are going to teach.

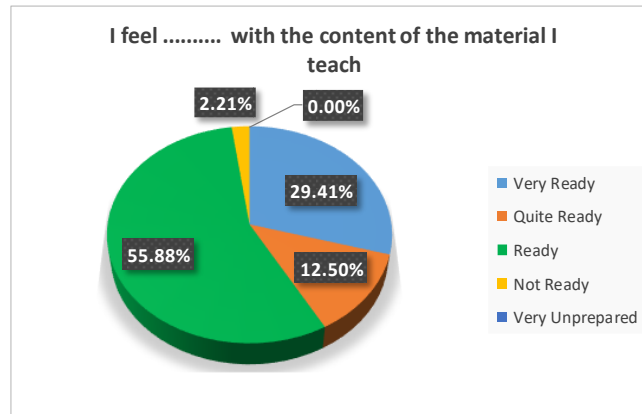


Figure 1. Percentage of pre-service teachers' feelings on the teaching materials taught.

According to the diagram 1, as many as 76 students stated that they were prepared with the material they would teach. If calculated by the percentage, 55.9% of students feel ready with the content of the material to be taught. While as many as 40 students stated that they were very prepared with the material, they would teach. If calculated with the percentage, 29.4% of students feel very prepared with the content of the material to be taught.

Teaching material mastery

A professional teacher should master the materials since it is one of the important points in a professional aspect. Therefore it is necessary to know how ready students face the practicum stage.

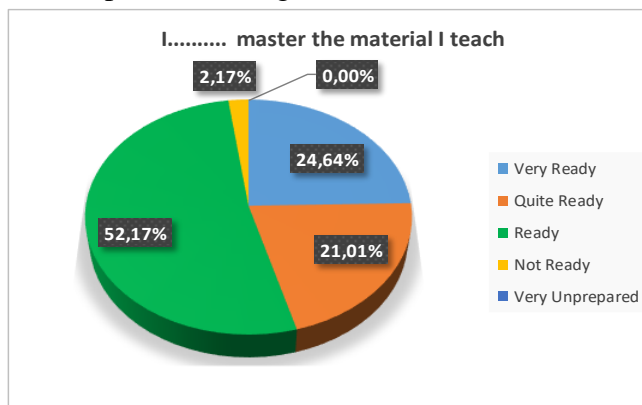


Figure 2. Percentage of pre-service teachers' feeling on the teaching material mastery.

From diagram 2, it can be illustrated that as many as 72 students stated that they were ready with the material they would teach. If calculated by the percentage, 52.9% of students feel ready with the content of the material to be taught.

The planning of teaching materials in terms of difficulty levels and students' competence.

According to the diagram above, as many as 77 students stated that they were prepared with the material they would teach. If calculated by the percentage, 56.6% of students feel ready with the teaching material with different levels and students' competencies.

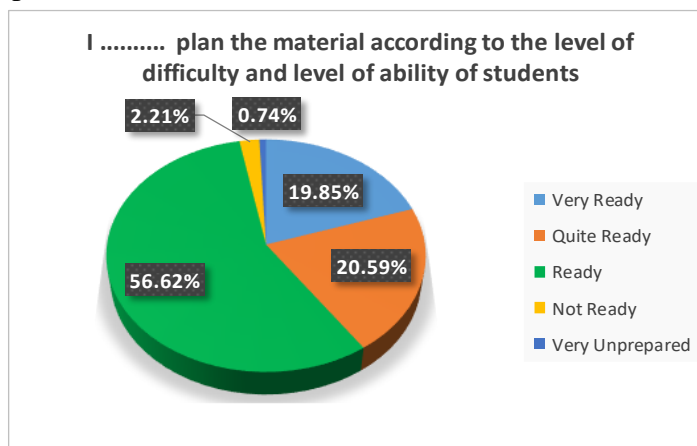


Figure 3. Percentage of pre-service teachers' feeling on the teaching material mastery.

Teaching management and preparation

Preparing and managing the learning process can be the key of success in the teaching and learning process. Therefore it is necessary to know how ready students in dealing these factors.

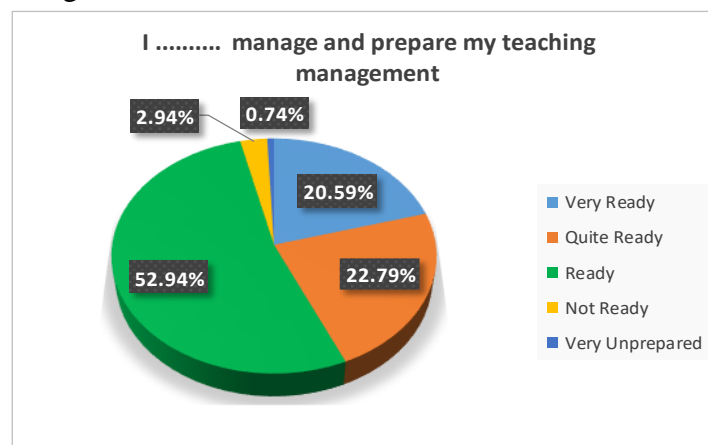


Figure 4. Percentage of pre-service teachers' feeling on the teaching management and preparation.

According to diagram 4, as many as 72 students stated that they were prepared with the material they would teach. By percentage, 52.9 percent of students feel prepared for the preparation and management of the learning process.

The ability to manage the class.

One of the professional aspects is managing the class. A teacher's ability to manage their students is critical to be able to manage their students so the teaching-learning process can be maximized. Therefore it is necessary to know how ready students to manage the class.

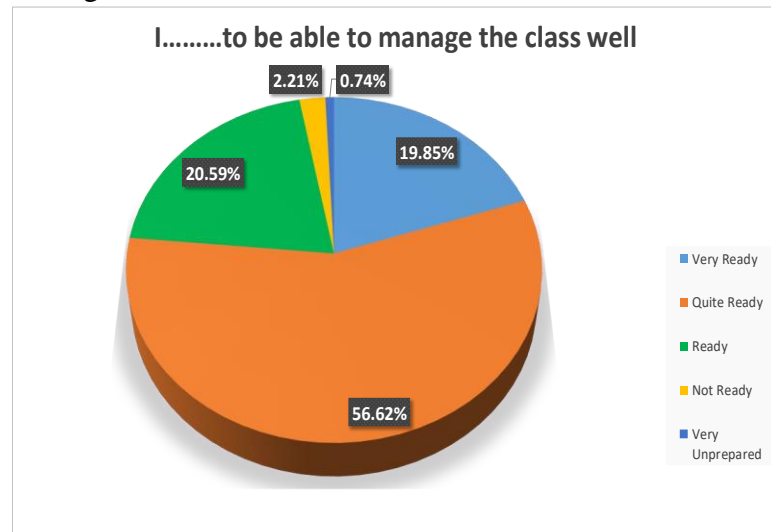


Figure 5. Percentage of pre-service teachers' feeling on the ability to manage the class.

Evaluation to understand students' progress

Evaluating students is one of the important stages in doing professional teaching. It is needed to measure the student's achievement and the process of teaching itself. Therefore it is necessary to know how ready students in construct the evaluation.

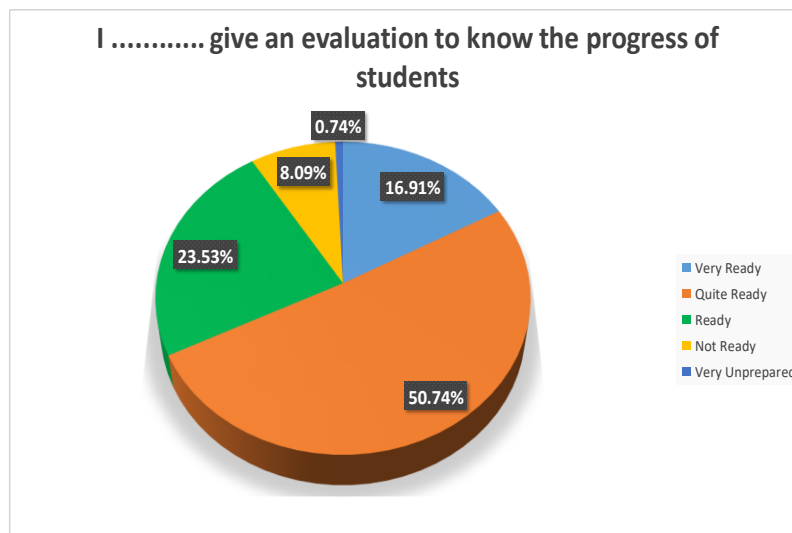


Figure 6. Percentage of pre-service teachers' feeling on the ability to use evaluation to understand students' progress.

From diagram 6, it can be illustrated that as many as 77 students stated that they were ready with the material they would teach. If calculated by the percentage, 56.6% of students feel ready with the evaluation.

Evaluation results as a reference for teaching

The evaluation is used to measure the process of teaching-learning. From the evaluation result, the teacher can decide how to arrange the learning plan. Therefore it is necessary to know how ready students are to use the evaluation as the standard in planning the teaching-learning process. From the diagram 7, it can be illustrated that as many as 77 students stated that they were ready to use the evaluation result as a reference for teaching. In terms of percentages, 55.1 percent of students are satisfied with their evaluation results. Besides the data above, there is also reflection after they did the PPL process. From what the students wrote in their professional reflections, we can figure out a few things. Some of them said they were a little bit depressed when they were asked for something related to learning material in the form of PPT, video learning, and google form tasks to the teacher of many revisions. However, they overcame the problem by preparing Google Form or any media that could help their preparation in teaching the students.

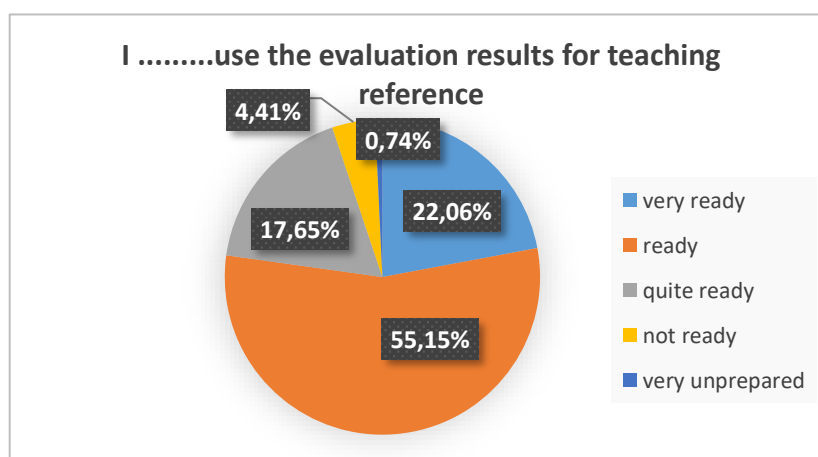


Figure 7. *Percentage of pre-service teachers' feeling on the ability to use evaluation as reference for teaching.*

Discussion

The primary objective of this study is to explain the pre-service teachers' professional aspects of readiness in online teaching practicum. The study was done because there are a lot of things that happen during a pandemic. One of them is pre-service teacher readiness in facing the online teaching-learning process due to the condition of schools. The study was conducted because many phenomena occur during the pandemic. Online learning was already an issue due to the possibility of the advancement of technology. However, the online learning they found in their teaching practicum was carried out due to the pandemic, which is quite new for the school students and parents.

This study showed that the pre-service teachers had different experiences and perspectives in facing the online teaching practicum. They described their own experiences and tried to compare what they had heard about schools from their lecturers to what they had been taught. They sometimes also heard from their seniors, or they compared their own experiences when they were at school in junior and senior high schools. The result of this study describes the readiness of the pre-service teachers in facing the online practicum if it is seen from the perspective of a professional teacher. 70 % of those who took part in the survey said they were

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prepared to take on the online teaching practices. Students, researchers, and even all readers will benefit greatly from knowing how well-prepared pre-service teachers are for the job of preparing a better education.

The findings showed that the pre-service teachers are ready to face the online teaching practicum. It showed that the theories they had already learned in the classroom helped them in preparing their readiness in having the practicum. Although it should be done offline, they can adapt the situation so they can adjust to the needs of school students. Some obstacles they have can be noted as the experience in the order they can learn to improve their knowledge and skill.

The result of this study is in line with the previous study that the pre-service teachers were having a big role in the success of online teaching-learning. It provided valuable insights into the readiness of teacher profiles, which can be used as models for institutions and teachers, particularly in the context of equipping online pedagogies, teaching, and learning environments. However, previous studies only included teachers as participants, whereas pre-service teachers are required to complete a teaching practicum in order to participate in those studies. This study covers this gap to provide pre-service teachers' perception from their point of view.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In closing, this study revealed pre-service teachers' readiness covering their professional readiness in online practicum. The finding unpacked pre-service teachers' readiness in an online setting in which it is quite different from what the university prepares for the students' readiness to teach is examined in an online setting that differs greatly from what universities prepare them for. Some findings related to the professional aspect of readiness are elaborated with the implication of their practice in classrooms.

Based on the results, more than 70% of the participants feel ready for the online teaching practicum from a professional point of view. They prepared some teaching materials, media, and teaching techniques even before the online teaching practicum. Some participants, though, thought that offline teaching was more interesting than online because they could best use what they learned in college. Participants also said they felt ready to run the class, including keeping special-needs students in line. So, while the teaching-learning process, they can control the class optimally. Even though the class was conducted online, they were still excited. They tried to approach the students. Therefore, the students will be more cooperative in class. They also did some evaluations as they taught in the class day by day. This evaluation can be useful to see the students' progress. Moreover, it also can be their reference for their following teaching.

This study would be better if it looked at a wider range of language problems so that the results could be different depending on how hard each one was. And it could be done for another aspect of teaching readiness so the preparation of facing the online teaching practicum can be done well.

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