

OBSTACLES FACED BY PRE - SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS DURING TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (PPG)

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Abstract

The Indonesian government has issued new rules to prepare pre-service teachers to be professional teachers in the future by asking them to attend additional education named Teachers Professional Education Program (locally known as Pendidikan Profesi Guru, henceforth PPG). This case study aimed to identify the obstacles experienced by pre-service English teachers in FKIP Universitas Riau during the PPG program and the Teaching Practicum (PPL) as a part of the PPG program. This qualitative research involved 10 alumni of the Subsidized PPG English Education Department. Focus Group Discussion was used to collect data from the participants. The data obtained were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1984) thematic analysis and referred to the three procedures introduced by Flick (2002) i.e., open coding, axial coding and selective coding with the help of the NVivo 12 software. The findings showed seven emerging obstacles faced by the pre-service English teachers during PPG. There were one (1) obstacle found at the first-semester theory program in PPG, and six (6) obstacles found at the second-semester practicum program in PPG known as PPL, which can be used as an input for further PPG students to prepare themselves both physically and mentally when participating in PPG as well as that for the development of a better PPG system in the future used by the government.

INTRODUCTION

Becoming a professional teacher is a long non-linear journey. It begins long before pre-service teachers enter the formal education system. Someone's experiences when she/he is a child, for instance, or when he is in primary and secondary schools are among the important phases when one has started to 'learn' becoming a teacher. They learn by observation or that by interaction with their parents and teachers in the past. These interaction and observation experiences are as their initial capital to begin defining who the real teacher is.

This learning process then continues formally when someone enters an institution that teaches them to be a teacher, or LPTK (Development Institutions Educational Personnel) like IKIP (Institute of Teacher Training and Education) or FKIP (Faculty of Teachers Training and Education) in a university, like University of Riau. During pre-service teacher education, college students learn all of the knowledge that will be their provision as a professional teacher.

At the undergraduate level, the PPL Program in Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Riau University is usually offered for final-year students who should have passed certain courses, like TEFL and Micro Teaching. Students usually take the Teaching Practicum program after they have completed almost all of the theoretical courses and before they do research or thesis for their final project. For one semester, the students will be placed in several schools in the city of Pekanbaru and within the province of Riau. After the students pass all of the compulsory courses and fulfill the required University Credit Unit (Indonesia: SKS), they then graduate with a Bachelor of Education and are then entitled to become teachers.

However, since the enactment of Law No.14 / 2005 on teachers and lecturers, the government issued new rules for the pre-service teachers in Indonesia that those alumni of undergraduate education are no longer entitled to directly obtain an educator certificate. In other words, getting a title as an alumnus of Teachers Training and Education Faculty with a bachelor's degree in education is not enough for the requirements to become professional teachers. They need to attend an additional education named PPG This kind of education must be taken for 1 year after a candidate has graduated from either education or non-education undergraduate degree programs through this program, it is expected that the competence and professionalism of teachers will be truly guaranteed by undergoing a two-semester or one-year education. Besides, according to Suryadarma and Jones (2013), Indonesia needs a more highly trained teachers with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to “produce” higher-value generation. To achieve this goal, the government develops a system of professional development for teachers, like improving the quality of pre-service teacher education (pg. 157). This program applies for those who want to be a teacher, either undergraduate from the faculty of education, or non-education.

This is in accordance with the Law of The Republic of Indonesia on Teachers and Lecturers number 14 of 2005, Article 8, mandates that faculty must have academic qualifications, competence, teaching certificate, physical and spiritual health, as well as having the ability to achieve national education goals. In Law number 12 year 2012 on Higher Education, Article 17 verse (1) states that professional education is higher education after completing a bachelor's degree program to prepare Students for employment that requires a specific qualification. The preparation of teachers as professional educators is also stated in a government regulation number 19 year 2017 about Amendments to Government Regulations and number 74 year 2008 about teachers. Those regulations underlie the reformation of teachers in Indonesia where they must be prepared by a professional educator after a degree program.

The goal of PPG is to prepare professional teachers who have pedagogical, personal, social and professional competences in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations. In practice, PPG refers to The Regulation of *Kemenristekdikti* (Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education Affairs) number 44 year 2015 concerning National Higher Education Standards, and that number 55 year 2017 concerning Teacher Education Standards. In general, the learning process in PPG consists of two main programs: in-depth lecture material activities in the classroom during the first semester, and teaching experience activities (practicum) at school for one semester under the guidance of a mentor teacher (*Guru Pamong*). It is different from their experiences when doing the Teaching Practicum (PPL) for their undergraduate degree. Pre-service teachers are guided to experience intensive teaching practice in schools. *Kemenristekdikti* (Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education Affairs) (2018) in PPG Implementation Guidebook states that PPG curriculum structure consists of 38 credits: General Activities (4 credits), Learning Tool Development Workshop (19 credits), and Field Experience Practices (15 credits).

Theoretically, this practicum or PPL activity has a very strategic role in providing real experiences for pre-service teachers to experience the atmosphere of the school directly with all its complexities. Practicum does not only function as a place to learn how to be a professional teacher (professional learning), such as learning how to plan lessons, making learning media, explaining lessons, and managing class; but also, as an important place to transform (a place of transit) from a college student to become a new teacher in the classroom (Wilke, (2004) as stated in Chong, Wong, & Lang (2011). This transformation process usually is not always smooth; there will be turmoil, challenges, and dilemmas happening along the way. The success of the teacher candidate transformation process will be influenced by several factors, including support from the school community, such as mentors and school administrators.

There are some previous studies related to the current study. One of the recent studies was conducted by Diputro & Suwarso (2020). Their study investigates about pre-service English teachers' perspectives towards teacher professionalism or Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG). The results show that the pre-service teachers thought that the PPG program has to be more flexible and practical. Another study was done by Raja (2019) that investigates teachers' responses to questionnaire items that explore opinions related to knowledge-based teachers, involvement, and expectations in the Teacher Professional Education Program in Indonesia. In addition, a study by Adnyani (2015) explored about Indonesian pre-service teachers' perceptions of PPG-SM3T program for their professional development. Her exploration provides scientific justification for exploring strengths and weaknesses of an educational institution as well as for its development in the future. The results of the study show that pre-service teachers who took PPG-SM3T in the assigned university in central Indonesia viewed that the program gave a positive impact to their professional development.

Moreover, according to Directorate General of Teaching Learning and Student Affairs (2018) about the passing grade, it was stated that the students must reach the point at least 76 points for the learning achievement of the PPG Program with several aspects assessed, i.e., (1) assessment of learning device development processes and products; (2) PPL processes and products; (3) competency test; and (4) assessment of community life in dormitories/other facilities. The numbers of assessment aspect for passing the PPG program requires students to prepare themselves well and able to overcome the obstacles might be happened in the future. However, there is no study conducted investigating about the obstacles experienced by the PPG English students in FKIP Universitas Riau before.

Thus, in light of these concerns, the aim of this research was to investigate the obstacles experienced by pre-service English teachers during the PPG program in 2018 as well as during the PPL Program in FKIP Universitas Riau, so that the next pre-service teachers especially those who major in English Language Education – can overcome with these obstacles and help them learning to be a professional teacher.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts the principles of exploratory case study design. As stated by Tight et al. (2016) that exploratory case studies are set to explore any phenomenon in the data which serves as an interesting point. The qualitative approach was deliberately chosen because the nature of the objects to be studied is more of social phenomena, perceptions, and events in the PPG implementation process.

This research was conducted in FKIP Universitas Riau in December 2020, with ten participants involved from 15 research population. They were the Subsidized PPG students of the year 2018. The research participants were selected using a purposeful sampling technique, which is selecting samples based on certain criteria. In this case, the criteria were that the participants must be pre-service English teachers majoring in English Language Education who had passed the subsidized PPG program in 2018 and currently have teaching activities such as being a teacher either in schools or courses.

The data were collected by using Focus Group Discussion which was conducted for 63 minutes. A focus group is “a group of people who engage in a discussion guided by a set of questions and moderated by a facilitator” (Eaton, 2017, p.8). Unlike personal interviews, focus group discussion allows participants to say what they think, discuss with the others about counter-arguments, and change their opinions as the discussion proceed in informal life settings. This research used steps of conducting FGD suggested by Smith (2019), which have three phases.

- Phase 1: Before the Focus Group
- Phase 2: Conduct the Focus Group
- Phase 3: Interpreting and Reporting the Results

In this research, three kinds of questions were used, i.e., probe questions, follow-up questions, and exit questions. The FGD was held online through the Zoom Meeting application due to this Covid-19 pandemic. The FGD results were transcribed verbatim and analyzed inductively following the data reduction principles introduced by Miles and Huberman (1984) and referred to the three procedures introduced by Flick (2002), i.e., open coding (the phase where all themes were found and categorized), axial coding (a step where the researcher looked for the relationship between themes), and selective coding (the stage where the researcher selected a relevant theme to be explored further in the discussion). In implementation, data analysis was carried out with the help of NVivo 12 software (electronic software that can be used to analyze qualitative data). There were some tools used in NVivo to analyze the data in this research, cited from Mortelmans (2019) and the stages of analyzing the discussion data using tools mentioned below were quoted from (Daud, 2020):

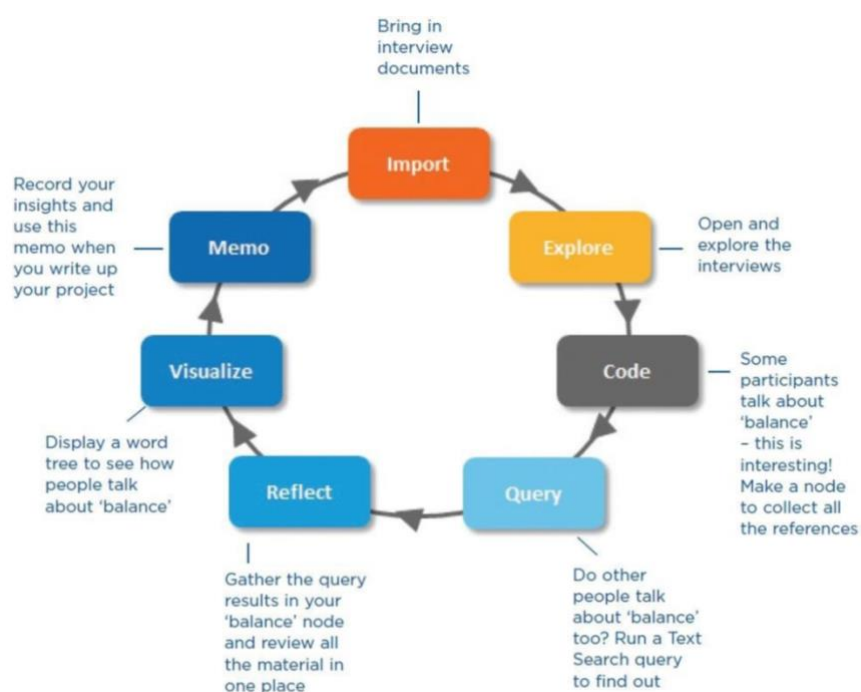


Figure 1. Tools to analyze the data (Mortelmans, 2019)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The qualitative data obtained from the Focus Group Discussion showed seven emerging obstacles faced by the pre-service English teachers during Teachers Professional Education Program (PPG). There were one (1) obstacle found at the first-semester theory program in PPG, and six (6) obstacles found at the second-semester practicum program in PPG which known as PPL. More details are presented in the following figure:

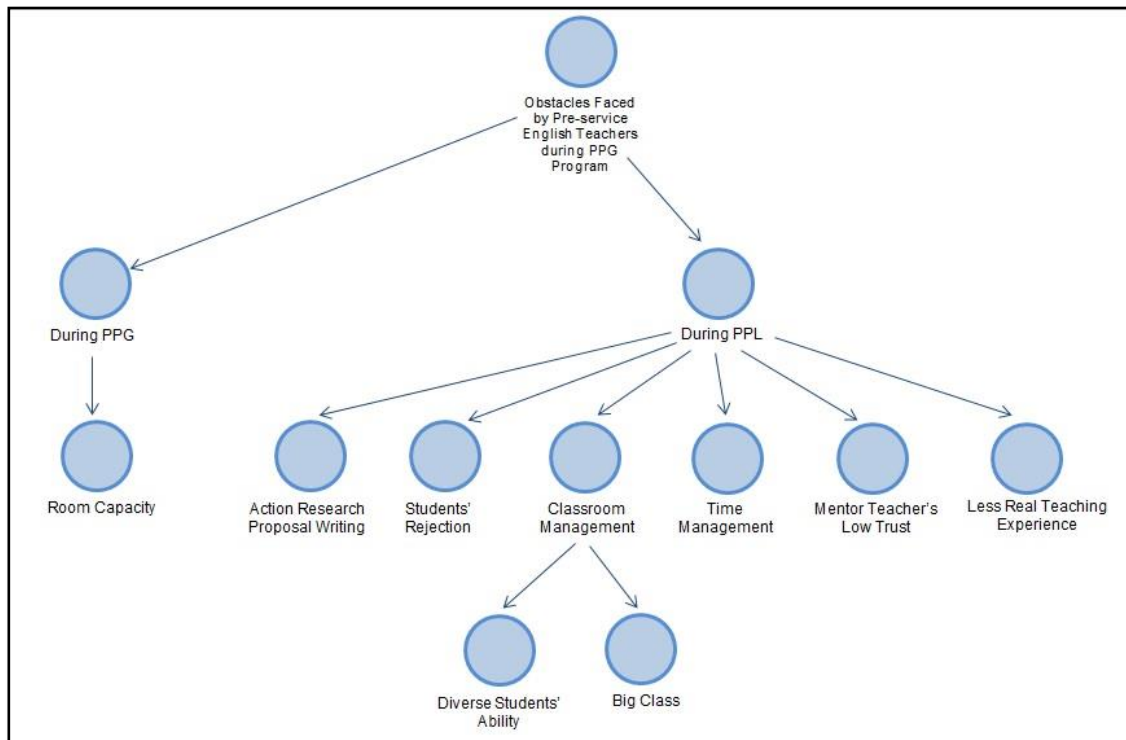


Figure 2. Result of the participants' answers about obstacles faced during PPG Program and PPL

A. Obstacles during PPG Program

1. Room Capacity

This is the only obstacle experienced by pre-service English teachers during PPG program in the first semester i.e., about the facilities, such as classrooms, specifically was about the room capacity. A classroom becomes one of the campus facilities that support the convenience of the learning process. If the classroom capacity is not enough to accommodate the students, the classroom will be crowded which does not rule out the possibility of creating ineffective learning environment. One of the participants, RS5 said in the discussion that rooms became the obstacle occurred during the program. The capacity of the rooms was not enough for all of the students who joined in PPG program.

“Yes sir, I'm trying to remember what obstacles were faced at that time during PPG, sir ... That's as far as I remember...what I remember the most was the problem of the room, sir ...”(RS5, FGD).

Then she continued ...

“Yes, the room facilities for studying are lacking... no... not enough for....one class

is not enough for our incoming students, like that.” (RS5,FGD)

As for RS1, RS3, and RS4 did nodding while RS5 mentioned about the point. It is indicated that they agreed and experienced the same thing, uncomfortable in the classroom with a density of students’ number during the theoretical program of PPG. The disproportion between the number of the students and the size of the class affects the learning process in the classroom. As stated by Barrett et.al (2019), many researchers agree that overcrowded conditions hinder students’ academic performance. Pre-service teachers had one semester of theoretical learning which was done in the classroom. Theoretical learning requires adequate facilities to support students’ learning. This physical obstacle which dealt with the campus facility caused participants’ learning performance to be disturbed.

B. Obstacles during PPL Program

1. Action Research Proposal Writing

One participant with the initial RS2 mentioned that she experienced difficulty dealing with the assignment of conducting classroom action research during PPG program. She said in the focus group discussion that adjusting the proposal that has been made early - to the field was an obstacle experienced during PPL.

“For me during the PPL there was a problem... we had a proposal right, sir, now that adjusts to the topic we want to choose for the proposal as well as KD running in school. Well, that's a bit... somewhat, at that time there was a slight problem... the adjustment, had to be readjusted...” (RS2, FGD)

Then, she continued...

“At that time when we want...we had the last test, except...a kind of the exam sir...which was for...PTK?...well yes sir, that is for PTK, well we needed to conduct a research again, right sir?...before that, we had made a proposal, well to adjust it with the on-going use basic competencies (KD).. so it needed to be adjusted again with the KD. Then may be from the mentor teacher was also.... want to ask for cooperation, that way...?” (RS2, FGD)

In the second semester, participants are required to do a PPL (Teaching Practicum Program) for one semester which required them to teach at partner schools selected by the PPG Program. Before joining to PPL, participants must first compile a proposal of Classroom Action Research as a part of PPG assignment that pre-service teachers need to conduct. An obstacle was occurred during the process of the assignment which is experienced by the participants.

Before conducting the research, a proposal needs to be made first. The proposal consists of what problems or questions to be identified as the title, what pieces of literature fit to the topic as the information, and what strategies should be used as the guide to conduct the research. As for RS2 mentioned in the discussion, the problems to be discussed in her research was not corresponding with the problems happened in school so made her to adjust and remake the proposal.

2. Students' Rejection

One of the participants said that she found it hard to get students' attention in the classroom and often being ignored by them. As it was said by RS5 in the discussion that:

“If students in my school tend to be unresponsive sir ... tend to be not caring to maybe those who are not the teachers there sir ... want to come in is just okay, or do not want to is okay, I see ... not bothered” (RS5, FGD).

In relation to this, Nihaayah (2019) found that pre-service teachers are not considered to be real teacher and being underestimated by the students could bring pre-service teachers into mental breakdown. Furthermore, the frequently revealed data analysis in that research found that disrespectful and disruptive students are cause of stress which experienced by pre-service teachers during teaching practicum. It made sense that the participant in this research mentioned the students' misbehavior in a type of being ignored by them was an obstacle experienced during the Teaching Practicum (PPL).

However, other participants, RS4, RS6, and RS7 shook their head which could be indicated that they did not experience the same thing; experience about facing students' misbehavior in school. As for RS1 also did not find obstacle dealing with the students:

“If it is (problem) about students, I didn't have it sir” (RS1, FGD)

3. Classroom Management

Two participants admitted in the discussion that they experienced difficulty in managing a class with the students who had a different level of English language proficiency. As said by RS7 that it was hard to control the class when the high-ability students finished the tasks earlier than the students with less ability.

“For me, I got PPL in SMP 4 sir, my problem actually was...classroom management sir. Because the majority of the class was smart children... so they were easy to catch the material, finished the task quickly, so if they...there were about two grand-champion children who were easy to get bored while their friends still do the task, so need to focus on that, give them more questions than their friends who still do the task.” (RS7, FGD).

In addition, RS3, another participant, said that diversity in students' abilities made it difficult to explain the material. Some of the students were easy to understand but some of the others were not. She found this as an obstacle when doing teaching practice.

“So at first it was indeed well known that SMA 1 was quite good, but because at that time a zoning system had been implemented, heterogeneous students entered there... Until there are some teachers complaining like that, the only obstacle was... for the obstacle, at that time there were several classes at SMA N 1 Pekanbaru that were quite crowded sir...and indeed there were some children who were actually for the size of the city, their English was not that good, they didn't know at all ... in fact they are too unknowledgeable with English” (RS3, FGD).

These participants required mentor assistance in managing diverse students' ability most of the time, because it is common knowledge that every student possesses different ability in learning, and it is found in Puspita (2018) that teachers who cannot deal with the needs of high and low ability students well defined as teachers with low expectations. To overcome this obstacle, both pre-service teachers and mentor teachers need to have a discussion about what methods can be applied to manage the class. It is stated in (Cohen & Lotan, n.d.) that the most commonly attempted methods of solving these obstacles are ability grouping and individualized seatwork. This research found that classroom management was the most frequent issue discussed in the Focus Group Discussion.

4. Time Management

Another participant in the discussion with the initial RS1 said that adjusting time with the part of a lesson plan especially that in the 2013 curriculum became an obstacle in running a good teaching process.

“But at the very beginning of teaching during PPL, it was the time management sir...if we used the 2013 curriculum, we had to be in order sir... appreciation, prepared the students... so sometimes the teaching time was sometimes excessive, sometimes insufficient, sir... but gradually I started to get used to it sir...had got the guideline sheet in PPG, so I could fit in the time to teach it, not excess, not less.” (RS1, FGD).

Another participant with the initial RS6 said “same” while RS1 was speaking about the case. According to his respond, it is indicated that he had the same problem as RS1 which is about managing the time provided with the activities in the lesson plan. It is also found in Nihaayah (2019) that pre-service teachers worried whether the time would be sufficient or not to carry out all activities that fit to the lesson plan. Even though there is a lesson plan that helps, the pre-service teachers often find it difficult to balance the time with the lesson plan.

5. Mentor Teacher's Low Trust

In the discussion, one of the participants said that he experienced sort of not good relationship with mentor teacher. The mentor teacher was not allowed to take the class teaching the students, even though the schedules for him were given. He admitted that it happened quite often with the result that feeling mistrusted to teach the students and lacking experience of real teaching in the classroom.

“Well, sometimes I was asked to just stay in the library... yes, that was so, the mentor teacher didn't believe on us to teach, well I was with RD had PPL in SMP 8... be asked to “you two just stay in the library, let Mam teaches the class”...Even though, it had already been determined, you got this part, this part ... how many classes did we get ... oh there were six classes our mentor teacher got then it was decided into 2, that was so...although those were our teaching time, she...she...”let just Mam teaches the class”... well that was so.” (RS6, FGD).

It was surprising to know that the mentor teacher who is literally a ‘mentor’ – had a doubt of her mentee which in this case was the pre-service teachers. The relationship between the pre-service teachers and the mentor teacher is something that needs attention because pre-service teachers are not only gaining teaching knowledge from the students but also that from the mentor teacher. Hence, a mentor teacher plays a big role in training pre-service teachers to be professional teachers in the future. However, in this case, RS6 said that he felt sort of not good relationship with the mentor teacher.

It is also found in (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009) that mentors would not allow pre-service teachers to take over their classes as they felt that the pre-service teachers were wasting time, since the mentors had to complete the syllabus before the academic year ended. From these cases, it was clearly indicated that the mentor teachers had trust issues, and worse, presumed pre-service teachers as incompetent to take the class. This must be realized by other mentor teachers that having low trust on pre-service teachers to teach the students could affect their readiness and enthusiasm in exploring the real world of teaching.

However, other participants, RS1, RS5, and RS7 mentioned the opposite thing. They did not have any obstacles with the mentor teacher. As for RS5, she even found her mentor teacher as an inspiring teacher.

“... I felt after I met my tutor who was in SMA 12... I felt I had to be an inspiring teacher... inspiring for both the people around me and especially my students and Alhamdulillah from there. I feel I have to be able to inspire ... like my tutor teacher..” (RS5, FGD).

Then, she continued...

“I think my tutor really provides guidance, really engages me... you have to be like this, the teacher has to be like this... really blunt sir. If we are wrong, really wrong, if we are correct, got praised, like that sir ... so it really gets an impression sir ... Thank God it's like that so even though ... maybe people say 'ah it's normal like that', but in my opinion, that's what the most valuable memory. Because I didn't get it in S1 PPL, sir. (RS5, FGD)

RS1 had similar experience...

“Yes sir ... not much different from RS5 because we were in the same school with the same tutor, sir. So I want to add, our tutor teacher really educates and exemplifies... when we just arrived, she immediately put into practice, sir, how to teach properly and correctly, then we... when we finished teaching, we were immediately seated together, gave feedback which one is good and which one is not good... so the three of us learned together. So that's how it was sir, so it was a very good experience ...” (RS1, FGD)

In addition, RS7 said that the mentor teacher he had liked to support his learning process by giving them chances to take the class; found out by own self what various things happened during the class, then by sparing her time to have discussion with the participants telling about many things they experienced both in the class and outside the class.

“Yes sir ... if I had PPL experience in SMP 4 it was very valuable, because I met a mentor who really could be a role model ... Mam DN as the mentor teacher did give me many opportunities, sir, for example like teaching practice ... she gave me... first, superior class in class 1, uh in grade 3 ... then not superior, that is sir, I was asked to look at the difference, being asked by Mam DN to try to see what the difference is like, it means that later you make the different lesson plan as well, the technique is different too... then I was also given to teach the lower-level class, Sir... to 8th grade, then 7th grade... so all levels were given, all types of classes were given .. Then ... Mam also gave suggestion while in ... making the RPP in particular, for example during the 6 months of the campus I said 'like this, mam' ... then she gave the suggestions... then also helped during the implementation of the PTK...” (RS7, FGD).

These are contrary to what was experienced by the previous participant who got less trusted by his mentor teacher to teach the students. Overall, even though all of these depended on how the mentor teacher pre-service teachers got, yet, principally a mentor teacher is a mentor who gives knowledge, offers support, and puts trust on them to teach.

6. Less Real Teaching Experience

The other obstacle experienced by pre-service English teachers during the teaching practicum (PPL) was concerned about non-teaching activity in school. One of the participants said that he got non-teaching experience more than the teaching one, such as some duties in the library, some duties dealing with the computer, and even those dealing with the marker ink.

“Most of the time, we were asked to do tasks in the library, if it is for teaching, yes...yes, it was...and well like just teaching as usual. Then, yes ... yes the most frequent yes that was...because I am quite good at computer, most of the time during the PPL, I was asked to do some duties related to computer stuff, that was so from me sir” (RS6, FGD).

Then he continued...

“Well for example, yes .. “the ink runs out, how come the print is like this” ... got more ordered around this and that. For teaching, there was no impression, sir ... during the PPL ” (RS6, FGD).

As for RS4, RS5, and RS8 smiled while RS6 was speaking about the case. Their facial expressions showed something new and surprising about what happened to RS6 who got more non-teaching experience. Furthermore, based on the others’ respond to RS6’s answer, which showed silence means that they did not experience the same thing. This obstacle only experienced by RS6 in the discussion.

In short, pre-service teachers might gain more knowledge and experiences by doing what real teachers do in a class; delivering the material, giving students tasks, and examining students’ understanding. However, participating in other school’s activities or duties is quite good as well to get experiences, such as assisting teachers with the computer, the library staff or even that with the marker problem. Still, pre-service teachers need to know which activity should get more and which should get less, because as it was experienced by this participant that getting less real teaching experience became his obstacle during the program.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to identify what the obstacles experienced by the pre-service teachers, especially those in English Department FKIP Universitas Riau – during the PPG program. Based on the data provided, it was found that there were seven obstacles experienced by the PPG students; one obstacle was identified during the semester theory, which was concerned about the room capacity – and six obstacles experienced during the teaching practicum (PPL). The obstacles include (1) action research proposal writing (2)

students' rejection, (3) classroom management, (4) time management, (5) mentor teacher's low trust, and (6) less real teaching experience. Classroom management was the most frequent issue discussed in the Focus Group Discussion. This can give additional information for other researcher who wants to conduct further research on the related field. Besides, the data can then be used as an input by the government or related institutions for the development of a better PPG system in the future, and that by PPG students so they can prepare themselves both physically and mentally when participating in PPG program.

Following the findings, several recommendations were proposed in order to reduce some obstacles might be happened in the future.

1. The facilities such as classroom should be repaired on both the quality and the size so that it could accommodate the amount of the pre-service teachers who enroll the program. This could be done by telling the condition to the authorities and ensuring them that it became the obstacle for the students to join the learning process in class well.
2. Dealing with the different level of knowledge the students had – could be solved by having a discussion with the mentor teacher who had more experience facing this case. Have a good relationship with the mentor so the discussion could talk about any things pre-service teachers faced, not only about how to manage the class with diverse students' ability. The teaching strategies that might overcome this obstacle are stated by (Trees, 2013) that small group learning opportunities and impromptu oral presentations can enhance the students' recognition of their knowledge and experiences and to help them develop the confidence and ability to interact and thus build collegiality.
3. It is essential for the pre-service teachers to involve in the real environment of teaching because it is a part of practicing and learning to be a professional teacher in the future. Mentor teachers play big role in giving opportunities for them to directly involve to the class and get rid of any doubts about their capability in teaching because they are indeed in the process of learning.
4. Both mentor teachers and staff in school should know which experience pre-service teachers should get more and which should get less. Asking for the pre-service teachers doing many duties with non-teaching stuff might give them less real teaching experience with the students even though the non-teaching experience also support them to be professional teacher.

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