

The Role of Mentor Teacher in Preparing Teacher Candidate at the Field Experience Practice

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Abstract

This study is related to the Field Experience Practice (PPL) at the Indonesia University of Education. The program was implemented to prepare professional teacher candidates as educators at the school level. The relationship between advisor (DPL), mentor teacher and intern is one of the keys to the success of the Field Experience Practice. In addition, mentor teacher is one of the main elements, since the process of implementing the program is in school. This study used the descriptive method, in which the mentor teacher is the main subject of the study. The data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. The result of the study obtained information about (1) how the mentor teacher supported the intern during the Field Experience Practice at school; (2) how the mentor teacher guided the intern at school; (3) how the mentor teacher provided feedback on practical performance during the program; and (4) the process of coordinating relationship between advisor, mentor teacher, and intern in the program. With the information, the intern obtained a lot of real experience and could improve their abilities both in teaching, classroom management, and dealing with classroom issues correctly. This study can be beneficial for the advancement of education in Indonesia, especially in preparing professional and quality teacher candidates.

Keywords: Field Experience Practice, Mentor Teacher, Teacher Professionalism, Teacher Education

Introduction

Field Experience Practice (PPL) is the estuary of a long process of implementing teacher education program which focus on academic education. Prior to the teaching practice, teacher candidates have taken a number of academic education both scientific content material (disciplinary content knowledge) and teaching material (pedagogical content knowledge). Teacher education is a complex educational process which includes program planning, educational processes, and result assessment as well as training (rehearsal) (Republic of Indonesia. Law No. 14, 2003). Planning stage requires careful preparation in mastering knowledge, skills, and dispositions by the intern. The three abilities are the main prerequisites which must be mastered by teacher candidates to deliver them to become a real quality and professional teacher (Republic of Indonesia. Law No. 14, 2005). Recently, teacher candidate should also mastering competencies in digital era towards industrial revolution 4.0 and to achieve sustainable Innovation in The Digital Era (Kemenristekdikti, 2018).

For more than half a century, Indonesia University of Education (UPI) has been working year after year to improve the quality of the teacher education process both in terms of academic education by strengthening and deepening the scientific field (disciplinary content knowledge) as well as pedagogical content knowledge, specifically at the final stage, namely the Field Experience Practice

(PPL). Various innovations had also been attempted and the result had been evaluated and given feedback for improvements. For example, the idea of the need for students to obtain early experience (exposure) during their first years, cross fertilization, reflection on the Field Experience Practice through three ways or tripartite conferences and the integration of learning, doing, and reflecting. Various obstacles had also been experienced and various solutions had been proposed and applied as well as various approaches and strategies from the result of academic studies and experiences from other universities abroad (UPI, 2018).

The PPL for undergraduate students at UPI is a program designed to train S-1 education students that they master intact and integrated teaching skills, so that they possess readiness in implementing their duties as a professional teacher. The program aims to strengthen the mastery of academic competencies, develop professional identity as an educator, and provide basic experience to implement learning under effective supervision of advisor and mentor teacher (UPI, 2018).

The program targets include: (1) recognizing student characteristics in terms of development and individual differences; (2) observing the physical, geographical, and social environment of partner school; (3) reviewing Content Standard (SI) and Competency Standard (SKL) as well as curriculum/syllabus developed by teachers in partner school; (4) observing learning activities; (5) reviewing the material, methods, media, and learning resources used by the teacher; (6) recognizing the organizational structure and school management; (7) reviewing the process and result of student learning assessment by the teacher; (8) developing a Lesson Plan (RPP) in an educational field; (9) implementing RPP in order to conduct educational learning with supervision from advisor and mentor teacher; (10) analyzing and following up the process and result of student learning evaluation; (11) conducting diagnostic learning difficulties and remedial learning; (12) identifying problems in education and learning in school which can be examined in the framework of completing a thesis; and (13) reporting and discussing the Field Experience Practice process and result.

To achieve the goals and objectives, the PPL in UPI is implemented through 7 main steps, namely: (1) debriefing, (2) field orientation, (3) development of educational learning program/plan, (4) limited practice training and laboratory modeling microteaching, (5) training in conducting educational learning, (6) preparing report, and (7) examination. These seven main steps must be passed by all parties involved in the PPL, especially the advisor, students, and mentor teacher with the final goal being the student can graduate after undergoing the seventh step of the exam. Therefore, the testing is very important in determining the quality of graduates, since the exam functions to filter out the feasibility of graduating as a teacher or not in addition to other functions (Boreen et al, 2009).

The PPL in UPI had sometimes experienced obstacles in its implementation, especially in the process at school. There were some mentor teacher who had guided the interns well, on their initiative, not based on the main tasks and functions regulated in the system. There were also complaints raised by the interns during the program, most of whom felt they did not get enough support and guidance during the program. They feel they did not obtain feedback and support from mentor teacher in terms of class management, drafting a lesson plan, teaching, and evaluation techniques. Not a few of the interns were shocked and scared during the beginning of the Field Experience Practice.

Based on the background, this study focuses on the ideal roles and responsibilities of the mentor teacher for the intern during the PPL, based on the assumption that the mentor teacher has a very important role in enriching the teaching experience directly for the intern, so that the quality of the intern is expected to be better in the future (Brooks and Sikes, 1997).

Method

This study was conducted in order to describe the factual condition of the role of mentor teacher in the PPL, especially the mentoring process at school. To achieve the objectives, the descriptive method was used. The characteristics of descriptive study are the study can be conducted through assessment, explanation, evaluation, prediction, operational research, and development of indicators (especially the

formulation of the role of the mentor teacher). Meanwhile, to achieve the target according to the method, the implementation of the study was conducted through an in-depth study of documentation in the guidebook of the PPL of Indonesia University of Education.

The research instrument to obtain data and information was addressed to mentor teacher in order to be able to answer the problems of the study. The instrument consists of (1) how the mentor teacher supported the intern during the program; (2) how the mentor teacher guided the intern at school; (3) how the mentor teacher provided feedback on the performance of the intern; (4) coordinative relationship between advisor and intern.

Results and Discussion

The PPL is an important stage for teacher candidates who are currently a university student. The program provides an opportunity for teacher candidates to obtain the realm of teacher training in real terms. The program also teaches teacher candidates how to master the four main competencies as a professional teacher; the first one is pedagogic competence that is the ability of a teacher to combine the principles of teaching science with the abilities and backgrounds of their students; second, personality competence that is the ability of a teacher to be an example for their students; third, professional competence that is the ability of a teacher to use the most effective technique to involve students inside and outside the classroom; fourth, social competence that is the ability of a teacher to identify environmental aspects which can improve the effectiveness of classroom learning (Tillema, 2009).

The PPL is one of the cumulative courses in the strata program that is undertaken by students. This program is held to increase awareness of the interns on the important components of teaching and learning activities, and to encourage them to be able to implement and improve personal skills as a creative teacher. The interns were taught how to make the most effective choice when facing challenging situations in the classroom. They were also taught how to balance their role as a modern teacher ranging from being an instructor, creator, manager, mentor, to a role model.

Based on the instrument testing given to the mentor teacher on the PPL at UPI, the data were obtained as follows.

1. How the mentor teacher supported the intern during the program

The objective was to identify the support given by the mentor teacher to the intern during the PPL by looking at how the mentor teacher explained the school environment through orientation, be it the school condition, staff, students and the environment surrounding the school. Most of the mentor teacher had carried out field orientation at the beginning of the program. In addition, the mentor teacher at the beginning of the teaching practice also explained the structure and program in school according to the guidebook of UPI. The activity was assisted by the school, especially representatives from the curriculum staff and school staff.

After the orientation period in the first week of the program, the mentor teacher explained the main tasks of the interns, which was demonstrated through discussions about class distribution and learning schedules. The mentor teacher usually showed annual, semester, and lesson plan programs to the interns as a first step to explain their function as a teacher. In order for the learning process to run smoothly, the mentor teacher had to be able to provide or facilitate the interns to be able to always discuss the problems in the learning process. This activity could be realized well by the mentor teacher, so that they were able to explain how to create an atmosphere of activities in such a way, in harmony with the development of students, that the teaching and learning interactions took place effectively. To keep students connected with advisors and lecture activities on campus, the mentor teacher also gave time allocations to the students for guidance on campus (McCray, 2015).

2. How the mentor teacher guided the intern at school

In carrying out their duties, the mentor teacher must be able to make arrangements for the course of the PPL at school, since the mentor teacher had mastered the school situation well, be it related to the school environment or students as well as the ongoing learning process. For this reason, the steps taken by the mentor teacher in guiding the intern in school can be seen from how the tutor teacher arranged professional partnerships with the intern, plan and teach cooperatively with the intern, negotiate with the intern, give an opportunity to the intern to plan, prepare, implement, assess, and evaluate the teaching program through a face-to-face meeting on a regular basis, develop and maintain progress cooperatively with the intern, and help the interns apply and interpret curriculum and school policy documents (McCray, 2015).

3. How the mentor teacher provided feedback on the performance of the intern

To obtain a valuable experience, the intern had to follow well what was instructed by the mentor teacher regarding the evaluation or reflection of the learning process in the classroom. The interns were given freedom by the mentor teacher in exploring the class. They were guided to become a teacher. Therefore, several steps were taken by the mentor teacher in order to increase the ability of the intern to practice themselves as a real teacher in the classroom. These aspects are: tutor teacher can demonstrate a learning material, so that it can be easily understood by students, and is able to master the material or subject matter. In addition, the mentor teacher also helped students develop skills to connect with parents when there were problems related to learning and school. The role of the mentor teacher had to be able to explain about the condition and learning outcomes of the students. Mentor teacher also had to be able to explain the shortcomings of the intern during the PPL and gave appraisal/appreciation to the abilities and skills of the intern in the teaching process. So as to be a professional teacher, mentor teacher had to be able to provide feedback to the intern in a supportive and cooperative manner, so that they could carry out their duties as a teacher well.

4. Coordinative relationship between advisor and intern

In realizing successful Field Experience Practice, the mentor teacher should not only focus on the ability of the intern in the learning process in school, the mentor teacher also had to be able to give the opportunity to the intern to be able to participate in the question and answer session and/or program evaluation with the advisor. This activity was intended to establish effective and quality communication between mentor teacher, intern, and advisor, in which the mentor teacher had to be able to show the willingness to communicate with the advisor and intern in the context of the success of the PPL. In addition, the mentor teacher had to be able to convey information about the progress and condition of the intern to the advisor directly (Sikes, 1997).

Conclusions

Through the PPL, teacher candidates were provided with how to prepare a Lesson Plan (RPP) and its implementation, so that students obtained the maximum opportunity to participate in a positive environment. Furthermore, teacher candidates also learned how to observe learning, reflect, and compile reports. Although the program provided many benefits for teacher candidates, challenges were also often encountered in the practice of the implementation, one of which was the lack of effective supervision from mentor teacher and advisor. Not all advisors and teacher guidance, whom had been given the task of assisting the interns had the time, ability, even willingness to provide guidance to the teacher candidates, either as an example or advisor, or as a suggestion which could be relied upon during practice in the classroom. To overcome the challenges, the mentor teacher can understand their role when assisting the PPL interns to fulfill pedagogical, personal, professional, and social competencies. The PPL aims to help teacher candidates maximize their potential. On the other hand, students can also study seriously and look for provisions when they have actually become a teacher. When the competence of new teachers increases, students will get the best teachers who can direct their education in a better direction.

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