Students' Perception of Pedagogical Course Learning Process
Developing Pedagogical Competence in Teacher Education

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Abstract: Teachers college is a place where students learn and develop their pedagogical competence and pedagogical course is one the main ways to achieve this. However, the quality of pedagogical course is still questioned because there have been some criticisms on the quality of the graduates. Therefore, it is crucial to gain insight on the strength and weaknesses of the current practice of pedagogical course held by teachers college. This study aims to obtain information about the current practice of pedagogical course organized by teachers college and identify problems that need to be addressed in order to improve the quality of the course. This study is also resulted in some recommendations to improve the effectiveness of pedagogical course learning process which will allow students to develop their pedagogical competence as future teachers. This study used quantitative descriptive method and employed questionnaire to collect the data. The questionnaires were given to 21 students taking pedagogical course, who then assessed elements of the learning process that could help develop pedagogical competence. Based on the results of data analysis, it was found that the course delivery lacked the ability to engage students, the course materials hardly facilitated students to understand difficult materials and the course evaluation lacked feedback needed by students. In other words, the quality of the course materials, delivery, and evaluation was still on the average level, which means the course learning process did not optimally facilitated students to acquire pedagogical competence they need as future teachers.

1 INTRODUCTION

Teacher is an important element in education. Nowadays, teacher's role in education has evolved from simply as instructor to facilitator, researcher and even counsellor. These involve advanced pedagogical competence that need years of development. In the context of teacher education, student teachers are expected to acquire the necessary competence required to teach and to deliver effective learning process once they graduate. In other words, teacher education is aimed to prepared students to be able to teach in schools. If this aim is not fulfilled, learning process in schools will not go as expected and thus will affect the quality of school graduates.

It goes without saying that quality teachers produce quality education and quality teachers are resulted from quality teacher education program held by higher education institution, particularly teachers college. However, it is not easy for teachers college, especially those in developing countries to meet this

responsibility. There are a number of external and internal factors affecting the learning process in teachers college in developing countries (Westbrook et al., 2013). The external factors include lecturers, course materials, interaction patterns, media and technology, learning situation, and system. There are still many lecturers who lack understanding of learning materials and expect students to give exact answer as explained when evaluating their students' learning and thus discourage creative thinking. Lecturers also often have limitations in accessing new information which allows them to know about the latest development in their field (state of the art) and the possibilities of further development from what has been achieved today (frontier of knowledge). Meanwhile, course materials are considered too theoretical and lacking contextual examples. In addition, delivery method is monotonous and does not optimally use relevant media. Media use is often determined by availability and not by its relevance with the instructional objectives of the course.

Moreover, in some universities the academic culture is not conducive to implement a system which is oriented towards quality learning.

On the other hand, internal factors impending learning process in higher education include students themselves, motivation, early ability, ability to learn independently, English mastery, and learning gap. Low motivation makes students get bored easily, expect quick yielding, hard to concentrate, cannot manage time, and lazy to do assignment. Weak early ability leads to difficulties in understanding course materials, completing assignments, and implementing learning strategies. Lastly, learning gap often occurs between: a) knowledge and understanding, b) comprehension and competence, c) competence and willingness to implement, d) willingness to implement and action, and e) action and progressive changes (Westbrook et al., 2013).

The external and internal factors above give negative impacts on the course quality, including the quality of pedagogy related courses. In teachers college, developing students' pedagogical competence is performed through pedagogy related courses. It is through pedagogical courses that students develop their understanding and mastery of pedagogical competence needed as teachers. Thus, if pedagogical course is not well organized, the pedagogical competence that students expect to develop will not be achieved. Although both internal and external factors identified by Westbrook et al. (2013) include teacher education practices in South Asia, further research need to be done in order to clearly identify the problems in organizing quality pedagogical course in Indonesia.

A study on students' satisfaction on "Pedagogy" course training conducted by Scoda (2014) found that the level of satisfaction on the course content and course design was only around 50%. The study also found that the students thought the course was too theorized, lacked practical applications, and needed better organization and support. Scoda (2014) argued that further research about needs, limits, and strategies of organizing pedagogical course is needed considering its importance and impact for prospective teachers.

This study would like to describe the current practice of pedagogical course organized by teachers college in Indonesia and identify problems that need to be addressed in order to improve the quality of the course which include course planning, delivery, materials and evaluation. This study is also resulted in some recommended strategies to effectively develop students' pedagogical competence as the ultimate goal of pedagogical course.

2 PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE AND TEACHERS EDUCATION

Competence is mainly obtained through education and formed by knowledge, understanding, skill, value, attitude and interest (Gordon in Mulyasa, 2007). For teachers, competence refers to rational performance and behaviors to meet certain specification in conducting educational duties. Teacher competence includes pedagogical competence, personal competence, social competence, and professional competence. Teacher competence therefore is not only related to ability to transfer knowledge or information but also to facilitate students to learn effectively and create conducive atmosphere to interact with peers and teacher.

Teacher pedagogical competence plays a pivotal role in students' learning process since it deals with teacher's ability in organizing the learning process which is based on understanding on learners, curriculum, and learning design as well as the use of educational technology and learners' ability to actualize their potentials (Sagala, 2009). Giertz (in Ryegard, Apelgren, and Olsson, 2010) describes pedagogical competence as "…the ability and the will to regularly apply the attitude, knowledge and skills that promote the learning of the teacher's students". On the context of pedagogical contribution, they further argues that pedagogical competence equipped with definite goals and frameworks supports and facilitates students' learning.

Pedagogical competence consists of several indicators below (Sagala, 2009).

- Ability to understand learners. Teacher should understand the characteristics of learners' development, the principles of learners' personality development as well as identify learners' early ability and potentials.
- Ability to design the learning process. Teacher should be able to do planning starting from formulating learning objectives, selecting suitable strategy and method, determining learning steps and motivating learners. Also, teacher should be able to organize learning materials, use learning resources, manage class and perform evaluation.
- Ability to conduct learning that is educative and dialogic. Teacher should be able to open learning session by first motivating and conveying learning objectives, to organize learning by applying relevant method, to

communicate well with learners, and close learning session by giving conclusion and reflecting.

- Ability to evaluate learning outcome. For this purpose, teacher should be able to design and conduct evaluation, analyze test results, utilize assessment results to improve the quality of learning.
- Ability to develop learners' potentials by facilitating learners to channel their academic and non academic interests.

According to Korthagen and Kessels (1999), there are three major causes of transfer problem in teacher education: (1) Students' preconception about learning and teaching do not agree with theories taught in teacher education programs which lead to resistance in learning the theories presented; (2) Students' low motivation which is due to underdeveloped personal concerns about teaching or failure to encounter concrete problems prohibit learning to take place; (3) Students are presented with abstract, general expert knowledge that is unlikely to be useful in real life situations which need quick and concrete solutions. Korthagen and Kessels (1999) further argue that the transfer problem can be overcome by conducting a more realistic teacher education that is based in the reality of surrounding environment and that allow student teachers to make meaning out of a problem situation. This way, student teachers are able to build cognitive structures which enable them to deal with similar problem situations in the future. Furthermore, the realistic approach to teacher education entails the following (Korthagen and Kessels, 1999): (1) Suitable learning experiences that lead student teachers to develop adequate needs, feelings, values, meanings and behavioral tendencies to respond to immediate situation; (2) Promotion of further awareness and reflection on learning experiences which lead to situation-specific knowledge instead of general conceptions; (3) Presentation of theoretical notions from empirical research which allow student teachers to perceive more in the specific and in similar situations and to act according their heightened awareness; and (4) Training of student teachers in acting productively.

It is obvious that pedagogical competence is an essential part of becoming a teacher and thus determines the success of teaching delivery and the effectiveness of learning process. Pedagogical competence not only deals with how teacher make students learn something but also how teacher manage students and the surrounding environment in order to meet certain learning objectives. Teaching pedagogical competence to student teacher thus should be directed towards mastery of knowledge and skills that are reflected by attitudes and behaviors. Unfortunately, teacher education provided by higher education institution in Indonesia has been unsuccessful in following this direction since the learning process tends to employ traditional approach in which theory is presented without much connection to practice and as the result the knowledge acquired by students are not transferable to classroom practice.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

This descriptive quantitative study used survey method to examine students' perception about quality pedagogical course in teachers college. The sample consisted of 22 student teachers who had finished taking pedagogical course. The data was collected using questionnaire, which are divided into two sections. First section is about the course learning process and the second section is about the course materials. The data gathered was then analyzed quantitatively and presented in percentage.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In teacher education program, students' pedagogical competence is developed through pedagogical courses. Therefore, the quality of the courses determines the quality of pedagogical competence acquired by the students. There are several indicators that can be employed to assess the quality of a course which include course planning, course delivery process, course materials, and course evaluation. Students' perceptions of these indicators were used to assess the quality of pedagogical course taken by sample students.

Students' perceptions on course planning, delivery and evaluation are used to evaluate the quality of the course learning process. The students' responses are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Pedagogical course learning process.

No.	Course Learning Process	Total Score
Course Planning		
1.	Readiness in delivering the course.	64
2.	Completeness of course attributes (course syllabus, learning media, etc.)	69
3.	Diversity of learning methods.	66
4.	Diversity of learning resources.	60

No.		Total Score
5.	Utilization of media and instructional technologies.	70
Course Delivery		
6.	Punctuality in starting the class.	63
7.	Class duration matches credit hours (1 credit hour equals 50 minutes)	71
8.	Attempts to arouse students' interest at the beginning of the class	58
9.	Ability to engage students.	53
10.	Sistematic organization of course materials.	67
11.	Suitability between materials delivered and target competences.	70
12.	Clarity in delivering learning objectives, materials, and answers to students' questions.	66
13.	Special time provided for discussion of course materials.	56
14.	Ability to direct discussion so as to achieve the goal.	60
15.	Assigning structured assignment (paper, summaries, problem solving exercises, etc.)	64
Course Evaluation		
16.	Feedback for assignments given.	51
17.	Diversity of measuring learning outcomes or evaluation	57
18.	Suitability between test materials and learning objectives.	68
	Average	63

As shown in Table 1 above, the score for course planning ranges from 60 to 70. Diversity of learning resources scores the lowest (60) while utilization of media and instructional technologies score the highest (70). The data indicates that the quality of course planning is average, with special attention needs to be given to increase the variety of learning resources used for learning. In addition, it is equally important to increase the diversity of learning methods because in a study of preferred instructional styles, Slotnik, Pelton, Fuller and Tabor (1993) found that students gave high rate to instructional methods which are practical (it enables to get an idea of how they will use what they are learning) and which worked with them in the past. Those highly rated instructional methods include practical projects, lecturers with discussion, use of simulation, student participation in course design, and individual projects. On the contrary, seminars where student's present papers and discuss them are the least favorable.

As for course delivery, the score ranges from 53 to 71. Ability to engage students score the lowest

(53), followed by special time provided for discussion (56). On the other hand, the class duration that matches credit hours scores the highest (71), followed by suitability between materials and target competences (70). It can be concluded that although materials given are suitable with target competences and delivered in good clarity, students still lacked motivation at the beginning of the class and showed low participation during the learning process. Students indeed had discussion but the discussion only focused on the questions asked by students and rarely covered all the materials that should be covered. According to Slotnik, Pelton, Fuller and Tabor (1993), learning process in higher education should employ a variety of ways that allow students to use or apply what they are learning. Teaching new concept or skill to college students means helping them understand its applicability to them or show them how they will use the concept and skill in their careers. Students are more likely to value what they are learning when they can see its immediate applicability. Furthermore, it should also involve students and make them active in their own learning. In a course where lecturing is commonly used, students' participation should be encouraged in ways that are practical and interesting. Moreover, since adults see themselves as individuals instead of group members), it is better to make sure students understand their responsibility and evaluate them according to whether they do their responsibility or not.

Lastly, for course evaluation, the highest score was given to suitability between test materials and learning objectives (68), followed by diversity of measurements of learning outcomes (57) while feedback for assignments given scores the lowest (51). The data indicates that the suitability between test materials and learning objectives still need to be improved, measurement methods needs to be varied and that there should be feedback given after completion of assignment.

As for the course materials, the indicators along with the scores are given in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Pedagogical course materials.

No.	Course Materials	Total Score
1.	Availability of relevant applicable examples of given materials.	68
2.	Course materials are easy to understand.	70
3.	Re-discussion of materials that students are difficult to understand.	57
4.	Completeness of materials delivered.	61

5.	Course materials are in line with the syllabus.	67
6.	Suitability of course materials with references given.	62
7.	Use of current issues in discussing the materials.	68
8.	Use of scientific articles to enhance the quality of learning.	47
	Average	62.5

It can be seen from the table that the highest score (70) was for the ease to understand the course materials and the lowest (47) was for the use of scientific articles in learning. The score for re-discussion of difficult materials was also low (57). The data indicates that although students thought that the course materials were relatively easy to understand, this may be limited to certain materials and to certain level of understanding because the completeness of course materials delivered was quite low. This also affected the need to re-discuss difficult materials, which was hardly facilitated. Moreover, the use of scientific article was very low, which implies that the course was not supported by latest research on pedagogy. In fact, Korthagen and Kessels (1999) suggest that presenting students with theoretical notions from empirical research allows students to acquire deeper and more specific and to act productively in similar problematic situations.

Overall, the quality of the pedagogical course learning process and course materials was averagely good but much improvement is needed especially regarding the course delivery and evaluation, methods in delivering difficult materials, and use of current issues or research results to update the materials given. As pointed out by Sagala (2009), pedagogical competence deals with the ability to understand learners, design learning process, and evaluate learning outcome. Understanding learners can be done by addressing the issues such as brittle study habit, learning difficulties, and values from home or environment that may affect learning (Harkin, Turner, and Dawn, 2001). It is also important to highlight the impact of students' principles, conceptions and beliefs about the goal of teaching, which will influence their teaching practice later in schools. Ritter (2007) argues that students who have no idea of the potential change that they might bring into their students' abilities will be unlikely to take their responsibility seriously enough to apply new teaching ideas and method that contradict with school's tradition or with traditional methods of instruction. Moreover, if students believe that the traditional teaching methods they experienced as students during teacher training are effective, they will be encouraged to teach according to traditional methods.

In designing learning process and evaluating learning outcomes, major causes of transfer problem such as students' preconception about learning and teaching and students' low motivation (Korthagen and Kessels, 1999) should be addressed and tackled effectively. If not, students as prospective teachers will be presented with abstract knowledge that is not transferable to classroom practice. In other words, development of students' pedagogical competence very much depends on the learning process of pedagogical course that pays attention on how student teachers will apply what they have learned on real life situation.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Developing pedagogical competence of students attending teacher education entails shifting from traditional methods to new teaching methods which encourage active participation, address immediate applicability, and build cognitive structure useful for future practice. These methods should be reflected not only in course delivery, but also in course planning, course evaluation, and course materials. The course delivery should promote active learning through the use of various methods and media, the course evaluation should allow students to obtain feedback in order to confirm what they have learnt and the course materials should make use of scientific articles which could assist students in understanding difficult materials. These will enhance the quality of pedagogical course which in turn will greatly affect the development of students' pedagogical competences and their academic quality as future teachers.

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