

MENTOR COACHING TO HELP PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE LESSON PLAN

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Abstract: This paper investigates how mentor coaching, which is intended to prepare pre-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language in facing their teaching practices, help them design lesson plans. A lesson plan, as Farrell (2002) stated, is a collection or a summary of a teacher's thoughts about what will be covered during a lesson. This means that before coming to the teaching process, a teacher should prepare systematic steps to be conducted in a class in order to reach the objective of a lesson. However, most pre-service teachers are confused with the designing process of lesson plan that is how to articulate the government curriculum into operational details. For example, they do not know which activities to include in the lesson plan, and they do not understand how to determine indicators or "enabling objectives" (Brown, 2007) for assessing students' achievement in the lesson. Therefore, mentor coaching is seen as one of alternatives in helping pre-service teachers. Mentor coaching, as Nolan (2007, cited in Zepeda, 2012, p. 165) said, is a "structured process whereby an experienced person introduces, assists, and supports a less-experienced person (the protege) in a personal and professional growth process." In the context of this study, the experienced person refers to the teacher/the lecturer in the class and the less-experienced person in this context refers to the pre-service teachers or student teachers. This study used action research as the method. Furthermore, the data were obtained by distributing questionnaire and collecting pre-service teachers' lesson plans as well as conducting an interview. In addition, after having designed a lesson plan with mentor coaching technique, the pre-service teachers were asked to reflect the process in order to gain their perception about the mentor coaching technique. It is important to find what they think and feel about this mentor coaching process because it is expected that this type of coaching will be useful in helping pre-service teachers to write an effective lesson plan.

Keywords: Mentor coaching, pre-service teachers, lesson plan, action research

Abstract: Makalah ini menyelidiki bagaimana pembinaan mentor, yang ditujukan untuk mempersiapkan calon guru bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing dalam menghadapi praktek mengajar nantinya, membantu mereka merancang rencana pelaksanaan pembelajaran, atau RPP. RPP, seperti diungkap oleh Farrel (2002), adalah kumpulan atau rangkuman pemikiran guru mengenai cakupan sebuah pembelajaran. Ini berarti bahwa sebelum mengajar, seorang guru harus mempersiapkan langkah-langkah sistematis untuk dilaksanakan di dalam kelas agar bisa meraih tujuan sebuah pembelajaran. Akan tetapi, kebanyakan calon guru bingung dengan proses merancang RPP, yaitu bagaimana menjabarkan kurikulum pemerintah kedalam detail operasional. Misalnya, mereka tidak tahu aktivitas mana yang harus dimasukkan ke dalam RPP, dan mereka tidak mengerti cara untuk menentukan indikator atau "tujuan yang memungkinkan" (Brown, 2007) untuk menilai capaian siswa dalam pembelajaran tersebut. Karena itu, pembinaan mentor dipandang sebagai salah satu alternative dalam membantu calon guru. Pembinaan mentor, seperti yang dikatakan oleh Nolan (2007) dalam Zepeda (2012, h. 165), adalah "proses terstruktur dimana seseorang yang berpengalaman mengenalkan, membantu, dan mendukung seseorang yang kurang berpengalaman dalam proses pertumbuhan kepribadian dan profesi." Dalam konteks kajian ini, orang berpengalaman mengacu pada guru atau dosen di kelas, dan yang kurang berpengalaman mengacu pada calon guru atau

mahasiswa keguruan. Kajian ini menggunakan metode penelitian tindakan kelas. Selain itu, data diperoleh dengan menyebarkan angket dan mengumpulkan RPP para calon guru juga wawancara. Ditambah lagi, setelah merancang RPP dengan teknik pembinaan mentor, para calon guru diminta untuk bercermin pada proses tersebut agar memperoleh persepsi mereka terhadap teknik pembinaan mentor. Penting untuk mencari tahu apa yang mereka pikirkan dan rasakan terhadap proses pembinaan mentor ini, karena diharapkan jenis pembinaan seperti ini akan bermanfaat dalam membantu para calon guru untuk menulis RPP yang tepat guna.

English in Indonesia is considered as a Foreign Language, and according to the government's directive, English is started to be taught as early as possible. Therefore, there will be many English teachers required in all levels of Education in Indonesia. In order to fulfill the need, Indonesia University of Education (UPI) provides their students, the pre-service teachers, with the necessary skills in teaching, and one of them is designing a lesson plan.

However, most pre-service teachers are confused with the designing process of lesson plan, that is how to articulate the government curriculum into operational details, and this condition leads the pre-service teachers to not having a confidence in implementing the lesson plan in their teaching practicum. Hence, helping them in the process of designing an effective lesson plan is expected to result in having the pre-service teachers gain more confidence, and mentor coaching is seen as one of alternatives.

It is believed that mentor coaching could be an effective way to help pre-service teachers to deal with problems that might occur during their process of learning (Onchwari, 2006, *Professional Experience Handbook*, 2012). The literature on mentoring or mentor coaching also revealed that the program can assist the development of the pre-service teachers (Smith, 2004; Onchwari, 2006; Brady & Broadbent, 2006; and Hudson and Nguyen, 2008) as well as improve their teaching (Huling and Resta, 2001).

Regarding the aforementioned issue, this paper reports on an action research that investigates the role of mentor coaching in helping pre-service teachers of English as a Foreign Language design lesson plans to prepare themselves in facing their teaching

practices and how they respond to the technique. This study was guided by the following questions as: 1) To what extent does a mentor coaching help pre-service teacher to design an effective lesson plan for an EFL Classroom? and 2) How do the pre-service teachers respond toward the mentor coaching technique?

Mentor coaching

Mentoring or mentor coaching has often been portrayed as an intentional, nurturing, instructive, and supportive activity in which a more experienced or more skilled person (the mentor) helps shape the growth and development of a less experienced or less skilled person (the protege) (Garvey, 2003; Brady & Broadbent, 2006; Onchwari, 2006; Nolan, 2007, cited in Zepeda, 2012; Hudson & Nguyen, 2008, and Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). In the context of this study, the experienced person or the mentor refers to the teacher/the lecturer in the class and the less-experienced person in this context refers to the pre-service teachers or teacher students.

Previous studies on mentoring have shown that mentoring plays an important role in supporting beginning teachers' growth and development. Smith (2004), for instance, examined the nature of staff-wide mentoring on pre-service teacher improvement. The result of the study indicated that although there are barriers, the pre-service teachers achieved desired intensive outcomes from the mentoring program. Other benefits in the partnership were also gained, such as the collegial support, the engagement of the resistant teachers, and intern experience with staff-wide mentoring.

Another more recent study was reported by Onchwari (2006), who explored the

effectiveness of mentor-coach initiative model in teacher professional development. It is found that the mentor-coach model received positive responses from the teachers.

In addition, Brady and Broadbent (2006) conducted a study in which they investigated the role of the academic mentor in secondary pre-service teacher education. They discover that both the academic mentor and the pre-service teacher gain the effectiveness of the experience in the mentoring program. Despite the problems occurred, the program provided the academic mentors “opportunity for self-reflection and they relished the chance to impart a passion for the discipline and for teaching itself” (p. 8). For the pre-service teachers, the mentoring program introduced them to the profession with the “mixture of idealism coupled with the reality” (p. 9).

Even though mentoring or mentor coaching is seen as an important element especially in supporting pre-service teacher into the field, it is evident from the literature that roles undertaken by mentors and mentees (pre-service teachers) in mentoring relationship are numerous, depending on the context and the goals to be achieved (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010, Leshem, 2012).

Furthermore, the definitions of mentoring or mentor coaching itself vary greatly. In fact, Amy (2001) argued that mentoring is different from coaching. She further explains that in mentoring, the protege listens and the mentor shares; while in coaching, the coachee talks and the coach listens or questions. In addition, Clutterbuck (1991, cited in Rhodes, Stokes & Hampton, 2004, p. 14) stated that mentoring includes coaching, facilitating, counseling, and networking. Therefore, to avoid ambiguity, in this paper the term mentor coaching and mentoring are used interchangeably.

Pre-service Teachers

According to Hudson and Nguyen (2008), pre-service teachers (mentees, term used by Hudson & Nguyen, 2008 and Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010, or protégés, term used by Gravey, 2003) are generally assigned to “an experienced mentor in the school for the period

of the practicum” (p. 1). In addition, EFL pre-service teachers are those who learn to teach English as a Foreign Language (henceforth, EFL) (Hudson & Nguyen, 2008).

In addition, although this has not always been the case, generally, literature on mentoring stereotypes mentors as “older, wiser, and more experienced persons and mentees as younger and less experienced persons” (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010, p. 44). In this study, the pre-service teachers refer to EFL student teachers who have no previous experience in teaching English.

In order to maximize the likelihood of a successful mentoring program, it also suggested that the pre-service teachers should seek feedback and listen to advice (Professional Experience Handbook, 2012). Also, Professional Experience Handbook (2012) suggests that pre-service teachers should be open-minded as well as reflective.

Lesson Plan

A lesson plan, as Farrell (2002) suggests is a collection or a summary of a teacher’s thoughts about what will be covered during a lesson. This means that before coming to the teaching process, a teacher should prepare systematic steps to be conducted in a class in order to reach the objective of a lesson. Furthermore, Jensen (n.d) emphasizes that lesson plan can be treated as a guideline for both novice teachers and experienced teacher since by designing a lesson plan, one will know what to do next in the class.

Action Research

Action research is a research that contains action and research outcomes at the same time, and aims to improve teaching and learning in the classroom (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). Ferrance (2000:1) also adds that action research is “a collaborative activity among colleagues searching for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in schools, or looking for ways to improve instruction and student achievements”. Moreover, it has been suggested that one way to improve teaching and learning in schools or in any other

educational context is to involve teachers in conducting research in their own classroom (Levin and Rock, 2003).

METHOD

This research employed action research proposed by Ferrance (2000), which focused on single classroom issue. In conducting the action research, the study was guided by a movement through five phases of inquiry as suggested by Ferrance (2000), namely, identification of problem area, collection and organization of data, interpretation of data, action based on data, and reflection.

The whole data of this research were taken from questionnaire, pre-service teachers' lesson plans and interview. Here, multiple sources of data are used to better understand the situation happens in the classroom. As suggested by Ferrance (2000), the collection of data and the use of at least three sources (triangulation) of data serve as important steps in deciding what actions need to be taken. This section discusses the participants who were involved in this study. It also covers the data collection procedures to describe the process of data collection in detail.

The participants of this study were six university students in their seventh semester who were enrolled in an English Instructional Planning class at English Education Department in UPI. The participants were chosen as they have no previous experience in teaching English. In this study, the participants received on site support from the mentor coaching program. The mentor in the mentor coaching program refers to the teacher/the lecturer in the class.

One of data collection methods in this study was by collecting pre-service teachers' lesson plan. Furthermore, questionnaire was also distributed. The questionnaire consisted of a Likert scale with a total of 7 items. All the items on the questionnaire cover the aspects that deal with lesson plan. The aims of the questionnaire were to elicit the students' responses regarding the lesson plan. In addition, a semi-structured interview with the pre-service teachers was conducted to obtain

deeper information on their reflections about mentor coaching experience and to evaluate the success of the program. The interview questions deal with discovering the students' opinion of what has been done in the mentor coaching and the impact of the mentoring process on assisting the participants to design lesson plan. During the interview, both the questions being asked and the students' responses were recorded. There were eight open-ended questions and could be seen as follows:

1. What steps did you put on your first draft of lesson plan?
2. What changes have you made to the way you design the lesson plan?
3. Why did you do that?
4. How do the changes in your lesson plan influence your confidence as an English teacher to be?
5. How do you see a one-on-one consultation session?
6. What do you think of having this session, while others are working in group?
7. Do you think the changes in your lesson plan help the students get more understanding on the lesson?
8. What do you expect your students to be able to do after attending your lesson? Please explain.

After all the data were collected, they were analyzed by using descriptive qualitative analysis on the questionnaire and the interview. The data collected from the Likert-scale in the questionnaire were compiled and analyzed. Then, the responses from the interview were transcribed and analyzed. Finally, we triangulated information collected during and after the data were gathered from the various participants to confirm findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Mentor Coaching in Helping Pre-service Teachers to Design an Effective Lesson Plan

In relation to how the mentor coaching help pre-service teachers in designing an effective lesson plan, data gained from the documents

shows that all of them have made some changes in terms of format and the activities included in the lesson plan. These changes are made referring to the government's document which is published by BSNP (Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan)/National Board of Education Standard. In addition, the pre-service students said that they came up with the idea of changing their lesson plan after they experienced the mentor coaching process. This statement is in line with what they state in answering the item in the questionnaire, "I get more knowledge in designing a lesson plan." Two of them said "I strongly agree" and four of them said, "I agree." The data show that all pre-service teachers (n=6) who are involved in this study think that having a mentor coaching technique in designing a lesson plan give them more knowledge. This is in line with what was stated by Brady and Broadbent (2006) in their report on their study on the same technique. The use of mentor coaching in facilitating pre-service teachers has resulted in a positive way.

In addition to the above statement, another positive way of having mentor coaching is changing the belief of those pre-service teachers in discussing how to design a lesson plan. They used to think that it was difficult to discuss the process of designing a lesson plan. According to the data from the questionnaire, they stated, "I can be more open in discussing my difficulties in designing a lesson plan." Furthermore, in an interview, they stated that having mentor coaching gave them an opportunity to share their confusion in designing a lesson plan. This situation is in line with what was proposed by Garvey (2003) and Hudson and Nguyen (2008), who acknowledge the role of the mentors as having such personal attributes as a more skillful person or knowledgeable, helpful, and friendly. These findings also support what have been stated by literature on mentoring (Garvey, 2003; Brady & Broadbent, 2006; Onchwari, 2006; Nolan, 2007, cited in Zepeda, 2012; Hudson & Nguyen, 2008; and Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010) that mentoring or mentor coaching should be intentional, nurturing, instructive, and supportive so that

it can support the growth and development of a less experienced or less skilled person.

Having experienced the mentor coaching technique, the pre-service teachers stated that they find this technique beneficial for them. It gives benefit in a way that they can gain useful feedback for their lesson plan (questionnaire item no 6) as well as have no worries about their peer opinion on their work (questionnaire item no 7).

Furthermore, these pre-service teachers mentioned in the interview that mentor coaching technique is very useful in gaining their confidence before they can really implement what they have planned in their lesson plan. In a similar vein, Smith (2004) stated that one of the beneficial results of mentor coaching is making their mentees or protégé gain collegial support.

CONCLUSION

Although this mentor coaching was conducted for a short period of time, the effects seem to be evident. This study has shown that having mentor coaching in helping the pre-service teachers design a lesson plan gives more benefit than not. The benefits for the pre-service teachers included gaining more knowledge, having opportunities to discuss difficulties, and receiving useful feedback. Apparently, this finding supports what has been suggested by Garvey (2003), Brady and Broadbent (2006), Onchwari (2006), Nolan (2007), cited in Zepeda (2012), Hudson and Nguyen (2008), and Ambrosetti & Dekkers, (2010) that mentoring or mentor coaching can support a less-experienced person (the pre-service teachers) in a personal and professional growth process. Also, this study has revealed that the pre-service teachers respond positively toward the mentor coaching as this program can provide them with feedback as well as make them feel confident as candidates of EFL teachers.

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