Teaching Practices as Reflective Process for Student Teacher's Decision-Making Skills

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Abstract. Critical, creative thinking skills and good communication skills will vividly be seen when student teachers can make decisions wisely as a part of their preparation process to become a teacher. There are many challenges and situations where student teachers need to be able to decide how to solve problems they face, starting from preparing their lesson until the teaching practice. Therefore, the current study aims to explore how student-teacher make decisions both individually and collaboratively. A descriptive- qualitative study is conducted to explore factors that influence student teachers' decision-making skills and how peer feedback contributes to the student-teachers continuous improvement. Data will be gathered from an e-questionnaire with open-ended questions and peer feedback to explore the factors influencing student-teachers decision-making skills. In addition, student teachers are also asked to write down a critical reflection on the process of decision making they made.

Keywords: decision making skill; student teacher; teaching practice

1 Introduction

It has been the biggest challenge for student teachers as they begin their role as teachers in the learning process to direct their students' learning activities as well as to define a situation where they need to decide what needs to be done to aim students' learning outcomes that will help them contribute in the society where they live. Managing a learning process which reflects a wider social structure suddenly becomes bewildering and problematic, fraught with difficulties at every turn [1].

It happens because of the sin that has distorted human's life. So, feeling afraid or anxious about what they might face when they are in front of their students has become the most common phase that the student teachers face before their teaching practice. Therefore, in the process of decision making, student teachers need to improve based on continuous feedback from the more experienced teacher concerning about how to handle their own emotion as well as their teaching skills, such as how to create a supportive learning atmosphere for their students to learn, how to design an effective learning strategy, how to manage the classroom, how to handle misbehavior of their students, etc.

The feedback will be beneficial for the student teachers to enhance their confidence, especially when they need to make decisions on the ongoing activities during the teaching and learning process. "All of the decisions during the teaching process are influenced by the ongoing classroom context, as well as teachers' experiences, values, knowledge of content, pedagogy, and individual students" [2]. Teaching practice as a bridge between theory and practice in the

learning of teaching and the place where pre-service teachers develop a personal teaching competence [3]. In addition to that, the teaching practice is both 'eagerly and anxiously anticipated by pre- service teachers, and later remembered as a significant milestone' [4]. Furthermore, identifying teaching practice as the most powerful aspect of their teacher preparation is a great advantage since it will give student teachers to experience teaching students in the real classroom contexts [5].

The cultural differences among the students or between a teacher and student have made a huge gap between the teacher's expectation and the students' achievement. This condition makes student teachers' position as the beginning teachers difficult to decide things they need to do to respond to the dynamic change in the learning process. Teachers are expected to be initiative to adjust the teaching method with the students' cultural background that must affect their abilities to receive the information given to them. Even though student teachers are still in the process of developing their teaching skills, they also need to take initiatives based on the situations they face and they are also required to be able to solve problems and make decisions during the learning process.

Especially in online teaching and learning process that has brought new challenges for student teachers during their preparation to become a teacher which need sharp and biblical decision-making skills. As they are preparing themselves to become Christian teachers, they are fully aware that apart from Him, they can do nothing. Knowing that they all have fallen into sin, their worldview in seeing things around them has been distorted by their own desire, only after Christ redeems them and let their mind captive by the light of His Word, then they are enabled to see things in the new perspective. They are able to discern things not based on what or how they thought, but they make decisions through the new lens by which they can see what is good or bad, which is right or wrong through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So, God gives them a spiritual discernment that will provide them with insights to make wise decisions that will be manifested throughout their teaching practices [6].

Therefore, student teachers need to learn to monitor their own actions and thinking processes and makes decisions about what, and even how to think purposefully to the students' learning success. In addition, a continuous support from others as a learning community is really needed for a better teaching quality. In this research, feedback from peers and the lecturer are given after the student teacher have done their teaching practices during online microteaching. Therefore, the present study aims to explore how student teacher make decisions both individually and collaboratively.

2 Literature Review

A teacher plays an important role from the preparation until the evaluation processes. A teacher is responsible for managing the students' behavior so that they can achieve the learning goals that have been designed earlier. Especially for student teachers, it is crucial for them to improve their teaching skills as well as their decision-making skills along with the learning activities they go through. In this online learning, student teachers faced challenges related to students' behavior, instructional techniques and assessment procedures that will require them to improve their decision-making skills and other teaching skills.

There are three types of decision-making skills, they are reflective decisions, immediate decisions, and routine decisions [9].
a. Reflective decisions are taken by the teacher before starting the learning process. Before teacher handles the class, he/she can go through the given syllabus, and they decide and plan for the activities that will be done during the learning process or prepare a lesson plan

where they can set the learning goals. Teacher's obligation is to implement the plan prepared by him/her in the classroom and reflections are required.

b. Immediate decisions are on the spot decisions which are taken by the teacher in the classroom. These decisions are made within the dynamics of the classroom situation whereas reflective decisions are made before the teaching time. To create a good ambiance to the students in the classroom teacher takes the immediate decisions, for instance, controlling the classroom, resolving the disputes, changing the topic based on the requirement of the students, introducing an article in the classroom from newspaper based on the clarification of the students' doubts.

c. Routine decisions are automatic decisions taken by the teacher during the learning process. These types of decisions are default decision in the classroom and teacher adapts a part of his/her teaching style. For example, students are joining to participate in different activities planned for the online English classes. Teacher handles the class smoothly, dividing them into different groups for discussions, managing the noise, providing the feedback based on the parameters set by the university/department.

Teacher as a decision maker in the class should be able to see that students that they are teaching come from many different socio-economic, cultural backgrounds that they need to respond also differently and wisely. The basis for individualized professional development to strengthen teachers' classroom practice recommend that systematic and standardized observation of real classroom practice contribute to teacher quality [4]. It embedded not only in credentials or in coursework but in what teachers do while they are interacting with their students.

Decision-making develops through modalities that arise from individuals and groups.7The purpose of learning communities is to facilitate active over passive learning, teamwork and cooperation as opposed to competition, and foster a sense of community. Learning communities move the focus of classroom learning from content- centered and teacher-centered to student-centered and learning-centered [10]. As student teachers experience different tastes in the classrooms they teach, they will undergo different situations that force them to think critically and decide things to be done. They need a supporting system that will provide enhanced opportunities for reflective inquiry in the development of professional knowledge [5].

In addition to that, student teachers appreciated the value of working closely with others, they were more willing to take risks and develop interesting and more challenging lessons, and that each invested significantly in the partner's development and success [8]. Therefore, a critical reflection and learning both individually and collaboratively as a group are embedded as a part of everyday professional practice of a teacher [7].

Therefore, engaging in a reflective and collaborative dialogue with others enables student teachers as they become teachers in response to the contextual circumstances of their work, and supports continuous development of effective pedagogy, processes and policies in schools in response to an unpredictable and dynamic change in the education field. Engaging in critical reflection and dialogue contributes to the establishment of teaching as a community of practice and its ultimate recognition as a profession [8].

3   Research Methods

The research method used was qualitative research, which was started from a problem identification, data gathering, data reduction, data analysis, and conclusion [10]. The process or

research involved emerging questions and phenomenon data typically were collected from the participants' setting, data analysis was inductively built from particular to general themes, then the researcher made interpretations of the meaning from the data gathered [1]. This research gathered data from e-questionnaire, microteaching peer feedback, and the student teachers' individual reflections. These data gathered to get detail insights on how student teachers see their own teaching practices and decision-making skill improvement and how the learning community plays its role to support the decision-making process.

The research was conducted while the student teachers were taking the Planning, Strategizing, Assessing, and Learning course. There were 18 students participating in the study. The data gathering started from planning their lessons, conducting their microteaching, and evaluating their microteaching practice through a self-reflection and peer feedback. They were asked to fill out the e-questionnaire that required them to respond some questions with additional reasons towards the decisions they made before, during, and after the microteaching they conducted. The data would be analyzed descriptively to show what factors that might influence student teachers to make decisions during the online teaching and learning process.

4 Results and Discussion

Individual Decision-Making Skill

As a part of preparing student teachers to put theories into practice, microteaching practices were conducted in 13 meetings after they had a review on planning the lessons, choosing the most suitable strategy with the students' needs and characteristics, and assessing the students' learning progress. Through microteaching also, student teachers are also required to be reflective on the decisions they made while they were teaching their students acted by their peers.

One goal of teacher preparation is to help preservice teachers develop adaptive expertise by raising their "metacognitiveawareness of what they know and do not know" while asking them to develop and refine their skillsfor dealing with ever changing demands of the learning context or situation. From the e-questionnaire sent to the student teachers participating in the study, it was foundthat a teacher needs to prepare the lesson very carefully by considering the students' diagnosis whichinclude the students' readiness to learn in all learning domains (cognitive, affective, psychomotor).

Identifying students as Imago Dei.

As they are preparing themselves to become English teachers who are going to teach their students from Christian perspectives, then they are aware of their students' identities as Imago Dei. This alsomeans that they are as teachers who also prepare the lessons according to the students' uniqueness and lead them to the Truth, especially in the online learning context stated by some students on the e-questionnaire sent to them.

"I believe that every student is the image of God. They have their own personality, learning style, and own perspective which have many differences one another. My identity as a Christian teachershould lead them to the right knowledge based on His words."

"I believe that my student is an image of God and each of them has purpose in life. My responsibilityis to make them understand about their identity and do your calling according to God's will."

Readiness to Adjust with Dynamic Situations

During the microteaching, there were things happened unexpectedly where student teachers feel such as the technical problems related to the internet connection and technology familiarly which forced them to adapt and modify for a better online teaching and learning process. They neededto make decisions on the spot within the dynamics of the classroom situations. There were some situations where they needed to make immediate decisions as what they stated on the open-ended questions given in the e-questionnaire.

"It's about the technical thing which is the internet connection it is so buffering. Another unexpectedthing is that I really faced "real student" that is not quite same with the diagnose that I've made and It is so challenging for me to teach them but as time goes bye I can handle it with the help and guidance of Holy Spirit. I also realize that each person was unique and smartin the way they are :)

"The bad internet connection during the warming up session."

"I did not expect the time would be not enough for my micro-teaching. I guess I enjoyed it a little bit too much that I lost track of time."

Immediate Decisions to Unexpected Situations

Since the internet connection has become the main issue during the online teaching and learning process, so student teachers needed to take decisions to create a good ambiance to the students immediately.[9] Their decisions represent their reflections, beliefs, and perspectives. As they faced dynamic situations, it forced them to think critically and decide things to be done. Time- management is another issue that needed to be improved during the online microteaching. Having aback-up plan related to strategy or method that will keep their students engaged in the learning process when the internet connection was not supportive and make sure the learning objectives that they have designed will be achieved will need wise decision makings. They made decisions becausethey believed that they have been given authority to play their role to give a supportive learning environment and meaningful learning process. When students stay engaged, teachers can continue planting valuable seeds in their lives. Students also could witness how their teachers still try their best due to the poor internet connection to keep in touch with them.

"At that time, I tried to be relaxed and let things happen/flow. But I also took a one step ahead decision for the technical things. When I saw that the internet was not working when I played the video, I just kept on continue singing without the video and tried to make the students keep enjoyed it." "I think make a spontaneous improvement by playing game, singing or watching is the best way." "I needed to be spontaneous developing the course so it's still engaging for the students yet meaningful." "If the duration enough, I will try to continue with a short version of my plan. If the duration is not enough, then I will see my enduring understanding and emphasize it."

A continuous Reflection toward Better Improvement and Growth

They need a supporting system that will provide enhanced opportunities for reflective inquiry in the development of professional knowledge [5]. They needed space to improve their teaching skills, communication skills, and time-management skills to help their students grow optimally and holistically. During the microteaching, student teachers also realized the weak areas in their teaching skills that need to be improved.

"I have a lot of things to be fixed and sharpened especially my ability to adapt with my surrounding."

"I learned to improve my class management skills and I also learned to be more careful even with little things. I think it's important to at least let the students know about the learning goals of the day so they can also do their parts in achieving the goals."

"I learned that I have to be more prepared and try to be relaxed because sometimes I still get nervous and boom...I got blank"

"I reflected my teaching skill, activities, and asked myself whether my learning goals is too hard to be achieved by my students."

"I learned that when I set the learning objective, I have to make sure that it is suitable for the class and also students' condition and ability. I learn not being an ideal person that set to much /high learning goals."

From the data gathered both from the e-questionnaire and the student teacher's individual reflections, it was found that they realized that their teaching skills were sharpened through the microteaching practice that they have done. Other than that, they also realized that it is important for a teacher to really consider the student's conditions, so that they can design the learning goals that   their students can achieve. "All of the decisions during the teaching process are influenced by the ongoing classroom context, as well as teachers' experiences, values, knowledge of content, pedagogy, and individual students." [2]. Teaching practice as a bridge between theory and practice in the learning of teaching and the place where pre-service teachers develop a personal teaching competence [3].

Teacher as a decision maker in the class should be able to see those students, they are teaching are unique and have different cognitive abilities, family and cultural background that should an important consideration in the lesson planning process, so that the learning goals designed will be achievable for the students. The basis for individualized professional development to strengthen teachers' classroom practice recommend that systematic and standardized observation of real classroom practice contribute to teacher quality. [4].

In this case, student teachers are fully aware that apart from Him, they can do nothing. Knowing that they all have fallen into sin, their worldview in seeing things around them has been distorted by their own desire, only after Christ redeems them and let their mind captive by the light of His Word, then they are enabled to see things in the new perspective. They are able to discern things not based on what or how they thought, but they make decisions through the new lens by which they can see what is good or bad, which is right or wrong through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

God's wisdom to guide a Spiritual Discernment

During the online microteaching, they faced different situations that made them more aware that God's wisdom will give them a spiritual discernment to make wise decisions that will be manifested throughout their teaching practices [6].

"I reflected that preparing a plan would not necessarily run as smoothly as what I would expected and during   class not only I play an important role to influence my students through my teachings, but I also asked for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to enable me leading the class. Achieving learning goals will certainly be very fun but the atmosphere of the class can be controlled suddenly without goals at all so the teacher must be prepared. For this reason, I learned that prayer and work need to ask the Holy Spirit for help in guiding me as a teacher in class."

Teacher learning is characterized by reflection in and about practice although reflection is more than merely a recount of what occurred, but a thoughtful and thorough analysis of the teacher's role in what happened [12]. Reflection then includes the teacher's actions, reactions,

and interactions [13]. Through the reflection time, teachers also need God's wisdom that will guide them to a spiritual discernment to make wise decisions in different situations,

Collaborative Decision-Making Skills

Being a teacher also needs support from other teachers, cooperation will open new perspectives on seeing things, so that the teaching practices will be more effectively done. Supports and feedback from peers are needed for student teachers, especially to improve their pedagogical practices, find the suitable learning method, and keep them aware of the things that need to consider from others' perspectives.

Peer Feedback and Supports as a Learning Community

"Being a teacher, we need to be more complex on students by seeing their needs first and foremost, then integrate it with the lesson and finding the suitable method used for them. That's crystal clear not easy to do. Cooperating with other teachers from other subjects may help, I think, to make that plan successful."
"What an insight! I really agree with you that from today's microteaching and basically from every teaching session I reflect a lot on how I treat my students during the teaching session. And I think we are blessed and lucky enough to have such a community that can support us through comments and suggestions, am I right?"

Student teachers realized that they need a learning community that will support each other. Therefore, engaging in a collaborative dialogue with others enables student teachers as they become teachers to respond towards the contextual circumstances of their work better [11]. It also continuously supports the development of effective pedagogy, processes and policies in schools in response to an unpredictable and dynamic change in the education field. Feedback from peers is another way to make them improved, not only in teaching skills, but in developing decision-making skills that will be very needed, especially in the dynamic online learning processes [9]. Therefore, they appreciated the value of working closely with others, there were more willingness to take risks and develop interesting and more challenging lessons, and each invested significantly in the partner's development and success [8].

4 Conclusion

By conducting a reflective microteaching, student teachers could really see how they see their students as Imago Dei, therefore they need to prepare their lessons carefully by considering their students' characteristics, cognitive abilities, and cultural backgrounds. In order to create a supportive earning environment for their students' success, they need to set the learning goals that are achievable for their students, and they will need God's wisdom that will help them to make wise decisions in the midst of dynamic online learning process. Through peers' feedback ad suggestions after they have done the microteaching, student teachers also can make improvements for a better teaching quality as well as their character development. This also contributes on how student teachers value that support from a learning community is still needed though it is only given through online feedback.

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