

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' SENSE OF PREPAREDNESS FOR TEACHING: AN INDONESIAN CASE

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**Abstract:** A sense of preparedness for teaching is an essential factor in the field of teacher preparation as it is a crucial construct in pre-service teachers' professional growth towards becoming accomplished teachers. Accordingly, this paper aims to explore pre-service English language teachers' sense of preparedness for teaching within Indonesian contexts. A cohort of final-year students of a university-based English language teacher program in Yogyakarta was included as the participants. In this mixed-methods study, an online questionnaire and interview were the research instruments employed to collect the data. There were 106 students responding to the questionnaire and 31 students participating in the interviews. Findings showed that the pre-service teachers' levels of preparedness varied according to the teaching tasks. Based on the survey, the task of technology integration obtained the highest score. This implies that the participants appeared to feel comfortable with using technology in their teaching practices. However, their overall sense of preparedness indicated lower confidence. The interview results provide further explanation of the survey findings. The descriptive analysis revealed some key issues, including academic and personal factors, which potentially influenced pre-service teachers' sense of preparedness for teaching.

**Keywords:** teacher education, pre-service English language teachers, a sense of preparedness for teaching

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Pre-service teachers' sense of preparedness or readiness for teaching is a key factor in a journey of becoming a successful teacher. Exploring pre-service teachers' preparedness for teaching is crucial as this factor has great influences on pre-service teachers' teaching abilities in the classroom (see Ingvarson et al., 2007; Rowan & Townend, 2016; Stites et al., 2018). Understanding pre-service teachers' feelings of preparedness offers an explanation on a condition when pre-service teachers feel ready to execute their teaching competencies, including cognitive and affective aspects that they have learned and practised in the teacher education program. Moreover, a sense of preparedness is not only crucial for pre-service teachers, but also for the teacher education program regarding program effectiveness (Ingvarson et al., 2007). Further, from their investigation, Ingvarson et al. (2007) explain that teachers who are considered well-prepared commonly refer to those who have obtained adequate knowledge on subject matters and students' learning characteristics, as well as having good skills to assess students' learning competencies and plan effective class programs.

A sense of preparedness for teaching is task-specific or competency-based. Turner et al. (2004), for example, suggested that student teachers' feeling of preparedness appeared to be specific to certain teaching competencies. In their investigation, the participants felt more prepared in handling class practices rather than managing general teaching tasks, such as communicating with other school community members. Rowan and Townend (2016), who conducted a mixed-methods study with newly graduated teachers as their participants, identified three specific aspects of teaching where the participants felt less prepared. These included teaching students with diverse abilities, supporting students with a disability, and communicating with parents. Similarly, Abdullah (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study in a teacher education institution in Indonesia. The study aimed to examine pre-service teachers' level of readiness to teach by assessing their professional knowledge, professional practices, and professional attitudes. The results indicated that the participants felt more prepared in two aspects of preparedness, namely professional practices and attitudes, while less prepared in professional knowledge.

A number of studies have revealed that a sense of preparedness is likely to have connections with other factors, including self-efficacy and motivation to teaching. Siwatu (2011), for example, Siwatu found out that school locations, urban and suburban, have affected teacher candidates' feeling of preparedness to teach. The findings demonstrated that the level of perceived readiness for teaching and confidence of pre-service teachers who were teaching in suburban schools was higher than those who were teaching in urban schools. Additionally, it is worth noting that a sense of preparedness for teaching has a significant influence on pre-service teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching. Nugroho (2017) reveals that self-efficacy has contribution to pre-service EFL teachers' sense of preparedness. Similarly, in the field of early childhood education in the US, Kim et al. (2018) found the significant relationships of teacher candidates' sense of self-efficacy in teaching and preparedness for teaching.

Other investigations have revealed the relationships between the feeling of preparedness to teach and other constructs, including professional and social competencies to support pre-service teachers' professional growth. Research has strongly demonstrated the contribution of elements of teacher education, in terms of knowledge and field practices, to pre-service teachers' preparedness to teach in various disciplines, such as arts (Hudson & Hudson, 2007), health and physical education (Swabey et al., 2010), mathematics (Casey & Childs, 2011), and primary education (Brown et al., 2015). The findings of Lee et al. (2012) reported a significant contribution of teaching practicum to pre-service teachers' perceived preparedness and self-efficacy in teaching, particularly in regard to teaching knowledge and skills. More specifically, Brown et al. (2015) identified three aspects of teaching practicum that contributed most, namely practical teaching experiences, observations of experienced teachers teaching in class, and relationships with cooperating teachers. These two studies are relevant to the present study, which included teacher education students as participants, and exemplify the significant role of teaching practicum in pre-service teachers' feeling of preparedness to teach.

A strong sense of preparedness has also been shown when coursework and practicum experiences in pre-service teacher education programs align, including providing courses in line with the pre-service teachers' needs in their field of work. Onchwari (2010), for example, reveals that there is no significant difference between preservice teachers and in-service teachers in

handling their students' stress. On average, they are moderately prepared to cope with stress in their students. It is likely that both pre-service and in-service teachers have not had sufficient training regarding stress management. Therefore, it is important to include theories on how to handle students' stress in the teacher education program. She also highlighted the important role of teaching practicum supervisors to assist pre-service teachers to cope with students' stress. Further, O'Neill and Stephenson (2012) revealed the contribution of theories, particularly related to classroom management, in shaping pre-service teachers' professional competencies. Their study demonstrated that the completion of a classroom management course significantly increased the participants' feeling of readiness for teaching and other teaching competencies. This finding suggests that theories should be aligned with the practices in order to ensure pre-service teachers' readiness for teaching.

To this point, the review of the literature has demonstrated that a sense of preparedness is a crucial construct in pre-service teachers' professional growth towards becoming accomplished teachers. Previous investigations have shown some pieces of evidence about the influence of a sense of preparedness for pre-service and in-service teachers' professional growth. However, within teacher preparation in Indonesia, not much research, particularly in the field of EFL, has examined pre-service teachers' feelings of preparedness for teaching (see Daflizar et al., 2022; Kusaeri, 2019; Loreman et al., 2013; Purwasih et al., 2021; Sari & Ridhwan, 2022). Considering the essential roles of a sense of preparedness in teacher education, there is an urgency to explore this construct further to portrait recent situations of pre-service teachers in Indonesia, which would be a potential support for the attainment of the national goals, particularly with regard to the quality of education. Therefore, this paper aims to assess pre-service teachers' feelings of preparedness for teaching and identify some common concerns that potentially affect their sense of preparedness through the lens of pre-service English language teachers.

## **METHOD**

This section discusses the research method employed in this investigation. It includes the research design, instruments, and participants.

### **Research Design and Instruments**

To address the research objectives, a mixed-methods study was employed to reach larger samples as well as to gain deeper information from the respondents. According to Cresswell (2014), a mixed methods approach allows a researcher to include a large sample of the target population with relatively shorter time and less resources. Furthermore, this research approach has the capacity to describe trends as well as explore attitudes and opinions of the research participants.

To obtain all relevant information, there were two research tools used in this study, namely a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

#### ***Questionnaire***

The online questionnaire, which was adapted from Darling-Hammond et al. (2002), was used to examine the participants' general perceived preparedness for teaching. This instrument

was in the form of a Likert scale survey with 32 closed-ended items and six options for each item ranging from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (6). More specifically, there were six categories of survey questions asking about the participants' sense of preparedness as shown below.

- a. Preparedness to promote student learning (*e.g. I feel prepared to use engaging teaching strategies*);
- b. Preparedness to understand learners (*e.g. I feel prepared to understand how students' social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development influences learning*);
- c. Preparedness to teach critical thinking and social development (*e.g. I feel prepared to help students learn to think critically and solve problems*);
- d. Preparedness to develop instructional leadership (*e.g. I feel prepared to develop and solve problems with colleagues*);
- e. Preparedness to use technology (*I feel prepared to integrate technology in teaching and learning*);
- f. Overall preparedness (*I feel prepared to become an English language teacher*).

### ***Semi-structured interviews***

The second instrument was follow-up interviews. The interviews aimed to obtain more information from the participants about their perceptions on preparedness for teaching, therefore they were conducted after the participants completed the questionnaire. Punch (2014) suggests that interviews enable the researcher to investigate the problem under investigation in depth, in its natural setting, recognising the complexity and influence of context. Accordingly, this tool was employed to obtain further information particularly related to the pre-service teachers' concerns in teaching, including their experiences when undertaking courses and during their teaching practicum, which may affect their feelings of preparedness.

### **Data Analysis**

After all data were collected and the interview results were transcribed, statistical and thematic approaches were employed to analyze the survey and interview results sequentially. All the survey responses from the respondents were recorded in an Excel worksheet. Then, descriptive statistics using SPSS version 24 were used to gain general information about the participants' perceptions of preparedness.

Regarding semi-structured interviews, the thematic analysis was employed to provide more explanation about their feelings of preparedness to complement the survey results. All audio-recorded interviews were individually transcribed verbatim, then uploaded in NVIVO before the analysis began. In the analysis, pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' confidentiality. Later in this paper, both datasets, which tend to be consistent to each other, were integrated and discussed further. The information collected from the interview provided more clarification about the questionnaire results, especially when the participants responded some items with 'somewhat agree'. The literature review is used as a conceptual framework to analyze the data and to see whether the data are convergent or divergent with the prior studies.

### Setting and Research Participants

This study was conducted in a university-based English language teacher education program in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in the mid of 2017. The participants of the present study were a cohort of final-year students enrolled in the English language teacher education program. All the participants had completed all the required coursework for teaching and teaching practicum. Before the online questionnaire was launched, invitations to participate in this survey were sent to all final-year students of the English language education program. There were 68% of the population (106 students), consisting of 81 female and 25 male students, who consented to join the research. Out of 106 survey respondents, there were 31 students who agreed to be interviewed. The overall research procedure involving the participants is illustrated in Figure 1.

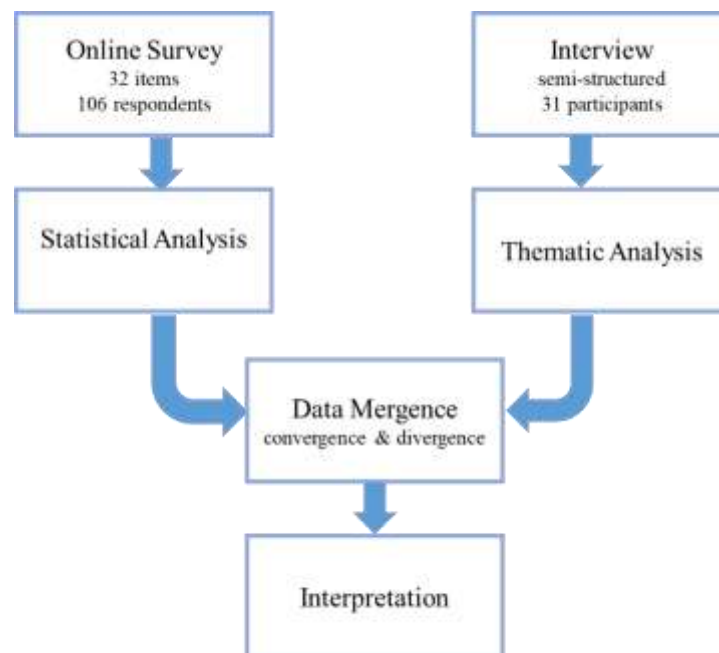


Figure 1. Research Design

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### *A General View of Pre-Service Teacher's Preparedness for Teaching*

This section describes and explains the analysis results of 32-item survey with 106 English language teacher education students as the respondents. In the analysis, this survey is classified into six groups: (1) promoting students' learning, (2) understanding learners, (3) teaching critical

thinking and social development; (4) developing instructional leadership; (5) using technology; and (6) overall preparedness. Each category is elaborated in detail in the following sections.

### ***Preparedness to Promote Students' Learning***

The first part of this survey presents a number of teaching practices which are important to support students' learning, such as effective instructional strategies to engage students; managing a classroom with diverse students' characteristics; enhancing students' learning and achievement; as well as the ability to improve their teaching quality through self-evaluation and reflection. The participants should assess their own readiness dealing with these classroom practices by responding to 13 survey statements in this category.

Table 1 shows that, in general, the respondents have a medium level of perceived preparedness to enhance students learning with the means ranging from 3.83 to 4.34 in a six-point Likert scale. The data demonstrate that most of the responses consistently indicate slight agreements (*somewhat agree*) with the statements.

In this category of preparedness, the top three teaching skills that the participants feel more prepared are to understand students' diversity in learning with a mean of 4.34; to connect lessons to real life with a mean of 4.32; and to do self-evaluation and reflection on their class performance with a mean of 4.31. The data reveal that most responses to these three survey statements are between 'somewhat agree' and 'agree' as presented in Table 1.

With a slight difference, the bottom three teaching abilities that the participants feel less prepared relate to teaching strategies to deal with different purposes with a mean of 4.00; teaching strategies for students' diversity with a mean of 3.98, and students' independent assessment with a mean of 3.83. For these three survey items, most of the participants appear to be less certain with their abilities as indicated by their responses.

**Table 1. Preparedness to Promote Students' Learning**

<i>Preparedness on</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>somewhat disagree</i>	<i>somewhat agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
students' learning diversity	1%	1%	9%	56%	24%	9%	4.34	.86
classroom learning to the real world	1%	0	12%	54%	25%	8%	4.32	.85
self-teaching reflection	0	1%	12%	56%	23%	8%	4.31	.81
subject matters	1%	2%	11%	54%	25%	7%	4.25	.86
engaging teaching strategies	1%	2%	10%	58%	25%	4%	4.18	.79
students' motivation and learning independence	0	2%	15%	55%	24%	5%	4.17	.79

<i>Preparedness on</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>somewhat disagree</i>	<i>somewhat agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
teaching strategies to support new learners	0	2%	15%	52%	22%	7%	4.13	.90
assessments	1%	5%	17%	42%	30%	5%	4.13	.96
challenging and appropriate expectations	1%	1%	14%	59%	21%	4%	4.11	.79
students' academic success	1%	2%	20%	55%	16%	7%	4.03	.89
teaching strategies to serve different purposes	1%	3%	21%	52%	18%	6%	4.00	.91
teaching strategies to meet different students' needs	1%	2%	19%	58%	16%	4%	3.98	.82
students' independent assessments	2%	8%	17%	51%	18%	4%	3.83	.99

### ***Preparedness to Understand Learners***

This section presents pre-service teachers' perceived preparedness to understand their learners through the responses of four survey statements. Similar to the previous category, the participants' feelings of preparedness to understand their learners are also in the moderate level as demonstrated in Table 2. The data reveal that the participants seem to be sufficiently prepared to learn about their students' characteristics and social background. However, they have the biggest concern regarding students with special learning needs, which gain the smallest mean score (3.95) within this category.

**Table 2. Preparedness to Understand Learners**

<i>Preparedness on</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>somewhat disagree</i>	<i>somewhat agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
the influence of students' social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development	0	1%	12%	51%	24%	12%	4.41	.87
the influence of non-school factors on students' learning	0	2%	18%	48%	27%	5%	4.18	.83

<i>Preparedness on</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>somewhat disagree</i>	<i>somewhat agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
the influence of students' family and cultural backgrounds	3%	1%	13%	55%	24%	5%	4.11	.92
special learning needs	3%	0	23%	53%	16%	6%	3.95	.94

### ***Preparedness to Enhance Learners' Critical Thinking and Social Development***

There are ten survey items asking about the participants' feelings of preparedness to teach critical thinking and social development as shown in Table 3. These teaching competencies include the abilities to engage students to work collaboratively with their classmates; the abilities to communicate verbally and non-verbally to support the learning process in class; and to facilitate students' critical thinking. From the descriptive statistics, it can be seen that the highest level of preparedness relates to the participants' competency to engage students to work cooperatively with a mean of 4.35, while the lowest level is on the ability to help students to think critically and solve problems with a mean of 3.92. This means that a moderate level of pre-service teachers' preparedness is also identified in this section.

**Table 3 Preparedness to Enhance Learners' Critical Thinking and Social Development**

<i>Preparedness on</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>somewhat disagree</i>	<i>somewhat agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
cooperative group work	0	4%	9%	49%	29%	8%	4.35	.88
stimulating questions	0	3%	8%	58%	25%	7%	4.31	.79
verbal communication strategies	0	2%	13%	54%	25%	6%	4.24	.80
social development and group responsibility	1%	3%	12%	53%	25%	6%	4.19	.88
independent learning	0	1%	15%	58%	19%	7%	4.18	.79
self-motivated and self-directed students	0	2%	15%	55%	24%	5%	4.17	.79
students' questioning and discussion skills	0	6%	10%	55%	23%	7%	4.17	.89
nonverbal communication strategies	1%	3%	15%	56%	21%	5%	4.08	.86
students' diverse perspectives.	1%	6%	18%	52%	18%	6%	3.97	.95
critical thinking	1%	5%	18%	57%	16%	4%	3.92	.88



### ***Preparedness to Develop Instructional Leadership***

Instructional leadership is one of the components assessed in the survey. The data reveal that the participants feel moderately prepared to the three teaching competencies. The highest score for this category is the participants' feelings of preparedness to discuss and solve problems with colleagues with a mean of 4.32. Slightly lower, the participants are also moderately prepared to maintain an orderly and purposive learning environment with a mean of 4.05 and to resolve conflicts in the classroom with a mean of 3.94.

**Table 4. Preparedness to Develop Instructional Leadership**

<i>Preparedness on</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>somewhat disagree</i>	<i>somewhat agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
relationships with colleagues	1%	0	8%	61%	21%	8%	4.32	.79
a conducive learning environment	1%	2%	20%	51%	23%	4%	4.05	.86
interpersonal conflicts in the classroom	0	4%	23%	53%	16%	5%	3.94	.85

### ***Preparedness to Use Technology***

As predicted, the perceptions of preparedness to use technology obtain the highest mean value in the survey with a mean of 4.63. Over 90% of the participants indicate their readiness to integrate technology in the classroom practices as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Preparedness to Use Technology**

<i>Preparedness on</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>somewhat disagree</i>	<i>somewhat agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
technology in teaching and learning	0	0	8%	33%	42%	17%	4.63	.83

### ***Overall Preparedness for Teaching***

It is interesting to find out that the participants' overall preparedness is the lowest value in this survey with a mean of 3.74, as shown in Table 6. The descriptive statistics show that a significant number of the participants are less confident in this survey item as the responses are mostly *somewhat agree* (49%) and *somewhat disagree* (27%). This finding indicates that a number of participants have some concerns about their feeling of preparedness for teaching.

**Table 6. Overall Preparedness**

<i>Overall</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>somewhat disagree</i>	<i>somewhat agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
becoming an English language teacher	2%	5%	27%	49%	13%	4%	3.74	.93

### ***Further Exploration on Aspects That Potentially Influence a Sense of Preparedness***

In the interviews, the participants shared their experiences and feelings which may reflect on their sense of preparedness for teaching, particularly after doing their teaching practicum in schools. There are some interesting findings collected from this interview. This paper highlights some common issues, both supporting and inhibiting factors, emerging from the interviews as presented below.

#### ***Supporting factors***

Positive views were identified from the interview with the participants when they were asked what made them feel prepared/unprepared.

Firstly, the responses showed that early motivation appeared to contribute significantly towards their sense of preparedness for teaching. The data indicated that having a passion toward teaching as well as an intention to serve or please others had a great influence on their readiness to become a teacher as shown below. Pseudonyms are used here to protect the participants' confidentiality.

#### ***Passionate about teaching***

...since I was in Grade 9, I wanted to become a teacher and I also liked the English language. (Hanes)

I love teaching and I want to be a professional English teacher. (Aster)

These quotes indicate pre-service teachers' high motivation to become teachers. Their strong intentions have influenced their willingness to make more efforts to accomplish their dreams.

#### ***Compassionate towards parents and others***

My goal is to make my parents happy and when my parents (Arsa)

I like to share things with others (Boy)

This is an interesting finding. Some participants said that people around them have important roles in their decisions to attend the teacher education programs. They are eager to contribute to society as well as to respect their parents. Therefore, they tend to be persistent and resilient.

#### ***Supporting system***

University supervisors, mentor teachers, peers, school students are people who have direct connections with pre-service teachers during teacher training. This study found out that the

participants' positive experiences with them built their self-confidence as English language teachers as well as developed their preparedness for teaching. Here are some of the quotes:

...the [students] really respect me and they joined every activity that I did, very enthusiastic and I'm really happy because of their attitude in the classroom (Celline)

My school-mentor was really attentive, offered great help on how to write a good lesson plan (Ama)

I find it helpful for me because I cannot be a teacher like I wanted to be and the lecturers support us and she gave us good motivation (Celline)

These quotes show how students' acceptance, school-mentor's attention, and university supervisors are important for their professional development. Having supports from people around them appeared to be crucial for the participants as they grow their sense of belonging to the professional community.

As presented previously, the participants in this study had different reasons for joining the teacher education program, which affect their perceptions of preparedness for teaching. Furthermore, external supports appear to complement the personal intentions during their early professional development.

### ***Inhibiting factors***

In contrast to the previous section, the interviewees also had some concerns about the teaching profession. The following are frequently-shared concerns during the interview section.

#### *Inadequate proficiency of the subject matters*

I think that my English is still not good, my grammar is worse actually and I think because my biggest problem in English is actually about the grammar and the speaking (Roy)

I am afraid to make mistakes when I have to speak in English. (Jasmine)

Knowledge on the subject matters, in this case the English language, emerges as a dominant concern among the participants of this study. Having low confidence seems to influence their readiness to become a teacher as shown in the quote. From the interviews, it can be noted that lack of grammar and pronunciation accuracy is considered essential and significantly contribute to their success of teaching practices.

#### *Challenges with classroom practices*

When my students are busy in their own and they're talking to each other. I become confused how to get their focus, their attention. (Rose)

Sometimes I cannot control the students when I speak. Then, some of them, usually students who sit at the back, they tend to speak with their friends. and when I say, "Please, be quiet", they become quiet for a few seconds, then talk to their friends again. (Orchid)

Grabbing students' attention is an important skill in teaching. This example shows that the participant seems to be surprised and not ready yet to adjust her teaching strategies to the real class situation. At this point, she realised that there should be flexibility in her teaching strategies

to adapt to the actual class atmosphere. This situation is commonly known as reality shock (Kim & Cho, 2014).

I think that even though I have had my PPL I still find myself not ready enough to teach in a school because I think that we need more practices to teach especially in a large class. (Carnation)

The number of students in one class can also be a source of some participants' anxiety. A typical class of a secondary school in Yogyakarta consists of around 30 students. Managing a class with a large number of students appears to be very challenging for pre-service teachers. Not only should they be able to recognise the students' characteristics, they are also expected to select effective teaching strategies to ensure a conducive learning atmosphere.

#### *Students' diverse learning characteristics and needs*

I think that all of the students were very active so they could easily get the materials, catch the materials very well but it turned out that not everyone in that class very can really understand the materials. I'm so sad because I forget about that. (Lily)

Students have different characteristics. Teachers should be able to handle them wisely. Sometimes, students who are critical and smart, asked unexpected questions. It is a challenge for me. It seemed that they just wanted to test me. (Tulip)

Despite the fact that pre-service teachers have learned about theories of students' development in teacher education, facing different students' learning styles in class is still problematic for pre-service teachers. This quote reveals that recognising students well is a crucial teaching component to be considered as well as a challenge for a beginning teacher.

#### *Demanding administrative tasks*

A teacher does not only teach. Behind it there are administrative processes which need to be completed as a teacher. That sometimes made me change my mind. (Chrysanthemum)

I didn't do all of the administrative things, of course. I only experienced one or four of them. And it was already so overwhelming. I mean like what's the point of this? I feel teachers now get the burden already from the administration. (Gladiolus)

Teaching practicum in school raises some participants' awareness that teachers have other responsibilities besides teaching. They should regularly complete some paperwork, including thick documents of lesson plans and students' reports. For some participants, they consider teaching as a demanding profession.

After presenting important findings of this study, this paper will discuss the research results in light of relevant literature in the following section.

## **Discussion**

The literature review has strongly underlined that a sense of preparedness for teaching is an important aspect of pre-service teachers' professional growth (see Housego, 1990; Ingvarson et al., 2007; Rowan & Townend, 2016). This study has demonstrated that in general the participants showed a moderate level of perceived preparedness. It confirmed that pre-service

teachers' sense of preparedness for teaching is task or task-specific, such as preparedness for subject matters and preparedness for teaching strategies and assessment (see Table 1). This is in line with prior research (see Rowan & Townend, 2016; Turner et al., 2004). Furthermore, the current findings have also revealed that the participants have some personal concerns, which potentially influence their feelings of preparedness for teaching.

The present research highlights some key findings that relate to pre-service teachers' feelings of preparedness for teaching. In the following sub-sections, further discussions on the research findings are elaborated.

### ***Knowledge and Practice***

Research has strongly suggested that knowledge on subject matters is crucial for teachers (see Darling-Hammond, 2006; Shulman, 2013). Even though this survey has demonstrated that the participants are moderately prepared to teach the subject matter, the interview results show that some participants consider themselves having insufficient knowledge, in this case the English language subject.

In Indonesia, English is a compulsory foreign language subject taught in secondary schools. Consequently, these pre-service English language teachers are required to be proficient in the language, which is not their first language or mother tongue. This means that the non-native pre-service teachers have a challenge to teach a foreign language using the targeted language to their students. The present findings indicate that knowledge on the target language is a serious concern among the participants as revealed in the interview. Some participants acknowledged their inadequate language proficiency as English language teachers. This situation appears to be common among pre-service English language teachers in ESL/EFL contexts as revealed by Atay (2007), Liaw (2009), Malmir and Mohammad (2018).

Additionally, some other research reveals the contribution of knowledge mastery to other aspects of language learning. Based on a systematic review, Wyatt (2018) notes that English proficiency, native versus non-native teachers, a sense of anxiety, and teaching efficacy are common issues of research in EFL/ESL contexts. Nugroho (2017), for example, suggests that anxiety has a significant influence on pre-service English language teachers' self-efficacy in Indonesia. Insufficient English language proficiency is one the causes of anxiety. Further, Daud et al. (2019), who also conducted a mixed-method investigation in Indonesia, claim that there are three potential interrelated factors affecting pre-service English language teachers' speaking anxiety. They are social (e.g. speaking in front of people), linguistic (e.g. grammar, pronunciation), and personal elements (e.g. motivation).

In addition to the English language proficiency, applying the theories they have learned in teacher education into practice is another general issue among the participants as shown in this study. In this case, their self-efficacy to handle class practices appears to be low, which is likely to influence their preparedness. This finding aligns with a qualitative study conducted in Salatiga, Indonesia (Ragawanti, 2015), and a study conducted in the US that reported the existence of a gap in pre-service teachers' knowledge of classroom management (Poznanski et al., 2018).

### ***Students' Heterogeneity***

Prior research strongly suggested that classroom practices could be a major challenge for pre-service teachers and possibly influence their teaching confidence and feeling of preparedness due to their limited teaching experience (see Dicke et al., 2015; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012; Poznanski et al., 2018). Christophersen et al. (2016) argue that students' misbehaviour in class influences pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. Drawing upon the results of a large-scale study, Rowan and Townend (2016) have identified three areas where beginning teachers feel less prepared. They include coping with the diversity of students' abilities, facilitating students with disability, and discussing sensitive matters with parents. In line with the prior investigations, problems, such as noisy students, different learning paces, could be the source of pre-service teachers' sense of preparedness and anxiety.

Even though the data show that the participants are moderately- to well-prepared to understand students' heterogeneity (see Table 1 and 2), the difficulty to manage a large size of students with various characteristics is a common issue raised by the participants, in line with prior research (see El-Abd & Chaaban, 2020; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012). In this situation, pre-service teachers are confronted with the ability to select effective instructional strategies that are able to engage all students. Both datasets revealed the participants appeared to feel less prepared with this teaching ability (see Table 1), even they feel confused to handle the class. Additionally, this study found out some other concerns related to students' characteristics. They include their ability to assist students with special needs, to facilitate students' critical thinking, and to mediate interpersonal conflicts in the classroom.

### ***Technology for Learning***

The roles of technology have expanded greatly in the educational field, including teacher training programs (see Kauppinen et al., 2018; Keser et al., 2015; Rowston et al., 2020). Han et al. (2017) reported that the ability to integrate technology in class significantly improved pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in teaching. Voogt and McKenney (2017) even suggest the urgency to increase the use of technology in teacher education to support teacher candidates' Technology in Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) in early literacy. The current data showed that the participants had included technology in their teaching practicum, and they considered themselves ready to use technology in their teaching practices. As shown in Table 5, the participants' sense of preparedness to integrate technology in teaching and learning obtains the highest mean score with a mean of 4.63. This implies that the majority of the participants (92%) believe and feel confident that they have sufficient skills to use technology to optimise students' learning in class. Howard et al. (2021) suggest that digital competence is an essential component which pre-service teachers should develop for educational technology use.

### ***Professional Connectedness***

Having an ability to connect with the teaching community is one of the key aspects that pre-service teachers should be aware. Gordon (2008) strongly suggests that pre-service teachers are expected to be able to recognize their own capacity in order to shape their self-identity. Therefore, meaningful experiences when undertaking teacher training programs are crucial.

Accordingly, the current interview results (see the findings section) revealed that various types of connectedness, which impacted pre-service teachers' professional journey, occurred during the teacher preparation. The connections with their supervisors, mentor teachers, peers, and other school members enrich their professional growth.

University-based supervisors, mentor teachers, peers, school students and other school community members are people who have significant contribution to pre-service teachers' professional growth. As found in the data, receiving attention, guidance, and feedback from more-experienced teachers, in this case lecturers and mentor teachers, is valuable for the participants. Dixon et al. (2012) emphasised the importance of feedback from the more experienced people to the less experienced ones. Furthermore, feedback may increase professional efficacy and motivation (Lee & Yuan, 2014; Rots et al., 2012). Inside a classroom, students' acceptance is another positive experience. The participants appeared to be happy when their students considered them as the teacher. Furthermore, they shared the same feeling when other teachers and school staff welcomed them warmly.

This shows that social and professional relationships during teacher preparation are essential for pre-service teachers' early professional growth. These interconnections may positively or negatively contribute to pre-service teachers' sense of professional efficacy as well as preparedness for teaching.

### ***Non-Teaching Tasks***

This research found teachers' administrative work appeared to be another challenge for some participants. This finding is in line with Yuan and Lee (2016) who recommend that recognising unexpected constraints that pre-service teachers encounter in the school environment can also cultivate negative feelings and affect their exploration of self-identity. In the current research, non-teaching responsibilities of teachers, such as to be a teacher on duty, seem to undermine the pre-service teachers' interests in this profession.

The above discussion on pre-service teachers' sense of preparedness for teaching revealed that feelings of preparedness are interconnected to other components, deriving from selves or other aspects. Mastery of knowledge and skills, opportunities to practice, social connectedness are some of potential aspects that contribute to pre-service teachers' perceived preparedness for teaching.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The teacher education program is a place where students (pre-service teachers) are equipped with knowledge and practices to become prospective quality teachers. Pre-service teachers' sense of preparedness is one of the ways to evaluate and monitor the process of teacher preparation. Prior research has strongly recommended including this factor to be one of the tools to measure pre- and in-service teachers' professional growth.

This study reveals that pre-service teachers' sense of preparedness for teaching is contextual and specific to particular teaching tasks. It suggests that a sense of preparedness for teaching is influenced by other interrelated aspects, such as motivation, knowledge, classroom practices as well as professional supports. Furthermore, the present findings highlight the

complexities of becoming a teacher and the essential roles of teacher education as a formation place for future teachers.

This paper adds to the literature on the degree to which pre-service training prepares prospective teachers for their work. The results of the investigation, which indicate potential sources of a sense of preparedness, may be used as feedback to the teacher education program. Therefore, it is urgent to include this factor as one of the dimensions to be measured in an overall teacher education program evaluation.

Regarding research limitation, it is acknowledged that this study only included students from one department of a university. Therefore, it is necessary to see this area of research in a wider context, bigger samples, and various perspectives. Furthermore, investigating other factors that are likely to influence pre-service teachers' sense of preparedness for teaching is a potential topic of research.

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