Enhancing Pedagogical Competencies of Teacher Candidates Through Peer Observations

Nengah Dwi Handayani[1*], Ida Bagus Nyoman Mantra[2]

[1,2]English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Denpasar, Indonesia

Corresponding Email: *ndwihandayani@unmas.ac.id

Abstract

This research aimed at enhancing the pedagogical competencies of teacher candidates through the implementation of peer observations. The study was conducted on the 6th-semester students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) of Universitas Mahasaraswati (Unmas) Denpasar, especially those taking a Microteaching Course. Utilizing a classroom action research design, the research tracked the improvement of students' pedagogical competencies through a series of tests: pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test. The mean pre-test score was 73.895, indicating a moderate level of pedagogical competency at the start of the study. After the implementation of peer observation, the student's performance improved, with the mean score rising to 79.684 in post-test 1. By the second post-test, the mean score increased to 86.947, demonstrating a significant improvement. The findings suggest that peer observation could improve the pedagogical competencies of teacher candidates.

Keywords: pedagogical competency, peer observation

INTRODUCTION

In teacher training programs, the development of pedagogical competency is essential for preparing future teachers. Pedagogical competencies include a variety of abilities, such as lesson planning, classroom management, teaching strategies, and assessment procedures, all of which are essential for effective teaching (Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Teacher candidates, particularly those in training programs, sometimes struggle to develop these skills in traditional classrooms.

Pedagogical competency is defined as an educator's capacity to successfully support learning using a well-developed set of skills and knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2012). These skills are necessary to guarantee that instructors can manage diverse classes, offer compelling content, and assess student learning meaningfully. They address various teaching practice issues, such as curriculum design, classroom administration, teaching methods, and evaluation approaches. However, teacher candidates, particularly those entering training programs, frequently fail to completely master these qualities in traditional classrooms, where academic knowledge generally trumps practical experience (Cruickshank & Metcalf, 1993).

Pedagogical competency is essential for increasing student outcomes and ensuring efficient and equitable learning. Research shows that teachers with better pedagogical ability help their pupils develop deeper comprehension and critical thinking skills (Hattie, 2008). Furthermore, experienced teachers can establish inclusive classroom environments in which all students, regardless of background or ability, have the opportunity to achieve. Bridging the gap between theory and practice remains a major difficulty in teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

To address this issue, innovative approaches such as peer observation can be implemented to promote professional development and strengthen pedagogical competencies (Bell & Cooper, 2013; Hendry & Oliver, 2012). Peer observation, in which prospective instructors observe and provide feedback on one another's teaching approaches, is widely acknowledged for its capacity to foster a reflective and collaborative learning environment (Shortland, 2010).

Although there are many kinds of research supporting the use of peer observation in professional development contexts (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hendry *et al.,* 2014), little research has been conducted on its application specifically in pre-service teacher education programs, particularly in non-Western contexts such as Indonesia. This work tries to fill a huge research gap.
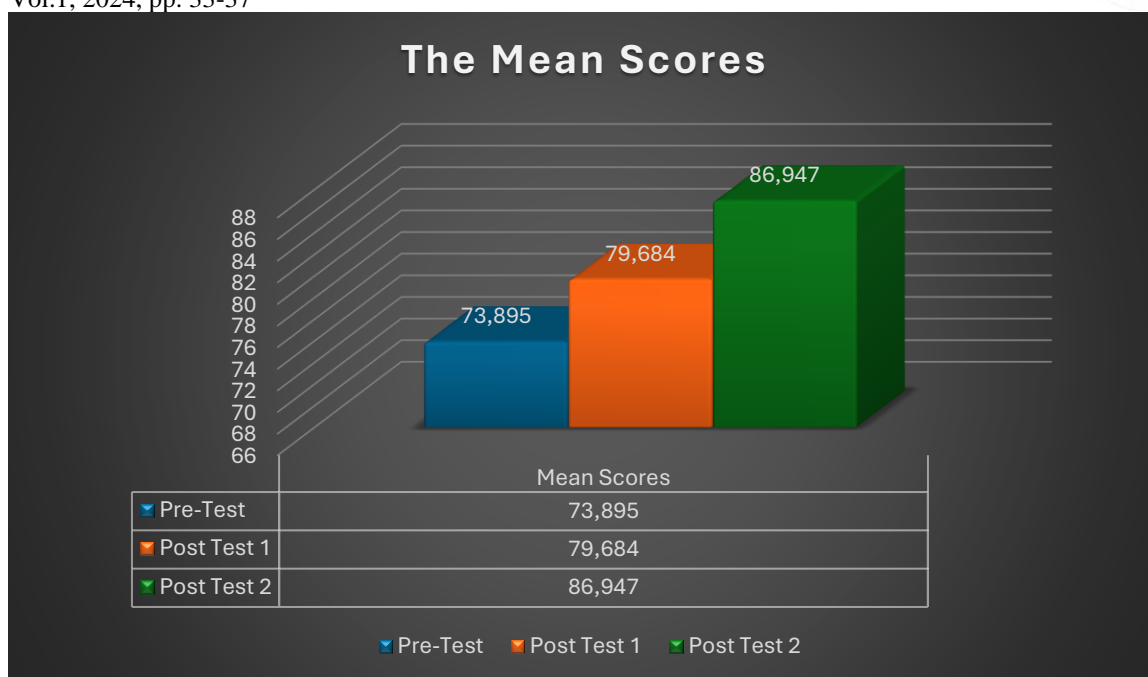
This study investigates the use of peer observation to improve the pedagogical competence of prospective teachers participating in the English Language Education Study Programme (ELESP) at Mahasaraswati University Denpasar (Unmas). This study focused on sixth-semester students completing the Microteaching course, an important component of teacher preparation. Microteaching allows future teachers to practice crucial teaching skills in a controlled environment, making it an ideal venue for incorporating peer observation as reflective practice (Amobi, 2005). Based on the background above, the researchers intended to conduct research on Enhancing the Pedagogical Competencies of the 6th-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program of Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar through Peer Observations.

METHOD

This study used a classroom action research method to examine the impact of peer observation on subjects' pedagogical competencies through a series of examinations (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). This study uses peer observation to shed evidence on peer-based learning interventions in pre-service teacher education, particularly in Indonesia. The purpose of classroom action research in education is to foster an inquiry-oriented approach to teaching in which challenging one's own practice becomes part of the job and the teaching culture (Ary *et al.,* 1972). It can be carried out by an individual teacher, a group of teachers working together inside a single school, or researchers in a long-term collaboration (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). Furthermore, it offers insight into the potential of peer observation to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical teaching competencies, a challenge that persists in teacher training programs. The subjects under study were the 6th-semester students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) of Universitas Mahasaraswati (Unmas) Denpasar, especially those taking the Microteaching Course. The research figured out the improvement of students' pedagogical competencies through a series of tests: pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed a classroom action research design to investigate the improvement of prospective teachers' pedagogical competence using a battery of tests, including pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2.

The Mean Scores

Mean Scores	
Pre-Test	73,895
Post Test 1	79,684
Post Test 2	86,947

Pre-Test   Post Test 1   Post Test 2

At the beginning of the study, the average pre-test score was 73.895, indicating moderate pedagogical competency. These basic findings highlight a recurrent difficulty in pre-service teacher education: students may have theoretical knowledge but struggle to apply it in effective teaching practice (Cruickshank & Metcalf, 1993). Moderate initial competency emphasizes the necessity for specific interventions to close the gap between theoretical comprehension and practical application in the classroom.

After using peer observation, the average score climbed to 79.684 in post-test 1, indicating a considerable improvement. Peer observation has long been acknowledged as an effective approach for encouraging reflective practice by allowing teacher candidates to critically analyze their teaching methods and receive constructive feedback from peers (Bell & Cooper, 2013). This activity not only raises self-awareness but also promotes collaborative learning, in which students can learn by seeing various teaching styles and approaches (Hendry & Oliver, 2012). This early improvement on post-test 1 demonstrated that peer observation could speed up the development of teaching competency by giving insight and feedback in real time.

The average score on post-test 2 rose to 86.947, demonstrating a significant gain in pedagogical skills. This considerable improvement could be attributed to the cyclical nature of classroom action research, which involves repeated cycles of planning, observation, reflection, and action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Over time, teacher candidates get more comfortable with the peer observation process, incorporating feedback into their teaching practice and honing their skills. These findings were consistent with the larger literature, which indicated that peer-supported professional development could significantly increase teaching efficacy (Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond, 2005).

This research finding showed that peer observation is an excellent way to improve teacher candidates' pedagogical competencies. Peer observation promotes continual improvement and professional development by allowing for reflection and feedback. Furthermore, this study emphasized the need of incorporating peer learning into teacher education programs,

particularly in instances where students require greater opportunities for practical application and collaboration (Shortland, 2010).

CONCLUSION

The results revealed a considerable improvement in pedagogical skills. In conclusion, the improvement in test scores from pre-test to post-test 2 supported the claim that peer observation could improve the pedagogical competencies of the subject under study. This not only improved pedagogical competency but also fostered a Culture of cooperation and reflective practice, both of which are essential for training future teachers to confront various issues in the classroom. Based on the conclusion, the lecturers teaching the Microteaching Course are suggested to implement this peer observation. Teacher candidates must view peer observation as a valuable learning opportunity, not just a task. Active participation in peer observation allows for a more in-depth evaluation of one's own teaching techniques as well as the teaching practices of others. Although this study focused on students enrolled in Microteaching courses, future research could look into the effects of peer observation across various teacher training courses.

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