Pre-service Social Studies Teachers' Perception of the Impact of Literacy on Teaching Quality

Maha Dewi Sabrina Nalle
[1]Universitas Pelita Harapan

Article Info	Abstract
	Indonesians' literacy skills are left behind compared to other Asians countries. Literacy skills are essentials for social studies subject; hence, the teachers are compelled to prepare and improve their teaching quality to lead students increase their literacy skills. This study aims to examine the perception of pre-service social studies teachers regarding literacy and its impact to their teaching quality. This study uses a qualitative study approach, the data were collected from semi-structured interview of 6 pre-service social studies teachers chosen with purposive sampling. The results shown that pre-service teachers social studies perceive literacy play important role in enhancing teaching quality. The suggestion is pre-service teachers are educated by integrating technology-based literacy methods to enhance their critical reading skills and ultimately improve their future teaching quality.

Corresponding Author:
Maha Dewi Sabrina Nalle
Institution: Universitas Pelita Harapan
Email: mdsnalle@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' teaching competency is one of the pivotal factors demanded by this fast-changing world to be innovative and creative. Teachers' competencies hold immense role over students' achievement such as thinking skills, particularly in social studies subject. Social studies is a multidiscipline subject, integrating History, Civics, Sociology, Economy, and Geography into one. A teacher's teaching competency plays important roles to promote critical thinking skills in social studies class, in which all sorts of information are mixed in this subject. Therefore, developing the teaching competency for social studies pre-service teachers is important to be professional teachers. Undergo various classes and teaching practicum pre-service teachers learn basic skills of delivering content, classroom management and create design instructional. In the process, literacy becomes a supportive crucial aspect because the skills to comprehend, analyze, and deliver information effectively are compulsory in teaching activity. Good literacy will help pre-service teachers to design meaningful and engaging learning activities and improve their teaching quality.

Social studies, as a subject, has been substantiated to be reading-intensive (Akpochafo, 2014, as cited in Iheakanwa et al, 2021). This means Social Studies pre-service teachers are compelled to purposely design a learning experience that supports students' literacy skill. Literacy is the ability to comprehend and analyze information by reading, listening or watching (Fadila & Pramudiani, 2023). In the current era, society is experiencing significant shifts in literacy skills, particularly in reading habits because of the impact of internet access and social media algorithms on how people consume information and read texts. According to Margaret Mackey (Mackey, 2020), there are five key themes

highlighting these changes: 1) the decline in traditional print reading, as evidenced by international assessments like PISA; 2) the rise of digital reading, especially through mobile devices, which has transformed the way people engage with text; 3) the interactivity of contemporary reading, which includes texts that are multimodal and often tied to other media formats, 4) the growing importance of reader autonomy, where personal choice in reading materials influences motivation and engagement; 5) the challenges of defining and measuring reading in an age where the boundaries between print, digital, and interactive media are increasingly blurred. Pre-service social studies teachers must adapt themselves to this shift. UNESCO results reveal that Indonesia's reading interest rate is only 0.01%, far behind that of developed countries which reached 0.45–0.62% (Suswandari, 2018). Indonesian students are in an insecure position because of their low interest in reading which will reflect their literacy skills, while Social Studies is a discipline that requires good literacy skills hence to achieve a meaningful learning, where students can perform their role as good citizens.

The change in reading skills required pre-service teachers in Social Studies to be prepared. Pre-service teachers on their teaching practicum and soon their real class are compelled to prepare and develop students literacy skills. Pre-service teachers are required to achieve basic teaching competency during their study and teaching practicum. Indonesia regulate teaching competency consists of four main areas: 1) pedagogic competence, 2) personality competence, 3) professional competence, and 4) social competence (Akbar, 2021). Literacy will affect pedagogic competence in Social Studies class. According to (Kusnandar, 2009, as cited in Akbar, 2021) there are 7 highlights on pedagogic competences: 1) opening: open the learning with an engaging activity, connect today's topic to students' prior knowledge, previous topic; 2) content delivery: explaining the essential concepts to students; 3) Closing: assessing students' performance and evaluating learning activity; 4) classroom management: create a conducive place to learn; 5) questioning: asking questions that match the students' level of understanding to encourage participation and evaluation; 6) rewards: give feedbacks, praising and motivation; 7) variation: apply various teaching strategies and methods to avoid students' boredom. These seven skills are not only indicators of teaching techniques, rather they reflect the pedagogic quality of a teacher in building meaningful social interaction with students.

In this modern education context, the application of the seven pedagogic skills closely related to pre-service teachers' perception about literacy. Perception reflects how far pre-service teachers understand the role of literacy to support their teaching competence. Thus, the relation of teaching competence and pre-service teachers' perception of literacy become a key to shape teachers who are able to present meaningful and relevant teaching.

Teachers who have reading habits play a prominent role in increasing teaching quality and developing students' literacy. Research shows that teachers who are routinely reading are likely to be competent and innovative in delivering content (Wijayanti et al, 2022). Furthermore, they contribute to establishing positive literacy culture in school because their reading habits are proven to motivate and guide students in improving their reading skills (Fitrianti et al., 2021). In practice, teachers can create a literate classroom environment by modifying learning materials, chose relevant text, and encourage students to read critically and reflectively (Reichenberg & Andreassen, 2018; Neno et al, 2022; Heafner, 2017).

Considering the benefits of teachers who are good at literacy, the research question is how pre-service Social Studies teachers perception of the impact of the role of literacy on teaching quality? The research aims to describe and analyze perception. This research is significant to provide an overview of the readiness of prospective teachers and recommendation for the curriculum of social studies teacher education.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with semi-structured interview techniques. The six participants involved are pre-service Social Studies teachers from a private university selected through

purposive sampling. All participants have completed three teaching practicums, the last one lasts for three months. Data collected through interview were analyzed using thematic analysis according to Miles and Huberman (Heriyanto, 2018) to identify patterns and theme that emerge regarding their perception of the impact of literacy on their teaching quality.

The thematic analysis has three steps procedure as shown in picture 1: 1) after data were collected, the researcher identify the key points, 2) coding: a reflective process of identifying, reviewing, and grouping meaningful data segments to answer the research problems, 3) theme development by reviewing and grouping related codes, interpreting patterns in the data that reflect the research questions, and forming tentative themes that are refined based on their significance, consistency, and relevance (Heriyanto, 2018).

Data Collection	→	Data Reduction	→	Coding	→	Finding theme
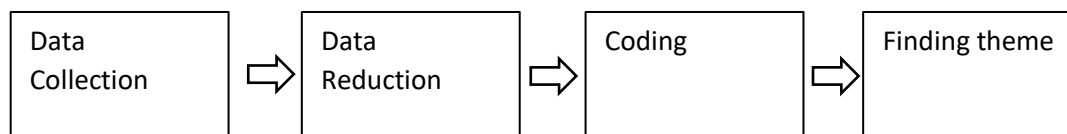
Picture 1: Thematic Analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The participants were to answer around 14 questions, most interviews duration are 16 – 30 minutes. After the thematic analyzing process reached the final step, this study highlighted four themes.

3.1 Perceptions of Literacy Skills

The essential question is "What do participants perceive about "literacy" and its various types? Overall participants view literacy not just as the ability to read, but as a process that includes understanding, analyzing, and finding new meaning from the reading sources.

"In my opinion, literacy is not just reading, but to understand and also analyze or research what we read." (quoted R1)

"Literacy means how someone gets information, processes information so that it becomes a new knowledge for her/him" (quoted R2)

"If we read a lot of literacy, we can answer unexpected questions from our students." (quoted R3)

"In the school I had practicum, (teaching materials) were based on books that have been prepared, but they were limited... It is necessary to read alternative sources" (quoted R4)

"Because today's children are very critical to follow the trends. If we as pre-service teachers don't have the ability to do that... we are the ones who are left behind" (quoted R5)

They emphasized the importance of literacy in preparing for learning, especially for exploring teaching material outside the textbooks. Literacy is considered crucial in supporting the teaching process and answering their students' questions properly. They are also aware of the existence of various types of literacy, such as digital literacy, and social literacy, all of which are important for pre-service teachers to be able to keep up with information and understand the changes in social context. Several participants also highlighted the importance of digital literacy and critical thinking skills in dealing with the character of students who are increasingly critical and technologically literate.

3.2 Personal Experiences in Developing Literacy

The second theme is answering "Do the pre-service teachers feel their literacy has improved during college? What are the contributing factors?" Most of the participants agreed that they are

honing their literacy skills in college. Their literacy skills improve because of the quality of the faculties, learning environment and academic requirements encourage them to refine their skills.

"....we as students are required... must read, must do literacy." (quoted R2)

"The lecturers ... don't directly give the speech, but we are first told to read article so that we know where the learning is going," (quoted R4)

"Lecturers... already included journals in syllabus, so we knew where to read for assignments." (quoted R6)

The majority of participants feel that their literacy skills have improved because they are compelled to get used to reading journals, analyzing articles, and thinking critically in each assignment. In addition, the learning system that encourages students to read before lectures also plays a big role. Not only that, literacy also develops indirectly through daily interactions, such as reading important information in their emails, or group messenger. In fact, some students said that the curriculum and syllabus designed by lecturers were very supportive of this process, Thus, it can be concluded that the experience of developing literacy in college is influenced by learning policies, assessment format, and encouragement for critical thinking that is integrated in the academic process.

3.3 Perception of the relationship between literacy skills and teaching quality

The third theme's essential question is "Do they feel that literacy play role in their teaching?" Participants consistently stated that literacy skills have a great influence on the quality of teaching, especially in terms of delivering content in depth, contextual, and relevant to students' needs.

"Of course, we must have read a lot so that we can explain the things that happen around us to students and students can understand them." (quoted R4)

"Reading / literacy helps in the preparation of learning content... I summarize, I think is there anything that I can connect from this topic to the lives of students?" (quoted R1)

"Through reading or doing literacy, we can determine the right strategy that suits the conditions needed in the classroom." (quoted R3)

"That way... We can give these children the skills to think critically through the questions we ask in class." (quoted R6)

Literacy is perceived not only as a reading activity, but also as a process of exploring broader knowledge from various sources. This is felt to be important in compiling instructional design such as lesson plans, choosing learning strategies, and answering critical questions from students. Good literacy is also considered to help pre-service teachers to think critically, master the content, and contextualize the learning relevant to students' context.

3.4 Challenges in developing literacy skills

The last highlight is the theme emerge about the difficulties to improve participants' literacy skills. Overall participants highlight the main challenges to develop literacy skill is because in this digital era, they depend mostly on technology, short texts and find difficulties reading long text.

"Because...used to the short content from cellphones, ...when ... given a long reading and in a black and white color ..." (quoted R6)

"...to read journals, ...preferred to search in AI. There I also reflected, I was also like that, if there are easier ways to obtain information, why choose the difficult ones. So, just do a quick search, and it's done." (quoted R4).

"The biggest challenge in my opinion is from myself ... laziness." (quoted R5)

"Digital technology actually provokes me to spend a lot of my time using it" (quoted R2)

"Sometimes it is difficult to understand the text, because the terms are difficult" (quoted R3)

"...the reading content is too advanced, so it is a bit difficult to understand, so I prefer...after I read it, someone explains what the meaning of the text I read." (quoted R1).

Participants preferred brief information from social media or videos rather than long texts or scientific journals. Additionally, participants expressed difficulty in understanding higher-level

language in academic readings, which makes them tend to seek instant ways to comprehend the text content. Other inhibiting factors include laziness and distractions from phone notifications that reduce reading consistency.

The research shows that pre-service teachers social studies perceive literacy play important role in enhancing teaching quality, yet, reading habits, and technology distractions remain as the main problems to achieve the teaching competence.

Discussion

As a follow-up to the results of the research that has been described, it is important to analyze the implications of these findings in a broader context. Historically, teachers' involvement in reading professional literature has been limited, with many relying on intuition and personal experience (Broemmel, 2019). Although teachers recognize the importance of professional literature, their involvement is inconsistent, with few regularly reading professional journals or books (Broemmel, 2019). Teachers, especially at the elementary level, read more often material relevant to the classroom situation, such as pedagogical journals, than academic journals or theoretical books (Broemmel, 2019). These findings suggest that although professional literature is important, teachers' reading practices are still limited (Broemmel, 2019). Participants perceive that literacy is important and impacts the teaching quality, yet they admitted that reading habits are inconsistent unless they must do assignments.

Another research from Heafner (2017) shows that students who do not have access to quality texts or are not trained with effective reading methods tend to struggle in critical thinking, with literacy in social studies strongly influenced by access to quality schools and teachers. Teachers play an important role in shaping a culture of literacy in the classroom, which influences the way students approach texts, whether with deep understanding or simply searching for the right answers. In addition, Heafner mentioned that a more critical and inclusive approach to literacy, taking into account students' cultural identities, is important to help them connect the text with their perspectives. The selection of relevant and in-depth texts is essential in developing complex reading skills in social studies classes. The participants mentioned in the interview that literacy helped them to give other learning resources besides the compulsory textbooks. The pre-service teachers were encouraged to ask proper questions for students to properly read the text to complete their assignments.

The digital reading offers wider access to information, but it also poses serious challenges, especially when it comes to the selection of relevant and trustworthy information. Research shows that reading in digital media often creates the illusion of understanding or "the feeling of already knowing," which can actually lower the level of comprehension (Bråten et al, 2020). Therefore, university play an important role in building a digital literacy culture, among other things, by giving pre-service teachers the space to choose their own reading and explore various genres, in order to foster intrinsic reading motivation and improve their skills, such as research done in school by Durgin (2016, as cited in Gingerich & Adler, 2020). Researchers also call for the need to expand the concept of traditional reading towards an approach that includes the different types of non-traditional and multi-source texts that are common in today's digital age (Bråten et al, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the interview results, there are several concerns that must be considered by the campus to improve students' literacy skills and reading habits. First, participants express difficulty in understanding more complex texts and tend to opt for short, instant information from technology, such as social media or video. Therefore, campuses can introduce learning methods that combine technology with literacy, such as using digital platforms that provide explanations or discussions related to the text read, to help students understand and criticize reading more deeply. Furthermore, building consistent reading habits needs to be encouraged through literacy activities that

involve pre-service teachers, for example by holding critical reading seminars that support discussions about reading materials. This will not only improve their literacy skills, but it can also have a positive impact on their teaching quality in the future, as good literacy will improve their ability to deliver the content more clearly and effectively to students. Integrating these activities into the university curriculum holistically can help students develop better literacy skills, which in turn will contribute to improving the quality of their teaching.

5. REFERENCES

Akbar, A. (2021). Pentingya kompetensi pedagogik guru. *Jurnal Pendidikan Guru (JPG), 2*(1), 23–30. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.32832/jpg.v2i1.4099

Bråten, I., Braasch, J.L.G., & Salmerón, L. (2020). Reading Multiple and Non-Traditional Texts New Opportunities and New Challenges. In Moje, E.B. et al (Eds). *Handbook of Reading Research, Volume V (pp.* 79-98). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315676302

Broemmel, A. D., Evans, K. R., Lester, J. N., Rigell, A., & Lochmiller, C. R. (2019). Teacher Reading as Professional Development: Insights from a National Survey. Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts, 58 (1). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol58/iss1/2

Fadilla, N., & Pramudiani, P. (2023). Hubungan antara Kebiasaan Membaca dengan Keterampilan Berpikir Kritis Peserta Didik Di Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Elementaria Edukasia, 6*(2), 304–313. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.31949/jee.v6i2.5430

Fitrianti, N., Purwanti, J. I. S., & Sularmi, D. (2021). Studi korelasi antara gaya belajar dan kebiasaan membaca dengan kemampuan berpikir kritis dalam pembelajaran ips di sekolah dasar. *Didaktika Dwija Indria , 9*(4), 1-6. Retrived from https://doi.org/10.20961/ddi.v9i4.48762

Gingerich, J., & Adler, M. (2020). The Importance of Reading Across Genres. Kansas English, 101(2020), 46-51. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.62704/0ef8bb17

Heafner, T. L. (2017). Reading as A Tool of Thinking and Learning in The Social Studies. *Social Studies Journal, 37*(2), 6-22. Retrieved from https://pcssonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/SSJFall17Updated.pdf#page=6

Heriyanto, H. (2018). Thematic Analysis sebagai Metode Menganalisa Data untuk Penelitian Kualitatif. ANUVA, 3(2), 317-324. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.14710/anuva.2.3.317-324

Iheakanwa, J.U., Obro, S. & Akpochafo, P. W. (2021). Reading Ability, Study Habits and Students' Academic Performance in Social Studies. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal).* 5675. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/5675

Mackey, M. (2020). Who Reads What, in Which Formats, and Why? In Moje, E.B. et al (Eds) *Handbook of Reading Research, Volume V (pp.* 99-165). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315676302

Neno, H., Emanuel, U., & Yulita, D. (2022). Teachers' reading habits and their effect on the student s' literacy. English Review: Journal of English Education, 10(3), 811-820. https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v10i3.5705

Reichenberg, M., & Andreassen, R. (2018). Comparing Swedish and Norwegian teachers' professional development how human capital and social capital factor into teachers' reading habits. Reading Psychology, 39(5), 442-467. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2018.1464530

Sapira, D. (2023). Peran Guru dalam mengembangkan budaya membaca di Sekolah Dasar. *JSES, 4*(2), 176-187. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.54297/jses.v4i2.111

Suswandari, M. (2020). Membangun Budaya Literasi bagi Suplemen Pendidikan di Indonesia. Jurnal Dikdas Bantara, 1(1), 20-32. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.32585/jdb.v1i1.105

Wijayanti, E., Mujiyanto, Y., & Pratama, H. (2022). The Influence of The Teachers' Reading Habit On Their Teaching Practice: A Narrative Inquiry. *English Education Journal, 12*(2), 205-214. https://doi.org/10.15294/eej.v12i2.56256