

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of seven sub-themes. The first section is the background of the study, which mainly describes the burning issues related to the powerless condition among the preservice teachers and some empirical evidence of the study related to the empowerment issues. The second part is formulating the problems into the research question. The third section presents the objectives of the study. The fourth section is the description of the limitation of the problem. The fifth section describes the significance of the study theoretically and practically. The following section explains the specific term used in this study. And the last section presents the organization of this paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

Empowerment has long been crucial in critical pedagogy and transformative education. Within each perspective, empowerment is central to the creation of humanizing human life, which encompasses a sense of personal control to link clearly to more excellent health and well-being (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010; Zimmerman, 2010). Empirical evidence from recent research provides that empowerment is a key component of transformative value, as higher education is an ongoing process of student transformation (Brunton & Jeffrey, 2014; Cheng & Cheng, 2016; Harvey, L., & Green, 1993; Murray, 2019a).

In another perspective, Teacher education or teacher training is often seen as the agency primarily responsible for the success of the education transformation. The increasing role of English as a global language requires the provision of an effective English language teaching program (Alikhani & Bagheridoust, 2017; Pellegrino et al., 2012). Significantly, the English teacher training program, which takes responsibility for students' success in all aspects, should help provide a pathway for the struggle to increase the quality of human resources and improve the country's education quality.

Recent studies in the student empowerment area indicate that empowerment can mean different things to different people in different contexts across settings and times. (Ashcroft, 1987; Bandura, 2002; Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010; Cheng & Cheng, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Duhon-Haynes, 1996; Freire, 2017; Guntern et al., 2017; Murray, 2019a; Page & Chahboun, 2019; Shulman, 1986; Sullivan, 1996; Zimmerman, 2010). Freire (1970, 2017) argues that empowerment means freedom and liberation. Ashcroft (1987) and Duhon-Haynes (1996) define empowering as bringing into a state of belief's one's ability to act effectively. Lord (1991) argues that empowerment is the process with element experiences powerless, gaining awareness, learning new roles, initiating, participating, and contributing. Sue (1978) declares that the empowerment process elaborates on internal experience and social context. Murray (2019) defines student empowerment as the dynamic, complex, and multifaceted concept needed to engage and support students to gain knowledge, skill, and desire to enact change for the Sustainability in Higher Education (SHE). However, the conservative teaching practices in the higher education context often have the effect of disempowering students. Therefore, an important clue in this regard of ELT context is the ability of teacher educators to prepare qualified English preservice teachers to help schools in developing knowledge, fostering socially acceptable values, and building the foundation for productive work and active citizenship(Guo, 2014)

In the context of Indonesian policy, Dirjen Pendidikan Tinggi (2020) has published the empowerment program, well-known as Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka, which gives students a big motivation and freedom to develop their interest and life skills at the higher education level. It is in line with the concept of student empowerment in Sustainability in Higher Education proposed by Murray (2019). The vision of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) is making a program of university become the Center of Excellence (Wulandari et al., 2021) where effective citizens and workers are educated and prepared (Skills, 2015) to meet the demands of society and industry 4.0 (Suherdi, 2019). In fact, the students, who have just graduated from one program at a university sometimes, have a

problem with “link and match” between what the students learn on the campus and what they do after graduation. In other words, they are the fatality of disempowering students.

Recent studies indicate that the phenomena of disempowering students have triggered the complex powerless condition for the preservice teachers, especially in the English teaching context (Chai et al., 2019; Nichols, 2006; Nichols & Zhang, 2011; Sakhiyya et al., 2018). Sakhiya (2018) argues that most preservice teachers find it challenging to design the English Material for the teaching practicum. Chai (2019) finds that the preservice teachers’ belief in developing material has shifted by the relevant factors of TPACK. Nichols (2006) discovered that preservice teachers sometimes meet the rejection classroom atmosphere when they report a desire for teacher empowerment vs. student empowerment. Nichols and Zhang (2011) find that although in-service teachers and preservice teachers agreed on the need for teacher control in the classroom, there is less agreement about their perceptions of the need to create a classroom environment of positive affirmation and student empowerment.

This paper reports a study about the preservice teachers’ belief in the empowerment model in the context of English as a Foreign Language Teacher Education (hereafter, namely EFLTE). This study investigated two key areas: the preservice teachers’ beliefs and the dimension of empowerment.

1.2 Research Questions

This study explored two main statements of the problems, which are broken down into the following:

1. What is the preservice English teachers’ belief in empowerment in the learning and teaching of English practice?
2. What dimensions do preservice English teachers perceive that support the process of empowerment in the learning and teaching of English practice?
3. How do the preservice English teachers perceive their belief in supporting dimensions of empowerment?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To dig out the preservice teachers' belief in the process of empowerment
2. To find out the dimensions that could empower themselves in the learning and teaching of English practices
3. To explore how the preservice teachers perceive their belief in finding the relationship among dimensions of empowerment

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study attempts to investigate the belief, understanding, experiences of four preservice teachers, one teacher educator, and one mentor teacher in the English education department in FPS UGJ, in Cirebon, regarding the concept of teacher empowerment in the EFL context. More specifically, this study describes their perception and experiences on the process of empowerment in the learning and teaching of English practices. It also explores how they perceive their belief in each empowerment dimension that could support them in English learning and teaching practices.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study aim to contribute to the following:

1) Theoretical significance

It references Preservice English Teacher Empowerment within dimension, which acts as a comprehensive and supportive empowerment system in English teaching education programs.

2) Practical Significance

It provides diverse phenomena and personal experiences capable of giving a slight solution to empower students, especially the preservice teachers, mentor teacher, and teacher educators who have a strategic role in the education transformation at unpredictable conditions.

1.6 Clarification of The Key Terms

For the purpose of the study, some key terms have been defined in their specific meanings.

- 1) Empowerment means the process undertaken by a student to become stronger and more confident, especially in directing and controlling her/his own and others' life.
- 2) Dimension of student empowerment means the components that make someone stronger and more confident, especially in directing and controlling their own and others' lives.
- 3) Preservice teachers are the students of the English Education Program who take the teaching practicum program at School partnership.

1.7 Organization of the dissertation

The paper consists of five chapters, the following chapters are:

- 1) Chapter one is the introduction, which provides an overview of the study and its purpose. This chapter consists of the study's background, which mainly describes the issues on empowerment in general concepts and shows some empirical evidence related to student empowerment. The other parts of this chapter also formulate the statement of the problem, the study's objectives, the study's scope, the significance of the study, and the limitation of the study.
- 2) Chapter two reviews two different literature but related areas, English as a Foreign Language Teacher Education, hereafter namely EFLTE, and student Empowerment, which has five dimensions: knowledge, learning, personal growth, competence, and community. Gaps in the literature are identified in this chapter and are followed by presenting research questions.
- 3) Chapter three describes the methodological issues considered for the study and specifies the design, instrumentation, sampling, and adapted data collection procedures. It also explains how data were analysed and interpreted. The results of the study are presented in chapter four.

- 4) Chapter four presents findings regarding the preservice teachers' perception of the five dimensions of student empowerment.
- 5) Chapter five summarizes the study as a whole and provides recommendations for further research and improvement of the preservice teachers.