

Enhancing Teachers' Literacy Competence Through Critical Writing in The Digital Era

Moh. Yamin¹

¹English Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,
Lambung Mangkurat University

Corresponding Email: moh_yamin@ulm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The future challenge to education to respond to the strategic need for human resource development requires teachers to be individuals who are responsive to and critical of development dynamics. Teachers' literacy competence through the enhancement of their critical writing skills is a necessity. This article discusses the literacy positioning to strengthen teachers' abilities. By enlarging the knowledge capital, it contributes towards teachers' strength in elaborating any issues concerned with writing, such as social issues. Critical writing competence will exist when teachers own a number of knowledge resources, which is known as literacy capacity. The more literate teachers are, the more they will be able to be critical writers and able to write on whatever subject is. The digital era, as the triggering factor, has an effect on teachers' positioning to be people involved in developing self-competence. Also known as the disruptive era, it offers new ways for teachers to access information quickly and easily. This research is based on a critical literature review, in which every relevant theory and all relevant research results are authentic resources for enriching the discussion. The data analysis uses a descriptive method and qualitative approach. What has been found in the related literature and the findings of similiar studies in answering the research problem are discussed in detail.

Keywords: literacy competence; critical writing; and digital era

DOI: 10.20961/ijpte.v2i2.24118



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INTRODUCTION

Teachers in the twenty-first century should not only be able to teach based on pedagogical and professionalism competence, but should also have literacy competence. Pedagogical competence is not sufficient because it only deals with the ability to teach. It means that teachers need to formulate teaching methods so that the classroom can be managed well and that they have the ability to prepare lesson plans, deliver materials, employ teaching media, implement the teaching and evaluate the teaching process. Professional competence is also insufficient, because it relates to a teacher's mastery of the subject structure and concept. Therefore, pedagogical and professional competence should be complemented by literacy competence (Hoesein, 2015, p. 492).

Literacy competence will contribute towards increasing teachers' general competence. The more literate teachers are, the better the model they will be for their students because they will do their best for the class. Teacher literacy means that they have wide knowledge to share with the students. If teachers with only pedagogical and professional competence teach a subject, it will be different from teachers with literacy competence, as the latter can develop and widen their mastery of the subject enriched with their new knowledge.

It is a new era for teachers in the twenty-first century, being a time in which they are working for enlightenment dealing with the importance of new knowledge (Demire, 2009). Teachers in front of their students are defined as people who can teach well by delivering appropriate material. A good teacher is a person with whom the students feel at home in the classroom. This means that a teacher does not only work to deliver the material relating to the subject, but can also motivate the students to be progressive learners. A teacher who is the figure for the students is the one who always attends himself as a part of the students' lives in learning. Such teachers can share their experience with the students, and by sharing their knowledge, they will show that they always update this. That is why inspirational teachers are those who never stop to sharpen their knowledge and to be the learning models for their students.

As a result, as the learning model for students, it is important that teachers read. Reading can be the capital for teachers to activate their knowledge relating to the subject they teach. What teachers read does not always deal with their subject solely, but they read other textbooks that support their capacity as a learning model. A variety of books can enliven their teaching paradigm. A high reading level will influence a teacher's material formation and design and deepen its substance.

Inspirational teachers need to have another competence known as the critical writing capacity, which functions to support their literacy capacity (Fernet, Trépanier, Austin, and Levesque-Côté, 2016). The level of a teacher's literacy capacity, whether high, intermediate or low, is also determined by how good the teacher is at writing. Good writing means that a teacher is not only good at mastery of the knowledge relating to pedagogical and professional competence, but can also translate the knowledge into good writing, which can show that the teacher has established mastery of knowledge both theoretically and practically.

However, good writing in itself is not sufficient because it must be open and able to give any new views about what is written about dealing with the issue.

Consequently, good writing should be critical and able to provide new views about the subject, such social issue. By having more comprehensive views of a subject, the teacher can be a learning model for the students. The critical writing that teachers do can be concluded as an attempt to consider problems from different perspectives so that they can read in a reasoning manner. It is also a series of activities to elaborate all aspects of teaching.

One future challenge for teachers trying to increase and strengthen their teaching skills is that they must have good literacy capacity, complemented by critical writing. This combination is the main asset for teachers to compete in the competitive era. This era requires everyone to never stop learning and to improve themselves as productive individuals. Nothing is static, including the dynamics of education and teaching. The dynamics themselves must be encouraged by strengthening teachers' capacity so that they can do their best for teaching and education. For teachers in this new perspective, it is very important for them to be able to write, and the model for this ability comes from their literacy capacity.

Being able to write is a skill that should be fostered by writing regularly and continuously, so that the practice creates a writing habit. Good writing involves a long, never ending process, so teachers need to practice their writing as the main part of strengthening their capacity to be a learning model for their students. Productive skills and literacy competence in writing should complement each other. To be a true teacher it is not sufficient to have only pedagogical and professionalism competence; other supporting elements are needed, such as competence in writing, which involves critical writing, followed by literacy competence.

Enhancing teachers' literacy competence through critical writing is necessary in the effort to improve teaching quality. The digital era, which is also called the new era or disruptive era, should be introduced to teachers as the main factor in enhancing their literacy competence through critical writing. Teachers' participation in the digital era plays an important role in developing their education and teaching skills. Teachers' literacy in the digital era allows them to understand their position as lifelong learners in the learning process, so that they are not left behind (Hursen, 2014). Teachers can benefit from the digital era as a source of knowledge and an aid to writing and become the learning models for their students. This means that introducing the digital era to teachers in relation to literacy competence through critical writing is necessary.

Based on this consideration, this article aims to discuss the importance of literacy competence through critical writing. It is hoped that it will contribute towards new understanding that a teacher is not only a teacher who teaches, but also reads and writes, and can be an important player in the development of education.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Literacy

Literacy is a combination of skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, counting, and accessing and using information. It can also be referred to as a social practice influenced by context: as a learning process through reading and writing; and as a medium through which to reflect on, analyze and criticize science and any ideas learnt (Coffey, 2008). That is why, literacy, as a form of mind sharpening, is important for training anyone who wants to have their knowledge strengthened. Knowledge that is acquired through literacy will give a different view of understanding for teachers (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 1999). Literacy is an enlightenment activity that aims to make people understand and become smart; what they can do becomes the model for development.

Literacy is the thinking process, which attempts to do any kinds of programs to answer the challenge of twenty first century. In literacy, the mind and individuals' capacity to be independent are built. Through the enculturation of literacy, this is an important step to change the mind-set. Those who never enculture the literacy are in a static mind-set. When they think about questions dealing with reality that should be answered and discussed, their responses are textual, not contextual. This is different from those who have become accustomed to literacy. They will be able to respond to problems and explore the condition very openly by providing a number of facts and reasoning. What they do is based on factual situations and data, before any assumptions or conclusions are made (Pestacore, 2007). Therefore, literacy is like a root that creates a person's competence in thinking deeply. It means that literacy should be mastered and learned as a step towards the strengthening of self-capacity. Detailed discussion of literacy follows, based on its use, but is limited to reading and writing as the subject of this study.

Literacy that deals with reading involves books as the source of knowledge and of understanding, and a perspective that provides any substances of life in which those are very useful for humans' development. Reading can guide people to be better, to do things more regularly, and to have the scientific reasons. Reading opens up new perspectives and paradigms in all aspects of life, a situation which truly determines human principles. Reading, as part of the literacy process, should be well managed; therefore, it should be the framework for obtaining new knowledge, and is usually followed by critical reading, demonstrating that it is related to the ability to read texts beyond their surface level. Each text read must be approached with the perspective of obtaining deep meaning. Critical reading is an individual's ability to read a text with the aim of deconstructing it in order to extract this meaning. Reading in the literacy context should be understood as a reading activity.

Writing is the process of translating thoughts into a concrete form, which are words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs or text. Writing related to literacy is an evolving process, in which a writer should first find a topic before starting to write the topic sentence, followed by the supporting sentences, and the concluding sentence in a paragraph, which itself is one of many paragraphs in a text (Murray, 1968). Writing in literacy is considered as an enlightenment activity for delivering

an issue, discussing it, proposing a point of view, and presenting the writing results to the public for comment. Literacy dealing with writing involves how the writer becomes a person who is able to propose a concept or point of view on an issue. In writing for literacy, this issue should be answered by giving supporting ideas. Principally, literacy in writing aims to develop the view that writing not only functions to compose ideas into words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and text, but also to introduce new points of view to readers for their enlightenment.

Critical Writing

Writing is a developmental process (Dyson and Freedman, 2003). This means that when a writer writes, a process takes place, such as developing the topic into a topic sentence, and incorporating supporting sentences, the concluding sentence in a paragraph, and the following paragraph into a whole text. This process in writing is an important step that needs to be taken so that the writing can take place. There is no writing without the developmental process of writing itself. It should be stated that well organized writing begins from the developmental process itself, because that is the starting point. The writing process that starts from the developmental process will lead to writing results that are more established and better organized. Good writing and its results are the two components that are considered as the result of the developmental process. Consequently, writing should be understood as the thinking process that defines the developmental process as a step in writing.

With regard to the developmental process, Finocciaro and Bonomo (1973) state that a writer should pay attention to the following steps:

- 1) Copying the model sentences or dialogues which have been read or spoken;
- 2) Writing sentences they have been practiced orally;
- 3) Writing several sentence patterns;
- 4) Changing sentences into a simple dialogue or short paragraph;
- 5) Writing a dialogue by including newly learned structures and vocabulary;
- 6) Answering a series of specific questions from a reading passage;
- 7) Completing a series of sentences;
- 8) Writing a summary from a reading passage that has been read;
- 9) Writing an outline from the material that has been read;
- 10) Writing a letter;
- 11) Writing a short paragraph;
- 12) Writing an original ending to a story that has been read;
- 13) Writing an ending to a story whose reading has not been completed;
- 14) Writing a simple dialogue using known structures;
- 15) Completing a dialogue when the first few lines have been given;
- 16) Preparing a paragraph from a dialogue;
- 17) Preparing a dialogue from a paragraph;
- 18) Reconstructing a dialogue from one or two words given in an utterance.

Consideration of these steps will make writing easier. The above steps can be a guide for writing undertaken by the developmental process. There will be a starting point in writing and a finishing point; attention should be paid to this in the field of writing. Writing is a way of expressing ideas and can be considered as the expression of self-identity to readers. Because writing means identity, it must be based on data. This means that teachers should be literate, able to read critically in order to write critically. Academic capital, such as pedagogical and professional competence, is at hand, which will guide teachers to be able to write. What they experience from reality in or out of the class dealing with the students and the subjects can be written down. It can then be discussed in order to obtain new perspectives from observing developing issues.

Writing is the thought work towards reality and fact to analyse and to discuss. What is written comes from this reality and fact, as sources of knowledge. Good writing must reflect what is happening in reality so that it can speak for this reality, inform about what is taking place within it, and introduce anything that actually appears in reality. The essence of writing taken from reality and fact provides what should be delivered to readers. The more factual writing is, the more credible it is, so writing can be considered as critical writing. Critical writing created in a form of a paper is the result of hard work, because teachers have been able to absorb and analyse problems rationally and in a reasoning manner; consequently, they are thinking critically. The teacher's role in critical writing should be the key in presenting the reality dealing with education, students, classroom management, etc.

The Digital Era

The future challenge in education 4.0 is that teachers should be able to participate in and follow technological advances. Education 4.0 requires anybody to respond the dynamics quickly. The changes in technology in relation to education mean that teachers should be able to keep up with developments so that they are not left behind. Education 4.0 is the era in which every new technological advance represents its era, including teachers' interest in accessing educational information to support their task in teaching. Technological products in education, such as digital books and edmodo, are important tools for teachers in class (Benešová & Tupaa, 2017, p. 2199).

That is why, teachers should be technology literate. Teachers' literacy competence in technology is required as they are asked to be able to write critically (Nykqvist & Mukherjee, 2016). Digitalized books mean that teachers need to be able to access these online for their writing interests, so they need to be literate in technology. All learning sources are digital; teachers should think digitally in order to obtain these learning sources in order to upgrade their pedagogical and professional competence so that they can write critically in response to educational issues at school and in the classroom.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. Data were taken from a number of research articles discussing teachers' competence in relation to literacy and critical writing in the digital era. All the findings and

results of the articles became data sources for further discussion. No limit was imposed on the number of research articles; with more data, the discussion will be rich and meaningful, thus contributing to teachers' skills development. The analysis technique applied is content analysis, based on the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Literacy Competence

Literacy competence deals with defining, finding, evaluating and communicating information, as an important component in shaping teachers' abilities. No teachers are competent without possessing literacy competence. It is necessary for any teacher to be competent in literacy in order to obtain any kind of information which can strengthen their position as a learning model for students. Being a learning model means that a teacher is the figurehead for students' own learning. The research results found by Ömür, Nigar, and Meral (2009) at Uludag University Education Faculty Class Teaching Department, Preschool Education Department and Science Teaching Department show that the average score of the teacher candidates was centred on the "I'm not sure" option, which points to the fact that they did not have detailed or accurate knowledge of the subject. This implies that teachers' literacy in general means that they not have sufficient information about the subject they teach. The knowledge they do have comes from past activities and they do not try to obtain information and knowledge from new resources. It seems that technological development, followed by upgrading of information dealing with the subject, is insufficiently mastered or upgraded by the teachers. They partake in routine activities irrelevant to the subject or career discipline. They are concerned with their comfort zone, not efforts to improve their skills. The data can be seen in Table 1 below:

The Defining Statistical Results Regarding the Teacher Candidates' Levels of Information Literacy

Information Literacy	Departments	N	\bar{X}
Defining	Class Teaching	60	3,50
	Preschool Teaching	60	3,39
	Science Teaching	60	3,69
	Total	180	3,52
Finding	Class Teaching	60	3,78
	Preschool Teaching	60	3,53
	Science Teaching	60	3,68
	Total	180	3,66
Evaluating	Class Teaching	60	3,87
	Preschool Teaching	60	3,60
	Science Teaching	60	3,77
	Total	180	3,74
Communicating	Class Teaching	60	3,96
	Preschool Teaching	60	3,66
	Science Teaching	60	3,72
	Total	180	3,78
General	Class Teaching	60	3,80
	Preschool Teaching	60	3,56
	Science Teaching	60	3,71
	Total	180	3,69

Basaran (2005) also states that teacher candidates know how to seek, obtain, process and present information, but they are not good enough at storing it and collecting information following procedures. Kurniawati (2017, p.136), based on

interview results, states that teachers considered themselves to lack the knowledge and skills related to literacy teaching. This means that literacy competence plays a central role in building teachers' ability to guide their class. Rogers (1983) states that literacy is an innovation.. Rogers mentions five stages in adopting an innovation or a new thing: knowing, being interested, trying, applying, and being accustomed. Literate people only need to accustom themselves to, or internalize, literacy in their daily activities.

A teacher in the context of educating children should have the literacy capacity to create learning models in class. These models cannot be developed if teachers themselves are not learning models for them how to read, write or communicate. A learning model is an ideal figure to motivate students so that they can imitate what the teacher does in the classroom. A class situation engendering a positive atmosphere influences how learners learn and understand how the teacher speaks and delivers. The key point in designing a class comes from the teacher who has a teaching concept. The more knowledge a teacher has in designing a class to be interactive and interesting means that the teacher has wide knowledge and experience to apply to the class. Long term interest after the teacher becomes literate will be able to drive the teaching-learning class toward student literacy. Students can be literate because the teacher is literate, or vice versa, students can be illiterate because the teacher is illiterate. This is the challenge for teachers to upgrade their knowledge by being accustomed to being literate.

Critical Writing

Lee (2010) conducted a study with four Hong Kong EFL secondary school teachers who had teaching experience ranging from 5 to 15 years; the classroom research data and teacher interviews showed that the teacher education writing course helped promote teachers' professional development in various aspects, such as problematizing traditional models of writing and questioning the status quo. Teachers took on the role of inquirers by critically reflecting on their first-hand experience from classroom research; reading research papers on topics related to the teaching and learning of writing; developing a writing habit; constructing new identities as writing teachers; and critically evaluating the need to balance idealism about good writing practices with the reality of classroom teaching.

Coxhead and Byrd (2007), Hyland (2007), Ferris (2007) and Weigle (2007) state that it is necessary to conduct future teacher writing education research in authentic classrooms dealing with writing instruction on vocabulary, grammar and genre which is meaningful for students, because it has a clear purpose; that is, assessment. This research should be in longitudinal, so that sustained writing teacher development can be observed. To make responses to students' writing meaningful, pre- and in-service teacher writing education should reflect on and reinforce what is taught in teacher education, and then emphasize the key issues in the secondary school classroom. Students' writing behaviour will not change unless writing teachers show a change in their pedagogy. Teacher writing education needs to focus on certain salient issues and draw on insights from writing research. This selection of issues should be guided by teachers' needs. In teacher writing education, writing teachers' goals and attitudes to academic

writing give responses to students' writing and assessment and it needs to be taken into consideration. This is because their attitudes towards the above issues affect not only the way they learn, but also their long term commitment to enhancing their teaching of writing.

Based on these points, teachers' role in teaching writing determines students' success in learning. Teachers' commitment to driving students' learning motivation in writing plays a significant role in shaping learning habits. Critical writing deriving from the habit of reading and from literacy activity is the main capital, and teachers should facilitate such a learning model to reach their goals. Barber and Mourshed's study (2007, p. 12) shows that the main driver of the variation in students' learning at school is the quality of the teachers. In line with Barber and Mourshed's study, Hattie (2009) conducted a large-scale survey on factors influencing the learning outcomes of pupils and found that the quality of teachers has a greater impact on the learning of pupils than the quality of the curriculum, the teaching methods, the school building or the role of parents. This means that critical writing instruction should be conducted through critical pedagogy, in which all issues relate to students' lives and problems, which will contribute to their skills development. Teachers in critical issues can guide the learning-teaching process so that there will be an interactive class. The digitalization era in education 4.0 should be considered and understood to make teachers upgrade their knowledge relating to current issues in writing.

CONCLUSION

Literacy competence in relation to critical writing is the capital for teachers to be able to increase and improve their knowledge. It is an inherent part of teachers' psyche, so that they can always be innovative, creative and productive when undertaking their tasks. Because the role of literacy competence is significant, teachers should develop their related competence in order to enrich their skills; this is called critical writing. Critical writing competence will exist when there is literacy competence. Literacy competence is the spirit that will enrich teachers' critical writing. The more competent in literacy teachers are, the more competent in critical writing they will be. This means that there is a significant contribution from literacy competence to critical writing competence in strengthening teachers' literacy competence to respond to the education 4.0 challenges.

Education 4.0 illustrates that digital books, online books and online resources support and strengthen teachers' competence in literacy and critical writing and should be utilized to maximum effect to change and reform teachers' abilities from passive to active, from illiterate to literate, and from unproductive to productive. Teachers' skills reformation will become the key notion in reforming students' education and achievement for the better.

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