# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background of the Study

Teaching practicum is one of the compulsory subjects that should be enrolled by pre-service teachers. It has an important role in providing field experience for pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers with several teaching experiences when facing coursework are more prepared to understand the ideas, theories, and concepts that are added to their academic work (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, p. 401, 2005). Through teaching practicum, pre-service teachers experience teaching in an authentic atmosphere, enabling them to discover more about the teaching context, curriculum, learners, and materials (Yalcin-Arslan & Ilin, 2018). Nevertheless, pre-service teachers often face challenges considering it as "a complex experience for students, since it is experienced as an emotionally, physically, and interpersonally demanding process with significant consequences in the development of the teacher and the permanence in the profession" (Melville, Campbell, Fazio, Stefanile, & Tkaczyk, 2014, as cited in Fierro, Carvalho, Retamal, & Almonacid, 2021). Furthermore, dealing with students in class, pre-service teachers' self-belief, the supervisors, and the schools generate the causes of arising challenges during teaching practicum (Fhaeizdhyall, Nazamuddin, Sabbir, & Ibrahim, 2018).

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced the closure of schools in a number of regions in Indonesia (Adi & Rochman, 2020). Based on Circular Letter Number 4 in 2020 concerning the Implementation of Education Policies during the emergency period of the Covid-19 virus transmission, the Ministry of Education and Culture enforces learning from home or online learning (Kemendikbud, 2020). This situation also affects the teaching practicum. Due to the policy, the teaching practicum had to shift from a face-to-face classroom environment to a completely

online one. As a result, pre-service teachers conducted activities of teaching practicum entirely online. However, virtual settings cannot replace the important aspects of face-to-face teaching practicum (Hunter-Johnson et al., 2021). As a consequence of this transition, various limitations occur in its implementation, where the pre-service teachers cannot deal with students, the school environment, and the college supervisor directly. Similarly, one of the universities in West Java, Indonesia, implemented an online teaching practicum during the pandemic. It consists of two stages: In teaching practicum I, pre-service teachers observed the school environment where they were placed. In teaching practicum II as an advanced stage, they carry out activities related to all teaching duties, such as making instructional materials, online learning activities, and assessment instruments.

Certainly, this situation differs greatly from the teaching practicum before the pandemic. Pre-service teachers need to adapt to the new educational setting, that is, the virtual environment. It requires them to maximize the utilization of technology and various digital platforms to provide both synchronous and asynchronous or even collaborative asynchronous teaching activities and to communicate with the supervisors. Thus, this research aims to unravel challenges and how to cope with the challenges experienced from the pre-service teachers' perspective in online teaching practicum.

This research is relevant to previous research from Özüdoğru (2021) focused on problems and barriers during online teaching practicum for pre-service teachers in the faculty of education in Turkey using a case study as a method. The research found that the problems experienced by pre-service teachers were collected under the themes of implementation, student, impossibility, technical, and instructor. Similar to the previous research,  this present research will discuss teaching practicum. As for the gap, it is focused on investigating the challenges encountered by pre-

service teachers during teaching practicum in the Covid-19 pandemic and also the potential solutions experienced to cope with those challenges.

## 1.2. Formulation of the Problems

Based on the background of the study, the formulation of the problems in this study are:

1.2.1 What challenges did the English pre-service teachers face in online teaching practicum during the pandemic?

1.2.2 How did they cope with those challenges?

## 1.3. Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides four definitions related to this study as follows:

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| 1.3.1 | Pre-service Teachers | : It is defined as three English Education Department students who are in the process of training and preparing to become professional teachers in a real context in three senior high schools in Tasikmalaya. |
| 1.3.2 | Teaching Practicum | : It is divided into two stages (i.e., teaching practicum I and teaching practicum II), which are designed for 8 and 23 days, respectively, using a block system to provide field experience for English pre-service teachers, and all activities are conducted online in consequence of the Covid-19 outbreak. |
| 1.3.3 | Challenges in online teaching practicum | : It describes the difficult situation pre-service teachers encountered that required significant mental or physical effort to be done successfully during the online teaching practicum program. |

| 1.3.4 | Potential Solutions | : It describes how pre-service teachers overcame challenges during the teaching practicum program. |

## 1.4. Aim(s) of the Research

The aims of this research are to unravel challenges and potential solutions viewed from the pre-service teachers' perspective in an online teaching practicum.

## 1.5. Significance of the Research

| 1.5.1 | Theoretical Uses | : This research contributes to developing theories in a teaching practicum, focusing on the challenges and potential solutions in the context of online implementation. |
| 1.5.2 | Practical Uses | : This research provides valuable information to all stakeholders in the educational field about the challenges and potential solutions encountered by pre-service teachers during online teaching practicum for further improvements in planning and organizing teaching practicum in the future. |
| 1.5.3 | Empirical Uses | : This research gives readers an overview of the challenges encountered by pre-service teachers in online teaching practicum and how they cope with them. |