

IMPLEMENTATION OF SCIENCE PRACTICAL WORK AT FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA, INDONESIA

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Abstract:

Science practical work is an important part of Biology Teacher Education Program (BTEP) curriculum in order to (1) show confirmation and illustration of theory, and (2) develop students' knowledge and skills to teach successfully in junior and senior high school science laboratory. This paper describes how UT conducts the practical work and how student's perception toward the implementation of practical work. The paper was based upon the study of the practical work implementation in the first semester of 2011, at an UT-Regional Office (RO). Data were collected by interviewing practical work instructors, distributing a questionnaire to 15 students, and observing practical work activity. The results of the study revealed that (1) UT/RO collaborated with a face to face institution of higher education to facilitate BTEP students doing practical work activity, (2) the students actively participated to accomplish the required tasks of practical works and wrote the report, (3) practical work assessment was based upon students' performance and practical work report, and (4) students considered that practical work will develop their understanding of scientific concepts, science skills, curiosity, and ability to work carefully and systematically. The conclusion of the study were (1) implementation of practical work tended to be used for confirmation and illustration theory and presentation experience for future teaching, and (2) students well and actively performed the practical work, were capable to write the report, and revealed positive perception toward the practical work.

Keywords: science practical work, laboratory work, teacher training, biology teacher education program, distance learning, open learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences (FKIP) of Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia (UT) has been offered Biology Teacher Education Program (PBIO) for secondary school teacher since 1986. All of the BTEP students should perform science practical works (laboratory and experimental works) activities. Those activities are a central and important part of curriculum. The implementation of practical works has a challenge, especially in terms of providing room or location, equipments and materials, as well as instructors/supervisors. Aspects that support the implementation comprise of laboratory staffs, home lab programs, residential programs

lab, lab instructors, external institution, facilities and internal funds of university.

Practical work activities are an important part in science education (Abrahams & Millar, 2008; Abdulwahed, et al., 2008; Downing & Holtz., 2008; Hofstein & Lunetta, 2004; Hofstein & Mamlok-Naama, 2007). The science laboratory is a setting in which students work individually or cooperatively in small groups to analyze phenomena. In addition, students interact with facilities to observe and examine the phenomena (Hofstein, 2004; Hofstein & Mamlok-Naama, 2007).

The form of laboratory activities may include hands-on labs, simulated labs, remote labs, virtual labs/activities, and practical work (Downing and Holtz, 2008; Ma & Nickerson, 2006). In addition Downing and Holtz described that practical work can be intended to facilitate online science learning. In science, it involves both laboratory and fieldwork activities and is closely related to learning by doing and experimentation. Furthermore, in distance education system regarding laboratory/practical work activities can be provided for students in the form of face to face sessions, home lab kits, video demonstrations; and interactive simulations (Kennepohl, 2010).

Factors which still hinder learning in practical work activities consist of (1) practical work activities do not according to abilities and skills of competencies that students have to master at the ends of learning, (2) assessment of capabilities and skills of practical works tend not to be done seriously, (3) limitations of practical work practices regarding resources, time constraints for conducting the practical work properly, the large number of students, and appropriate place for implementation (Hofstein, 2004; Hofstein & Lunetta, 2004; Greco, et al., 2010; Yung; 2001).

Kennepohl and Shaw (2010) stated that online and distance delivery face barriers such as classroom scheduling, physical location, and financial status, as well as job and family commitments, furthermore teaching science at online and distance education system is more demanding than and certainly not as common as teaching science at face to face education. Therefore, running of practical work activities at online and distance education will have challenges in terms of providing classrooms facilities, competent instructors, schedule activity, student grouping, and assessment.

This paper describes how UT conducts the practical work, how the learning outcomes of practical work, and how student's perception toward the implementation of practical work. The paper was based upon the study of the practical work of 2 courses (Science Practicum and Biology Practicum 2). The implementation of the study was at the UT RO which provides those practicum courses for BTEP students in the first semester of year 2011. The RO of this study provided activities for students from three ROs. Data were collected by using an interview to regional office's staffs and practical work instructors, and a questionnaire to 15 students (7 students for Science Practicum and 8 students for Biology Practicum 2), and an observation during carrying out of the practical work.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Science practical work program implementation is coordinated by UT's Regional Offices (ROs). The model of partnerships with other institutions is used in order to deliver the practical work program. ROs in collaboration with universities or schools provide facilities and instructors so that students can do their work properly. Students can carry out the activities individually or in groups. However, they should be guided by the instructor to work with in order to work properly and have feedback from the instructor. Before doing the activities, they should have read the module and review dry-lab simulation program of practical work activities. UT is now

being continued to develop more topics of dry-lab simulation programs with the aim of meeting the needs of students to do practical work.

As Shaw and Carmichael (2010) stated that to run science practical work program in distance education should be supported by the availability of laboratory staffs, home lab programs, residential programs labs, lab instructors, external institution, facilities and internal funds of the distance education institution itself. Thus, UT's RO had determined the university as a partner by considering the availability of facility, materials, instructor, lab staffs, and practical work assessor. RO in collaboration with the university that has been selected provided practical works activities for students. RO arranged practical work schedule by considering labs schedule in the university partners and student's time off work. Practical works activities for the courses Science Biology Practicum and Practicum 2 conducted in the laboratory at the university partners. In addition, instructor, lab staffs, and marker of practical works skills and report were from the university. The schedule of the practical works have done during low student practical works activity in the university and UT's students (mostly of them were school teachers) were off from their work. Students came and gathered to the university partner and remained to stay around the university for one week. Thus, they worked and completed all practical works tasks within one week. Students carried out the practical works activities in groups with 6-7 students. Tasks of practical activities were taken from the tasks listed on the modules for both the practicum courses. Regarding the form of laboratory activities (Downing and Holtz, 2008; Ma & Nickerson, 2006), in this study, students conducted hands-on labs and practical works and tended the results of their activities in order to confirm and illustrate theory of science and use and present their experiences for future teaching.

Results of analysis toward students perception showed that (1) students had already had a module, however not thoroughly studied it before, therefore they always confirm the procedures to the module and confirm the results of practical works to other students (as they recorded the data/information), (2) facilities and materials were available to support their practical works activities, and (3) the instructor and lab staffs assisted and guided them during activities. Instructors provided a brief explanation of the content and general lab procedure, however they did not deliver test or quiz to check student readiness in doing practical works. Data analysis results in Table 1.

Table 1. Facility, Instructor, and Student Procedure Understanding

	Science Practicum (PEPA4203)		Biology Practicum 2 (PEBI4419)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Student:				
Read module	2.9	0.35	2.0	0.58
Understand tasks	3.1	0.35	3.3	0.49
Facility:				
Equipments	3.4	0.42	3.6	0.45
Materials	3.1	0.35	3.6	0.48
Instructor:				
Understand content	3.4	0.52	3.7	0.49
Provide teaching	3.5	0.53	3.4	0.53
Propose solution	3.3	0.46	3.4	0.53
Provide explanation	3.0	0.53	3.0	0.82
Provide guidance	3.3	0.46	3.7	0.49

N of Students

N = 8

N = 7

Note: 1: strongly disagree 2: disagree 3: agree 4: strongly agree

Moreover, the result of this study showed that (1) students had a positive attitudes towards practical works and assumed that practical works process and writing report were easy, enjoyable and useful for them, (2) in addition, they perceived that practical works could enhance their science knowledge in science and improve their practical work skills in observation, prediction, and following the procedure, and improve their ability in working systematically. Thus, the activities though practical works setting is perceived as the attempt to develop students' understanding of concepts, science skills, and attitudes and interest towards science (Hofstein, 2004; Hofstein & Lunetta, 2004; Hofstein & Mamlok-Naama, 2007; Tiberghien, 2000). Table 2 shows the results of the finding.

Table 2. Student's Attitudes and Learning Outcomes

	Science Praktikum		Biology Practicum 2	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Practical works was easy	3.1	0.35	3.0	0.58
Doing report was easy	2.8	0.71	2.7	0.76
Practical works was enjoyable	3.4	0.52	3.6	0.53
Practical works was useful	3.5	0.53	3.3	0.76
Science knowlegde	3.5	0.54	3.7	0.49
Skills in observation	3.1	0.34	3.7	0.49
Skills in data recording	3.3	0.46	3.7	0.49
Skills to predict results	3.4	0.52	3.7	0.49
Skills in practical works	3.1	0.35	3.7	0.49
Accuracy	3.3	0.46	3.7	0.49
Curiosity	3.5	0.54	3.7	0.49
Working systematically	3.4	0.52	3.4	0.79

Results of analysis toward perception of instructors revealed that (1) student understanding of the content and practical work procedure was quite well, students interest was good, and students activity during practical work was well, (2) practical works experiences provide additional knowledge and skills to students, (3) communication and interaction during practical works occurred smoothly and properly, so the practical works could be done quite well, (4) it was rather difficult to have the tool for identifying the motion of heart muscle of frog, thus in this case, student used the modified and simpler tool. In addition, analysis of study showed that instructors needed improve time management for each activity order to conduct practical work more effectively. Moreover, instructors stated that practical works assessment carried out on the aspects of the practical process and lab reports. Practical works assessment included assessment of (1) students readiness for practical works, (2) students skills and thoroughness in assembling and using the tools/ materials, (3) student skills in conducting practical works experiment and improvisation, (4) precision/accuracy in observation and data/information recording, and (5) accuracy, cleanliness, neatness and work safety. Process of practicum works was assessed during activity by an instructor. Lab report was a product of practical work. The report was assessed by instructors who met qualifications in terms of science content and practical skills as well as understand how to mark practical report.

Each student report was assessed by 2 (two) instructors. The instructors took approximately 2-3 days for marking one student report. Practical work score contributed 30% and practical works report contributed 70% towards the course grade. Regarding student assessment, generally assessment of student practical work carried out on practical work reports, thus grade of students' performance do not reflect actual students' practical work abilities and skills (Hofstein, 2004; Hofstein & Lunetta, 2004; Greco, et al., 2010). A practical work skills consist of manual dexterity, cooperation, and communication skills. These aspects are considered should be assessed in the report includes the observation and recording, theoretical stage of inquiry, questioning, hypothesizing and planning, (post inquiry stage, presentation of result, and conclusion. Hofstein (2004) argued that practical work assessment should be carried out on both the practical work skills (20%) and practical lab reports (80%).

3. CONCLUSION

This study revealed that (1) implementation of practical work tended to be used for confirmation and illustration theory and presentation experience for future teaching, (2) the students actively participated to accomplish the required practical works and presented the report, (3) practical work assessment was based upon students' performance and practical work report, and (4) students considered that practical work will develop their understanding of scientific concepts, science skills, curiosity, and ability to work carefully and systematically. Thus the conclusion of the study were students well and actively performed the practical work, were capable to write the practical lab report, and revealed positive perception toward the practical works.

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