



Opportunities of Digital Fabrication Laboratory Technology as Innovative Chemistry Pedagogical Tools: Trends and Pre-Service Chemistry Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract: Fabrication laboratories transform an idea into a tangible product, making it a potential pedagogical tool in chemistry education. This research aimed to explore the potential aspects of the Fabrication Laboratory as a pedagogical tool in terms of existing literature and how pre-service chemistry teachers perceive the opportunities for the Fabrication Laboratory as a pedagogical tool for teaching chemistry to students. The study was conducted using descriptive research. A total of 54 pre-service chemistry teachers from a University in Central Java, Indonesia, were interviewed regarding their perspectives on the opportunities of Fabrication Laboratory to overcome difficulties in chemistry learning. The result showed that the Fabrication Laboratory has the opportunity to be a pedagogical tool for teaching chemistry to students in terms of existing literature and the views of pre-service chemistry teachers. The Fabrication Laboratory has the opportunity to be a pedagogical tool for teaching chemistry in terms of existing literature and the views of pre-service chemistry teachers. Several advantages that make FabLab have the potential as a pedagogical tool, according to pre-service chemistry teachers, include (a) flexibility of printed 3D chemistry media, (b) development creativity, and (c) technological innovation. This research provides implications for the professional development of pre-service chemistry teachers regarding the use of cutting-edge technology such as FabLab, which has a powerful tool for pedagogical transformation, especially for pre-service chemistry teachers in facing the challenges and opportunities of chemistry learning in the 4.0 revolution era.

Keywords: digital fabrication laboratory, higher education, chemistry learning

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INTRODUCTION

Technological transformation in education is something that cannot be avoided. Massive changes and innovations in technology require all lines to immediately take adaptive action, including in the education sector (Tenhovirta et al., 2022). Education is a crucial aspect in the development of sustainable living (Sady et al., 2019; Sommier et al., 2022; Wiek et al., 2011), and one of the essential elements in forming a skilled and innovative generation is teachers (Yager et al., 2012). Teachers, especially chemistry teachers, have an essential role in providing students with an understanding of the complex field of chemistry (Mishra & Yadav, 2006), which is abstract and often considered difficult (O'Dwyer & Childs, 2017; Sirhan, 2007). There is much work based on science (Tolbert, 2020). If pre-service chemistry teachers cannot overcome the existing challenges, it is feared that this will negatively impact the formation of future generations.

Effectiveness in learning does not only depend on the material taught but also on the methods (Abbitt, 2011), strategies (Owston et al., 2013) and technology (Oliveira et al., 2019) that educators use to facilitate the learning process or what is called as pedagogical tools (Huang & Yu, 2022). In an era of rapid technological development, innovative pedagogical tools ensure students develop deep and relevant understanding (Haas et al., 2022). One promising innovation is using the Fabrication Laboratory as a pedagogical tool, especially its advantages in bridging the computer-based world with the real world. Unfortunately, there are various challenges in chemistry teacher education, especially in the context of student-teacher training. These challenges can involve understanding abstract concepts, lack of skills, creativity, and limitations in real-world situations. This highlights the need for innovative approaches and learning tools that support the development of practical skills and theoretical concepts in pre-service chemistry teachers. As technology develops, the use of Fabrication Laboratories is increasingly widespread globally in various fields. The Fabrication Laboratory is a laboratory that utilizes digital fabrication, which can be used to make almost anything to create goods according to needs (Celani, 2012). The Fabrication Laboratory is an international digital laboratory network that provides

new technological tools for digitally manufacturing goods (Santos, 2018). The fabrication laboratory (FabLab) has been proven to develop the skills needed to face 21st-century challenges, such as thinking creatively, thinking multidisciplinary, additive manufacturing, and working independently (Rayna & Striukova, 2021). FabLabs is part of a network of digital fabrication spaces worldwide that offers access to the most advanced technologies for manufacturing digital design. Some of the machines at FabLabs include 3D printers, laser cutters, and CNC routers. FabLab can make various products, including home products such as key chains, plates, spoons, cellphone holders and products related to scientific artefacts like artificial organ science, robots, NMR prototyping results, and Scalable modelling molecules.

FabLabs has an impact beyond its ability to make products. FabLabs encourages multidisciplinary thinking, which enables people to produce holistic solutions by combining ideas from various fields of knowledge and creative thinking, which is critical for innovation and problem-solving in a rapidly changing world. Additionally, Fablab has been shown to instil critical capabilities needed to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. FabLabs encourages creativity and interdisciplinary approaches, as well as encouraging the use of additive manufacturing techniques, which are becoming increasingly important in modern production processes. They also support the development of independent work habits, allowing people to take initiative and manage projects autonomously. By providing hands-on experience with advanced technologies, FabLabs plays a crucial role in promoting a collaborative learning environment.

Fab Lab offers a learning environment that makes it possible to create almost anything, designing and moulding abstract ideas and concepts into concrete forms (Andersen & Pitkänen, 2019). However, even though it has excellent potential, research regarding using FabLab as a chemistry learning tool is still limited. There has been no research into the extent to which pre-service chemistry teachers are aware of and able to take advantage of these opportunities, which have not yet been fully explored. By exploring prospective teachers' views of Fabrication Labs, we aimed to assess how much this new technology can be integrated into learning. Therefore, further research needs to be carried out to explore the potential of the Fabrication Laboratory as a pedagogical tool in chemistry education.

Integrating FabLabs to improve pre-service chemistry teacher training is of interest. Although the current literature discusses the various benefits of Fab Labs, there is not enough research on how the companies can be used specifically to enhance the practical training of upcoming chemistry educators. Recent studies have investigated the fabrication for educational purposes like the fabrication of dental models (Zarbah et al., 2024), 3D printed supra condylar models (Lubet et al., 2024), and biometric identification using 3D Finger-Knuckle Print (Faouzi et al., 2023). However, little research has concentrated on how FabLabs can improve hands-on training for pre-service chemistry teachers. It is critical to address these differences to prepare educators better to become future chemistry teachers. This study expands previous information about the fabrication capabilities of Fab Labs in all areas. It emphasizes how important it is to develop these opportunities to meet the unique needs of pre-service chemistry teachers.

METHODS

This study used a descriptive research approach to explain the nature of a phenomenon being studied (Grimes & Schulz, 2002). An empirical study was carried out involving 54 pre-service chemistry teachers at the teaching faculty at a state university in Central Java. Survey and interview methods were carried out to gain an in-depth understanding of how pre-service chemistry teachers view fabrication laboratory (FabLab) opportunities in helping the students they will teach in the future. The research was conducted on 54 respondents consisting of 49 females and 5 males. Qualitative data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis with the help of NVIVO-12 (Miles et al., 2014). The literature review aimed to obtain an overview of research trends in the fabrication laboratory field, whether they are still relevant, and whether they have opportunities for assessment. In order to find patterns, themes, and problems in the literature, a literature review entails gathering resources, describing and analyzing them, and choosing, classifying, and assessing the content. The first step was applying the inclusion criteria to the years (2012–2022). Following the criterion for keywords and titles, inclusion criteria were applied based on language and document type. Reading the entire text was the last step, and the third stage required applying inclusion criteria to the abstract. On October 18, 2023, 216 documents were discovered. From the initial screening process, 216 documents were identified by searching the string "fabrication laboratory". Of the 216 documents, 136 documents that met the publication range from 2012 to 2022 were identified. We also used an integrative review to provide deeper insight into the Fabrication Laboratory. The methods in the integrative review follow the PRISMA Steps. An initial search was done using the "Fabrication Laboratory" keyword in the Scopus database. Data collection was carried out on October 18 2023, from the Scopus database. A total of 216 documents were found. Furthermore, the following inclusion criteria were applied to the search results: (1) Documents published in the period 2012-2022; (2) The published document is an empirical study; (3) The journal article presents the connection between the Fabrication Laboratory as a

pedagogical tool. Exclusion activities were carried out to exclude documents published from book series ($n=14$), conference papers ($n=1$), conference papers ($n=50$), review papers ($n=2$), trade journals ($n=2$), from books ($n=11$), from Spain ($n=4$), China ($n=1$), France ($n=1$), Germany ($n=1$), resulting in 49 articles. The full text of the remaining 49 articles was evaluated through more detailed reading.

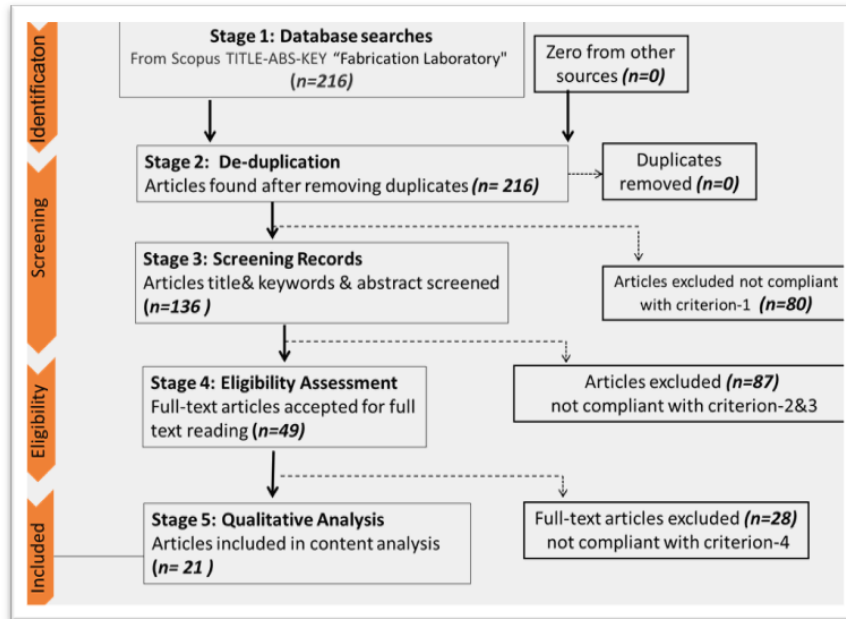


Figure 1. Flow diagram of literature review

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research was conducted to examine the opportunities for Fabrication laboratories as pedagogical tools theoretically and empirically. A literature review of research trends in the Fabrication Laboratory field was carried out over the last ten years to theoretically examine Fabrication Laboratory opportunities. The first analysis was carried out to see the development of publications from year to year in the field fabrication laboratory. We conducted a literature search on scientific publications that had been published and were indexed by Scopus. As a result of the search and analysis, 216 documents related to the keywords fabrication laboratory were found published in Scopus. Of these 216 documents, 136 were found published in the last ten years (2012-2022). Publications related to fabrication laboratories exhibited a fluctuating trend. However, if a straight line is drawn from 2012 to 2022, an upward pattern is observed over the last ten years. This certainly indicates that research in the field of Fabrication Laboratory continues to be an intriguing topic for examination by the scientific community as it can serve as a tool for advancing various aspects, like innovation competency, creative product (Sopapradit et al., 2024), motivation and engagement from the student (Nikou, 2023). As a result of the literature review, 216 documents related to the keyword fabrication laboratory were published in Scopus. From these 216 documents, 136 were found to have been published in the last ten years (2012-2022). Publications related to fabrication laboratories show fluctuating trends, but if we drew a straight line from 2012 to 2022, there was an upward pattern in the last ten years. This analysis showed that research in the field of Fabrication Laboratories continues to be an exciting topic for further study by the scientific community because it can be a tool to advance various aspects.

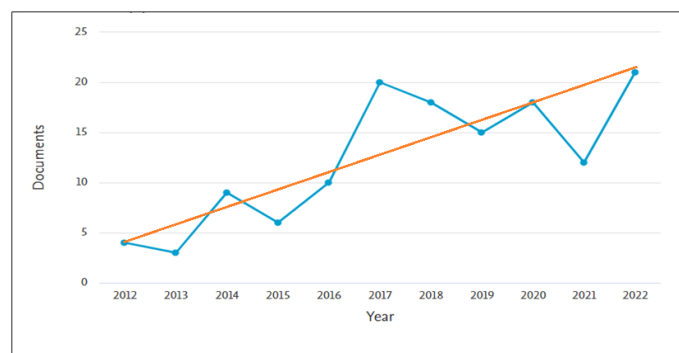


Figure 2. Trends of Fabrication Laboratory Research

Of all the documents published on Scopus over the last ten years, it was found that the subject area most studied was in the engineering field, namely 74 published documents. These studies cover several aspects related to the Fab Lab in an engineering context, such as the application of 3D printing technology, the use of laser cutters, and the integration of other technologies in teaching and learning in engineering. These findings illustrate that the Fab Lab has become the center of attention for enriching the learning experience of engineering students. However, it is interesting to note that although engineering dominates FabLab-related studies, there is an excellent opportunity to expand the scope of Fab Lab use into the context of chemistry learning (Cataldo et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2021). Seeing that Fab Lab can create simulations, models and experiments that support a practical understanding of chemical concepts, there is a solid basis for developing a more interactive and contextual approach to learning chemistry. The importance of expanding the use of Fab Lab into chemistry education can be further discussed in the context of the need for innovative and relevant learning methods to motivate students and improve their soft skills in chemistry learning.

Table 1. Trend in Subject Area of Fabrication Laboratory (2012-2022)

Subject area	Number of Publication
Engineering	74
Computer Science	67
Social Sciences	37
Physics and Astronomy	13
Arts and Humanities	13
Mathematics	12
Materials Science	10
Environmental Science	10
Business, management and Accounting	9
Energy	8
Chemistry	6
Decisions Sciences	5
Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	5
Earth and Planetary Sciences	4
Psychology	2
Medicine	2
Chemical Engineering	2
Multidisciplinary	1
Economics, Econometrics, and Finance	1
Agricultural and Biological Sciences	1

The engineering field initially adopted FabLabs technology, such as rapid prototyping technologies (McLaren, 2001). However, using fabrication technology such as FabLabs to support education is still far from new (Rejeb, 2022). Thus, these findings provide a solid basis for continuing to explore the potential of Fab Lab as a pedagogical tool in chemistry learning.

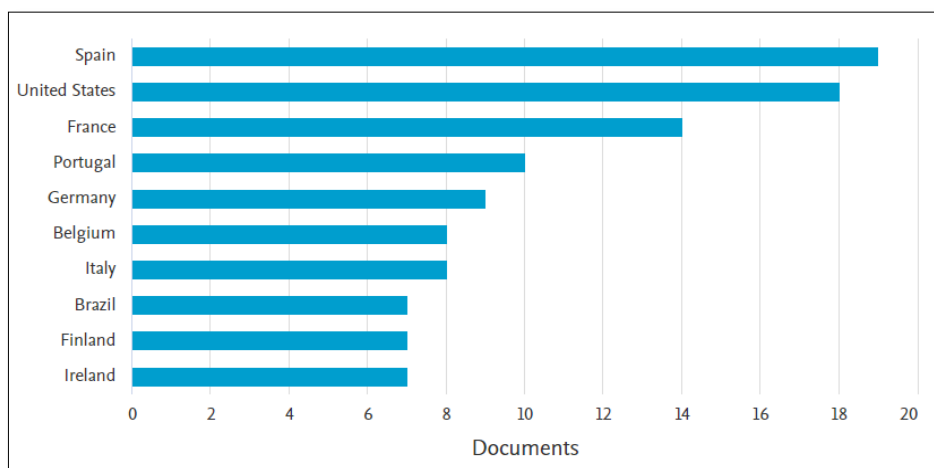


Figure 3. Most countries that have carried out FabLab's Research

Figure 3 indicates that the country with the highest number of publications on the topic of Fabrication Laboratories in Scopus was Spain (ranked first), followed by the United States (ranked second), and France (ranked third). From a literature review of 136 Scopus publications related to Fabrication Laboratories, the dominant type of publication is Conference Papers, totalling 65 papers, followed by the article document type, which totals 54 documents and 13 book chapters. This analysis highlights the diverse nature of publications in the field of Laboratory Fabrication, reflecting a wide range of scientific activities. The prevalence of Conference Papers indicates active participation in academic events and conferences focused on this area. On the other hand, articles can demonstrate comprehensive research studies and reviews that contribute to understanding Fabrication Laboratory topics. Discussions around these types of publications can encourage collaborative efforts and facilitate the dissemination of knowledge within the academic community. Researchers, educators, and stakeholders can explore these diverse resources to gain comprehensive insight into Fabrication Laboratory research, ultimately advancing the field.

In this research, testing was also carried out to determine the relationship between the term "Fabrication Laboratory" and other related terms. Analysis and visualization are carried out using the Vos Viewer application. The results of Network Visualization Mapping show that the term fabrication laboratory is related to other terms, which are classified into five groups, namely the red group, which shows that the term fabrication laboratory has a strong relationship with the terms 3-D printing, 3D printers, 3D printing, Additive manufacturing, Fabrication, International space station, Robotics, Space stations. The green cluster shows that the ERM fabrication laboratory also has a strong relationship with the terms Architectural Design, Digital Fabrication, Digital Manufacturing, Fab Labs, and Fabrication Laboratories. The Blue Cluster shows the term fabrication laboratory about the world of education because it is shown in the map that fabrication laboratory has a strong relationship with the terms e-learning, Education, Engineering Education, FabLab, Students, and Teaching, as presented in Figure 4.

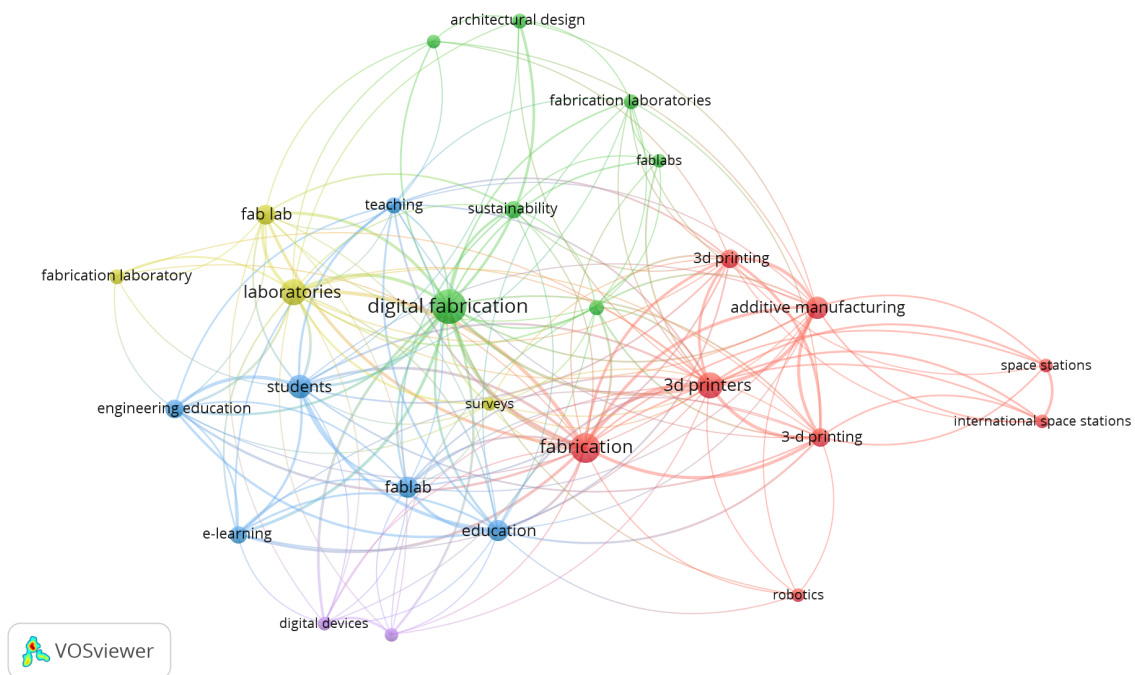


Figure 4. Network Visualization Mapping Results

The size of labels and circles in this context plays a vital role in representing the significance or superiority of a particular item. In bibliometric analysis, circle size, for example, can indicate publication volume, citations, or connections to other elements in the network, including authors or research topics (Van Eck & Waltman, 2013). Further exploration of the strong relationship between the Fabrication Laboratory and the term Education can be seen more deeply by highlighting the map in the term "education" section. A closer view of the map with the term "education" is presented in Figure 5.

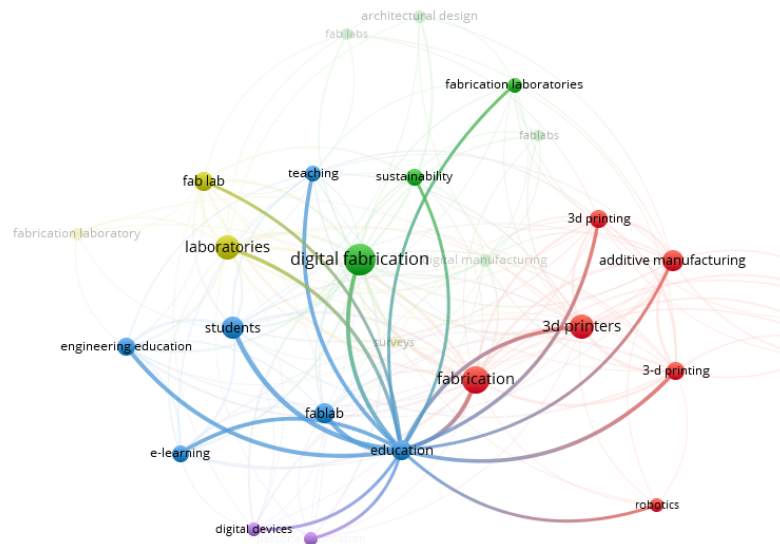


Figure 5. Network Visualization Mapping Results FabLab with Education

Figure 5 shows a connection between the term "FabLab" and terms in the field of education with the emergence of a link between FabLab and e-learning, students, laboratories, teaching, technical education, and digital devices. The emergence of a link between the terms "students" and "teaching" with FabLab shows that the facilities in FabLab contribute directly to learning. This relationship has the potential to conduct further research on how FabLab influences learning media, learning methods, learning outcomes, and the skills needed to face the challenges of the 21st century, especially in education. Researchers are also still open to seeing how FabLab can support learning in chemistry. [García-Ruiz et al. \(2023\)](#) state that FabLab integration in education can be done in two ways: direct integration and partial integration. Direct integration is carried out by creating a FabLab and managing it independently by educational institutions, which can be utilized by the academic community in the university environment. In an educational context, it is found that this direct integration approach is suitable for use at the higher education level.

The emergence of the terms "laboratory" and "sustainability" suggests that the scope of FabLab emphasizes theoretical education and practical skills in facing challenges related to sustainability-related themes. The use of digital fabrication technology in FabLab can contribute to sustainability because each individual can customize their product needs within the laboratory, thereby extending the life of the products produced and reducing waste ([Fleischmann et al., 2016](#)). [Kohtala \(2017\)](#) states that digital craft techniques can maximize material utilization and reduce production waste. Advanced computer programs can determine the best way to print or cut an object, minimizing the material used. FabLab's relationship with the term sustainability has also been proven through several studies. FabLab can realize ideas for making environmentally friendly products that students have successfully made independently, such as agro-sensoring prototypes, environmentally friendly modems, aquaponic systems, clothing and accessories from recycled materials, and solar panels ([Santos et al., 2018](#)). Overall, these findings highlight the importance of the Fabrication Laboratory in education and its potential to improve student learning outcomes by integrating real-world experiences with cutting-edge technology and pedagogical innovation. More research and exploration of this social science can provide more insight into the role of Fabrication Laboratories in the education system.

Table 2. Educational Level and Disciplinary Scope

Disciplinary Scope	Educational Level				
	Primary	Junior School	High School	University	Combination of Levels
Sciences	2	1			2
Mathematics					2
Chemistry				1	
Physics				1	
Architecture				2	
Combination Field		2	3	5	

Based on Table 2, the results of previous research showed that FabLab can be used at any level of education, from primary to higher education. Most students, around eleven to thirteen years old, in sixth grade,

and a small number in fifth grade, can utilize FabLab for learning (Togou et al., 2020). FabLab is a learning tool that helps teachers and students bring ideas to life. The research was conducted on instructors and students at two high school locations with FabLabs operational. FabLab has strengths in terms of the technology available in the lab to facilitate the realization of creative and innovative ideas from developing student products (Maravilhas & Martins, 2019). Fabrication laboratories can physically represent scientific concepts by providing a practical and exciting approach (Fonda & Canessa, 2016).

Table 3. Learning Approach used with FabLab

Learning Approach	Number of Articles
STEAM and STEM	11
Problem-Based Learning	4
Experiment	3
Case Study	2
Hands-on Learning	1

In educational contexts, FabLab has emerged as a novel approach educators can use to advance STEAM projects (Montés et al., 2023). Intensive discussion of these concepts can lead to better understanding and practice. Collaboration between educators, innovators and researchers can more effectively increase the value of the Fabrication Laboratory as a centre for innovation and a powerful tool for educational growth (Sopapradit et al., 2024). The potential of Fabrication Laboratories, which have a wide range of fields, can influence innovative approaches and strategies to exploit their potential in any subject, including chemistry education. Teachers can use FabLab to facilitate science learning; for example, students could make robots using equipment in the fabrication laboratory, such as 3D printers, laser cutters, and Arduino boards connected to a cloud server. This example shows that student-centred science learning can be improved with FabLab. Students were directly involved in understanding science, technology, mathematics, and engineering principles and enhancing 21st-century skills such as creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, and communication (Cornetta et al., 2019). This indicates that FabLab can become a pedagogical tool for the 21st-century learning paradigm.

FabLab is a technology-rich, technology-mediated learning environment (Kim et al., 2024). Students are challenged to define their problems in groups and create solutions through a problem-based learning (PBL) approach. FabLab facilitates constructionist learning, where students can share authentic ideas and discover new insights through the use of digital fabrication tools. In addition, FabLab also promotes collaboration between students and between students and teachers. In research, learning products created through FabLab (Chan & Blikstein, 2018) include X-Acto Knives, Tangible Product, and Headphone Hook. In the context of chemistry education, FabLab is a powerful tool for better understanding abstract chemical concepts, with its ability to print physical molecular models via 3D printing tools (Martin et al., 2023). This physical molecular model has advantages because it adds multimodal sensory features in chemical learning, such as vision, hearing, and touch, to improve understanding of the spatial attributes of 3D shapes (Carlisle et al., 2015). The concept of chemistry has long been understood to be a complicated concept. It gives rise to many misconceptions because students are unable to visualize the submicroscopic level regarding how a molecule acts, which sometimes involves the rotation of sigma bonds, molecular vibrations, and the reaction mechanisms that underlie a chemical reaction that can occur. With the technology available in the FabLab, chemistry students can, independently or in groups, make this submicroscopic level real because it is physical. Using digital fabrication tools such as 3D printers, CNC machines, and laser cutters, students can build and work together to find a complete perspective on chemical concepts by connecting macroscopic, submicroscopic and symbolic levels. Fablab also promotes collaboration not only between students but also between teachers and students, thereby creating a community that supports each other and learns from each other without fear of guilt, and this is essential for building creative thinking skills.

The analysis and synthesis of the reviewed literature found that the benefits of FabLab in supporting learning stimulate students' creativity because FabLab provides an environment, materials and advanced technology that allows students to carry out prototyping and create natural products, thereby triggering creativity in finding solutions. For example, FabLab is forming a Network that embraces concepts of an open-source symbiotic relationship between fabrication and ecology (Gao, 2018). This network aims to promote sustainable practices and reduce waste using recycled materials and renewable energy sources while simultaneously triggering student creativity. Fablab also builds collaboration through an interdisciplinary approach because they combine digital skills with hands-on 'making' skills since they are themselves mixed environment, both digital and physical (Rayna & Striukova, 2021). FabLab experience also enhanced situated learning environments where students and teachers collaborate to achieve common objectives in "doing" and "creating", which often involve scientific knowledge and skills. For example, Fab Labs can be used as Green

FabLabs, where students can perform experiments related to green chemistry, such as determining the antibacterial properties of lactic acid (Byard et al., 2019). Furthermore, apart from the literature, it is also essential to explore the perspective of pre-service chemistry teachers as stakeholders who might implement FabLab in their teaching practices. This integration between literature findings and the perspectives of pre-service chemistry teachers will provide a more comprehensive insight into the potential and challenges of using the FabLab in the context of chemistry learning. Pre-service teachers are asked about their initial perceptions regarding Fabrication laboratory opportunities as a learning tool to overcome difficulties in learning chemistry. The question asked in the interview is: "As a pre-service chemistry teacher/chemistry teacher, how important is the Fabrication Laboratory to help you gain competency as a prospective professional teacher?". The profile of pre-service chemistry teachers' answers is presented in Figure 6.

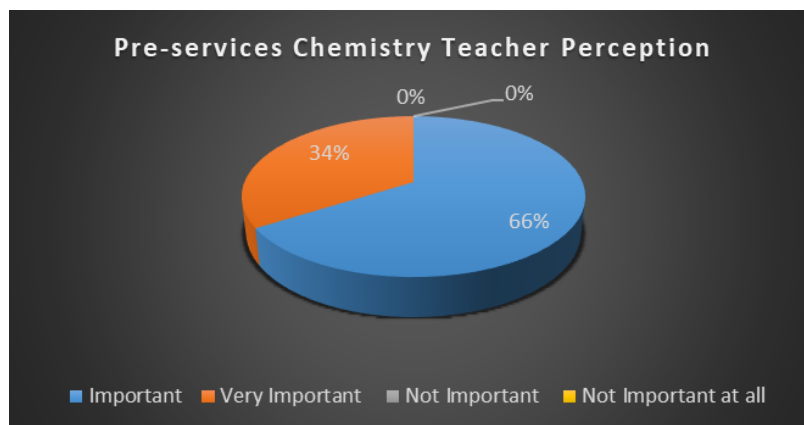


Figure 6. Perception of Pre-service Chemistry Teachers-Fabrication Laboratory Opportunities

Most pre-service chemistry teachers answered that FabLab is essential for the development of their careers as teachers because most of them need visualization assistance; it is not enough to imagine molecules in 3 dimensions, or with the help of 3-D simulation via computer, they need more than that, namely making 3-dimensional molecules into tangible products that can be touched, touched and rotated. The second reason is related to costs and facilities because not every student has a computer device and the freedom to use gadgets at any time due to Islamic boarding school/ma'had rules; therefore, if given the choice of the printed version of 3D learning media, they prefer three-dimensional printed structures.

Pre-service chemistry teachers see FabLab as a valuable tool to help them understand chemistry material better. Using FabLab provides hands-on experience that can improve students' understanding through a practical learning approach. Respondents noted that using FabLab, with its ability to create objects in 3D, can facilitate the interpretation of chemical materials. This enriches the way students explore and understand chemical concepts in more depth. Some respondents saw that using FabLab could provide new competencies for teachers, increasing their professionalism. FabLab is considered a source of innovation that can help teachers develop student creativity. In line with this, research from Celani (2012) produced findings that the use of digital fabrication was proven to be able to increase aspects of student creativity. In line with that finding, Sopapradit et al. (2024) found that digital fabrication laboratories were able to increase creative competence and innovation. From thematic analysis using the help of N-Vivo, several reasons that emerged from interviews, it was found that FabLab could help because it could, according to pre-service chemistry teachers, include (a) flexibility of printed 3D chemistry media, (b) development of creativity, and (c) technological innovation. Morin and Moccozet (2021) state that FabLab's implementation in pedagogical approaches is made possible by combining the "making" process with design thinking. Design thinking organizes the steps leading to the "making" process, and the "making" process aids in the DT prototyping phase.

Students stated that FabLab was very useful in providing visuals of compounds or framework models in chemical materials. Using FabLab gives them a physical representation that helps clarify abstract chemistry concepts. As prospective chemistry teachers, respondents felt that FabLab was important because it allowed them to develop practical skills and creativity in chemical experiments. This is considered a relevant aspect and supports their professional development as educators. Students see FabLab as a helpful tool for better understanding chemistry material. Using FabLab provides hands-on experience that can improve students' understanding through a practical learning approach. Respondents noted that the use of FabLab, with its ability to create objects in 3-D, can facilitate the interpretation of chemical materials. This enriches the way students explore and understand chemical concepts in more depth. Several respondents saw that using FabLab could

provide new competencies for teachers, increasing their professionalism. This contributes to students' understanding of the relevance of chemical concepts to the real world.

CONCLUSION

The Fabrication Laboratory has the opportunity to be a pedagogical tool for teaching chemistry in terms of existing literature and the views of pre-service chemistry teachers. Several advantages that make FabLab have the potential as a pedagogical tool, according to pre-service chemistry teachers, include (a) flexibility of printed 3D chemistry media, (b) development creativity, and (c) technological innovation. This study underscored how the opportunities of FabLab can change chemistry education as a pedagogical tool to create a more interactive, creative, and efficient learning environment. The positive perspective of pre-service chemistry teachers may inspire legislators and educational institutions to invest in this technology, which will modernize chemistry education.

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