



CHALLENGES OF THE FIRST YEARS OF TEACHING IN RURAL AREAS: VOICES OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHER

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Abstract: *Teaching practicum in rural schools provides pre-service teachers with authentic opportunities to develop professional competence while confronting the realities of educational inequality. This study explores the experiences, expectations, challenges, aspirations, and concerns of pre-service teachers who completed their teaching practicum in remote rural schools in Aceh Besar Regency, Indonesia. A qualitative research design was employed involving six pre-service teachers selected from rural school placements. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires adapted from Kizilaslan (2012) and analyzed using thematic analysis following Creswell's coding procedures. The findings reveal that rural teaching experiences fostered greater flexibility, creativity, adaptability, and professional commitment among participants. Despite these positive outcomes, the participants encountered substantial pedagogical, personal, and social challenges, including inadequate educational facilities, limited technological resources, diverse student learning needs, classroom management difficulties, heavy administrative responsibilities, and adaptation to unfamiliar school cultures and professional relationships. Most participants expressed a strong willingness to pursue teaching careers in rural schools, viewing such placements as opportunities to contribute to educational equity and professional growth. Nevertheless, they also reported concerns about their preparedness to address diverse student needs effectively and to adapt to demanding school environments. The findings suggest that rural teaching practicum plays a significant role in shaping pre-service teachers' professional identity, resilience, and social responsibility. The study recommends that teacher education institutions strengthen pre-practicum preparation through contextualized training, reflective practice, classroom management, and adaptation to resource-constrained settings. In addition, stronger partnerships between universities and rural schools, together with supportive educational policies and mentoring systems, are essential to prepare future teachers capable of serving diverse educational contexts and promoting equitable education in underserved communities.*

Keywords : *pre-service teachers; teaching practicum; rural schools; professional identity; teacher education; educational equity.*

Abstrak: Praktik pengalaman lapangan (PPL) di sekolah pedesaan memberikan kesempatan nyata bagi calon guru untuk mengembangkan kompetensi profesional sembari menghadapi realitas ketimpangan pendidikan. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengalaman, harapan, tantangan, aspirasi, dan kekhawatiran calon guru yang telah menyelesaikan PPL di sekolah pedesaan terpencil di Kabupaten Aceh Besar, Indonesia. Desain penelitian kualitatif digunakan dengan melibatkan enam calon guru yang ditempatkan di sekolah pedesaan. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terbuka yang diadaptasi dari Kizilaslan (2012) dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik dengan mengikuti prosedur pengodean Creswell. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengalaman mengajar di pedesaan menumbuhkan fleksibilitas, kreativitas, kemampuan adaptasi, dan komitmen profesional yang lebih tinggi di kalangan peserta. Terlepas dari hasil positif tersebut, para peserta

menghadapi tantangan pedagogis, pribadi, dan sosial yang signifikan, termasuk fasilitas pendidikan yang tidak memadai, keterbatasan sumber daya teknologi, beragamnya kebutuhan belajar siswa, kesulitan dalam pengelolaan kelas, beban administratif yang berat, serta perlunya beradaptasi dengan budaya sekolah dan hubungan profesional yang asing bagi mereka. Sebagian besar peserta menyatakan keinginan kuat untuk meniti karier sebagai guru di sekolah pedesaan, karena memandang penempatan tersebut sebagai peluang untuk berkontribusi pada pemerataan pendidikan dan pengembangan profesional. Namun demikian, mereka juga mengungkapkan kekhawatiran mengenai kesiapan mereka dalam menangani kebutuhan siswa yang beragam secara efektif dan beradaptasi dengan lingkungan sekolah yang penuh tuntutan. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa PPL di pedesaan berperan penting dalam membentuk identitas profesional, ketangguhan, dan tanggung jawab sosial calon guru. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar lembaga pendidikan guru memperkuat persiapan pra-praktik melalui pelatihan yang kontekstual, praktik reflektif, keterampilan pengelolaan kelas, dan adaptasi terhadap lingkungan dengan keterbatasan sumber daya. Selain itu, kemitraan yang lebih kuat antara universitas dan sekolah pedesaan, disertai dengan kebijakan pendidikan yang mendukung serta sistem pendampingan, sangatlah penting untuk mempersiapkan calon guru yang mampu melayani berbagai konteks pendidikan dan mendorong pemerataan pendidikan di komunitas yang kurang terlayani.

Kata kunci : calon guru; praktik pengalaman lapangan; sekolah di daerah pedesaan; identitas profesional; pendidikan guru; kesetaraan pendidikan

INTRODUCTION

The internship program for prospective teacher candidates is a mandatory stage for undergraduate education students. This teaching practicum aims to produce graduates ready to become professional teachers—possessing pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies—and to prepare them to become competent, disciplined, and responsible educators (Nguyen, 2021; Shi, et al, 2025).

As an Educational Personnel Education Institution (LPTK) in Aceh Province, the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) at Abulyatama University plays a vital role in producing graduates who are competent in their respective fields. One aspect of this role involves the placement of prospective teachers, particularly in remote and coastal areas of Aceh Province. This program aims to address stakeholder needs, specifically those of the Aceh Besar Education Office, which requested the placement of student interns in remote areas of Aceh Besar. Against this backdrop, the researcher is interested in examining the challenges students face when teaching in remote areas, specifically in Aceh Besar. Teaching practicum is widely recognised as the most influential component of initial teacher education because it allows pre-service teachers to integrate university learning with authentic classroom practice (Sari et al., 2025).

Since entering the teaching profession is demanding in any educational context, teaching placements in rural schools introduce additional professional, cultural, and emotional challenges due to geographical isolation, limited educational resources, and unfamiliar school communities (Ai et al., 2022; Mudra, 2024; Sari et al., 2025).

Teaching in remote areas presents a unique set of challenges for student teachers. Previous studies consistently report that beginning teachers in rural schools encounter resource constraints, limited technological infrastructure, professional isolation, and difficulties adapting to local cultures, all of which influence their professional learning and identity development (Ai et al., 2022; Mudra, 2024). The dynamics involved differ somewhat from those experienced by seasoned educators; the situation entails more than just a lack of facilities—

it also demands mental and professional readiness, as well as adaptability. Many student teachers report that this experience shapes their character as educators. To succeed in remote areas, student teachers must navigate various factors, such as adapting to local culture and language, managing limited teaching experience and resources, dealing with transportation and logistical constraints, understanding students' socio-economic backgrounds, coping with limited guidance from their institutions, and often taking on multiple roles for their students.

The challenges involved certainly require prospective teachers to adopt appropriate strategies, enabling them to quickly adapt to a new environment and promptly identify the needs that must be met for effective teaching. Teaching in remote areas demands well-planned strategies to ensure the learning process remains effective, despite significant limitations in facilities and environmental conditions. Prospective teachers need to learn the local culture and language to facilitate acceptance by the community and students, while also avoiding misunderstandings. They must also develop creative, environment-based lessons, utilizing simple, readily available objects as learning aids to keep the material engaging even without technology. Furthermore, the ability to manage multi-grade classrooms is crucial, as a single room often accommodates students from various grade levels. Prospective teachers also need to foster student motivation through personal approaches, simple words of encouragement, and small, enjoyable activities. Equally important, they must establish good communication with the community, maintain their health, and engage in regular reflection to evaluate their teaching experiences and enhance their professional competence. By employing these strategies, prospective teachers can adapt successfully and make a positive impact on education in remote areas.

These adaptive strategies have been recognized as essential competencies for teachers working in rural contexts because they enable effective instruction despite environmental constraints (Sari et al., 2025; Shi et al, 2025).

Based on the issues outlined above, this study aims to examine the phenomenon within a specific time and setting, exploring the various meanings reflected therein. This qualitative study is expected to provide a rich, in-depth description of the perspectives held by student teachers—prospective educators—regarding their experiences teaching in remote areas, while also establishing a foundation for future quantitative research. Furthermore, the findings will help identify appropriate and effective strategies for teacher training institutions (LPTK) to produce teachers who are not only high-quality but also capable of thriving in diverse educational environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Effectiveness of Teaching Practice at School for Pre-Service Teachers

Teaching practice, also known as practicum or field experience, constitutes a fundamental component of teacher education programs. It provides pre-service teachers with the opportunity to apply pedagogical theories and methodologies acquired in coursework to authentic classroom contexts. Numerous studies have highlighted that teaching practice is instrumental in developing pedagogical competence, professional identity, and reflective capacity among pre-service teachers (Korthagen, 2010; Zeichner, 2012; Meutia et al, 2018; Nguyen, 2021; Shi

et al, 2025).

Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice

One of the primary purposes of teaching practice is to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. While teacher education programs equip pre-service teachers with conceptual understanding in areas such as educational psychology, curriculum design, and classroom management, these principles are often abstract until tested in real classroom situations. According to Darling-Hammond (2006), the practicum enables pre-service teachers to contextualise theoretical frameworks and to understand the complexities and contingencies of real teaching. More recent studies likewise demonstrate that practicum experiences facilitate the transformation of pedagogical knowledge into context-sensitive teaching practice (Sari et al., 2025). Thus, the practicum acts as a mediating space where knowledge is transformed through practice and reflection.

Development of Professional and Pedagogical Competence

Teaching practice serves as an arena for developing professional and pedagogical competence. During this period, pre-service teachers engage in lesson planning, instructional delivery, assessment, and classroom management under the supervision of mentor teachers and university supervisors. Through observation, feedback, and self-assessment, they refine their teaching strategies and gain greater instructional efficacy (Liu, 2020; Hendriwanto, 2021; Shi et al, 2025). Moreover, effective supervision during teaching practice has been found to significantly enhance pre-service teachers' ability to integrate theory into practice (Nguyen, 2021).

Formation of Professional Identity and Confidence

Teaching practice also contributes to the formation of a professional teacher identity. As pre-service teachers assume the responsibilities of actual teaching, they begin to perceive themselves as members of the teaching profession. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argue that professional identity is shaped through interaction, reflection, and negotiation of one's role in the school context. Repeated teaching experiences help to build confidence, self-efficacy, and a sense of belonging within the educational community. Recent empirical evidence further suggests that rural teaching experiences play an important role in shaping professional identity through continuous interaction with local communities and school cultures (Ai et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2025).

Exposure to School Culture and Collaboration

The school-based component of teaching practice exposes pre-service teachers to the social, cultural, and organisational dynamics of educational institutions. They learn to navigate relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents. According to Clarke, Triggs, and Nielsen (2014), this exposure fosters an understanding of school culture and promotes the development of collaborative and interpersonal skills necessary for effective teaching. Participation in staff meetings and extracurricular activities further broadens their appreciation of the multifaceted nature of teachers' professional duties. Similar conclusions were reached by Daud et al. (2025), who found that relationships with mentor teachers and school leaders significantly influence pre-service teachers' professional growth.

Reflective Practice and Lifelong Learning

Reflection is a critical dimension of effective teaching practice. Schön's (1983) concept of the "reflective practitioner" underscores the importance of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action in professional learning. Through reflective journals, discussions, and feedback sessions, pre-service teachers evaluate their teaching performance, identify areas for improvement, and develop adaptive expertise. This reflective disposition cultivates lifelong learning, which is essential in a rapidly changing educational landscape. Recent studies also demonstrate that systematic reflective practice enhances resilience, self-efficacy, and professional learning among pre-service teachers (Hendriwanto, 2021).

In conclusion, teaching practice represents a pivotal stage in the preparation of pre-service teachers, facilitating the transition from theoretical understanding to professional practice. It enhances pedagogical competence, confidence, and reflective capacity, while fostering a sense of professional identity and commitment. Despite challenges such as limited supervision or variability in school environments, the practicum remains an indispensable element of effective teacher education programs. Its success depends largely on strong partnerships between universities and schools, as well as structured mentoring and continuous reflection..

METHODOLOGY

This study applied a qualitative approach in collecting data. The population of this study was 256 prospective teacher students participating in field experience who were placed in several schools, both in urban and remote areas. The sample used in this research was students placed in remote schools; the number was 6 students from six high schools located in the Aceh Besar Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. This sample was taken randomly from schools spread across the Aceh Besar area, especially remote areas.

Given that open-ended responses are highly effective for gathering accurate and in-depth data on the issues under investigation, open-ended questions were formulated as the survey instrument for this study. Open-ended qualitative questionnaires have been widely recommended for exploring participants' lived experiences, beliefs, and perceptions because they allow respondents to express ideas beyond predetermined categories (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This survey aims to explore the perspectives of pre-service teachers regarding teaching practices in remote areas and other lifestyle-related issues. The questions were designed to elicit open-ended responses, thereby allowing participants to answer based on their personal experiences and feelings without feeling constrained. This flexibility is expected to yield broad, profound, and insightful responses—including concrete examples—and ultimately provide richer, more in-depth, and varied data (Brown, 2004).

The questions asked were designed based on research by Kizilaslan (2012). These questions relate to:

1. What expectations do you have about teaching in a rural school?
2. What do you believe are the greatest professional challenges that a beginning teacher may experience in their first year in a rural school?
3. What are the greatest personal and social challenges that a beginning teacher may experience in their first year in a rural school?

4. Are there other issues that may concern you as a beginning teacher in a rural school?
5. Do you intend to apply for a position in a rural school next year?
6. Why would you like to teach in a rural school?
7. What are your greatest apprehensions about teaching in a rural school?

Responses to the questions above was analyzed using the adopted method: the coding process outlined by Creswell (2002). All written responses will be coded, and themes will be identified based on the topics most frequently discussed by participants. Thematic analysis is particularly appropriate for identifying recurring patterns and shared meanings across participants' narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The resulting data are unique and surprising, offering robust evidence to substantiate the findings. In the final stage, themes will be determined based on a consensus derived from the collected data.

FINDINGS

The various teaching challenges faced by student teachers in remote areas are illustrated by data collected and analyzed using thematic analysis. The data also reveal diverse perspectives among student teachers regarding teaching in remote regions—viewpoints held both from their own standpoint as educators and from that of their peers. There are differing views—both positive and negative—concerning the variables examined in this study, including responses touching upon "spirit," "being grounded," "heterogeneous students," "new relationships," "student character," and "challenges regarding facilities."

These diverse challenges are examined through the lens of the student teachers' own perspectives on teaching in remote areas. Their initial views characterize teaching in such regions as an experience defined by a lack of facilities and infrastructure—specifically, a lack of internet access or general inaccessibility. This is reflected in comments such as, "I thought teaching in a remote area meant no transportation, having to walk, and no internet access." Others envisioned it as teaching without adequate facilities; one student noted, "Let alone books—even the classrooms aren't up to standard; I've even seen schools on social media that don't have electricity." This article delves deeper into the specific challenges faced by student teachers in remote areas, focusing on two aspects: their responses regarding the teaching experience itself and the interesting experiences they encountered while teaching in these locations.

Challenges

Student Expectations

Teaching in remote areas certainly requires a great deal of passion. The researchers sought to explore a key interview indicator: the extent of the student teachers' expectations regarding their teaching experiences.

Based on the results of the open-ended interviews, teaching in remote areas appeared to foster greater flexibility and creativity among the participating pre-service teachers. This is motivated by the lack of teaching equipment in schools, so teachers must be able to teach using simple media or those that can be accessed around the school. This is reflected in the statement of one respondent who responded, "If you don't have a projector, then use the media that is available around them" (If you have no projector, teachers may use the media that is

available around them).

Meanwhile, other prospective teacher students stated that the experience of teaching in remote areas provided the opportunity to gain valuable experience, broaden their horizons and become professional teachers. Apart from that, student teacher candidates also revealed that when they teach in remote areas, they must also be able to adapt to real conditions in the field and must have a positive impact on students. In fact, some respondents also hoped for financial support, based on the response of one prospective teacher student, "please give pocket money" (Hopefully, we need more allowance).

The scarcity of instructional resources encouraged them to rely on locally available materials and adapt their instructional strategies to the surrounding context. Similar findings have been reported by Ai et al. (2022), who found that rural teaching experiences promote adaptive professional identity development, and by Sari et al. (2025), who argued that teaching in remote Indonesian schools encourages resourcefulness and context-responsive pedagogy. The expectation of becoming professional teachers through authentic teaching experiences is also consistent with studies showing that rural practicum experiences strengthen pre-service teachers' professional commitment and reflective capacity (Shi et al, 2025).

The Greatest Challenges

Meanwhile, the challenges faced by student teachers during their field experience practicum varied. Some students, for instance, complained about limited facilities and technology—specifically citing issues with internet access and learning resources. These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating that inadequate infrastructure, limited instructional resources, and unreliable internet access remain among the most common challenges experienced by pre-service teachers during rural teaching practicums (Mudra, 2024; Sari et al., 2025).

Other respondents highlighted the challenge of adapting to students' diverse cognitive abilities, noting that while some grasp lessons quickly, others are slower to absorb the material. As one respondent explained: "Students have diverse characteristics: some are quick to understand, while others require repeated explanations." Similar observations were reported by Mudra (2024), who found that beginning teachers frequently struggle to address diverse learner needs in rural classrooms where instructional support and learning resources are limited.

On the other hand, the responses also highlight the issue of classroom management. Teachers continue to face significant challenges in managing student discipline and maintaining student focus amidst potential distractions from outside the classroom. A teacher's ability to manage the classroom in a way that supports learning is crucial for creating a safe and comfortable learning environment.

The final challenge facing student teachers is adapting to a new environment, encompassing both the culture and the social setting surrounding the school. Interaction with teachers and students within the learning environment is a crucial element in establishing the teaching and learning atmosphere. This finding also aligns with Ai et al. (2022), who reported that adapting to unfamiliar school cultures and developing relationships with local communities are essential processes in constructing professional identity during rural placements.

a. Personal Challenges

In addition to external factors, student teachers face various challenges stemming from internal factors, which are influenced by diverse individual characteristics and circumstances. Findings indicate that one of the most frequently cited challenges is self-management. This encompasses the ability to manage time effectively, balance academic and personal life, and maintain the motivation and enthusiasm needed to navigate the educational process. Variations in the ability to manage these aspects influence the students' level of readiness to meet the diverse academic and professional demands placed upon aspiring educators. This finding supports previous studies indicating that self-management, emotional regulation, and time management represent critical developmental challenges for pre-service teachers during practicum experiences (Daud et al., 2025; Hendriwanto, 2021).

Based on interview results, one of the challenges faced by student teachers is time management—specifically regarding the preparation of instructional materials and the completion of various administrative tasks. Students noted that developing instructional plans, preparing teaching materials, and handling administrative duties require effective time management skills to ensure all tasks are completed successfully. Similar evidence was reported by Hendriwanto (2021), who found that managing lesson preparation, administrative responsibilities, and personal wellbeing constitutes one of the most demanding aspects of the teaching practicum.

However, the research findings also reveal variations in student experiences. Some respondents reported no significant difficulty in carrying out these tasks, attributing this to a high level of confidence in their own abilities. This confidence helped them navigate the demands of the learning process and their teaching practicums, enabling them to better manage the challenges that arose. The role of self-confidence observed in this study is also consistent with findings showing that teacher self-efficacy enables pre-service teachers to cope more effectively with practicum-related challenges and classroom uncertainty (Liu, 2020).

b. Social Challenges

Based on interview results, social challenges constitute one aspect that student teachers face during their school-based practicum. These challenges are evident in the students' efforts to build positive relationships with mentor teachers, peers, and students, as well as in their attempts to adjust to the prevailing work culture within the school environment. This adaptation process entails understanding the norms, communication patterns, and operational mechanisms implemented at the school. Similar findings have been reported by Clarke et al. (2014) and more recently by Daud et al. (2025), who emphasized that relationships with mentor teachers and school leaders strongly influence pre-service teachers' learning experiences and professional identity development.

However, the students' experiences varied; some respondents reported successfully establishing good social relationships and effectively adapting to the school environment, while others encountered difficulties in establishing communication and working relationships, particularly with school principals or vice-principals. These findings indicate that the ability to build interpersonal relationships and adapt to the school's organisational culture represents a social challenge that influences the students' experiences during their teaching practicum.

Difficulties in communicating with school leaders have also been identified as an important source of professional tension during rural teaching placements (Daud et al., 2025).

c. Aspirations After the Field Experience Program (PPL)

Based on interview results, the majority of students expressed a desire to serve as teachers in remote or rural schools after completing their Field Experience Practice (PPL). This aspiration is driven by the motivation to gain diverse teaching experience while making a tangible contribution to improving educational quality in areas with limited access and resources. Students view teaching in these regions as an opportunity to develop professional competence, enhance their adaptability to various school environments, and broaden their understanding of diverse student characteristics and educational settings. This finding corroborates the study of Ai et al. (2022), which demonstrated that positive rural practicum experiences increase pre-service teachers' willingness to pursue teaching careers in underserved communities. These findings indicate that the PPL experience not only strengthens students' readiness as prospective teachers but also fosters a motivation to contribute to the equitable distribution of educational services, particularly in remote and rural areas. Likewise, Sari et al. (2025) argued that authentic teaching experiences in remote Indonesian schools strengthen prospective teachers' commitment to educational equity and community service.

d. Greatest Concerns

Based on interview results, students expressed various concerns following the completion of their Field Experience Practice (PPL). The most frequently cited concern related to their ability to optimally meet students' learning needs. Students felt they were not yet fully prepared to accommodate the diversity of student characteristics, abilities, and learning requirements within the instructional process. Similar concerns have been documented by Mudra (2024), who found that pre-service teachers frequently question their readiness to address diverse learning needs in rural classrooms with limited instructional resources. Additionally, some respondents expressed concerns about adapting to a new work environment, specifically regarding school organisational culture and interactions with the school community. This concern also reflects the professional identity tensions reported by Daud et al. (2025), where beginning teachers experienced uncertainty while adapting to school culture and organisational expectations. Other concerns centred on classroom management and the effective delivery of instructional material, as students felt they still required further experience and competency development to conduct the teaching process more optimally. On the other hand, some students expressed a preference for placement in urban schools, citing ease of access, the availability of facilities, and a work environment perceived as more supportive. Consistent with previous literature, classroom management remains one of the strongest predictors of beginning teachers' perceived preparedness during the practicum period (Nguyen, 2021). These findings indicate that, although the PPL provided meaningful teaching experience, students still harbour various concerns regarding their professional readiness and adjustment as they enter the workforce as teachers.

Discussion and implications

Pre-service teachers' Expectations

Research findings indicate that the majority of students aspire to become flexible, creative, and professional teachers after completing their Field Experience Practice (PPL). These aspirations reflect strong intrinsic motivation to continuously develop personal competencies and a readiness to face the challenges inherent in the work environment, including in rural schools with limited facilities and infrastructure. A flexible and creative mindset demonstrates the students' awareness that the teaching-learning process does not always unfold under ideal conditions; consequently, teachers must be capable of adapting instructional strategies to the characteristics of their students and the specific school context. Meanwhile, the aspiration to become a professional teacher signifies an understanding of the importance of mastering pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies as the foundation for carrying out teaching duties. These findings align with the objectives of the Field Experience Practice (PPL)—namely, to provide students with authentic experiences that familiarise them with real-world school settings and prepare them for the demands of the teaching profession. Therefore, these findings imply a need for teacher education programs to design PPL experiences that go beyond a mere focus on mastering teaching skills; instead, they should also strengthen students' adaptability, creativity in utilising available resources, capacity for professional reflection, and personal resilience. Such efforts are expected to produce graduates who are better prepared to navigate diverse educational contexts, including resource-constrained schools in rural areas. Similar findings have been documented by Sari et al. (2025), who observed that authentic teaching experiences in remote Indonesian schools significantly strengthen professional commitment and adaptive teaching practices.

Key Challenges

Research findings indicate that the primary challenges faced by student teachers during their Field Experience Program (PPL) include limited learning facilities, the diverse characteristics of students, and difficulties in communicating with key school personnel—specifically principals and vice-principals. Limited facilities require student teachers to adapt to existing conditions by creatively utilising resources and developing innovative instructional strategies. Meanwhile, the diversity of students' characteristics, abilities, and learning needs necessitates the use of flexible teaching approaches—such as differentiated instruction—to ensure that every student receives learning opportunities tailored to their specific needs. Beyond pedagogical challenges, the findings reveal social challenges related to establishing communication and professional relationships within the school environment. Although most student teachers reported successful relationships with their supervising teachers and students, some respondents still struggled to interact effectively with principals or vice-principals. These findings suggest that a prospective teacher's readiness is determined not only by pedagogical competence but also by social competence and the ability to adapt to the school's organisational culture. Consequently, the study highlights the need for teacher education programs to strengthen student preparation prior to the field experience—focusing not only on lesson planning and delivery but also on classroom management,

differentiated instruction, professional communication, and adaptability to diverse school environments. In this way, student teachers will be better equipped to handle the complex tasks and roles associated with teaching across various educational contexts.

Students' Concerns

Research findings indicate that the most frequently expressed concern among students following their Field Experience Practice (PPL) is the inability to fully meet students' learning needs. This concern reflects the students' awareness of the complexity of a teacher's role in accommodating the diverse characteristics, abilities, and learning needs of students. Conversely, the findings also reveal a gap between students' ideals regarding effective instruction and the practical realities of the field, where they encounter various constraints—such as heterogeneous student populations, limited learning resources, and administrative demands. Nevertheless, the majority of students maintain an optimistic outlook, believing that these challenges can be overcome through ongoing teaching experience, competency development, and reflection on their instructional practices. Such optimism serves as a vital psychological asset for prospective teachers, fostering resilience, a drive for continuous learning, and adaptability in the face of professional challenges. Consequently, these findings suggest that teacher education programs should provide learning experiences that prioritize authentic problem-solving, strengthen reflective skills, and equip students with instructional strategies responsive to diverse student needs. Beyond enhancing pedagogical competence, these efforts are expected to bolster students' teacher self-efficacy, thereby better preparing them to navigate the dynamics of teaching in a professional setting.

Aspirations After the Field Experience Program (PPL)

Research findings indicate that the majority of students express a desire to serve as teachers in remote or rural schools after completing their Field Experience Practice (PPL). These findings suggest that the PPL experience serves not only to develop pedagogical and professional competencies but also to play a role in fostering social awareness and a commitment to the equitable distribution of educational services. Exposure to real-world school conditions—including the various challenges inherent in the teaching-learning process—appears to encourage students to view the teaching profession as a form of service to the community, particularly in areas facing limited access to education and resources. The aspiration to teach in remote regions reflects a developing service orientation and sense of social responsibility, both of which are integral to a teacher's professional identity. Consequently, these findings imply that teacher education programs must continue to provide diverse field experiences—including placements in schools with varying characteristics—to ensure students gain a comprehensive understanding of the educational landscape in Indonesia. Furthermore, the study provides a basis for higher education institutions and policymakers to design preparation, mentoring, and incentive programs that strengthen the readiness and motivation of prospective teachers to serve in remote and rural areas, thereby supporting efforts to ensure equitable educational quality.

Research Implication

For Educational Institutions (Faculty/University)

The results of this study offer significant implications for institutions responsible for teacher education—

specifically Faculties of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP)—regarding the design of more contextualized training programs for prospective teachers. The findings indicate that students continue to face various challenges during their Field Experience Practice (PPL), particularly concerning classroom management, limited learning facilities, diverse student characteristics, and the process of adapting to schoolwork cultures. Consequently, educational institutions need to strengthen pre-PPL preparation programs by providing training focused on classroom management, the development of creative and adaptive instructional strategies, and the ability to communicate and adapt to school organizational cultures. Furthermore, simulation-based learning utilizing scenarios that reflect schools with limited facilities and infrastructure should be integrated into teacher education programs. Such simulations are expected to hone students' abilities to improvise, optimize available resources, and make effective pedagogical decisions across various instructional situations. In this way, students will possess not only conceptual mastery but also the practical readiness to navigate diverse school environments during their field experiences and upon entering the workforce as educators.

These recommendations are consistent with Nguyen (2021), who highlighted the importance of structured mentoring, and Sari et al. (2025), who emphasized authentic preparation for rural teaching contexts.

For Rural Schools

The results of this study also carry implications for schools in remote and rural areas serving as partners in the implementation of Field Experience Practice (PPL). Research findings indicate that student success in adapting and carrying out teaching duties is influenced not only by their existing competencies but also by the support provided by the school environment. Therefore, schools need to create an ecosystem that fosters students' professional learning through intensive mentoring by supervising teachers—covering lesson planning, classroom management, and reflection on teaching practices. Furthermore, schools should provide opportunities for collaboration that encourage active student engagement in various academic and non-academic activities, such as lesson planning, professional discussions, school development initiatives, and teacher learning communities. An open, collaborative, and supportive work environment helps students feel accepted as part of the school community, boosts their confidence, accelerates their adaptation, and maximizes their contribution to the learning process. Thus, a strong partnership between schools and higher education institutions not only enhances the quality of PPL implementation but also contributes to the development of prospective teachers who are more competent, adaptable, and prepared to face the diverse challenges of educational practice. This supports Daud et al. (2025), who demonstrated that supportive school cultures and mentoring relationships significantly improve pre-service teachers' professional learning.

For Education Policy

The results of this study have implications for the formulation of education policy, particularly regarding the strengthening of educational services in remote and rural areas. The findings indicate that limited learning facilities remain a primary challenge for students during their Field Experience Practice (PPL). This situation underscores the importance of policies aimed at the equitable distribution of educational facilities and

infrastructure, ensuring that every school possesses adequate support to conduct high-quality learning processes. Furthermore, the high level of student interest in serving in remote areas reveals a potential human resource pool that could be leveraged to achieve a more equitable distribution of educators. Consequently, the government needs to design policies that sustain and boost this interest by offering incentives to teachers assigned to remote regions—such as special allowances, career advancement opportunities, access to continuous professional development programs, and support for their well-being and working conditions. Comprehensive policies would not only enhance the appeal of teaching assignments in remote areas but also support the equitable distribution of qualified educators and strengthen efforts to improve educational quality across all regions. Similar recommendations have been proposed by Sari et al. (2025), who argued that sustainable rural teacher retention requires institutional support, incentives, and equitable educational resources.

For Students/Novice Teachers

The results of this study also hold implications for pre-service and novice teachers as they prepare to face various professional challenges. Research findings indicate that the Field Experience Program (PPL) presents challenges related to limited facilities, the diverse characteristics of students, and the need to adapt to the school environment. Consequently, pre-service and novice teachers must cultivate resilience, creativity, and adaptability as essential assets for carrying out their professional duties. Resilience enables aspiring teachers to persevere and thrive when facing obstacles, while creativity supports their ability to design and implement effective instruction despite resource limitations. Furthermore, the study fosters an awareness that teaching in remote or rural areas is not merely a professional challenge but also an opportunity to make a tangible contribution to the equitable distribution and improvement of national education quality. With this perspective, pre-service and novice teachers are encouraged to view assignments in these regions as valuable professional experiences and as a form of service toward building a more inclusive and equitable education system. These competencies are widely recognised as essential characteristics of resilient beginning teachers (Hendriwanto, 2021; Shi, et al, 2025)

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Research findings indicate that the Field Experience Program (PPL) in remote and rural schools provides meaningful experiences in shaping students' readiness to become teachers. These experiences not only strengthen students' motivation to become professional, flexible, and creative teachers but also foster an awareness of the teacher's vital role in supporting equitable education. The strong interest shown by the majority of students in serving in remote or rural areas demonstrates that the PPL experience effectively builds social commitment and a dedication to service within the education sector, particularly in regions facing various limitations. This finding corroborates previous research demonstrating that rural teaching practicum contributes substantially to professional identity formation and commitment to educational equity (Ai et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2025).

On the other hand, this study reveals that the process of developing such readiness is inextricably linked to the various challenges students face during their field teaching practice (PPL). Limitations in facilities and

infrastructure, the diverse characteristics of learners, classroom management, administrative demands, and the need to adapt to the school's work culture all serve as experiences that test the students' pedagogical, personal, and social competencies. Although these challenges give rise to concerns—particularly regarding the ability to optimally meet learners' educational needs—the majority of students remain confident that their experiences and the ongoing learning process will help them grow into competent educators. Similar challenges have consistently been identified among beginning teachers in rural schools across different educational contexts (Mudra, 2024; Daud et al., 2025).

Overall, the study's findings confirm that the Field Experience Program (PPL) serves as a vital professional learning process for integrating teaching knowledge, skills, and values into actual practice. Through this experience, student teachers not only develop teaching competencies but also build resilience, adaptability, and interpersonal skills, while forging a professional identity as aspiring educators. Consequently, the PPL plays a strategic role in preparing graduates who are not only academically competent but also possess a social commitment and the readiness to contribute to improving the quality of education across diverse contexts, including in remote and rural areas. These findings reinforce recent evidence that authentic practicum experiences remain one of the strongest predictors of teacher readiness and long-term professional development (Shi et al, 2025).

Suggestion

Based on the research implications, there are several recommendations that various stakeholders can consider to enhance the effectiveness of the Field Experience Practice (PPL) and prepare prospective teachers who are more adaptable to diverse educational contexts.

For teacher education institutions—specifically the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP)—it is essential to strengthen pre-internship (PPL) preparation programs by implementing training focused on developing practical competencies. This preparation should cover classroom management, differentiated instruction, creative teaching strategies, the use of simple instructional media, professional communication, and the ability to adapt to school organizational culture. Furthermore, simulation-based learning or case studies that reflect school environments with limited facilities and infrastructure should be integrated into the curriculum to ensure students are better prepared for real-world situations in the field. Universities also need to develop a continuous support system involving academic supervisors and mentors to foster students' academic and psychological readiness throughout the internship period (Nguyen, 2021; Sari et al., 2025).

For partner schools—particularly those in remote and rural areas—it is essential to establish more collaborative partnerships with higher education institutions to support the professional learning of student teachers. Supervising teachers are expected to act not merely as technical guides but also as facilitators who provide constructive feedback, create space for reflection, and offer opportunities for students to engage in various school activities. Furthermore, communication among student teachers, teachers, and school leadership must be continuously strengthened to foster a learning environment that is open, supportive, and conducive to

the development of prospective teachers' competencies (Daud et al., 2025).

For policymakers, the findings of this study can serve as input for formulating policies that support improving the quality of education in remote and rural areas. Such efforts can be realized through the equitable distribution of educational facilities and infrastructure, the strengthening of mentoring programs for novice teachers, and the provision of reward and incentive schemes that make assignments in remote areas more attractive. Comprehensive policies are expected to support the equitable distribution of teachers while simultaneously enhancing the quality of educational services across all regions (Sari et al., 2025).

For aspiring teachers and novice educators, it is essential to leverage the Field Experience Program (PPL) as a means for continuous professional learning. Developing reflective skills, resilience, creativity, interpersonal communication, and a willingness to keep learning must be integral to the process of personal and professional growth throughout an educator's career. In this way, the experiences gained during PPL can serve as a foundation for building professional competence while strengthening the commitment to contribute to improving the quality of education across diverse school settings.

Furthermore, future research is encouraged to involve a larger number of participants from diverse study programs or field experience (PPL) placement locations to obtain a more comprehensive overview of the experiences of student teachers. Future studies could also employ a mixed-methods approach or a longitudinal design to examine the development of students' professional readiness—from the period before their field experience through their entry into the teaching workforce—thereby gaining deeper insight into the factors influencing the successful development of professional competence and identity among prospective educators.

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