TEACHING ON THE FRONTLINES: VOICES OF FUTURE EDUCATORS IN KAMPUS MENGAJAR PROGRAM BATCH 7

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman calon guru pendidikan bahasa Inggris yang mengikuti program Kampus Mengajar Batch 7. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan tujuh peserta menggunakan metode fenomenologis kualitatif. Kemudian, analisis tematik digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan enam tema utama: tantangan dalam mengajar dan implementasi program, stres dan hambatan selama program, strategi untuk mengatasi hambatan, pengembangan diri sebagai calon pendidik, hubungan antara teori dan praktik, serta pemahaman tentang realitas pendidikan. Tantangan utama meliputi kurangnya kepercayaan diri dalam mengajar, fasilitas sekolah yang buruk, koneksi internet yang lemah, dan dukungan yang terbatas dari sekolah. Meskipun demikian, peserta mengembangkan strategi seperti manajemen waktu, komunikasi, dan kerja sama tim untuk beradaptasi dengan kondisi lapangan. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun terdapat berbagai hambatan, program Kampus Mengajar memberikan pengalaman belajar yang berharga yang berkontribusi pada pertumbuhan profesional mahasiswa dan pemahaman mereka tentang bidang pendidikan dalam konteks nyata.

Kata Kunci: *kampus mengajar; pengalaman akademik; calon guru; studi fenomenologi*

Abstract

This study aims to explore the experiences of English Education pre-service teachers who participated in the Kampus Mengajar Batch 7 program. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with seven participants using qualitative phenomenological methods. Then, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The results revealed six main themes: challenges in teaching and program implementation, stress and obstacles during the program, strategies to overcome obstacles, self-development as prospective educators, the relationship between theory and practice, and understanding the reality of education. Key challenges included lack of confidence in teaching, poor school facilities, weak internet connectivity, and limited support from schools. Nevertheless, participants developed strategies such as time management, communication, and teamwork to adapt to field conditions. The study concludes that despite the various obstacles, the Kampus Mengajar program provides valuable learning experiences that contribute to students' professional growth and understanding of the educational field in real contexts.

Keywords: kampus mengajar; academic experience; pre-service teachers; phenomonology study

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia continues to develop thanks to various programs from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, one of which is Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM). This program provides freedom for students to take courses outside the study program to broaden their experience and insight according to their interests and expertise (Krishnapatria, 2021; Apriliyani et al., 2022). MBKM aims to improve the quality of learning and prepare students to compete globally. In addition, this program encourages students to design their own educational path, so that they are expected to create superior human resources and contribute to the progress of the nation (Wahyudi et al., 2024).

According to Setyadi et al., (2021), As students are a group of people with a wide range of academic knowledge and skills, they are an asset to the country. The "Kampung Mengajar" program is used as a learning method in schools as part of the "Kampung Merdeka" project. According to the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Anwar Makarim, the Kampus Mengajar is organized mainly to improve students' reading, math, and technology skills. Second, it supports education throughout the epidemic, especially for 3T elementary and junior high schools. The program is supported by LPDP, the education fund management agency, as it provides a great opportunity for students to practice and improve their teaching skills while developing as individuals. Implementation: provides a good opportunity for students to develop and improve their teaching skills while developing as individuals.

As a new program, the implementation of campus education certainly faces many challenges. According to Hilmi et al (2022), there are several problems faced by students during campus teaching practice in Yogyakarta. Among them are that students do not have teaching competencies that match the needs of schools; some students do not receive appropriate teaching opportunities; teachers do not understand technology; and teaching campus students miscommunicate with teachers in the field. There are some solutions offered such as innovation in learning, more extracurricular activities to fill the gaps in learning, library digitization, technology adaptation, and better coordination with teachers before the school starts operating. Every teaching campus participant experienced difficulties and challenges in running the teaching campus. Not only students have difficulties, but the lecturers who help them also have difficulties.

Although there are many obstacles faced during the implementation of the Kampus Mengajar Program, this study focuses on three main obstacles that refer to the study of Asra et al. (2023):

1. Student obstacles are adjustments in teaching students, because students have different characteristics and personalities, there are students who often play in class and often go out, as well as students who pay less attention to the material I teach.
2. Limited learning media is an obstacle to teaching.
3. Network limitations cause students to not be able to use technology properly.

One of the obstacles I experienced during my time at the assignment school was the limited role in the learning process. Although we are involved in teaching activities, our position as students of the Kampus Mengajar (KM) Program is not as the main teacher, but as a teacher partner. This means that we do not have the full authority to design or deliver all lesson materials independently. Instead, we can only enter the classroom to assist and carry out learning at the direction of the class teacher, the applicable curriculum, and the teaching materials prepared by the teacher. Our role is more as a companion, facilitator, or implementer of programs that aim to assist teachers and support the student learning process, not as a full takeover of teaching duties.

Understanding individual development is crucial as experiences shape a person's character and skills. The events, conditions and activities that a person experiences during their lifetime are referred to as their life experiences. The longer one stays in the field and the more diverse the situations, one will gain a deeper understanding of the different circumstances, problems and solutions faced there. Furthermore, according to Nurmansyah, 2020) Everything a person has gone through is included in their life experiences, experience is more than just a collection of events. It is a learning process that allows one to acquire new knowledge, perspectives, dispositions and skills. In addition, the amount of time spent studying a subject and the various conditions encountered influence the experience.

People can confront their prejudices and understandings to gain a better understanding of humanitarian issues, including their own, through experiences that aid cross-cultural adaptation Browne et al., (2015). Life experiences and learning are connected in complex and interesting ways. Education must be linked to other experiences in a meaningful way to encourage new and deeper growth. Dewey (1938) studied the "organic relationship between education and personal experience education more than half a century ago and personal experience". Mezirow's perspective shift theory is the most innovative in explaining the shift between learning, meaning and experience. A shift in perspective is described as "the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our prejudices have limited the way we view, understand, and experience our world; reformulating these assumptions to enable a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and making decisions or taking action based on this new understanding." According to the data, a learning event must be subjectively assessed and affect learners in one of two ways: 1) by expanding their skills, sense of self, or outlook on life, or 2) by transforming them Merriam, S. B., & Clark, M. C. (1993).

In addition, according to the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), created by Kolb (2015), experience plays an important role in the learning process. According to Kolb (2015), "Learning is the process by which experience is transformed into knowledge." Experiential learning emphasizes each individual's learning process this includes simulating real-life situations in addition to listening. In other words, the learning process uses experience as a source of learning. That is, learning comes from students' own experiences, not from

teachers or books. All aspects of experience include the body, mind, feelings, and actions. Therefore, this is a comprehensive individual learning experience (Kolb, 2015).

"Experiential Learning" is a term often used to describe a particular type of learning from life experiences, often contrasted with lectures and classroom instruction. The term "learning" is often used to describe a particular type of learning from life experiences, which is often contrasted with learning in classrooms and lectures. The definition given is "learning where students are in direct contact with the reality they are learning about" by Tate and Keeton (1978). It is different in that the learner never encounters that reality during the learning process, as opposed to learning it through reading, listening, speaking, or writing. In this experiential learning theory, reasoning, analysis and academic knowledge are often downplayed, while the main source of learning is direct sensory experience and action in context. To enhance academic knowledge, many educational institutions offer experience-based learning programs, such as internships, field projects, and classroom exercises. In this context, it is considered a learning approach similar to action learning, problem-based learning, service learning, or team learning many people believe that lifelong learning is a process that is controlled by a person and includes direct experience.

Some previous studies are relevant to this research. Salsabilla (2022) examined the experiences of Jambi University English Education students during the Kampus Mengajar (KM), which included motivation, challenges, skills improvement, and experience teaching English in elementary schools. From this study, Salsabilla (2022) identified several challenges faced by students in the Kampus Mengajar (KM) program. These challenges can include obstacles in terms of the following:
1. The trip to school
   a. The chool is quite far
   b. Severe road condition
2. During at school
   a. Have difficulty to manage the time
   b. Bad internet conection
   c. Lack of facilities
   d. Problem with students
3. From the Kampus Mengajar program
   a. Late disbursement of funds
   b. Technical problems in distrubuting the information

Cahyono & Aliyyah (2024) discussed MBKM: Persepsi Mahasiswa Tentang Kampus Mengajar. The results of this study show the benefits, urgency, challenges, and obstacles in participating in the Kampus Mengajar (KM) program. Research conducted by Cahyono and Aliyyah (2024) revealed various challenges and obstacles faced by participants during the Kampus Mengajar (KM) Program, including the following:

1. Challenges in participating in the Kampus Mengajar (KM) program:
    a. Teacher readiness
        1) Lack of training from the government
        2) Lack of preparation in learning
    b. Self-adjustment
        1) Helping students with special needs
        2) Dealing with different types of students
2. Obstacles in partisipating in the Kampus Mengajar (KM) program:
    a. Facilities and Infrastructure
        1) Limited facilities hinder learning
        2) Facilities support learning
    b. Student Response
        1) The large number of slow learners
        2) The lack of willingness on the part of students

Meanwhile, Hikmah & Astuti (2024) found that EFL pre-service teachers' challenges in teaching English to young learners during Kampus Mengajar program in rural areas. Research conducted by Hikmah & Astuti (2024) revealed various challenges, including the following:

1. Pre-service Teachers Pedagogical Competencies
    a. Classroom Management
    b. Choice of Language Use
2. Development of Learning Materials and Media
    a. Teaching Aids or Media
    b. Learning Material or Resources
3. Institution-related Challenges
    a. Teachers' Support and Abilities
    b. School and Learning Facilities

Although the Kampus Mengajar (KM) program has been widely researched in terms of policy and its impact on schools, the direct experiences of students as prospective teachers, especially in Batch 7, are still less explored in depth. Moreover, not many studies have explored the affective aspects, challenges of field practice, and pedagogical reflections of students in carrying out their roles as educators in placement schools. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the experiences of prospective English teachers who participated in the the Kampus Mengajar (KM) program batch 7. To explain the challenges, obstacles, and ways to overcome them during the program. The main purpose of this research is to find out the challenges, obstacles and ways to overcome them for pre-service teachers during the Kampus Mengajar (KM) program batch 7. To achieve this, the research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the challenges and obstacles faced by pre-service teachers during the Kampus Mengajar (KM) Batch 7 Program?
2. How to overcome the challenges and obstacles faced by pre-service teachers during the Kampus Mengajar (KM) Batch 7 Program?

RESEARCH METHODS

One of the qualitative research methods used in this study is phenomenological design. The purpose of this study was to determine the experiences of English education students who participated in the Kampus Mengajar (KM) batch 7 program. As stated by Creswell (2007), phenomenology is a field that investigates human experiences and the way we understand and make sense of those experiences to shape our view of phenomena. A research method known as phenomenology is used to investigate human experience. Cresswell (2009) states that the purpose of phenomenological studies is to find the basis of human experience in relation to the phenomena expressed by the subject. Therefore, the purpose of research using a phenomenological approach is to gain a better understanding of the meaning contained in a person's experience of a particular concept or phenomenon, including their view of themselves and their perspective on life Kuswarno, (2007).

The research instrument will utilize semi-structured interviews directly with the participants. Sugiyono (2009) semi-structured interviews allow participants to respond freely while adhering to predetermined themes, thus providing space for researchers to explore more in-depth information based on the relevant context. The purpose of using this instrument is so that the author can descriptively describe the experiences of pre-service teachers of English education students who have participated in the Kampus Mengajar (KM) program batch 7. Some important aspects that was be covered in the questions are challenges and obstacles and how to overcome them. The researcher adapted some questions from Salsabilla (2022).

In this study, the researcher will use purposive sampling to select participants who are considered to have rich information about the phenomenon under study. Boeije (2010) described purposive sampling as intentionally selecting participants according to the needs of the study. The participants in this study aim to explore the experiences of English education students who had participated in the Kampus Mengajar (KM) program batch 7.

Each participant in this study was given a pseudonym and coded as follows: Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), Participant 4 (P4), Participant 5 (P5), Participant 6 (P6), and Participant 7 (P7). All seven participants are batch 7 students of the Kampus Mengajar (KM) Program.

Semi-structured interviews, which consist of a series of open-ended questions centered on the subject the researcher wishes to study, are a very important data collection technique (Fox et al., 1998). Face-to-face interviews will be conducted in person. The researcher and the participant will discuss a meeting time to conduct the interview. Each participant's interview will last between 30 to 45 minutes. The interview questions will be designed to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges, obstacles and ways to overcome them from pre-service teacher of English education students while participating in the Kampus Mengajar (KM) program batch 7.

To assist researchers, during the interview process, we conducted documentation in the form of photos and voice recordings as evidence and

support in data analysis. This documentation plays a role in ensuring the accuracy of the information conveyed by participants and makes it easier for researchers to review the answers that have been given.

Qualitative data analysis is an effort to classify data, break it down into manageable parts, synthesize it, search for and discover patterns, identify important and learned information, and determine what can be communicated. Qualitative researchers will directly enter the object, conduct exploration with a guiding tour question, so that the problem will be found clearly. Thematic Analysis is a data obtained through face-to-face interviews will be analyzed according to the approach proposed by Clarke and Braun (2017). This method consists of six systematic stages: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data by reading and transcribing the interviews, (2) creating initial codes to help find themes, (3) searching for themes by analyzing the interview transcripts and finding challenges, obstacles and ways to overcome them, (4) reviewing the themes to validate their relevance to previous research, (5) naming the themes, and (6) compiling the report.
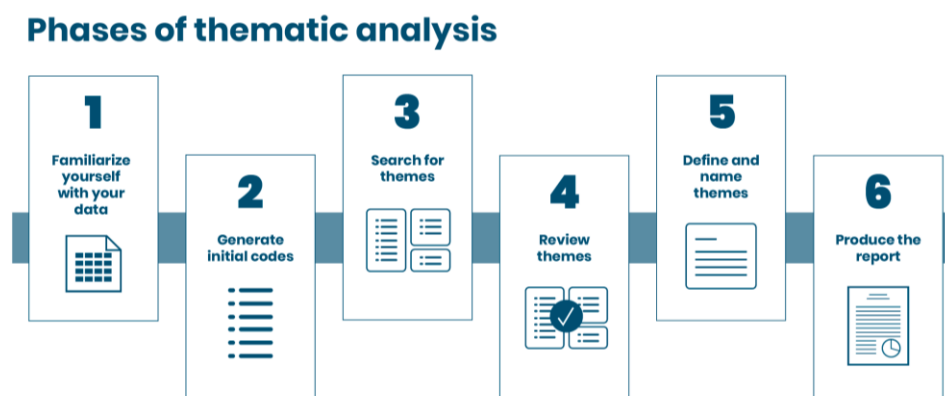

Figure 1. Phases of Thematic Analysis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participated in the Batch 7 Kampus Mengajar (KM) program. The participants shared their challenges, barriers, and strategies for overcoming them. The findings from this study are organized into six main themes and several subthemes, which are further explained below.

Challenges in Teaching and Implementing Programs
First-Time Teaching Experience

Some participants were teaching for the first time, so when they entered the classroom, they felt nervous, awkward, and lacked confidence. As one participant said:

> *(P6) explained, "At first, it was very awkward because it was my first experience... But during the teaching process, thank God, I was able to do it, even though I had no previous teaching background."*

Meanwhile, (P1) said, "When I taught for the first time in front of a class, I definitely felt nervous, lacked confidence, and panicked. I am a rather panicky person."

And supported by the statement (P5), "I was nervous at first, obviously, but thankfully the children were very welcoming. So, every time we came in to create a work program or teach a few times, they were happy and enthusiastic, so it was quite enjoyable."

Technology Adaptation

During the implementation of the technology adaptation program, several students experienced problems related to the internet network and poor connection quality. As stated by the participant below:

(P3) Said, "There were some miscommunications, especially during the first AKM test, which really caused problems because of the network."

(P6) Adding, "The challenge I faced was that the AKM network was very difficult, and I felt confused about what to do because the children's answers required a good network connection....The school's WiFi network was problematic, so we used mobile phone networks, but it turned out that the mobile phone networks were also unable to support the AKM."

Restrictions from the School

Some students encountered obstacles in implementing the program because they did not obtain permission from the school and were often not allowed to carry out planned activities. As stated by the participant below:

(P5) Saying, "Because the teachers are also sometimes difficult to communicate with. We want to make this. It's forbidden. We want to make that. It's not possible, they say. That's how it is. So we want to make a game. It's strictly forbidden. It's not allowed. There are many restrictions. So we want to make this, but we can't. We want to make that."

Similarly, (P7) experienced "limitations in facilities and infrastructure, so getting permission from the school. Like when we made a program outside of school, it was a bit difficult to get permission, so there were many challenges."

Stress And Obstacles During The Program

Long Placement Distance

The placement of the duty school quite far from the student's place of residence causes physical fatigue, triggers stress, and misses the family at home. As the participant below has said:

(P1) said, "What I experienced was that my placement was quite far from where I lived. I also had to rent a room there. Another challenge was that I had few friends at the university who were also teaching. So that was my challenge when I joined this program... I felt very sad because I was far from my parents, and I also felt tired because sometimes I had to go back and forth since I still had classes to attend."

(P2) added "What causes me stress when undergoing this program is having to commute between campus and school, as well as the difficulty of dividing my time between campus and this campus teaching program. This is because there may be several courses to take... At our school, classes are held until Friday, so I am automatically not at school there. On Monday and Tuesday I am at campus, and on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday I have to return to school."

Administrative and funding burdens

Kampus Mengajar (KM) students must complete program administration tasks that are often time-consuming and can cause stress for students, as well as delays in funding disbursement. As stated by the participant below:

(P3) mentioned "Actually, what stresses us out is the amount of administration. There will be several uploads every month."

Similarly, (P7) "Things that stress me out Perhaps the first is funding, because the program money is late."

Obstacles to Communication And Teamwork

The lack of good communication with teammates has led to some members not participating actively. As the participant below has said:

(P6) said, "To undergo the program that made me stressed when we were running it, but my friends didn't contribute much to it, there was a lack of communication. Sometimes there were friends who were lazy to come when running the program."

(P4) felt similarly that "Because it was my first experience, and I tend to find it difficult to communicate with new people, I was hesitant to express my opinion."

Strategies To Overcome Challenges And Obstacles

Making Schedules and Dividing Tasks

Students create work schedules and divide tasks according to their abilities, allowing work programs and lectures to complement each other. As the participant below has said:

(P1) explained "The way to deal with it is by dividing the work. You do this program with him. So, make a schedule. Then, give me the easier tasks because I am a woman. Tasks such as pressing buttons or whatever should be given to the men."

According to (P2), "I had no choice but to live there and share my schedule. I stayed there every Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, then returned to Kendari on Monday and Tuesday, and went back to campus as usual on Monday and Tuesday. This continued until the program was completed."

Group Discussion and Communication

Discussing with group members can help find solutions, maintain communication, and strengthen teamwork. As the participant below said:

(P6) explained, "To deal with this issue, we usually discuss it again in the group so that we can be on time when we want to run the program. Then we communicate with our group about possible solutions when our friends are reluctant to attend."

(P4) added, "In my case, I usually invite my friends to talk, my group of friends to communicate. For example, I want this, what do you think? So maybe he also gives me input or additional information...usually I rarely communicate, I usually ask my friends, for example, what do you think if I do this, is it good or not? Lack of confidence means that the way to overcome it is to communicate more deeply. Communicate more deeply."

(P7) admitted, "And also communication limitations. Yes, of course, we as prospective teachers will definitely maintain relationships and communication so that they remain good."

The same applies to (P3), "We have already started to address communication issues first. This means that communication is not only with friends but also with the school. That is how to address it. So, if there is anything, we immediately discuss it together to resolve the issue."

Time Management

Students participating in the Kampus Mengajar (KM) Program manage and allocate their time effectively to fulfill their responsibilities at school and their academic obligations in college. As stated by the participant below:

(P3) said, "The point is, they are all good at managing their time. There is a proverb that says a smart person is someone who is able to adapt to any situation....I confirmed many times with the school and also with the other party. That's what I did yesterday, so there were no scheduling conflicts because both parties had confirmed."

(P5) added, "The first thing to do is manage your time because you have to balance the Kampus Mengajar Program with your studies."

(P1) also experienced the same thing: "How to manage time for lectures, completing assignments, and Kampus Mengajar program activities that must be done by the deadline."

Self Development and Reflection as a Prospective Educator

Increased Self-Confidence

There were some participants who felt more confident after going through the challenge of teaching in front of the class. As the participant below has said:

(P1) said, "I'm a bit of a panicky person, but I can handle it... By reassuring myself, I can get through it and provide good material for the students, and they can understand what I'm explaining."

(P4) also added, "I definitely felt scared, but I thought, oh, it turns out I can overcome all these challenges. Next, I think I need to improve myself even more."

The same goes for (P5) "Relieved, automatically. Because, Alhamdulillah, I was able to get through what I thought I couldn't. Usually, there are teachers who suddenly don't show up, so I have to replace the material. So, like it or not, I have to be ready because the material is something we don't learn quickly, so there's no preparation. But, once I got through it, oh, I was relieved, it turned out I could do it."

Awareness of Self-Weaknesses

There were also participants who realized their weaknesses, such as being nervous when being noticed by senior teachers, forgetting easily, and even having difficulty starting the material. As the participant below has said:

(P4) admitted, "As for my own weaknesses, I often blank out. For example, if a teacher suddenly comes into the classroom while I am teaching, I suddenly become afraid of making a mistake while teaching. Perhaps I am afraid of being noticed by that teacher."

Meanwhile, (P3) stated, " My weakness is that I am a forgetful person... that's why I often make notebooks or set alarms to remind myself of my weaknesses." And (P2) added "I realized that if I am too nervous when speaking, sometimes I forget the material."

Similarly (P5) "because it was my first time, there were still some things lacking in my preparation. So, there were still some things lacking in myself, especially regarding the material I was going to teach my students."

Relationship Between Theory and Practice

Relevant Course Materials

Relevant materials, such as microteaching, are considered relevant and very helpful for students in preparing for class. As the participant below has said:

> (P6) mentioned *"So, the most relevant subject is micro teaching. We are taught how to become good teachers, how to teach, how to manage students in class. I think this is very relevant for the Kampus Mengajar program."*

> (P2) added *"The first lecture material that was most relevant was micro teaching because it taught us how to teach, how to create teaching materials, how to control the class, how to teach in class, and how to understand children's characters."*

> Meanwhile, (P5) stated, *"What I experienced during the Relevant Kampus Mengajar program was that all the lecture materials were relevant because I majored in education, so automatically the materials and subjects taught were relevant to what happens in the field, such as micro teaching, how to teach, introduction to psychology, student character, and so on."*

> And reinforced by (P4) *"What you experience during the Teaching Campus program for relevant courses is micro teaching, where we are taught how to be good and proper teachers."*

Understanding the Reality of Education

The Complexity of Education and the Field

The students realized that the real world of education is more difficult than what they had imagined in college. As the participant below has said:

> (P5) said, *"So, it was my experience that made me understand the reality of the world of education deeply. If I am the one with the most realistic experience, then as a teacher, I must be well-prepared. It is impossible for us to teach students without knowing anything about them, because I'm in middle school, so sometimes there are questions that we ourselves didn't expect to be asked. So, in my opinion, that experience and self-preparation before entering the classroom are extremely important."*

> (P1) added, *"Because I think this program gives me the opportunity to be directly involved in school and see how the learning process works in the classroom. We also witness the challenges faced by teachers when dealing with students in the classroom. It also made me realize that the conditions in the field are more difficult than we imagined, compared to the theory we learned at university."*

The same goes for (P3) "The reality of the world of education may be more difficult than we imagine. The reality in the world of education. From the teachers there, I learned that there was one teacher who lived quite far from the school. He was promoted at the school, so whether he liked it or not, he had to carry out his responsibilities."

Just like (P4) "For example, we used to only theorize in college about how to become good and proper teachers. It turns out that when we actually dive in, the reality is very, very different, with many obstacles suddenly appearing."

Discussion

This study aims to explore the experiences of English Education students participating in the Kampus Mengajar (KM) Program Batch 7. Based on a thematic analysis of interview data, six main themes were identified that describe the dynamics of the students' experiences, ranging from the challenges and obstacles they faced, the strategies they used, to the reflection process they underwent while carrying out their duties at their placement schools.

1. Challenges in Teaching and Program Implementation

Most participants said that the most difficult thing for them was when they taught for the first time. Students lacked confidence, were nervous, and were not accustomed to real classrooms. In addition, due to limited school permits and insufficient support, students had difficulty carrying out their work programs. Furthermore, technical problems such as unstable internet connections and limited school facilities caused the program to run more slowly. Research conducted by Asra et al. (2023) and Fayza & Daud (2024) reinforces these findings by stating that limited school authority and infrastructure often pose major obstacles to implementing Kampus Mengajar (KM) programs.

2. Stress and Obstacles during the Program

During the program, students also faced physical, mental, and administrative pressures. Due to the long distance between their homes and schools, as well as having to divide their time between classes, some participants reported feeling exhausted. Additionally, incomplete reports and delayed fund disbursements added to the burden. Stress also stemmed from poor communication among team members. This aligns with the findings of Salsabilla (2022) and Cahyono & Aliyyah (2024), which indicate that Kampus Mengajar participants often experience administrative pressure and double burdens.

3. Strategies for Dealing with Challenges and Obstacles

Students use approaches such as dividing tasks fairly, creating activity schedules, communicating openly within the group, and taking the initiative to stay temporarily at school to overcome these problems. The primary way to resolve issues collectively is through group discussions. Students' ability to adapt

to on-site dynamics is demonstrated through these strategies. Suyatno et al. (2023) also emphasize that collaboration and communication are crucial for resolving issues that arise during the program.

4. Self-Development and Reflection as a Prospective Educator

Students developed self-confidence, public speaking skills, and awareness of their weaknesses during the program. Some students admit to continuing to experience anxiety, fear of making mistakes, or difficulty in managing the class. Improving preparation before teaching or making reminder notes are some of the ways they try to overcome these issues. This indicates that the program serves as a space for reflection where students can get to know themselves as prospective teachers. Merriam & Clark (1993) found similar results, stating that direct experience can encourage deeper learning and self-development.

5. The Relationship between Theory and Practice

Students realize that courses such as microteaching, educational psychology, and student character are very helpful in preparing them to face the classroom environment. In addition, they learn that conditions in the field are more complex than what is learned in the classroom. This shows how important it is to combine the theoretical understanding gained during their studies with practical experience. According to Cahyono and Aliyyah (2024), the integration of theory and practice is a crucial component in preparing students to become professional educators.

6. Understanding the Reality of the World of Education

The Kampus Mengajar (KM) program gives students a new perspective on the real world of education, especially in schools located in areas with limited resources. Students learn about the importance of teacher work culture and discipline. They also learn about structural issues such as limited facilities and a shortage of teachers. This enhances their understanding of the complexity of Indonesia's education system. Field experience, according to Hikmah & Astuti (2024), helps students become more self-aware and better understand the real world of education.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to describe the experiences of English Education students participating in the the Kampus Mengajar (KM) Program Batch 7. Based on the results of thematic analysis, six main themes were obtained that reflect the dynamics of student experiences, namely: challenges in teaching and program implementation, stress and obstacles during implementation, strategies for overcoming obstacles, self-development as prospective educators, the relationship between theory and practice, and understanding the realities of the world of education.

Students face many challenges, including administrative pressures, limited school permits, nervousness when teaching for the first time, and internet

connectivity issues. However, they are able to manage their time, work well in teams, and communicate effectively, enabling them to develop adaptable strategies. This experience helps students understand the complexities of the Indonesian education system, particularly in areas with limited resources. It also helps them understand their strengths and weaknesses.

It has been proven that Kampus Mengajar (KM) programs improve students' readiness as prospective teachers, shape their character, and provide real learning experiences. Students can reflect the theories they learn in school into real-world practice through direct involvement in the world of education.

This study shows that students participating in the Kampus Mengajar (KM) Program must prepare themselves academically, mentally, and technically. They must also communicate well with the team and the school. Universities must provide education that is appropriate to the field conditions and actively assist during the program. In addition, it is hoped that partner schools will be more open and cooperative in providing space for students to maximize their tasks and work programs. The success of this program and the development of prospective educators' skills depend on good collaboration between students, universities, and schools.

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