Exploring Participants' Reflection on English Teaching Experiences Through The Kampus Mengajar Program Batch 6

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Abstract

This study explored the reflections of English Education students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare (UMPAR) who participated in the Kampus Mengajar Program Batch 6. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving eight participants. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and documentation and analyzed thematically. The results showed that participants' teaching experiences were strongly influenced by school contexts, including facilities, institutional support, and student characteristics. Limited resources, the absence of English teachers, and students' lack of English background created significant challenges, while supportive environments provided more positive experiences. To address these conditions, participants employed three main adaptation strategies: pedagogical strategies (simplifying materials, teaching basic vocabulary, and using games or icebreaking), managerial strategies (using personal funds and reorganizing libraries), and social strategies (emotional approaches and collaboration with teachers and peers). Overall, the study highlighted that teaching experiences in the Kampus Mengajar Program were determined by the interaction between school contexts and participants' adaptation strategies. These adaptations enabled them to maintain effective learning processes while shaping meaningful reflections on English teaching in diverse school environments.

Keywords: Adaptation Strategies, Kampus Mengajar, School Context, Teaching Experiences.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of human resources and in preparing individuals to face the demands of the 21st century. In Indonesia, the government has consistently sought to improve the quality of education through various programs and policies, one of which is the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiative. This program aims to provide students with the opportunity to gain meaningful learning experiences beyond the classroom and to strengthen the link between theory and practice. Within this initiative, the Kampus Mengajar program is specifically designed to send university students to schools in need, with the expectation that they will assist teachers, support literacy and numeracy development, and contribute to school administration.

The Kampus Mengajar program has become a significant effort to address challenges faced by schools, particularly those located in rural and under-resourced areas. Many schools in Indonesia still struggle with limited facilities, inadequate teaching resources, and students' low literacy levels, which can hinder effective teaching and learning. The placement of university students in these schools is intended not only to help schools cope with these difficulties but also to provide pre-service teachers with real-life teaching experiences that enrich their pedagogical and professional competencies. For English Education students, the program provides an important opportunity to practice teaching English in diverse and sometimes challenging environments, which may be very different from the contexts in which they have studied.

Several studies have shown the positive impacts of the Kampus Mengajar program. Salsabilla and Maharani (2022), for instance, reported that participation in the program improved students' confidence and communication skills. Similarly, Setiawan and Sukamto (2021) found that the program encouraged innovation in teaching practices, particularly in rural schools where resources were limited. More recently, Fayza, Daud, and Masyhur (2023) highlighted that the program significantly contributed to the development of pedagogical competence among English Education students. These findings underline the value of Kampus Mengajar in preparing students to become future educators who are resilient, adaptable, and reflective.

However, there remains a gap in the literature concerning how school contexts influence participants' reflections on their teaching experiences. While many studies have examined the general benefits of the program, few have specifically focused on how facilities, resources, and student characteristics shape the way participants adapt and reflect on their teaching. This aspect is particularly important because the diversity of school contexts in Indonesia means that participants' experiences can vary widely depending on where they are placed. Understanding how these contexts affect their reflections can provide valuable insights into the process of teacher professional development.

This study seeks to fill that gap by exploring the reflections of English Education students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare (UMPAR) who participated in the Kampus Mengajar Program Batch 6. The focus is on how their teaching experiences were influenced by the school contexts in which they were placed, and on the adaptation strategies they employed to overcome challenges. By examining these reflections, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of school contexts in shaping pre-service teachers' professional growth, while also offering practical recommendations for improving the preparation of future participants in similar programs.

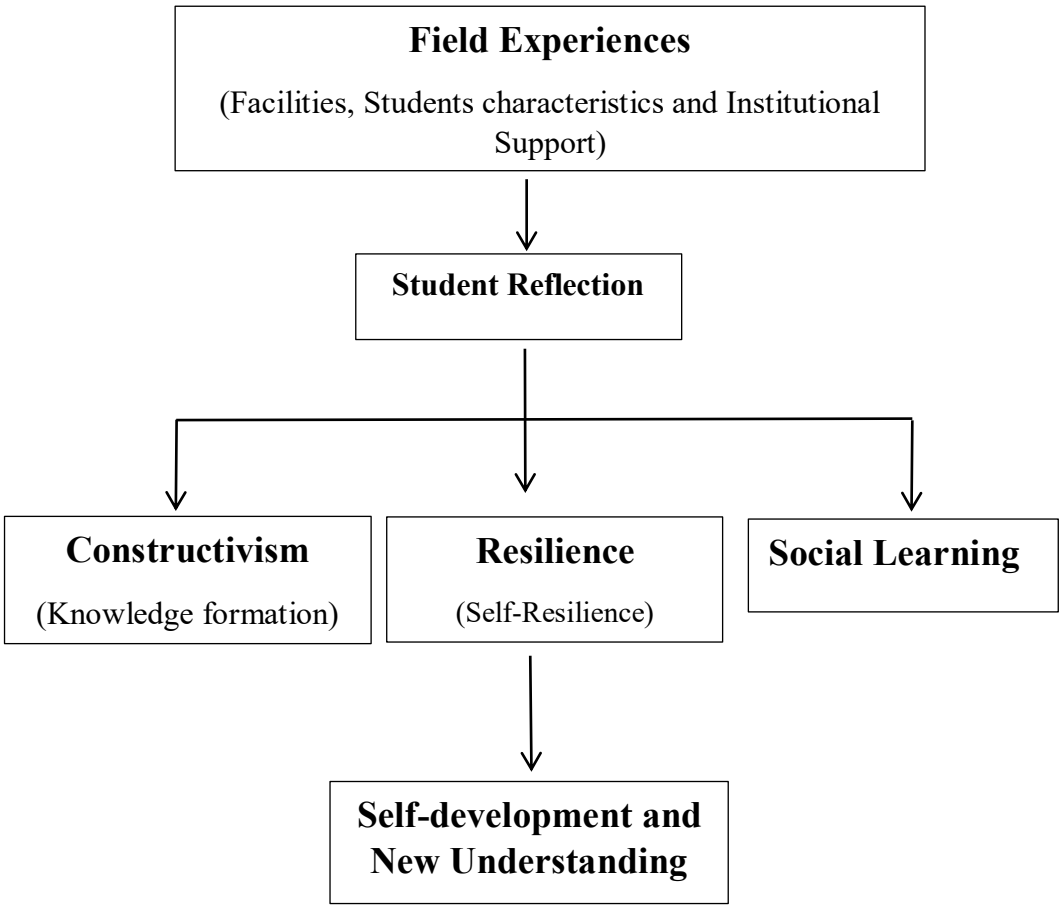
Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in several theoretical perspectives that provide a lens through which participants' reflections can be understood. First, the concept of reflection as articulated by Schön (1983) in The Reflective Practitioner is central to this study. Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action highlight how teachers learn from their experiences by analyzing their practices during and after teaching. This framework is particularly relevant as the participants continuously evaluated and adjusted their teaching strategies in response to classroom dynamics.

The second theoretical perspective is constructivism, as proposed by Vygotsky (1978), which emphasizes that learning is constructed through social interaction and cultural context. Participants in this study taught students with diverse backgrounds and varying levels of prior knowledge, which required them to scaffold learning in ways that connected new knowledge with students' existing experiences. Another important concept is resilience. Garmezy (1991) defined resilience as the capacity to adapt positively despite adversity. In the context of this study, resilience is reflected in the participants' ability to overcome challenges such as inadequate facilities, lack of resources, and students' limited exposure to English, while still maintaining effective teaching.

The study also draws on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which underscores the importance of learning through direct experience. The Kampus Mengajar program offers students authentic teaching experiences in real classrooms, providing opportunities to move through the cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Finally, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory provides another perspective. Through collaboration with peers, teachers, and school communities, participants learned not only by doing but also by observing, imitating, and modelling practices within the social environment of the school. Taken together, these theoretical perspectives form the conceptual framework of the study. They explain how participants reflected on their experiences, adapted to challenges, and developed professional competence through the interplay of individual resilience, social interaction, and experiential learning

The following diagram illustrates this conceptual framework:



RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

The participants of this study were eight students from the English Education Department who joined the Kampus Mengajar Program Batch 6. They were purposively selected because they represented the population of interest, namely pre-service English teachers who experienced teaching in different schools under the Kampus Mengajar program. The participants were assigned to both elementary and junior high schools in rural and semi-urban areas in South Sulawesi. The schools where they were placed varied in terms of facilities, resources, and student readiness, which provided a rich source of data for understanding how school contexts shaped participants' reflections.

Course Descriptions

This study employed a qualitative research design with a case study approach. The case study was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore participants' reflections in depth and within their real-life contexts. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative case study research provides an opportunity to investigate complex phenomena by focusing on the participants' experiences in natural settings. In this study, the focus was on how English Education students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare (UMPAR) reflected on their teaching experiences during their participation in the Kampus Mengajar Program Batch 6.

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews. This instrument was chosen because it enabled the researcher to obtain detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences while also allowing flexibility to probe further into emerging issues. The interviews were conducted individually and recorded with participants' permission. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. In addition to interviews, documentation was also collected in the form of reflection notes and teaching reports written by participants during the program. These documents served as supporting data to triangulate the findings from the interviews.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process consisted of six phases: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Through this process, the researcher was able to identify patterns across the data and develop themes that captured the essence of the participants' reflections.

To ensure trustworthiness, the criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985) were applied: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was ensured through member checking, where participants were asked to review the transcripts and confirm the accuracy of their statements. Transferability was supported by providing thick description of the context and participants. Dependability was established through an audit trail, in which the researcher documented every step of the process. Finally, confirmability was maintained by triangulating data from interviews and documents, as well as keeping reflective notes to minimize researcher bias.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study show that participants' reflections on their teaching experiences were strongly shaped by the school contexts in which they were placed. These contexts involved the availability of facilities, the readiness of students, and the support from the school environment. In many cases, schools lacked textbooks, organized libraries, and adequate classrooms,

which presented serious challenges for teaching. However, participants demonstrated the ability to adapt to these conditions by developing a range of strategies that enabled them to continue teaching effectively and to grow as future educators.

One of the main aspects that emerged from participants' reflections was the way they modified their pedagogical practices. Faced with students who had little or no prior exposure to English, participants simplified the material and focused on basic vocabulary and expressions. They also used interactive activities such as games and songs to maintain students' attention and to encourage participation. These practices illustrate the application of differentiated instruction, as described by Tomlinson (2014), where teachers adjust content and methods to suit the learners' readiness. In addition, the creation of learning media such as flashcards and worksheets reflects Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist perspective, emphasizing that knowledge is built through active engagement and interaction with meaningful learning experiences. By constantly observing and responding to students' needs, participants also demonstrated reflection-in-action, as proposed by Schön (1983), which shows their ability to adjust strategies spontaneously during the teaching process.

Another important dimension that appeared in the reflections was the managerial aspect of teaching. Many participants were placed in schools where resources were very limited. In these contexts, they took initiative by preparing their own teaching materials, reorganizing neglected school libraries, and revitalizing learning spaces that had long been unused. Some participants even used personal funds to support classroom activities. These managerial strategies show the presence of resilience, as described by Garmezy (1991), which refers to the ability to continue functioning effectively despite adversity. By reorganizing resources and creating low-cost solutions, participants not only supported their own teaching but also contributed to improving the school environment. This finding is in line with Setiawan and Sukamto (2021), who found that Kampus Mengajar participants introduced innovations that brought positive changes to rural schools.

Social interaction also played an essential role in shaping participants' reflections. Participants emphasized the importance of building emotional connections with students, particularly in schools where learners were initially anxious or unmotivated. By showing empathy and encouragement, they succeeded in creating a more positive classroom atmosphere that supported participation and reduced fear of failure. Collaboration with peers and school teachers was also a significant element, as participants often worked together

to organize literacy programs, extracurricular activities, and other school projects. These practices resonate with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which highlights the importance of learning through observation, modeling, and cooperation. The collaborative efforts not only supported students' engagement but also created a sense of shared responsibility among participants and the school community.

Overall, the reflections of participants reveal that their teaching experiences were a dynamic process shaped by both challenges and adaptive responses. The absence of resources, low student readiness, and varied school conditions often created barriers, but these very barriers encouraged participants to be more creative, resilient, and adaptive. Their ability to design appropriate pedagogical strategies, manage limited resources, and build strong social relationships demonstrates that the Kampus Mengajar program provided them with authentic opportunities to develop professional competencies. These findings also extend the existing literature by showing how specific school contexts directly influenced the types of reflections and strategies that participants adopted, rather than simply highlighting general benefits of the program.

The discussion further illustrates that the combination of pedagogical, managerial, and social strategies allowed participants to transform challenges into opportunities for growth. In line with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, their experiences followed a cycle of concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation, enabling them to consolidate their skills as future teachers. In addition, their ability to adapt in diverse contexts aligns with the objectives of the Kampus Merdeka initiative, which emphasizes preparing graduates to be reflective, adaptive, and resilient. Thus, this study highlights the crucial role of school contexts in shaping pre-service teachers' reflections and underlines the importance of equipping them with the skills to thrive in diverse and challenging educational environments.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the teaching experiences of Kampus Mengajar participants from Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare were significantly shaped by the school contexts in which they were placed. Schools with limited resources and students with low levels of readiness presented substantial challenges; however, participants were able to overcome these obstacles by applying pedagogical, managerial, and social strategies. Their reflections

demonstrate the importance of resilience, adaptability, and creativity in becoming effective teachers.

The findings suggest that universities should provide more systematic preparation for students before they join programs like Kampus Mengajar, especially in terms of adaptive teaching methods, resource management, and reflective practices. It is also recommended that schools collaborate more actively with program participants to ensure mutual benefits for both the schools and the students. Future research could expand this study by including participants from different study programs, universities, or program batches in order to provide a broader understanding of how school contexts influence teaching experiences.

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