CONSTRUCTING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY: REFLECTION FROM *KAMPUS MENGAJAR* PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The development of a teacher's professional identity is important in the world of education but is often faced with challenges between theory and practice, especially for pre-service English teachers in Indonesia. This gap in understanding the profession's complexity can impact pre-service teachers' professional readiness and commitment. This study explores the influence of teaching mentoring experiences through the *Kampus Mengajar* Program on pre-service English teachers' professional identity formation. By employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study focuses on the reflections of a fifth-semester English Education Department student who participated in the program in 2023. Data were collected through reflective journals and semi-structured interviews and then analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings showed significant changes in pre-service teachers' views of the profession, improved pedagogical competence, and the formation of a stronger professional identity through self-reflection. The conclusion of this study emphasizes that field experience and deep reflection play an important role in building the professional identity of pre-service teachers who are ready to face the world of education.

Keywords: *Kampus Mengajar*, pre-service english teacher, reflection, teaching experience, teacher professional identity

INTRODUCTION

The formation of teachers' professional identity is very important to improve the quality of education. However, teacher professionalism in Indonesia is still considered relatively low among pre-service and in-service teachers (Chang et al., 2014). Teachers' professional identity is essential in understanding their identity, roles, and responsibilities. Building professionalism requires a balance between the theoretical understanding learned during university studies and practical hands-on experience (Suyatno et al., 2023). Therefore, developing pre-service teachers' professionalism is sufficient through classroom learning and requires direct involvement in the world of work. Through practical experiences in schools, pre-service teachers not only teach but also educate their knowledge to students. This practice allows teacher candidates to feel more involved and part of the school community, creating a deep sense of belonging and active engagement in the environment. Exposure to practical experience as early as possible will prepare pre-service teachers for the world of work. According to Meihami (2021)**,** teacher education programs place students in a professional environment that allows them to build and adapt their professional identity to various communities of practice, leading to professional identity development. Teachers' professional identity is influenced by various factors, such as social, cultural, and institutional differences (Behin et al., 2018).

Teaching policies, particularly language policies, are one of the institutional factors that majorly impact teacher identity development.

Pre-service teachers often face various challenges in the process of forming their professional identity. Internal challenges include emotional management, self-confidence, language skills, and job dissatisfaction, while external challenges include classroom management, lack of resources, relationships with colleagues, and financial concerns. To overcome these, teachers are required to persevere by finding solutions through reflection, thorough preparation, and creative teaching strategies (Lomi & Mbato, 2020). Similar problems are found among ESL teachers, who face institutional policies, limited autonomy, lack of technological mastery, and diverse teaching contexts (Hafeez, 2023).

In response to these challenges, the *Kampus Mengajar* Program, part of *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* policy, is designed to provide practical experiences that support the formation of pre-service teachers' professional identities. The program includes activities such as teaching mentoring, use of educational technology, school administration tasks, and collaboration with peers. These activities not only improve participants' skills and confidence but also strengthen interpersonal relationships that are critical to their development as future educators (Rezania & Jamilatur, 2021). However, the program also has some weaknesses. Participants often face obstacles such as a lack of teaching experience, limited facilities, difficulty dealing with diverse student abilities, and remote school locations (Bin Ladi & Soma, 2023). In addition, the limited socialization of the program's objectives led to mixed perceptions among participants, which sometimes led to resistance or skepticism (Wahyuni & Anshori, 2021). In facing these challenges, reflective practice becomes an important element. According to Farrell, practice reflection is an evidence-based systematic thinking process, where teachers analyze the challenges faced to find solutions. This approach aligns with Kolb (1984) Experiential Learning Theory, states that effective learning occurs through a cycle of direct experience involving four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Several studies have shown that practical experience is important in forming teachers' professional identities. Weran & Kuswandono (2021), in their research in Sintang, found that adaptation to the school environment and the role of parental figures played a role in the formation of teachers' professional identities. Meanwhile, Nue & Manara (2022) stated that the professional identity of pre-service English teachers in Indonesia develops through subjective and emotional engagement during the education period and teaching practice in schools. Hidayat & Patmisari (2023) showed that the *Kampus Mengajar* program positively impacts teachers' professional competence, although it requires further monitoring to maximize learning outcomes. Other research suggests that personal, behavioral, and environmental factors contribute to developing professional identity, especially in challenging school contexts (Groenewald & Arnold, 2024). Protassova et al. (2021) found that teachers' professional identity in Latvia was influenced by self-perception as a good educator and positive school environment support. Agustin (2019) emphasized the importance of reflection for Pre-service teachers' professional development, where the use of reflective journals helps teachers process their teaching experiences and evaluate their beliefs and actions. Kurniawati & Kristianti (2022) also revealed that collaboration with peers is important in shaping professional identity, where teachers can learn from the experiences and mistakes of peers. According to Sipahutar et al. (2023), in their research, the *Kampus Mengajar* program helps develop pre-service teachers' teaching skills, where pre-service teachers, especially students of the English Education Study Program, apply various teaching methods. Maharani et al. (2022) found that support and positive interactions in the classroom can help shape professional identity and create a conducive learning atmosphere.

However, there is still a gap in understanding how the experience of teaching assistance under experienced teachers, particularly in programs such as the *Kampus Mengajar*, affects the professional identity of pre-service English teachers. Furthermore, further research is needed to explore how in-depth reflections on these experiences can bridge the gap between theory taught on campus and practice in the field. This study aims to explore pre-service English teachers' reflections on their professional identity formation after engaging in teaching mentoring activities in the *Kampus Mengajar* Program initiated by the Indonesian government. By exploring participants' experiences and reflections, this study hopes to provide insights into how the program can more effectively support pre-service teachers' professional identity formation. This research focuses on two main questions: 1) How do experiences in the *Kampus Mengajar* Program influence the professional identity formation of pre-service English language teacher candidates in Indonesia? 2) How do reflections on pre-service teachers' teaching experiences in the *Kampus Mengajar* Program help bridge educational theory on campus with teaching practice in the field?

Developing Teachers' Identity Professional

Professional education in preparing pre-service teachers is vital in forming competent and professional teachers. According to Mushahari & Sharma (2022), structured and continuous training is the primary basis for teachers' deep understanding of their field and strong teaching skills. Professional development of pre-service teachers is an activity that develops skills, knowledge, expertise, and other characteristics of a person as a pre-service teacher (Lestari & Rosmayasari, 2023). Professionally trained pre-service teachers can teach well and play a role in improving the quality of education in a country. Pre-service teachers or student teachers should be directed to start building their self-image as educators during their education. This stage is the beginning of their actual classroom teaching experience. Self-awareness, understanding of their potential and shortcomings, and future professional vision are essential steps in forming their professional identity. This education period for pre-service teachers is critical because most have no direct experience in teaching. They generally only see the role of the teacher from the perspective of being a student. However, through the Introduction to *Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan* (PLP), pre-service teachers can experience the challenges of teaching in the real world. The program provides an accurate picture of the teaching profession and helps them build a stronger professional identity with systematic support and guidance. A teacher's professional identity is their understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and values as an educator. Professional identity formation is complex because many factors, including culture, influence it. In other words, a teacher's identity is not only formed within themselves but also influenced by social, cultural, political, professional, institutional, and even global aspects (Behin et al., 2019; Ivanova & Skara-MincLne, 2016). A teacher's professional identity is not fixed; it develops throughout life to answer the question, "Who am I today?" The teaching and learning process plays a vital role in forming a teacher's professional identity, where the role of 'teacher' is seen as a dynamic process that changes over time. This dynamic process links teacher learning to basic beliefs, self-perceptions and understandings, goals and targets in teaching, and perceived behaviors (Beijaard, 2019; Beijaard et al., 2004). Thus, in line with what Khine & Muthanna (2023) state that a teacher is an essential element in the education process; both teachers and pre-service teachers must realize that 'teaching' is not just a job but an extraordinary profession. A teacher's identity is formed through interactions with others in their professional environment. Basic beliefs about what it means to teach and be a teacher are constantly evolving and changing with experience. This perspective encourages pre-service teachers to be flexible learners committed to learning throughout their lives to adapt

to change and feel confident in their role (Walkington, 2005). A teacher's professional activity and development rely heavily on their understanding of their professional identity. The professional identity reflects their experiences, practices, values, and beliefs as educators. With a clear understanding of professional identity, teachers can determine the direction and goals in self-development and improve the quality of teaching.

Torres-Cladera et al. (2021) state that becoming a teacher is a complex journey that takes place throughout a professional career, involving deep consideration of actions in the academic and social spheres and ongoing efforts to update teaching approaches and practices. Similarly, Sulisworo et al. (2016) highlighted that various interrelated factors, including student characteristics, teacher competencies, teaching approaches, quality of materials, facilities, classroom management, and learning environment, influence student learning success. Among all these factors, teachers are often considered the most influential element in improving the quality of education. When student learning outcomes fall short of expectations, teachers are usually in the spotlight. However, blaming teachers alone is unfair, considering that learning is a complex system that involves many interconnected components. However, the role of quality teachers is still vital because they can have a positive impact even with limited facilities. Likewise, adequate facilities without the support of qualified teachers will hinder the achievement of maximum learning outcomes. Self-development and supportive policies strongly influence teacher professionalism. Appropriate professional development policies and programs can strengthen teachers' competencies and provide effective teaching resources, such as the *Kampus Mengajar*. Policy and program support is essential for teachers to improve their professionalism and play a more optimal role in educating the nation's children.

Effect of Practice Experience on Professional Identity

Practical experience plays a vital role in shaping pre-service teachers' professional identity. As they undergo teaching practice in schools, their professional identity tends to evolve and adapt to the real situations they encounter. Cattley (2007) mentions that field experience, especially hands-on practice, allows pre-service teachers to explore the role of a teacher in a natural environment. This will enable them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and develop the necessary skills as an educator. This real-life experience is a starting point for pre-service teachers to understand their professional role, which differs from the theory they learn in the classroom. The close relationship between higher education and the world of work makes experiential learning an important element. In addition to honing academic and professional skills, experiential learning strengthens pre-service teachers' social skills to better interact within the school community and with students from diverse backgrounds (Sidrah et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Zulfikar et al. (2020) emphasized that higher education institutions that prepare pre-service teachers aim to produce quality educators. Therefore, the college organizes micro-teaching and teaching internship programs. The program starts with micro-teaching classes, where pre-service teachers practice teaching on a small scale in preparation for the actual field experience. After that, they join the Introduction to *Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan* (PLP), an internship program that allows pre-service teachers to face real challenges in the classroom. In addition to *Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan* (PLP), the *Kampus Mengajar* program is organized by the government. This program aims to strengthen the teaching skills of pre-service teachers in the field. Through the Kampus Mengajar, pre-service teachers can gain hands-on experience teaching in schools in need, improve their skills, and face the challenges of the education world with more confidence.

Kampus Mengajar Program

The *Kampus Mengajar* program is integral to the Ministry of Education and Research's broader initiative under the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* policy, which aims to improve education in Indonesia. The program allows students, particularly those preparing to become teachers, to gain teaching experience in primary and secondary schools. The program focuses on schools that need special assistance to improve students' literacy, numeracy, and technology skills. According to the *Kampus Mengajar* guidebook (2023), participants help teach in the classroom and collaborate with teachers to design creative and engaging learning activities that promote student development. The program benefits students and schools and allows pre-service teachers to enhance valuable skills such as leadership, creativity, communication, and teamwork. Research by Suyatno et al. (2023) shows that the *Kampus Mengajar* program significantly contributes to the professional growth of pre-service teachers. Through this program, participants face real-life challenges in the school environment, thus encouraging them to develop and apply their skills practically. Similarly, Syahria et al. (2024) identified two core themes in professional development in this program: the improvement of teaching skills and participants' positive perceptions of how the *Kampus Mengajar* program enhanced their professional competencies. Such hands-on experiences provide the pre-service teacher with insights into the realities of the profession, offering opportunities to build their professional identity and adapt to various educational environments.

During the program, pre-service teachers are exposed to the daily challenges and realities of the education sector. This hands-on engagement encourages self-reflection, enabling them to assess their strengths and identify areas for development. This process is integral in shaping their professional identity, providing a deeper understanding of their roles and responsibilities as future educators. Through this reflective practice, the participants develop their teaching skills and enhance their sense of purpose and identity as educators, which is crucial for their long-term commitment to the profession. Therefore, the *Kampus Mengajar* program addresses the school's needs and serves as a platform for pre-service teachers to develop their professional identity and prepare themselves for the complexities of the teaching profession. By immersing themselves in an actual educational setting, pre-service teachers can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, equipping them with the resilience, adaptability, and insight necessary to thrive in diverse educational contexts.

The Role of Reflection in Professional Identity Development

Reflection is a necessary process that helps teachers understand themselves in their professional roles and how those roles fit into the broader context of education. Reflection helps teachers realize their potential and strengths and the areas they need to develop in their profession. With reflection, teachers can understand their position in a dynamic educational environment and evaluate their interactions with students, colleagues, and the education system. Based on the perspective of Korthagen & Vasalos (2005) cited in Rahman (2014), four main aspects need to be considered in reflecting on teachers' professional practices: the environment, professional behavior, competence, and belief in the profession. Through reflection on these aspects, teachers can continue to develop and adapt to the changing needs of education. The first aspect is the environment, which focuses on how a teacher utilizes the learning environment to develop professionally. This includes physical conditions such as classrooms and infrastructure and the social environment, which provides for relationships with students and colleagues. Reflection on the environment helps teachers see how much they can utilize the surrounding situation to support learning. The second aspect is professional behavior, which includes teachers' attitudes toward change and innovation. A positive attitude towards change is very important because the world of education is constantly evolving, and

teachers must be ready to face various innovations and new methods that can improve the quality of learning. Competence is the third aspect that needs to be considered in reflection. Competence here includes the teacher's ability to respond to the evolving needs of education. In the modern era of education, teachers are required to master various skills, ranging from a deep understanding of teaching materials to increasingly sophisticated educational technology. Reflection helps teachers see whether they already have sufficient competence to carry out their duties or need to improve specific skills. Finally, belief in the profession is an essential aspect of reflection. A teacher's belief in his or her profession will significantly affect his or her dedication and enthusiasm for teaching. Teachers who strongly believe in their profession tend to have high motivation and always want to provide the best for students by improving the quality of teaching and helping teachers survive in the face of challenges in the field. Suphasri & Chinokul (2021) emphasized that reflection improves teaching quality and contributes to the development of teachers' professional identity. Through reflection, pre-service teachers can evaluate their beliefs about the teaching profession and adjust them to their first-hand experiences. For example, in this program, pre-service teachers develop empathy and a deep understanding of their role in creating a conducive learning environment.

Reflection also encourages pre-service teachers to consider areas for improvement in their skills, for example, by improving how they deal with challenges in the teaching-learning process Mulyani et al. (2022). In alignment with what Titu (2019) states, meaningful reflection for teachers can provide valuable insights for future teaching, focusing on preparing for creating a learning environment that supports the teaching-learning process and improves student achievement. In other words, reflection requires pre-service teachers to respond to problems or the unexpected, utilizing experience and problem-solving skills to develop effective strategies or actions. Overall, the *Kampus Mengajar* program and its accompanying reflection help teacher candidates build a stronger professional identity. The *Kampus Mengajar* program enriches their teaching experience and builds essential social and professional skills. The program encourages pre-service teachers to be active and reflective learners and to understand the importance of professionalism, adaptation, and innovation in teaching. Combining practical experience and reflection helps shape pre-service teachers into better-prepared and competent educators.

METHOD
Research Design
This study used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach was chosen because this study aims to explore the subjective experiences of participants in the *Kampus Mengajar* program and how their experiences in the *Kampus Mengajar* program contribute to forming their professional identity as pre-service teachers. As explained by Sembiring et al. (2024), the phenomenological approach is an approach that seeks to reveal how a person interprets specific experiences and what impact these experiences have on her.

Participants
The respondent in this study is a female 5th-semester student majoring in English Education at a university in Karawang. This participant uses the pseudonym Jihan. Jihan has participated and completed the *Kampus Mengajar* program in 2023 at a school in Subang. In selecting participants, the researcher used the purposive sampling method, which selects participants based on certain criteria. This method is included in non-probability sampling, which according to Creswell & Creswell (2018), aims to obtain more in-depth information from individuals who

have direct experience related to the topic under study. In this case, the selected participants must be truly involved in the program and willing to share their experiences and reflections.

Instruments

The data collection instruments in this study were respondents' reflection journals and semi-structured interviews. The reflection journal was chosen because it allows participants to write down their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a more in-depth and personalized manner and also participants voluntarily provide their self-reflection during the implementation of the *Kampus Mengajar*. This journal provides space for participants to express how they interpret and internalize their experiences during the program, thus providing rich and detailed data. Likewise, semi-structured interviews were used to allow researchers to ask questions that were flexible and adaptable to participants' responses. This type of interview allowed the researcher to further explore certain topics that emerged during the conversation (Subakti et al., 2023). With seven main questions, this interview allows participants to speak openly, resulting in deeper and more detailed data. This study used thematic analysis procedures to understand how participants' experiences in the *Kampus Mengajar* program contributed to the formation of teachers' professional identities and behaviors. Data were collected through reflection journals and semi-structured interviews, then transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process began with data familiarization, coding, theme identification, theme review, and result writing. The analysis mapped the relationship between participants' self-reflection and indicators of professional behavior, such as commitment and teaching skills, to explore the program's influence on participants' readiness for education.

Procedure

The first step in this study was participant selection by contacting an individual who met the criteria, which was Jihan, then explaining the purpose of the study, and asking for her consent. The researcher then asked the participant to write a reflection journal about her experience during the *Kampus Mengajar* program, including challenges faced, lessons learned, and the impact of the program. After the journals were collected, the researcher proceeded to conduct a semi-structured interview over the phone for 30 minutes, using Bahasa Indonesia to make Jihan feel more comfortable. The next step was to carefully transcribe the interview recordings for further analysis. Before the transcription process, back-checking was conducted to ensure the accuracy of the data, where participants were allowed to verify the information they provided during the interview. After the transcription was completed, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes related to the participant's experiences and reflections in shaping their professional identity.

Data Analysis

Data was collected through individual interviews and participants' reflection journals. Interviews were conducted with a flexible approach, allowing participants to talk about the development of their professional identity, both through previous and current professional development experiences, as well as their hopes for the future. Participants agreed to be interviewed, but beforehand the researcher sent a list of questions in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure their comfort and readiness. The interview lasted for about 30 minutes over a phone call and was recorded using a mobile phone. After the interviews, the recordings were carefully transcribed and then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore how the experience of being a teaching assistant through the *Kampus Mengajar* Program contributes to the formation of pre-service English teachers' professional identity. In addition, it also explored how the process of self-reflection undertaken during and after the program influenced the pre-service teachers' understanding of their role as educators. From the data analysis, three main themes were identified: Transformation of Views on the Teaching Profession, Development of Pedagogical Competence, and Formation of Teachers' Professional Identity.

Table 1. Emerging themes and sub-themes

Theme 1	Transformation of Perspective on the Teaching Profession
Theme 2	Pedagogical Competence Development
Theme 3	Construction of Professional Identity

Theme 1. Transformation of Perspective on the Teaching Profession

Before joining the *Kampus Mengajar* Program, Jihan had a simple perspective on the teaching profession. She thought that being a teacher was a relatively easy job, consisting only of routine tasks such as teaching, giving assignments, and evaluating student learning outcomes. Jihan said:

> "*Sebelum saya mengikuti Kampus Mengajar, pandangan saya profesi guru adalah profesi yang mudah karena hanya datang ke sekolah, mengajar, dan pulang.*"

However, after joining the program, her understanding changed significantly. Jihan realized that teaching is not just about delivering material, but also involves the ability to convey information in a way that students can easily understand. This is especially true when teaching English in an environment where the students are less familiar with the language, where they have to find ways to make the students understand the material well. Jihan said:

> "*Setelah saya mengikuti Kampus Mengajar pandangan saya berubah, karena mengajarkan ilmu baru kepada peserta didik adalah hal yang tidak mudah karena bagaimana caranya agar ilmu yang diajarkan dapat mereka pahami, terutama dalam bahasa inggris.*"

This perspective change shows that the direct teaching experience gave Jihan new insights into the complexities and challenges faced by a teacher. This view is supported by previous research, as outlined by Meihami (2021), which shows that hands-on experience in the field helps pre-service teachers understand the complexities of the profession. Jihan understands that the teaching profession is not only about transferring knowledge but also about building relationships with students and creating a supportive learning environment. Through this program, Jihan gained a realistic view of the duties and responsibilities of a teacher, as well as the importance of the teacher's role in students' intellectual and emotional development. Thus, the *Kampus Mengajar* Program provides deeper insights into the role of teachers in building emotional relationships and creating a supportive learning environment, reinforcing Maharani et al. (2022) findings on the importance of positive interactions in supporting teachers' professional identity formation.

Theme 2. Pedagogical Competence Development

The teaching experience through the *Kampus Mengajar* Program helped Jihan develop her pedagogical competencies, including creativity, adaptability, and the ability to use technology in teaching. Jihan realized that effective teaching requires creativity to maintain student interest. They began to apply various creative teaching methods, such as games, ice-breaking, and a more relaxed approach to increase students' learning motivation. Jihan shares her experience:

> "*Saya menggunakan pendekatan yang lebih santai dengan menggabungkan metode ceramah, permainan, candaan, dan ice breaking... Dengan permainan atau ice breaking ini secara tidak langsung melatih fokus peserta didik.*"

In addition, she uses technology such as Canva and YouTube to make learning materials more interesting and interactive. This use of technology is in line with the practices suggested by Hafeez (2023), who emphasizes the importance of technology adaptation in modern teaching contexts. Jihan also said:

> "*Tak jarang saya melakukan pengajaran di Perpustakaan karena terdapat smartboard yang memungkinkan saya untuk mengajarkan materi menggunakan ppt melalui Canva dan YouTube. Setelah melakukan pengajaran, saya mengarahkan siswa untuk menggunakan aplikasi Canva sebagai alat untuk mereka gunakan dalam mempresentasikan tugas mereka.*"

This use of technology shows that Jihan does not only rely on conventional methods but also utilizes modern tools that suit the needs of today's education and involve students directly in the learning process.

Jihan's ability to manage the class and adapt to the diversity of student backgrounds has also improved. In this program, Jihan was exposed to classroom situations with students who had diverse backgrounds, interests, and abilities. This challenge helped Jihan develop her adaptability, where she had to adjust their teaching methods to suit the needs and conditions of each student. Jihan said:

> "*Berbagai macam latar belakang siswa yang saya temui... dari beragam latar belakang siswa yang saya temui, saya menggunakan pendekatan yang lebih santai dan memberikan ice breaking saat proses pembelajaran.*"

Through the challenge of managing a diverse class, Jihan also learned to customize teaching methods according to students' individual needs. This approach is relevant to the concept of Differentiated Instruction (DI) outlined by Matiyenga & Ajani (2024), where teachers must be responsive to student diversity.

From these results, it appears that the *Kampus Mengajar* Program gave Jihan a deeper understanding of the importance of flexibility and adaptability in teaching. Jihan learned to be a responsive teacher, who is able to adjust her learning approach according to students' needs. Thus, Jihan gained relevant and contextualized pedagogical skills, which will help her in her future teaching profession.

Theme 3. Construction of Professional Identity

Through a process of self-reflection during and after the program, Jihan began to develop her professional identity as a pre-service teacher. Jihan realized the importance of empathy in building relationships with students and being an effective educator. In addition, this self-reflection helped Jihan to better understand classroom dynamics and identify the values needed to be a good teacher. Jihan said:

> "*Program ini membantu saya membentuk identitas sebagai seorang guru dengan cara memberi pemahaman mendalam tentang dinamika kelas, memperkuat kemampuan adaptasi saya dengan peserta didik.*"

Jihan realized that being an effective teacher requires specific skills such as good communication, patience, creativity, and mastery of technology. Through her experiences in the field, Jihan began to develop an understanding that teachers must have the ability to communicate well in order to deliver material effectively and understand students' needs. Jihan said:

> "*Kemampuan yang harus dimiliki guru menurut saya adalah kemampuan komunikasi yang baik, kesabaran, kreativitas, serta kemampuan menggunakan teknologi.*"

This reflection helped her identify the values needed to be a good educator, such as patience, creativity, and mastery of technology. This is in line with the literature showing that a teacher's professional identity is shaped by the experiences and competencies acquired during the training process and practical experience (Syahria et al., 2024).

The experience in this program also gave Jihan a more realistic view of the challenges teachers faces in education. Jihan faced challenges such as complex classroom management, cultivating low student interest, and dealing with limited resources at school. These experiences helped Jihan build a strong professional identity, with a more prepared and realistic attitude towards education. Jihan said:

> "*Program ini memberikan gambaran nyata kepada saya sebagai calon guru bagaimana tantangan nyata di dunia pendidikan, membantu mengembangkan sikap profesional, empati, dan komitmen sebagai pendidik.*"

Jihan's self-reflection reflects the importance of a systematic approach based on real experiences, as suggested by Farrell (2024) through evidence-based reflection. Through experiencing first-hand the challenges and dynamics in the field, Jihan began to internalize the professional attitudes, responsibilities, and commitments required of a teacher. Jihan understands that a teacher's professional identity is not static, but continues to develop along with experiences in the field. This finding supports the research of Suyatno et al. (2023), which shows that practical experience in the field has a great impact on the formation of pre-service teachers' professional identity and improving their pedagogical skills.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the *Kampus Mengajar* Program has a significant impact on the professional identity formation of pre-service English teacher candidates. The program helped participants change their perspective on the teaching profession, from a simplistic view to a

more realistic and in-depth one. Participants understood that the teaching profession is not only about delivering material but also about building emotional relationships with students and creating a supportive learning environment. In addition, the program improves participants' pedagogical competencies, including creativity, adaptability, and mastery of educational technology. Participants are able to apply a variety of creative teaching methods and are responsive to the diversity of student needs, demonstrating adaptability in facing real challenges in the field.

Through deep reflection, participants begin to build a strong professional identity, internalizing important values such as empathy, patience, creativity, and effective communication skills. The program also provides practical experience that bridges the gap between theory learned on campus and practice in the field, strengthening participants' professional attitudes and commitment to education. However, the program still faces several challenges, including limited facilities, communication barriers, and a lack of socialization of the program's objectives. Therefore, strengthening the aspects of training, mentoring, and support is needed to maximize program outcomes and more effectively shape the professional identity of future teachers.

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