

BAB II

TINJAUAN PUSTAKA

In higher education, the integration of pedagogical theory and field practice has become a primary focus in teacher education curriculum development in various countries. Teaching assistantship programs, as part of experiential-based education, are a response to the increasingly complex and dynamic needs of the educational landscape. Previous studies have shown that direct classroom experience has positive implications for the formation of teachers' professional identities, strengthening pedagogical competencies, and developing the reflective capacities of education students (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zeichner, 2010). However, the implementation of such programs in underdeveloped or remote areas has been relatively rarely studied in depth.

2.1 Experience-Based Education and the Experiential Learning Model

The experiential learning model developed by Kolb (1984) emphasizes the importance of a four-stage learning cycle: concrete experience, observational reflection, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This theory has been widely adopted in the design of field practice programs for prospective teachers. In the Indonesian context, several studies have confirmed the effectiveness of this approach in strengthening the readiness of education students to face real-life classroom dynamics (Suprihatiningrum, 2014; Suryana, 2019). However, most studies still focus on urban contexts or reference schools with adequate infrastructure. Few studies have specifically examined how this experiential learning cycle occurs in schools with limited human resources and infrastructure.

2.2 Implementation of the Teaching Assistance Program and Curriculum Transformation

A study by Nursalim and Fauziah (2020) showed that the involvement of education students in a teaching assistantship program positively impacted communication skills, classroom management, and the development of lesson plans responsive to student needs. Similar findings were also presented by Putra and Handayani (2022), who observed that the MBKM program was able to bridge the gap between theory and practice, especially for final-semester students. However, some of these studies did not specifically address how students' experi-

ences were shaped by the geographic, social, and cultural context of the schools where they served as assistantships.

In comparison, an international study by Ronfeldt et al. (2013) emphasized the importance of the quality of placement schools in determining the success of prospective teachers' field practicums. Schools with collaborative climates, strong pedagogical leadership, and reflective cultures tend to provide more meaningful assistance experiences. Therefore, contextualizing the results of international studies within the heterogeneous realities of Indonesian education is crucial to enrich academic discourse in this field.

2.3 Implementation Challenges in Rural Areas

The literature also highlights the challenges of implementing fieldwork in remote areas. Research by Anderson and Stillman (2011) shows that students placed in schools with high challenges (e.g., limited teacher resources, low parental involvement, or high social inequality) tend to experience greater adaptation burdens, but also exhibit greater problem-solving skills and professional resilience. Unfortunately, in Indonesia, the site-based approach has not yet fully become an analytical variable in studies of teaching assistantship implementation. Meanwhile, Zamroni's (2020) study found that MBKM programs tend to operate in a normative and administrative manner in many institutions, without systematic documentation of student reflection processes or feedback mechanisms from schools. Therefore, research focused on rural areas, such as Bawolato, would provide important empirical contributions to enriching the study of the diversity of MBKM practices.

2.4 Contribution of This Study

From various previous studies, it can be concluded that there is a significant research gap in the following areas: (1) limited studies related to the implementation of the Teaching Assistance Program in challenging geographic and socio-cultural contexts; (2) the lack of a complete picture of how students experience and navigate the complexity of learning in a rural context; and (3) the lack of a conceptual model based on field data that is able to explain the relationship between assistance experience, quality of guidance, and the development of professional competencies.

Therefore, this study takes a critical stance to fill this gap by integrating an experiential learning approach into an empirical analytical framework that draws on the experiences of students at SMP Negeri 1 Bawolato. Through data triangulation and thematic analysis, this research is expected to provide new contributions to the development of context-adaptive teacher education policy designs and encourage the formation of collaborative learning eco-systems between campuses and schools across Indonesia, including underdeveloped areas.