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## Exploring the impact of school field experience on prospective English teachers' readiness

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### Abstract

This research investigates how the *Program Pengenalan Lapangan* or *PLP* (the School Field Experience Program) influences English teacher candidates' preparedness. Using a 22-item questionnaire, data were collected from 41 participants through a quantitative descriptive method. Results show that 78.71% believe the school field experience program enhanced their readiness, particularly in instructional planning, classroom management, communication, and character development. The high percentage of positive responses suggests that the school field experience program effectively bridges theory and practice. However, lower parental communication and administrative task scores indicate aspects needing improvement. The research highlights the value of experiential learning in teacher education and suggests enhancing the program through reflective teaching and stronger mentorship.

### Keywords

Experiential learning, perception-based research, prospective English teacher, school field experience program, teaching readiness

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## Introduction

Preparing future educators to be highly qualified and adaptable has become a top priority in the changing educational landscape, particularly considering the rapid growth of technology and global issues. The School Field Immersion Program extensively supports this objective in Indonesia, often called *Program Pengenalan Lapangan* or *PLP*. The school field experience program is crucial to the teacher education program because it provides a valuable framework for connecting pedagogical theory and real-world classroom experience. Under the supervision of qualified mentors, this program immerses aspiring teachers in the actual school setting, enabling them to watch, engage, and gradually acquire critical teaching competencies.

The demand for qualified English teacher candidates is particularly urgent in the context of English language instruction. In addition to having a strong command of the language, prospective English teachers need to be equipped with a wide range of 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching abilities, including digital literacy, critical thinking, communication, teamwork, creativity, and intercultural awareness. Therefore, the school field experience program will develop these skills and promote professional readiness among prospective English teachers.

In line with the targets of the Indonesian Ministry of Education's *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) policy, the school field experience program strongly emphasizes adaptable, student-centered, and contextual teaching and learning methods. This strategy encourages educational autonomy, innovation, and character education development to prepare teacher candidates to successfully negotiate modern classrooms' challenges and make significant contributions to their local communities and national educational objectives.

Several studies have demonstrated how the school field experience program improves teacher readiness. For example, prior studies have shown that student interest and participation in the school field experience program significantly impact teacher readiness (Moeriyati & Wulandari, 2023). Similarly, Efendi (2023) reported that the school field experience program effectively enhances competencies across pedagogical, personality, social, and professional domains. However, these studies primarily focus on general teacher education programs and often lack specificity regarding English language teaching.

Moreover, Maharani et al. (2024) underscored a gap between theoretical training and practical application, particularly in integrating digital technology within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching context. This suggests that while the school field experience program contributes to general teaching competencies, exploring their effectiveness in equipping English teacher candidates with the specific skills required for modern, technology-integrated classrooms is necessary.

Despite the program's acknowledged advantages in general teacher education, a few studies have examined *PLP*'s role in improving prospective English teachers' readiness, particularly considering the *Merdeka Belajar* policy and the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century education. Studies already conducted frequently overlook the difficulties prospective English teachers face, such as adapting to various linguistic and cultural contexts in the classroom and using digital resources in language training.

By examining how English teacher candidates view the benefits of the school field experience program and how it improves their readiness to teach, this research aims to address

this gap. In line with the goals of the *Merdeka Belajar* initiative and the competencies necessary for a successful 21<sup>st</sup> century education, this research searches participant questionnaire data to determine how the school field experience program influences prospective English teachers' pedagogical, professional, and interpersonal skills.

## Literature Review

### *Theoretical foundations of experiential learning*

Experiential learning is a fundamental component of teacher education, emphasizing converting academic information into functional abilities. According to Kolb's experiential learning theory, learning is a continuous process that includes active experimentation, abstract conceptualization, reflective observation, and actual experiences (McLeod, 2017). This framework underscores the significance of real-world experiences in fostering deep learning and skill acquisition among pre-service teachers.

Dewey's philosophy, which supports education based on experience and interaction with the environment, further supports the importance of experiential learning. He maintained that education should be life itself, not just a means of preparing for it, and emphasized the significance of involving students in worthwhile activities that mirror actual circumstances (Miettinen, 2000).

### *Impact of field experience on teacher readiness*

The school field experience program and other field activities are crucial in bridging the gap between classroom practice and theoretical education. Through these programs, pre-service teachers can manage classrooms, use pedagogical ideas, and cultivate their professional identities. The research has indicated that these experiences improve instructional methods, classroom management abilities, and self-efficacy.

Additionally, it has been discovered that pre-service teachers' evaluation and assessment abilities are enhanced when project-based learning (PBL) is incorporated into field experiences. Poonputta (2023) showed that these areas significantly increase when PBL and experiential learning are combined, underscoring the value of experiential, group-based learning settings in teacher preparation.

### *Challenges in implementing experiential learning*

Implementing experiential learning in teaching education presents several difficulties despite its advantages. These include pre-service teachers' perspectives on experiential learning, mentor teachers' lack of training, and restricted access to resources. While field experiences benefited international students in a graduate teacher education program, Akindo et al. (2017) revealed that obstacles such as cultural differences and adjusting to new learning contexts were common.

Integrating technology, such as virtual reality (VR), into experiential learning presents opportunities and obstacles. Solomon (2020) explored the use of VR in teacher education within resource-limited regions, finding that while VR can enhance engagement and provide

immersive learning experiences, challenges like limited infrastructure and access to technology hinder its widespread adoption.

### ***Relevance to English teacher preparation***

Field experiences are significant for establishing language teaching competencies for prospective English teachers. Their readiness and confidence are enhanced by interacting with various student demographics, practicing language teaching techniques, and getting feedback in authentic classroom environments. English teacher education programs that incorporate experiential learning techniques guarantee that their graduates are prepared to handle the demands of modern classrooms.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Research design***

This research used a quantitative descriptive method to investigate how prospective English teachers perceive the benefits and efficacy of the school field experience Program (*PLP*) in preparing them for future teaching positions. Using an established questionnaire, a quantitative approach was used to measure and analyze students' responses objectively. This allowed for statistical interpretation of perception patterns and tendencies (Bungin, 2011; Creswell, 2015; Sugiyono, 2014).

The descriptive method was appropriate for this research because it aimed to describe and interpret the current condition of students' perceptions without manipulating any variables. This design allowed the researchers to gain insights into how prospective English teachers evaluate the role of the school field experience program in enhancing their teaching readiness across pedagogical, personal, and professional aspects.

#### ***Research site***

This research was conducted at an English Education Study Program of Toraja-Christian University of Indonesia during the academic year 2024/2025. This institution was chosen due to its consistent implementation of the school field experience program as part of the teacher training curriculum

The participants of this research were 41 English teacher candidates at UKI Toraja who had completed the school field experience program. They were in the final stages of their undergraduate studies and had undergone classroom-based teaching experiences through the *PLP*. The participants were selected using total sampling, considering all eligible students who recently completed their school field experience program to ensure relevant and reflective insights.

*Data collection and analysis*

A close-ended questionnaire with 22 items was used to gather data; each item was created to assess a different facet of teaching preparedness acquired through the *PLP*. The questionnaire was modified using pre-existing tools and literature that addressed teacher competencies, such as communication, character development, classroom management, curriculum comprehension, pedagogical skills, and professional identity. Students were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the assertions regarding the benefits of the school experience program by answering "Yes" or "No" to each item. Education specialists were consulted to verify the instrument's validity and reliability. Before the research began, a few students took a pilot exam to improve the items and ensure internal consistency.

The researchers analyzed the data by scoring, tabulating, and calculating score percentages and score averages. The researchers used a Guttman scale. The Guttman scale is a scale used to get firm answers from respondents; there are only two intervals, such as "agree-disagree," "yes-no," "true-false," "positive-negative," "ever-never," etc. This measurement scale can produce questions in the form of multiple choice or checklists, with answers made with the highest score (yes) one and the lowest (no) zero (Sugiyono, 2014).

**Table 1.** *The score of the Guttman scale*

Value/ Score	Information
1	Yes
2	No

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed by using the following formulas,

Percentage

$$P=f/n \times 100\%$$

Where:

P : Percentage

f : frequency of answer

n : total respondent (Bungin, 2011)

Average

$$\text{Average Score} = (\text{Total Score}) / (\text{Total Item})$$

**Table 2.** *Score interpretation*

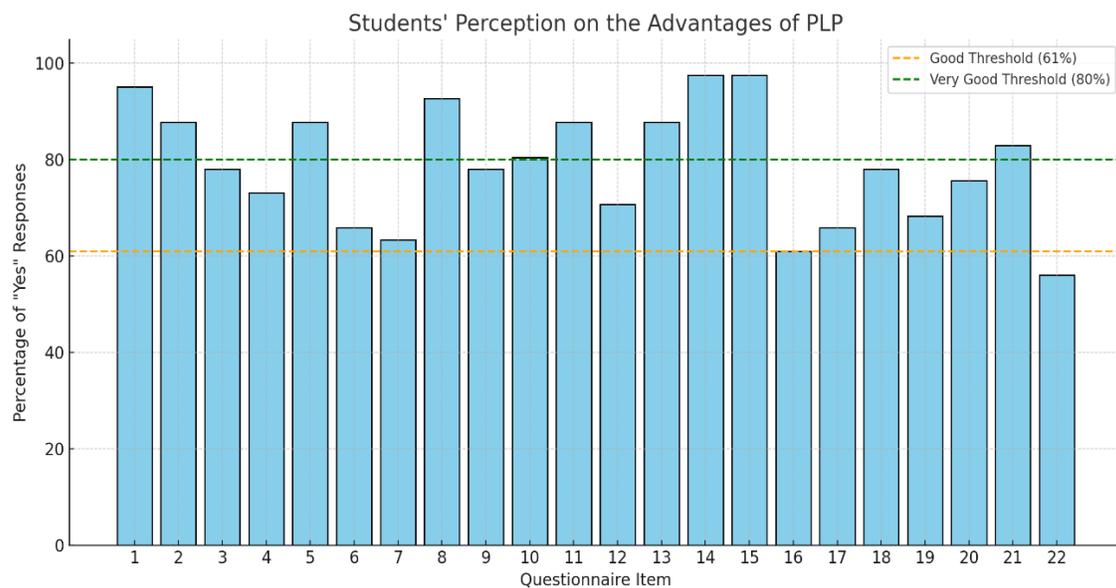
Percentage (%)	Category
0-20	Very weak
21-40	Weak
41-60	Enough
61-80	Good
81-100	Very good

Source: Riduwan (2010)

## Findings and Discussion

The results of the data analysis indicate that the average percentage of "Yes" responses is 78.71%, indicating that students generally perceive the school field experience program positively. According to the interpretation scale from Riduwan (2010), a score within the 61%–80% range is categorized as "Good." Therefore, it can be concluded that the overall perception of students regarding the benefits of the school field experience program is good.

**Figure 1.** The bar chart of the percentage of students' responses



As shown in Figure 1, the bar chart visualizes the percentage of students who responded "Yes" to each item on the school field experience program questionnaire. The dashed lines show the thresholds for "Good" (61%) and "Very Good" (80%) perceptions. The following is the analysis of each item:

- Item 1: 95.12% of students agreed that the school field experience program provides broad knowledge for prospective teachers. This is categorized as Very Good.
- Item 2 reveals that 87.80% of students believed the school field experience program helps develop teaching skills. This is also categorized as Very Good.
- Item 3: 78.05% of students stated that the school field experience program helps build character. This falls under the good category.
- Item 4: 73.17% agreed that the school field experience program trains leadership, indicating a good perception.
- Item 5: 87.80% believed the school field experience program helped recognize student characteristics, which is Very Good.

- Item 6: 65.85% felt the school field experience program helped them master learning theories and principles. This is categorized as Good.
- Item 7: 63.41% agreed that the school field experience program trains curriculum development skills, categorized as Good.
- Item 8: 92.68% agreed that the school field experience program improves classroom management skills, indicating a Very Good perception.
- Item 9: 78.05% believed the school field experience program enhances their ability to develop student potential — a good rating.
- Item 10: 80.49% responded that the school field experience program helps in assessment and evaluation, categorized as Good.
- Item 11: 87.80% believed the school field experience program helps shape them as role models, which is Very Good.
- Item 12: 70.73% agreed that the school field experience program supports personality development, categorized as Good.
- Item 13: 87.80% believed the school field experience program encourages continuous self-development, categorized as Very Good.
- Item 14: 97.56% stated the school field experience program strengthens communication with students — categorized as Very Good.
- Item 15: 97.56% agreed the school field experience program enhances communication with colleagues — again, Very Good.
- Item 16: 60.98% believed the school field experience program trains communication with parents and the community — this is categorized as Enough.
- Item 17: 65.85% agreed that the school field experience program helps master relevant scientific concepts — categorized as Good.
- Item 18: 78.05% stated the school field experience program helps in mastering curriculum materials — Good.
- Item 19: 68.29% agreed that the school field experience program develops interdisciplinary understanding — Good.
- Item 20: 75.61% believed the school field experience program trains the application of scientific concepts in daily life — Good.
- Item 21: 82.93% stated that the school field experience program helps manage academic assignments — Very Good.
- Item 22: 56.10% agreed that the school field experience program trains administrative task management — categorized as Enough.

Most items got high percentages of agreement, especially those about self-development, communication, character development, teaching practice, and pedagogical competence. For example, "Very Good" perceptions were indicated by agreement percentages above 87% for Items 1, 2, 5, 8, 11, 13, 14, and 15. These aspects demonstrate how well the school field experience program works to impart general information, improve teaching techniques, evaluate classroom activities, and foster communication skills among students and other educators. Furthermore, questions that focused on curriculum creation, interdisciplinary understanding, and mastery of learning theories (questions 6, 7, 17, 18, 19) also demonstrated

favorable perceptions, with percentages ranging from 63% to 78% classified as "Good." These findings imply that the school field experience program successfully exposes aspiring educators to critical professional skills.

However, certain aspects of the school field experience program were perceived less positively. Specifically, Item 22, which refers to the ability to manage administrative tasks, received only 56.10% agreement, and Item 16, on communication with parents and the surrounding community, received 60.98%. These results fall into the "Enough" category, indicating areas needing improvement in future school field experience implementations. The findings of this research found some implications as the discussions of this research as described as follows.

**Pedagogical competence**, lesson design, classroom management, and instructional delivery were among the pedagogical skills that most participants said the *PLP* program significantly improved. This result is consistent with global research that highlights the value of fieldwork in fostering instructional skills. For example, research found that school-based learning helps pre-service teachers develop their capacity to function well in classrooms and that they actively create professional knowledge during their initial teacher education (Thomas & Casale, 2021).

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which holds that knowledge is produced by transforming experience, supports the growth of pedagogical competency through real-world experience. By allowing teacher candidates to participate in real-world teaching situations, the *PLP* helps them absorb pedagogical knowledge through active experimentation and critical observation. Furthermore, a shift toward more socially conscious and equitable language teaching methods is suggested by the school field experience program's positive impact on the readiness of prospective English teachers. This is consistent with the principles of Critical Language Pedagogy, which support instructional strategies that empower students and deal with structural injustices (Asrifan, 2025).

**Professional competence**, according to the participants, the *PLP* program assisted them in comprehending educational policies, ethical obligations, and professional behavior, among other aspects of their professional development. This insight aligns with the results of global studies. According to Shultz (2020), field experiences are beneficial for teacher candidates, especially as they practice creating and carrying out successful learning experiences, build meaningful relationships with English language learners, and boost their confidence in their capacity to support diverse learners through critical reflection and feedback.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that people learn new behaviors and skills through social contact and observation, offers a helpful foundation for comprehending the growth of aspiring teachers. Such an environment is provided by the school field experience program, where teacher candidates can gain practical teaching experience and mentorship to enhance their professional competencies. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that peer contacts are crucial for improving EFL teachers' professional competence. In this sense, the *PLP* program is a starting point that could be reinforced even more by using the peer coaching model as a sustainable professional competence training model (Panggua et al., 2021).

**Personal and social competence**, according to the research, teacher candidates' social skills and personal development were encouraged by the *PLP* program. The participants reported increased self-assurance, flexibility, and communication abilities. These results are consistent with global research that highlights the value of field trips in fostering social and personal skills. For instance, Köksal (2019) highlighted that field experiences provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to engage in reciprocal interactions with learners in real classrooms, thereby enhancing their personal and social development. Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, which holds that critical reflection on experiences results in a change in one's viewpoints and behaviors, can help us better understand this process (Mezirow, 2018). Because the *PLP* promotes this kind of introspection, teacher candidates can reconsider their presumptions and better comprehend their educator responsibilities.

**Integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills**, although the *PLP* program successfully fostered traditional teaching competencies, it was less clear how 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like digital literacy and creative teaching techniques were incorporated. International studies have underlined the necessity of integrating digital technology into teacher education programs to prepare students for modern classrooms. For instance, research found that instructors had significant deficiencies in their digital competency, which are made worse by insufficient initial and ongoing training models (da Silva & Ramos, 2023; Valverde-Berrocoso et al., 2021). This gap in digital skills hinders teachers' ability to integrate technology into their pedagogical practices effectively (Instefjord & Munthe, 2017; Sitorus et al., 2025; Valverde-Berrocoso et al., 2021).

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The benefit of the school field experience program in preparing prospective English teachers for the teaching profession was investigated in this research. The results show that the *PLP* is essential for improving educational, professional, personal-social, and reflective abilities, among other aspects of teacher readiness. Most participants stated that the *PLP* experience improved their capacity to organize and present lessons, manage classrooms, comprehend school culture, and participate in reflective practices—all critical competencies for successful English language teaching.

Moreover, international research supports the value of early field experiences in building teacher identity and confidence (Tang et al., 2016; Shultz, 2020). These experiences also serve as platforms for experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) and social learning (Bandura & Walters, 1977), offering meaningful engagement with real-life teaching scenarios. However, the research also identified a gap in developing 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching skills, particularly in integrating digital literacy and innovative pedagogical tools. Thus, while the *PLP* has proven effective in foundational teacher training, there is a pressing need to modernize and enrich the program to better align with global trends and the evolving demands of education in the digital era. The following suggestions are put up considering the findings,

- **Curriculum Enhancement**  
Integrating 21st-century skills in the *PLP* curriculum, such as problem-solving methods, digital literacy, and technology-enhanced learning practices. In practical teaching and lesson design, place a strong emphasis on inquiry-based and student-centered techniques.

- **Strengthening Mentorship and Supervision**  
For pre-service teachers to receive continuous, excellent mentoring, universities and partner schools should work together more closely. Mentor teachers should receive training to successfully supervise, guide, and provide feedback through professional norms and reflective practice.
- **Extending Duration and Depth of Practice**  
For a more immersive experience, consider extending *PLP* or combining it with subsequent teaching practicums. Introduce graded responsibilities, starting with observation and moving toward full lesson delivery and classroom management.
- **Fostering Reflective Practice**  
To assist pre-service teachers in internalizing and enhancing their practice, encourage frequent coaching sessions, peer discussions, and reflective diaries. Throughout the *PLP*, digital portfolios are used to record, reflect on, and evaluate progress.
- **Future Research**  
Conducting longitudinal studies to determine how *PLP* affects teacher candidates' career growth and actual teaching performance. To gain a more thorough knowledge of the program's efficacy, the research scope should be broadened to include the viewpoints of mentor instructors and supervisors.

### Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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