



THE INFLUENCE OF PAST EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE NOVICE TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

This research explores the transition of novice teachers from higher education to professional practice, focusing on the impact of college learning experiences and early teaching experiences on their professional readiness, teaching effectiveness, and the development of pedagogical skills and professional identity. Through a qualitative case study approach involving 15 novice teachers, the study examines how theoretical foundations acquired in higher education contribute to teaching preparedness, while also identifying the challenges posed by the gap between theory and classroom practice. The findings reveal that while higher education provides a solid theoretical framework, novice teachers often feel underprepared for the complexities of real-world teaching. Early teaching experiences, such as practicum and internships, are crucial in bridging this gap, allowing teachers to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts, develop classroom management strategies, and adapt to diverse student needs. The study underscores the importance of continuous support from mentors and collaboration with colleagues in fostering professional growth and confidence among novice teachers. The research concludes that to enhance the effectiveness of teacher education programs, there is a need to integrate more practical experiences with theoretical learning and to create a collaborative, supportive learning environment. This approach would better prepare novice teachers for the challenges of the classroom and contribute to their long-term professional success.

Keywords: *College Learning Experience, Professional Readiness*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process that allows students to actively develop their potential, both in spiritual aspects, self-control, personality, intelligence, morals, and skills necessary for themselves, society, nation, and state. Education is expected to be able to produce graduates who think globally and act locally and are based on noble morals. In this context, there are two interconnected educational concepts: learning and instruction. The concept of learning is rooted in students, while learning is rooted in educators. The teaching and learning process involves interaction between students and educators. Learners are individuals who develop their potential through certain paths, levels, and types of education, while educators are professionals who are responsible for helping learners reach maturity.

Factors that affect learning in schools include teachers, students, infrastructure, educational environment, and curriculum. Among these factors, teachers play a key role. Teachers are the most decisive component in bringing the curriculum, learning resources, facilities, and infrastructure, as well as a meaningful learning climate for students. According to Supriadi in E. Mulyasa (2007), the



quality of education assessed by students' learning achievement is greatly influenced by teachers, namely 34% in developing countries and 36% in industrialized countries. A study by Heyneman and Loxley (1983) in 29 countries found that one-third of the quality of education, especially student learning achievement, is determined by teachers.

Therefore, teachers need to have in-depth knowledge and adequate learning and teaching experience, to shape them to become effective professionals in carrying out their duties, as well as being able to inspire and guide students towards achieving their maximum potential. College learning experience and early teaching experience are two crucial phases in a teacher's professional journey. According to Kolb (1984), learning is a cycle that involves direct experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. This model and understanding suggest that learning experiences in colleges can influence how teachers deal with challenges in the field. Feiman-Nemser (2001) adds that the induction phase, or the early years as a teacher, is a very important period to develop a professional identity and build pedagogical competence.

In Indonesia, the Freedom of Learning policy has driven significant changes in teacher education, but there are still challenges in preparing new teachers to face the real complexity of the classroom. Learning experiences in higher education often provide an essential theoretical foundation but transitions to professional practice often encounter a variety of challenges, including the gap between theory and practice, classroom management, and the development of professional relationships.

The transition from higher education to professional practice is a challenging phase for novice teachers. In this period, new teachers often face a gap between the theoretical knowledge they acquire in college and the reality of teaching in the field. These challenges can be overcome with the right support and guidance, both from mentors and through induction programs designed to help new teachers adapt to their work environment.

Practical experience during teacher education, such as teaching practice and field assignments, is essential to prepare teachers for professional challenges. Through this experience, teachers can develop classroom management skills, effective teaching strategies, and the ability to adapt to diverse student needs.

According to Loughran (2006), learning through hands-on teaching experience allows teachers to develop their pedagogical skills. However, this process requires deep and continuous reflection to connect the theory learned with the practice experienced. An effective learning process is not only based on the accumulation of theoretical knowledge but also on the ability to apply that knowledge in practical situations. Learning through teaching experience allows teachers to understand and apply theories learned in college in a real classroom context. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) also emphasized that practical experience during teacher education, such as teaching practice, is essential in preparing teachers for real professional challenges. Therefore, it is crucial to research how college learning experiences and early experiences as teachers can affect their professional activities. This research aims to identify important elements of the learning and teaching experience that can improve the effectiveness and success of novice teachers. With this understanding, better educational strategies can be devised to help new teachers transition from higher education to professional

practice, so that they can make maximum contributions in their educational environment.

METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative method with a qualitative case study approach. According to Creswell (2013), a qualitative approach allows researchers to explore personal experiences and individual perceptions in depth. In this context, this approach is used to explore how novice teachers interpret their experiences and how those experiences affect their professional practice. Denzin and Lincoln stated that qualitative research is research that uses a natural setting, to interpret phenomena that occur and is carried out by involving various existing methods. The subjects of this study consisted of 15 novice teachers who worked at various levels of schools. Subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the criterion that they had completed higher education and had one to 4 years of teaching experience. The instrument used in this study is a semi-structured interview. An interview, according to Sugiono, is an interaction between two people who aim to share information and ideas through a question-and-answer process, so that they can build a common understanding about a certain topic. This interview is designed to explore the learning experiences of teachers during college and their experiences early in their teaching careers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Learning experience in higher education

Almost all teachers interviewed reported that they experienced positive learning experiences during their time in higher education, with a particular emphasis on mastering a solid theoretical foundation in education. Most respondents assessed that higher education provides a comprehensive and in-depth theoretical foundation, which is important for understanding basic concepts in teaching and education (Smith & Brown, 2019). Previous research also supports these findings, by suggesting that higher education serves as an important foundation in the development of pedagogical knowledge. However, while such theoretical foundations are crucial, some respondents identified the imbalance between theory and practice as a major problem. They want more practical experience that is relevant to real situations on the ground, which indicates that they feel less prepared to face the real challenges in the classroom.

The gap between theory and practice in teacher education has long been identified as an area that requires greater attention in teacher education programs (Grossman, 2011). Research shows that practical experience integrated with theory can help prospective teachers develop better pedagogical skills and be better prepared to face classroom challenges. This is consistent with the findings from the interviews, where some respondents expressed the need to adapt the lecture material to the teaching context they are facing in the field. This awareness reflects the urgent need to improve the teacher education curriculum to place more emphasis on practical application and simulation that approaches the actual classroom situation.

In addition, interaction with lecturers and peers during their studies is recognized as an important factor in the professional development of teachers. Respondents noted that support and guidance from lecturers and collaboration with peers significantly affected their readiness to teach. Previous research has shown

that positive relationships with lecturers and peers not only improve theoretical understanding but also facilitate social and professional learning that is essential for career development. These interactions help prospective teachers build a support network and obtain constructive feedback, which is invaluable in the process of their adaptation to the actual teaching environment.

Overall, this study shows that higher education plays an important role in preparing novice teachers by providing a strong theoretical foundation. However, the imbalance between theory and practice remains a significant challenge. This emphasizes the need for more practical experience integration in teacher education programs to ensure that prospective teachers are prepared to face the challenges in the classroom with relevant skills and knowledge. Positive support from lecturers and collaboration with peers are also important elements that contribute to the professional readiness of new teachers, reinforcing the argument that a collaborative and supportive learning environment is key to preparing effective and competent teachers.

Initial Teaching Experience on Pedagogical Competence and Professional Identity

Early teaching experience, including practice and internships, plays a key role in the development of new teachers' pedagogical skills and professional identity. The findings from the interviews show that new teachers feel significant benefits from this experience in shaping their skills and increasing their confidence as educators. Through this experience, they gain valuable insights into classroom management, the application of educational theories, and the development of practical teaching strategies.

Practicum and internship experiences provide opportunities for prospective teachers to apply the theories they have learned in higher education in real contexts. Research by Darling-Hammond (2006) underlines that a well-structured practicum experience can strengthen the pedagogical skills of prospective teachers by providing them with hands-on experience in managing classrooms and applying teaching methods. Darling-Hammond also mentioned that practicum experiences allow teachers to overcome real challenges, such as adapting teaching methods to diverse student needs. This is in line with the findings of the interviews which show that the challenge of adapting teaching methods to the needs of students is seen as a critical learning opportunity that contributes to professional growth.

Feiman-Nemser (2001) adds that early teaching experience not only contributes to pedagogical skills but also to the formation of teachers' professional identities. Feiman-Nemser argues that this experience helps new teachers develop a deeper understanding of their role and align their expectations with the realities of teaching practice. This allows teachers to build their professional identity through reflection on their teaching experience and adaptation to the demands of the profession. Furthermore, support from mentors and colleagues during the initial experience is crucial in helping new teachers adapt to the demands of the profession. Research by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) shows that strong mentor support can boost the confidence of novice teachers and help them overcome early challenges in teaching. This support also contributes to the development of pedagogical competence by providing constructive feedback and practical advice necessary to effectively manage classes and apply theory in practice. Ingersoll and Strong emphasized that experienced mentors can provide essential guidance in teachers'



transition from theory to practice, which in turn helps to improve the quality of their teaching.

In addition, research by Bartell (2005) shows that collaboration with colleagues and support from the education community plays an important role in accelerating the adaptation of new teachers. Bartell emphasizes that teachers who connect with colleagues and participate in professional communities can gain much-needed new ideas, teaching strategies, and emotional support. This is reflected in the interview findings that show that support from colleagues and mentors not only helps new teachers in overcoming initial challenges but also plays a role in building their confidence and professional abilities.

The data show that early teaching experience is crucial in developing pedagogical competencies and shaping the professional identity of new teachers. This experience allows them to bridge the gap between theory and practice, reinforce the knowledge gained during their studies, and apply it in real-world settings. The challenges faced in managing diverse classrooms highlight the need for teacher preparation programs to focus on adaptability and problem-solving skills. Support from mentors and colleagues also underscores the importance of a supportive professional network in fostering confidence and professional growth in novice teachers.

Professional Activities of Teachers in Increasing Effectiveness and Success as Beginner Teachers

The importance of professional activities in increasing the effectiveness and success of novice teachers is the main focus of educational development. Based on the results of the interviews, several things were identified as important factors in improving the quality of teaching. These elements include thorough and flexible lesson planning, the use of a student-centered teaching approach, the integration of technology and interactive methods, and the continuous evaluation and adaptation of teaching strategies. In addition, collaboration with colleagues and maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum through regular evaluations are also recognized as crucial aspects.

Comprehensive and Flexible Lesson Planning

Comprehensive and flexible lesson planning is a fundamental element in increasing teaching effectiveness and achieving optimal learning outcomes. Good planning not only provides structure to the teaching process but also provides a framework that allows teachers to modify and adapt their approach according to student needs and dynamic classroom conditions. In the educational literature, comprehensive planning is often considered a prerequisite for creating a productive and inclusive learning environment.

According to Darling-Hammond (2000), thorough planning allows teachers to anticipate various student needs as well as potential challenges that may arise during the learning process. Teachers involved in in-depth planning can design diverse activities, appropriate assessment methods, and teaching strategies that support all students, including those with special needs or who come from different backgrounds. Thus, thorough planning also includes a deep understanding of the subject matter, learning objectives, and effective teaching strategies. Furthermore, research by Tomlinson (2001) suggests that flexible planning allows for teaching differentiation, i.e. strategies in which teachers adapt their instruction to meet the individual needs of students. This is especially important in heterogeneous

classrooms, where students may have different abilities, interests, and learning styles. By using flexible planning, teachers can offer a variety of tasks and challenges tailored to students' abilities, so that each student can reach their full potential.

Flexibility in planning is also closely related to the teacher's ability to respond to student feedback. When students provide feedback on the difficulties they face or about certain aspects of learning that they find less effective, teachers who have flexible plans can quickly adjust their teaching. This creates a more dynamic and interactive learning environment, where students feel that their needs and opinions are valued.

Student-Centered Teaching Approach

A student-centered approach to teaching is a strategy that is increasingly recognized as essential in efforts to improve the quality of teaching at different levels of education. This approach departs from the view that each student has unique characteristics, learning styles, and needs, which must be considered by teachers in designing and implementing the learning process. As a result, this method emphasizes the importance of customization and flexibility in teaching to ensure that all students can reach their maximum learning potential.

According to Tomlinson (2001), student-centered teaching not only accommodates individual differences within the classroom but also promotes greater student engagement. By adjusting teaching methods, materials, and learning speed according to students' individual needs and interests, teachers can increase students' motivation, understanding, and active participation in the learning process. This creates a more meaningful learning experience, where students feel valued and supported in their academic journey. In addition, this approach also involves students in making decisions regarding their learning process. For example, students may be allowed to choose a project topic, evaluation method, or type of learning activity that suits their preferences. This not only increases their sense of belonging toward learning but also encourages the development of critical, reflective, and independent skills that are essential in long-term education.

Integration of Interactive Technologies and Methods

The integration of technology and interactive methods in teaching plays a significant role in improving teaching effectiveness. Koehler and Mishra (2009) explain that technology can enrich students' learning experience by providing access to diverse and innovative resources. The use of technology, such as digital aids and online learning platforms, can increase student engagement and support a variety of learning styles. In addition, interactive methods, such as project-based learning and group discussions, are effective in increasing student participation and understanding of the material (Smith & Johnson, 2014). This method allows students to be actively involved in the learning process and apply concepts in a practical way, which supports the development of critical and analytical skills.

Continuous Evaluation and Adaptation of Teaching Strategies

Continuous evaluation and adaptation of teaching strategies are key components in efforts to improve the effectiveness and quality of teaching. This evaluation not only includes formal assessments through tests and examinations but also involves formative assessments that are carried out regularly throughout the learning process. According to Black and Wiliam (1998), formative evaluation is a continuous process and involves constructive feedback given to students. This



feedback allows students to understand their strengths and weaknesses, as well as provides an opportunity for teachers to tailor their teaching approach to suit the individual needs of students.

This continuous evaluation process has several important benefits. First, formative evaluation allows teachers to monitor student progress in real time, so they can immediately identify areas that need special attention. Thus, teachers can intervene in a timely and more effective manner in helping students achieve their learning goals. For example, if a teacher notices that many students are having difficulty understanding a certain concept, the teacher can immediately adjust his teaching method, either through material revision, the use of visual aids, or the application of different learning strategies.

In addition, continuous evaluation also supports reflective development in teachers. Along with assessing student progress, teachers are also faced with critical reflection on the effectiveness of the teaching strategies that have been implemented. Hattie and Timperley (2007) show that this reflection is important to enable teachers to continue learning and developing, as well as adapting their teaching strategies based on the results of the evaluation.

Collaboration with Colleagues

Collaboration with colleagues is essential in improving the quality of teaching. Hargreaves (1998) stated that collaboration among teachers can expand their professional knowledge, improve teaching practices, and improve student learning outcomes. Through collaboration, teachers can share ideas, strategies, and experiences, which can enrich teaching methods and increase innovation in classroom practice. Collaboration also supports continuous professional development by providing opportunities for shared reflection and learning from the experiences of colleagues.

Maintaining Curriculum Relevance and Effectiveness

Maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum through regular evaluation and adjustment is essential to ensure that the curriculum remains in line with the needs of students and the latest educational developments. Guskey (2003) explained that continuous curriculum adjustments, based on student feedback and learning outcomes, can improve the quality of teaching and ensure that the curriculum remains relevant. Regular evaluation of the curriculum allows teachers to tailor teaching materials and methods according to student needs and the latest developments in education.

The results of this study underscore the multifaceted nature of effective teaching, especially for novice teachers. Thorough and flexible planning, as well as a student-centered approach to teaching, are important foundations in improving the quality of teaching. The integration of technology and interactive methods enriches the learning experience and increases student engagement. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of teaching strategies allow teachers to remain responsive to evolving student needs. Collaboration among teachers not only improves teaching practices but also supports the exchange of ideas and innovations. Maintaining the relevance of the curriculum through regular evaluation ensures that the teaching materials remain to the needs of students and the latest educational developments. All of these elements contribute significantly to the professional success and growth of novice teachers, preparing them to face the demands of the classroom and achieve higher teaching effectiveness.



CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the important role of learning in higher education in preparing novice teachers, especially in terms of mastery of a strong theoretical foundation and pedagogical skills. Although higher education provides a solid foundation in understanding the basic concepts of education, the results of the study show that there is an imbalance between the theory taught and the reality in the field. Beginner teachers feel that they need more relevant practical experience to face real challenges in the classroom. In addition, early teaching experiences, such as practice and internships, can prove crucial in developing pedagogical competencies and shaping the professional identity of new teachers. This experience allows them to bridge the gap between theory and practice, reinforce the knowledge gained during their studies, and apply it in real-world situations. The challenges faced in managing diverse classrooms emphasize the need for teacher education programs that place more emphasis on adaptability and problem-solving. Support from mentors and collaboration with colleagues also play a significant role in helping novice teachers adapt to the demands of the profession and boost their confidence. Thorough and flexible lesson planning, student-centered teaching approaches, technology integration, and continuous evaluation and adaptation of teaching strategies are important elements in improving teaching effectiveness. These factors contribute significantly to the professional success and growth of novice teachers, preparing them to face the demands of the classroom and achieve higher teaching effectiveness.

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