
TEACHING READINESS AND PROFESSIONALISM OF PGSD STUDENTS: A CONCEPTUAL-CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE RISKS OF UNPROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Readiness, Professionalism, PGSD, Teacher education, Primary education

The quality of primary education is closely linked to teacher professionalism, which should be systematically developed through teaching readiness in pre-service teacher education. However, previous studies reveal a persistent gap between academic competence and practical pedagogical readiness among pre-service primary school teachers (PGSD students), indicating that theoretical mastery does not automatically ensure professional classroom performance. This study aims to critically analyze the concept of teaching readiness as a foundation of professionalism and its implications for the quality of primary education. A qualitative approach was employed through a conceptual-critical literature review of national and international research articles, policy documents, and relevant theoretical frameworks in teacher education. The analysis focused on the relationship between teaching readiness, pre-service teacher professionalism, and the risk of unprofessional instructional practices in primary school contexts. The findings show that teaching readiness is a fundamental component of teacher professionalism; however, a substantial discrepancy remains between theoretical preparation and pedagogical practice in authentic classrooms. Inadequate teaching readiness potentially leads to less professional instructional behavior and negatively affects learning quality and pupils' development. This study concludes that strengthening teaching readiness in pre-service teacher education programs is essential as a preventive measure against professional risk and as a strategic effort to improve and safeguard the quality of primary education in Indonesia.

Abstrak

Kualitas pendidikan dasar sangat dipengaruhi oleh profesionalisme guru yang seharusnya dikembangkan secara sistematis melalui kesiapan mengajar dalam pendidikan calon guru. Namun, berbagai penelitian menunjukkan masih adanya kesenjangan antara kompetensi akademik lulusan pendidikan guru dan kesiapan pedagogis dalam praktik pembelajaran

di kelas, yang mengindikasikan bahwa penguasaan teori belum tentu menjamin profesionalitas mengajar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara kritis konsep kesiapan mengajar sebagai fondasi profesionalisme calon guru sekolah dasar (mahasiswa PGSD) serta implikasinya terhadap kualitas pendidikan dasar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui kajian pustaka konseptual-kritis terhadap artikel penelitian nasional dan internasional, dokumen kebijakan pendidikan, serta kerangka teoretis yang relevan dalam pendidikan guru. Analisis difokuskan pada hubungan antara kesiapan mengajar, profesionalisme calon guru, dan potensi risiko praktik pembelajaran yang tidak profesional di sekolah dasar. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa kesiapan mengajar merupakan komponen fundamental dalam profesionalisme guru, namun masih terdapat kesenjangan yang signifikan antara kesiapan teoretis dan kesiapan pedagogis dalam konteks kelas yang autentik. Rendahnya kesiapan mengajar berpotensi menimbulkan praktik pembelajaran yang kurang profesional dan berdampak negatif terhadap kualitas pembelajaran serta perkembangan peserta didik. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penguatan kesiapan mengajar dalam program pendidikan calon guru perlu dilakukan secara sistematis sebagai upaya preventif terhadap risiko profesional serta sebagai strategi untuk menjaga dan meningkatkan mutu pendidikan dasar di Indonesia.

Keywords: Kesiapan, Profesionalisme, PGSD, Keguruan, Pendidikan

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a central role in the primary education system as the main actors who determine the quality of the learning process as well as the development of students' character. Teacher professionalism should not be understood merely as the fulfillment of administrative requirements or the possession of certain academic degrees; rather, it encompasses the integrated mastery of pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies as manifested in classroom teaching practices. These four competencies constitute essential prerequisites for teachers to perform their duties effectively, reflectively, and responsibly in accordance with educational developments and the characteristics of primary school learners.

Nevertheless, the dynamics of primary education in Indonesia indicate that teacher professionalism remains an unresolved issue. Data from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education show that, in recent years, a considerable number of teachers particularly at the kindergarten and primary school levels have not yet met the minimum academic qualification of a bachelor's degree (S-1) or a diploma four (D-IV), as mandated by Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. This condition has prompted the government to implement various higher education affirmative programs through teacher education institutions (LPTK) as an effort to improve teachers' qualifications and competencies.

The issue of teacher provision is not limited to academic qualifications but also relates to the quantitative availability of teaching personnel. The high number of teachers entering retirement each year is not fully balanced by the number of prospective teachers who are ready to fill these positions. This gap has resulted in an increasing demand for teachers across regions while simultaneously posing challenges for the education system to prepare prospective teachers who are not only sufficient in number but also possess adequate professional readiness and competence.

On the other hand, concerns regarding teacher competence are also reflected in Indonesian students' learning outcomes in various international assessments. The relatively low performance of students in literacy, numeracy, and science indicates persistent fundamental problems in the learning process at schools. Several studies suggest that limitations in teachers' pedagogical and professional competencies contribute to this condition, particularly in lesson planning, the selection of instructional strategies, and the implementation and evaluation of learning that are not yet fully oriented toward students' needs.

Issues of teacher professionalism become increasingly complex when associated with the alignment between teachers' educational backgrounds and the subjects they teach, especially at the primary school level. Such misalignment may affect the quality of instruction, as teachers may not fully master subject matter content and pedagogical approaches that are appropriate for the developmental characteristics of primary school students. This situation highlights a gap between the normative standards of teacher competence and the realities of teacher competence in practice.

In this context, students of Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) programs, as prospective teachers, play a strategic role in shaping the future quality of primary education. PGSD students should ideally be comprehensively prepared during their higher education to develop adequate teaching readiness and professionalism before entering the teaching profession. However, numerous research findings indicate that the teaching readiness and professional competence of PGSD graduates have not yet reached optimal levels, raising concerns about the quality of instructional practices they may carry out once they begin teaching in schools.

Insufficient pedagogical and professional readiness among prospective teachers may result in ineffective teaching practices, unsystematic lesson planning, and limited

responsiveness to students' developmental needs. In the long term, such conditions may negatively affect the overall quality of primary education, given that primary education serves as a fundamental foundation for students' academic development and character formation at subsequent educational levels. Therefore, primary school students should not bear the consequences of prospective teachers' lack of professional readiness.

Although numerous studies have examined teaching readiness and teacher professionalism, most have treated these concepts separately or focused primarily on measuring levels of readiness among prospective teachers. Relatively few studies have explored the teaching readiness of PGSD students as a preventive factor against the emergence of unprofessional teaching practices in primary schools through a conceptual-critical approach. This gap in the literature indicates the need for a more in-depth analysis to understand the relationship between teaching readiness and prospective teacher professionalism within the context of primary education in Indonesia.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to critically and conceptually examine the teaching readiness of PGSD students as the foundation of prospective primary school teacher professionalism, as well as to analyze the potential risks of unprofessional teaching practices if such readiness is not optimally developed. This study is expected to contribute conceptually to the development of teacher education, particularly as a basis for formulating strategies to strengthen the teaching readiness of PGSD students as a preventive measure to maintain and enhance the quality of primary education in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a conceptual-critical review design. This approach was selected because the study was not intended to test hypotheses, conduct instructional experiments, or measure relationships among variables quantitatively. Instead, it aimed to critically and in depth examine the concepts, realities, and implications of teaching readiness and professionalism among Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) students as prospective primary school teachers within the context of primary education in Indonesia. A conceptual-critical review enables researchers to examine, compare, and synthesize theoretical frameworks, previous research findings, and educational policy documents in order to identify fundamental

issues and potential professional risks that may arise in teaching practices when prospective teachers' teaching readiness is not optimally developed.

The data sources in this study were secondary in nature and obtained through a literature review relevant to the research focus. The analyzed literature consisted of reputable national and international journal articles, academic books, and educational policy and regulatory documents related to prospective teachers' teaching readiness, professionalism and competence of primary school teachers, and pre-service teacher education. Policy documents included laws, teacher competency standards, and national policies concerning teacher education and primary education. All sources were selected based on the credibility of the publishers, relevance of content, and recency of publication.

The selection of literature was conducted using systematically defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria comprised: (1) publications issued between 2015 and 2024, (2) literature written in Indonesian or English, (3) a focus on teaching readiness, teacher professionalism, primary teacher education, or pre-service teacher education, and (4) sources originating from reputable academic journals, scholarly books, or official documents of educational institutions. Conversely, literature that was not relevant to the context of primary education, non-academic popular sources, or materials lacking clear authorship and publication information were excluded from the analysis. Based on this selection process, approximately 25 literature sources were analyzed in depth in this study.

Data collection was carried out through systematic document analysis and literature review. The process began with searching relevant sources using keywords such as teaching readiness, teacher professionalism, prospective teacher competence, primary school teacher education, and pre-service teacher education. The identified literature was then screened and classified into major thematic categories reflecting the concepts of teaching readiness, teacher professionalism, the reality of PGSD students' readiness, and the potential risks of unprofessional teaching practices in primary schools.

Data analysis was conducted using a critical thematic analysis approach. The initial stage of analysis involved data reduction, which entailed selecting and simplifying information from various literature sources to align with the research focus. The reduced data were subsequently presented in narrative and thematic forms to reveal patterns,

trends, and gaps between the expected standards of teacher professionalism and the actual readiness of PGSD students as prospective teachers. Critical analysis was then performed by comparing teacher competency standards, findings from previous studies, and the context of primary education in Indonesia. The results of this analysis were conceptually synthesized to develop a comprehensive understanding of the implications and risks of insufficient teaching readiness for instructional practices in primary schools.

The trustworthiness of the data and research findings was ensured through source triangulation by comparing various types of literature, the use of consistent and well-established theoretical frameworks in teacher education studies, and the traceability of data sources to allow verification. This study also adhered to ethical principles of educational research by not involving human participants directly, not conducting instructional interventions, and not evaluating or judging specific individuals or institutions. Accordingly, this review places professional ethics and the protection of learners as fundamental principles in the conduct of academic research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Teaching Readiness as the Foundation of Prospective Teacher Professionalism

The results of this review indicate that the teaching readiness of Primary School Teacher Education (PGSD) students is a key factor in shaping prospective teacher professionalism. Teaching readiness is not limited to the mastery of pedagogical knowledge and subject matter, but also includes mental readiness, professional awareness, and the ability to implement contextual learning in accordance with the characteristics of primary school students. These findings confirm that teaching readiness serves as an initial foundation that determines the quality of prospective teachers' professional practices when they enter the classroom.

A synthesis of previous studies shows that the teaching readiness of PGSD students remains largely conceptual and has not yet been fully translated into mature pedagogical practice. Students generally understand the principles of lesson planning, implementation, and evaluation at a theoretical level; however, they often face limitations in applying this knowledge reflectively and adaptively in real classroom situations. This condition indicates a gap between learning processes in higher education and professional

demands in primary schools, which require flexibility, pedagogical sensitivity, and contextual decision-making skills.

2. The Gap between Theoretical Mastery and Practical Readiness

These findings align with perspectives emphasizing that teacher education programs that overly prioritize theoretical aspects without adequate practical experience and reflection may produce graduates who are not yet professionally ready. In this context, teaching readiness should not be understood merely as the accumulation of coursework, but rather as a professional process that requires the integration of theory, practice, and continuous reflection. Such integration represents a critical distinction between prospective teachers who are professionally ready to teach and those who merely fulfill formal academic requirements.

The discussion of teaching readiness is closely related to the interpretation of prospective teacher professionalism. The findings demonstrate that professionalism cannot be reduced to the possession of academic qualifications in teacher education; instead, it is reflected in teachers' actual competencies in designing meaningful learning experiences, managing classrooms effectively, and adapting instructional strategies to students' needs and developmental stages. Numerous studies indicate that prospective teachers with insufficient pedagogical readiness tend to experience difficulties in lesson planning and subject matter mastery, which ultimately affects the quality of classroom learning processes.

3. Risks of Unprofessional Teaching Practices

Within the context of PGSD students, this condition is particularly concerning because graduates of teacher education programs are structurally positioned as professional educators in primary schools. If professionalism is understood merely as administrative legitimacy obtained after graduation, prospective teachers who are not yet pedagogically mature may still enter classrooms. This situation is consistent with the concept of pedagogical content knowledge, which emphasizes the importance of integrating subject matter mastery with contextual pedagogical strategies. Without adequate readiness, prospective teacher professionalism risks becoming symbolic rather than being realized in high-quality teaching practices.

The findings also indicate that insufficient teaching readiness among prospective teachers has direct implications for the emergence of unprofessional teaching practices.

Prospective teachers who lack pedagogical readiness may conduct instruction without systematic planning, rely on monotonous teaching methods, and demonstrate limited reflection on students' needs and characteristics. These findings are reinforced by studies on the implementation of recent curricula, which reveal that even in-service teachers continue to face challenges in applying student-centered learning approaches. Consequently, the risk of inadequate readiness is even greater among prospective teachers who have not yet acquired sufficient professional experience.

4. Implications for Primary Education

In primary education, unprofessional teaching practices have significant consequences because students are at a critical stage of development. Poorly planned and non-contextual learning may lead to misconceptions, reduced learning motivation, and hindered academic and non-academic development. Therefore, primary school students should not bear the consequences of prospective teachers' lack of professional readiness. Within the Indonesian education context, the findings reveal a distinction between subjective and objective teaching readiness among PGSD students. Subjective readiness is often based on self-confidence or the completion of academic studies, whereas objective readiness refers to actual competence in implementing instruction according to professional teacher standards. This distinction indicates that teaching readiness should be positioned as a primary indicator of prospective teacher professionalism, rather than merely as an administrative outcome of higher education.

Overall, the results and discussion underscore that teaching readiness is the main foundation of professionalism among prospective primary school teachers. Professionalism should not be understood solely as the status of graduating from a teacher education program, but rather as the outcome of systematically developed pedagogical and professional readiness. Insufficient teaching readiness may give rise to unprofessional teaching practices that directly affect students as the most vulnerable stakeholders. Therefore, strengthening the teaching readiness of PGSD students represents a strategic preventive measure to maintain and enhance the quality of primary education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual-critical review concludes that teaching readiness is a core foundation of professionalism among PGSD students, reflected in their ability to design,

implement, and evaluate learning aligned with primary learners' characteristics. The study identifies a gap between theoretical preparation and practical pedagogical readiness, which may risk instructional quality. Therefore, teaching readiness should be systematically strengthened through integrated curricula, reflective practice, meaningful field experiences, and its inclusion as a core graduation standard to improve the quality of primary education in Indonesia.

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