

**EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING AS PRE-SERVICE
TEACHERS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING SKILLS: A
STUDY OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS AT SRIWIJAYA
UNIVERSITY**

A THESIS

BY

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ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM



FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

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Palembang, July 2025
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to Allah subhanallahu wata'ala, The Almighty God who creates every detail creatures of this *dunya* and *akhirah*, including me and this thesis. Also to my beloved parents, sister, family, who support and believe me as always and thus who spent their whole time to be volunteer for humanity.

MOTTO

"Allah tidak membebani seseorang melainkan sesuai dengan kesanggupannya..."

-Q.S Al Baqarah: 28

"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away."

- Pablo Picasso

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how volunteer teaching contributes to the development of teaching skills among English Education students at Sriwijaya University. Although experiential learning has long been emphasized in teacher education, little empirical research has examined how non-mandatory volunteer teaching fosters pedagogical growth in the Indonesian EFL context. This study addresses three research questions: (1) How do these experiences influence their perception of the teaching profession (2) What teaching skills are developed through volunteer teaching? and (3) What challenges do students face during these experiences? Using a qualitative case study approach, 23 English Education Sriwijaya University students were purposively selected based on their involvement in community-based volunteer teaching programs. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews by Kirkpatrick's Evaluation Model, and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings reveal that volunteering helps students develop core teaching skills, apply theoretical knowledge in practice, and build emotional strengths such as confidence and adaptability. While participants encountered common classroom challenges, they responded with creative strategies that deepened their instructional awareness. These experiences ultimately strengthened their sense of professional identity and confirmed the value of volunteer teaching as a bridge between academic preparation and real-world application. The study suggests the relevance of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and Kirkpatrick's Evaluation Model in explaining the multidimensional learning outcomes of volunteer-based teaching.

Keywords: experiential learning; pre-service teachers; teaching skills; volunteer teaching

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents: (1) Background of the Study, (2) Problems of the Study, (3) Objectives of the Study, (4) Significance of the Study.

1.1 The Background of the study

Teacher education plays a crucial role in preparing future educators with the necessary skills to prepare effective teaching and learning. A well-structured teacher preparation program should not only provide theoretical knowledge but also combine practical experiences that allow pre-service teachers to apply pedagogical concepts in real classroom settings. According to Gonzalez et al. (2019), teacher education programs must combine experiential learning components, such as internships and volunteer teaching activities, to enhance the professional growth of future teachers. These experiences help pre-service teachers develop instructional strategies, assessment methods, and classroom management techniques while maintains their ability to adapt diverse learning environments.

One of the effective experiential learning in teacher education is volunteer teaching, where pre-service teachers engage in unpaid teaching activities as part of their professional training. Volunteer teaching, as part of voluntarism, refers to teaching activities that initiated independently without financial reward, with the aim of contributing to education while gaining hands-on experience (Barkhuizen, 2016). This practice is widely recognized as a valuable bridge between theory and its real-world application (Palpacuer-Lee et al., 2018). Through this experience, pre-service teachers can develop essential skills such as lesson planning, classroom management, and communication, as well as adapt to the needs of diverse students (D'Rozario et al., 2012)

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) offers a theoretical foundation for understanding how volunteer teaching promotes meaningful learning. According to Kolb, experiential learning is a process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. His model involves four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Volunteer teaching allows pre-service teachers to progress through these stages by

engaging directly with real classroom environments, reflecting on their experiences, conceptualizing effective strategies, and experimenting with new instructional approaches. These cycles maintain both cognitive and emotional learning and help pre-service teachers internalize pedagogical knowledge in a sustainable manner.

To evaluate the outcomes of this experiential learning, Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Evaluation Model (1994) provides a relevant framework. This model assesses learning across four dimensions: (1) Reaction – how participants feel about the experience, (2) Learning – the increase in knowledge or capability, (3) Behavior – the application of learning in real settings, and (4) Results – the final outcomes, such as teaching effectiveness or student performance. When applied to volunteer teaching, this model helps examine how pre-service teachers respond to the program, what they learn, how their teaching behavior changes, and what impact these changes have on their professional development. The integration of Kolb's and Kirkpatrick's models are enable a comprehensive understanding of both the learning process and the outcomes achieved through volunteer-based teaching.

Practical teaching experience is essential for pre-service teachers to develop confidence and competence in classroom management, lesson planning, and student engagement. Research by Soong (2013) highlights that participation in community-based teaching activities helps pre-service teachers familiarize themselves with school environments and develop the necessary adaptability to address various challenges in teaching. Additionally, pre-service teachers who engage in volunteer teaching often show a stronger professional identity and higher motivation toward their teaching careers.

In English language teacher education, volunteer teaching has been recognized as an effective strategy to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. D'Rozario et al. (2012) found that service-learning initiatives in Singapore's English teacher education programs encourage essential professional values, such as responsibility, empathy, and commitment to student success. The study also found that pre-service teachers who participate in volunteer teaching have higher self-confidence in instructional delivery and classroom engagement. They develop critical thinking skills that allow them to modify and adapt their teaching strategies to suit the needs of different learners. Furthermore, by interacting with diverse student populations, pre-service teachers enhance their cultural competency, which is crucial for creating inclusive learning environments.

Unlike formal internships, volunteer teaching offers a more flexible and low-pressure setting for pre-service teachers to refine their skills. Pazilah et al. (2021) argue that service-learning activities provide realistic teaching experiences, allowing future educators to understand student needs better and experiment with various instructional methodologies. Their findings indicate that half of pre-service teachers engaged in service-learning programs reported increased confidence in lesson planning and instructional delivery. Moreover, volunteer teaching serves as a first stage that facilitates a smoother transition into professional teaching positions. Additionally, working with other educators, parents, and community members in volunteer settings helps pre-service teachers develop strong interpersonal and collaborative skills.

Despite its advantages, volunteer teaching does not always ensure that pre-service teachers overcome all teaching challenges. Some still struggle with lesson planning, classroom management, and confidence building, even after participating in volunteer teaching programs. Research by Forster et al. (2015) found that many of volunteer teachers faced difficulties keeping students engaged, while others struggled with effectively assessing student learning. These findings suggest that critical elements must be present to ensure the effectiveness of volunteer teaching. According to (Eyler & Giles Jr., 1999) such critical elements include structured reflection, ongoing mentoring, alignment with academic goals, and institutional support. When these components are present, experiential learning can produce deeper professional learning and sustained skill transfer.

Although research has explored the role of practical teaching experiences in teacher education, few studies have specifically examined the effects of volunteer teaching on English language pre-service teachers. Palpacuer-Lee et al. (2018) emphasized the positive impact of service-learning on teacher development but highlighted the need for further research on its application in English teacher education programs, particularly in Indonesia. Their study found that while service-learning improved pedagogical skills, limited data exists regarding its long-term effects on teaching careers. Additionally, institutional support and curriculum integration were identified as key factors influencing the success of volunteer teaching initiatives.

In Indonesia, various volunteer teacher programs contribute to education by enhancing access to learning opportunities. Government-led programs often place

volunteer teachers in disadvantage areas, referring to regions that are under-resourced, remote, underdeveloped, or border areas in terms of infrastructure, teacher availability, and educational services to support educational accessibility. Programs such as *Guru Penggerak* and *Guru Relawan* (by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology) train teachers to become learning leaders and promote innovation in teaching. Initiatives like *Guru Garis Depan (GGD)* and *SM3T (Sarjana Mengajar di Daerah Terdepan, Terluar, dan Tertinggal)* locate education graduates to disadvantages areas for a year. Additionally, movements like *Indonesia Mengajar* send outstanding young Indonesians to teach in disadvantages areas for a year.

Beyond government programs, universities also play a role in volunteer teaching through community service initiatives. Programs such as *Kuliah Kerja Nyata (KKN) Tematik Pendidikan* allow university students to teach in schools as part of their academic requirements while contributing to local education. *Kampus Mengajar*, launched by the Ministry of Education, provides opportunities for students to assist in the learning process in underprivileged schools (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2024). At Universitas Sriwijaya, student-led initiatives such as *UKM Unsri Mengajar*, *FKIP MENGAJAR* by Student Executive Board, etc. these programs enable students to participate in volunteer teaching activities, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

Previous research has properly investigates the role of practical teaching experiences in teacher education. However, few researches have looked specifically at the effects of volunteer teaching on English language pre-service teachers. Palpacuer-Lee et al. (2018) emphasize the positive impact of service-learning on teacher development while highlighting the need for additional study on its use in English teacher education programs, particularly in Indonesia. Their study discovered that, while service-learning increased pre-service teachers' pedagogical skills, there was limited data of its long-term impact on their teaching careers. Furthermore, the study found that institutional support and curriculum integration have an important influence in the success of volunteer teaching projects. The study also found that those who had participated in volunteer teaching had greater levels of instructional effectiveness since they had already faced and addressed real-world teaching issues.

To address this gap, a study entitled *Exploring the Impact of Volunteering as Pre-Service Teachers on the Development of Teaching Skills among Students of the English Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University* needs to be conducted. This

study aims to examine how volunteer teaching supports the development of instructional competencies, identify the challenges faced by participants, and analyze the critical elements that influence their learning process.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

Based on the background, some problems that formulated in this study, include:

1. How does volunteering as a pre-service teacher influence the development of teaching skills among English Education students at Sriwijaya University?
2. What specific teaching skills do English Education students develop through their volunteering experiences?
3. What challenges do English Education students encounter during their pre-service teaching volunteer program?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Based on the formulated research questions, this study has three main objectives:

1. To explore how volunteering as pre-service teachers influences the development of teaching skills among English Education students at Sriwijaya University.
2. To examine the specific aspects of teaching skills that are most enhanced through volunteering experiences.
3. To identify the challenges encountered by students in applying their teaching skills during and after participating in volunteering programs.

1.4 The Significances of the Study

1. For universities and teacher education programs

The findings of this study offer valuable recommendations on integrating volunteer teaching into the curriculum. By understanding the benefits and challenges of volunteer teaching, universities can design experience-based training models that enhance students' preparedness before entering professional teaching careers. Additionally, incorporating structured volunteer programs can improve teacher education curricula by aligning theoretical instruction with real-world teaching experiences.

2. For lecturers and teacher educators

This study highlights the role of volunteer teaching as an effective strategy for reinforcing pedagogical concepts taught in teacher education programs. By utilizing volunteer experiences as case studies or reflective learning opportunities, lecturers can help pre-service teachers deepen their understanding of teaching methodologies. The findings also provide insights into how educators can support students in overcoming challenges they face during volunteer teaching.

3. For pre-service teachers

This research offers insights into how volunteer teaching contributes to their professional growth. It provides a clearer understanding of the teaching skills that can be developed through volunteer activities, including lesson planning, classroom management, adaptability, and problem-solving. Additionally, this study addresses the common challenges faced by pre-service teachers in volunteer settings, allowing them to prepare more effectively for their future careers. By identifying key strategies to optimize their volunteer teaching experiences, this research aims to enhance their confidence and readiness for formal teaching positions.

4. For educational institutions and partner schools

This study emphasizes the mutual benefits of collaboration with volunteer teachers. Schools that participate in volunteer teaching programs can receive additional support in classroom instruction while also playing a role in shaping future educators. The findings of this research can also help schools and mentor teachers design structured guidance for pre-service teachers, ensuring that volunteer experience aligns with the learning needs of students.

5. Significance for Future Research

In addition to its theoretical and practical implications, this study also paves the way for future research in teacher education. Additionally, comparative research between volunteer teaching and formal internships can provide deeper insights into the strengths and limitations of each approach. Future research can also investigate how different cultural and educational contexts influence the effectiveness of volunteer teaching in developing teaching competencies. By expanding the scope of research in this area, scholars can continue to refine and improve teacher education programs to better prepare future educators.

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