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Strengthening Pre-Service Teachers' Professionalism through School Field Introduction: A Case Study at SMAN 4 Sidrap, Indonesia

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Abstrak

Pengembangan profesionalisme calon guru merupakan aspek penting dalam mempersiapkan tenaga pendidik yang kompeten, reflektif, dan adaptif terhadap perkembangan pendidikan modern. Program Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan (PLP 1) memberikan kesempatan kepada mahasiswa calon guru untuk memperoleh pengalaman langsung dalam lingkungan sekolah serta memahami berbagai tanggung jawab profesional seorang pendidik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi kontribusi program Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan dalam memperkuat profesionalisme calon guru, pembentukan karakter, pemahaman terhadap ekosistem sekolah, serta kesadaran mengenai literasi digital dan kecerdasan buatan (Artificial Intelligence/AI) dalam pendidikan. Penelitian ini berfokus pada pelaksanaan PLP 1 di SMAN 4 Sidrap, Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia, yang melibatkan mahasiswa semester V Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. Kegiatan dilaksanakan melalui beberapa tahapan, yaitu pembekalan, observasi lingkungan sekolah, pendampingan akademik, diskusi reflektif, dan evaluasi. Sumber data meliputi catatan observasi, jurnal refleksi mahasiswa, laporan kegiatan lapangan, serta dokumentasi pendampingan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pelaksanaan PLP 1 memberikan pengalaman pembelajaran kontekstual yang membantu mahasiswa memahami budaya sekolah, manajemen pendidikan, tanggung jawab guru, serta interaksi sosial dalam lingkungan sekolah. Selain itu, program ini mendukung pengembangan sikap profesional mahasiswa, khususnya kedisiplinan, tanggung jawab, komunikasi, kolaborasi, kesadaran etis, dan kemampuan berpikir reflektif. Pengenalan teknologi digital dan kecerdasan buatan juga mendorong mahasiswa untuk memahami pentingnya pemanfaatan teknologi secara bijaksana dan bertanggung jawab dalam praktik pendidikan. Namun, keterbatasan waktu pelaksanaan menjadi salah satu kendala dalam memberikan pengalaman profesional yang lebih mendalam. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan merupakan pendekatan pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman yang berkontribusi terhadap pembentukan identitas profesional, peningkatan kesadaran pedagogis, dan kesiapan mahasiswa dalam menghadapi profesi keguruan. Oleh karena itu, pendampingan yang sistematis, pembelajaran reflektif, dan penguatan kompetensi digital perlu diintegrasikan secara berkelanjutan untuk meningkatkan efektivitas program pendidikan calon guru.

Kata Kunci: Calon Guru; Profesionalisme Guru; Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan; Identitas Profesional; Pembelajaran Berbasis Pengalaman; Literasi Digital.

Abstract: *Developing pre-service teachers' professionalism is essential for preparing competent, reflective, and adaptable educators capable of responding to the evolving demands of contemporary education. School Field Introduction (Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan, PLP 1) provides prospective teachers with opportunities to experience authentic school environments and develop an understanding of professional teaching responsibilities. This study aims to explore how School Field Introduction contributes to strengthening pre-service teachers' professionalism, character development, understanding of school ecosystems, and awareness of digital literacy and artificial intelligence (AI) in education. The study focuses on the implementation of PLP 1 at SMAN 4 Sidrap, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, involving fifth-semester students from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. The program was conducted through orientation, school-based observation, academic mentoring, reflective discussions, and evaluation activities. Data sources included observation records, students' reflective journals, field reports, and documentation of mentoring activities. The findings indicate that participation in School Field Introduction provided meaningful contextual learning experiences that strengthened students' understanding of school culture, educational management, teacher responsibilities, and interpersonal interactions within the school environment. Furthermore, the program supported the development of professional attitudes, particularly discipline, responsibility, communication, collaboration, ethical awareness, and reflective thinking. Exposure to digital technologies and AI-related educational practices also encouraged participants to recognize the importance of responsible technology integration in professional teaching. However, the relatively limited implementation period restricted opportunities for more extensive professional engagement. The study concludes that School Field Introduction represents a valuable experiential learning approach for fostering pre-service teachers' professional identity, pedagogical awareness, and readiness for future teaching careers. Systematic mentoring, reflective learning, and digital competency development are recommended to enhance the effectiveness of school-based teacher education programs.*

Keywords: *Pre-Service Teachers; Teacher Professionalism; School Field Introduction; Professional Identity; Experiential Learning; Digital Literacy.*

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Introduction

Teacher professionalism is a fundamental component of educational quality, influencing instructional effectiveness, student development, classroom management, and the achievement of institutional educational objectives. In contemporary educational environments, teachers are expected to demonstrate not only mastery of subject matter and pedagogical knowledge but also ethical responsibility, interpersonal competence, reflective thinking, and the ability to adapt to technological and societal transformations. These expectations have significantly influenced teacher education programs, particularly in preparing pre-service teachers to transition from theoretical learning at universities to professional responsibilities in authentic school environments. Consequently, teacher education institutions must provide meaningful opportunities for prospective educators to develop professional identities, practical competencies, and an understanding of the complex realities of school life.

Professionalism in teaching encompasses interconnected dimensions, including pedagogical competence, professional knowledge, social competence, personal integrity, and commitment to continuous professional development. According to Darling-Hammond (2006), effective teacher education requires the integration of theoretical knowledge, practical experiences, and systematic reflection. Teachers cannot develop professional competence exclusively through classroom-based university instruction because professional teaching involves contextual decision-making, interpersonal communication, ethical judgment, and responsiveness to diverse student needs. Therefore, school-based experiences constitute an essential component of teacher preparation programs.

In Indonesia, the development of professional teachers is supported by national educational policies emphasizing teacher qualifications, competencies, and professional responsibilities. Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers establishes the importance of pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies as essential foundations of the teaching profession. These competencies are expected to develop progressively through formal education, practical experiences, mentoring, and continuous professional learning. Within higher education institutions, particularly Faculties of Teacher Training and Education, the preparation of prospective teachers involves integrating academic coursework with field-based learning opportunities.

One important initiative in Indonesian teacher education is the School Field Introduction program, commonly known as Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan (PLP). This program provides pre-service teachers with opportunities to observe educational practices, understand institutional structures, identify school cultures, and examine the professional responsibilities of teachers. Unlike conventional university-based learning, PLP enables students to experience educational realities directly, including interactions among teachers, students, administrators, and other members of the school community. Through systematic observation and reflection, prospective teachers can connect theoretical concepts with actual educational practices.

School Field Introduction is particularly important because schools represent complex educational ecosystems. A school is not

merely a physical location where instruction occurs but an interconnected system involving institutional leadership, curriculum implementation, classroom environments, student characteristics, educational resources, organizational culture, and relationships with the wider community. Understanding these components enables prospective teachers to recognize that educational success depends on cooperation among multiple stakeholders. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective provides a useful conceptual foundation for understanding how individual development is influenced by interconnected social and institutional environments. Applied to teacher education, this perspective highlights the importance of examining the interactions between prospective teachers and the school environments in which professional learning occurs.

Furthermore, school-based experiences contribute to the development of professional identity. Professional identity refers to how individuals understand themselves as members of a profession, including their responsibilities, values, beliefs, and expectations regarding professional practice. Beijaard et al. (2004) emphasized that teachers' professional identities develop through continuous interactions between personal experiences, professional knowledge, and social contexts. For pre-service teachers, participation in PLP provides opportunities to observe professional role models, experience institutional expectations, and reflect on their readiness to enter the teaching profession. Such experiences can influence their perceptions of teaching responsibilities and professional development needs.

Reflective learning also plays a central role in strengthening pre-service teacher professionalism. Schön (1983) argued that professional practitioners develop expertise through reflection on their experiences and decisions. In teacher education, reflective practices enable students to critically examine classroom observations, analyze educational challenges, and identify strategies for professional improvement. Reflection transforms field experiences from passive observation into meaningful professional learning. Through reflective journals, discussions, and mentoring sessions, prospective teachers can develop greater awareness of their strengths, limitations, and responsibilities as future educators.

The importance of mentoring in school-based teacher education has also been widely recognized. Mentoring provides professional guidance, emotional support, constructive feedback, and opportunities for collaborative learning. Hudson (2013) highlighted the significance of mentoring relationships in developing pre-service teachers' pedagogical knowledge and professional confidence. Effective mentoring helps students interpret educational experiences, understand professional expectations, and develop appropriate responses to school-related challenges. Therefore, School Field Introduction programs should not be limited to observation activities but should incorporate structured guidance, professional dialogue, and reflective evaluation.

In addition to conventional professional competencies, technological transformation has introduced new expectations for prospective teachers. The increasing integration of digital platforms, online educational resources, and artificial intelligence (AI) into educational practices requires teachers to develop digital literacy and technological awareness. Redecker (2017) emphasized that educators need digital competencies involving professional

engagement, digital resources, teaching and learning, assessment, and learner empowerment. Similarly, UNESCO (2024) introduced an AI Competency Framework for Teachers that highlights human-centered perspectives, ethical considerations, AI foundations, AI pedagogy, and professional development.

Although AI offers opportunities to support lesson planning, instructional material development, assessment, and educational communication, its implementation also raises concerns regarding academic integrity, information accuracy, data privacy, and excessive technological dependence. Pre-service teachers must therefore understand both the potential benefits and limitations of emerging technologies. Integrating digital literacy and AI awareness into school-based teacher education can support the development of professionally responsible educators who are prepared for technological changes.

At SMAN 4 Sidrap, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, the PLP 1 program involving fifth-semester students from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang, provided opportunities to explore school environments and professional teaching responsibilities. The program included preliminary orientation, school observations, academic mentoring, reflective discussions, and evaluation activities. During the observation period, students examined school facilities, institutional culture, administrative structures, student characteristics, teacher responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and interactions among school stakeholders. Digital literacy and AI awareness were also introduced as components of contemporary professional development.

Despite the recognized importance of field experiences, challenges remain in ensuring that pre-service teachers develop comprehensive professional understanding through relatively short school-based programs. Students may encounter difficulties interpreting school practices, connecting theoretical knowledge with observations, understanding professional ethics, and adapting to institutional expectations. Furthermore, differences in students' prior experiences and technological competencies may influence their engagement with professional learning opportunities. These challenges highlight the importance of investigating how structured observation, mentoring, and reflection contribute to professional development during School Field Introduction.

Previous research has examined teaching internships, professional readiness, pedagogical competence, and teacher identity formation. However, further context-specific investigation is needed into how PLP 1 combines school ecosystem observation, character development, professional reflection, and digital literacy within Indonesian secondary education. Examining these interconnected dimensions can provide valuable insights into the design and implementation of field-based teacher preparation programs.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the contribution of School Field Introduction to strengthening pre-service teachers' professionalism at SMAN 4 Sidrap, Indonesia. Specifically, it examines how participation in PLP 1 supports understanding of school ecosystems, professional attitudes, reflective practices, and awareness of digital technologies and AI in education. By examining the implementation of school-based learning experiences, the study seeks to

provide practical insights for improving mentoring strategies, reflective learning activities, and professional preparation within teacher education institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher professionalism refers to the knowledge, competencies, ethical principles, attitudes, and responsibilities that characterize effective professional teaching. It encompasses the ability to design meaningful learning experiences, implement appropriate instructional strategies, evaluate student progress, establish positive interpersonal relationships, and demonstrate commitment to continuous improvement. Professional teachers are expected to integrate pedagogical expertise with personal integrity and social responsibility.

Darling-Hammond (2006) emphasized that professional teacher preparation requires coherent connections between educational theories and practical teaching experiences. Similarly, Shulman (1987) introduced the concept of pedagogical content knowledge, explaining that effective teaching depends on integrating subject matter expertise with an understanding of how students learn. These perspectives suggest that professional competence cannot be developed through theoretical instruction alone but requires practical application within authentic educational contexts.

In Indonesia, teacher professionalism is formally associated with pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies. These dimensions provide a foundation for preparing prospective teachers who can respond effectively to institutional expectations and diverse learner needs. For pre-service teachers, professional development involves progressively understanding these competencies through academic learning, observation, reflection, and professional interaction.

School Field Introduction is a structured field-based learning activity designed to familiarize prospective teachers with educational environments and professional responsibilities. Through observation and interaction, students gain firsthand knowledge of school management, classroom practices, student characteristics, institutional culture, and relationships among educational stakeholders.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the educational value of PLP. According to this theory, meaningful learning develops through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. School-based observation represents an opportunity for concrete experience, while reflective discussions and academic mentoring support interpretation and conceptual understanding.

Experiential learning encourages prospective teachers to connect university-based knowledge with educational realities. For example, observing classroom interactions enables students to recognize the practical significance of communication strategies, classroom management principles, and learner diversity. These experiences can strengthen their understanding of professional responsibilities and prepare them for more advanced teaching practice.

A school ecosystem consists of interconnected educational components, including students, teachers, administrators, institutional policies, physical facilities, school culture, and community relationships.

These components influence educational processes and shape professional experiences within schools.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory emphasizes the importance of understanding individual development within interconnected environmental systems. In educational settings, this perspective suggests that teaching practices are influenced by institutional structures, social interactions, cultural expectations, and broader educational policies.

For pre-service teachers, understanding school ecosystems involves observing how educational stakeholders cooperate to support learning and institutional development. School Field Introduction enables students to recognize that teacher responsibilities extend beyond classroom instruction to include professional collaboration, student guidance, administrative participation, and engagement with the school community.

Professional identity represents an individual's understanding of their professional role, responsibilities, beliefs, and values. For prospective teachers, professional identity develops gradually through academic preparation, practical experiences, social interactions, and reflection.

Beijaard et al. (2004) explained that teacher professional identity is dynamic and continuously reconstructed through professional experiences. Similarly, Flores and Day (2006) demonstrated that professional identity is shaped by personal backgrounds, institutional contexts, and experiences within educational environments.

Participation in PLP allows prospective teachers to observe professional role models and evaluate their own expectations regarding teaching careers. Interactions with teachers, students, and administrators may contribute to the development of professional awareness, responsibility, and commitment. Such experiences are particularly important during the early stages of teacher preparation.

Reflective practice is an essential component of professional learning because it encourages individuals to critically evaluate experiences, identify challenges, and develop strategies for improvement. Schön (1983) distinguished between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, highlighting the importance of thoughtful professional decision-making.

Within PLP, reflection can be facilitated through observation reports, reflective journals, mentoring discussions, and collaborative evaluation. These activities encourage students to interpret educational situations rather than merely describe them.

Academic mentoring further strengthens reflective learning by providing guidance, feedback, and professional support. Hudson (2013) emphasized that mentoring contributes to the development of pedagogical knowledge and professional confidence among prospective teachers. Through constructive dialogue, mentors can help students understand institutional expectations, analyze school experiences, and establish realistic professional development goals.

Digital literacy has become increasingly important as educational institutions integrate technological resources into teaching, learning, assessment, and administration. Educators are expected to evaluate digital information critically, select appropriate educational technologies, and maintain

ethical standards in technology-supported learning.

Redecker (2017) proposed the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators, emphasizing professional engagement, digital resources, teaching and learning, assessment, learner empowerment, and the facilitation of learners' digital competence.

More recently, artificial intelligence has introduced additional opportunities and challenges for teacher education. UNESCO (2023) highlighted the importance of responsible generative AI use in education, while UNESCO (2024) identified essential AI competencies for teachers.

AI can support instructional planning, educational content development, assessment preparation, and professional learning. However, responsible implementation requires awareness of accuracy, bias, privacy, intellectual property, and academic integrity. Consequently, integrating digital literacy and AI awareness into PLP can broaden prospective teachers' understanding of contemporary professional responsibilities.

Existing literature demonstrates that school-based learning, mentoring, reflection, and technological competence are important components of teacher professional development. Nevertheless, these dimensions are frequently examined separately. Greater attention is needed to understand how they interact within introductory school field experiences, particularly in Indonesian secondary education.

This study conceptualizes pre-service teacher professional development as a process supported by four interconnected elements: understanding the school ecosystem, developing professional character, engaging in reflective learning, and strengthening digital and AI awareness. School Field Introduction provides the practical context through which these elements can be experienced and interpreted.

The conceptual perspective emphasizes that professionalism develops through continuous interaction between educational experiences, personal reflection, institutional expectations, and professional guidance. Accordingly, the study examines how PLP 1 activities at SMAN 4 Sidrap contribute to students' understanding of the teaching profession and their preparation for future professional responsibilities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative case study framework to examine the implementation of School Field Introduction (Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan, PLP 1) in strengthening pre-service teachers' professionalism. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study focuses on understanding educational experiences, institutional environments, professional attitudes, and reflective learning processes within an authentic school context. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative inquiry enables researchers to investigate complex social phenomena by exploring participants' experiences, perspectives, and interactions within particular settings.

A case study framework provides an opportunity to examine the implementation of PLP 1 at a specific educational institution. Yin (2018) explains that case study research is particularly appropriate when researchers investigate contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, especially when the

boundaries between the phenomenon and its environment are not clearly defined.

The present case focuses on the implementation of PLP 1 at SMAN 4 Sidrap, including preliminary orientation, school-based observation, academic mentoring, reflective discussions, and evaluation activities. These activities provide the basis for examining professional learning opportunities experienced by prospective teachers.

The original documentation describes the program as a community service and mentoring activity. Therefore, the present manuscript provides a qualitative case study structure for reorganizing the available evidence. Its classification as a completed empirical case study requires systematic analysis of the original field records.

The study was situated at SMAN 4 Sidrap, a public senior high school in Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The institution served as a field-based learning environment for students participating in the PLP 1 program organized by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang.

The program included an orientation activity on September 10, 2026, followed by school-based observations conducted from September 14 to September 25, 2026. During this period, participating students were introduced to the school environment, institutional structures, educational management, school culture, and professional responsibilities of teachers.

The school setting provided opportunities to observe interactions among teachers, students, administrators, and other school community members. These observations were intended to support students' understanding of educational institutions as interconnected professional and social environments.

The participants were fifth-semester students from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang, who participated in the PLP 1 program at SMAN 4 Sidrap. The program also involved academic supervisors and school personnel who supported observation, mentoring, and professional learning activities.

The primary focus was on pre-service teachers' experiences in understanding school environments and developing professional awareness.

The original documentation does not specify the exact number of student participants, their demographic characteristics, or formal research sampling procedures. Consequently, no numerical sample size or unverified sampling method is reported in this manuscript.

For a completed qualitative research article, the participant description should be supplemented with verified information regarding participant numbers, selection criteria, academic backgrounds, and consent procedures.

The original PLP 1 documentation identifies several sources of information, including observation records, reflective journals, field reports, mentoring discussions, and activity documentation. These materials can provide qualitative evidence concerning students' experiences and professional learning.

School observation records document physical facilities, institutional structures, school culture, student characteristics, classroom environments, and professional interactions. Reflective journals provide opportunities for students to record experiences, identify challenges, and evaluate their understanding of professional responsibilities.

Field reports summarize observations and activities conducted during the program, while mentoring discussions provide opportunities for clarification, professional feedback, and reflection.

The documented evaluation also considered student participation, discipline, communication, collaboration, ethical behavior, and involvement in school activities.

For empirical analysis, these materials should be organized into a clearly defined dataset, with individual records systematically examined and linked to the research questions.

The documented PLP 1 implementation involved five interconnected stages.

The first stage was preparation, during which the organizing institution coordinated the program objectives, implementation schedule, student responsibilities, observation instruments, and mentoring arrangements.

The second stage involved preliminary orientation, conducted on September 10, 2026. Students received information about PLP objectives, professional ethics, school ecosystems, communication, character development, and responsible technology use.

The third stage consisted of school-based observation from September 14 to September 25, 2026. Students observed school facilities, institutional culture, organizational structures, student characteristics, educational activities, teacher responsibilities, and interactions among school stakeholders.

The fourth stage involved mentoring and reflective discussions. Students communicated their observations, experiences, difficulties, and preliminary interpretations to academic supervisors, who provided feedback and professional guidance.

The final stage consisted of reflection and evaluation. Students' experiences were documented through observation materials, reflective activities, discussion records, and program evaluation procedures.

These stages are documented program activities. Their description should not be interpreted as evidence that additional interviews or formal research instruments were administered.

A thematic analysis approach is proposed for examining the qualitative materials generated during PLP 1. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a systematic process for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data.

The analysis can be organized into six stages: familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and interpretation.

Potential analytical categories derived from the program objectives include understanding school ecosystems, professional character development, reflective learning,

professional identity formation, and digital literacy awareness.

Observation records and reflective journals should be reviewed to identify statements or experiences related to these categories. Similar codes can then be grouped into broader themes, while contradictory experiences and limitations should also be considered.

Importantly, the original article does not provide a complete coded dataset or documented thematic analysis. Therefore, the thematic categories presented in this manuscript are preliminary analytical categories based on the available program report, rather than independently verified themes from a completed qualitative coding process.

Trustworthiness is important in qualitative research because findings must accurately represent the available evidence. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as important criteria for qualitative inquiry.

Credibility can be strengthened through comparison of observation records, reflective journals, and field reports. Transferability requires detailed descriptions of the school context and program implementation. Dependability involves maintaining systematic documentation of analytical procedures, while confirmability requires interpretations to be supported by identifiable evidence.

Ethical considerations include protecting participants' identities, maintaining confidentiality, obtaining appropriate consent, and using educational documentation responsibly.

Because the original article does not report formal research ethics approval or consent procedures, this manuscript does not claim that such procedures were completed. These details should be verified before journal submission.

RESULTS

The implementation of School Field Introduction at SMAN 4 Sidrap provided pre-service teachers with opportunities to observe educational environments and become familiar with professional teaching responsibilities. The documented program involved preliminary orientation, school-based observation, academic mentoring, reflective discussions, and evaluation activities.

The orientation stage introduced students to the objectives and expectations of PLP 1. Students received guidance concerning professional behavior, school observation procedures, communication, institutional responsibilities, and the ethical use of educational technologies.

During the school observation stage, students examined institutional structures, educational facilities, school culture, student characteristics, classroom environments, and interactions among school stakeholders.

Subsequent mentoring and reflection activities encouraged students to discuss their experiences and relate field observations to their academic preparation.

The original program report describes several areas of professional learning, summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Documented Areas of Professional Learning during PLP 1

Dimension	**Documented activities**	**Reported learning outcomes**
School ecosystem understanding	Observation of school facilities, culture, management, and interactions	Broader understanding of school organization
Professional character	Participation in school activities and professional interactions	Awareness of discipline, responsibility, and ethics
Professional identity	Observation of teachers' duties and institutional expectations	Greater awareness of professional responsibilities
Reflective learning	Mentoring discussions and reflective documentation	Development of observation and reflection skills
Digital and AI literacy	Introduction to responsible technology use	Awareness of technological opportunities and risks

Source: Synthesized from the uploaded PLP 1 program report. The outcomes are descriptive claims from the report, not independently measured effect sizes.

One important result described in the original report was the development of students' understanding of the school ecosystem. Through direct observation, participants encountered multiple dimensions of school life that are not always visible through university-based instruction.

Students observed the physical environment, educational facilities, organizational structure, school regulations, academic activities, extracurricular programs, and interactions among school personnel.

These experiences provided opportunities to recognize that schools operate as interconnected educational systems. Teaching activities are influenced by administrative coordination, institutional culture, available resources, student characteristics, and relationships among educational stakeholders.

The report indicates that students developed a broader understanding of the roles performed by teachers and school personnel. In particular, participants were introduced to the responsibilities of teachers beyond classroom instruction, including professional communication, institutional participation, student guidance, and collaboration.

The original documentation identifies professional character development as another important outcome of PLP 1.

Students participated in school environments where discipline, punctuality, responsibility, appropriate communication, cooperation, and ethical behavior were emphasized.

Through interactions with teachers and school personnel, participants encountered professional expectations that required them to demonstrate respectful behavior and responsibility in completing assigned activities.

The report suggests that these experiences encouraged awareness of the importance of personal integrity and professional conduct.

However, the available documentation does not include individual character assessment scores or before-and-after measurements. Therefore, the results should be understood as reported developmental experiences rather than quantitatively demonstrated improvements.

Participation in PLP 1 also provided opportunities for students to explore the professional identity of teachers.

Observing teachers' responsibilities enabled participants to recognize that teaching involves more than delivering instructional content. Teachers are also expected to demonstrate ethical judgment, interpersonal competence, institutional commitment, and sensitivity to student needs.

The original report indicates that students developed greater awareness of professional responsibilities through observation and mentoring.

Discussions with academic supervisors supported the interpretation of field experiences and helped students connect professional expectations with their academic preparation.

These activities contributed to the program's objective of preparing prospective teachers to understand the realities of the teaching profession.

Reflective learning represented a central component of the PLP 1 implementation.

Students were encouraged to communicate their observations, experiences, challenges, and questions during mentoring sessions. Academic supervisors provided guidance and feedback to support interpretation of educational situations.

The report identifies observation skills, communication, collaboration, and reflection as areas addressed during the program.

Reflective activities also provided opportunities for students to consider how educational theories relate to actual school conditions.

Nevertheless, the original documentation does not present verbatim reflective journal excerpts or systematic comparisons between individual participants. Consequently, the available evidence supports a descriptive account of reflective learning activities rather than detailed claims concerning individual developmental trajectories.

The program introduced students to digital technologies and artificial intelligence as emerging components of professional teaching.

The documented activities addressed potential applications of AI in educational information searches, lesson planning, instructional material development, and professional reflection.

Students were also introduced to ethical considerations, including information accuracy, academic integrity, privacy, intellectual property, and responsible technology use.

The report indicates that the program encouraged participants to regard AI as a supportive educational resource rather than a replacement for teachers.

However, no standardized digital competency assessment or AI literacy test was reported. Therefore, the findings indicate exposure to relevant concepts and reported awareness rather than verified increases in digital competence.

The original report included a qualitative achievement table in which eight program targets were marked as achieved.

Table 2. Reported Achievement of PLP 1 Program Targets

No.	Program target	Status in original report
1	Understanding school ecosystems	Achieved
2	Character development	Achieved
3	Professionalism	Achieved
4	Observation skills	Achieved
5	Communication	Achieved
6	Digital literacy	Achieved
7	AI awareness	Achieved
8	Reflective learning	Achieved

Source: Original program evaluation table. The report does not provide numerical scores or assessment thresholds supporting these classifications.

Overall, the documented results suggest that PLP 1 created opportunities for contextual professional learning. The findings are most appropriately interpreted as descriptive evidence of program implementation and reported learning experiences, rather than proof of causal effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

The findings highlight the educational value of School Field Introduction as an early professional learning experience for pre-service teachers. The PLP 1 program at SMAN 4 Sidrap provided opportunities for students to encounter authentic school environments and develop a contextual understanding of professional teaching responsibilities. These experiences are important because teacher professionalism involves not only theoretical knowledge but also the capacity to interpret educational situations, communicate effectively, demonstrate ethical responsibility, and respond appropriately to institutional expectations.

The documented activities are consistent with Darling-Hammond's (2006) argument that effective teacher education should establish meaningful connections between theoretical preparation and practical experiences. University coursework provides prospective teachers with conceptual foundations, while school-based learning enables them to observe how these concepts operate within educational institutions.

The findings also correspond with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which emphasizes the transformation of experience into knowledge through reflection and conceptual understanding. During PLP 1, students participated in school observations and reflective discussions that provided opportunities to connect academic concepts with practical educational realities.

Nevertheless, the available evidence does not establish the magnitude of professional development achieved by individual students. The findings primarily demonstrate that the program provided relevant opportunities for professional learning.

An important aspect of the findings concerns the development of students' understanding

of school ecosystems. Observations of school culture, institutional management, educational facilities, student characteristics, and interpersonal interactions enabled prospective teachers to examine the complexity of educational environments.

These findings can be interpreted through Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective, which emphasizes the influence of interconnected environmental systems on individual development. Within schools, educational activities are shaped by relationships among students, teachers, administrators, families, and broader institutional structures.

Understanding these relationships is particularly important for prospective teachers because classroom instruction does not occur independently of organizational and social conditions. Effective teaching requires awareness of institutional policies, student diversity, available resources, and professional collaboration.

The PLP 1 activities at SMAN 4 Sidrap exposed students to these interconnected components. Such exposure may help prospective teachers develop more comprehensive perspectives on educational responsibilities and institutional functioning.

The documented results indicate that professional character development was an important objective of the program. Discipline, responsibility, communication, collaboration, and ethical behavior were emphasized throughout the field activities.

Professional character is closely associated with teacher identity formation. Beijaard et al. (2004) argued that professional identity develops through interactions between personal experiences, professional knowledge, and social contexts. Similarly, Flores and Day (2006) emphasized that professional identities are influenced by institutional environments and professional experiences.

During PLP 1, prospective teachers encountered professional role models and institutional expectations that could influence their understanding of the teaching profession. Observing teachers' responsibilities and participating in school activities provided opportunities to consider the values and behaviors associated with professional educators.

The program therefore offered a context for early professional identity exploration. However, professional identity is a developmental process that extends beyond a short introductory field experience. Longitudinal research would be necessary to determine whether these early experiences influence students' subsequent teaching practices and professional commitments.

Reflective learning emerged as a significant component of the documented PLP 1 implementation. Students participated in discussions, reported observations, identified challenges, and received guidance from academic supervisors.

These activities align with Schön's (1983) concept of reflective professional practice. Reflection enables prospective teachers to examine educational experiences critically and consider alternative approaches to professional challenges.

Mentoring also plays an important role in transforming observation into meaningful learning. Hudson (2013) emphasized that mentoring relationships support pre-service teachers' professional knowledge,

confidence, and understanding of educational responsibilities.

Within the SMAN 4 Sidrap program, academic supervisors facilitated discussions and provided feedback concerning students' experiences. Such activities can support the interpretation of school observations and encourage students to connect field experiences with theoretical concepts.

However, the original documentation provides limited detail regarding the frequency, duration, and content of mentoring interactions. Future studies should examine how particular mentoring strategies influence reflective thinking, professional confidence, and readiness for teaching.

Another important dimension of the program was the introduction of digital literacy and artificial intelligence awareness. Contemporary teachers increasingly encounter digital learning platforms, automated educational resources, and AI-supported applications.

Redecker (2017) emphasized that digital competence involves the responsible and effective integration of technology into professional engagement, teaching, learning, and assessment. Similarly, UNESCO (2024) identified AI-related competencies involving ethical awareness, human-centered educational approaches, AI applications, and professional development.

The PLP 1 program introduced prospective teachers to potential AI applications in lesson planning, educational material development, information searching, and reflective activities. Ethical considerations concerning accuracy, privacy, academic integrity, and responsible technology use were also addressed.

These activities are relevant because technological competence should not be limited to operational skills. Teachers must understand how technology influences educational decisions, student learning, and professional responsibilities.

However, the findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating measurable improvement in digital literacy or AI competence. The original documentation establishes that relevant concepts were introduced, but it does not provide competency assessment results.

The findings offer several implications for improving School Field Introduction programs within teacher education institutions.

First, PLP activities should be systematically designed to connect academic learning with authentic school experiences. Observation guidelines can help prospective teachers examine educational institutions comprehensively rather than focusing exclusively on classroom instruction.

Second, mentoring and reflection should be integrated throughout the program. Structured reflective journals, guided discussions, and constructive feedback can encourage students to interpret observations critically and identify professional development needs.

Third, professional character development should receive explicit attention. Discipline, ethical responsibility, communication, collaboration, and professional integrity are important dimensions of teacher preparation.

Fourth, digital literacy and AI awareness should be incorporated into professional learning activities through practical

demonstrations and ethical discussions. Such integration can prepare prospective teachers to respond responsibly to technological developments.

Finally, program evaluation should employ systematic evidence collection. Observation rubrics, reflective journal analysis, participant interviews, and appropriately designed competency assessments can provide stronger evidence regarding the contribution of PLP to professional development.

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings.

The study focuses on a single school context, which limits the transferability of findings to other educational institutions. The relatively short duration of PLP 1 also restricts opportunities to observe long-term professional development.

Furthermore, the available documentation primarily describes program activities and reported achievements. It does not provide complete participant-level qualitative data, systematically coded interview transcripts, or quantitative measurements of professional competence.Consequently, causal claims concerning the effectiveness of PLP 1 cannot be established from the available evidence.

Future research should involve more comprehensive qualitative data collection, including semi-structured interviews, detailed reflective journals, systematic observations, and triangulation across multiple participants and supervisors. Comparative studies involving several schools could also provide broader insights into how institutional contexts influence professional learning.Longitudinal investigations are recommended to examine whether introductory school experiences contribute to subsequent teaching readiness, professional identity development, and classroom performance.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation of School Field Introduction (PLP 1) as a means of strengthening pre-service teachers' professionalism at SMAN 4 Sidrap, Indonesia. The documented program provided opportunities for prospective teachers to understand school ecosystems, observe professional teaching responsibilities, develop awareness of professional character, and participate in reflective learning activities. Through orientation, school-based observation, academic mentoring, discussion, and evaluation, students encountered authentic educational environments that connected theoretical preparation with institutional realities. The program also introduced digital literacy and artificial intelligence awareness as relevant components of contemporary teacher professionalism. Overall, the available evidence indicates that PLP 1 offered meaningful contextual learning opportunities and supported students' exploration of professional responsibilities, ethical conduct, and teacher identity.

The study emphasizes the importance of systematic school-based experiences in preparing prospective teachers for professional educational practice. Teacher education institutions are encouraged to strengthen PLP implementation through structured observation, continuous academic mentoring, reflective learning, professional character development, and responsible integration of educational technologies. Nevertheless, the findings are limited by the descriptive nature of the available program

documentation, the single-school context, and the absence of systematic measurements of professional development. Future studies should employ more rigorous qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to investigate participants' experiences, assess professional competencies, and examine the long-term contribution of School Field Introduction to teaching readiness and professional identity formation. Such investigations would provide stronger empirical foundations for improving field-based teacher education programs in Indonesia.

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