

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the study's essential components, including its background, formulation of the problem, operational definitions, objectives, and significance.

#### A. Background of the Study

The connection between student-teachers and their educational experiences is crucial to improving PCK and educational outcomes. PCK is essential for student-teachers to effectively convey subject matter in understandable and relevant ways to learners (Shulman, 1987). Research has highlighted that teacher education programs significantly support student-teachers' PCK development by providing structured opportunities for practical application and reflection (Elian et al., 2023; Hidayah & Marhaeni, 2016). For example, a longitudinal study by Van Driel (2021) found that student-teachers who participated in such programs showed improvements in their PCK. However, Prabandari et al. (2024) found that challenges remain, including the lack of emphasis on PCK in the curriculum and the need for a more integrated approach that combines theoretical knowledge with hands-on teaching experience. To address these challenges and provide more experiential learning opportunities, initiatives like the *Kampus Mengajar* program have been introduced. This program serves as a practical platform where student-teachers can integrate their theoretical knowledge with real teaching experiences, which is vital for the development of their PCK.

The *Kampus Mengajar* program, part of the *Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy initiated by *Kemendikbudristek*, provides student-teachers with the opportunity to engage directly in teaching at primary and secondary schools while addressing key educational challenges. The program primarily aims to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills. Literacy refers to the ability to read, understand, and express ideas from various sources, while numeracy involves the ability to use mathematical concepts in everyday life,

including counting, problem-solving, and data interpretation (Fatonah et al., 2023). Ramadhani et al. (2024) reported that the implementation of this program at SD Negeri 1 Darmajati led to a 9% improvement in literacy and a 34% improvement in numeracy through activities such as reading aloud and literacy festivals, showing a significant impact on student learning outcomes. At the same time, the program benefits student-teachers by allowing them to contribute meaningfully to real classroom teaching while gaining practical experience that enhances their understanding of pedagogy and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). Wahyuni and Saleh (2023) found that student-teachers developed leadership, collaboration, and creativity in designing engaging learning strategies during their field experience. This direct involvement helps them better understand classroom dynamics and student needs, which is essential in preparing for future teaching challenges (Mautang et al., 2024). Furthermore, the *Kampus Mengajar* program serves not only as a form of community service but also as a platform for developing soft skills needed in their professional careers. These positive outcomes are closely linked to the active roles student-teachers undertake throughout the program, both in instructional and non-instructional school activities.

In the *Kampus Mengajar* Program context, student-teachers play an active role in various aspects of education. They assist teachers in literacy and numeracy instruction by developing creative and engaging teaching methods to enhance students' understanding of the material. They also support teachers and students in adapting to technology for learning, including using online learning applications and digital tools. Additionally, student-teachers contribute to school administration by preparing lesson plans and documenting educational activities, which are crucial for operational efficiency. The program also includes creative activities such as the "*Pohon Literasi*," where students record their reading history, and "*Sabtu Berhias*," to raise environmental awareness among students.

Before starting their field assignments, student-teachers participating in the *Kampus Mengajar* program undergo a structured pre-deployment training

known as “*Pembekalan*”. This training is conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (*Kemendikbudristek*) in collaboration with university lecturers and education practitioners. The training equips participants with essential competencies in pedagogy, teaching strategies, literacy and numeracy instruction, communication ethics, and the use of educational technology in school contexts. It is delivered through a combination of synchronous (live webinars) and asynchronous (self-paced) learning modules. Its duration varies by batch, typically lasting 8 to 21 days (Kemendikbudristek, 2023; 2024).

Not only do student-teachers participate in community service, but they also have the opportunity to teach in primary and secondary schools, allowing them to experience firsthand the challenges and dynamics of the classroom. This was also evident among student-teachers at one of the universities in Tasikmalaya who joined the program. In addition to preparing and implementing service initiatives, many of them were asked by their mentor teachers to teach directly, often being entrusted with specific classes. Through these teaching assignments, student-teachers not only apply pedagogical theories but also gain practical insights into classroom management, student engagement, and content delivery. After teaching, they are encouraged to reflect on their practices by evaluating the learning process, providing feedback to the teachers, and helping students grasp the lesson materials more effectively. These experiences foster a deeper understanding of effective teaching and contribute significantly to their professional growth (Etika et al., 2021; Kolb & Kolb, 2022; Meliyana & Sugesti, 2023; Nur Rizkiyah et al., 2024; Taufiqurrahman, 2022).

However, despite its positive impact on student-teachers’ skills, research on *Kampus Mengajar*’s role in developing PCK remains limited. A study by Nurhidayah et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of PCK in teaching readiness, but no data shows how the *Kampus Mengajar* program directly affects students’ PCK development. Sumani et al. (2022) showed the program’s positive impact on students-teachers’ social skills, but no study has specifically

explored the correlation between the program and PCK understanding. In addition, evaluations conducted on the *Kampus Mengajar* program primarily focus on the general impact on student literacy and numeracy and the development of student-teachers' soft skills (Doddy, 2021). As a result, while this is important, the evaluation did not include an in-depth analysis of how the practical field experience improved students-teachers' PCK. Thus, this suggests a gap in research that needs to be filled to understand the relationship between teaching experience and PCK development.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the correlation between the English student-teachers' participation in the *Kampus Mengajar* Program and their understanding of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) at one of the universities in Tasikmalaya. The English student-teachers were selected as respondents because the researcher seeks to understand how participation in the *Kampus Mengajar* Program influences their pedagogical and content-specific teaching skills development. The findings of this study are anticipated to provide deeper insights into the program's role in enhancing the pedagogical competence of English Education students and to offer valuable recommendations for improving educational programs designed to foster future teachers' professional growth.

## **B. Formulation of the Problem**

The research question of this study is "Is there a significant correlation between participation in the *Kampus Mengajar* Program and English student-teachers' understanding of PCK?"

## **C. Operational Definitions**

### **1. Kampus Mengajar Program**

A government-initiated program in Indonesia designed to engage university students, particularly those in education fields, in teaching roles at elementary schools. This program aims to enhance the educational experience of both student-teachers and elementary or secondary students through practical teaching experiences.

## **2. Understanding of PCK**

Student-teachers' ability to integrate their knowledge of pedagogy (teaching methods) with their understanding of the content they are teaching (in this case, English). This includes skills in lesson planning, instructional strategies, assessment methods, and adapting content for diverse learners.

### **D. Aim of the Study**

This study aims to identify the correlation between participation in the *Kampus Mengajar* program and English student-teachers' understanding of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK).

### **E. Significance of the Study**

#### **1. Theoretical Significance**

This study will enrich the Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) literature and the correlation between participation in experiential education programs such as *Kampus Mengajar* and English student-teachers' understanding of PCK.

#### **2. Practical Significance**

This study will provide practical recommendations to educational institutions and the English Education Department in designing more effective training programs to develop student-teachers' PCK through practical field experiences, such as in the *Kampus Mengajar* program.

#### **3. Empirical Significance**

This study will provide relevant empirical data on the correlation between participation in the *Kampus Mengajar* and the English student-teachers' understanding of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which can serve as a reference for future research in teacher education and training.