# PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON THE CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES DURING THEIR TEACHING PRACTICE PROGRAM

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| | This study investigates the perceptions of pre-service English teachers regarding the challenges they face and the strategies they employ during their teaching practice. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with five final-year English education students, the research explores real-world classroom experiences from the perspective of those preparing to become full-time teachers. The findings reveal several key challenges, including limited teaching time, inadequate school facilities, classroom management difficulties, low student motivation, and struggles with lesson preparation especially in adapting to unfamiliar content or integrating technology. Despite these obstacles, the participants employed a range of adaptive strategies such as using digital tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Quizizz), aligning materials with student interests, incorporating games and quizzes, and building positive classroom relationships. These approaches reflect a student-centered mindset and highlight the importance of flexibility, creativity, and continuous self-development. The study emphasizes the need for improved teacher preparation programs that support both pedagogical competence and emotional readiness, equipping future educators to thrive in diverse and often unpredictable teaching contexts.<br><br>*This is an open access article under the <u>CC BY-SA</u> license.* |
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## INTRODUCTION

Teaching practice is a crucial phase in the journey of pre-service English teachers, offering them the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge from university courses into real classroom contexts. This stage is essential not only for developing pedagogical skills but also for building classroom management abilities and professional confidence, which are critical for a successful teaching career. Teaching practicum allows pre-service teachers to deepen their

understanding of the connection between theory and practice, improve classroom management, and develop professional self-assurance ( Başaran Uysal & Savas, 2021).

Despite its importance, pre-service teachers often face several challenges during their practicum, including limited teaching time, inadequate school facilities, difficulties in managing classrooms, and anxiety related to professional performance. These challenges can affect their teaching effectiveness and overall learning experience (Karim & Abbas, 2024).

One of the biggest challenges that pre-service English teachers face is adapting to a classroom environment that is constantly changing and diverse. According to research by Dewi & Fajri, (2023), internal factors such as teachers' self-perception of their English skills and teaching experience, along with external factors like student motivation and school facilities, play a significant role in how effective their teaching can be. They emphasize that understanding these challenges is crucial for pre-service teachers to prepare themselves well during their teaching practicum. Managing large classes with low student motivation and engagement can create challenging situations for pre-service teachers. For instance, Dzulfikri & Azami, (2024) note that pre-service teachers often experience high levels of anxiety when teaching groups of students with varying English proficiency. This anxiety negatively affects both their ability to maintain classroom control and to encourage student participation.

The implementation of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum further intensifies these challenges. This curriculum emphasizes student centered learning and authentic assessments, requiring teachers to shift from traditional methods to more innovative and flexible strategies (Andika & Yulia, 2025). However, the transition has revealed significant obstacles, including insufficient supervision, high student to teacher ratios, and students' over reliance on artificial intelligence tools, which complicate differentiated instruction and character education. To address these issues, English teachers have initiated self-training, collaborative learning through teacher working groups (MGMP), and coordination with school leadership to improve curriculum implementation.

In addition to pedagogical challenges, The integration of technology presents both significant opportunities and challenges. Research by Farjon et al., (2019) reveals that prospective teachers' readiness to incorporate technology is influenced by their attitudes, competencies, and access. Among these factors, attitude plays the most dominant role, while limited access, although the least impactful, still poses a meaningful barrier in practice. This indicates that although pre-service teachers recognize the pedagogical value of technology, many struggle due to a lack of adequate infrastructure support and technical training.

Furthermore, Low student motivation and limited learning resources remain major challenges. For example, a study by  Rahmadani et al., (2024) found that many Students feel shy or afraid of making mistakes when learning English, which often leads them to stay quiet and hesitate to participate actively. Additionally, Low student motivation and limited access to visual learning resources continue to be major challenges. For instance, a study by Nguyen & Pham, (2024) in Vietnam found that using visual aids significantly improved vocabulary retention and engagement among 5- to 6-year-old students. The group taught with the help of

images showed much better learning outcomes compared to those taught using traditional methods without visual materials. This emphasizes that visual media not only simplify concepts but also help build confidence and spark a genuine interest in learning among young children.

The psychological pressure that pre-service teachers face is something that really needs to be taken seriously. As reported by Velasquez et al., (2023) point out in their review that engaging in professional reflection and working closely with mentors and peers can make a big difference. These collaborative experiences help future teachers build emotional strength and boost their teaching skills, even when they're feeling anxious or unsure of themselves.

To overcome these multifaceted challenges, pre-service English teachers employ a variety of strategies. According to Kristiantoro (2024), found that effective lesson planning, use of interactive media such as games and rewards, and active engagement with mentors and peers are key approaches that help teachers adapt to classroom realities. Such strategies not only enhance teaching effectiveness but also boost teachers' confidence and professional growth.

Given the complexity of these challenges and the importance of effective strategies, understanding pre-service English teachers' perceptions during their teaching practicum is crucial. Insights from such research can guide teacher education programs and policymakers in designing better support systems, including mentoring, training, and resource provision, to prepare competent and confident English teachers who can thrive in diverse educational contexts (Syaniah & Fithriani, 2023).

In summary, addressing both internal and external challenges through strategic interventions and institutional backing is essential for equipping pre-service English teachers with the skills and confidence needed to succeed in modern classrooms.

This research is highly important because of the vital role teachers play in the learning process, especially for prospective English teachers who are currently undergoing teaching practice. In the context of Indonesian education, this research holds urgency. English language teaching in Indonesia faces significant challenges such as low teacher competence, especially in rural areas, and ineffective teaching methods which hamper students from acquiring strong English language skills despite years of study. Many teachers in Indonesia score low on pedagogical and professional competencies, limiting their ability to deliver quality English education. This research, by deeply exploring the real experiences of prospective English teachers and their adaptive strategies, provides valuable insights that can help improve teacher training programs. Sharing effective methods and pedagogical knowledge tailored to Indonesia's diverse educational contexts can directly contribute to raising the quality of English education nationwide.

Thus, the research fills a gap by combining authentic qualitative insights from pre-service English teachers with the innovative use of technology and student-centered pedagogy to offer practical contributions for enhancing teacher training programs in Indonesia. This

combination of approaches and contextual relevance is what sets this study apart as a novel contribution to the field.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study was conducted using qualitative method by utilizing interviews as the primary data collection method. Semi-structure interviews are chosen because they allow the researcher to explore in depth the perceptions, and experiences, used by pre-service English teachers during their teaching practicum. Semi-structured interviews are widely recognized as a valuable qualitative research tool that allows researchers to deeply and contextually explore participants' experiences, motivations, emotions, and perspectives. According to Ruslin et al., (2022), this approach is superior to structured interviews because it offers "adaptive flexibility to expand questions during the interview process, while still maintaining the research focus." Lei, (2023) have proven that semi structure interview was effective in eliciting rich, detailed data on student-teachers' experiences during practicum, especially when exploring how teaching beliefs evolve through real classroom practice .

This research was conducted at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur during the academic year 2024/2025, involving five 8th semester English education students who were purposively selected based on their experiences from five different schools, to enriches researcher findings and adds contextual depth to the analysis. Thus, the participants need to be in their final year of study as currently they have completed the teaching practice and may now be formally recognized as pre-service teachers. As an ethical consideration, the five participants will be assigned as Participant 1-5 (P1-P5) to facilitate the research and to maintain the safety and privacy of everyone involved in this semi-structured interview.

Table 1. Participant's Demographic information

| Number | Participant | Gender | Age | Semester |
|--------|-------------|--------|-----|----------|
| 1 | Participant 1 | Male | 22 | 8 |
| 2 | Participant 2 | Male | 23 | 8 |
| 3 | Participant 3 | Male | 23 | 8 |
| 4 | Participant 4 | Female | 22 | 8 |
| 5 | Participant 5 | Female | 22 | 8 |

The main instrument in this study is the interview guide which was adapted from (Nababan & Amalia, 2021), consists of key open-ended questions related to the challenges during the teaching practice, and strategies to overcome the challenges. The participants were

interviewed for five minutes. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa to ensure that participants could comfortably and clearly share their experiences when becoming a pre-service teacher. Then, building upon the participants' consent, the interview was recorded in audio recorder. The data from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. First, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to accurately capture participants' responses. The researcher then engaged in data familiarization by reading the transcripts repeatedly to identify key patterns and initial impressions. Coding was conducted both inductively and deductively, assigning labels to significant units of meaning. These codes were then grouped into broader categories and refined into major themes, including instructional barriers, Finally, the last and essential step was drawing the conclusion from the data analysis. In this stage, the themes were interpreted in relation to the research objectives. The researcher examined how the themes answered the core research questions and what they revealed about the pre-service teachers' experiences. this structured yet adaptable approach allowed the researcher to present nuanced, authentic insights into the challenges and strategies experienced by pre-service English teachers during their teaching practice.

## RESULT

### The main challenges during the teaching practice

Based on the results of interviews with five pre-service English teachers, they still experience challenges in managing an active classroom in learning, the challenges faced during teaching practice are diverse and reflect the complexity of classroom management in real settings.

P1 said:

"My biggest challenge was time management because the time I had for teaching there was quite limited." Based on the previous statement, P1 identified time management as his biggest challenge, stating that the limited teaching hours made it difficult to deliver material effectively. This issue is common among pre-service teachers, who often need to adjust lesson plans and teaching strategies to fit into restricted time slots. Effective time management is crucial to ensure learning objectives are met and student engagement remains high. A study by Ariyati & Subroto, (2022) highlights that effective time management significantly impacts student learning outcomes, especially in an online learning environment.

P2 said:

"The challenge might be the limited facilities, for example, the quality of the whiteboard used there was inadequate, there was no projector, limited internet access, and so on." Limited facilities, as experienced by P2, such as inadequate whiteboards, lack of projectors, and restricted internet access, hindered the teaching process that could have been more interactive and engaging. Such conditions force teachers to improvise using simple or conventional teaching media. Studies also indicate that infrastructure limitations are a significant barrier to implementing technology-based learning, requiring teachers to be creative with available resources. Nacikit et al., (2024) highlight limited learning facilities—

such as the lack of teaching media, textbooks, computers, projectors, and restricted internet access significantly impact the teaching and learning process. These limitations make it difficult for teachers to implement interactive and varied teaching methods, which in turn affects the effectiveness of instruction and student motivation. As a result, both teachers and students often must rely on simple or conventional teaching tools to overcome these challenges. This study emphasizes that inadequate facilities remain a major barrier to creating engaging and meaningful learning experiences.

P3 and P4 said:

"The biggest challenge I faced in the class during teaching practice was how to handle students who were difficult to manage. We had to be able to reprimand them without making them angry or offended." (P3)

"The main challenge I faced while teaching in the class was the students themselves because some of them underestimated me since I was just a KKN student. As a result, some students were not serious and did not want to do the assignments I gave." (P4)

Classroom management and student behavior were the main challenges for P3 and P4 Managing difficult students without causing conflict requires strong communication skills and positive discipline strategies. P4 also faced students who underestimated her due to her status as a KKN (teaching internship) student, resulting in a lack of seriousness and engagement. This highlights the importance of building positive, respectful relationships between teachers and students to maintain motivation. Effective classroom management is fundamental in creating a conducive learning environment, especially when dealing with challenging student behaviors. According to Taufik Ismail & Suhra Suhra, (2024), managing classroom dynamics requires not only clear rules and discipline but also strong communication skills and positive discipline strategies to prevent conflicts and maintain student engagement. Their study also highlights that pre-service teachers often face difficulties gaining respect and motivation from students, particularly when students underestimate them due to their internship status. Building positive and respectful relationships between teachers and students is therefore essential to foster motivation and active participation in the classroom.

P5 said:

"The challenge I faced was that the students tended not to like learning English because they considered it a difficult subject.". Especially in English as mentioned by P5, shows that students' perceptions of subject difficulty can be a major obstacle. Teachers need to find ways to spark interest and motivate students to participate actively in learning. Motivation plays a crucial role in the English learning process, as students who lack motivation often face difficulties in achieving their learning goals. Motivation encourages persistence, concentration, and improves learning quality. Students with strong motivation tend to show greater enthusiasm and focus when facing learning challenges. Therefore, teachers need to implement strategies that foster and sustain student motivation to enhance active participation and learning outcomes (Anggraeni et al., 2024).

**Difficulties in preparing teaching materials and using technology**

Respondents showed varied experiences regarding challenges in preparing materials and using technology.

P1 said:

"I can say I didn't have difficulties because I have applied the use of teaching materials and technology since I gained experience in college. Besides, I took a course that taught me how to use teaching materials and technology, which I then applied in the class I taught."P1 who already had relevant training and experience, did not encounter significant difficulties. This underscores the importance of teacher training and experience in technology use to maximize the benefits of digital tools and applications.

P2 said:

"Of course, there were difficulties, but we have to improvise to minimize the problems we face." Meanwhile, P2 acknowledged difficulties but overcame them through improvisation. This reflects the reality that teachers must be flexible and creative in overcoming resource limitations. Teacher creativity is essential in managing classrooms and overcoming challenges such as limited resources and student boredom. Teachers who are flexible and creative in using available media and strategies can create a more engaging and effective learning environment despite infrastructural constraints. This ability to improvise and adapt is crucial for maintaining student motivation and ensuring the learning process continues smoothly (Tanjung & Namora, 2022).

P3 said:

"I didn't experience difficulties because lately I have been using AI tools like ChatGPT or Google Gemini to manage my classes, especially for preparing lesson plans. AI has saved me a lot of time in preparing teaching materials." On the other hand, P3 felt that he did not experience any difficulties because he took advantage of AI technologies such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini to help prepare lesson plans and materials, significantly saving preparation time. The use of advanced technology is an innovative adaptation that can enhance teacher efficiency in the digital era.

P4 said:

"When I was teaching, I had some difficulty preparing materials because some of the content from the school where I taught was unfamiliar to me. So, I had to study again using YouTube, books, and other resources to understand the material well enough to explain it clearly to the students." From the previous statement, we can learn that P4 faced difficulties mastering certain materials and had to engage in self-study using YouTube and books. This shows that teachers must continuously develop their competence to teach materials confidently and effectively. Continuous development of teacher competence is fundamental to improving the quality of education. Teacher competence encompasses pedagogical, professional, personality, and social aspects, all of which must be developed continuously through formal education, training, and professional experiences. Such development enables teachers to deliver material

confidently and effectively, adapt to curriculum changes, and respond to diverse student needs, thereby enhancing overall learning outcomes (Tasya Wislim et al., 2024).

P5 said:

"Fortunately, I didn't face any obstacles because the teachers there had already provided teaching materials. I only needed to create the teaching media, such as PowerPoint presentations or online quizzes like Kahoot." Meanwhile, P5 benefited from support at her school, where teaching materials were already provided by other teachers, allowing her to focus on creating engaging media such as PPTs and online quizzes. Such support and resource availability greatly facilitate the teaching and learning process.

**Strategies to Engage Students and Maintain Their Interest**

Various strategies were employed to increase student engagement and interest, demonstrating adaptive and student-centered approaches.

**P1 and P4 said:**

"My strategy was to ask the whole class about their interests at the beginning. For example, if the students were interested in learning topic A, I would focus more on teaching that topic but still alternate with other materials to keep a balanced approach." (P1)

"First, we need to understand their learning interests. Whether they prefer games, quizzes, or conventional explanations. As a teacher, we must adjust to their interests to create a positive and conducive learning environment." (P4)

P1 and P4 emphasized the importance of identifying students' interests first, so that materials and teaching methods can be tailored accordingly. This approach aligns with the principle of differentiated instruction, aiming to accommodate students' diverse needs and interests for more meaningful and effective learning. This is quite in line with the Student centered learning (SCL) emphasizes the active role of students in managing and developing their own learning process by considering their needs, interests, and aspirations. This approach increases student engagement and motivation by allowing them to participate actively through discussions, problem-solving, and collaborative projects. Aligning lessons with student interests while balancing curriculum requirements helps maintain relevance and fosters a positive learning environment that supports motivation and meaningful learning experiences (Aulia Luthfiyyah et al., 2025).

P2 said:

"The first strategy is to try to inspire my students because they still need guidance, and that is my responsibility as a teacher." P2 focuses on inspiring and guiding his students, recognizing that many still need close mentorship. Serving as a role model and providing

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encouragement can foster trust and a positive learning environment. creating relationships that promote trust and a positive learning environment for students. Research shows that strong mentor support and meaningful interactions significantly influence students' emotional and professional growth. For instance, during teaching practicum, mentors who provide emotional and social support, not just technical guidance, can boost student teachers' self-confidence, psychological safety, and motivation (Dreer-Goethe, 2025). Furthermore, teachers who serve as positive role models have a strong impact on students' attitudes and behaviors. In inclusive classrooms, students tend to adopt more positive attitudes toward peers with learning difficulties when they observe their teachers modeling respectful and supportive behavior—demonstrating that students mirror the values and actions of their teachers (Löper & Hellmich, 2024).

P3 said:

"As a pre-service teacher, I keep my students interested by creating relevant materials and fostering a positive learning environment with constructive feedback. I also give students choices in their learning, which is one of my main priorities." P3 emphasizes the importance of relevant materials, constructive feedback, and offering students choices in their learning process. Giving students meaningful choices, using content that feels relevant to their lives, and offering constructive feedback not only keeps them engaged but also helps create a classroom built on respect, independence, and personal growth. Monteiro et al., (2021) emphasize that timely, specific, and supportive feedback can create a more inclusive and motivational classroom climate.

P5 said:

"I often encourage students to answer questions, and those who answer correctly receive rewards to motivate them." P5 uses incentives, such as giving rewards to students who answer questions correctly, to boost motivation. Positive reinforcement is a well-established method for encouraging active participation and effort. By integrating simple reward systems into daily instruction, teachers can reinforce student effort and create an environment where participation is both encouraged and celebrated. Especially in younger or less confident learners, these rewards can serve as important motivational tools that help build positive learning habits.

**Adapting Teaching Methods to Accommodate Diverse Learning Styles**

Adapting teaching methods is key to accommodating students' diverse learning styles, ensuring lessons are not monotonous and remain effective.

P1 said:

"To accommodate diverse learning styles, I use an app called Quizizz to increase variety in learning activities, so the lessons don't become monotonous." P1 used interactive applications like Quizizz to add variety to lessons and increase student engagement. The use of digital media like this has been shown to reduce boredom and improve focus. This study aligns with the findings of Masruroh & Subiyantoro, (2024), who discovered that using Quizizz significantly enhanced fourth-grade students' learning interest, with engagement scores increasing from 59.6% (moderate category) to 74.3% (high category) after two cycles of Quizizz-assisted instruction.

P2 and P4 said:

"I usually organize games or quizzes so that the class flow doesn't feel monotonous and students can stay focused on the material."

"I am given the freedom by the teachers to adjust my teaching style according to the students. If they prefer learning through games, then I will conduct lessons using games."

P2 and P4 frequently incorporate games and quizzes, making lessons more enjoyable and helping students stay focused. These activities support active learning and can be adapted for different content areas. The frequent use of games and quizzes by P2 and P4 significantly contributes to creating a more engaging and focused learning environment. This instructional strategy is strongly supported by recent research on game-based learning and active learning approaches. Gui et al., (2023), in a meta-analytic study on digital educational games in STEM education, found that such tools not only improve students' conceptual understanding but also enhance cognitive skills like problem-solving and strategic thinking. They concluded that "digital games are effective in promoting both knowledge gains and higher-order thinking skills, particularly in STEM disciplines".

P3 said:

"I accommodate different learning styles by using various methods. It depends on the students' interests. The key is flexibility and providing choices so students can learn optimally." P3 adapts his methods based on student interests and emphasizes flexibility, providing options so students can learn in ways that suit them best. This approach aligns with differentiated instruction principles. Pozas et al., (2020) taxonomy of DI highlights open education/autonomy as a crucial practice, where students select learning tasks, groupings, and output forms—strategies that enhance personal investment and self-regulation. These findings align directly with P3's emphasis on choice and flexibility: by adapting lessons to match interests, offering multiple pathways, and enabling self-directed learning, embodies an evidence-based, student-centered teaching approach proven to boost engagement, autonomy, and academic performance across diverse contexts.

P5 said:

"I consider the type of learning and use methods that align with their era, such as using AI like ChatGPT, and connect it with the teaching media available at their school." P5 considers students' familiarity with current trends, integrating AI tools like ChatGPT and aligning media with resources available at the school. Keeping up with technological advancements helps make lessons more relevant and engaging for today's learners. P5's strategy of incorporating students' familiarity with current trends like integrating AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) and aligning media with in-school resources reflects a pedagogically forward-thinking approach that enhances lesson relevance and student engagement. Scholarly evidence supports this integration: Labadze et al., (2023) synthesized a range of studies and found that AI chatbots, notably ChatGPT, offer personalized, on-demand assistance, improving students' engagement, motivation, and self-directed learning by tailoring according to individual interests and resource availability.

## DISCUSSION

### The Main Challenges During the Teaching Practice

This study revealed that pre-service teachers encounter several significant challenges during their teaching practice. Key issues include limited teaching time, inadequate school facilities, classroom management difficulties, and low student motivation. These findings align with previous research indicating that constraints in resources and time pressure can negatively impact the teaching and learning process (Karim & Abbas, 2024). Additionally, many participants experienced anxiety about their professional performance, highlighting the need for better emotional and psychological support during this critical training period.

### Difficulties in Preparing Teaching Materials and Using Technology

Participants also reported challenges in preparing appropriate teaching materials and integrating technology into their lessons. They struggled particularly when adapting to unfamiliar content or using digital tools effectively. Even though some technologies like ChatGPT and Quizizz were employed, mastery and seamless integration remained problematic. This underscores the importance of enhancing teacher education programs to include thorough digital literacy training, enabling pre-service teachers to confidently and creatively use technology in their classrooms (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010).

### Strategies to Engage Students and Maintain Their Interest

To address these challenges, pre-service teachers adopted various creative and adaptive strategies to engage students and sustain their interest. They utilized interactive games, quizzes, and tailored the learning materials to match students' preferences, creating an enjoyable and dynamic classroom atmosphere. These approaches reflect a student-centered teaching

mindset, where learning success is closely tied to students' motivation and active participation. The findings support educational theories emphasizing meaningful interactions and relevant content as key factors in boosting student engagement.

**Adapting Teaching Methods to Accommodate Diverse Learning Styles**

Furthermore, pre-service teachers demonstrated flexibility in adjusting their teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles. They employed a range of approaches from visual and auditory to kinesthetic techniques based on the unique needs and characteristics of their students. This adaptability is crucial for maximizing learning effectiveness and ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to comprehend the material. Such practices align well with the principles of differentiated instruction, widely regarded as an effective way to address classroom diversity.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that pre-service English teachers face a variety of challenges during their teaching practice, reflecting the real complexities of managing a classroom and delivering lessons effectively. One of the main difficulties is managing a limited teaching time, which makes it hard to cover all the material thoroughly. Additionally, inadequate facilities such as poor-quality whiteboards, lack of projectors, and limited internet access pose significant obstacles to creating interactive and engaging lessons.

Classroom management and student behavior also present major challenges, especially when students underestimate the authority of pre-service teachers, leading to lower motivation and participation. Many students also find English difficult, which further affects their enthusiasm for learning. When it comes to preparing teaching materials and using technology, some pre-service teachers struggle, particularly when they are unfamiliar with the content, while others benefit from prior training or support. To overcome these challenges, the teachers use student-centered approaches by tailoring lessons to students' interests and learning styles, incorporating active learning methods like games and quizzes, and leveraging digital tools and AI to keep students engaged. Creativity and flexibility are essential for managing limited resources and maintaining student motivation.

This research offers valuable insights for the world of teaching in Indonesia, especially in preparing future English teachers during their pre-service training. It highlights the real challenges they face in the classroom, such as limited teaching time, inadequate school facilities, difficulties in managing the class, and low student motivation. These challenges often make teaching a complex and demanding task for novice teachers. The findings encourage teacher education programs to not only focus on pedagogical skills but also on emotional readiness and technological competence, helping future teachers become more confident and effective in today's dynamic classrooms. Ultimately, this study serves as a valuable reference for educators, policymakers, and program developers especially in

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Indonesia aiming to design better teacher training and support systems that respond to the real demands of modern education.

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