

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the research. It delves into several key areas, including the study's background, research problem, research objective, significance, scope, limitations, and definitions of key terms.

A. Background of Study

Education plays a crucial role in the advancement of a nation, and teachers serve as the key figures in shaping the younger generation. According to Zaini (2013: 5-6), education is not solely focused on the transfer of knowledge but also plays a vital role in shaping students' character and attitudes in a more positive direction. This includes behavioural changes from negative tendencies to positive ones and moral improvements from less virtuous to more ethical conduct. Furthermore, education is responsible for maintaining the positive character traits that students already possess, enabling them to develop into individuals with strong morals, responsibility, and the ability to contribute positively to society. Thus, education is not merely an academic process but also an ongoing effort to cultivate a generation with integrity, ethics, and high moral standards.

To foster quality education, it must be aligned with professional educators. Teachers hold a crucial role in the education system and the teaching-learning process. As stated by Sopian (2016), teachers are essential components that cannot be overlooked in the teaching and learning process, as they determine the success or failure of education. Therefore, in the educational and

teaching process, it is necessary to have qualified teachers, meaning those who not only master the subject matter and teaching methods but also understand the fundamentals of education. To develop professional teachers, preparation must start from the foundation. Before teaching, a teacher should have thorough readiness. This readiness is a crucial aspect that should not be overlooked, as it plays a vital role in any activity, including the teaching process. Indonesia still faces significant challenges in ensuring the equitable distribution of educators, particularly in remote and underserved areas. The shortage of qualified teachers in various regions has led to disparities in the quality of education. Kompas.com (2024) reports that Central Java is experiencing a significant teacher shortage due to a high number of retirements each year, while at the same time, there is an excess of temporary teachers. Consequently, many students do not receive optimal learning opportunities. Therefore, more aspiring educators with strong motivation and competencies are needed to address this issue.

To encourage students' interest in the teaching profession, the Indonesian government has developed various programs, one of which is the *Asistensi Mengajar* program, a part of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) initiative. This program allows students to actively participate in teaching activities at schools, particularly those in need of additional teaching staff. By joining this program, students not only support school educators but also gain real teaching experience, enhance their professional skills, and develop a deeper understanding of the educational field.

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program consists of eight types of learning activities designed to enrich students' experiences and

competencies. First, the student exchange program allows students to study at other universities, both domestically and abroad, in order to broaden their academic and cultural horizons. Second, internships or work placements provide opportunities for students to gain direct experience in the professional world, either in industries or relevant institutions. Third, the *Asistensi Mengajar* program places students in schools, enabling them to experience the teaching and learning process firsthand and to improve their pedagogical skills and readiness to become educators. Fourth, research activities aim to enhance students' analytical thinking and problem-solving abilities through involvement in scientific projects. Fifth, humanitarian projects are intended to foster social awareness and sensitivity to societal issues. Sixth, entrepreneurship activities encourage students to develop creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. Seventh, independent projects give students the flexibility to design their own learning experiences based on their interests and needs. Lastly, the Thematic Community Service Program (KKN Tematik) focuses on solving community problems through interdisciplinary approaches and locally based initiatives (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020).

Among these eight activities, the *Asistensi Mengajar* program is one of the most impactful in providing students with real-life experiences in education. Students participating in this program engage directly in classroom activities, interact with students, and assist teachers in the teaching process. In addition to enriching their teaching experience, this program also aims to boost students' confidence and pedagogical skills, preparing them to become professional teachers in the future.

Several previous studies have indicated that programs like this can have a positive impact. For example, a study by Fajaria and Nurhasanah (2022) found that the majority of students participating in *Kampus Mengajar* experienced increased motivation towards the teaching profession. They became more enthusiastic about considering a career as a teacher after gaining firsthand teaching experience in schools.

However, there is still a gap in understanding how the *Asistensi Mengajar* program influences students' interest in choosing teaching as a career, particularly among those majoring in English Education. Most previous studies have only examined the general impact of teaching experience programs without specifically analyzing how these experiences shape students' interest in particular fields of study. Therefore, a deeper exploration is needed to identify the factors that influence students' decisions to become teachers after participating in this program.

As a student who also participated in the *Asistensi Mengajar* program, the researcher recognizes the importance of exploring how this real world teaching experience contributes to the development of interest in the teaching profession. This personal involvement becomes an initial motivation to deeply understand the factors that influence students' interest in becoming teachers after participating in the program.

Moreover, the teaching profession still faces various challenges that can affect students' career decisions. Some of the major obstacles include the lack of recognition for teachers, perceptions of low financial stability, and

demanding working conditions. Thus, it is essential to understand how students respond to their experiences in the *Asistensi Mengajar* program and what factors support or hinder their interest in pursuing a career in education.

Based on the background above, this study aims to explore how students' experiences in the *Asistensi Mengajar* program influence their interest in choosing the teaching profession. Using a qualitative approach, this research will uncover students' perceptions, motivations, and challenges in considering a career in education.

Although the *Asistensi Mengajar* program provides real teaching exposure for English Education students, their level of interest in becoming teachers after joining the program remains varied. Some students report increased motivation and confidence after experiencing direct classroom interaction, while others still feel doubtful or unprepared to choose teaching as a career. In addition, previous studies mostly examined general teaching practice programs such as Kampus Mengajar, but there is still limited research focusing specifically on how the *Asistensi Mengajar* program influences English Education students' interest in the teaching profession, especially in SMP and SMA contexts. Therefore, this study is important to explore more deeply how students interpret their experiences, what factors shape or hinder their interest in becoming teachers, and how this program contributes to their reflections toward choosing teaching as their future profession.

B. Research Problem

1. How do English Education students perceive their interest in becoming teachers after joining the *Asistensi Mengajar* program?
2. What experiences and challenges influence their interest during the program?
3. How does the *Asistensi Mengajar* program shape their reflections and aspirations toward a teaching career?

C. Research Objective

1. To explore English Education students' perceptions of their interest in becoming teachers after participating in the *Asistensi Mengajar* program.
2. To identify the personal experiences and challenges that influence students' interest in pursuing a teaching career.
3. To investigate how the *Asistensi Mengajar* program contributes to students' reflections and aspirations toward becoming teachers in the future.

D. Significance of the Study

1. For Academic Contributes to the literature on experiential programs in higher education, particularly the *Asistensi Mengajar* program, and its influence on students' career choices.
2. For Practical Provides recommendations for improving the implementation of the *Asistensi Mengajar* program to better foster students' interest in becoming teachers.

3. For Policy Supports the government and educational institutions in designing relevant *Asistensi Mengajar* programs to motivate students to become professional educators.

E. Scope and Limitations

1. Scope: This study focuses on students majoring in English Education (Tadris Bahasa Inggris) who have completed the *Asistensi Mengajar* program. The research will involve a students from the same, allowing for an in-depth exploration of their experiences and motivations.
2. Limitations: The study is limited to data obtained from a small group of 12 students. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent the experiences of all participants in the *Asistensi Mengajar* program.

F. Definition of key terms

1. *Asistensi Mengajar* program: A program that provides students with the opportunity to assist teachers in schools, support the learning process, and introduce technology in teaching as part of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy.
2. Interest in Becoming a teacher: Students' motivation and desire to choose teaching as a future career.
3. Experience-Based Learning: A learning method that involves direct experience in teaching practice within a school environment.
4. Intrinsic Motivation: An internal drive that encourages individuals to engage in an activity based on personal satisfaction and meaningful experiences.