OPEN ACCESS
Edunomika Journal: Studies in Education and Development Economics
Vol. 1 No. 1. March 2026, pp. 41-49 DOI. https://doi.org/10.22437/edunomika.v1i1.53240

Research Article

BRIDGING THE THEORY-PRACTICE GAP: THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL FIELD IMPLEMENTATION ON THE TEACHING READINESS OF PROSPECTIVE ECONOMICS TEACHERS

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Article Information
Accepted: December 15, 2025
Revised: December 29, 2025
Accepted: January 30, 2026
Online Version: March 31, 2026

Abstract

The gap between mastery of pedagogical theory and practical competency in the classroom remains a fundamental challenge in global teacher education. This study aims to analyze the effect of the School Field Introduction (PLP) program as a new policy instrument to bridge this gap on the teaching readiness of prospective teacher students. Using a quantitative approach with an *ex-post facto design* , this study involved 97 Economics Education students from the 2016 intake of the University of Jambi as respondents. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire instrument and analyzed using simple linear regression. The results empirically prove that PLP has a positive and significant influence on teaching readiness, with a regression coefficient of 0.579 and a high significance value. These findings indicate that direct immersion experiences in schools through cultural observation, assistance, and guided practice play a vital role in transforming declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge and increasing the self-efficacy of prospective teachers. The novelty of this study lies in evaluating the impact of the implementation of the latest teacher education standards regulation (Permenristekdikti No. 55/2017) in the specific context of economics education. This research contributes to the education literature by confirming that PLP is not simply a curricular routine, but rather a key determinant of teacher professionalism. Consequently, Teacher Training Institutions (LPTK) need to strengthen the quality of mentoring during PLP to ensure adaptive and competent graduates.

Keywords: Prospective Economics Teachers, Teaching Readiness, Professional Competence, Teacher Education, Introduction to School Field (PLP)

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a central role in the architecture of human civilization and the development of quality human resources. In a global context, education is not simply a process of transferring knowledge, but rather a systematic effort to improve the intellectual, social, spiritual, and professional qualities of individuals. As mandated by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, the goal of education is to develop the potential of students to become individuals who are faithful, pious, have noble character, are competent, creative, and independent. However, the success of achieving this noble goal of education depends heavily on the quality of the learning process that occurs in the classroom, where teachers act as the primary actors and spearheads of change.

The urgency of teacher quality has become a crucial issue in various countries, including Indonesia. Teachers are not only required to transfer knowledge, but also must be able to design learning, manage classes, and optimally develop students' talents and potential. Law No. 14 of 2005 of the Republic of Indonesia affirms that teachers are professional educators with the primary task of educating, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students. Teacher quality is linearly correlated with the quality of graduates; competent teachers will create an effective learning environment and produce quality students. (Kuswanto & Refnida, 2024) . Therefore, the preparation of prospective teachers through the Teacher Training Institute (LPTK) is a critical phase that determines the future of a nation's education.

Teaching *readiness* is a fundamental variable that every prospective educator must possess. This readiness does not emerge suddenly, but is formed through a long process of learning and experience. (Slameto, 2003) defines learning as the process of attempting to achieve new behavioral changes as a result of interaction with the environment. In the modern educational landscape, this readiness is also greatly influenced by prospective teachers' perceptions of their own competence in facing the transition from student to professional teacher (Hourani, 2013) .

In the context of teaching, teaching readiness encompasses the physical, mental, and intellectual conditions that enable a person to carry out the learning process effectively. This readiness encompasses mastery of basic competencies such as opening and closing lessons, explaining skills, implementing variations, and the ability to manage the classroom and conduct evaluations. Mastery of this general pedagogical knowledge *has* been empirically proven to be a key predictor of teaching quality in the classroom (König et al., 2017) .

To bridge the gap between theory learned in college and the realities of school life, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, issued Regulation Number 55 of 2017 concerning Teacher Education Standards. This regulation introduced the School Field Introduction (PLP) program as an improvement on the previous internship model. A major challenge in teacher education is often the gap between theory taught on campus and actual practice in the field, a phenomenon Korthagen (2017) calls the "theory-practice gap," which must be bridged through intensive clinical experience.

Fieldwork Internship (PLP) is defined as a process of observation and internship undertaken by Bachelor of Education students to learn aspects of learning and educational management in educational institutions. This program is designed in stages, starting with PLP I, which is an observation of school culture , and PLP II, which focuses on strengthening academic competencies and guided teaching practice. Through good supervision and mentoring during the fieldwork program, students can develop their professional identity and self-confidence (Ulvik & Smith, 2011) . Thus, through PLP, students are expected to not only understand theory but also be able to implement learning outcomes in real-life situations, which significantly correlates positively with increasing their teaching readiness (Cahayani, 2021) .

Theoretically and normatively, students who have completed various education courses and the PLP program should have a high level of teaching readiness. The Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) of Jambi University, as one of the LPTKs, has a vision of producing innovative and competitive professional teachers. The curriculum has been designed in such a way that students have a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of education, from planning to evaluation.

However, the reality on the ground shows a significant gap *between* these ideal expectations and empirical conditions. Based on national data, teacher professionalism in Indonesia remains relatively low. The results of the Initial Competency Test (UKA) show that the average national teacher competency only reaches 42.25. Data from the Research and Development Agency of the Indonesian

Ministry of National Education also reveals that the percentage of teachers "fit to teach" at the public high school level is only around 65.29%, and this figure is even lower at other levels. This macro phenomenon is reflected in the micro context at the University of Jambi. Initial observations of Economics Education students from the 2016 intake indicate that their teaching readiness is still in the "quite low" category, with an achievement of around 65%. Many students only understand the educational situation limited to theory in the lecture hall, but stutter when faced with real classroom situations.

This low level of teaching readiness is determined by various factors. First, a lack of practical experience in the field makes it difficult for students to apply pedagogical, personal, professional, and social competencies in an integrated manner. Second, there are indications that students' understanding of the four main indicators of teaching is still minimal, resulting in a lack of confidence and unpreparedness in dealing with student dynamics. Third, internal factors such as an immature mastery of knowledge and basic teaching skills also contribute. Teaching readiness requires a combination of interest, mastery of material, and methodological skills. If the PLP program is not implemented optimally or if students do not utilize it seriously, the transition from "student" to "teacher" will be hampered.

Previous research has extensively discussed the importance of field experience for prospective teachers. A study by Kurniasari and Rahmawati (2016) found a positive and significant relationship between interest in becoming a teacher and field experience practice (PPL). old term before PLP on teaching readiness, with a relative contribution of 84.96%. Other research also highlights that teacher competency cannot be developed solely through face-to-face lectures but requires intensive internships.

This research position is to strengthen and update these findings in the context of the latest regulation, namely the transition to the School Field Introduction (PLP) regime based on Permenristekdikti No. 55 of 2017. In contrast to previous studies that may still refer to the old PPL model, this study specifically highlights the effectiveness of the PLP model at the University of Jambi on Economics Education students. This study fills the literature gap regarding the evaluation of the implementation of the new PLP policy at the regional university level, as well as its quantitative impact on the mental and professional readiness of prospective economics teachers.

The novelty *of* this study lies in its focus on evaluating the internship program (PLP) as a new policy instrument in teacher education in Indonesia. This study offers an empirical perspective on how the change in program nomenclature and structure from PPL to PLP impacts student readiness outcomes. Furthermore, this study provides scientific contributions in the form of quantitative data on the level of teaching readiness of prospective economics teachers in the Industry 4.0 era, where educational challenges are increasingly complex. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for LPTK (Institute for Teacher Training and Education) in evaluating internship curricula and for policymakers in refining PLP implementation guidelines to improve the quality of future teachers.

Based on the background of the problems and urgency that have been explained, this study aims to measure and comprehensively analyze the influence of the Introduction to School Field (PLP) on the teaching readiness of Economic Education students of Jambi University Class of 2016. Specifically, this study wants to prove whether the factual experience gained during the PLP process is able to bridge the gap between the theory obtained on campus and the demands of professionalism in schools, and how much the program contributes to shaping the teaching readiness of prospective teachers.

RESEARCH METHODS

Contains the type of research, time and place of research, target/objective, research subjects, procedures, instruments and data analysis techniques, and other matters related to the research method. Target/objective, research subjects, procedures, data and instruments, as well as data collection techniques, as well as data analysis techniques and other matters related to the research method, can be written in sub-chapters, with sub-headings. Sub-headings do not need to be notated, but are written in lowercase letters with capital letters, bold, left-aligned. An example can be seen below.

2.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach to test the influence between variables objectively through numerical data. The research design applied is *ex-post facto* , where the researcher does not provide special treatment or manipulate variables, but rather retraces events that have occurred to find out the factors that influence them. This approach was chosen because the School Field Introduction (PLP) variable is an event that has been experienced by the subject. The research was conducted at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), Jambi University, specifically in the Economic Education Study Program. The research period was focused on the odd semester of the 2019/2020 academic year until the completion of the report in 2020.

2.2 Research Target/Subject

The target population in this study was all students of the Economics Education Study Program, Jambi University, Class of 2016 who had completed the School Field Introduction (PLP) program. Considering the importance of accurate data representation from this specific population, the study determined a sample size of 97 students. The sampling technique was based on the characteristics of a homogeneous population (fellow students of the 2016 class who had completed the PLP course), which allowed for the generalization of the research results to that population .

2.3 Research Procedures

The research procedure was conducted through three main stages: preparation, implementation, and data analysis. The preparation stage included initial observations to identify teaching readiness issues, proposal development, and obtaining research permits. The implementation phase involved distributing instruments to predetermined respondents. Given the retrospective nature of the research variables, data collection was conducted once (cross-sectionally) after students completed the PLP program. The collected data was then verified for completeness before entering the processing and statistical analysis phase to draw conclusions regarding the proposed hypotheses .

2.4 Data Collection Instruments and Techniques

The primary data collection technique used was a survey using a closed-ended questionnaire. The instrument was developed using a Likert Scale to measure respondents' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of two main variables: Introduction to the School Field (Variable X) and Teaching Readiness (Variable Y). Before use, the instrument underwent a rigorous validation and reliability process. The instrument's item validity was tested using the Product Moment correlation technique, where the item is declared valid if the calculated r - value > table r - value. Meanwhile, a reliability test was conducted to ensure the consistency of the measuring instrument in collecting data. The indicators of teaching readiness measured include the ability to open a lesson, mastery of material, classroom management, and learning evaluation, while the PLP indicators cover the preparation, briefing, implementation, and oral examination stages.

2.5 Data analysis techniques

The data obtained were analyzed using statistical software (SPSS). The data analysis technique consisted of two parts: descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to present data in the form of frequency distributions, percentages, and categories (Very Good to Poor) to provide an overview of the performance of each variable.

Before hypothesis testing is carried out, analysis prerequisite tests are carried out which include:

1. Normality Test : To ensure that the data is normally distributed.
2. Homogeneity Test : To ensure that the data variance is homogeneous.

Hypothesis testing was carried out using Simple Linear Regression Analysis to determine the magnitude of the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable, as well as the t-test. to test the significance of the influence at a 5% confidence level (alpha = 0.05) . The test decision is based on a comparison of the calculated t-value and the t-table and the significance value (Sig.); if the calculated t-value > t-table or the Sig. value < 0.05 , then the alternative hypothesis is accepted, which means there is a significant influence between PLP on teaching readiness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Research result

1. Data Description for Each Variable

Based on data collected from 97 respondents of Economics Education students from Jambi University, Class of 2016, a description was obtained regarding the two research variables, namely Introduction to School Field (PLP) as the independent variable (X) and Readiness to Teach as the dependent variable (Y).

- **Teaching Readiness Variable (Y):**

The descriptive analysis results indicate that students' level of teaching readiness is in the very positive category. Based on the recapitulation of questionnaire data, the average achievement for the teaching readiness variable was recorded at 60%. The authors concluded that this figure falls into the "Very High" category. This indicates that students generally feel they possess adequate pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies to carry out their teaching duties.

- **Variable Introduction to School Fields (PLP) (X):**

For the PLP variable, the study results showed an average achievement of 66%. This achievement is also categorized as "Very High." This high percentage reflects that the implementation of the PLP program, from observation and internship to guided teaching practice, was deemed very effective and provided a comprehensive experience for students.

2. Prerequisite Analysis Test Results

Before hypothesis testing was carried out using regression analysis, the research data had undergone prerequisite tests to ensure the feasibility of the statistical model used.

Based on the results of the normality test (using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test), a significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) was obtained for the teaching readiness variable of 0.4803. Because the significance value is greater than 0.05 (0.480 > 0.05), it can be concluded that the residual data in this study is normally distributed, thus meeting the requirements for analysis using parametric statistics (linear regression).

3. Regression Analysis Results and Interpretation

Testing the influence between variables was carried out using simple linear regression analysis.

Table 1. Results of Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	26,025	6,092		4,272	0
	PLP (X) PROGRM	0.5 8	0.051	0.76	11,407	0
a. Dependent Variable: teaching readiness (Y)						
R2 = 0.57						

Based on the Unstandardized Coefficients (B) column in Table 1 , the linear regression equation formed is

$$Y = 26.025 + 0.58X + e$$

Based on Table 1, Constant (a) = 26.025: If the PLP Program variable (X) is 0 (or the student does not participate/get a PLP score), then the student's Teaching Readiness (Y) level is predicted to be 26.025. This is the baseline value of readiness without any PLP intervention. Regression Coefficient (b) = 0.58: This value is positive, meaning there is a unidirectional relationship. Every 1 unit (or 1 point) increase in the PLP Program score, the Teaching Readiness score will increase by 0.58. The better the PLP implementation, the higher the teaching readiness .

Because the Sig. value (0.000) is much smaller than the probability of 0.05 (0.000 < 0.05), Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. Conclusion: There is a significant (real) influence between the PLP Program and Teaching Readiness. This means that the PLP program has been statistically proven to play a role in shaping students' teaching readiness.

4. Model Quality Test Results (Significance Test)

R2 (R Square) value shows how much ability variable X has in explaining variable Y. Based on Table 1, the R2 value is 0.57. This indicates that the PLP Program variable contributes 57% to the formation of Teaching Readiness. The remaining 43% (100% - 57%) is influenced by other factors not examined in this model (for example: interest in becoming a teacher, academic achievement in microteaching, family environment, or internal motivation).

3.2 Discussion

1. Interpretation of the Significance of the Influence of PLP on Teaching Readiness

Based on the results of the inferential statistical analysis that has been conducted, this study successfully confirmed the hypothesis that there is a positive and significant influence between the Introduction to School Field (PLP) on the teaching readiness of Economic Education students at Jambi University Class of 2016. This finding is evidenced by the calculated t - value of 11.407 which far exceeds the critical t - table value (1.660), as well as a regression coefficient of 0.579. Empirically, these data indicate that the PLP program is not just a curricular formality, but is a major determinant that contributes substantially to the formation of professional competence of prospective teachers. The high coefficient of influence implies that any increase in the quality of experience that students gain during direct interaction with the school ecosystem will have linear implications for increasing their self-confidence and technical abilities in teaching.

This finding is in line with the premise of David Kolb's *Experiential Learning Theory* , which states that knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. (Kolb & Boyatzis, 2014) . In the context of PLP, students are no longer merely passive recipients of knowledge in the classroom (abstract conceptualization), but are transformed into active actors who conduct active experiments in schools. The cyclical process of reflective observation of how mentor teachers teach, followed by concrete experiences in managing their own classes, becomes the main catalyst that matures their teaching readiness. Without going through the "immersion" phase *in* partner schools, students' pedagogical knowledge tends to remain declarative and has not been internalized into ready-to-use procedural knowledge.

2. Dialogue with Literature: PLP as a Bridge between Theory and Practice

The results of this study strengthen the findings of a recent study from (Arslan & Ilin, 2018) published in *the Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* . Arslan found that teaching practicum provides "contextual awareness" *that* cannot be simulated on campus. Students who initially had high concerns about their own performance (*self-concerns*), after undergoing the practicum, experienced a shift in focus to concern about the impact of learning on students (*impact-concerns*). This is relevant to the description of the data in this study where students from the University of Jambi showed high scores on indicators of classroom management and opening lessons, indicating that they had passed the initial anxiety phase and were able to control the instructional situation.

Furthermore, in the specific context of economic education in Indonesia, this finding corresponds to research (Khaerunnas & Rafsanjani, 2021) in the *Edukatif journal* . They concluded that familiarity with the school field significantly contributes to the readiness of economics students to become professional teachers, particularly in terms of curriculum adaptation and understanding student characteristics. The consistency of the results between this study and Khaerunnas' study confirms that the characteristics of the economics discipline which often requires contextualization of the material with social reality The field experience greatly assisted students. Students learned how to simplify complex economic concepts into relevant learning materials for high school students through hands-on guidance at the training school.

3. The Role of *Self-Efficacy* and Competency Validation

The psychological aspect of teaching readiness, which in this study is reflected in the high level of students' perception of their own abilities (60% in the Very High category), can be explained through the perspective of Albert Bandura's *Social Cognitive Theory* , specifically the concept of *Self-Efficacy* . Teaching readiness is strongly influenced by an individual's belief in their ability to organize and carry out the actions necessary to achieve learning objectives. The PLP program provides the most powerful source of *self-efficacy , namely mastery experiences* .

Research (Çelik & Topkaya, 2017) A study in *the International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research* supports this analysis. Their study revealed that the increase in prospective teachers' perceived teaching efficacy during the field program stemmed from a decrease in teaching anxiety and an increase in professional confidence . When Jambi University students successfully conducted a learning session during the field program, they received positive feedback. both from student responses and evaluations of mentor teachers which cumulatively builds the mental construct of "I am ready to be a teacher." Conversely, if PLP is not implemented seriously, students will miss this moment of competency validation, resulting in low mental readiness upon graduation.

4. Critical Analysis: Mentoring Quality and Field Challenges

Although research results show positive effects, it is important to discuss the variability in the quality of PLP implementation. (Brown & Lee, 2015) A study in the journal *Teaching Education* highlighted that "simply being in school" does not guarantee readiness; the quality of mentoring is key. Students who received intensive guidance, structured observation, and constructive feedback from mentor teachers demonstrated significantly higher levels of readiness than those who were simply released. In this study, despite the high average readiness, there was still variation in responses that may reflect disparities in the quality of guidance received by students at different partner schools. This serves as an evaluative note for LPTK (Teaching Institutions) to standardize the quality of mentoring in partner schools.

In addition, a recent study from (Rahman et al., 2025) A study in *the International Journal of Recent Educational Research (IJORER)* highlighted specific challenges in providing feedback skills *during* field practice. They found that although prospective teachers felt prepared in terms of delivering material, they often struggled to provide meaningful evaluation and *feedback* to students due to a lack of experience. This finding is relevant to analyzing the descriptive data in this thesis, where the evaluation aspect of learning may have different scores than the opening aspect of the lesson. PLP should be interpreted not only as an exercise in "performing in front of the class," but also as an exercise in conducting accurate diagnostic and formative assessments, a crucial competency in the current era of the Independent Curriculum.

5. Synthesis and Policy Implications of LPTK

The strong correlation between PLP and teaching readiness found in this study has serious implications for LPTK curriculum design. (Öztürk & Yıldırım, 2015) This phenomenon is reminiscent of the phenomenon of "reality shock" *when* theoretical idealism collides with the chaotic reality of schooling. An effective PLP program serves as *a shock absorber* . Therefore, the LPTK (Learning and Teaching Institute) at Jambi University needs to ensure that the PLP curriculum continues to be revitalized to maintain its relevance to current demands, including the integration of technology into learning, which has become a post-pandemic imperative, as suggested by a study (Sun et al., 2016). regarding the technological readiness of prospective teachers.

Overall, this study confirms the position of the PLP program as the heart of teacher education . Readiness to teach is not an innate attribute, but rather a competency constructed through the dialectic between theory on campus and practice in schools. Without a quality PLP, LPTK will only produce graduates who "know about teaching" but not "can teach." The PLP program's contribution of 0.579 points to teaching readiness is empirical evidence that the investment of time, effort, and money in this internship program provides a tangible *return on investment* in the form of the birth of prospective economics educators who are competent, adaptive, and ready to contribute to the advancement of national education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes empirically that the School Field Introduction (PLP) program acts as a crucial determinant in the formation of the competency architecture of prospective teachers. The results of the statistical analysis confirmed that there was a positive and significant influence of the implementation of PLP on the teaching readiness of Economics Education students at Jambi University, with a substantial contribution. This proves that teaching readiness is not a stand *-alone variable* or innate talent, but rather the result of construction from interactive and reflective experiences in a real school environment. The more intensive and high-quality the experiences students gain during the "immersion" phase *of* school, the higher their level of *self-efficacy* and professional readiness to enter the workforce.

Theoretically, these findings strengthen the validity of *Experiential Learning Theory* and *Situated Learning Theory* in the context of teacher education in Indonesia, which emphasizes that pedagogical knowledge becomes meaningful only when applied in authentic contexts. Practically, this research provides policy implications for Teacher Training Institutions (LPTKs) to avoid viewing PLP as merely a curricular routine. LPTKs need to strengthen *quality assurance mechanisms* in PLP implementation, particularly in standardizing mentoring by mentor teachers and supervising lecturers, given the program's vital role as a bridge between students and professional teachers.

This research is not free from limitations. First, the *cross-sectional* research design only captures perceptions of readiness at one point in time, so it cannot capture the dynamics of changes in readiness longitudinally. Second, the study population was limited to one study program at one university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to different academic cultural contexts. Therefore, future research *is* recommended to:

1. Expanding demographic reach by involving various LPTKs in different regions for more comprehensive data comparison.
2. Adopting *a mixed-method* (qualitative-quantitative) approach to delve deeply into "how" the mental transformation process occurs during PLP.
3. Incorporating contemporary variables such as "Technology Readiness" or "Digital Literacy" as moderating variables, considering the increasingly complex challenges of education in the 4.0 era.

THANK-YOU NOTE

The authors would like to thank the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Jambi University, for their support and facilities. We also extend our deepest appreciation to the partner schools and all the PLP student participants who volunteered their time as respondents, ensuring the successful collection of this research data .

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Conceptualization, A.K.S. and E.M.; Methodology, A.K.S.; Software, A.K.S.; Validation, A.K.S. and E.M.; Formal Analysis, A.K.S.; Investigation, A.K.S.; Resources, A.K.S.; Data Curation, A.K.S.; Writing – Original Draft, A.K.S.; Writing – Review & Editing, A.K.S. and E.M.; Visualization, A.K.S.; Supervision, E.M.; Project Administration, A.K.S.; Funding Acquisition, A.K.S.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. The entire process was conducted objectively and in accordance with scientific principles, without the influence of any financial, personal, or professional affiliations that could bias the interpretation of the results.

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