

The Role of Mentor Teacher in Improving Teacher Professional Education Training Program Through Learning Management System at State Islamic University of Datokarama Palu, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study is to examine the role of mentor teachers in improving the professionalism of Teacher Professional Education (PPG) students based on the Learning Management System (LMS) at LPTK UIN Datokarama Palu. This research study focuses on the role of mentor teachers, their contribution to improving four teacher competencies. This study will also explain the opportunities and challenges in implementing LMS-based PPG. This study uses a qualitative case study method. Data were collected through direct field observations, in-depth interviews, and analysis of written documents related to the implementation of the teacher professionalism training program. The results of this study indicate that mentor teachers have played a role as facilitators, guides, evaluators, counselors, communicators, scaffolders, and mentors. The professionalism of students who participated in the training has increased in four core competencies: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies. Opportunities for future teacher professional development include the integration of institutional systems and strengthening collaborative academics. Meanwhile, challenges that must be faced include lack of connectivity, weak time management, lack of coordination across roles, and weak student digital literacy. This study concludes that mentor teachers have been proven to play a strategic role in improving student professionalism. Therefore, the government needs to actively involve mentor teachers in the implementation of future teacher professional education.

KEYWORDS: mentor teacher, teacher candidate training, Learning Management System.

I. INTRODUCTION

The shifting paradigm of national education in the digital era has driven significant transformations in the implementation of the Teacher Professional Education Training program (Bonfield, Salter, Longmuir, Benson, & Adachi, 2020; Pasi & Dhamak, 2025), particularly at the Teacher Training Institutions (LPTK) within the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. A crucial element in the professional training of prospective teachers is the role of mentor teachers (Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2017) as primary mentor's in-field practice and learning interactions based on the digital Learning Management System (LMS) platform. Mentor teachers serve not only as technical supervisors but also play a strategic role in providing prompt, honest, and constructive feedback on student practice reports, teaching videos, and learning tool designs (Izadinia, 2015; Yilmaz & Bıkmaz, 2021). This feedback serves as the basis for students to continuously improve their pedagogical skills. This context becomes even more crucial when linked to the objective state of teacher competency in Indonesia. Based on data from the 2021 National Teacher Competency Test (UKG), the average national teacher competency score was only 53.02. This data indicates the still-low mastery of teacher competencies, particularly in pedagogical aspects and the use of educational technology. This situation demonstrates the importance of strengthening PPG as a strategic instrument in boosting the professional quality of prospective teachers through a systematic, integrative, and digital technology-based approach.

The use of digital Learning Management System (Koh & Kan, 2021) in teacher training program implementation has accelerated significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic, which required adaptation to online learning methods. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in 2023 recorded that more than 120,000 PPG students actively used LMS, involving thousands of mentor teachers from across Indonesia (Maisyaroh et al., 2021). This emphasizes the role of LMS as a key infrastructure in the PPG learning ecosystem. However, implementation challenges remain, particularly regarding the technological capacity of mentor teachers and infrastructure readiness in various regions. The UIN Datokarama Palu teacher training center faces not only technical challenges such as limited mentor teachers and digital resources, but also unique local contextual needs. Nevertheless, efforts to improve the quality of teacher training continue through collaboration with partner schools/madrasahs, intensive training, and innovative programs such as the "Teaching Clinic" designed to hone students' practical

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skills. However, a 2023 evaluation showed that only around 60% of mentor teachers actively utilized digital technology in their mentoring, due to limited training and technical support (Muchlis, Priatna, & Maizora, 2023). This indicates the need for a comprehensive strategy to sustainably support the role of mentor teachers.

In this context, mentor teachers are not only responsible for administrative duties, but are also required to be mentors capable of bridging educational theory with field practice, as well as fostering student professionalism across four core competency dimensions: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional. According to Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, professional teachers are required to fully master all of these dimensions. Therefore, the role of mentor teachers is central to ensuring that PPG students not only master content and methods, but also develop character, professional ethics, and collaborative skills in a dynamic learning environment. Theoretically and practically, strengthening the role of mentor teachers within the LMS ecosystem is a determining factor in developing the quality of PPG graduates. However, there remains a gap in research regarding the concrete contribution of mentor teachers in the context of LMS-based PPG, particularly at religious-based LPTKs like UIN Datokarama Palu. Most previous studies have focused solely on the technical aspects of LMS use, without delving deeply into how mentor teachers' guidance directly impacts the professional development of PPG students.

Therefore, this research begins with the empirical and theoretical need to identify and analyze the strategic role of mentor teachers in guiding PPG students through an LMS. The main focus is on how this role significantly contributes to the professional development of prospective teachers in the digital era, and how LPTKs like UIN Datokarama Palu can develop effective strategies to address the challenges and opportunities of digital platform-based learning sustainably.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Mentor Teacher

Supervisory teachers are teachers who are tasked with accompanying students to guide practicums according to their field of study (Barahona, 2019). Supervisory teachers in Teacher Professional Education (PPG) play a crucial role in guiding, directing, and accompanying PPG students, as facilitators helping students in developing effective learning tools that are in accordance with the applicable curriculum, ensuring student readiness in preparing lesson plans (RPP) or teaching modules and other teaching materials. As experienced practitioners, supervisory teachers are role models in the application of professional ethics and pedagogical competencies, providing inspiration and motivation to students to become lifelong learners and professional teachers. Supervisory teachers have a function as facilitators, guides, and assessors in the experience-based learning process. Supervisory teachers play a role in the learning process which involves four stages, namely concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

A mentor teacher also has duties other than teaching (Hall, Draper, Smith, & Bullough Jr, 2008). The mentor teacher duties include assisting students in the implementation of PPG, mentoring, performance evaluation, delivering materials, mentoring, and coordinating with supervising lecturers. The mentor teacher also plays a role as a mentor who is very influential in the formation of character and teacher competence. PPG students are individuals who are in the transition stage to professional teachers. In this case, students are in their own Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), namely an area of learning potential that can develop if given appropriate guidance and intervention. Therefore, the mentor teacher is present as a "scaffolder", which helps PPG students bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and professional practice in the field.

B. Improving Teachers Candidate professionalism

Improving professionalism in Teacher Professional Education (PPG) is one of the important aspects in the formation of qualified, competent teachers who are able to make maximum contributions to the world of education in Indonesia. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 Article 8 states that teacher competencies include pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies obtained through professional education. Jean Piaget argues that learning is an active process involving four key concepts, namely Schemata are mental structures or basic thought patterns formed by individuals to organize and understand information from the surrounding world. Schemata develop through experience and change dynamically as knowledge increases. Assimilation is a mental process in which a person incorporates new information into an existing cognitive structure without fundamentally changing the structure. Accommodation is a mental process when an individual changes his cognitive structure (scheme) to fit new information or experiences that cannot be fully explained by previous knowledge and Equilibration is an important process that regulates the relationship between assimilation and accommodation. Piaget argued that true learning occurs when an individual experiences cognitive disequilibrium due to new information or experiences that do not fit with their existing schemas. To restore this balance, the individual will accommodate or adjust their schemas, ultimately achieving a new equilibrium.

In the context of improving professionalism, referring to the PPG curriculum principle, namely the activity-based curriculum, which is an implementation of the TPACK (technological pedagogical content knowledge) concept (LPTK UIN Datokarama Palu, 2022). Teacher professionalism is not formed instantly. It is the result of the process of internalizing skills, values, and knowledge

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in the context of practice and social interaction. This is in line with the spirit of contextual teaching and learning (CTL), where the learning process must be contextual to be meaningful. If this program is implemented in accordance with existing requirements and provisions, it will have a positive impact on improving teacher professionalism in Indonesia. By passing the performance test (UKIN) and knowledge test (UP) and being declared successful, teachers will receive a teacher certificate as formal proof of recognition given to teachers and lecturers as professionals (Law Number 14 of 2005).

C. Learning Management System (LMS)

A Learning Management System (LMS) can be simply defined as web-based software used to plan, implement, manage, and evaluate a learning process. The in-service Teacher Professional Education (PPG) program is conducted through distance learning, where interactions between educators and students are separated by space and time. This LMS serves as the primary means of delivering digital content, learning videos, discussion forums, and collecting student assignments, reflections, and assessments. In this context, PPG has adopted an E-Learning approach, namely fully technology- and internet-based learning. In this learning context, knowledge is formed and updated through networks, not simply stored in individual heads, through the four main principles of connectivism: autonomy, connectedness, diversity, and openness. Watson and Watson state that an LMS is an integrated platform for delivering, managing, and documenting learning activities, including assessment and reporting of learning outcomes. The implementation of an LMS provides many benefits that directly and indirectly support the role of mentor teachers in the learning process, namely increasing learning flexibility, expanding educational reach and collaboration, streamlining learning administration management, and supporting lifelong learning. The implementation of an LMS supports the central role of mentor teachers as professional mentors in the field. An LMS increases the flexibility and efficiency of the learning process, expands access and collaboration, and encourages a spirit of lifelong learning.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative methods. In qualitative research, the use of theory serves as a guide for data gathering and analysis (Nurdin & Pettalongi, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2016). The data was collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis at the research site (Rusli, Hasyim, & Nurdin, 2021; Rusli & Nurdin, 2022). The research was conducted in two public high schools in Poso. The researcher chose the location based on the consideration that the two schools are the pride of the community in the conflict-prone area of Poso district. The results of this study can later be a reference as well as a guideline for building a peaceful life and making these two schools a sample for other educational institutions.

Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and the analysis of written documents. The interviews involved four mentors teacher, five lectures, and twenty teacher candidates. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The results of the transcripts were consulted with the participants to obtain their consent (Nurdin, Scheepers, & Stockdale, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2014). The data analysis technique employed a deductive thinking approach, which can be interpreted as a research procedure that generates deductive conclusions from the interviews and field notes. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis from Strauss and Corbin (1998). The analysis started with open, axial, and selective coding. The final result of the data analysis is themes found from the data.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Case Description

State Islamic University (UIN) Datokarama Palu, which is the only State Islamic Religious College in Central Sulawesi Province, Palu City. With two campuses, namely campus 1 located at Jalan Diponegoro Number 23, Lere Village, West Palu District, Palu City and campus 2 located in Pombewe Village, Sigi Biromaru District, Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi. The vision of UIN Datokarama Palu is to develop moderate Islamic studies based on the integration of science, spirituality and local wisdom. The mission is to organize Islamic higher education based on the integration of science, develop moderate Islamic studies through interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches, organize character strengthening based on values, art, culture and local wisdom, develop research oriented towards the development of Islamic science and Muslim society, organize community service and Islamic spiritual guidance.

The Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FTIK) and the Professional Teacher Education (PPG) Study Program are located on campus 2 of UIN Datokarama Palu. The transformation of national policy from Professional Teacher Education and Training (PLPG) to the Professional Teacher Education Program (PPG) in 2019 marked the beginning of the trust given to one of the Teacher Training Institutions (LPTK) within the State Islamic Religious College (PTKIN), in this case IAIN Palu, to organize the PPG Program. Although the institution previously had no track record in organizing PLPG, the trust was given based on adequate lecturer qualifications and the institution's ability to organize the program's implementation professionally.

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The quality of the PPG program is largely determined by the competence of the lecturers and mentor teachers. The institution sets high standards in terms of lecturer qualifications, namely a minimum rank of Senior Lecturer and a lecturer certificate. Meanwhile, mentor teachers are selected based on strict criteria, with a minimum rank of IV/a, a teacher certificate, and from an A-accredited school/madrasah. This selection aims to guarantee the quality of mentoring and maintain a match between educator competency and program needs, so the institution was appointed as the organizer of the PPG Program with the first batch receiving a quota of 32 participants, most of whom came from the Central Sulawesi region, namely Parigi Moutong Regency, Donggala Regency, Palu City and its surroundings.

The PPG program is designed as a blended learning approach, combining online learning through the website <https://ppg.silagapendis.com/> and face-to-face sessions on campus. The online component is implemented for three months, emphasizing mastery of professional competencies, while the face-to-face sessions are conducted for three months, focusing on strengthening pedagogical competencies. This approach reflects the integration of educational technology and direct interaction, which are essential in developing teacher professionalism. That same year, greater trust was again given when the institution was assigned to administer the National Knowledge Test (UP) for all Islamic religious education teachers in Indonesia, even before the official establishment of the PPG study program at the institution. This demonstrates the institution's perceived legitimacy and academic credibility within the national campus environment.

With the issuance of Decree No. 61 of 2020 from the Director General of Islamic Education concerning guidelines for the establishment of permits for teacher professional education study programs, dated January 6, 2020, the institution, with its swift response to this national mandate, fully supported and endeavored to formally establish the PPG study program through the Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. On January 10, 2020, the Dean formed a team to prepare a proposal for the PPG study program. The proposal submission process included fulfilling various administrative and academic requirements, including curriculum completeness and verifying the qualifications of lecturers and mentor teachers. The proposal successfully convinced central government policymakers, demonstrating recognition of the institution's capabilities, particularly in human resource management and academic infrastructure readiness. After undergoing an assessment process, the institution received official approval from the Ministry of Religious Affairs through Decree No. 52 of 2021 concerning the Permit to Establish the PPG Study Program at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Palu. Recruitment of the first batch of PPG students in 2021 was carried out with reference to national standards resulting from consolidation between PTKIN through central forums.

B. The role of mentor teachers in improving the professionalism of prospective teachers.

The results of the study indicate that the role of the supervising teacher is threefold, namely; First, the supervising teacher plays a central role in improving the professionalism of LMS-based PPG students at LPTK UIN Datokarama Palu. They act as facilitators, mentors, evaluators, counselors, and professional role models who guide students in teaching practice, preparing teaching materials, and strengthening teaching attitudes and ethics. Second, the supervising teacher actively utilizes the LMS as a means of academic guidance and pedagogical communication, which is complemented by additional LMS platforms such as WhatsApp and Zoom. The coordination system between lecturers, supervising teachers, and students runs synergistically through refreshment activities, workshops, and monitoring that support smooth learning. Third, the supervising teacher also plays an important role in providing feedback, correction, and motivation to students, both in the context of field introduction practice (PPL), preparation of lesson plans/teaching modules, and performance exams. Students feel that the support of the supervising teacher is not only technical, but also builds their confidence and readiness as prospective professional teachers. Based on the experiential learning theory by David A. Kolb, which emphasizes that knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, through four cycles, the role of the mentor teacher includes;

Concrete Experience

Regarding the role of mentor teachers, PPG students at UIN Datokarama Palu have concrete experiences of direct learning through intensive mentor teacher mentoring in teaching practice, developing teaching materials, and fostering professional ethics. LMS and digital platforms like Zoom and WhatsApp are actively used for academic mentoring, creating real-life experiences in professional communication and coordination. Furthermore, students receive direct feedback, assignment corrections, and motivation that build their confidence and readiness as future teachers.

Reflective Observation

This role, in relation to PPG students, reflects that the guidance of mentor teachers is highly influential in shaping their attitudes and understanding as prospective professional teachers. The mentor teachers' exemplary behavior, discipline, and communication skills serve as concrete examples that they reflect on as part of their professionalization process. They also recognize that the effectiveness of the LMS depends heavily on the mentor teachers' active involvement. The feedback provided not only improves technical aspects but also instills deep pedagogical values.

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Abstract Conceptualization

PPG students began to develop a conceptual understanding of the role of mentor teachers in LMS-based learning. They linked field experiences to teaching theory, concluding that teacher professionalism is built through systematic, collaborative, and values-oriented guidance. Students also understood that an LMS is not just a tool, but part of a learning ecosystem.

Active Experimentation

PPG students began applying the results of their guidance and reflection in real-world practice, such as developing lesson plans, teaching independently, and utilizing an LMS innovatively. They tried out strategies exemplified by their mentor teachers and demonstrated initiative in improving and developing their teaching practices. This study demonstrates that the mentor teacher's role in enhancing the professionalism of PPG students is referred to as a reflective-transformative facilitator, as their presence is a key driver in experiential learning that shapes PPG students' competencies and professional identity.

C. Improving the professionalism of prospective teachers

Teachers' Competency

Based on the results of this study, the role of mentor teachers can be grouped into four competencies: First, improving pedagogical competency. The mentor teacher's role is to guide students in developing teaching materials (lessons, teaching modules, student worksheets), designing assessments, and implementing learning that is appropriate to student characteristics. Students are able to develop teaching materials independently and appropriately. The quality of student learning planning improves after mentoring, and students understand the application of contextual learning methods through direct practice and feedback.

Second, improving personal competency. The mentor teacher's role is to serve as a reference source for understanding teaching materials, curriculum integration, and relevant and contextual learning strategies. Students are able to connect theory from the Learning Management System (LMS) with real-world practice in schools. Students demonstrate improvements in performance exams (UKIN) and the development of teaching materials. Student-developed teaching materials are more appropriate and align with curriculum standards, and students reflect on their learning practices. Third, improving social competency. The mentor teacher serves as a role model in attitudes, professional ethics, and moral responsibility, building relationships that support students personally, and building character and self-confidence. Students demonstrate an attitude of responsibility, discipline, and self-confidence during teaching practice, a supportive and inspiring mentoring relationship is created between the supervising teacher and students, students feel comfortable, appreciated, and motivated in the LMS-based PPG process.

Finally, improving professional competence involves fostering effective communication and collaboration with students and lecturers through digital media in an adaptive and flexible manner. Intensive communication is established through LMS, WhatsApp, Zoom, and discussion forums. Students actively engage in discussions, ask questions, and solicit input through various communication channels. Collaboration between the supervising teacher, lecturer, and students is synergistic in mentoring and evaluation.

D. Constructivism Learning Theory

Based on the constructivist learning theory put forward by Jean Piaget, learning is an active process that involves four key concepts, namely;

Schemata

From the schemata stage perspective, the improvement of PPG students' professionalism at UIN Datokarama Palu can be seen as an indicator of the success of the LMS-based mentor teacher role through four main teacher competencies. Pedagogically, students are able to build conceptual schemas about learning planning independently through practice-based mentoring. Students understand contextual learning strategies concretely through practice and feedback, which strengthens their procedural schemas. Personally, students conduct critical reflections on teaching practices, indicating the formation of reflective schemas that form the basis for professional decision-making. Socially, interpersonal schemas are formed through the models of attitudes and ethics demonstrated by mentor teachers. Professionally, this interaction enriches students' collaborative and digital-literacy schemas, demonstrating adaptation to technology-based learning.

Assimilation

Through the assimilation process of increasing the professionalism of PPG students at UIN Datokarama Palu, it shows the success of the role of LMS-based mentor teachers, where new knowledge is integrated into the old schemata without changing the basic structure, students assimilate the concept of compiling teaching tools and contextual learning into previous understanding, so that learning planning becomes more mature (pedagogical), professional values and learning strategies from mentor teachers strengthen students' responsible and reflective attitudes (personality), students' discipline, empathy, and self-confidence grow through role models, assimilated in their social schemata (Social), students integrate digital communication and collaboration patterns into their professional practice through intensive interaction via LMS and online media (professional).

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Accommodation

The accommodation stage occurs when students adjust their old understanding to new experiences. Improving the professionalism of LMS-based PPG students at UIN Datokarama Palu, the role of the mentor teacher encourages students to make accommodations in four teacher competencies; Pedagogy, students are able to develop teaching materials that are on target, after adjusting their understanding through direct practice and feedback from the mentor teacher. Personality, students integrate theory from the LMS with real practice, showing improvements in reflection, performance tests (UKIN), knowledge tests (UP) and the preparation of teaching materials according to the curriculum. Social, students' professional attitudes (responsibility, discipline, self-confidence) grow through ethical and supportive guidance, forming positive and constructive relationships. Professionally, students accommodate new skills in digital collaboration, actively discussing via LMS, WA, and Zoom, and playing a role in synergistic collaboration with lecturers and mentor teachers.

Equilibration

Equilibration (cognitive balancing) stage: From a pedagogical perspective, when students recognize the gap between the theory in the LMS and the practice guided by the mentor teacher, they experience disequilibrium. Through direct guidance, constructive feedback, and practical opportunities, students accommodate to the new experience. Their pedagogical knowledge becomes more balanced as they successfully integrate theory and practice, marked by improved teaching materials and learning design skills. Personality enhancement: When students encounter discrepancies between theoretical content and school reality, they engage in critical reflection and adjust their understanding through cognitive accommodation. As a result, students demonstrate improvements in performance exams (UKIN), develop appropriate teaching materials, and develop reflective habits. This indicates that the equilibration process has been effective in internalizing professional values.

Socially, when students face social pressures or professional ethics that they have not yet fully mastered, disequilibrium occurs in the affective-social aspect. Through modeling by the mentor teacher, students adjust their attitudes and behaviors, experience social accommodation, and ultimately find equilibrium in the form of self-confidence, discipline, and responsibility. Professionally, students experience confusion and difficulty in establishing effective online communication (technological disequilibrium). However, with the guidance of adaptive and flexible mentor teachers, students learn to navigate various digital platforms. The overall process of improving the professionalism of PPG students at UIN Datokarama Palu through an LMS-based approach is a clear indicator of the success of mentor teachers as facilitators, mentors, and constructivist learning models, which encourage students toward adaptive, reflective, collaborative, and transformative teacher professionalism.

E. Socio-Cultural Theory

From the socio-cultural perspective, Lev S. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes that a person's cognitive development occurs through social interactions within a cultural context. The central concept of this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In the context of PPG (School Teacher Education) programs, mentor teachers act as scaffolders, providing conceptual, procedural, strategic, and metacognitive support until students become independent. The professional development of PPG students can be analyzed through four teacher competencies, which also serve as indicators of the success of mentor teachers in LMS-based mentoring: First, pedagogical competency, where mentor teachers guide students in developing lesson plans/learning modules, student worksheets (LKPD), and other teaching materials. This is a form of scaffolding within the ZPD that supports students in developing appropriate and effective learning planning skills. Second, personality competency, where mentor teachers serve as role models in professional ethics, responsibility, and reflection.

Through intensive social interactions, students learn to develop their professional character. Third, social competency, where the relationship fostered between mentor teachers and students creates a positive, supportive, and mutually constructive learning environment. This social interaction is crucial for developing students' self-confidence, discipline, and professional attitudes. Fourth, regarding professional competence, mentor teachers encourage collaboration and active communication between students, lecturers, and teachers through digital media. This creates a collaborative learning community. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for explaining how mentor teachers become agents of professional transformation. This approach emphasizes that learning is social, contextual, and mediative, mediated by language, culture, and social relations. With this approach, mentor teachers not only teach prospective teachers what to do but also shape who they become as future teachers.

F. Connectivism Learning Theory

A review of the connectivism learning theory developed by George Siemens offers a relevant theoretical framework for understanding how knowledge is formed and updated through networks, rather than simply stored in individual heads. In the context of implementing the Learning Management System (LMS)-based Teacher Professional Education (PPG) at UIN Datokarama Palu, the role of mentor teachers as learning facilitators is crucial in shaping the professionalism of prospective teachers. This role can be examined in depth through the four main principles of connectivism: autonomy, connectedness, diversity, and openness.

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First, from the aspect of autonomy, connectivism emphasizes the importance of individual independence in managing their learning paths and resources. Mentor teachers in the PPG program at UIN Datokarama Palu play a central role in fostering student autonomy. Through guidance in the development of teaching materials such as lesson plans (RPP), teaching modules, and student worksheets (LKPD), students are encouraged to think independently and make appropriate pedagogical decisions. The research results showed that students experienced improved quality in lesson planning and a better understanding of contextual learning methods after undergoing intensive mentoring. This reflects the strengthening of pedagogical competencies based on the principle of learning autonomy.

Second, from a connectedness perspective, connectivism teaches that knowledge is acquired through dynamic networks. In practice, mentor teachers utilize various digital media such as LMS, WhatsApp, and Zoom to build effective communication and collaboration with students and lecturers. This coordination system operates synergistically through refresher sessions, workshops, and joint monitoring activities that support the smooth running of the learning process. This open and intensive communication is a concrete reflection of the strengthening of professional competence, which strengthens the connections between various educational actors within the learning network. Third, connectivism theory emphasizes the importance of diversity as a source of rich knowledge. Mentor teachers present a variety of approaches, learning strategies, and best practices that enable students to understand the integration of theory from the LMS with the real-world context of schools/madrasas. Students do not rely solely on a single learning model but learn from the diverse perspectives offered by mentor teachers. This encourages in-depth reflection on learning practices and improves the quality of teaching materials and performance exam results. In this regard, mentor teachers' personal competencies are reflected in their role as sources of inspiration and strengthen students' professional identities.

Fourth, the principle of openness in connectivism is evident in how mentor teachers build inclusive, supportive, and participatory mentoring relationships. Students are given space to discuss, ask questions, and receive feedback openly without fear or pressure. Mentor teachers serve as role models of professional ethics, moral responsibility, and reflective behavior, so students feel valued and motivated. This open relationship strengthens students' social competence, characterized by increased self-confidence, discipline, and the ability to build professional relationships during field practice. Thus, the role of mentor teachers in the LMS-based PPG at UIN Datokarama Palu can be understood holistically through the lens of connectivism as a key driver in establishing dynamic, reflective, and collaborative learning networks. Mentor teachers function not only as technical mentors but also as active connectors in the knowledge network system, encouraging students to grow into independent, connected, open-minded, and prepared professional teachers who are ready to face the challenges of the digital education world.

G. Opportunities and Challenges

The opportunities consist of several things, namely: First, placing mentor teachers as an integral part of the institutional system. This position opens access to training, academic activities, and collaboration with lecturers. Second, in the implementation of PPG, mentor teachers act as pedagogical mentors, assisting students in preparing teaching materials, implementing innovative learning methods, and designing PTK. They are also involved in performance tests and PPL, thus supporting students' professional habituation through real-world practice. Third, creating structural collaboration with lecturers through activities to align perceptions, monitoring, evaluation, and training UKIN examiners. In the context of the LMS, mentor teachers utilize digital features such as assignment comments, discussion forums, and communication via WhatsApp and Zoom. This enables the establishment of responsive and personal two-way communication. Fourth, as role models of professional ethics, mentor teachers contribute to the development of students' character and professional attitudes. Fifth, their role as formative evaluators is seen through providing reflective feedback on lesson plans/teaching modules and learning practices. Sixth, mentor teachers also demonstrate their capacity as digital innovators by utilizing LMS integration and other supporting technologies.

The challenges faced by mentor teachers in improving the professionalism of LMS-based PPG students at UIN Datokarama Palu are as follows: First, limited internet access, especially for students in remote areas. This hampers LMS access, synchronous learning, uploading assignments, and communication with mentor teachers. Weak signal, power outages, and large file sizes also complicate the process of assessing the authenticity of practical assignments. Second, time constraints due to their primary duties as teachers at school make it difficult to provide optimal online mentoring. To overcome this, many implement flexible schedules, provide guidance outside of official LMS hours, and utilize alternative media such as WhatsApp. Third, coordination with lecturers from different schedules, methods, and academic perspectives is challenging. Fourth, students' low digital literacy makes it difficult to navigate the LMS, operate the device, and understand online instructions. Fifth, mentor teachers face a dilemma in maintaining academic integrity, especially in verifying the authenticity of student-submitted practical reports. Nevertheless, mentor teachers actively provide guidance outside of LMS hours, maintaining intensive communication. This attitude is appreciated by students as a form of true professionalism. Sixth, from the student's perspective, this has an impact on the supervising teacher regarding technical and time issues, although it actually encourages the growth of time management and communication skills as provisions for becoming a professional teacher.

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V. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the role of mentor teachers is highly strategic in enhancing the professionalism of LMS-based PPG students at the LPTK UIN Datokarama Palu. Mentor teachers not only serve as technical mentors but also serve as facilitators, evaluators, and professional role models, assisting students in various aspects of learning, from teaching practice to developing teaching ethics. The LMS and digital communication media are maximized to support a collaborative and integrated academic guidance process between students, lecturers, and mentor teachers. Significant improvements in student professionalism are evident across four core competency domains: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional. The mentor teachers' guidance connects LMS theory with real-world practice, fosters work ethics, and enhances students' abilities in designing, implementing, and evaluating learning. In this process, mentor teachers also facilitate effective communication and cross-role synergy. Despite facing a number of challenges such as limited infrastructure, time, coordination, and low student digital literacy, mentor teachers remain flexible and innovative. These challenges actually create a unique learning environment for students to develop time management, communication, and professional responsibility skills. Therefore, the role of mentor teachers in the LMS-based PPG ecosystem is not only crucial but also crucial for the success of students' transformation into adaptive and collaborative professional teachers.

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