The Role of Mentor Teachers in Non-Academic Guidance: Case Study of Senior High School Teaching Assistance Program

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Info Section	ABSTRACT
	Objective: This study aims to examine the role of the supervising teacher in non-academic guidance in the Teaching Assistance Program in Senior High Schools. As with technical guidance in the learning process of prospective teachers, non-academic aspects are no less important in the success of the teaching assistance program, but there are still few studies that reveal these aspects. **Method**: The study was conducted using a qualitative method with data collection through in-depth interviews with supervising teachers and prospective teachers. **Results**: The results of the study indicate that supervising teachers play a significant role in the development of interpersonal skills, professional ethics, guidance on school environment adaptation, leadership character, and stress management needed by prospective teachers. This non-academic guidance has improved the professional readiness of students, preparing them to face educational challenges. However, there are challenges in implementing this guidance, namely limited time and workload of supervising teachers. This study recommends training for supervising teachers in non-academic guidance aspects and the need for institutional support to improve the effectiveness of the teaching assistance program. **Novelty**: These findings emphasize the importance of a holistic approach in the education of prospective teachers, which focuses on academic aspects and the development of social and emotional skills.

INTRODUCTION

The role of teachers is very important in shaping personality, preparing and developing human resources, improving community welfare, and advancing the state and nation (Kasmawati & Naryoto, 2022). A teacher is someone who has academic qualifications and competence as a learning agent.(Damayanti et al., 2021). Teachers are very important figures in ensuring the smooth running of the learning process (Jaafar & Ghazali, 2018; Rashid et al., 2019; Rivera et al., 2021). In implementing teaching competencies, teachers are required to actively improve their professional development (Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2020; Wiese et al., 2024). Teachers as one of the main components in learning are the determinants of the success of the teaching and learning process in the classroom (Al Fath, 2021; Arifin & Yaqin, 2022). Therefore, teachers must be able to play an active role as professionals in supporting government efforts to improve the quality of education in Indonesia (Chintyawati, 2023; Damayanti et al., 2021; Rani, 2020).

Teacher education is the foundation for developing the quality of education in every country (Chugh et al., 2022; Cupido & Norodien-Fataar, 2018). Efforts to produce quality teachers do not only rely on learning carried out in the classroom but also need to gain direct experience in the field through various teaching practice programs. One of them is the Teaching Assistance Program (Puspitasari & Nugroho, 2021). This program aims to hone the skills of prospective student teachers through authentic interactions with

students, senior teachers, and the school environment (Kusumawardani et al., 2024). One of the crucial elements in this program is the role of mentor teachers who act as guides for prospective student teachers during the mentoring process at school (Chan et al., 2022; Dahal, 2023; Dasmo & Sumaryati, 2014).

There is a growing theme in the role of teachers, especially mentor teachers (Zehra et al., 2023). Mentors, often referred to as mentor teachers, are very important in shaping the competence and professionalism of prospective teachers or pre-service teachers (Abetang et al., 2020; Chugh et al., 2022). In practice in the field, mentor teachers should not only provide technical guidance to master teaching skills but also provide emotional and pedagogical support, which is very important for the comprehensive development of prospective educators. Close interaction between mentor teachers and prospective teachers fosters a supportive learning environment that allows prospective teachers to face practical challenges in the field of education with greater confidence and competence. The role of mentor teachers is not limited to academic guidance; they also play an important role in providing non-academic support, which includes aspects of developing emotional, ethical, and social skills (Hayes & Mahfouz, 2020; Nugraheni, 2021; Tausan, 2023).

Non-academic mentoring is essential in preparing prospective teachers to face the complexities of the world of education that goes beyond the classroom (Kutsyuruba & Godden, 2019). Several studies have shown that non-academic support, such as stress management, interpersonal communication, and professional character development, are important factors in forming effective teachers (McArthur et al., 2017; Wilson & Huynh, 2020). In the context of learning, this role becomes even more crucial because prospective teachers are often faced with emotional and psychological challenges that have never been experienced before. This is where mentor teachers are expected to provide guidance that not only helps students develop their teaching skills but also their mental and emotional readiness to become professional educators (Hernandez et al., 2016; McArthur et al., 2017; Waber et al., 2021).

Although important, research on the role of assistant teachers in non-academic mentoring is still relatively limited. Most studies tend to focus on the academic aspects of mentoring, such as the development of pedagogical skills and classroom management (Chugh et al., 2022; Dahal, 2023; Nuraisyah & Rahman, 2021). In fact, non-academic mentoring plays a strategic role in helping prospective teachers adapt to social and emotional challenges in the school environment (Ellis et al., 2020; Yaacob & Bakar, 2018). Thus, the benefits of this study have novelty in a more comprehensive understanding of the role of assistant teachers in non-academic aspects which is very much needed to enrich the literature and support the improvement of the quality of teacher education.

In the context of Senior High School, non-academic mentoring by assistant teachers has a more complex dimension (Flores, 2019; Pruaño et al., 2022). Assistant teachers not only help prospective teachers in managing interactions with adolescent students but also equip them with the ability to adapt to wider social networks (Eliwatis et al., 2022; Gao & Wang, 2022; Hackmann & Malin, 2020; K et al., 2021). Thus, the novelty of this study aims to explore the role of assistant teachers in non-academic mentoring in the Teaching Assistance Program at the Senior High School level. Therefore, it produces an important question: What is the role of assistant teachers in non-academic guidance in the Teaching Assistance Program in Senior High Schools? The results of this study aim to provide a significant contribution to enriching the understanding of the important role of assistant teachers in teacher education programs. The importance of this study is also as a recommendation for further development of teaching assistance programs in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used is a qualitative approach with a case study method. The research design uses qualitative descriptive. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to describe in depth to explore the role of mentor teachers in non-academic guidance in the Teaching Assistance Program. This study involves exploring subjective experiences and complex social interactions. The case study method allows researchers to understand the phenomenon being studied in a specific context, namely non-academic guidance in High Schools (Creswell, 2016; Yin, 1989). The phenomenon being studied occurred in one of the partner schools in the Teaching Assistance program. Informants were collected by purposive sampling with the criteria of mentor teachers in High Schools and students who were taking part in the teaching assistance program which included three mentor teachers and two prospective teachers. The data collection procedure was carried out by observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Data analysis was carried out by reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions.

The following is a research flow diagram:

Identify Problems and Objectives

Literature Study and Instrument Development

Selection of Informants and Partner Schools

Data Collection (Interviews, Observations, Documentation)

Data analysis

Triangulation and Validation of Findings

Interpretation and Report Writing

Publication of Research Results

Figure 1. Research Flow Chart

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

General Description

During the period of 2023 and 2024, Lambung Mangkurat University has implemented a teaching assistance program with 22 partner schools with a total of 1,578 student participants (Source: Quarterly Performance Report IV of Lambung Mangkurat University, 2023). One of the partner schools in the teaching assistance program is a Senior High School. The role of assistant teachers in Senior High Schools includes various important aspects in developing the competencies of prospective teachers. As field assistants in the teacher education program, assistant teachers provide comprehensive guidance for students to gain the skills, experience, and confidence needed as competent and committed educators. Although academic skills are the main focus, non-academic guidance is an important aspect in shaping the character and social skills of prospective teachers. These non-academic skills are greatly needed by prospective teachers,

especially in facing the various real challenges they face in the world of work, not only in classroom learning but also in the school environment as a whole.

Form of non-academic guidance Teaching Assistance Program

1. Interpersonal skills development

   The assistant teacher always helps prospective teachers in developing interpersonal skills, such as building relationships with students, coworkers, and parents of students. Students are taught how to build harmonious working relationships, handle conflicts professionally, and maintain effective communication with various parties. Daily routine interactions with high continuity in schools are a medium for developing these interpersonal skills. Assistant teachers also teach empathy, being an active listener, and responding according to social context.

2. Development of professional ethics

   Professional ethics are the foundation for the teaching profession. Supervisors guide students to understand and strive to practice ethical values that need to be upheld as a teacher. Supervisors always remind students to maintain integrity, be fair and inclusive towards all students, and maintain trust with the school community. Supervisors as role models for students also directly provide real examples of these ethical values, for example the attitude that must be shown when facing situations that require teachers to make ethical decisions, including maintaining student privacy, and when handling student discipline problems that require caution.

3. Guidance in adapting to the school environment

   Like society, a school is a community that has its own social and cultural environment. The guidance provided by the supervising teacher in this case is to help students recognize and adjust to the school's socio-cultural environment. Students are taught to recognize applicable norms and ways to adjust to school dynamics. Guidance in this aspect can help students hone their sensitivity to social needs at school. During the student's practice journey, their active participation in the school community can be seen, for example in students' extracurricular activities and teachers' non-academic activities.

4. Leadership character development

   It is undeniable that teachers are leaders in the classroom. To shape students as leaders, the assistant teacher provides opportunities for students to participate in activities other than classroom learning. Activities outside the classroom, such as organizing school events, leading small projects, and helping students in extracurricular activities can strengthen the leadership character of prospective teacher students. This leadership learning teaches students about time and people management, leading by example, forming an attitude of supporting others, and forming effective collaboration.

5. Stress management training

   During the internship, students face various complex situations in the school environment. There are various pressures and demands, both academically and socially. The supervising teacher teaches students about the importance of maintaining emotional balance. Guidance is directed at ways to manage stress, such as time management, maintaining mental health, and conducting self-reflection personally and with the help of colleagues. Open discussions about

teaching experiences are often held as an effort to help overcome student anxiety and stress. Guidance in this aspect is felt to be very important for students so that they are not only able to become effective teachers but also able to maintain mental health.

Table 1. Non-Academic Guidance Activities Mentor Teachers with Teaching Assistance Students

No.	Form of Guidance	Form of Activity
1	Interpersonal skills development	building relationships with students, co-workers, and parents. Students are taught how to build harmonious working relationships, handle conflicts professionally, and maintain effective communication with various parties. The mentor teacher also teaches empathy, being an active listener, and responding according to social context.
2.	Development of professional ethics	The supervising teacher guides students to understand and try to practice the ethical values that need to be upheld as a teacher. The supervising teacher reminds students to maintain integrity, be fair and inclusive towards all students, and maintain trust with the school community.
3.	Guidance in adapting to the school environment	Helping students recognize and adapt to the school's socio-cultural environment. Students are taught to recognize applicable norms and ways to adapt to school dynamics.
4.	Leadership character development	The mentor teacher provides opportunities for students to participate in activities other than classroom learning. Activities outside the classroom, such as organizing school events, leading small projects, and helping students with extracurricular activities can strengthen the leadership character of student teachers.
5.	Stress management training	The supervising teacher teaches students about the importance of maintaining emotional balance. Guidance is directed at ways to manage stress, such as time management, maintaining mental health, and conducting self-reflection both personally and with the help of colleagues.

In the mentoring process, it is not uncommon for mentor teachers to encounter obstacles, especially in guiding and directing prospective teachers in non-academic aspects. One of the obstacles faced is time constraints. In addition, mentor teachers themselves face a fairly large workload, making it difficult to pay attention to the prospective teachers they mentor. The complexity of the role faced by mentor teachers does not dampen their enthusiasm for providing professional experience to prospective teachers. In addition to directing aspects of stress management, mentor teachers also provide examples through direct actions of how they as mentors complete complex role tasks.

Discussion

Mentor teachers play a central role in the education of prospective teachers, especially in field experience practice (Abetang et al., 2020; Gakinya et al., 2022). As mentors and field facilitators, mentor teachers support the professional development of prospective

teachers (Chalies et al., 2019). The general responsibility of a mentor teacher is to provide guidance based on teaching experience. The role of a mentor teacher covers all aspects holistically, including academic and non-academic aspects (Darling Hammond, 2020). Supervisory teachers can be called mentors and also professional models who can provide examples of teachers who can be imitated regarding how a teacher should behave and act in complex situations at school (Lu and friends, 2020). This is in line with Bandura's view of social learning theory. They explain that each individual learns through observing and imitating the behavior of models, just as interns learn from mentors through observing everyday social interactions in the school environment (Azizah et al., 2021; Bandura, 1997).

Based on the research results, it can be mentioned several roles of non-academic guidance for prospective teacher students, namely: development of interpersonal skills, development of professional ethics, guidance on school environment adaptation, development of leadership character, and stress management. This non-academic support can provide significant results for the success of prospective teacher students when undergoing field experience practice at school (McArthur et al., 2017; Wilson & Huynh, 2020). Guidance provided by mentor teachers when prospective teachers face difficult or stressful situations at school can increase students' self-confidence and mental resilience. Guidance from mentor teachers helps develop prospective teachers' soft skills as they develop daily interactions with students, colleagues, senior teachers, and parents (Bent et al., 2020; Sulhan, 2022).

The non-academic guidance aspects provided by the supervising teacher have a positive impact on the professional readiness of prospective teachers (Ndebele and Legg-Jack, 2022). Professional readiness can be obtained not only by emphasizing teaching techniques, but also by paying attention to how to practice managing the various pressures faced in the context of education and teaching (Stefanus et al., 2022). Soft skills of prospective student teachers are important to be trained continuously, so that students demonstrate increased professional abilities in classroom management, including communication with parents of students, and the ability to adapt to social dynamics in the school environment (Chalies et al., 2019; Gakinya et al., 2022).

Non-academic guidance focuses on self-development and aims to prepare students to become prospective professional teachers (Zhong and Craig, 2020). Students are expected to have technical competence and strong professional character and attitude when carrying out their duties as prospective educators. Interpersonal skills are an integral part of a teacher's social competence (Junaesih et al., 2024). These social skills can be developed through observation and interaction with others (Bandura, 1997). Regarding mentoring activities by supervising teachers, prospective teacher students learn the process of building harmonious relationships and handling conflicts by directly observing the behavior and actions of supervising teachers in the school environment (Mameli et al., 2022). The formation of professional teacher identity by fostering a culture of care and affection in schools contributes to effective learning for prospective teachers (Falcon Linares, 2023). Students gain interpersonal skills development through the process of observing and imitating the behavior demonstrated by the supervising teacher (Kamarudin et al., 2020). Personal relationships are necessary in the context of school learning, including active listening skills and fostering empathy (Aspelin et al., 2021; Tackie, 2022).

Coaching in the development of professional ethics, encouraging the behavior of supervising teachers in terms of maintaining integrity, justice, and inclusiveness to influence students by providing real examples in daily interactions in the school environment (Fatimah & Triyanto, 2024). The ethical behavior of the supervising teacher

as a field supervisor becomes a guideline for real action based on professional values (Fitriatin & Rosyidah, 2024). Guidance carried out in the development of ethics is important so that prospective teacher students can understand and internalize ethical values. Indonesian:and the norms that apply in the education profession, where ethical decisions in the context of education must be guided by professional values (Nagima et al., 2023; Zhu & Guo, 2021).

The supervising teacher helps in the process of adjusting to the social environment at school. School is a social community that has its own norms and is known as school culture (Jurumiah & Saruji, 2020). As a miniature society, school culture requires adjustments that need to be made by prospective teachers (Kutsyuruba and Bezzina, 2024). This is where direction and guidance from the supervising teacher is needed so that prospective teachers can recognize school norms and learn to adapt to them (Maisaroh et al., 2023). In addition, prospective teacher students can actively participate in various activities in the school environment (Gardesten and Herrlin, 2024).

Coaching in strengthening leadership character helps motivate students. Leadership is one of the elements that need to be honed in a prospective teacher (Kutsyuruba and Godden, 2019). In the transformation of leadership character, the emphasis is on inspirational leadership so that it can motivate others to be able to maximize their potential (Cindy & Aisyah, 2024). Examples are given by the supervising teacher in the guidance process by leading through action and providing space for students to play an active role in school activities (Ismail et al., 2023). The principle of situational leadership allows mentor teachers to adapt their leadership style to the character development needs of students (Butar et al., 2024; Jannah et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2020).

Stress management guidance is one of the important roles of mentor teachers. Stress experienced by prospective teachers can be an obstacle in their career development, where there is a difference between environmental demands and individual abilities in dealing with these demands (Herman et al., 2020). As future teachers, management steps are needed to create emotionally prosperous individuals (Dreer-Goethe, 2023; Libertson, 2023). Guidance from the supervising teacher is very important in maintaining students' alertness when facing complex pressures from the school environment (Carroll et al., 2022). Guidance from the supervising teacher to students to maintain emotional balance through efficient time management, maintaining mental health, and frequent self-reflection (Dung et al., 2024). It is important to raise and maintain awareness in the teacher education process to maintain their mental health (Gómez-Olmedo et al., 2020; Hemming, 2024).

The complex role of teachers, both as professional teachers and as tutors, is a challenge that needs to be faced (Lindqvist et al., 2021, 2023; Tuerah & Pusungula, 2023).This program requires mentor teachers to act as supervisors and facilitators who are able to provide support to prospective student teachers, both technically and non-academically (Dreer, 2020). Some mentoring programs last twelve weeks, but still require more time and effort to make significant changes (Jose and Matore, 2021). Limited guidance time and excessive teacher workload have a negative impact on teacher performance and mental health (Haidusek-Niazy et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023). In addition, the limited time for practice has an impact on the difficulty in providing sufficient attention to prospective student teachers, although in turn, tutors still try to fulfill their role in non-academic guidance (Radulović et al., 2023). Several guidance teachers have different understandings in non-academic guidance, so that they give different results in their implementation (Wilson and Huynh, 2020). There are supervising teachers who are consistent in carrying out academic and non-academic guidance, and there are supervising teachers who tend to be mediocre in guiding non-academic aspects (Ritchey

and Smith, 2019).The complexity of the role of a teacher and tutor can also cause work stress and subsequently reduce job satisfaction (Samallo & Wulani, 2022). Teachers reported an increase in the workload they felt related to the policy changes (Stacey et al., 2023). Clear and fair workload policies are needed to ensure transparency to maintain educator morale and productivity (Park and friends, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Findings: The results of this study provide significant confirmation that non-academic guidance is no less important in shaping the professional identity of prospective teachers. Integration between academic and non-academic guidance is needed to improve students' abilities in practice at school. Supervisors are role models who help prospective teacher students by providing real examples and intensive interactions. **Implications**: Looking at the theoretical implications, the results of this study emphasize the need to expand the framework of supervising teachers to include non-academic aspects. Supervisors are not only seen as mentors in learning practices, but also as role models in developing the character and emotional competence of prospective teachers. Practically, it can be recommended to develop training for supervising teachers, especially in non-academic aspects. As an institution that organizes teaching assistance programs, universities need to prepare systematic guidelines on non-academic guidance so that supervising teachers can carry out their roles effectively. **Limitations**: The limitation of this study is the limited number of informants, namely only in high schools, so that comprehensive data were not obtained at all levels of school. **Future Research**: Further research focuses on the role of students in academic and non-academic guidance in the Teaching Assistance Program.

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