

Strengthening the Agency and Identity of Professional Educators Based on Local Wisdom to Realize the Scientific Vision, Mission, and Objectives of the Study Programme and Implementation of Merdeka Belajar at PGSD Universitas Muria Kudus

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Abstract: In the research literature on teacher education in Indonesia, there are not many studies that capture and reveal how study programmes realize their scientific vision, mission and objectives and how they implement the education policies of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. To fill this gap, qualitative research was conducted with a directed content analysis design with the theories of social constructivism, teacher professional agency and identity, and global meaning-making as the theoretical framework. The purpose of this research is to gain a contextual understanding of what the PGSD UMK study programme needs to do in order to realize its scientific vision, mission, and goals (ideals) and implement Merdeka Belajar policy. The findings of our research are a set of suggestions about the daily practices that need to be demonstrated by lecturers (prospective teacher educators) and study programme students (prospective teachers) to achieve ideals and contribute to the implementation of the policy. Based on these findings, we invite stakeholders to be involved in the realization process.

Keywords: Social constructivism, teacher professional agency and identity, global meaning creation, Merdeka Belajar policy, PGSD UMK

1. Introduction

As stated in Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System, improving the quality of human resources is the goal of education in this country. Specifically, this law describes quality Indonesian human beings as follows: faithful and devoted to God Almighty, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and a democratic and responsible citizen. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology launched Merdeka Belajar policy with a series of episodes to achieve the goal. As stated in the Merdeka Belajar pocket guide, this policy is implemented to accelerate the achievement of the national goal of education, namely the improvement of the quality of Indonesia's human resources that have advantages and competitiveness compared to other countries.

Kampus Merdeka is one of the episodes of Merdeka Belajar (MBKM) for education reform at the tertiary level, which we believe is in line with the objectives of providing education for prospective teachers in Indonesia, precisely at educational personnel education institutions, namely developing the competencies needed to support the implementation of national education. MBKM leads to the creation of a learning culture that is innovative, not restrictive, and in accordance with the needs of each university. When Lembaga Pendidikan Tenaga Kependidikan (LPTK) realizes it, then we can expect that schools will have the same culture in their learning.

As one of the LPTK in Indonesia, Muria Kudus University (UMK) welcomes and takes part in the implementation of MBKM, as done by the Bachelor Degree Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar (PGSD), Faculty of Teacher Training and

Education. The programmes that students participate in include: campus teaching, independent entrepreneurship, independent student exchange, and Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA). Noting the alignment of MBKM's goals with the goals of LPTK in Indonesia, we see that by participating in MBKM programmes, the PGSD UMK study programme is manifesting its scientific vision, namely developing the science of Primary School Teacher Education which is in line with the principles of constructivism based on local wisdom in order to produce excellent graduates. Constructivism can guide and help study programmes achieve a learning culture that is innovative and not restrictive. Attention and grounding in local wisdom can help study programmes meet the needs of the community/social and cultural context in which they are located.

What is meant by excellent graduates as mentioned in the vision certainly refers to the four teacher competencies mentioned in Law number 14 of 2015 concerning teachers and lecturers, namely: pedagogic competence, personality competence, social competence, and professional competence. This means that the graduates of the study programme are capable teacher candidates who have the ability to become educators. In addition, of course, the study programme expects its graduates to have a strong spirit or drive from within to continue to grow in order to teach effectively, contribute to the transformation of national education that our country is pursuing, and become global citizens who have and demonstrate social responsibility. Unfortunately, there are not many studies in Indonesia that reveal the process of implementing locally-based and globally-oriented teacher education and how collaborations (with local, national and global parties) take place to produce innovations in the process (Goodwin, 2020). To fill this gap, we conducted research with the aim of obtaining a contextual understanding of what the PGSD UMK study programme needs to do to realize its scientific vision, mission, and goals and implement Merdeka Belajar policy. Based on this goal, we asked the following questions to guide our research and exploration: What are the daily practices that need to be demonstrated by PGSD UMK lecturers and students to achieve the scientific vision, mission, and objectives of the study programme and implement Merdeka Belajar policy. This paper aims to that local wisdom can be the basis for strengthening the agency and identity of educators to realise their scientific vision, mission, and goals and implement the Merdeka Belajar policy.

As a foundation for building our argument, here are the definitions of two key words in it. Firstly, teacher professional identity (Hsieh, 2010), which is the beliefs, values and commitments one has to being a teacher (as distinct from other professional occupations, such as actors or diplomats). Teacher professional identity also implies being a certain type of teacher, such as a creative and innovative teacher, a capable teacher (having all four educator competencies: personality, pedagogic, social, and professional), a teacher who is an active learning practitioner, a PGSD teacher who pays attention to local wisdom, and so on.

Second, teacher agency, which is the capacity of teachers to act deliberately and constructively in directing their professional growth and contributing to the growth of education quality (Peters, 2022). Based on this definition, a teacher can be said to have agency if his intention and direction to have skills are not only aimed at himself, his students, and his school but he also aims to transform the education of his nation.

2. Literature Review

As we have mentioned before, MBKM is actually aimed at changing the learning paradigm so that universities produce graduates (HR) who are superior, useful for life and the surrounding community (Sa'diyah et al., 2022), and have Pancasila character (Utami & Suswanto, 2022). Various challenges hinder its implementation, including the quality of human resources of lecturers and students who are less supportive (Fuadi & Aswita, 2021) and it is not easy to build cooperation between study programmes and outside parties (Krishnapatria, 2021).

In terms of quantity and compared to research on professional teachers, research on prospective teachers dominated in the period 2013-2021. These studies generally use a narrative inquiry design, focusing on the identity of prospective teachers and teaching practices and their challenges (Nababan & Amalia, 2021; Mambu, 2009). Studies with other designs focus on reflection as an essential component in pre-service teacher education, primarily to improve teaching quality and construct their professional identity (Apriliani, 2020; Triastuti, 2020; Azizah et al., 2018; Widodo & Ferdiansyah, 2018; Sitti et al., 2017), as well as a portrait of contextual factors in their teaching practices (Drajati et al., 2021; Kusumarasdyati & Retnaningdyah, 2019; Abrar et al., 2018). From the review of these studies, we can conclude two things. First, how prospective teacher education programmes realize their scientific vision, mission and goals has not been widely researched. Second, an appropriate research design is needed to investigate the process of realizing these ideals.

A number of qualitative studies have been conducted by PGSD UMK lecturers to show how local wisdom and innovative teaching methods (Meiyanti & Bamiro, 2023) can improve the cognitive abilities and/or learning outcomes of primary school students. Similar results were also seen when local wisdom was presented with the help of innovative learning media (Anggraini et al., 2022) and through learning materials (Hidayah et al., 2023). A mixed-methods approach was also used by a number of study programme lecturers to investigate how local wisdom-based teaching media contributed to active, creative, effective and fun learning (Mulatsih & First, 2023) and improved learning outcomes of primary school students, particularly their cognitive domain (Adnyana et al., 2023). Through qualitative research and literature review, PGSD UMK lecturers also capture and reveal how the use of local wisdom-based learning media contributes to character education (Kumala & Setiawan, 2019) and the development of the cognitive domain of elementary school students (Zamroni, 2021). Based on the landscape of the research areas of the study programme

lecturers as described, conclude that research needs to be carried out on how local wisdom manifests or manifests in lectures and study programme activities and how lecturers strengthen their agency as educators of prospective teachers and researchers of local wisdom in the context of education.

Based on the brief review above, we conclude that it is necessary to conduct empirical research with appropriate approaches and designs, especially those related to: 1) the implementation of Merdeka Belajar policy in teacher education study programs, 2) how the study program realizes its scientific vision, mission, and objectives, and 3) how local wisdom manifests or manifests in lectures and study program activities, and 4) how lecturers strengthen their agency as educators of teacher candidates and researchers of local wisdom in the context of education. To fill these gaps, we conducted research with the aim of obtaining a contextual understanding of what the PGSD UMK study programme needs to do to realize its scientific vision, mission, and goals and implement Merdeka Belajar policy. The next section will discuss how to achieve these goals and answer research questions: What are the daily practices that need to be demonstrated by PGSD UMK lecturers and students to achieve the scientific vision, mission, and goals of the study programme and implement Merdeka Belajar policy.

3. Methodology

To get answers to these research questions, we used a qualitative approach with a directed content analysis design (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This design allows us to see the ideals of the PGSD UMK study programme, as stated in its scientific vision, mission and objectives, with the theories that we think underpin it and can help us understand how to embody these ideals in daily practices.

The Table 1 describes the scientific vision, mission, and objectives of the PGSD UMK study programme as stated in the Decree of the Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Muria Kudus University: 72/Kep/FKIP.UMK/A.18.03/IX/2022) as data for this research:

Table 1 - Scientific vision, mission, and goals of PGSD UMK study programme.

<p>Scientific Vision Developing the science of elementary school teacher education that is in line with the principles of constructivism based on local wisdom in order to produce excellent graduates.</p>
<p>Mission</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizing education through character-based learning, literacy, 6C (Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Creative Thinking, Character Education, Citizenship, and Communication) and HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) to improve the quality of primary school educators. 2. To produce research that supports the development of education and teaching, science, technology, and art in the field of Basic Education. 3. Producing community service programmes to empower and serve the community in the field of Basic Education and improve the institutional capacity of the FKIP UMK Primary School Teacher Education Study Programme, in order to achieve effectiveness and efficiency as a study programme that has an educational identity based on local wisdom and global insight.
<p>Objective: The aim of the Muria Kudus University Primary School Teacher Education Study Programme is to improve the quality of the study programme including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Producing (prospective) primary school teacher educators with creative, innovative, critical, and collaborative academic expertise based on local wisdom. 2. Producing seminal researchers who are able to produce academic work in the field of technology and learning innovations at the elementary school level based on local wisdom. 3. To produce edupreneur who have independence, integrity, motivation for lifelong learning, and adaptability in local wisdom-based communities.

3.1 Theoretical Framework and Data Analysis

Theories of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), teacher agency and professional identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), and global meaning-making (Tierney, 2018) equipped us to analyze the data with a number of concepts, some of which can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 - Concepts from the theoretical framework.

<p>Concepts from social constructivism theory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge construction as a collective process • Social interaction • Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) • Scaffolding • Cultural context
<p>Concepts from Agency Theory and Teacher Professional Identity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency (the drive to grow and contribute) as an important element in identity construction • Agency is not earned but achieved, including through social interaction • The importance of identity awareness for strong agency • The non-staticity of identity • The influence of contextual factors on the identity construction process
<p>Dimensions of Global Meaning Creation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interrupt the existing frame/lens/viewpoint of view • Self-reading, critical and adaptive • Creating meaning together • Honouring localness • Seeking reciprocity between the local and the global • Implement participatory literacy • Shifting from knowledge as regulation to knowledge as emancipation

There are at least three concepts that glue the three theories above, namely: 1) social interaction, 2) participation/engagement/behaviour, and 3) cultural context. All three are close to local wisdom, which is one of the keywords in UMK's vision statement and the scientific vision of its PGSD study programme. They became key concepts and guides in interpreting the research data as well as initial coding categories. Parts of the data that did not fit into these initial categories were given new codes.

4. Results

The results of data analysis resulted in answers to our research questions about the daily practices that PGSD UMK lecturers and students need to demonstrate to achieve the scientific vision, mission, and objectives of the study programme and the implementation of Merdeka Belajar policy. We express these answers in a series of proposals which are divided into two, namely for study programme lecturers as prospective teacher educators and for study programme students as prospective teachers.

4.1 *Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, Tut Wuri Handayani (In Front Setting an Example, in the Middle Building Ideas, and Behind Providing Motivation and Support): Strengthening the Agency of Prospective Teacher Educators*

The agency of PGSD UMK study programme lecturers in constructing their identity as educators of prospective teachers can be strengthened through the following efforts. First, lecturers need to convey to stakeholders (especially students) and dialogue about the desired world, especially about the scientific vision, mission, and goals of the study programme. By doing so, they collectively build awareness of their identity as teacher educators and their agency. When prospective teacher educators in this study programme have, strengthen, and show enthusiasm to grow and contribute to the achievement of their scientific vision, mission, and study programme goals and the implementation of Merdeka Belajar, they are actually constructing the identity of their students as prospective educators. At the same time, they embody local wisdom. For example, when the study programme lecturers show their skills as researchers to students (for example: sharing the latest publication files and interacting dialogically about them), they are actually showing good behaviour ("gus" in gusjigang-good behaviour, knowledge, and entrepreneurial spirit), persistence (the meaning of the Parang batik motif), and the Javanese proverb about perseverance "*sopo sing temen tinemu*" (who is earnestly looking for, will find what is sought). In the future, future educators will do the same in their classrooms. Thus, local wisdom will be preserved and meaningful.

Second, strengthening educators' agency also needs to be consciously pursued by lecturers of teacher education programmes by involving, including, or adding materials on local wisdom, *global* meaning makers, and educators' agency and identity construction in the teacher education curriculum. They can stand alone as courses (for example, launching two new courses named: 1) educator agency and identity, 2) global meaning makers, or as part of an existing course (e. g. adding local wisdom material to an educational research course).

Thirdly, lecturers place collaborative learning, cooperative learning, project-based learning, and other teaching methods under the auspices of social constructivism as part of the learning process in each study programme course.

Their application is necessary not only to ensure the achievement of prospective teachers' competencies but also to embody local wisdom (good behaviour, persistence, and perseverance) in the educational process in the study programme.

Fourth, as part of research activities and the study programme's permanent agenda, lecturers initiate a community of practice as a forum for dialogical interaction between lecturers, between lecturers and students, between lecturers, students, and teachers who graduate from the study programme. This community can strengthen the agency needed in constructing each other's identities. If it happens on an ongoing basis, dialogue in the community can help form individuals who create global meanings that have a number of characters as written in the Theoretical Framework section, especially if the study program expands the horizons/areas of view of the community by strengthening global networks for reciprocal scientific cooperation.

Fifth, study programme lecturers practice the character of global meaning creators in carrying out educational, research, and community service activities (Tri Dharma) and participate in the implementation of education policies, including MBKM. That way, students will do the same in activities (academic and non-academic). When the character of global meaning creators exists in lecturers and students and is reflected in daily practice, they are ready to stand side by side with colleagues from various parts of the world and together create meaning.

4.2 *Laku ing Sasmita, Amrih Lantip (Someone Who Wants to be Knowledgeable Must Hone Hisinner and Outer Self): Strengthening the Agency of Student Teacher Candidates*

The agency of PGSD UMK study programme students in constructing their identity as prospective educators can be strengthened through the following efforts. First, they need to continuously affirm the purpose of pursuing higher education in the study programme of their choice. Second, they need to understand the scientific vision, mission, and goals of the study programme and reflect them in their activities (academic and non-academic). Thirdly, in order to have the nutrients for agency, students follow and participate in dialogical interactions (both inside and outside the classroom) about the links between theory, research, policy, and daily practices, including on themes outside the discipline of the study programme and while participating in MBKM activities.

Fourth, students show themselves as creators of global meaning. If the creator of global meaning (with the characters as listed in the theoretical framework section) is an identity that is the target or desire of each student, then the creator of global meaning is also a collective identity. Thus, there is no furrowed brow when there are students who show agency to construct their identity as future educators as well as creators of global meaning.

Fifth, strengthening the agency of prospective teachers in constructing their ideal identity, namely prospective educators, is a continuous process, even until they achieve their identity as educators. Therefore, their cohesion as members and activists in the community of practice as described in the section on strengthening the agency of prospective teacher educators needs to be continuously attached in order to form the collective agency needed for sustainable educational transformation.

5. Discussion

The five daily practices that we propose prospective teacher educators to engage in and the five daily practices that we propose prospective student teachers to engage in are actually based on a number of views from agency theory and teachers' professional identity. First, the view that educators with agency are powerful actors who can shape and change their world (Bamberg, 2011). Second, the view that identity lives in and through activity and should be conceptualized as it develops in social practice (Mok, 2022). Third, the view that critical incidents/periods (in the context of this research: the implementation of Merdeka Belajar policy and the embodiment of local wisdom) are important in the construction of agency and identity (Sisson, 2016). Based on these views, we believe that when lecturers and students carry out the proposals as listed in this section: Findings, they are actually in the midst of their respective identities, namely teacher educators and prospective teachers. When they continue to do or practice it (agency), this identity will become stronger in each of them and eventually form a collective identity, namely superior human resources (Fuadi & Aswita, 2021; Utami & Suswanto, 2020) as aspired by the state, university, and study programme.

6. Conclusions

Based on the theoretical framework and the findings of this study, excellent graduates, the ultimate phrase in the scientific vision statement of the PGSD UMK study programme means: individuals who are capable, global meaning creators, and have and show agency in constructing their identity as prospective educators. To achieve this, the daily practice of prospective teacher educator lecturers and prospective teacher students must strengthen their agency and identity. Finally, we realize that: It takes a village to raise a global meaning maker and teacher with a strong sense of agency and identity. The formation of excellent graduates is a collective and continuous work that requires the role and contribution of all stakeholders.

The main weaknesses of this study are: 1) the subjectivity and bias of the researchers (especially the first researcher) in interpreting the data even though the theoretical framework has helped in the process, 2) the limited time owned by the

first researcher underlies the decision to only analyse the scientific vision, mission and objectives of the study programme, and 3) the first researcher is not a lecturer in the PGSD UMK study programme so he lacks a broad horizon, especially about the historical socio-cultural context of the study programme. Based on these weaknesses, future researchers need to use triangulation techniques to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings and their implications.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declare no conflict of interest.

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