



Postmodern Teachers' Self-understanding in Sekolah Penggerak

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana guru mengembangkan pemahaman tentang profesionalisme sebagai pendidik dan dampaknya terhadap kinerja mengajar. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian naratif, data kualitatif dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur berdasarkan teori Kelchtermans. Partisipan terdiri dari tujuh guru di Sekolah Penggerak, terbagi dalam dua kelompok: guru pemula dan berpengalaman. Analisis tematik digunakan untuk mengolah data. Penelitian menghasilkan dua temuan utama terkait identitas profesional guru dan pengaruh pembelajaran berkelanjutan terhadap kinerja mereka. Pertama, mayoritas guru secara tegas mengidentifikasi diri sebagai pendidik. Kedua, pemahaman diri profesional berperan signifikan dalam menentukan kualitas pengajaran. Studi ini juga menyarankan beberapa arah penelitian lanjutan guna memperluas temuan dan memberikan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai pemahaman diri profesional dalam berbagai konteks pendidikan.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated how teachers enhanced their professional self-understanding as educators and how this self-understanding influenced their teaching performance. The study adopted a narrative inquiry research design. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, guided by Kelchtermans' theory. The data were gathered from seven teachers in Sekolah Penggerak, categorized into two groups: novice teachers and experienced teachers. Thematic data analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. The research drew two main conclusions regarding teachers' professional identities and the impact of continuous learning on their performance. First, most teachers unequivocally identify themselves as educators. Second, professional self-understanding significantly impacts teachers' teaching performance. The study suggested several recommendations for future research to expand upon its findings and provided more comprehensive insights into professional self-understanding in various educational contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Exploring the professional self in education was deemed essential for teachers, as teaching relied on interpersonal interactions, and responding to others began with self-understanding (Badis, 2018). Research on teacher identity focused on the construction and development of teachers' identities (e.g., Kelchtermans, 1993), their perceptions of professional roles (Beijaard et al., 2000), and the interplay between self-image and role perceptions (Ben-Peretz et al., 2003; Day & Kington, 2008). Teachers' professional identities were shaped by a complex interplay of thoughts, beliefs, experiences, and perceptions (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). These identities evolved as teachers adapted to varying circumstances, including institutional cultures, societal norms, and pedagogical ideologies (Bullough & Gitlin, 2009). Teacher identity served as a foundation for the teaching profession, providing a framework for teachers' beliefs about how to act, how to be, and how to understand their role in society (Brandenburg & Gervasoni, 2016; Sachs, 2005).

Professional development played a critical role in the ongoing evolution of teacher identity, fostering growth and improvement in pedagogical practice (Day & Gu, 2010). Professional development programs equipped teachers with the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to navigate the dynamic educational landscape (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). (Kelchtermans, 1993) highlighted that social interactions, professional contexts, and personal experiences shaped teachers' self-perceptions. By challenging their

assumptions, beliefs, and opinions, teachers deepened their understanding of their professional identities, enhancing their classroom effectiveness (Conway et al., 2017).

In the postmodern era, characterized by pervasive technology and diverse student demographics, educators face rapidly evolving educational demands, necessitating innovative teaching approaches (Lather, 2010). Teacher professionalism, as defined by (Sagala, 2009) and mandated by Indonesia's Law No. 14 of 2005, Chapter IV, Article 8, Paragraph 1, requires academic qualifications, competencies, certification, health, and alignment with national education goals. For instance, gamification tools like Kahoot! have gained prominence for their interactive, competitive learning environment. Results revealed a significant positive correlation between Kahoot! use and students' vocabulary learning confidence, which strengthened over time despite the platform's competitive nature (Prasodjo & Ponto, 2023).

This study examined how postmodern teachers developed their professional self-understanding through personal experiences, social interactions, and their impact on teacher identity (Emanuel, 2006: 93). Postmodernism, as a movement, sought to transform modern perspectives (Emanuel, 2006: 93), correcting unchecked modernist assumptions (Ghazali & Effendy, 2009: 161). It introduced innovative ideas, shifting knowledge paradigms (Setiawan, 2018). The postmodern paradigm also transformed teacher-student interactions, moving from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches. This shift aligned with constructivism, a learning theory developed by J. Piaget in 1971, emphasizing action, reflection, and construction as key to knowledge acquisition (Ling & Catling, 2012). Consequently, postmodern teachers often empowered students to take responsibility for their learning.

In some regions, teachers exhibited a lack of enthusiasm for teaching, merely delivering materials without fully engaging in their roles. This practice was detrimental to education, as teachers were expected to do more than transmit information. This study aimed to serve as a reference for future educators, helping them avoid similar issues and fostering robust teacher identities. Previous studies explored teachers' professional identities in inclusive schools (Andi, 2021), higher education (Wilma & Marius, 2020), and across career stages (Yagan, 2021), underscoring the importance of professional development in shaping self-understanding. However, gaps remained, particularly regarding professional self-understanding in Sekolah Penggerak and its impact on teaching performance. To address this, the study investigated professional self-understanding among postmodern English teachers in Sekolah Penggerak, offering insights to better prepare future educators, especially English teachers, for teaching challenges. The study sought to enhance future educators' comprehension of professional self-understanding.

These earlier studies underscored the importance of professional development in shaping self-understanding. However, the sources explicitly state that gaps remained, especially regarding professional self-understanding in Sekolah Penggerak and its direct impact on teaching performance.

To address this identified gap, this study specifically investigated professional self-understanding among postmodern English teachers in Sekolah Penggerak. By focusing on this particular context and its influence on teaching performance, the research aimed to offer insights to better prepare future educators, especially English teachers, for teaching challenges, and to enhance their comprehension of professional self-understanding.

2. METHODS

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design to explore how postmodern teachers enhanced their professional self-understanding, aiming to provide insights for future educators. This design facilitated a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives by offering in-depth insights into the research issue. The descriptive qualitative method, as described by (Moloeng, 2010), involves interpreting phenomena such as behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions, presenting findings through words and sentences. This approach relied on the researchers' interpretation to analyze data qualitatively.

The researchers leveraged prior surveys to identify participant characteristics, enabling efficient selection based on predefined criteria. First, the study targeted postmodern English teachers in Sekolah Penggerak in Malang, who integrated modern technologies like computers, the internet, and instructional software to enhance learning. Second, the study focused exclusively on novice teachers (with up to five years of teaching experience) and experienced teachers (with ten or more years of experience), as defined by (Kim & Roth, 2011; Andi, 2018). Finally, based on these criteria, the researchers selected seven participants from three schools in Malang—SMA TNM, SMAN 4M, and SMPN 12M—identified through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MECRT) database of Sekolah Penggerak.

Data were collected through interviews, which (Leedy & Ormrod, 2021; Sugiyono, 2013) recognize as effective for capturing detailed participant perspectives and experiences. The interview instrument comprised twelve open-ended questions, organized into five dimensions adapted from (Yagan et al., 2021).

and aligned with Kelchtermans' theory of professional self-understanding: (1) self-image, (2) self-esteem, (3) task perception, (4) job motivation, and (5) future perspective. These questions were designed to elicit deep insights into the research topic.

After data collection, the researchers conducted thematic data analysis to address the research questions, following the five-step process outlined by (Braun & Clarke, 2006): (1) transcribing the data, (2) coding, (3) analysis, (4) compiling, and (5) report writing. Initially, interview data from novice and experienced teachers were transcribed into text. Next, the data were coded and categorized into novice and experienced teacher groups. The analysis then connected responses to Kelchtermans' theory for deeper interpretation. Subsequently, interview results were compiled, allowing themes to emerge. Finally, findings were presented in a comprehensive report, comparing perspectives between novice and experienced teachers to highlight differences and similarities.

To ensure ethical research practices, all participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their role prior to participation. They provided written informed consent, acknowledging their voluntary involvement and the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. The researchers ensured confidentiality by anonymizing data and securely storing all records. Participants were also given the opportunity to review and clarify their responses post-interview to maintain accuracy and transparency, aligning with ethical standards for qualitative research (Elvyra et al., 2024; Prasodjo et al., 2025).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

According to (Kelchtermans, 1993), five components shape a teacher's professional self-understanding: (1) Self-image, (2) Self-esteem, (3) Task perception, (4) Job motivation, and (5) Future perspective. The researchers analyzed previously collected data, describing each component and comparing findings between novice and experienced teachers. Each component includes sub-components that provide deeper insights, highlighting differences and similarities in the mindsets of novice and experienced teachers to offer a comprehensive overview of their professional self-understanding.

Self-image

The data revealed varied yet consistently positive responses from participants. Both novice and experienced teachers expressed a commitment to continuous learning, acknowledging that their current knowledge was insufficient and required ongoing improvement. Participant 1 (experienced teacher) and Participant 7 (novice teacher) emphasized this perspective, as shown below:

"In my opinion, as a teacher, I still have a lot to learn. I can't be satisfied quickly even though I have been teaching for more than ten years. We shouldn't be quickly satisfied with the results we have obtained; we also need to upgrade our knowledge every day."

ET-P1-SHS-SI (Continuous Learning)

"There are still a lot of things that I need to learn, especially recognizing the characteristics and needs of my students. This also affects my teaching practices and media. Moreover, in SMPN 12, many students do not understand the importance of learning English. Therefore, I participated in seminars and training held by the school."

NT-P7-JHS-SI (Continuous Learning)

Participants reported engaging in professional development activities such as seminars, workshops, and independent learning to enhance their skills. Despite differing experience levels, both groups recognized gaps in their abilities, particularly in adapting teaching strategies to diverse student needs. Novice teachers attributed these gaps to limited classroom experience, while experienced teachers sought to update their methods to align with evolving educational demands and technological advancements. This shared commitment underscored the dynamic nature of teaching, with both groups striving to improve student engagement, refine methods, and remain relevant in a changing academic landscape.

Differences emerged in how novice and experienced teachers improved their self-image. Experienced teachers adopted a self-oriented approach, focusing on personal growth through three key strategies: a determination to continuously improve, participation in the guru penggerak program, and a commitment to lifelong learning. These efforts reflected proactive steps to maintain relevance and enhance expertise. In contrast, novice teachers prioritized student relationships as a learning opportunity, gaining insights into effective teaching by understanding student perspectives. They also improved pedagogical skills through school seminars and learning about the kurikulum merdeka, as illustrated below:

"The strategy that I do is, first, I will not stop learning and will always upgrade myself through trainings held in school. Second, I participate in the guru penggerak program to learn new things and update my knowledge. Finally, I push myself to work hard and always learn new things."

ET-P1-SHS-SI (Continuous Learning)

"I think building a connection with students. When I am close to my students, I learned a lot from them about how they think and how they respond to things. I also learn a lot from the workshops held by the school and learned about new teaching methods and the kurikulum merdeka."

NT-P5-SHS-SI (Continuous Learning)

These responses highlight distinct priorities: novice teachers focused on developing foundational skills and adapting to new educational frameworks, while experienced teachers aimed to broaden their expertise. However, both groups valued learning, demonstrating a shared dedication to professional growth.

The development of self-image, as part of professional self-understanding, significantly influenced teaching performance for both novice and experienced teachers. Experienced teachers noted that their self-image improved with experience, enabling them to identify their teaching style, strengths, and areas signed by: ET-P4-JHS-SI (Reflective Behavior).

"The more experience I gained, the more I understand my strengths, my weaknesses, and my teaching style. By reflecting on my past mistakes, I have developed awareness to be more reflective, empathetic, and flexible in dealing with the diverse needs of my students."

Similarly, novice teachers emphasized learning through experience, particularly in managing classroom challenges. Over time, they became more patient and less reactive to student misbehavior, adopting a more considerate approach. This adaptability translated into flexible teaching strategies, such as using Quizizz and interactive icebreakers to maintain student engagement and create a dynamic learning environment, as Participant 6 noted:

"Over time, as my experience increases, I become calmer in dealing with problematic students and don't get angry easily or jump to conclusions too quickly before I know what the problem is. I also become more flexible and can adapt to problems in the classroom. Sometimes I use Quizizz for icebreaking so my students won't get bored."

NT-P6-JHS-SI (Emotional and Behavioral Growth)

The improvements in teaching performance stemmed from accumulated experience, emphasizing the importance of ongoing reflection and adaptation. By recognizing their strengths, weaknesses, and students' needs, teachers fostered supportive and engaging learning environments. This enhanced self-image not only strengthened their professional skills but also deepened student relationships, making learning more effective.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem, a critical component of teachers' professional self-understanding, underscores the role of emotions in the teaching process. High self-esteem is essential for teachers' well-being, fostering comfort and satisfaction in their roles. While self-esteem can originate internally, external factors significantly influence it, particularly for those with lower internal self-esteem.

Teachers' confidence in their teaching abilities is shaped by various factors, including preparation and real-time classroom experiences. Experienced teachers emphasized preparation as a cornerstone of confidence, noting that thorough preparation enhances teaching quality and boosts self-assurance, while inadequate preparation diminishes confidence and impacts classroom performance. Participant 1 articulated this perspective:

"I'm really confident in my teaching ability, and that confidence is also supported by preparations. If we have prepared what we're about to teach in advance, we will feel confident to teach, but if the preparations were not well made, we wouldn't be able to teach well and feel less confident."

ET-P1-SHS-SE (Confidence by Preparation)

In contrast, novice teachers reported fluctuating confidence levels. While prior knowledge and familiarity with subject matter bolstered their confidence, challenges such as students' difficulty understanding material triggered self-doubt. Participant 7 highlighted this variability:

"I think it fluctuates. Sometimes I feel confident because I've studied this before, and I thought the material in junior high school is not that hard. But sometimes, when my students didn't understand the material, it made me feel like I can't teach. So my confidence fluctuates depending on how I feel at the moment."

NT-P7-JHS-SE (Confidence by Situation)

These accounts illustrate how teaching confidence is influenced by both internal factors, such as personal preparation, and external factors, including student feedback and classroom dynamics.

Both experienced and novice teachers identified factors that enhanced their teaching confidence. Experienced teachers cited four key components: thorough preparation, effective time management, collaboration with colleagues, and a commitment to lifelong learning. Participant 4 summarized these elements:

"The first is readiness as in preparation, the second is proper time management, the third is collaborating with colleagues, and the last is always learning."

ET-P4-SHS-SE (Confidence by Preparation)

Novice teachers, however, emphasized mindset and personal development as key drivers of confidence. Through self-motivation and regular teaching practice, they gradually became more comfortable and confident in their roles. Participant 6 noted:

"Over time, what we must always have in mind is that we must be able to do it, motivating yourself and also a sense of habit, as in I have already gotten used to teaching, are also important factors for me."

NT-P6-JHS-SE (Confidence by Practice)

These findings highlight the interplay of internal resilience and external strategies in strengthening teachers' confidence. Experienced teachers relied on structured approaches and professional networks, while novice teachers focused on building confidence through practice and positive self-talk, reflecting distinct yet complementary pathways to enhancing self-esteem in the classroom.

Task Perception

Task perception, as outlined by Kelchtermans, encompasses teachers' deeply held beliefs about what constitutes high-quality education, their moral responsibilities to treat students fairly, complete assigned duties, and adapt to evolving work environments.

Both experienced and novice teachers emphasized the importance of competency development and lifelong learning to remain relevant in a dynamic educational landscape. Experienced teachers viewed ongoing learning as essential to avoid stagnation and meet the needs of current and future generations. Participant 3 articulated this perspective:

"Competency development and lifelong learning. Because the knowledge I get in college is always changing. So if we're being stagnant, we will not grow and become irrelevant to the current and future generations."

ET-P3-JHS-TP (Adaptation)

Similarly, novice teachers highlighted continuous education and reflection as vital for improving their performance. They actively sought learning opportunities from colleagues, social media, and daily teaching experiences, using reflection to identify and correct flaws in their methods. This commitment to never being fully satisfied kept them open to new knowledge and approaches. Participant 7 noted:

"Keep learning whenever and wherever, both from social media and from colleagues. Reflect on the previous day's teaching methods, what was lacking, what was wrong, and what was not suitable and fix it. So keep learning and never feel satisfied."

NT-P7-JHS-TP (Adaptation)

These efforts underscore that teaching success is a process of continuous development, requiring lifelong learning, flexibility, and regular reflection to meet education's evolving demands. Experienced teachers demonstrated adaptability to curriculum changes, noting that while structures like the P5 (Project *Penguatan Profil Pelajar* Pancasila) were introduced, the core goal of fostering student learning remained unchanged. They described their approach as "following the flow," aligning methods with updated standards. Participant 1 explained:

"Actually, we as teachers just follow the flow. And in fact, even though the curriculum has changed, our target as teachers is still the same. There are only additions in the changes to the curriculum. For example, P5 is now a student subject."

ET-P1-SHS-TP (Navigating Curriculum Reform)

In contrast, some novice teachers struggled to adapt to curriculum changes, particularly due to increased administrative demands. These additional responsibilities, such as workshops and paperwork, often detracted from their primary teaching focus, highlighting the need to balance duties to prioritize classroom instruction. Participant 7 shared:

"Honestly, for me personally, it's quite hard, let alone for older teachers. The hard part is actually because there are more administrative demands, workshops, etc. So the essence of a teacher's job to teach students becomes less optimal."

NT-P7-JHS-TP (Navigating Curriculum Reform)

Experienced teachers managed professional responsibilities efficiently by leveraging time management and technology. They prepared lesson plans in advance and used tools like Google Forms and Quizizz for assessments, ensuring streamlined workflows. Even during meetings, they prioritized students by assigning meaningful tasks and reviewing them later, balancing administrative and teaching duties. Participant 1 stated:

"I have to be able to manage my time by utilizing technology. The lesson plan has been prepared in advance. As for the assessment, I usually use applications such as Google Forms, Quizizz, etc. Then when I have a meeting, I give assignments to students, and I still check the assignments as an appreciation for their work."

ET-P1-SHS-TP (Balancing Responsibility)

Novice teachers, however, found the multifaceted demands of modern teaching overwhelming. Beyond classroom instruction, they faced administrative tasks and other responsibilities, often feeling uncertain about prioritization. Despite these challenges, they remained committed to prioritizing teaching and strove to adapt flexibly to assigned duties. Participant 7 reflected:

"The demands of teachers nowadays are heavy; being a teacher nowadays is not only teaching, but they must be able to do everything. I am still overwhelmed and confused about which task to prioritize. But what I prioritize above all is teaching; I am also still trying to be flexible in doing the tasks given to me."

NT-P7-JHS-TP (Balancing Responsibilities)

These insights highlight the resilience and adaptability required to navigate the teaching profession's complex demands. Experienced teachers relied on structured strategies and technology, while novice teachers focused on flexibility and prioritizing education, both striving to maintain teaching as their core responsibility amidst competing obligations.

Job Motivation

Job motivation, as defined by Kelchtermans, refers to the drives or motivations that influence an individual's decision to enter, remain in, or leave the teaching profession. Teachers' motivations for pursuing and sustaining a career in education varied, shaped by philosophical beliefs, personal circumstances, and external influences. Experienced teachers often cited external pressures, such as parental expectations, as significant factors in their career choice. For instance, Participant 3 highlighted how familial influence, tied to perceptions of teaching as a stable profession with work-life balance, directed her toward teaching despite initial reluctance:

"Actually, when I was in college, I didn't want to be a teacher, but because of my parents' demands, I had to become a teacher. They thought that, as a woman, teaching offered a good work-life balance, especially when I had children."

ET-P3-JHS-JM (External Influence)

In contrast, some novice teachers described a less deliberate path to teaching, shaped by external circumstances rather than a clear intention. Participant 5 exemplified this passive approach, noting that her career evolved organically without a predetermined plan:

"I don't really know, I just follow wherever life takes me."

NT-P5-SHS-JM (External Influence)

However, other novice teachers expressed a more philosophical perspective, viewing teaching as a noble endeavor with enduring societal impact. They found fulfillment in sharing knowledge, perceiving it as a lifelong contribution or "*jariyah* investment." Additionally, they valued teaching for the life skills it fostered, such as understanding diverse personalities and problem-solving, which they believed would benefit their future. Participant 6 articulated this viewpoint:

"Being a teacher is a charity, and the knowledge taught to my students is a jariyah charity, so there is no loss in being a teacher. Then, the knowledge I get from teaching children, such as character and various problems, can be used later in the future."

NT-P6-JHS-JM (Nobility)

These findings reveal distinct motivational drivers: experienced teachers were often influenced by external expectations, while novice teachers displayed a mix of passive career entry and idealistic views of teaching as a meaningful, skill-building profession. Both groups, however, demonstrated motivations rooted in personal and societal factors, shaping their commitment to the teaching profession.

Future Perspective

Future perspective reflects teachers' aspirations and expectations for their future selves and the changes they anticipate in their professional journey. It illustrates how time shapes self-awareness, with present actions influenced by past experiences and future goals.

Experienced teachers envisioned a future centered on personal growth and positive impact on their students and communities. They emphasized continuous learning to enhance their effectiveness as educators and leave a lasting legacy. Participant 1 expressed this ambition:

"What is certain is that I want to be useful for my students by continuing to learn and increase my knowledge. Put it like this, hopefully I can be an influential and useful teacher for others and not only for my students."

ET-P1-SHS-FP (Aspiration for Growth)

Similarly, novice teachers held optimistic views about their teaching careers, aspiring to seize future opportunities for learning and professional advancement to become competent educators. Participant 7 shared:

"Hopefully I can continue to be a good teacher, to be better of course. Hopefully in the future there will be many opportunities that I can take so that I can learn more and develop into a competent teacher."

NT-P7-JHS-FP (Aspiration for Growth)

Future perspective, as outlined by Kelchtermans, encapsulates teachers' aspirations and expectations for their future professional selves, shaped by past experiences and present actions, reflecting their evolving self-awareness. Both experienced and novice teachers shared a commitment to lifelong learning and professional growth, aiming to positively impact their students. Experienced teachers focused on expanding their knowledge to remain effective and influential educators, aspiring to leave a broader legacy beyond the classroom. Participant 1 expressed:

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Similarly, novice teachers held optimistic views, seeking future opportunities to advance their skills and become competent educators. Participant 7 noted:

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NT-P7-JHS-FP (Aspiration for Growth)

This shared vision underscores a dedication to continuous improvement and positive contributions to students' lives, highlighting common professional values across experience levels. Both groups emphasized the importance of teaching with patience, sincerity, and wholehearted commitment, believing that genuine care for students fosters a supportive learning environment. They cautioned that a lack of passion could lead to frustration, negatively affecting both teachers and students. Participant 3, an experienced teacher, stressed the emotional core of teaching:

"My hope is that teachers in the future must love their jobs and their students. Because we are dealing with people, and if we do not do it wholeheartedly, we will constantly be in a bad mood, and that will affect the children who will be afraid and dislike us. Teach from the heart, love your job. Because if we love our job, we will give our best to do it."

ET-P3-JHS-FP (Passion and Commitment)

Similarly, Participant 5, a novice teacher, highlighted sincerity while offering practical advice to maintain professionalism:

"Hopefully, they can be sincere and patient in teaching because, in terms of money, teachers' salaries are not that much. If you are not sincere and not teaching with whole heart, you will always be in a constant bad mood and always nagging. Also, use your high school experience as a guideline for dealing with students. Things to avoid are oversharing, as it can backfire. If we overshare, students might use it to rebel or justify mistakes. Don't compare one student to another, because it can make them rebel and lose respect for us, and don't say rude things like 'stupid' because we don't know the impact of those words on students."

NT-P5-SHS-FP (Passion and Commitment)

While both groups valued passion and commitment, their focuses differed slightly. Experienced teachers emphasized the emotional connection fostered by heartfelt teaching, promoting student comfort and respect. Novice teachers, while also valuing sincerity, provided specific, practical strategies to avoid pitfalls like oversharing, comparing students, or using harmful language, reflecting their focus on navigating early-career challenges.

To enhance understanding of novice and experienced teachers' professional self-understanding, the researchers summarized all dimensions—self-image, self-esteem, task perception, job motivation, and future perspective—into cohesive themes for clarity. Each dimension was distilled into a single representative theme, and similarities between novice and experienced teachers were highlighted to illustrate shared professional values and growth patterns, providing a comprehensive overview of their professional identities.

The study explored the professional self-understanding of novice and experienced teachers through five dimensions identified by Kelchtermans, each characterized by a distinct theme. In the dimension of self-image, themed as continuous learning, both groups prioritized professional development, with novice teachers focusing on enhancing instructional techniques and experienced teachers emphasizing technological adaptation to meet evolving educational demands. For self-esteem, themed as confidence by preparation, situation, and practice, experienced teachers derived confidence from thorough preparation, while novice teachers' confidence fluctuated based on classroom dynamics, growing through habitual practice. Job motivation, themed as motivation, revealed that experienced teachers often entered teaching due to external influences like parental expectations for work-life balance, whereas novice teachers were driven by a sense of nobility or followed life's course passively. Task perception, themed as adapting to balancing task and job demands, showed both groups valuing continuous learning and adaptability; however, experienced teachers managed workloads effectively using strategic planning and technology, while novice teachers struggled with administrative demands. Finally, in future perspective, themed as future commitment, both aspired to positively influence students, with experienced teachers aiming to be approachable yet respected and novice teachers focusing on professional growth to refine teaching methods. Despite shared values like lifelong learning and student impact, their approaches differed, reflecting their distinct career stages and experiences.

Discussion

The findings from the interviews with novice and experienced English teachers revealed both similarities and differences in their professional self-understanding, addressing the research questions and aligning with Kelchtermans' theory, which encompasses self-image, self-esteem, task perception, job motivation, and future perspective. Both groups demonstrated a positive attitude toward their professional self-understanding, recognizing their roles and responsibilities as educators. Corresponding to (Andi, 2021), the key finding was the centrality of continuous learning in enhancing their self-understanding, enabling both novice and experienced teachers to develop competencies and improve teaching performance over time. Continuous learning broadened their perspectives, refined teaching methods through self-reflection and trial-and-error, and fostered greater tolerance for student behavior, ultimately enhancing their ability to address classroom challenges.

While both groups embraced lifelong learning, their approaches to improving self-understanding and teaching performance differed. Relating to (Vilmar & Marius, 2020) within the context of identity, experienced teachers refined their teaching methods by reflecting on past mistakes and experimenting with new strategies, leveraging their extensive experience to adapt to evolving educational demands. In contrast, novice teachers underwent more personal changes, becoming more patient, less reactive, and more empathetic, which translated into calmer, more tolerant teaching practices and stronger student relationships. These shifts positively impacted their classroom management and instructional approaches (Yagan, 2021). Additionally, both groups actively integrated technology, such as Quizizz and Google Forms, to engage students, streamline grading, and save time. School-provided technology training further supported these efforts, enhancing student attention and learning outcomes through innovative, tech-based methods.

The semi-structured interviews, grounded in Kelchtermans' framework, confirmed that all participants exhibited strong professional self-understanding, though their perspectives varied. Relevant to (Darling-Hammond et.al., 2009), similarities included a shared commitment to continuous learning and student-centered teaching, while differences reflected their career stages: experienced teachers focused on strategic refinement, while novices prioritized personal growth and adaptability. In line with (Canway et.al., 2017), these findings highlight how professional self-understanding shapes teaching performance, with continuous learning as a pivotal mechanism for professional growth and classroom effectiveness across both groups.

Continuous Learning

The self-image dimension, themed as continuous learning, highlights the shared recognition among novice and experienced teachers of the necessity for ongoing education to enhance their teaching performance and adapt to evolving pedagogical methods. A key aspect of this theme is the intrinsic motivation driving teachers (Sachs, 2005), to pursue professional development opportunities, such as workshops, seminars, and training programs, reflecting their understanding of education as a dynamic field with ever-changing techniques and technologies. The study revealed distinct approaches to lifelong learning between the two groups. Novice teachers, often lacking confidence due to limited classroom experience, actively participated in school-organized workshops to build foundational teaching skills and

pedagogical expertise. Conversely, experienced teachers, while confident in their established methods, prioritized staying current with technological advancements and educational trends through programs like *Guru Penggerak* to remain relevant in modern classrooms. Thus, novice teachers focused on mastering teaching fundamentals, while experienced teachers emphasized refining and updating their knowledge (Gervasoni, 2016). This commitment to continuous learning ultimately improved their teaching methods, benefiting both educators and students by integrating the latest educational advancements.

Confidence by Preparation, Situation, and Practice

In the self-esteem dimension, themed as confidence by preparation, situation, and practice, both novice and experienced teachers develop classroom confidence, though their approaches differ. Compared to (Badis, 2018), experienced teachers derive a stable sense of confidence from thorough preparation, enabling them to deliver lessons with clarity and ease. Their ability to plan and organize materials fosters a strong sense of control, reinforcing their self-assurance. In contrast, novice teachers' confidence fluctuates based on emotional states and classroom dynamics. Positive student engagement boosts their confidence, while challenging situations may lead to self-doubt, highlighting their reliance on external stimuli for reinforcement. Over time, consistent practice strengthens novice teachers' confidence, as repeated exposure to teaching enhances their classroom management and instructional skills, gradually reducing uncertainty. This progression from externally influenced to internally reinforced confidence underscores the gradual development of professional self-understanding, with experience and practice fostering greater self-assurance across both groups as they advance in their careers.

Adapting to Balancing Task and Job Demand

In the task perception dimension, themed as adapting to balancing task and job demands, both novice and experienced teachers demonstrated a commitment to continuous learning and adaptability to meet professional responsibilities, navigate curriculum changes, and maintain high teaching standards. (Ben-Peretz et.al, 2003) suggested recognizing that stagnation risks obsolescence, both groups actively pursued professional development to integrate new educational advancements, ensuring relevance and responsiveness to students' evolving needs. Experienced teachers viewed curriculum changes, such as the introduction of *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5), as manageable adjustments, maintaining focus on core educational goals while incorporating new elements. They leveraged time management and digital tools like Quizizz and Google Forms to streamline assessments and balance administrative duties, even assigning and reviewing student tasks during meetings to prioritize learning. Conversely, novice teachers, while equally dedicated to lifelong learning through reflection, mentoring, and social media, often struggled with the administrative demands accompanying curriculum changes. These additional responsibilities, including workshops and documentation, sometimes hindered their focus on teaching, underscoring their challenges in task prioritization. Despite feeling overwhelmed, novice teachers remained adaptable, striving to prioritize student learning while navigating the multifaceted demands of the profession. Both groups' emphasis on continuous learning and flexibility highlighted their resilience, with experienced teachers managing challenges through strategic planning and technology, and novice teachers focusing on growth and adaptability to fulfill their roles effectively.

Motivation

In the job motivation dimension, themed as motivation, the study revealed distinct reasons for novice and experienced teachers' entry into the teaching profession, shaped by their backgrounds, values, and life circumstances. Experienced teachers were primarily driven by external factors, such as family influence and the promise of work-life balance. Parental encouragement played a significant role, as teaching was perceived as a stable, respected profession that allowed manageable integration of professional and personal responsibilities. Despite these external motivations, experienced teachers demonstrated commitment through continuous learning and active participation in workshops, reflecting their dedication to professional effectiveness. In contrast, novice teachers exhibited more varied and intrinsic motivations. One novice teacher described entering teaching passively, "going with the flow," suggesting that life circumstances guided her path rather than a deliberate choice. Others viewed teaching as a noble calling, emphasizing its spiritual and lasting impact, likening knowledge-sharing to *sedekah jariyah* (ongoing charity) that benefits students lifelong. Aligned to (Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L., 2011), these findings highlight the complexity of career choices in teaching, with experienced teachers influenced by external factors like family expectations and job stability, and novice teachers driven by a mix of intrinsic values, purpose, and situational factors.

Future Commitment

In the future perspective dimension, themed as future commitment, both novice and experienced teachers shared aspirations to positively influence their students and foster a supportive work environment, though their focuses differed. Experienced teachers were driven by a deep passion for teaching and a desire to be approachable, respected figures who shape young minds and inspire colleagues beyond the classroom. In a way with (Day, C., & Gu, Q., 2010), they viewed teaching as a transformative role, aiming to create a lasting impact on students and their broader educational community. Conversely, novice teachers prioritized personal and professional growth, seeking professional development opportunities to enhance their teaching skills and build experience. While also aspiring to be effective educators, their emphasis was on refining pedagogical abilities and establishing strong relationships with students and colleagues to cultivate a positive workplace. Both groups underscored the importance of dedication to students and a collaborative environment, reflecting shared values of impact and growth.

This study serves as a valuable resource for aspiring and current educators, as well as those interested in the teaching profession. By providing insights into professional self-understanding, it aims to deepen educators' awareness of their roles, responsibilities, and career expectations. The findings highlight the critical role of continuous learning, innovation, and adaptability in education, encouraging teachers to embrace ongoing development to meet the evolving demands of the profession and enhance their effectiveness in the classroom.

4. CONCLUSION

The responses from English teachers in Sekolah Penggerak yield two key conclusions. First, most teachers clearly identify as educators, evidenced by their positive attitudes and acknowledgment of the need for continuous learning to enhance their skills. Second, professional self-understanding significantly influences their teaching, which improves over time through continuous learning. By adapting to classroom dynamics and incorporating technology and modern teaching methods, teachers foster greater success in teaching and learning activities, demonstrating a commitment to professional growth and effective pedagogy.

Based on the result of this study, several recommendations can be put forward for further research. First, this study was only conducted at the junior high and senior high school level in Sekolah Penggerak. Future researchers are advised to expand the scope to the elementary school level by involving larger and more diverse samples to obtain more comprehensive result. Second, this study was only conducted at public school. To provide more varied perspective, future research can add the focus on private school Sekolah Penggerak in Malang area and give comparison to both data to give more insight in professional self-understanding. Third, provide some ways to measure the improvement of teachers' teaching performance. With this approach, it is expected to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of professional self-understanding in various educational context. Finally, future researchers are advised to use other theories to obtain different and more insightful results.

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