

# Students' teaching experiences of *Kampus Mengajar* program in teaching thematic at elementary schools in Cirebon

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## ABSTRACT

*Kampus mengajar* is a program launched by Nadiem Makarim since 2021 which involves students from various study programs going directly to schools located in 3T areas. This study aims at exploring students' experiences in teaching thematic through *kampus mengajar* program in the academic year of 2020/2021. This study used qualitative method, with narrative inquiry design in which five students from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon who became participants in this study. The data used in this study came from the results of narrative frame to capture students' experiences in participating *kampus mengajar* program, and interviews to obtain more deeply about the obstacles faced by students in teaching thematic. The results revealed that some students faced the difficulties in teaching thematic. The tendency happened because *kampus mengajar* program are followed by students from various study programs and majors. Therefore, the participants are difficult to conduct teaching thematic at elementary schools.

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## 1. Introduction

The covid-19 pandemic has impacted on Indonesia's educational system. Face to face learning was driven out of all educational institutions (Rosita & Damayanti, 2021). It has been two years since the pandemic impacted all aspect of life, including the learning activities. Because of the pandemic, educational management system has been obliged to redesign operational activities such as face-to-face learning, with has been changed to online learning. Nadiem Makarim, as Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia introduced the new policy, namely *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) program. It is intended that with this policy, universities will be able to improve the competency of their graduate students, both soft and hard abilities, so that they are in line with the demands of a rapidly changing social, cultural, work, and technical environment. (Setiawan & Sukamto, 2021).

Several MBKM programs are now being implemented, one of them known as *kampus mengajar*. *Kampus mengajar* is a part of MBKM program which involves students from different study programs and majors in each university to assist in teaching and learning process in schools, particularly at the basic education level, and provide opportunities for them to learn and develop themselves through practices outside the classroom (Iriawan & Saefudin, 2021). This program

intends to empower students from diverse majors to contribute to improving the quality of Indonesian education during the pandemic, particularly at the elementary school level, which was hit by the Covid-19 outbreak and is located in the 3T area. *Kampus mengajar* students go directly to teach elementary school students with a thematic learning model where this thematic learning model has been implemented in the 2013 curriculum. Indonesia has introduced thematic learning in elementary schools under the 2013 curriculum (Yuliana, Wiryawan, & Riyadi, 2018). The government has created the curriculum's learning tools, one of which is a student book. Majid in Wahyuni & Ananda (2021) stated that thematic learning is learning that incorporates a notion from several fields of study with the aim that students can learn more effectively and meaningfully. Thematic learning is described as learning that is organized around certain theme and combines various lesson content to offer students with meaningful experiences (Estuwardani & Mustadi, 2015). The thematic learning is an integrated learning model that employes a thematic approach incorporating several courses to offer students with meaningful experiences (Nizam, 2019). It is possible to conclude that thematic is a learning model that is used in all elementary schools. Thematic learning integrates various subjects of study into a single learning topic. With the implementation of the thematic learning model, it is hoped that students will get a meaningful and better experience both individually and in groups.

The main problem faced by *kampus mengajar* students are the low mastery of strategy in teaching thematic, because this program is followed by students who come from a variety study program and majors. This phenomena of varied backgrounds of university students in teaching provides different stories and experiences for each individual, particularly regarding thematic teaching assistance in elementary schools. Therefore, the researcher is interested to investigate more deeply about students' teaching experiences of *kampus mengajar* program in teaching thematic at the academic year of 2021/2022.

By fostering students' experiences of *kampus mengajar* program, narrative inquiry is used

to capture students' stories based on their experiences in teaching thematic at elementary schools in Cirebon. Narrative inquiry provides a tool for doing self-reflection and self-criticism about the obstacles of teaching thematic (Sugesti et al., 2020). This study gave an insight of teaching thematic to improve student teachers ability in conducting thematic and to make learning model more successful in the classroom..

There are five students from four different majors in Teacher Training and Education Faculty at Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia who became the participants in this study. They have been interviewed before this study is conducted. The students are chosen from *Kampus Mengajar* batch 2 in the academic year of 2021/2022. The aim of this study is to discover an answer to the following questions: (1) what are the students' teaching experiences in teaching thematic during *kampus mengajar* program?, and (2) What are the obstacles faced by students in teaching thematic during *kampus mengajar* program?

## 2. Method

This study used narrative inquiry design under qualitative approach. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994) Qualitative is study that uses natural settings to analyze events that occur and is conducted using a variety of current methodologies. Narrative analysis has often been referred to as "life stories." (Avianita et al., 2018). It was a means of contemplating and examining experience. On the other hand, narrative inquiry is beneficial since it allows to share and make meaning of individual experiences. Furthermore, narrative inquiry may probe into hidden ideas or attitude (Loo, 2018). This study explored students' experiences in teaching thematic through *kampus mengajar* program.

The participants in this study were five students who participated in *kampus mengajar* batch 2 program in the academic year of 2020/2021. The researcher took the students from Teacher Training and Education Faculty Universitas Muhammadiyah Ciebon.

Table 1 showed the list of participants in this study. There were five female students with different major and schools.

Table 1. List of participants

Students	Gender	Study Program	School
S1	Female	English Language Education	SDN 1 Waledessa
S2	Female	English Language Education	SDN 1 Karangsembung
S3	Female	Mathematics Education	SD Sada Ibu
S4	Female	Science Education	SDN 1 Karangmalang
S5	Female	Chemistry Education	SDN 1 Karangmalang

In this study, the researcher gained the data by carrying out narrative frame and online interview. This was due to an increase in Covid-19 cases in Cirebon. Interviewing is one of the most common data collection methods in the social sciences. Any face-to-face or non-face interaction between two or more people with a particular purpose in mind is considered to as a person-to-person interaction (Kumar, 2011:389). The narrative frame was carried out to capture the students' experiences in participating *kampus mengajar* particularly when they taught thematic. Meanwhile, the researcher carried out online interview with the participants to get some information related to the teaching thematic. The researcher prepared some questions to be answered freely by respondents. The interview was carried out to know the students' obstacles in teaching thematic and how to solve the problems

### 3. Findings and Discussion

#### 3.1. Students' Experiences of *Kampus Mengajar* Program

This section explored the *kampus mengajar* program's experiences among students. Capturing their stories while participating in *kampus mengajar* program, which is founded on the nature of narrative inquiry. The data came from students narrative frame.

*Kampus mengajar* batch 2 began with student selection internally. This program is attended by students from various faculties. However, this study only focused on Teacher Training and Education Faculty students. Of the dozens of students who participated in *kampus mengajar* program at Teacher Training and Education Faculty, the researcher determined five students were selected to be participants in this study, with details of two students from the English Education Study Program, one student from the Mathematics Education Study Program, one from the Science Education Study Program, and one student from Chemistry Education Study Program. In this implementation stage, researcher would like to retell the experiences of five students when carrying out thematic teaching on *kampus mengajar* batch 2 in the academic year of 2020/2021. Five students with the initials BCD, IF, DRS, ATM, and S. These students were placed in different elementary schools in Cirebon, namely SDN 1 Waledessa, SDN 1 Karangsembung, SD Sada Ibu, SDN 1 Karangmalang, so that researcher in telling the implementation of thematic learning did not only from one point of view.

Based on their narrative frame, most of the students experienced difficulties when they first entered the target elementary school to conduct thematic teaching. The fact is that students have to carry out thematic teaching practices to assigned elementary school students which is not in accordance with the study program they are taking. They are still confused with thematic teaching assistance, because all the subjects are combined in one theme and the learning is more concise and structured. It is in line with the statement of Nasrul (2018) Thematic learning is described as learning that is organized around certain theme and combines various lesson content to offer students with meaningful experiences.

According to the stories from all participants in this study, the elementary school where participants were placed during *kampus mengajar* program had implemented the 2013 curriculum (*Kurtilas*) so that schools were already using thematic learning model. This thematic teaching practice activity is a new thing for BCD, IF, DRS, ATM, and S. For them, the concept of thematic learning is not easy because it requires careful preparation so that learning can be successful.

#### 3.2. The obstacles of teaching thematic

This section described the students' obstacles in teaching thematic. The outcomes of this study were based on the interview with the students who joined *kampus mengajar* program in academic

year of 2020/2021. The interview was conducted to answer a research question about the obstacles in conducting *kampus mengajar* program “*what are the obstacles faced by students in teaching thematic during kampus mengajar program in academic year of 2020/2021?*”. Table 2, lists the names and their obstacles faced in teaching thematic.

Table 2. The students' obstacles

Student Obstacles in Teaching Thematic		
Initial	Name of Elementary Schools	The Obstacles in Teaching Thematic
BCD	SDN 1 Waledessa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficulties developing themes and instances of themes are not always appropriate with the conditions of the student learning environment.</li> <li>- A lack of teaching tools to assist thematic learning makes it difficult for students to mix disciplines in a flexible manner.</li> </ul>
IF	SDN 1 Karangsembung	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficulty in combining subjects into a single theme.</li> <li>- Difficulty comprehending the thematic learning syllabus.</li> </ul>
DRS	SD Sada Ibu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students' limited knowledge and competence to teach theme-related information.</li> <li>- Difficulty in defining the integration of different disciplines at the learning phase in the Lesson Plan (RPP).</li> </ul>
ATM	SDN 1 Karangmalang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires careful planning in terms of presentation between subjects.</li> </ul>
S	SDN 1 Karangmalang	

Based on table 2, the following was the outcome of the student interview:

According to a BCD story, some of the obstacles she had when applying thematic model learning in elementary school were difficulties in establishing themes, and instances of themes were not always suitable with the conditions of the student learning environment. Because the illustrations of themes in textbooks do not always correspond to the circumstances of students and the actual school environment, BCD has some trouble conveying to students. Furthermore, a lack of teaching resources to support theme learning makes it difficult for students to blend disciplines in a flexible way. Because the target school in the *kampus mengajar* program is an elementary school located in the 3T area and certified C, this circumstance also substantially affects theme learning achievement because the school lacks suitable learning facilities and media.

In the case of IF story, integrating themes into a single theme was a problem for her. It is difficult to tie one subject to another using the thematic learning model. This requires IF to be more open to various disciplines and to broaden its expertise.

DRS stated that thematic learning was carried out at SD Sada Ibu slightly later than other elementary schools because the majority of the students were children with special needs, therefore some students with special needs had low knowledge and competence so that DRS was constrained in teaching information related to the theme. With the condition of its students, DRS must understand not only the concept of thematic models, but also the situations and characters of different students. In addition, because DRS is not from an elementary school education study program, she only learned about this thematic learning model when she attended *kampus mengajar*, at first DRS had difficulty understanding the thematic learning syllabus because the subject topics were packaged in one theme.

According to ATM, She struggled to incorporate the lesson plan (RPP) into classroom instruction. One of the things he is perplexed about is determining what subjects are included in the theme.

Based on S story, applying the thematic learning model involves careful planning, namely in terms of topic presentation, establishing the theme, and relating it to the conditions in our surroundings. These were the challenges that S faced when teaching thematically. As a result, S is continually learning and expanding his potential in order for the theme model learning to be effective.

Based on the stories of participants in this study, when they initially started school, practically all of them encountered the same obstacles, namely how to foster creativity in order to build students' thinking abilities through the application of theme learning principles. Students are not just focused on one subject when taught thematically, but all subjects must be adequately conceived in one theme for learning to be considered successful.

#### 4. Conclusion

Kampus mengajar program is quite beneficial in increasing students' abilities, particularly in teaching skills. Because students who participated in kampus mengajar program were from a variety of study programs and majors. Not all students can have effective teaching abilities, especially when it came to implementing theme teaching in primary schools. As a result, it is recommended kampus mengajar program should be sustained by removing the numerous impediments discovered. And, Kampus mengajar students should be mastering thematic learning model to minimize any obstacles that may arise when they have been assigned to the target school of the kampus teaching program.

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