

OUT-OF-FIELD TEACHING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: PREPAREDNESS OF PRE-SERVICE PPG ENGLISH GRADUATES IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The Pre-service Teacher Professional Education programme (PPG Prajabatan) in Indonesia faces ongoing challenges related to assignment linearity, resulting in a gap between specialization-based training and classroom realities. This issue is particularly evident among English education graduates assigned to elementary schools and required to teach multiple core subjects beyond their training. This qualitative single-case study investigated how the pre-service PPG programme prepared English education graduates for non-linear teaching roles, focusing on the experiences of English specialists transitioning to generalist roles in elementary schools. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with graduates in Palembang and analysis of PPG syllabi and relevant government regulations. Interview data were thematically analyzed, while documents were examined through content analysis to evaluate professional preparedness and identify systemic competency gaps. The findings reveal that, while the programme successfully developed pedagogical, technological, administrative, and professional competencies, these forms of preparedness were largely universal and insufficient for managing multidisciplinary content and diverse classroom needs at the elementary level, positioning formally certified teachers as contextually underprepared. The study found that professional preparedness cannot be ensured through certification alone without alignment between training design and placement context. This research contributes to teacher education by providing evidence to inform policy reform towards level-based teacher preparation and structured support after certification.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 9 March 2026

1st revision: 22 April 2026

2nd revision: 2 June 2026

Accepted: 18 June 2026

Published: 30 June 2026

Keywords:

English education;

Out-of-field teaching

Pre-service PPG

Teacher preparedness

How to cite: Sari, K. I., Mirizon, S., & Vianty, M. (2026). Out-of-Field Teaching in Elementary Schools: Preparedness of Pre-Service PPG English Graduates in Indonesia. *Jo-ELT (Journal of English Language Teaching) Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa & Seni Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris IKIP*, 13(1), 185–199. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jo-elt.v13i1.19929>

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional preparation in Indonesia is primarily conducted through the Pre-service Teacher Professional Education programme (Pendidikan Profesi Guru/PPG Prajabatan), which serves as the official pathway for ensuring teacher competence and certification. In line with Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers (Undang-

Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 14 Tahun 2005 tentang Guru dan Dosen), the programme is designed to equip pre-service teachers with pedagogical and professional competencies aligned with their academic specializations. The programme aims to prepare teachers who are committed to the profession, capable of continuous professional development, and able to respond to the complexities of modern classroom environments (Vianty et al., 2024; Mirizon, 2020).

In this context, teacher preparedness is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing content knowledge, pedagogical competence, and technological integration within the TPACK framework (Phillips et al., 2025). It also includes psychological readiness to navigate diverse learner profiles, particularly the adaptive capacity and professional identity shifts required when teaching outside one's area of expertise (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021). However, a critical systemic issue has emerged: the rigorous preparation provided during the PPG programme does not always align with actual field placements, particularly for English education graduates. Although the programme is designed as a demand-driven response to teacher shortages (Directorate General of Teacher and Education Personnel, 2025b), the mismatch between specialized training and assigned teaching roles challenges the very foundation of teacher professionalism that the PPG seeks to establish.

The integrity of this professional preparation is theoretically and legally anchored in the principle of strict linearity. Ideally, graduates are expected to teach within their certified domains to ensure instructional quality (Porsch & Whannell, 2019; Stronge & Xu, 2018). Beyond basic skills, professional competence now requires continuous development of competencies to meet evolving classroom demands, supported by a strong institutional commitment to reach educational goals (Azrielyani et al., 2024; Jaya et al., 2024). This principle is legally reinforced by Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Regulation No. 1 of 2025 concerning the Redistribution of Civil Servant Teachers (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia Nomor 1 Tahun 2025) and Circular Letter of the Directorate General of Teachers and Education Personnel No. 1460/B.B1/GT.02.01/2021 concerning Linearization of Academic Qualifications and Teacher Certification for PPPK Recruitment (Surat Edaran Dirjen GTK 2021), which explicitly limit English education graduates to secondary-level roles (SMP/SMA/SMK) and distinguish them from Primary School Teachers (PGSD) (Directorate General of Teacher and Education Personnel, 2021, 2025a). Thus, the regulatory framework clearly positions English pre-service PPG as a specialist-oriented pathway rather than a generalist one.

Despite these clear legal mandates for linearity, a significant contradiction has emerged in recent field placements, where specialist-trained teachers are assigned to roles for which they were not trained. The outcomes of the contract-based civil servant (Pegawai Pemerintah dengan Perjanjian Kerja/PPPK) recruitment reveal that many pre-service PPG English graduates were assigned to elementary schools as *guru kelas* (generalist teachers). This assignment represents a fundamental transformation of professional identity, moving from a subject-specialist position to a generalist role who is responsible for multiple subjects, including Mathematics, Science, and Civics. This shift is often driven by pragmatic career considerations and the pursuit of financial stability (Novrianti et al., 2024), but it directly violates the intended PPG framework and creates a discrepancy between formal certification and practical classroom demands.

This policy-practice gap manifests in out-of-field teaching, creating a profound pedagogical mismatch. Situations in which teachers work outside their formal training often reduce their efficacy and increase job stress (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021; Price et al., 2019). When viewed through the lens of (Phillips et al., 2025), the secondary-level English PCK provided during PPG training does not seamlessly transfer to the interdisciplinary demands of an elementary classroom. Consequently, these teachers face a significant reality shock and

professional identity tension as they struggle to reconcile their specialist training with their generalist realities (Attabik & Zainiza, 2025; Novrianti et al., 2024).

While existing literature has extensively evaluated PPG's effectiveness in enhancing competencies within linear placements (Buhari et al., 2024; Nurwataniah et al., 2022; Qadrianty et al., 2024), there is a striking empirical gap regarding the transition of specialized English teachers into elementary generalist roles. Most previous studies focus on how PPG prepares teachers for their specific fields within linear placements, while limited research explores how English-specialized PPG graduates experience assignments as elementary generalist teachers. Filling this gap is crucial not only in the Indonesian context but also in global teacher education research, as it addresses the universal challenge of maintaining teacher quality amid systemic shortages and placement misalignments.

In response to this gap, the present study examines the extent to which pre-service PPG English graduates are prepared to assume the responsibilities of generalist teachers in elementary schools across pedagogical, content, technology, and psychological dimensions. By foregrounding graduates' experiences within an out-of-field teaching context, this study seeks to provide empirical insights into the policy–practice gap between specialist-oriented teacher education and field-level placement decisions. The findings are expected to inform teacher education policy and contribute to ongoing discussions on how to better align professional training with the practical realities of school staffing.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative single-case design to examine the extent to which PPG English graduates are prepared for generalist teaching roles in elementary schools. This design was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon within its real-world context (Chowdhury & Shil, 2021), particularly the systemic issue of out-of-field placements.

The case was bounded to PPG English graduates from Sriwijaya University (UNSRI), a major state-run Teacher Education Institution (LPTK) in Palembang, South Sumatra. This site was strategically selected to ensure a homogeneous training background, as all participants underwent the same curriculum and pedagogical preparation during their certification.

UNSRI was chosen because it is one of only two institutions in Palembang authorized to offer the PPG English programme and serves as the primary provider of certified English teachers in the region. As such, its graduates represent a significant proportion of the local teacher workforce, making this case particularly relevant for examining how national training standards intersect with local placement realities. The experiences of UNSRI graduates assigned to elementary schools provide concrete evidence of the mismatch between specialist preparation and generalist teaching demands, reflecting a broader national issue in teacher role alignment.

Participants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on three inclusion criteria: (1) holding a Bachelor's degree in English Education and having completed the pre-service PPG programme with a professional educator certificate; (2) currently serving as generalist classroom teachers in public elementary schools under the PPPK scheme; and (3) willingness to participate in the study. A total of five participants were selected, consistent with qualitative case study approaches that emphasize depth of insight over sample size (Creswell & Poth, 2018). At the time of data collection, all participants were in their second semester of teaching, ensuring sufficient practical experience to reflect on their pedagogical transitions.

The study was conducted in Palembang, South Sumatra, an urban context where the placement of PPG graduates in non-linear teaching roles is evident. Although the research was limited to a single city to enable in-depth, face-to-face data collection, the participants were drawn from five different public elementary schools with varied teaching contexts. These schools differed in terms of location and grade-level assignments, but generally shared similar structural constraints typical of public schools. To ensure confidentiality and protect participants' professional standing, pseudonyms were used for both individuals and their respective schools.

Instruments

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis to ensure methodological triangulation (Tisdell et al., 2025). The interview protocol was designed to evaluate professional preparedness by examining how PPG coursework and practicum experiences aligned with the interdisciplinary demands of elementary classroom teaching. The questions were developed based on the four teacher competencies mandated by Indonesian regulation (Minister of National Education Regulation No. 16 of 2007) and informed by the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Phillips et al., 2025). To ensure content validity, the interview instrument was reviewed by senior lecturers in English Education for clarity and relevance.

Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted in November 2025, with each session lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to facilitate natural expression and were audio-recorded with participants' consent. The recordings were transcribed verbatim and subsequently translated into English. To enhance trustworthiness, member checking was conducted by returning transcripts to participants for verification. This process was complemented by peer checking from an expert in English education to ensure conceptual accuracy and consistency in interpretation.

In addition, document analysis was conducted on PPG curriculum technical guidelines (Juknis) and course syllabi. These documents served as an objective reference for examining the alignment between the theoretical preparation provided in the PPG programme and the practical demands of elementary school teaching. The integration of interview and document data enabled a comprehensive analysis of graduates' preparedness in out-of-field teaching contexts.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection to allow for iterative interpretation of emerging findings. Interview transcripts were analyzed using the thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun & Clarke (2023), following six phases: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

The coding process was guided by the four teacher competencies mandated by Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 14 Tahun 2005 tentang Guru dan Dosen), pedagogical, professional, social, and personal, while also drawing on the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Phillips et al., 2025) as an analytical lens. This approach enabled the identification of patterns related to participants' instructional practices, administrative responsibilities, and challenges in applying pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in out-of-field teaching contexts.

Document data were analyzed using content analysis to complement and triangulate the findings from the interviews. The PPG curriculum guidelines and syllabi were examined to assess the alignment between formal training and the practical demands of elementary teaching. Triangulation was achieved by comparing interview data with curriculum

documents and relevant regulations to identify consistencies and discrepancies in teacher preparation.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The results regarding pre-service teachers' preparedness during their transition to elementary classroom teaching were presented through two interconnected thematic layers. These themes were identified through a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and document reviews, reflecting participants' field experiences. Table 1 presents the specific PPG courses that participants identified as significantly contributing to their foundational teaching preparedness.

Table 1
Teachers' perceived contributions of PPG pre-service English coursework

Course Name	Core Competency
Filosofi Pendidikan Indonesia (FPI): Philosophy of Indonesian Education	Comprehending the national educational philosophy (Ki Hadjar Dewantara) and the teacher's role in nurturing students' natural and contextual potential.
Pemahaman tentang Peserta Didik dan Pembelajarannya (PPDP): Understanding Students and Their Learning	Conducting systematic observations of student characteristics and designing instruction aligned with their developmental stages and diverse learning needs.
Teknologi Baru dalam Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran: Emerging Technologies in Teaching and Learning	Integrating digital technologies and interactive learning media to enhance instructional effectiveness and engagement in classroom settings.
Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi: Differentiated Instruction (DI)	Identifying and implementing differentiation strategies across content, process, product, and learning environments to address student diversity.
Prinsip Pengajaran dan Asesmen (PPA): Teaching and Assessment Principles	Designing and implementing effective instructional plans while developing diverse assessment tools to evaluate student learning outcomes and progress.

General Pedagogical Knowledge and Instructional Preparedness

Findings indicated that participants maintained professional confidence in their pedagogical preparedness during the transition from secondary to elementary levels. Document analysis of the 2022 PPG Academic Paper and core syllabi confirmed that the curriculum prioritized universal learning theories (Directorate General of Teacher and Education Personnel, 2022). In particular, courses such as Philosophy of Indonesian Education (FPI) and Understanding Students and Their Learning (PPDP) were designed to instill reflective thinking and adaptability through learning theories, including behaviorism, constructivism, and moral development theories (Directorate General of Teacher and Education Personnel, 2022a; Directorate General of Teacher and Education Personnel, 2022b). These documents provided a foundation that participants could adapt across different grade levels, focusing on student-centered instruction rather than subject-specific content. The PPG curriculum was perceived as prioritizing universal pedagogical principles over subject-specific content, enabling graduates to apply learning theories and instructional strategies across age groups.

"In the PPG program, almost all the course materials focused on pedagogy. In my opinion, the pedagogy I have learned remains relevant across all levels. The learning theories and student development are applicable to students of all ages." (P4)

“FPI is a course that shaped why we chose to become teachers and how we learn to manage ourselves.” (P3)

“The FPI course emphasized the idea that educators must humanize learners: how to teach children joyfully. In addition, understanding learners (PPDP) is crucial because we have to know the students’ needs we must accommodate.” (P4)

Beyond philosophical shifts, participants demonstrated preparedness to implement flexible teaching strategies, such as Differentiated Instruction (DI) (Directorate General of Teacher and Education Personnel, 2022d), which involved tailoring instruction to individual students’ needs, and the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) principle, which grouped students by current learning level rather than by age or grade. Participants emphasized that these strategies were essential for managing the extreme heterogeneity in elementary classrooms, and English graduates responded by providing scaffolding.

“The most important thing I implemented was DI. Of 30 students, only 10 are suitable for third grade. The rest were still learning basic reading and arithmetic.” (P2)

“In DI, we must first diagnose to understand how to group students. We guide them step by step through scaffolding, because if we give advanced material too quickly beyond their current level, these students will be left behind.” (P4)

“What I learned in the PPG training, such as problem-based and project-based learning, was quite effective to implement because the syntax is the same, and it helps me apply it at an elementary level.” (P4)

In summary, the findings indicate that the participants’ instructional preparedness was rooted in the adaptability of the PPG curriculum. By applying the differentiation strategies and instructional syntaxes (PBL/PjBL) outlined in the syllabi, graduates were able to simplify complex secondary-level frameworks into age-appropriate activities. This suggests that their pedagogical competence was not restricted by grade-level boundaries but was supported by a transferable framework.

Technological Knowledge and Innovation

Participants demonstrated technological preparedness characterized by adaptability and creative problem-solving in resource-limited settings. This was supported by the Emerging Technologies in Teaching and Learning Syllabus (Directorate General of Teacher and Education Personnel, 2022c) and the PPG Academic Paper (2022), which explicitly require students to design innovative learning experiences and to foster creative problem-solving skills as key objectives of the programme. These documents emphasize the importance of finding practical solutions in schools with limited resources. This preparedness was clear from the participants’ experiences in finding contextual solutions for elementary school learning:

“We can use technology to make learning more fun because we are accustomed to using a variety of media, such as videos and Canva.” (P5)

“Knowledge of emerging learning technologies is very important. Although the projectors at my school are limited, I can still innovate by using paper-based barcodes for the students.” (P1)

These findings indicate that graduates shifted from a reliance on ideal facilities to solution-oriented innovation. By developing low-cost, high-impact innovations such as paper-based barcodes, participants demonstrated their ability to integrate digital elements into classroom settings despite real-world infrastructure challenges. Rather than being constrained by limited resources, graduates have provided contextual solutions that integrate digital elements into primary school learning.

Administrative and Curriculum Understanding

In addition to instructional and technological preparedness, pre-service PPG graduates demonstrated significant competence in administrative aspects and in understanding the curriculum. This preparedness was rooted in a deep understanding of the Principles of Teaching and Assessment (PPA) course, which equipped them with the backward design framework. According to the PPA syllabus (Directorate General of Teacher and Education Personnel, 2022e), graduates were trained to design learning that begins with setting learning objectives and assessments before determining activities. This training provided the functional knowledge transfer needed to deconstruct the Merdeka Curriculum, regardless of the school level. Research findings indicated that graduates reported substantial benefit from their understanding of Learning Achievement (CP) concepts and teaching administration:

“The knowledge from the PPG is very beneficial, such as learning strategies, creating teaching modules, and determining learning objectives. All of this can be applied even if the subjects are different.” (P1)

“When I began teaching in elementary school, I was still able to adapt because the basic concepts were the same, particularly in breaking down the Learning Achievement (CP) into Learning Objectives (TP) and conducting assessments.” (P2)

This was further reinforced by P5, who emphasized that the training during PPG encompassed the entire school administrative system through Mentor Teacher guidance during the teaching practicum (PPL):

“Even though our teaching practicum (PPL) was in high school, we were taught administration, including school duty assignments (*guru piket*), filling out student reports, and designing assessment blueprints. So, when I was in elementary school, I was no longer surprised by administrative matters.” (P5)

In summary, the validation of document data and participant statements demonstrates that the ability to organize learning trajectories was grounded in a systematic understanding of instructional design. This administrative self-confidence provided graduates with a professional foundation and structural stability, enabling them to manage schoolwide responsibilities despite the challenges of mastering new thematic material.

Professional Identity and Reflective Practice

Graduates' preparedness was measured not only by technical proficiency but also by the transformation of professional identity and the capacity for reflective thinking. The pre-service PPG programme was designed to build a strong foundation in the teacher mindset, emphasizing the development of professional teachers who are adaptable to various educational challenges. As outlined in the program's educational philosophy (FPI) and work ethic, this mindset fosters a long-term commitment to teaching and encourages graduates to see themselves as professional educators rather than just subject-specific instructors. This shift from a subject-based to a broader professional identity was evident in the participants' accounts:

“I no longer consider myself an English teacher. I am now a classroom teacher.” (P2)

Participants also noted that the Philosophy of Indonesian Education (FPI) course served as a moral foundation for their careers. P3 and P5 explained how this reflective practice translated into proactive efforts to address their weaknesses and prepare for unfamiliar material:

“In PPG, we are taught to be professional and to learn throughout our lives. No matter the subject matter, we always prepare teaching modules.” (P3)

“If next week’s lesson is on angles (Mathematics) and I am somewhat confused, I will discuss it with colleagues or watch YouTube tutorials beforehand.” (P5)

These findings indicate that graduates possessed significant professional resilience. By informally building a community of practice with peers and independently seeking solutions through technology, they demonstrated the ability to recognize weaknesses (reflection) and immediately seek solutions (action). Despite content disparities, graduates maintained professional standards through reflective practice and high adaptability of identity.

Perceived Preparation Gaps

Although pre-service PPG graduates were highly competent in pedagogy, their placement as elementary school teachers highlighted significant contextual gaps. According to the Directorate General of Teacher and Education Personnel (2025a), teacher education should align strictly with subject and school levels (linearity). However, document analysis of the PPG English Curriculum and the Pre-service PPG Academic Paper (2022) shows a focus on adolescent or adult learners (SMP/SMA), creating a mismatch when applied to elementary needs. This lack of alignment resulted in a pedagogical gap regarding lower-grade student characteristics, deficits in non-specialized content, and limited inclusive education practices.

Graduates experienced a significant disconnect in addressing the psychological aspects and behavior management required for younger students (Grades 1-3), who prioritize emotional regulation over logical instruction:

“We need to be more patient and provide guidance than we do with high school students. For example, sitting positions and safe behaviors must be explained with understanding, patience, and love.” (P5)

“There is only one thing I do not think I was taught, which is Teaching for Young Learners, so I am quite overwhelmed when dealing with lower-grade students.” (P2)

Beyond pedagogical challenges, the content deficit in non-specialization subjects such as Mathematics, IPAS, Bahasa Indonesia, English, Civics, and Arts became an additional cognitive burden, as these subjects were not part of their English specialist training:

“The concern is the subject matter, especially Mathematics for Grades 5 and 6. I personally feel weak in Mathematics, so I need to study first before teaching.” (P5)

“The difficulty in teaching higher-grade classes lies in the IPAS (Science and Social) subject, because there are practical tasks such as making electrical components.” (P3)

Finally, participants identified a major gap in inclusive education, noting that the curriculum did not provide specific strategies for students with learning delays and specific child behaviors. P4 identified a significant gap in how 5th-grade students who were not yet able to read were being handled, as they exhibited behaviors inconsistent with their developmental age.

“We had not learned about inclusive materials or children with special needs. In the 5th grade I teach, there are some students who cannot read yet and behave like 1st graders, which means the child’s development does not match their age.” (P4)

These findings indicate a mismatch between the graduates’ academic expertise and the multi-subject demands of the elementary curriculum. This contextual unpreparedness forced graduates to navigate complex classroom realities, such as teaching non-linear subjects and independently managing inclusive needs. Despite policy recommendations to accommodate student diversity, the gap between curriculum implementation and school-level placement continues to place a significant professional burden on graduates.

The results categorize the data into key dimensions: instructional design, adaptive teaching, curricular mastery, professional identity, and content competence. Each dimension highlights the relationship between participants' strengths and the specific gaps identified in their professional placement. To clarify these findings, the primary dimensions of preparedness and their summarised themes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Synthesis of professional preparedness and contextual gaps

Dimension	Key strengths (Preparedness)	Identified Gaps
Instructional Pedagogical	Proficiency in differentiated instruction, teaching strategies, and assessment	Absence of Teaching Young Learners (TYL) & inclusive strategies
Adaptive Teaching	High adaptability and innovation in resource-limited settings	Difficulty in cross-curricular and multi-subject integration
Curricular Mastery	Mastery of Merdeka Curriculum and school administration	Limited understanding of elementary-specific content structures
Professional Identity	Strong reflective mindset, lifelong learning, and resilient adaptive capacity	Psychological gap in transitioning from subject to classroom teacher
Content Competence	Specialized English language competence	Content deficit in elementary subjects (Math, Science, etc.)

Discussion

The Transferability–Specificity Paradox

Most previous studies have shown that the pre-service PPG programme enhances teachers' pedagogical and professional competencies, including technology integration using the TPACK framework in linear placements (Buhari et al., 2024; Qadrianty et al., 2024; Daud et al., 2020). These previous studies generally report that professional competencies developed during PPG are directly linked to high levels of teaching preparedness. However, this study revealed a paradox where high formal certification does not equate to functional preparedness when the teaching context is misaligned. It highlights that while pedagogical skills are transferable, they lose their teaching accuracy when a teacher lacks a deep, specific understanding of the content required by the new environment.

This paradox stems from a gap between strong general pedagogical skills and limited Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) in elementary settings. Phillips et al. (2025) argued that effective teaching requires transforming subject matter into forms suited to students' developmental stages, a process known as Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which subsequently becomes disrupted in non-linear placements. These findings resonate with challenges in out-of-field teaching (OOF), where a deficit in field-specific pedagogical strategies often persists even among certified professionals (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021).

In this study, while English-specialist graduates possessed robust General Pedagogical Knowledge (GPK), they struggled to develop the specific PCK necessary for young learners. This alignment with the global challenge shows that when specialists are forced to prioritize integrated curricula over their specific expertise, their advanced skills remain underutilized (Tran, 2023). Consequently, these teachers often rely on general teaching methods to mask a lack of mastery of specific content. Their teaching preparedness, therefore, remains paradoxical: they are formally certified as professionals, yet contextually underprepared for the specialized demands of the elementary classroom. The structural collapse of this fragmented competency is visualized through the TPACK framework in Figure 1.

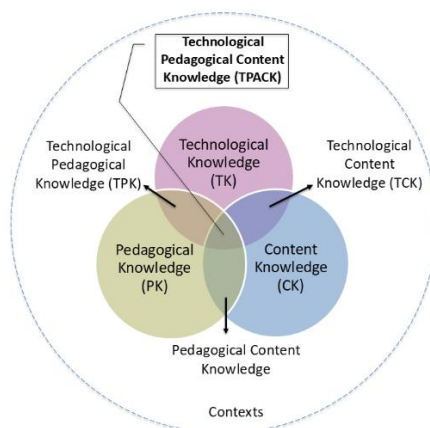


Figure 1. The tpack framework (adapted from Phillips et al., 2025)

Figure 1 shows that pre-service PPG English graduates were most prominent where Technological and Pedagogical Knowledge overlapped. However, non-linear placements created a gap in Content Knowledge. This gap prevented them from developing full Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), as their skills lacked the depth needed for elementary teaching. Although Chang et al. (2025) found that PPG significantly improved participants' TK and PK components; however, this success did not automatically translate into intact TPACK when teachers were placed in nonlinear positions. Without the anchor of relevant Content Knowledge (CK), the framework remains fragmented, a phenomenon that poses a persistent threat to professional teaching standards worldwide (Davies, 2022).

Out-of-Field Teaching Beyond Subject Matter

This study redefines out-of-field teaching (OOF) as more than assigning teachers outside their academic preparation. For pre-service PPG-certified English teachers in elementary schools, OOF also involves a struggle to address students' developmental needs. Consistent with (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021), the core issue is not just content unfamiliarity but a pedagogical collision in which a teacher's specialized methods fail to meet the needs of younger learners. Teacher self-efficacy diminishes when established teaching strategies, originally developed for adolescent students, prove ineffective for children who may still struggle with basic literacy and numeracy (Smith et al., 2024).

This collision occurs because PPG training focuses heavily on secondary-level pedagogy, which contrasts with the realities of elementary education, which require a stronger emphasis on student-teacher relationships and emotional support (Doyle et al., 2022). In this study, while methods such as differentiated instruction (DI) were theoretically transferable, they proved difficult to implement due to the extreme range of student abilities in phase C (grades 5-6). While Wong et al. (2023) demonstrated the effectiveness of DI in phase C classrooms, the current study reveals a different reality due to contextual misalignment. The participants' struggle suggests that DI's difficulty was not a failure of the method itself, but rather a consequence of the participants' background as secondary-level specialists. This confirms that the success of DI is highly dependent on the alignment between a teacher's training and their specific placement level.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that content challenges are context-dependent: while basic materials were manageable, abstract subjects such as Mathematics and IPAS caused severe emotional exhaustion. Without specific training in child psychology, managing impulsive student behaviors led to professional fatigue, a consequence often documented in international studies on teacher stress (Porsch & Whannell, 2019). To cope with this reality, participants adopted survival strategies, focusing on immediate classroom management rather than long-term instructional quality. This creates a persistent identity conflict (Attabik &

Zainiza, 2025); graduates are caught between their identity as language specialists and their assigned role as multidisciplinary generalists. This reliance on personal dedication to fill training gaps highlights a significant policy failure in teacher redistribution. When personal initiative replaces structured training, teacher professionalism becomes unstable, ultimately risking the overall quality of education (Davies, 2022).

Policy and Programmatic Implications for PPG

The findings of this study provide critical insights into teacher education policy in Indonesia, particularly regarding the misalignment between the PPG curriculum and the reality of teacher distribution. The presence of a dual mismatch across both subject specialization and educational level indicates structural gaps in the current PPG programme design. While teacher placement is formally regulated by Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Regulation No. 1 of 2025 concerning the Redistribution of Civil Servant Teachers (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia Nomor 1 Tahun 2025), in practice, recruitment complexities often prioritize administrative filling of vacancies over pedagogical suitability Permatasari and Tandiyuk (2023). If the government continues to assign English specialists to elementary schools, this policy must move beyond relying on individual teachers. Without a clear legal framework and institutional support, this practice risks instructional inequality, where students in non-linear classrooms receive less expert instruction than those in linear ones (Mullen et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the findings underscore the urgency of reconstructing the PPG curriculum toward a more flexible, level-based approach. Currently, the English PPG remains predominantly focused on subject mastery in secondary education contexts (Qadrianty et al., 2024), leaving graduates unprepared for the specific pedagogical and managerial demands of elementary schools. In line with Hobbs and Porsch (2021) for teacher flexibility, it is crucial to integrate teaching English for young learners (TEYL) and child development psychology into the core modules to develop cross-disciplinary competencies, particularly to enhance the functional preparedness of graduates who undertake out-of-field teaching assignments. Such cross-disciplinary competencies are not just extras; they are essential to reducing the professional identity tensions that threaten long-term career sustainability (Huang, 2021).

Finally, this study highlights the critical need for structured post-certification support. Although previous studies have emphasized the effectiveness of the PPG programme in developing pedagogical and technological competencies, the present findings suggested that these competencies might not be fully operationalized without adequate transitional support. Policy initiatives should therefore prioritize mentoring and induction systems that guide newly certified PPG graduates, supported by experienced elementary school teachers, to bridge gaps in Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), particularly in core subjects such as Mathematics, Integrated Science, and Social Studies (IPAS). Without sustained policy intervention, professional certification risks becoming an administrative formality rather than a genuine guarantee of instructional quality for all learners (Huang et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that although the PPG pre-service English programme establishes a strong foundation in pedagogical and technological competencies, curriculum and administrative understanding, and professional and reflective practice, these attributes did not necessarily result in functional preparedness for graduates assigned to out-of-field positions. This research fills a significant empirical gap by examining the experiences of English-specialized PPG graduates who, despite being certified as professional teachers, faced transitions when assigned to generalist roles. The novelty of this study lies in its challenge to the assumption that professional certification guarantees universal preparedness.

It revealed a professional paradox in which high-standard training becomes ineffective due to a lack of grade-specific Content Knowledge (CK), showing that even with strong Pedagogical (PK) and Technological (TK) skills, professional competence remains incomplete when the subject-matter placement is misaligned.

This research contributes to teacher education literature by questioning the idea that teaching preparedness is fixed. Instead, it demonstrates that preparedness is dynamic and shaped by the match between training and actual job placement. The study recommends that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen) and Regional Education Consortia (KPD) enhance the accuracy of teacher-needs mapping to prioritize linear placement and, in cases of unavoidable non-linear assignments, provide intensive content mentoring led by expert teachers to mitigate subject-matter deficits. Concurrently, Teacher Education Institutions (LPTK) should establish stronger data coordination mechanisms to enable curriculum adjustments, such as reassigning teaching practicums to elementary settings and introducing multi-subject bridging modules. It also suggests implementing structured post-certification mentoring. These actions are vital to ensure that teacher professionalism extends beyond administrative needs and is reflected in real classroom instruction.

This study is limited by its small sample size of five participants from a single region, which precludes statistical generalization across the entire Indonesian population. Future research should expand this scope by involving more diverse regions or private school settings to examine the nationwide consistency of these patterns. Additionally, further studies are needed to explore the long-term impact of out-of-field teaching (OOF) on student learning outcomes and the professional identity of English graduates in generalist roles.

FUNDING

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Participation in this study was voluntary. Prior to participation, all participants were provided with clear information regarding the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and anticipated benefits. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their personal information and informed that all data collected would be used solely for research purposes. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data generated and analyzed in this study are not publicly available because they contain information that could compromise participant privacy and confidentiality. Restricting public access ensures compliance with ethical research principles and applicable data protection regulations. Nevertheless, the dataset may be made available to qualified researchers upon reasonable request for verification or further analysis. Any such request will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will require prior approval from the appropriate institutional ethics authority.

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