

UNDERSTANDING TEACHING THROUGH EXPERIENCE: A STUDENT'S REFLECTIVE APPROACH TO BECOMING A CHRISTIAN TEACHER IN PSAL (PLANNING, STRATEGY, ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING)

[MEMAHAMI MENGAJAR MELALUI PENGALAMAN: PENDEKATAN REFLEKTIF MAHASISWA DALAM MENJADI GURU KRISTEN MELALUI MATA KULIAH PSAP (PERENCANAAN, STRATEGI, ASESMEN, DAN PEMBELAJARAN)]

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Abstract

This research explores the transformative process of student teachers as they transition into educators through reflective practices. Focusing on the personal experiences and reflections of student teachers, the study aims to understand how their experiences shape their development of calling, teaching competencies and pedagogy through the course PSAL (Planning, Strategy, Assessment and Learning). Using qualitative methods, the research highlights the role of self-reflection in enhancing how to make teaching plans, deciding on teaching strategies, assessment and conducting micro teaching in the classroom. By analyzing reflections report, the study investigates how student teachers reconcile theory with

practice, identify areas of growth, and ultimately construct their professional identity as Christian educators. This reflective approach not only contributes to their understanding of teaching but also fosters a deeper connection to their future students and teaching practices. The findings underscore the importance of reflective practice as a foundational tool for developing Christian educators.

Keywords: Calling; Christian educators; psal; reflective teaching

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi proses transformatif calon guru saat mereka menjalani proses transisi menjadi pendidik melalui praktik reflektif. Dengan berfokus pada pengalaman pribadi dan refleksi calon guru, penulisan ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana pengalaman mereka membentuk perkembangan panggilan, kompetensi mengajar, dan pedagogi mereka melalui mata kuliah PSAP (Perencanaan, Strategi, Asesmen, dan Pembelajaran). Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, penelitian ini berusaha menyoroti peran refleksi diri dalam meningkatkan kemampuan merancang rencana pelaksanaan pembelajaran, menentukan strategi mengajar, penilaian, dan melaksanakan micro teaching di kelas. Dengan menganalisis laporan refleksi, penelitian ini menyelidiki bagaimana calon guru menyatukan teori dengan praktik, mengidentifikasi area pengembangan, dan pada akhirnya membangun identitas profesional mereka sebagai pendidik Kristen. Pendekatan reflektif ini tidak hanya berkontribusi pada pemahaman mereka tentang pengajaran tetapi juga memperkuat koneksi yang lebih dalam dengan siswa mereka di masa depan dan praktik pengajaran mereka. Temuan ini menyoroti pentingnya praktik reflektif sebagai alat dasar untuk mengembangkan calon-calon pendidik Kristen.

Kata Kunci: Pengajaran reflektif; pendidik Kristen; panggilan;
psap

Introduction

Teaching is a noble vocation, a tremendous calling. To be a teacher is to serve as God's representative in the classroom, shaping students' hearts and minds with biblical values. Teaching from a Christian perspective emphasizes that education is not only about transfer of knowledge but also about guiding students to walk faithfully with God in all aspects of life, integrating faith with learning and character (Van Brummelen, 2009).

According to Vryhof (2011), teacher education plays a crucial role in strengthening the quality of national education in today's global and digital context. With the emergence to meet the expectations of government and society on teachers as well schools as formal learning institution continue to grow. Educators are expected to excel in pedagogy, especially in planning, determining learning strategy, conducting relevant assessments and making learning happen, as well handling challenges both inside and beyond the classroom. In addition, they are entrusted with cultivating a supportive and constructive atmosphere within the school community. Because society is constantly changing, moving quickly, and setting high ethical standards, Christian school leaders should always ask themselves, *"What are we doing? Why are we doing it this way? How could we do it better?"*

Nevertheless, reality shows the opposite, professional teachers find it difficult to have intentional time to think about and plan their lesson plans, including determining learning strategies, types of assessment, and developing instructional designs before they enter the classroom. PSAL Elementary Christian Religion Education is a course designed for prospective teacher students to guide them in preparing focused and gradually guided teaching. This article will explore how students learn PSAL as a course that prepares them to perform the role of a teacher, from the stages of planning learning, determining learning strategies, selecting the appropriate type of assessment, and developing instructional designs. The problem statement of this article is how

reflective practice in PSAL class help student teachers build their experience and identity as Christian teachers? During this process, students are also given the opportunity to participate in PO (Praktikum Observasi), which exposes them to learning the entire process practically from their mentor teachers at school. Then, an analysis of their progress and growth to become teachers will be taken from their reflections. Christian teachers are called to teach reflectively, integrating faith with learning while encouraging students to grow in truth (Palmer, 1998).

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research methodology within a constructivist and interpretivist paradigm, recognizing that meaning is co-constructed through lived experience and reflection. Qualitative research is especially appropriate for Christian education because it seeks to understand the depth of participants' faith-informed experiences rather than to measure variables in isolation. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, qualitative inquiry allows researchers to *"understand how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences."* In Christian education, this aligns with the goal of discerning how God is at work in teaching and learning contexts (Smith, 2018).

Within this framework, reflective journals serve as the primary method of data collection. Reflection is a central dimension of Christian pedagogy; it echoes the biblical call to *"examine yourselves"* (2 Cor. 13:5) and to discern God's ongoing work in one's life and vocation. As Van Brummelen (2009) argues, reflection enables teachers and students to *"walk with God in the classroom,"* integrating faith and learning in a way that shapes the heart as well as the mind. Through reflective journaling, participants are invited to explore how their faith informs their practice, relationships, and understanding of teaching as a divine calling.

The reflection journal was completed in the form of a reflection report compiled by each student at the end of the semester (after each student had completed their microteaching practice). The class population consisted of 12 students in their fourth semester of their second year, including 4 male students and 8 female students. Six

samples consisting of 3 male students and 3 female students were taken for analysis and discussion to represent the class in a balanced manner.

Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that teacher students are encouraged to write regularly in response to guiding prompts that address both pedagogical and spiritual dimensions for instance, how classroom practices express Christian values, how challenges shape faith, or how God's presence is perceived in teaching and learning. These journals provide authentic, first-person accounts of participants' growth and transformation, consistent with the qualitative aim of capturing lived experience in context.

The reflective journals are analyzed using hermeneutical approach, it requires the researcher to listen for how participants discern God's truth in their experiences while remaining reflexive about their own assumptions (Van Brummelen, 2012). Hermeneutical approach emphasizes on how to interpret meanings not just facts, therefore reflective journal should not be treated as neutral or objective reports (Van Manen, 2016). Instead, researcher here is engaging in interpretation, not measurement by asking these questions: what meaning is the participant making of this experience? How does the participant interpret God's presence, guidance or truth?

According to Palmer (1998), the use of reflective journals in this way serves a dual purpose: it functions as both a research instrument and a formational practice. As Palmer emphasizes, "*we teach who we are,*" and reflective practice allows teachers and learners to integrate their inner spiritual life with outward pedagogical practice. Thus, reflection becomes both data for understanding and a means of spiritual formation. This approach aligns with the Christian view of education as a redemptive and transformative process, one that cultivates wisdom, faith, and character in the image of Christ (Wolterstorff, 2002).

Theoretical Framework: Planning, Strategy, Assessment, Learning (PSAL)

Learning is an active and dynamic process that goes beyond the simple memorization of facts. Psychologist Kolb (1984) explains that true

learning occurs through the interaction of experience, reflection, and the application of knowledge to new contexts. His experiential learning theory emphasizes that meaningful understanding arises through learning from experience. In addition, Vryhof (2011) explains that students in Christian schools are given chances to demonstrate that they can recognize and truly understand things by acting in ways that show they have truly absorbed new knowledge. Christian education provides learning experiences that are meaningful and connected to real life. People who are vocationally minded challenge existing conditions and work towards Christian solutions that replace unfairness and shortcomings with peace and beauty. Here are some of the steps to learn in PSAL class: planning, strategy, assessment and learning.

Planning

According to Van Brummelen (2009), knowledge involves more than intellectual understanding and analysis. Knowledge must result in responsible responses and actions. Also, Van Brummelen (2009) said that the important focus in teaching is the understanding, perspective, and wisdom that we want students to gain. Graham (2003) states that "when you start thinking about making a change, you will probably run into some obstacles. These challenges can come from inside or outside of yourselves, and it is important to find as many as you can so you can address them. These barriers might hold you back, make you adjust your plan, push you to change your schedule, and more. However, you can get through them. If your plan is meaningful, you should want to do that." Christian teachers have the opportunity to develop teaching strategies that bring the classroom alive as an arena of faith and life-growth (Dickens et al., 2017).

Graham (2003) states that since we attend to our current needs and expend our energy toward what will meet those needs, the first important step in planning a lesson for a teacher is to figure out how to let the students understand why they need to learn the subject being taught. A planning wheel can be used to aid the process of developing activities and assessments using the six facets of understanding (explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy and self-knowledge). According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), in qualitative method, reflective journals often reveal the 2nd, 4th and 6th facet of

understanding which are interpretation, perspective and self-knowledge. These facets justify treating journals as texts for interpretation, not as factual reports—supporting a hermeneutical approach.

Learning Strategy

Paskarina (2021) states that *“In learning process, PAK teachers in their multifunctional role need to apply contextual learning strategies so that teaching and learning activities can take place in a systematic, directed, unobstructed, effective and efficient manner and can achieve educational targets.”* Learners often feel creative tension in different ways. Helping them understand why something is important before it is taught can help create the right kind of tension. Lawrence Richards refers to this as the 'hook,' which pulls the learners in and gets them engaged, while also establishing the focus of the learning process (Graham, 2003).

According to Graham (2003), Jesus did not often teach his disciples by giving them direct lessons or lectures. Instead, he used real-life situations and let his followers get involved in those problems before they even knew how to handle them. This involvement was actually a key part of how they learned. Van Dyke (2012) states that collaborative classrooms create a safe, welcoming and supportive environment where both teachers and students can feel secure and work together. Unlike classrooms that focus on individual competition, they reduce feelings of fear: fear of failure, fear of the teacher, fear of one another: *“love drives out fear”* (1 John 4:18).

Assessment

According to Van Brummelen (2009), assessment allows teachers to check how well the curriculum, teaching methods, and learning activities are working. Since it is an integral part of the instructional process, assessment requires continuity. This will help students be more willing to listen to lessons and teachers to be more willing to listen when they plan and teach. Graham (2003) states that assessment in real-life situations is usually more meaningful than evaluating it in typical school settings. Learning that takes place in real-world contexts offers a better way to measure understanding and should be seen as a valuable form of evaluation, not just a way to get a grade. Assessment activities should not be seen as the end of the process, but rather as an important part of it

that happens throughout the learning process. They should also guide the selection of learning activities before they are chosen (Dickens et al., 2017). Learning

Christian teachers are called to plan learning that connects faith and knowledge through strategies that encourage reflection, service, and transformation (Moore, 1998). Moreover, Gulo & Tapilaha (2024) states that Christian Religious Education learning should cultivate both spiritual depth and critical engagement, enabling students to discern truth faithfully in digital contexts. Therefore, Christian learning is not value-neutral; it intentionally guides students to respond faithfully to God in their understanding of the world (Van Brummelen, 2009).

Christian learning is understood as a transformative and faith-integrated process in which knowledge, spirituality, and character formation are intentionally nurtured through pedagogical strategies, teacher guidance, and contextual engagement (Van Brummelen, 2009; Smith, 2018; Gulo & Tapilaha, 2024). Based on the above understanding, reflection journal as means for doing reflective approach in learning, can help teachers to achieve the goals of Christian learning.

Students' Learning Process in PSAL

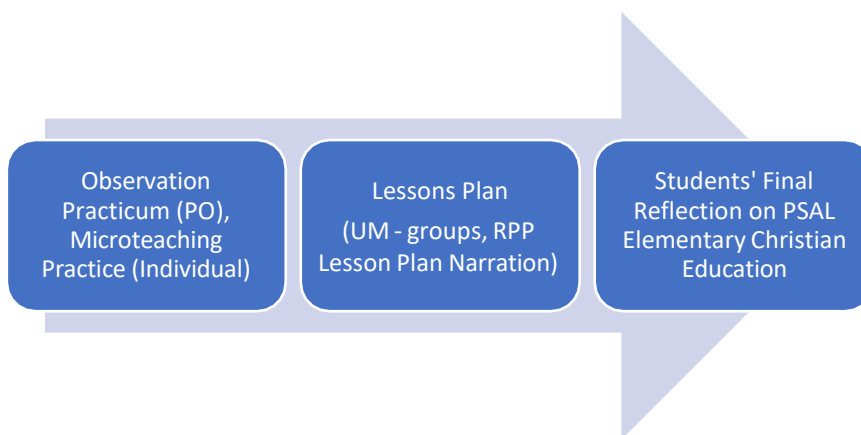
Teaching skills are a gift from God to humans who are created in His image. Teaching is a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit that needs to be developed to build a community of shalom as an accountability to God. Learning aims to bring about changes in spiritual, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in faith in Christ. The components of learning include planning, strategy, and assessment as efforts to develop human intellect (students) comprehensively. Learning must be carried out continuously, always remembering humanity's struggle with sin in living a life of sanctification as believers.

PSAL Course Design

This course helps students improve their knowledge and develop skills in teaching PAK/Biblical Studies for elementary school education based on a Christian perspective. In this course, students will learn about lesson planning, learning strategies or methods, developing relevant

assessments, elementary school microteaching, and developing learning media/resources. The assignment is to create lesson plans, materials, and microteaching aims to deepen the concepts that students have learned. This course is taken after studying introductory courses in Christian education, learning communities, instructional design concepts and applications, learning assessment, curriculum evaluation and development, student development, and learning and teaching. This course description was taken from RPS (Rencana Pembelajaran Semester) of PSAL (Planning, Assessment, Strategy and Learning).

The PSAL Elementary Christian Religion Education course consists of a total of 16 meetings, which include various activities ranging from emphasizing the importance of planning, determining the right learning strategy, choosing the proper type of assessment that can achieve learning objectives, and finally actualizing a holistic learning process in micro teaching practice.



Unit Mapping and Lesson Plan (RPP)

Students will collaboratively (in groups) compile unit mapping in accordance with the competencies provided by the lecturer. In this assignment, students will also conduct peer assessments based on their collaboration process. All grading of Unit Mapping (UM) will be based on the provided rubrics with the following grading indicators: identity, enduring understanding, essential questions, graduate profile, learning objectives, assessment, instructional design, learning strategy, and references.

Then students individually develop lesson plans from the unit mapping that have been compiled together with their groups after first selecting the topics (under the group unit mapping) that form the basis for the lesson plan development. All grading of Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP) will be based on the provided rubric with the following indicators: biblical Christian worldview, summative assessment, enduring understanding and essential questions, learning outcomes, time allocation, procedure and instructional design, formative assessment, and references.

Micro Teaching

After the planning stage is complete, students prepare themselves to practice their teaching skills in microteaching sessions. At the elementary school level, each student teacher is given the opportunity to conduct a 30-35 minute teaching simulation. All grading of micro teaching will be based on the provided rubric with the following indicators: Biblical Christian worldview, opening part, learning strategy and method, concept/content knowledge, asking questions and checking students' understanding, teaching aids and media, class management, communication skills, and closing part.

Observation Practicum

Students are given the opportunity to participate in observation practicums for the period of one week, where they are assigned to schools to observe various classes and learn from their mentors on how to make planning and how to teach at school. After this practicum, students are required to arrange an observation report in which they will report in detail on what the findings they gathered in the classes they observed.

Students' Reflection on Process

The objective of Reflection is so that students can describe, reflect on, and rationalize PSAL learning process during one semester. Here are some guiding questions: 1. How do you analyze the learning planning activities you have carried out? Are there any inconsistencies between the learning objectives, assessment, and learning strategies you have used? 2. How do you analyze your assessment plan? Is it feasible and

appropriate for achieving your planned objectives? 3. How does the microteaching you conducted reflect your beliefs and goals as a Christian educator? 4. How can the digital-based learning media you created facilitate students? 5. How can you analyze and evaluate your growth process during PSAP learning? What are your strengths and what do you still need to improve in your next microteaching activity? 6. What are your next steps in preparing yourself as a Christian educator after participating in the PSAP learning process? All grading of reflection process will be based on the provided rubric with the following indicators: personal growth, rationale of topic, rationale of learning strategy/method, rationale of assessment type, understanding of the role as Christian educators, the use of teaching aids/media, future follow up, and writing standard.

Analysis: Teacher Student Reflection

There are 6 students' reflection journals which are going to be analyzed, in which some significant growths of improvement are found. Here are the results and analysis points.

Table 1. Student's Reflection on PSAL

Students	Reflections
A	During the PSAP learning process, I experienced a deep reflective process on my role as a prospective educator. I become increasingly aware that the task of educating is not only about how to deliver material, but how to shape students as to have obedient hearts and live for God.
B	Participating in PSAL class learning activities provided an experience that was not only intellectually challenging, but also transformative in shaping my perspective as a Christian student teacher. During this learning process, I learned not only to understand pedagogical concepts, but also required to apply those concepts directly in the real classroom context. This gave me the opportunity to

	observe, experience, and reevaluate actual teaching practices.
C	During my participation in PSAL class, I gained new knowledge that help me to prepare as to become a Christian teacher who is capable of planning appropriate lessons.
D	Participating in microteaching activities in the Christian Education PSAL Elementary Christian Religion Education with the topic "David Chosen by God as the Next King" was a very meaningful experience for me. This experience has enhanced my growth process as a prospective Christian educator. Through this activity, I can excel my pedagogical skills, as well also deepen my understanding of the important part that Christian teachers play in developing the full personality of students, covering their thinking, feelings, and beliefs.
E	This class provided me learning process that greatly improved my ability as a teacher. This class also gave me the awareness that I must be prepared as student teacher. From the first meeting of this course to the time I did my microteaching, I finally realized many things that I had gained, learned, and done in this class.
F	During this PSAL Elementary Christian Religion Education class, I realized that being a teacher, especially a Christian teacher who teaches Christian religious studies, is not an easy job. Being a teacher is not only about how a teacher can teach in front of the class, but also how to harmonize all the elements contained in the Lesson Plan (RPP) and Unit Mapping (UM). Especially for a Christian religion teacher, in addition to harmonizing the elements in the RPP and UM, they must also be able to create lessons that enable students to get to know God better.

From the above reflections table, we can see that teacher students experience transformation along the period of PSAL course activities. First, in spiritual and transformative growth, we can see that all students experienced spiritual reflection and transformation, recognizing that teaching, especially in a Christian context is more than academic instruction. They also emphasize that education involves shaping students' character, hearts, and relationship with God.

Second, on the awareness of the Christian Teacher's Role, each reflection reveals a growing awareness that being a Christian teacher means serving as God's instrument in guiding students spiritually, morally, and intellectually. They acknowledge the teacher's role in integrating faith with learning.

Thirdly, integration of Theory and Practice. Students highlight how class activities (such as microteaching or PSAL learning) helped them apply pedagogical theories in practical classroom contexts. As well this hands-on experience allowed them to connect conceptual understanding with real teaching practice.

Fourthly, on Professional and Pedagogical Development. Almost all reflection notes on growth in teaching skills, including lesson planning, classroom management, and designing faith-based lessons. All of them demonstrate increased competence and readiness to teach.

Fifth, reflective understanding of teaching complexity, most of the teacher students recognize that teaching is a complex calling, requiring careful planning (RPP, Unit Mapping), creativity, and alignment between faith and pedagogy. They see teaching as both a profession and a ministry.

Dickens et al. (2017) noted that reflecting is aimed at transforming thought and behavior. Reflective response requires self-awareness, wisdom, and action. Key questions include: How do I know? Why do I think/act the way that I do? Learning is more than just doing something. It also involves thinking about what you're learning and understanding its significance. In a biblical way of learning, both participating actively and taking time to think deeply are important (Graham, 2003).

Implications for the future

As a follow up action or commitments, students were also asked to state their future plan or action plan in the reflective journals, on how to improve their learning and teaching preparation ahead.

Student A

As a prospective Christian teacher, I am committed to continuing to equip myself and develop my teaching skills so that I can become a professional teacher and preach the gospel through my teaching. In preparing myself to be an exemplary teacher for students, I will read more books, practice communicating in a simpler and more understandable way, and be open to receiving feedback from others. Thorough preparation will help me better create an engaging classroom atmosphere and rely on Christ in every lesson. I also realize that God leads me to continue learning to obey Christ's commands so that my teaching strategies remain true to Him and relevant to the needs of the times. I believe that the calling to be a Christian teacher is a calling from God and requires readiness, sincerity, and a life of example for the students. Thus, I realize that obeying Christ's commands and proclaiming the truth of the Gospel to children can only be done through God's guidance.

Student B

The follow-up action I will take as a Christian teacher candidate is to continue to bring about healthy growth in students' spiritual lives, and to bring students closer to and more familiar with God, becoming a holistic Christian educator who brings about transformation. I am committed to continuing to deepen my understanding of the Bible and Christian educational principles through personal study, discussion, community, and participation in spiritual activities. Spiritually, I realize the importance of building a close relationship with God so that I can teach with a heart full of love, not just with knowledge alone. I want to be a teacher who not only transfers knowledge but also transforms the way students think and live through service and example to Christ. I will continue to pray, learn, grow, and live out Christian values in all aspects of life, because I believe that education is God's means of bringing renewal to the world.

Student C

My follow-up action is that I am committed to studying more diligently in pedagogy and content courses and reviewing independently what I have learned. Additionally, I need to apply what I have learned in real-world contexts, such as teaching practice, Sunday school, and various practical experiences, so that I can further hone my teaching skills. To carry out these follow-up actions, I need God's help because I cannot do it on my own. God is the source of strength that always helps me prepare and shape myself to become a Christian teacher according to God's will.

Student D

From this whole experience, I realized that microteaching is not just a technical teaching exercise, but also a process of spiritual and professional formation. As an action plan, I am committed to continuing to develop creative and contextual learning methods. I am also learning more about good approaches to students, deepening my personal relationship with Christ as the foundation of my ministry, and providing teaching that builds students' lives holistically.

Student E

I will continue to learn and strive to pass each stage of my study because I already know that being a teacher is not easy. I will be more enthusiastic and serious in learning step by step so that I can achieve my goal of becoming a Christian teacher in accordance with God's Word.

Student F

Despite experiencing sense of fear during the PSAP SD class and during the microteaching preparation, I experienced growth in the process. I conducted more independent literature studies related to the material and the characteristics of fifth-grade elementary school classes. I am typically someone who speaks very quickly, but during yesterday's microteaching session, I was able to adjust and control my pace, although there were still some parts where I lost control. I hope that through this course, I can further deepen my calling as a teacher, continue to seek God's help, and become more diligent in my studies.

From the above statements, we can see that all six students express a strong commitment to continuous learning and self-improvement. This includes developing pedagogical skills, studying educational content, and refining teaching practices through experience and reflection. We can see this as their commitment to ongoing growth as Christian teachers.

Second, as a form of recognition of teaching as a Divine calling, each reflection frames teaching not merely as a profession but as a calling from God. Students consistently acknowledge that becoming a Christian teacher requires obedience to Christ, sincerity of heart, and dependence on God's guidance.

Third, all students emphasize the integration of spiritual formation with teaching practice. Teaching is seen as a means of proclaiming the Gospel, shaping students holistically, and serving God through education. Here we can see that teacher students are doing integration between faith and pedagogy.

Fourth, every reflection highlights reliance on God—through prayer, obedience, or spiritual growth—as essential for fulfilling their role as future Christian educators. Teaching is understood as impossible without God's help and empowerment. Dependence on God in teaching process is essential for Christian teachers.

Fifth, teacher students also show their reflective awareness of personal strengths and limitations. Each student demonstrates reflective awareness, acknowledging areas that need improvement (e.g., communication skills, fear, readiness, knowledge depth) and expressing willingness to grow through learning and feedback.

The learning experience in the PSAL Elementary Christian Religion Education course provides spaces for students to engage in dialogue during learning and provides opportunities for the development of prospective teachers' competencies. Through the PSAL course design, which combines conceptual learning (theoretical) learning, field observations during teaching practice, group discussions, presentations, and various knowledge to teachers through field observation practices, it is evident that prospective teachers not only learn the principles of teaching but also experience reflective learning that shapes a new

perspective on their calling and the teaching profession as servants in the educational community.

Across all reflections, students share a common realization that becoming a Christian teacher involves a holistic process of spiritual formation, professional preparation, and reflective practice, uniting pedagogical skill with faith-based purpose in serving God through education. We can see that teacher students experience transformation and improvement along the period of PSAL course activities by emphasizing that education involves shaping students' character, hearts, and relationship with God. At this point, we can figure out that reflective practice in PSAL class through arrangement of reflective journals help student teachers build their experience and identity as Christian teachers. Overall, the reflective journals demonstrate a shared trajectory of formation—spiritually, professionally, and pedagogically—while revealing individual differences in emphasis, experience, and maturity. Together, they illustrate that becoming a Christian teacher is a holistic and contextual journey, shaped by personal strengths, challenges, and God's ongoing work in each student's life.

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