Exploring Front Line Teachers Roles in Managing Remote School: A Narrative Inquiry Study

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Abstract. Teachers are an essential element in determining the quality of education. This study carefully reports on the roles of Front line teachers (FLT) in their careers. One front line program teacher was used as a single subject for questioning and authentic evidence about their work during their work. The teacher teaches at an elementary school on the island of Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. This research method uses a narrative inquiry method. Semi-structured interviews and documentation studies were used as a means of collecting data. Triangulation of methods and sources is used to increase the validity of the information obtained. The results show that FLT has a significant role in improving the quality of education in schools. In addition, FLT can be the motor of changes in teacher attitudes and mentality in teaching. Professional work spirit and integrity can drive horizontal and vertical changes in the target school. In addition to improving the quality of education, which is directly related to the quality of graduates, school performance from the administrative aspect has also improved.

Keywords: Front line Teacher · School Management · Remote Education · Remote School · Agents of Change

1 Introduction

Front line teacher (FLT) is one program by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, collaborating with the National Personnel Agency. The government launched the FLT program in 2015 [1]. The FLT program aims to improve the quality of learning in the frontier, outermost, and underdeveloped areas in several islands of Indonesia. In addition, FLT also aims to equalize quality and access quality education for students to meet national education standards [2]. Another impact of FLT is also expected to produce pioneer teachers, reformers, and enlighteners who work professionally to educate the nation's sons and daughters even though they are far from their home regions [3]. Differences in culture, language, and customs are expected to increase tolerance and harmony between nations.

This study maps the journey of a frontline teacher with Mr. K, who devotes himself to teaching at an elementary school in the 3T area of Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara. Mr.

K has devoted herself to being a teacher in the 3T area since she graduated from UPI Bandung. After graduating from teacher training program, Mr. K obtained a Gr degree behind the academic degree of his undergraduate education program. The first program was teaching at the SM3T, which was placed in East Aceh in September 2013. After completing the SM3T program for 1.5 years, Mr. K received a scholarship to join the Teacher Profession Program at the State University of Semarang, Central Java. While waiting for the opening of the FLT appointment program, Mr. K once taught at one of the high schools in her hometown, more precisely at her alma mater school when she was in high school.

His outlook on life, which was constantly challenged to face challenges, encouraged him to join the FLT program in 2017. At that time, the opportunity to place 12 FLT teacher formations throughout Indonesia's high school level was opened. The number who registered was 500. After discussing with Mr. K's family, he registered and finally passed the selection. His sudden departure from work had made his parents hesitate to let his son leave Java. However, his belief that he had been proven to overcome all difficulties in the SM3T program made his parents believe that Mr. K could carry out his duties well. Finally, the career journey as a frontline teacher begins.

The FLT program has been carried out for several years, and the evaluation of the FLT program regularly. Based on the report, in general, FLT achieved the expected ideal target. However, it did not alone leave problems that needed to be addressed. Studies on FLT have also been reported by studies such as [4], which researched learning models and methods suitable for use in 3T schools, namely normative, descriptive and hermeneutical methods. In line with similar research conducted by [5], which states that cooperative, discovery, expository, and demonstration learning methods are seen as effective to use.

Meanwhile, [6] reports the research results on ICT in supporting learning services in 3T areas through an approach of empowerment, growing from below, sustainability, modern learning, and partnerships. [7], looking at the 3T personal from the supervision process, according to the results of his research, it was concluded that the supervision of the FLT program at 3T could improve the competence and professionalism of teachers through collaborative programs [8]. However, they admit that many factors determine this outside the supervision carried out. However, in principle, an educational program does need to be monitored, planned, regular, and measurable to find the best solution to minimize existing problems.

In the global context, research on the role of teachers in improving the quality of education in rural areas has been reported by several studies, including [9], which examines the role of online learning communities in teacher professional development in rural China. Other studies reported by [10] examine the role of teachers in improving the quality of inclusive education in rural areas, which has implications for the importance of developing teacher capacity in empowering limited resources. Meanwhile, [11] reported the importance of participatory research in developing the quality of learning in primary education. In practice, all elements of the school need to be involved in designing the curriculum, analyzing student learning problems, and solving them together.

Some of these studies have shown an encouraging common thread that FLT is proven to improve the quality of education. However, research on the role of FLT in a broad context that is carried out systematically and in-depth is still rarely found. This research

contributes to providing a comprehensive finding about the complexity of the role of front line teachers in managing schools in rural areas. This study aims to explore information related to the role of FLT in guarding education in front line schools against the perspective of the subject's relationship with fellow teachers, the subject's relationship with students, and the subject's relationship with community members. In addition, the role of the subject in improving the quality of administration and management of resources, including school finances. No less important, it also aims to explore practically the role of FLT in improving the quality of student learning, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2 Methods

This study used the narrative inquiry method using a biographical approach [12]. This method was chosen because it follows the research context to be carried in this study. This study explores FLT' roles and teaching experiences in Eastern Indonesia's remote areas. Research on personal experiences follows [13]. The research location is right in East Nusa Tenggara, one of the outermost, remote, and frontier areas included in the group [2]. The government created a front line teacher program [14, 15]. Teachers are selected and selected and provided with insight to teach in remote areas. Front line school educators must face many challenges, apart from teaching competency factors (professional, personal, social, and pedagogical). Another factor is the cultural, customs, language, and religious gap between migrant teachers and local communities [15].

This research focuses on how FLT' roles and teaching experience in rural schools. There are many problems faced by teachers and students in a normal situation, especially during the pandemic. Some problems that arise regularly include the lack of student learning resources, teacher professional development programs, limited services, and internet access to facilitate communication and information for teachers, parents, and students [16, 17]. [18] reported several challenges faced in teaching in the 3T area: inadequate facilities, lack of learning resources, insufficient number of teachers, the mindset of parents and students, and low student competence.

The research subject was a front line teacher named Mr. K. Mr. K, who taught at front line locations for four years (2017–2021). Mr. K is a bachelor of education from Indonesia's best educational colleges (Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia). Mr. K has expertise in education history. However, in the primary school where he teaches, he teaches group subjects in the social field. Mr. K comes from Indramayu Regency, West Java Province. Mr. K has personal reasons for being attracted to teaching students in front line schools. He devoted himself to the island of East Nusa Tenggara. Another supporting subject is his wife, Mr. K, who accompanies her husband. Together with his wife, Mr. K, they dare to get out of their comfort zone on the island of Java.

Data collection procedures include semi-structured interviews and documentation studies. The two methods chosen are the most rational for this kind of pandemic condition. Direct and online observation is impossible because of limited access and limited opportunities to come in person. Interviewing is the process of digging up information directly on the subject. The documentation of the front line teacher program reports that the author has prepared can be used as additional information. Aspects and indicators of interview guidelines can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The semi-structured interview guidelines.

No	Aspects	Questions
1	Childhood life lessons	Please tell me, what are the past life lessons related to the professional's choice as a front line teacher?
2	Motivation and background reasons	Perhaps we may know the motivation that is the reason and encourages the professional's choice as a front line teacher?
3	Attitude towards the profession	a. What is your attitude towards the front line teaching profession? b. Is there a change in attitude when you first started and when you have been doing it for a long time? c. Do you have any thoughts of transferring jobs at a later date? If so, what were the most compelling factors in making this decision?
4	Challenges in undergoing a profession	a. Can you tell us about the ups and downs of being a front line teacher? b. Challenges and obstacles that are often faced both from internal and external factors
5	Support and denial from family	a. How is family support for professional choice as a front line teacher? b. What are the most worried about families when pursuing the profession as a front line teacher?
6	Lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic	a. What is the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic? b. How were the difficulties and challenges found in the field during the COVID-19 pandemic? c. How is supporting technology in overcoming learning problems during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Meanwhile, document analysis were investigated on several documents supporting or information about the respondent's front line teacher profession. Several documents can use as study material, including documents of assignment letters from the government or the authorities—learning support documents, and documents describing. The types of document analysis in this study can be described in Table 2. All of the documents will be obtained from the teachers.

In addition, documents related to learning were collected to gather information about the teaching place's location description. Such as the physical description of the school and its learning support room. Besides, photos or video documentation of the surrounding community's general social picture includes dwellings, places of worship, public

Table 2. The document's guidelines.

No	Aspects	Documents investigated
1	Instructional design document	a. Syllabus b. Lesson plan c. Student worksheet
2	Learning materials	a. Learning materials package book b. Media teaching
3	Learning assessment	a. Test questions/tests b. Question answer rubric c. Photo document sample answers from students

Table 3. The photo/video documentation.

No	Aspects	Photo/video investigated
1	Teaching process	General description of the learning process at school
2	Student learning activities	Description of student learning activities
3	Learning assessment process	The process of giving assignments or daily tests
4	Distance learning platform reliability	Technology support for learning
5	School physical image	School building and classroom

facilities, agricultural land, and markets. The list of photos/videos in question can be seen in Table 3.

The data analysis technique that used is thematic analysis [19], discourse analysis [20], and document analysis [21]. All of these techniques are using to produce comprehensive data. It will also use broadening, burrowing, and storying/restoring techniques [13]. In general, six sub-themes will focus on discussion, including influential past life lessons, reasons behind the professional's choice as a front line teacher, attitudes towards the profession that will take, challenges of taking on a front line teacher's role, and the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. These themes will discuss narratively based on other sources' informationes.

3   Result and Discussion

There is no aspiration to become a teacher when he is still teen, not even from a family who has the basics as a teacher. However, since the Qur'an is in the madrasa because his ability to read the Koran is better than the student his age, the Qur'an teacher likes to ask Mr. K to help teach his friends under him. Then the habit was honed when actively organized at the junior high school level. When he wants to register for college, follow the scholarship program provided by the Indramayu Regional Government in collaboration with universities in West Java and Yogyakarta. At that time, there were 2.500 registrants

taken by 150 participants. Mr. K occupies the first rank. Then there was the second stage of selection; 75 candidates were taken. The ranking had dropped to 55 because maybe the difficulty level was higher. These 75 candidates are guided for one month to take part in the deepening of material and questions. Then from 75, the best 30 candidates were taken. This third selection time can be in sixth place. However, that does not mean he gets a scholarship because he has to prepare for campus selection. Initially, there was a plan to major in Japanese literature and language at Unpad because, in high school, they also took language programs, but because Unpad's grade was high, so finally looking for a second alternative at UPI, namely the UPI Japanese language education department and the second choice in the UPI history education department. Finally entered the UPI. New scholarships will be awarded when the candidate has officially become a student. In the end, he has to pay for his studies hisself.

At first, the parents did not agree to college because they thought the scholarship had covered all the money. Finally, the parents had to pawn their only rice field. At that time, 10 million was mortgaged. Finally, Mr. K borrowed 7 million for registration fees and to find a boarding house. Came to Bandung no one escorted. Upon arrival in Bandung, join the his friend's boarding house before finding a boarding house at a price that suits his ability. Finally found a cheap boarding house with a room size of 1.5x2M. At first, I was alone, but I eventually found a friend who wanted to share a boarding house. He finally got to semester 3. After semester three he moved to a new place.

The joys and sorrows of being a front line teacher at the beginning of the placement because there was no clarity, considering that there was waiting for a decision between the regional government and the DPRD regarding the allocation of the regional budget for the salaries of the FLTs. Confident in the urgency of serving and helping the local community, Mr. K believes that when his child grows up. So whatever their profession, they must have time to feel the program for service. So they must experience and know how it feels to serve and share with people in need.

Mr. K teaches at the Bidiwai State Elementary School, Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara. The number of students is 103, balanced between the number of male and female students. At the beginning of the 2017 placement, Mr. K lived in a mess building provided by the school. Who occupies only alone. From the location of residence to the school, it is close and can be reached on foot. At the theme location, they are used to bathing and consuming rainwater. Until finally married and occupied a rented house with his wife. At the end of 2018, he married his wife in Yogjakarta. Then after getting married, the two still lived separately in each location for approximately one year. Only since March 2020 has he lived with his wife and children after picking up his wife and children from Yogyakarta.

The condition of the school environment where teaching is still relatively lagging. It can be seen from the lack of electricity and a good internet network. Daily lighting still uses kerosene lamps. The price of kerosene per liter is 5,000 for national standard fuel prices. Residents in the village still use firewood for cooking. Residents' houses are still houses on stilts made of wood. In addition, there is also the problem of limited clean water. The residents only rely on rainwater that is collected for the dry season. In the dry season, they usually buy clean water for their daily needs. Figure 1 illustrates a visualization of a school building where front line teachers teach.

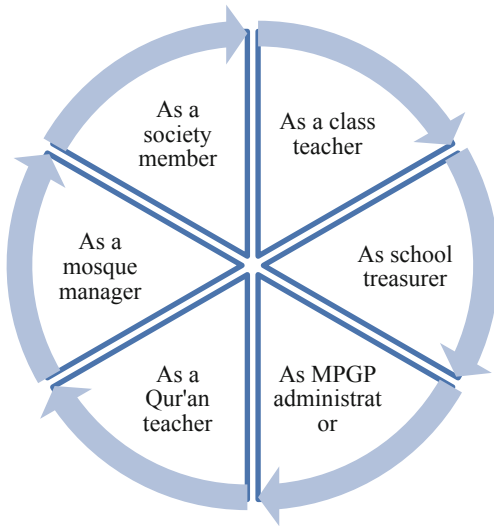**Fig. 1.** View of Bidiwai Elementary School Sumba NTT Indonesia.

Fig. 2. Front line teacher roles.

Both leaders, colleagues, citizens, and students are happy. Because they see the front line, teachers can be relied on to do all the school work. Sometimes they think they want to accept it. Relations with the community occur in harmony. Mainly since March 2020, Mr. K and his family have been occupying a house near the mosque. So that afternoon until the evening, the time is used to teach the children the Qura'n at the TPA because Mr. K and her family live in a Muslim housing complex. Figure 2 illustrates the multiple roles of front line teachers both at school and in the community where they live.

In addition to acting as a teacher, FLT can also be given other roles to improve school management quality. In 2019 Mk K was trusted to be the school treasurer. The first policy that was carried out was to increase the salary of honorary school teachers. Initially, his

salary was 175,000/month. Then in 2019, the honor was increased to 350,000/month. Then in 2020, it was increased again to 675,000. Then, in 2021 it will be increased again to 1,175,000. The reason for the increase is because the money is enough. In earlier times, the manager was too dependent on 15% of the total allocation of funds. But, since Mr. K entered, his honor was increased. There is an assumption that honorary teachers are apprentice teachers who do not have to be highly paid. In 2020 there is a policy change from the Boss' technical guidelines that a maximum of 50% can develop employee welfare. In some nearby schools, there are still teachers whose salaries are 300,000/month. I do not think this is my money, and they have served for quite some time, some for more than ten years.

In addition to carrying out his duties as school finance manager to raise the institution's good name, Mk K has also published story books for children in 2020. In addition, to improve the quality of education, there are plans to continue studies at the master's level. However, the difficulty is because it is difficult to find a place for the TOEFL test in the area and seek recommendations from the S1 supervisor. However, in the future, efforts are being made to participate in the master's course registration program to improve the competence and professionalism of teachers so that they can apply their knowledge more optimally amid society. In addition to further studies, teacher competency development activities can also be carried out through training activities, workshops, and sharing with fellow teachers in the local community (Vigo Arrazola & Bozalongo, 2014). The self-development process can be carried out both face-to-face and online, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

In general, the learning program at the school where Mr. K taught during the pandemic was carried out using a gathering point and home visit model. Before the pandemic, learning activities were carried out, as usual, namely face-to-face. However, the intensity of teacher attendance in class cannot be ideal for several reasons, such as the distance from the school to the teacher's house or the lack of monitoring from the department. It happens a lot in some rural schools. Meanwhile, since March 22, 2020, gathering point activities have been implemented in one place distributed in several houses. Technically, Monday in village A, Tuesday in village B, Wednesday in village C, Thursday in village D, Friday in village E. These activities are carried out from March 2020-September 2020. Each teacher is given a transportation fee of 50. 000/day because the teachers have to come to locations outside the school. Since October 2020 because there is a program of providing nutritious food to eliminate stunting. So that from October-December, students come to the location where the food supply is located around the school location so that it is all about learning. The program provides free food from the provincial government, specifically in the village where Mr. K teaches (Fig. 3).

January 2021 returns to the meeting point until February 2021. Starting in March 2021, the teachers begin to feel physically tired because they have to go to the meeting point while the student's attendance is not optimal. Finally proposed a policy meeting from the local education office. In the end, it was agreed that they would still use the gathering point model. However, the location was in a resident's house near the school. However, the number of students who attended was still not optimal. The average percentage of students attending is 60% of the ideal number. Students' attendance

Fig. 3. Documentation of home visit learning activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

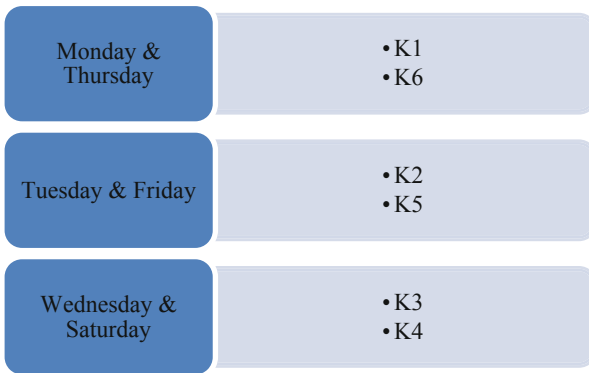| Monday & Thursday | • K1
• K6 |
| Tuesday & Friday | • K2
• K5 |
| Wednesday & Saturday | • K3
• K4 |

Fig. 4. Setting the classes schedule at school

is according to a tentative schedule, so the material cannot be presented in its entirety because it has to repeat much material (Fig. 4).

Meanwhile, there is an increase in the number of positive cases of COVID in the surrounding environment. So from March to April, the school has started to conduct alternating class programs, namely Monday grades 1 and 6, Tuesday 2–5, Wednesday 3–4, Thursday 1–6, Friday 2–5, and Saturday 3–4. The student at each class comes to school twice a week. Furthermore, teachers still get a special transport fee of 100/month. This pattern is used until the end of the new academic year in June 2021. After that, we will wait for policies from the central ministry. Implementing health protocols is a bit of a dilemma considering many limitations, such as buying 200,000/tank. Sometimes people also take it from there. After all, there have been no cases in the village where the school is located.

Concerning learning aided by technology, information, and communication (ICT) devices, in 2019, schools received nine units of Tab assistance according to the number

Fig. 5. Documentation of the learning process at the meeting point.

of grade 6 students. At the beginning of the pandemic, an application vendor offered it with a budget of 50,000/month. At that time the school could not because there was no electricity and internet. Although the model is semi-online, students still cannot access the material. Because until now there is no electricity in schools and villages. Some villages make solar power or batteries. However, not enough to illuminate all residents.

This research takes a complete picture of the profile and role of Front line Teachers in the program to improve and equalize the quality of education in one of the foremost, outermost, and underdeveloped areas in Sumba, NTT Indonesia, as has happened in other developing countries [22, 23]. The aspects studied include self-confidence, school profile and teaching environment conditions, relationships with superiors, colleagues, students, and residents, the role of FLT in improving the quality of education and institutions, and the role of FLT in realizing learning from home programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Aspects of support from family, spouse, and the ups and downs of the experience while serving also did not go unnoticed (Fig. 5).

Serving in the remotest, leading, and lagging areas of the city center do have many challenges. The challenges faced can be said to be quite complex because they involve multi-dimensions such as limited supporting facilities and infrastructure, access to electricity and the internet, differences in customs and culture, limited access to learning resources, work ethic, and interest in learning, as well as funding problems [18, 24, 25]. So not infrequently, only a handful of people are interested in following it. One of them is Mr. Mr. K, who has dedicated herself for four years at the FLT location in Sumba, NTT Indonesia.

As described in the Results section, he said that to dare to make big decisions to serve in the 3T area, he needed an apparent attitude. FLT comes to the location to be ready to face all possibilities that occur. FLT must be brave to risk his body and soul because the situation and conditions of nature and the environment are not like in urban areas. Of course, it requires above-average adaptability. A big-spirited attitude, and the courage to take risks, are needed to strengthen the determination to take part in the program to improve and equalize the quality of education [22].

In addition to positive self-confidence and attitude about the environment, aim for the program. A FLT must also reason regarding the rights and obligations that will be carried out and obtained. The ability to read and adjust to a lifestyle in a new place needs attention. Even in rural areas, it is not uncommon in some locations. The price of basic daily needs is higher than in the area of origin. It is essential to realize that during the service process, FLT's mind can focus on devoting themselves sincerely without overthinking the necessities of life as opinion from [23] stated, the importance of establishing harmonious relations between principals, teachers, and students to realize meaningful education in rural schools.

During the service program, the FLTs must be sensitive to analyzing problems in the surrounding environment, both problems at school, student problems, and internal school institutions. So the role of FLT is not only focused on improving the quality of student learning but also improving the quality of institutional management. To achieve this goal, FLT must increase the participation of colleagues and residents, as reported by [26] in the context of language teaching in rural areas. Parents' participation is vital to improve supervision of student learning [27], as reported by respondents who dared to take on roles and responsibilities in managing school finances to improve teacher welfare and availability of adequate learning facilities. In addition, FLT must be a funnel for access to information and insight for school residents with the outside world. So that the gap between the quality of education in the region and in the city is getting smaller.

Regarding the quality of learning, the FLT must show the best performance in front of superiors, colleagues, students, and parents of students. It aims to transform a good work ethic. So it can motivate teachers and students in FLT schools to be more disciplined with time and good at taking advantage of opportunities to improve the competencies and skills needed both now and in the future [8]. The behavior of coming and going home on time, a work ethic of serving, nurturing, warm, friendly, and motivating in the form of actions are essential to do.

In learning management, FLT teachers must be able to show optimal performance. They must learn to package learning that is fun and teaching. Able to encourage students' independent attitude in learning. So that students have a high awareness of learning. It is essential to master so that students have self-regulation in learning, especially when they continue their education at a higher level. It is not easy to optimize every limited resource, as reported by [28], who reported several difficulties in teaching language, especially in the context of students in rural areas. Thus the teacher must be creative in utilizing every available resource. One of the widely used learning models is cooperative learning [29].

Based on the results of interviews with FLT, their school implemented a study visit program or meeting point during the study from home program. The results of this study are in line with research reported by [30], which states that the distance learning method most widely used by teachers in the 3T area is to use home visits. The stages are preparation, implementation, follow-up activities, and monitoring and evaluation. This strategy is considered the most appropriate so that students continue to study without ignoring the health protocols set by the government. It cannot be separated from limited access to adequate technology, information, and communication in online learning.

For the development of front line teacher competence, it is necessary to carry out systematically planned programs such as TPACK, STEAM training, and various models and simple learning media that can be developed in rural schools [31]. Through these trainings, it is hoped that FLT can creatively design learning that can further activate students' motivation and learning involvement. To welcome the new eta from the development of information technology, the development of teacher competence in packaging mobile learning-based learning is no less important [32, 33]. In addition, They can also be prepared to master blended learning management skills using an online platform [34, 35]. Of course, this is done so that FLT is not trapped in the current situation, but must be more prepared for all possibilities in the future.

4 Conclusion

This research explores in-depth and comprehensively the role of FLT in improving the quality of education, learning in 3T areas. In addition, it also explores specifically how learning strategies are used to support learning from home programs during the pandemicCOVID-19. The study results show that FLT has a strategic role in helping to improve the distribution of education quality. In addition, FLT must establish effective communication with co-workers, students, and community members so that their existence can be accepted and supported. The FLT can be given an optimal role in managing school resources by giving additional tasks such as vice principals and data management for student operational assistance. Regarding the learning process from home during the pandemic, the study results show that home visit activities are the primary choice considering that complete online learning is not possible due to limited facilities and access to education. The results of this study also corroborate previous research reports.

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