

Enhancing Teachers' Competencies Through Professional Development Program: Challenges and Benefits

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' professional development program is considered to play an important role in enhancing teacher competencies. An observational case study is conducted to observe teachers' learning process and teachers' outcomes after learning on the program. Five English teachers who have participated in the professional development program in Indonesia and passed the teachers' competency test in the program have become key informants of this research. The objectives of the research are to investigate the learning process on the program and challenges faced by the teachers in implementing their teaching knowledge and outcome of teachers after participating in the program. The research has found three essential findings. First, the research found that pedagogic competencies and professional competencies have become the basic formulation for learning materials that are taught in the program. Second, the research found four obstacles and challenges to implement teachers' knowledge from the program in their classroom, for instance, innovative teaching methods and creative lesson designs. Third, the investigation also discovered the challenges and the benefits in the implementation of professional learning development as one of the solutions in enhancing English teachers' competencies in Indonesia. Furthermore, this research recommended the stakeholder to consider the financial aspect and the demography aspect in the implementation of the professional teacher development program.

Keywords: English teacher; teachers' Competencies; learning; professional development

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the discussion of education has become an endless hot topic because education is the main foundation in forming the characters of nations (Fullan, 2001; Apriliyanti, 2018). In nurturing dignified nations, the main pioneer is needed as the key successor in the education process itself (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). In this case, teachers are considered as the main agent to guide the generation of a nation towards a better direction (Fullan, 2001). Hence, discussions related to education cannot be separated from the topic of discussion related to the teachers. Besides, the success of an education system cannot be separated from the quality of the teachers themselves. In other words, the qualities of education process outcomes are closely related to the qualities of teachers when the learning process happens.

Also, the industrial revolution 4.0 has an impact on the advancement of education that is required teachers to be more enterprising in developing their qualities so that they are not left behind by the revolution progress on education. Lifelong learning not only applies to students but also applies to teachers who are evolved from subject material sources to lifelong learning teachers. This is a demand that is increasingly imposed by teachers but has a positive impact on the quality of the teacher's output itself.

Speaking of teachers' qualities, Stronge (2018) argued that the teachers' qualities should cover five specific characteristics of teacher responsibilities and behaviors as follow: (1) the teacher as a good personality representation; (2) the teacher as a good classroom manager and organizer; (3) the teacher as a good instructor; (4) the teacher monitors students' progress and potential; (5) the teacher possesses professionalism. Besides, Goldberg (2003) mentioned that to be great teachers, they should have certain qualities, namely, willingness to put learning in the necessary time, love for the age group they teach, and effective classroom management style, positive relationships with their colleagues, consistent excellence, expert use of instructional methods, in-depth content knowledge, and steadiness of purpose a teaching personality. In other words, teachers' qualities should cover four main competencies, namely teachers' competencies in the pedagogic aspect, personality, social, and professional to become great teachers. Moreover, stakeholder of educational policy has regulated teachers for being competent teachers to update the quality of conventional systems. In regulation law No. 14/2005 and law attachment No. 55/2017 (MENRISTEKDIKTI, 2017), stated that teachers in Indonesia should hold four competencies, namely, pedagogical competencies which cover classroom management and organizing, personal competencies which cover teachers' personality as role models and inspirations, social competencies which cover teachers' skills to be socialized with the colleagues and other school members, and professional competencies which cover teachers' professions as academic figures. Based on law attachment No. 55/2017 formulated that teachers' four competencies are inseparable from teachers' ability to deliver learning material that is integrated with science, technology, and arts (MENRISTEKDIKTI, 2017). The framework of this regulation in detail will be discussed in the English teachers' competency framework and the aforementioned regulation will become this research foundation in formulating research instruments.

Both experts' theories regarding teacher qualities and the standard regulations that are regulated by education stakeholders in Indonesia is formulated to enhance the quality of teachers and play an important role in the progress of a nation. Regulations are intended to meet the educational needs that are currently integrated into the industrial revolution where teachers are expected to literate in technology and more innovative teaching methods (Sangrà, 2010; NETP, 2017). Unfortunately, to change the pattern of teacher teaching habits in traditional ways such as the lecture method and the use of non-digital media, more time and effort is needed. Plenty of English language teachers in Indonesia are X generation category where the generation is not digital native generations. Thus, professional development training is important in efforts to enhance the qualities of teachers whose qualities meet the standard regulatory criteria in law attachment No.55/2017. Hence, the Minister of Education and Culture (later on MOEC) as the stakeholder in education policy in Indonesia organizes teacher training program as an effort to accelerate the number of competent teachers in teaching. They consider that this training can contribute greatly to enhancing the quality of teachers.

Based on the aforementioned arguments, this research is carried out in investigating whether the activities and outcomes of this training is by the expectations in terms of benefits to conduct the teacher training program as a means of enhancing teacher competencies and challenges faced by teachers whilst implementing the teaching knowledge after the program. Therefore, this paper will discuss in detail the findings from the field facts carried out on a

teacher training program in 2017. The framework and research methods that are used will be discussed in the following section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. English teacher competencies

Competencies are defined as “the set of knowledge, skills, and experience necessary for future, which manifests in activities” (Katane et. al., 2006, p.44; Apriliyanti, 2018). Regarding the teachers’ competencies, in Law No. 14/2005, competence is defined as “a set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that have to be owned lived, and controlled by teachers or lecturers in performing professional duties.” In other words, competence can be interpreted as the capability that must be possessed by teachers to be able to perform and accomplish their duties well. In line with attachment law No.14/2005, Schnekenberg & Waildt (2010) stated that academic staff—teachers—in this digital era should hold four competencies, namely pedagogical competence, personal competence, social competence, and professional competence.

Pedagogical competence refers to the ability to plan the learning activity, to manage the learning activity and evaluating the learning activity (Apriliyanti, 2018). In detail, according to Law attachment No.55/2017 stated that pedagogical competence is “a set of knowledge, attitude, and skill in designing, planning, scoring and evaluating the teaching and learning activity” (MENRISTEKDIKTI, 2017).

Personal competence is the capability of a stable personality, noble, wise and dignified as well as being exemplary learners (Undang-Undang No. 14 Tahun 2005 tentang guru dan dosen). Teachers also acted as a learning agent in which the role of the teacher as a facilitator, motivator, encouragement, learning planner, and learning inspiration for students (Apriliyanti, 2018). Meanwhile, Social competence is the capability of teachers to communicate and interact effectively and efficiently with learners, fellow teachers, parents/guardians of learners, and school community (Apriliyanti, 2018; Undang-Undang No. 14 Tahun 2005 tentang guru dan dosen).

The meaning of professional competence is the capability of English subject mastery widely and deeply (Apriliyanti, 2018; Undang-Undang No. 14 Tahun 2005 tentang guru dan dosen). Also, professionalism in English teachers is the interconnection of all domain, namely, language ability, cultural understanding, instruction ability included planning for the standards-based EFL and content instructions—, and classroom-based assessment for EFL (Kuhlman & Knežević, 2017).

There are at least four characteristics of a professional teacher. First, English teachers can give the instruction. Second, English teachers have to improve students' English skills and students' English competencies. Third, English teachers have to be proactive and innovative in the classroom situation. Fourth, teachers are good role models for their students. In fulfilling their obligations as teachers, teachers should provide their extra time to improve their competencies as professional teachers. The characteristics of each competency in this research are extracted into four conditions, namely preparation before teaching, core activity of teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation of the learning outcome, and teachers’ personality as presented in Figure 1.

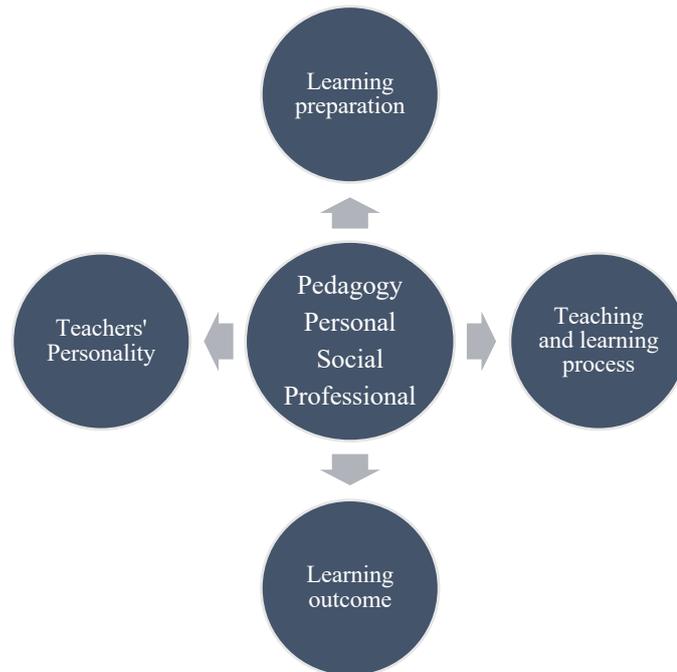


Figure 1. Teacher Competency Framework in this research (Adapted based on Law No. 55/2017)

2. Professional learning development

Training is a central feature of most social sector development efforts. The Training program gives a good impact on teachers' improvement (Wati, 2011). Wati (2011) found that English training programs were effective in improving teachers' beliefs but Basic English knowledge. She claimed that English teachers need long term training to be a useful forum for effective English teachers. Educational training provides the trainers who are helped the trainee to enhance their ability to be more productive in teaching behaviors (Katane, 2006; Apriliyanti, 2018; Fullan, 2001). Fulan (2001) argued that "significant educational change consists of changes in beliefs, teaching style and materials which can come about only through a process of personal development in a social context" (p. 124). Impact Measurement Center stated that 'English as a Foreign Language training program can change a school or company's culture for the better and it can show how much is the improvement after training' (cited in Apriliyanti, 2018). Therefore, teacher training is the program which helped the teachers to improve their ability to be better teachers in personal attitude and to advance their knowledge in English subject.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a part of broader research ranges of teacher training program evaluation (Apriliyanti, 2018). This research employed a qualitative method with observational case study as a design of this research to capture and to understand the behavioral changes of person under investigation and observation in its natural or real-life settings (Creswell, 2012). The research data is gathered by using non-participant observation, legal documents, and interview.

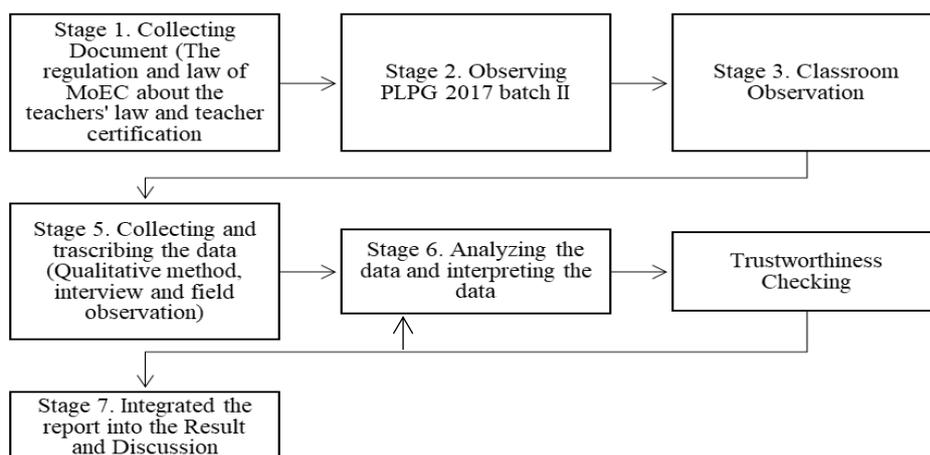


Figure 2. The design used in this research (adapted from Miles & Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 2012)

To investigate the challenges experienced by teachers in implementing the knowledge and methods they obtained during the training program, a semi-structured interview was conducted on the five key informants (see table 1). The aspect of which is questioned in this investigation is the teachers' teaching experiences after attending PLPG including the experiences in developing lesson plans, teaching and learning activities, and their problem solving while the teaching activities after PLPG.

The primary key informants were five English teachers at senior secondary public and/or private schools who have similar characteristics. They have a bachelor's degree in English education (S.Pd.) and have passed the national examination (UTN) of competence test of professional learning development program (later on PLPG) in 2017. The entire key informant names are kept confidential due to research ethics. The characteristics of the key informants is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Key Informant Characteristics

KI	G	D/C	TA	TE	TCT
ET-01	Male	S1 English Education	- Homeroom Teacher of 12 IPA 5 - English Teacher for 12 th grade	12 years (2-year while he was a college student & 10- year after graduation of S.Pd.)	77
ET-02	Female	S1 English Education	- Staff of the curriculum division - Homeroom Teacher of 12 - English Teacher Subject for 10 th to 12 th grade	17 years	77.8
ET-03	Female	S1 English Education	- Homeroom Teacher of 12 IPS 3 - English Teacher subject for 10 th and 12 th grade	11 years	77.3

ET-04	Female	S1 English Education	- Homeroom Teacher - English Teacher Subject for 10 th and 11 th grade	12 years	77.8
ET-05	Female	S1 English Education	- Vice Principal of Public Relations - English Teacher subject for 11 th grade	10 years	77.7

Abbreviations:

KI = Key Informant

D = Degree

TE = Teaching Experience

G = Gender

TA = Teaching Assignment

TCT = Teacher Competence Test score

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Enhancing Teachers' Competencies through Professional Development Program

Based on the results of research, the research findings will be elaborated in two parts, namely, the learning grid applied to professional learning development programs for English teachers in Indonesia and challenges faced by teachers in applying the knowledge gained during learning.

a. English teachers' learning grid on a professional development program

Observation and document analysis has been carried out in one of the professional learning development programs implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), in Indonesia, namely PLPG (Education and Training for the Teacher Profession). The training program in enhancing teacher competencies has been conducted for two months—online mentoring and 100 hours of lessons on face-to-face mentoring. The findings of this study found that of the four teacher competencies mandated by Law Attachment No.55/2017—pedagogical competencies, personal competence, social competence, and professional competence—, two main competencies were used as the basis for formulating the learning grid materials lecturing in the training, namely, pedagogical competence and professional competence. The summary of the learning materials is presented in table 2.

Table 2. Training materials in PLPG 2017

Main Competence	Training Form	Platform	Training Materials
Pedagogic	Online mentoring	<i>ksg.kemdikbud.go.id</i> (exclusive learning platform; user id and password needed)	The materials cover teachers' skills of: - understanding the students' characteristics; - learning theories; - 2013 curriculum; - designing the learning activities; - learning media and tools; - designing the lesson plan;

			- learning holistic assessment and conducted an action research
	Face to face mentoring	Convenient training place in Bandung	- Provided the deepening explanation of training materials in practice; - professional guidance in all workshop; - and peer-teaching simulation.
Professional	Online mentoring	<i>ksg.kemdikbud.go.id</i> (exclusive learning password; user id and password needed)	English subject materials of logical connector, modality, text and non-text, notice and announcement, discussion, advertisement, description, news item, narrative text, hortatory exposition, critical reading and writing with its references
	Face to face mentoring	Convenient training place in Bandung	- deepening the materials from the module in online mentoring - discussion forum with the expert instructors about how to teach the English materials well; - deepening the English material subject for both oral text and written text based on the grade level of formal school; - demonstrating the proper method and approach to teach the materials in the class to attract the students in the classroom.

Although theoretically, there are only two competencies taught by instructors to English teachers, however, the other two competencies—personal and social competence—are indirectly acquired by English teachers during the program. This evidenced during the training, the role model shown by the instructor influencing English teachers to become better teachers. Whereas socially, English teachers who took part in PLPG 2017 built the networking among English teachers from various institutions by joining discussion groups on social media platforms and exchanging information regarding the conditions of their schools.

b. Teachers' challenges in implementing their knowledge after PLPG

The aspect of which is questioned in this investigation is the teachers' teaching experiences after attending PLPG including the experiences in developing lesson plans, teaching and learning activities, and their problem-solving while the teaching activities after PLPG. The investigation found that in designing lesson plans, teaching and learning activities, and their problem-solving process, teachers faced challenges and difficulties during their implementation as follows;

1) Difficulty in determining the appropriate teaching approach for teaching English materials that could interest the students

In designing lesson plans for teaching, based on the interviewed, teachers sometimes experienced hardships in designing teaching methods that could attract students' interests. The diversity of students' backgrounds and the ability to comprehend basic English is mostly low, is the most difficult challenge for teachers to be able to make them to enjoy learning English.

Besides, majority of the students in this study claimed that learning English is difficult, so this is the teacher's main task to break that negative mindset about learning English.

Additionally, implementing a new approach or teaching method is not easy. Even though the teachers received training materials related to how to make an interesting English classroom, but the investigation found that the majority of English teachers in this research have failed to implement it. Three of the teachers used the conventional methods in teaching English, such as in lecturing. The students did not actively participate in the learning activities as observed, it is because the lesson is not interesting to them and that the teacher was not able to improve her/his teaching skill although she/he has joined the training program. This is because of the administrative burden on these teachers in this study is more time consuming than the time teachers use to formulate effective and efficient teaching methods. In other words, no matter how good the material provided during the training, this will not have any effect on the ability of the teacher if not given enough time to absorb the knowledge learn and apply it in the actual context.

2) Difficulty in determining appropriate English teaching material to meet students' needs

Of the five teachers who were key informants, one of them was an English teacher at the vocational school. The learning topics and competency standards in the 2013 curriculum, for both senior secondary level (SMA) and vocational school (SMK) have the same topics. Even though the needs of each school type are different. As in the case of ET-04 key informants. Students are intended to get a job after graduation. While still using the KTSP curriculum, ET-04 suggested that it was easier to adjust the English materials with materials needed in the world of work later such as writing job applications using English, or how to deal with interviews in English. However, in the 2013 curriculum, English subject matter in SMK is synonymous with English language material in high school. Learning achievement was equated as well as in the senior high school.

3) General obstacles faced by the teachers in teaching English as a foreign language in their schools

This research found that English teachers found three major obstacles in teaching English as a foreign language in their schools. The obstacles are motivating students to learn enthusiastically, teaching the proper English pronunciation and considering to enrich students' English vocabulary.

4) The challenges in publishing a scientific paper

In the criteria of professional competence in law attachment No.55/2017, it is mentioned that one of the measured indicators for being a professional teacher professional is by publishing a scientific work from the results of classroom action research. The research found that from the five key informants, no one had published a paper. Nonetheless, two of the key informants (ET-04, ET-05) stated that they were drafting the results of their class-action research. And one key informant (ET-04) expressed his desire to continue to the Master's level of education.

2. Challenges of implementing Professional Development Program in Indonesia

The implementation of a professional development program in Indonesia has been through various transformation phases from 2006 to 2017, for instance in the PLPG program, as a means to enhance teachers' competencies. However, the challenges have been found during the transformation phases. For instance, in the middle of 2017, the government announced a teacher-training program (later on PPG) for in-service teachers instead of the

PLPG teacher training. The in-service teachers' PPG activities are held in 2018. Plenty of teachers opposed this governments' decision. One of the factors is training costs. Unlike PLPG, in which all training costs has paid by the government, the cost of PPG development program will be charged to the teachers.

Another factor is training duration. The duration of the PPG professional development program is longer than PLPG. Such conditions will have a negative impact on teachers who teach in private schools in remote areas far from universities designated by LPTK. On the one side, if in-service teachers want to participate in the program as their effort to enhance their competencies, they have to dismiss teaching sessions because of the distance from the college. A substitute teacher is needed for this dilemma situation as well. However, if their learning session in the program has completed, then the substitute teacher has to stop teaching. If it will be done online, it is necessary to reconsider the quality of the signal network for teachers at the border. This problem should be reconsidered for the stakeholders in organizing the program for a better quality of teachers trained.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research findings and discussion, this research summed that English teachers have faced the obstacles while teaching and learning process. Then, they enhanced their competencies as English teachers by learning new knowledge on the professional development program to help them encounter obstacles in the teaching process. The facilities and time experiences in learning and practicing have become two of their reasons for the failure in implementing the innovation in the teaching process. However, the awareness in learning new knowledge has arisen in themselves for further following up after the program.

The professional development program is perceived to be beneficial in enhancing the teachers' competencies. To implement a professional development program, the stakeholder should consider the following two aspects, the financial aspect, and the demography aspect. Firstly, in the case of the training costs, training costs should not entirely charge to the teacher. The conditions of teachers in Indonesia does not equal, economically and demographically. PPG program should be free of charge for those who are teaching in private schools whose teachers' incomes are low from teaching and for schools located in 3T areas. It is intended that there is equal distribution of quality of education for teachers teaching in low school income.

In terms of demography, the mentor should have come to give the lecture for teachers who are teaching at the border area. If the teachers have to follow PPG at the chosen university, it will be difficult for the teacher to join the activity because they will leave the class for a long period. This also applied to teachers who are far from the training location. Thus, teachers will not be hesitated about attending PPG.

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