

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH AS ONE OF THE TPD STRATEGIES

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***Abstract.** Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is one of the teacher strategies to enhance the teachers' professionalism. In addition to the values gained through them, enrolling in TPD activities represents the commitment of individuals to raising their awareness of their work, looking deeper into it, and identifying opportunities and possibilities to improve it. CAR is one of many strategies for TPD, but one of the most demanding and, at the same time, one of the most powerful. It is demanding because teachers go through different procedures. This requires knowledge and skills in research. This research is aimed to reveal the teachers perspectives towards the implementation of Classroom Action Research. The subjects of the research are 10 teachers in South Kalimantan, Indonesia and are given the open-ended questionnaires of Classroom Action Research implementation in the classroom. The findings of the research show that Classroom Action Research is believed to improve on the teaching and learning process as it can identify the problems that occurred in the classroom. Most of the teachers are aware of the importance of conducting the classroom action research, and it is one of a way to develop their professional development. Then, it is suggested for English teachers to undergo Classroom Action Research in their classroom to ensure the professional development process.*

***Keywords:** Classroom Action Research, Strategies, Teacher Perception*

A. INTRODUCTION

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is undisputedly a crucial element in all careers to sustain and enhance the productivity of work. Focusing on the teaching profession, as is known; teachers do not only teach but also have a responsibility to learn, so it is considered an active and demanding job. According to Underhill (1999:17), for teachers, TPD is “the process of becoming the best teacher one can be, a process that can be started but never finished.” One of the paths for effective TPD is

the adoption of classroom action research (CAR). CAR is one of many strategies for TPD, but one of the most demanding and, at the same time, one of the most powerful. It is demanding because teachers go through different procedures. This requires knowledge and skills in research. However, considering CAR as a powerful tool for teachers' TPD, it is worth adopting in that it leads to an investigation of one's work and aims for better understanding and acting accordingly to enhance classroom practice. CAR has been proved to be a very effective method in TPD, which is “associated with work-based learning” (McNiff, 2010:41).

The perception of professionalism among English teachers in the Indonesian context was revealed by Yuwono and Harbon (2010). In their research, the motive for entering the English teaching profession was one of the areas shown in English teacher professionalism. The motives found were a passion for teaching, financial burden, family influence, religious calling, the love of the English language, and the perceived women' roles in society. Although some of the motives for entering the English teaching profession seem quite relevant to the notion of English teaching itself, they might not be a facilitative factor in the engagement of continuous learning as teachers. The proper motives insufficiently guarantee that teachers will have strong commitment and participation in continuous teacher learning. This idea is supported by Yuwono and Harbon (2010) in their research findings that teachers who work to provide English private tutor in a private educational agency as their take second job and those who teach at several schools while seeking permanent appointment find it challenging to participate in professional development programs due to their limited time. Furthermore, teachers who have high teaching burden and high administrative work might also be reluctant and unwilling to commit to professional development (Yuwono, 2005). This research is aimed to investigate teachers' perceptions about the role of the Classroom Action Research in developing the teachers' professionalism.

B. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As learners, teachers might learn through various learning activities underpinned by different views of teacher learning. Richards and Farrel (2005) listed four views of teacher learning, namely teacher learning as skill learning, cognitive process, personal construction, and reflective practice. In teacher learning as skill learning, the focus is on developing skills and competences which are necessary to create effective teaching. In teacher learning as a cognitive process, teachers will have experiences to review their beliefs and thoughts about teaching and learning and examine how these influence their instructional decisions in their every classroom practice. Based on the next view, teacher learning as personal construction, teachers are directed to learn through activities that make use of self-awareness and personal interpretation to create a solution for their classroom challenges. Learning activities drawn from the last view of teacher learning encourage teachers to examine their teaching experiences as a critical reflection in order that teachers can develop a better understanding of the firm and weak sides of their teaching practices. Taking active participation in these learning activities and applying the lessons received from the activities into the classroom can be beneficial to make positive changes in day-to-day teaching practices.

Several different learning activities have been used for teacher professional development. They can range from “formal, structured topic-specific seminars given on in-service days, to everyday, informal ‘hallway’ discussion with other teachers about instruction techniques, embedded in teachers’ everyday work lives” (Desimone, 2009). Richards and Farrel (2005) state that teachers can learn from workshops, self-monitoring, teacher support groups, writing and keeping a teaching journal, peer observation, teaching portfolios, analyzing critical incidents in the classroom, case analysis, peer coaching, team teaching, and action research. Furthermore, Villegas-Reimers (2003) made two categories for learning activities about professional development, namely organizational partnership models and small group or individual models. The organizational partnership models include professional development

schools, university-school partnerships, schools' networks, teachers' networks, distance education, and other inter-institutional collaborations. The small group or individual models include supervision, students' performance assessment, workshops, seminars, courses, case-based study, self-directed development, co-operative/collegial development, observation of excellent practice, teachers' participation in new roles, skills-development model, reflective model, project-based model, portfolios, action research, teachers' narratives, generational/cascade model and coaching/mentoring.

Teachers' Professional Development means "all types of professional learning undertaken by teachers beyond the point of initial training" (Craft, 2000). Kirk (1988:15-16) claims that no initial training is good enough to equip teachers with all they need in their "full teaching career"; however, "thorough and systematic" it is. This means there is a need to consider continuous Teachers' Professional Development for in-service teachers, which Craft (2000) refers to as "moving teachers forward in knowledge or skills".

Teachers' Professional Development differs in types and aims. Craft (2000) draws attention to the differences between in-service PD that fulfills school policies or "national priorities" and that which focuses on individual needs. This raises the issue of the 'Top-down' PD, which is imposed on teachers and the 'Bottom-up' PD in which individuals themselves seek to implement voluntarily. Edwards (2010b:58) strongly recommends the bottom-up strategy if, indeed, PD is expected to be successful. In my opinion, although the aims, to a certain extent, may coincide in both types, many differences can occur regarding teachers' motivation, commitment, and, therefore, outcomes.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study undergoes a qualitative approach. This design allows researchers to provide descriptions that suit the purpose of the study to present a detailed description of the teachers' perception toward the use of classroom action research as one of the

strategies to develop the teachers' professionalism. Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of the theoretical lens, and the study of research problem inquiring into the meaning individuals or group ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007: 37). The participants of this study are in-service teachers from South Kalimantan. 10 teachers participate in this study. To picture the perception of the teachers, an open-ended questionnaire is delivered to the target teachers. The questionnaire investigates the teachers' perceptions toward the use of CAR as Teacher Professional Development strategies.

D. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

There are three significant parts arose through the questionnaires that could help in elaborating teachers' expectation of action research: their teachers' knowledge of Action Research, the role of Action Research to their class, their previous experience of Action Research. Several teachers had a similar idea that action research function is to improve the teaching and learning process. They also mention that action research to identify the problem that happens in the classroom. Another teacher elaborates that action research has 4 stages in one circle and the stages as follow: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Moreover, mostly the teachers know about action research. However, one of the teachers said that action research as a requirement to get promotion.

Another teacher stated that doing action research and publish it to the Journal as part of teacher professional development. Therefore, action research should have done annually to improve teaching and learning quality. The teacher adds the result of action research help to find a better strategy in teaching in the classroom. Mostly teachers answered of the role of action research in the classroom is essential. Therefore, the role of action research is to improve teacher professionalism and teacher role not only as a practitioner but also as a teacher who able to evaluate and assess their own teaching method. Another teacher adds action research is a tool to measure if the materials in the classroom already obtain and absorb well by the students or not. One

of the teachers clarified that action research in the classroom role toward teaching and learning as a strategy to analyze the problems that occur in the classroom. Therefore, when the teacher finds out the problem, it follows by finding the solution to overcome the problems. Nevertheless, the answer from one of the teachers stated that action research helps the students score.

Based on the findings of the research, several perceptions are perceiving the teachers in implementing classroom action research as one of the strategies of teacher professional development. It is found that most of the teachers has undergone different learning activities to develop their professionalism in teaching that are obtained from various work lives such as workshops, teacher gradual meetings, peer observation, and classroom action research which is in line with Richards and Farrel (2005) who state that teachers can learn from workshops, self-monitoring, teacher support group, writing and keeping a teaching journal, peer observation, teaching portfolios, analyzing critical incidents in the classroom, case analysis, peer coaching, team teaching, and action research. This study has also investigated that most of the teachers have acknowledged how to conduct classroom action research. They have been conducting action research while being a teacher in order to solve the problems in the classrooms. This is due to the nature of action research as reflective research, which is an essential element in Teacher Professional Development. Teachers have to reflect on themselves to find out the problems that exist and figure out the solution to the problems. As Richards and Lockhart (1994:2) believe that the need for teachers to have curiosity in exploring their practice through developing the concept of questioning their actions and considering the promotion of self-reflection as an initial step in making the decision is the heart of TPD.

Furthermore, this study also elaborates that Classroom Action Research can be one of the strategies of getting Teacher Professional Development by which that the teachers consider the quality of the instructional process and should also be supported by all aspects. As Hathorn & Dillon (2018) support that more individual support should be given to teachers during the Action Research process. They believe that in the

Classroom Action Research process, teachers are supposed to be fully aware, eventually several aspects which consist of problems that students encountered during learning to ensure the success of achieving the learning objective.

E. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

It can be concluded from this research that Classroom Action Research improves the teaching and learning process as it can identify the problems that occurred in the classroom. Most of the teachers are aware of the importance of conducting classroom action research, and it is one of a way to develop their professional development. Then, it is suggested for English teachers to undergo Classroom Action Research in their classroom to ensure the professional development process.

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