

The Correlation between Teachers' Educational Background and Students' Achievement: A Study at Private Islamic Junior High Schools in Jambi

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Abstract

Although the demand for mastering English is getting higher, the student's achievement fell short of expectation. Several empirical studies indicated that one of the sources of the students' lack in English achievement was the teachers' qualification. There had been schools that let the teachers with non-English Education backgrounds teach English at schools. As the researchers concerned this phenomenon, this study aimed to seek the relationship between the teachers' educational background and the students' English learning achievement. The research design was a correlation study. The sample of the study was chosen purposively. The samples were chosen from 3 Private Islamic junior high schools in Jambi city Indonesia with A accreditation status. 244 eighth graders and 4 English teachers participated in this study. The data were collected by using a questionnaire and unobtrusive measures of the students' English achievement. The result of the coefficient correlation between teachers' educational background and students' achievement was $r=0.032$. It means that those variables were positively correlated. However, $r=0.032$ was considered low correlation. This study hopefully contributes to the school. It's important that the principals or policy maker of schools facilitate all teachers' activities which contribute to the development of their professionalism.

Keywords: Correlation, Teachers' Educational Background, and Students' Achievement.

1. Introduction

English lessons are not new for the students in Indonesia. Students have been introduced to English subjects since elementary school. However, the students' English learning achievement fell short of expectations. The study from Education first English Proficiency Index for school in 2020 reported that the student's English proficiency in Indonesia is categorized as low/ poor (EF Education First, 2020). The study examined the English proficiency level of the students in junior and Senior high schools around the world. Among 100 countries and provinces, Indonesia ranked 74 with a score of 453 and is in the 15th position among 24 countries in Asia. Tragically, Indonesia has suffered from low achievement since 2017. Therefore, studies to examine the reasons for such achievement are still needed to be conducted. Concerning the importance of

the teachers' role in the teaching and learning process, the teachers' qualifications are needed to be evaluated.

In the world of education, teachers play very important roles. In the hands of teachers, curriculum, learning resources, facilities, and infrastructure must be managed into something meaningful for learners. Teachers are educators first and foremost. They are in charge of providing students with the knowledge, skills, and methods of thinking and functioning that they will need in the future so that they might become leaders, operate their own enterprises, care for others, or make significant discoveries. Teachers do not only help the students become global citizens but also motivate them to strive for greatness. Teachers are in command of many valuable roles in the development of the society that make them vital to the quality of education in a nation (Abe, 2014; Zahoor et al., 2019). Furthermore, there have been a number of empirical studies indicating how teachers' qualifications affect the students' achievement. For example, the study from Dr. Abe., Adu 2013 showed that employing experienced qualified

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instructors in all schools is the most essential component in boosting learners' mathematical achievement (Dr. Abe, T.O., Adu, 2013). Teachers are one of the most critical factors influencing student accomplishment (Fakeye, 2012). They hold the key to closing achievement gaps. His study in the context of Oyo state indicated that teachers' teaching qualification was one of the factors that contributed to the student's achievement in the English language. The other example is the study by (Lee & Lee, 2020). Their study focused on science teachers in the U.S. The results show that the students who have been taught by multiple highly qualified teachers were more likely to earn a higher level of educational degrees. The results emphasized that subject-matter expertise was the strongest predictor of the students' earning higher levels of educational degrees. Although the studies argued that teachers' academic competency influences students' achievement, there was a relatively small number of studies that tested the extent of the impact of teachers' academic competence- especially in English language teaching, on students' achievement. The studies did not limit the assumption to the grade levels from which the relationship has previously been empirically examined.

To fill the gap, this recent study tried to examine the relationship between English teachers' qualifications students' and learning achievement. In the process of teaching language, the teachers must be able to deliver the content of the learning materials as well as to make the students be able to master the language they learn. Teachers must be professional in terms both of their teaching practice and their subject expertise (Stronge, j, 2007). Subject-matter expertise in fact includes the ability to convey and teach to others as well as a deep understanding of the concepts and ideas being taught. Experienced and effective teachers must convey the content of the subject being taught, the students, and all things that embody effective classroom management skills. Therefore in the case of teaching English experts argue that teachers are required to have language competence as well as teaching competence. Teachers need to be able to impart their language competence and manifest certain methods and techniques in teaching the language to involve the students who aim to become competent in the use of the language (Brown, 2014; Harmer, 2007).

However, in the practice of teaching and learning English, there was a contradictory issue arose. Based on an informal observation in several schools especially in private Islamic junior high school, it was found that some teachers who taught English did not have any qualifications as English teachers. In other words, they did not have any academic qualifications to be an

English teacher. They majored in Education, but their field of study was not English education. This phenomenon contradicted to teachers' specification in which qualified teachers referred to those who own license as a teacher which obtained at least from a four-year institution, but also to those well qualified in their area of specialization (Usman, 2012). The phenomenon also refuted the national teachers' qualifications. According to Indonesian Law No.14 article 10 year 2015, a qualified teacher must possess four competencies including pedagogic competence, personality competence, professional competence, and social competence that are gained by completing the professional teacher education and certifications in accordance with the field his duty (Undang-undang, 2015). The law indicates that it is compulsory for the teachers to have academic qualification background that matches the field of study they teach.

As a matter of fact, this study aimed to seek the relationship between teachers' educational background and the student's achievement. The study focused on English as the subject matter. This study would like to provide basic empirical evidence based on whether academic qualification had something to do with the students' English learning achievement. The results of this study were expected to contribute in such a way that the policymakers could come up with significant evaluation and consideration in the teachers' requirement process.

2. Method

This study was conducted based on a quantitative research study. The study applied a correlational design. The population of the study referred to All *MTs S (Madrasah Tsanawiyah Swasta* or Privat Islamic Junior High School) in Jambi city. To collect the samples of the study, the researchers applied purposive sampling. There were three schools selected for this study; *MTs An Nizam*, *MTs Al Hidayah*, and *MTs Nurrodiyah*. The schools were selected based on their A accreditation status. The selection was due to the belief that the higher the accreditation the better the standard the schools had. By having similar criteria, the researchers aimed to minimize the effect of confounding variables. This study limited the grade level of the students who participated in the study. The students were the whole eighth-graders from the three schools selected. The total number of students was 244. Since this study considered the teachers' educational background as the independent variable, the researchers also involved the teachers who taught those eighth-grader students. Four English teachers participated in this study. The researchers designed a questionnaire to get basic information on the

teachers' educational backgrounds. The questionnaire contained several statements to get the information on the teachers' age, gender, their latest level of formal education, and the length of their teaching experience. The data of the students' achievements were taken from the documentation. The researchers collected the raw results of the students' achievement from their school final examination. The researchers then categorized the students' scores based on the teachers' educational backgrounds. Table 1 represents the Samples of the study.

Tabel 1. Samples of the Study

Schools	Students' Grade Level	Number of Classes	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
MTs An Nizham Kota Jambi	VIII	2	45	2
MTs Al Hidayah Kota Jambi	VIII	4	134	1
MTs Nururrodiyah Kota Jambi	VIII	3	65	1
Total		10	244	4

3. Results and Discussion

After collecting the data from the teachers' backgrounds, the researchers collected some essential information. Among the four teachers who participated in this study, there was only one teacher who had English Educational background. In other words, the rest 3 teachers (75%) were graduated from the non- English Education department. The results of the questionnaire also showed that 3 of the teachers who did not possess an English Educational background had experienced teaching English for about 3-7 years, while the rest of one student had experienced teaching English for about 13 years. Thus, although they had different educational backgrounds, they had a lot of experiences in teaching English.

The relationship between English teachers' educational background and students' English learning achievement was investigated using Spearman's rho correlation coefficient. The results showed that there was a positive correlation between the variables [$r=0.032$, $n=244$]. Although the result showed that there

was relationship between the variables, the correlation was categorized low.

Table 2. The Result Correlation of Teachers' Educational Background and Students' English Achievement

Spearman's rh	Students Achievement	Teachers Educational Background	
		Students Achievement	Teachers Educational Background
	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,032
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,617
	N	244	244
Teachers Educational Background	Correlation Coefficient	,032	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,617	.
	N	244	244

The finding of the study verified previous studies that teachers' qualification contributes to the students' achievement (Dr. Abe, T.O., Adu, 2013; Fakeye, 2012; Lee & Lee, 2020; Sanda, 2013). The findings also indicated that the students' better achievement in English had something to do with the teachers' qualifications. The teachers who were qualified both in pedagogical and professional competence could manage the English teaching and learning process better. Since they comprehend the concept of English as a language as well as the ability to impart appropriate methods and strategies in the English learning classroom. Thus, it would be better if the students were taught by the teachers who graduated from the English education department. It would be easier for teachers who possessed the same educational background as the subject they taught to adjust to the school environment because they had already been equipped with supported teaching theory.

However, this study is still far away from being perfect. There are still shortcomings of this study. Since the method of the study did not explore the effect of the independent variable, this study was not certain of how English teachers' educational background statistically affects the students' achievement. The instruments to collect the data were limited only to the existing document. There might be other variables such as teachers' experiences and students' learning experiences that were ignored in this study.

4. Conclusion

Our study contributes to scientific literature in four ways. Firstly, it raises the issue of contradictory phenomena that happened in English teachers'

requirement procedures because there were teachers who were not from the English field of study taught English subjects. Secondly, not to mention its limitations, this study provides evidence that English teachers' educational background matters to the students' English achievement. Practically, this study highlights the need for the stakeholders/ policymakers to reevaluate the required procedure. The study also implied that the accreditation status could not be 100% reliable. The result of this study could be taken into account. The schools with A accreditation status still had flaws in providing qualified teachers for the students, let alone the schools with lower accreditation levels. To the teachers, participating in professional development activities would be recommended to increase their professional competence.

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