

ENGLISH TEACHERS' MOTIVATION AND CHALLENGES IN VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN YOGYAKARTA

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Abstract

This study examines English teachers' voices regarding the teacher professional development (TPD) experiences in state vocational high school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The voices include their motivation and perceived challenges of professional development efforts. The study is a qualitative research employing questionnaire and interviews to gather the data from ten English teachers in state vocational high school. The findings unravel some intrinsic motivations of English teachers and the challenges and needs perceived in doing TPD related to their time management, namely problems related to teaching schedule and time to look after the family. Most teachers also need more training to practice their ICT skills and performance. The suggestions for further studies are also discussed.

Keywords: teacher professional development, vocational high school, challenges

Introduction

Teacher professional development, including that of English teachers, as a compulsory factor for teachers' continuous improvement in educational field has been supported by a large number of education practitioners (Banks & Mayes, 2012; Tanang & Abu, 2014; Tondeur, Forkosh-Baruch, Prestridge, Albion, & Edirisinghe, 2016). The effort to enhance TPD is required by English Teachers especially in Indonesia particularly because English has become a preferred language of communication in the fields of technology, science, communication, trade and education (Senior, 2006). In education field, the need of English in Indonesia has increased when English becomes one of the compulsory subjects in schools and it is examined as one of the subjects in National Examinations as the requirement to graduate from a school. Seeing how important English is to be taught in a school, the Indonesian Government has prepared teachers to be professional in teaching through the Indonesia's Law, No. 14/ 2005, Verse 1. This law regulates teachers as they are to have academic qualification at least bachelor degree, certificate of educator, good physic and spiritual health, abilities to achieve the national education purpose, and master four teaching competencies, namely pedagogy, professionalism, social, and personality. Owing to the Law above, the government provides certification programs to enhance TPD in Indonesia. Certification programs are available as tangible supports by the government to value teacher professionalism.

Recently, TPD has gained its significant roles in Vocational High schools in Indonesia because the incumbent Indonesian President is focusing on the growth of vocational high schools. The president prioritizes vocational high school because Indonesia will have a great number of productive age people in the world in 2020 (Widodo, 2017). The president prepares Vocational High School students so that they can manage Indonesian natural resources and technology. Regarding the president's program, TPD in vocational high school is urgent, particularly for English teachers, as English is the lingua franca of the globalisation age. TPD for English teachers is desirable and crucial in English Language Teaching context throughout the world (Yuwono, 2008). Due to the importance of TPD for English teachers in vocational high schools, this paper explores the notion and issues of TPD as perceived by vocational senior high school English teachers. This study investigates two research questions as follows: 1) what are the English Teachers' motivations to participate in TPD programs; and 2) what are the teachers' challenges and needs in doing TPD program? These two questions are answered in the discussion section.

Teacher Professional Development

TPD has been discussed in many literatures and educational field. TPD facilitates teachers to develop their teaching skills. Teachers are supposed to have good competence, teaching performance, actively involved in professional development program, upgrade knowledge and engage the relevant issues, conduct the assignment ethically, and commit in teaching practice (Adnyani, 2015). To improve teachers' teaching, teachers are required to engage in learning opportunity such as workshop, mentoring and training to support their role (Tanang and Abu, 2014). TPD as specific programs can enhance teachers' knowledge and skills of teaching (Hill, 2009). Hill says that TPD has to bring improvements in teacher's knowledge, instruction, and students outcomes. There are many forms of TPD program such as participating educational seminars, writing research or portfolio and going to educational training. Those activities are prepared to improve teachers' skill and knowledge. However, Hill states that TPD cannot be estimated what percentage of it is worthwhile for teachers. Teachers who experience the TPD program can be invited to share their perception and feelings about TPD so that it can measure and evaluate TPD program. Hence, TPD will be useful. Hill invites people to reject professional development that exists only to fulfil state licensure requirements. The government and schools should support proven and highly promising TPD program (Hill, 2009)

The problems in TPD have been discussed by Hammel (2007). Hammel includes an overview of general educational research, many of which studying the role of professional development in school reform and change and the lack of communication between teachers and administrators regarding professional development.

Method

This study employed a qualitative study. The key of qualitative research is that meaning is constructed by individuals in interaction with their world (Merriam, 2002). English teacher's experiences in joining TPD programs are

investigated. A qualitative approach was chosen in this study because it could provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena than that would be obtained from purely quantitative data (Silverman, 2005). In this study, the researchers analysed the experience of following TPD based on the data collections that were obtained from multiple source information. The researchers conducted questionnaires and interviews.

Participants

The participants were 10 English teachers from 3 vocational high schools in Yogyakarta City in Indonesia. The participants were teaching English in a variety of grade levels, including grade X, XI, and XII. They were asked to voluntarily participate in this study after reading and signing the consent form. This consent form detailed what the participants need to do during the research process. The participants were selected in this study because they had experienced TPD programs throughout their careers. All participants referred to in the discussion are put in pseudonyms.

Teaching experiences

From the participants of this research, it can be concluded that most participants have been teaching English for 11 – 15 years. Five participants of them have teaching experiences from 11 to 15 years. Two participants have been teaching for 6 – 10 years. The other three participants have been teaching for more than 20 years. The distribution of their teaching experiences is shown in the following picture:

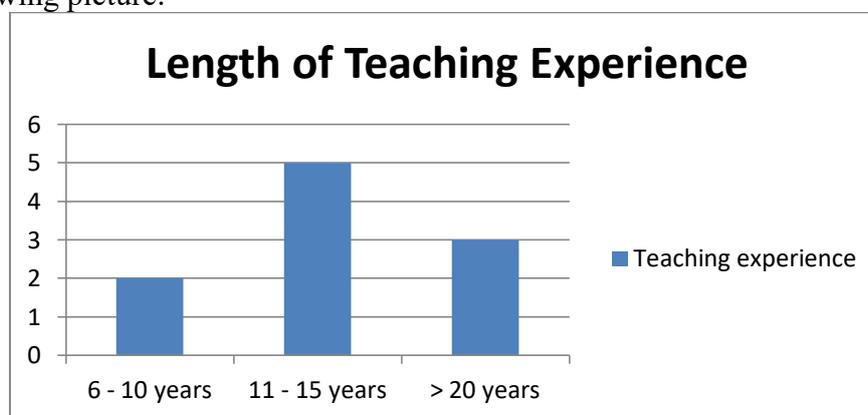


Diagram 1. Length of Teaching Experiences

Instruments

The study was based on two main data sources: a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire was adapted from The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). The questionnaire was adapted in the necessity of the condition of educational field in Indonesia. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: (1) three questions on teacher's background including gender, age, and the years of teaching; (2) eight questions of TPD. The interview was conducted to elicit their motivation related to TPD. The interview questions were based on participants' responses toward the questionnaire. This method highlights the advantages of a qualitative research in offering a deeper image (Silverman, 2005).

Procedure

The permission letter of conducting the study in Yogyakarta, Indonesia was obtained from the government office which deals with research studies for institutions, called KESBANGPOL (Kesatuan Bangsa dan Politik). After getting the permission, the researchers were allowed to initiate the study by distributing questionnaires and conducting interviews in State Vocational High Schools in Yogyakarta City. The English teachers completed the questionnaire of their efforts in TPD program. They were given chances to fill the questionnaire in one month from May to June 2017. After the participants had completed the questionnaires, each teacher participated in the interview section that lasted for 30-50 min. They were interviewed concerning their experiences and standpoints toward TPD, particularly the nature of professionalism as perceived by them.

The data based on the questionnaire was used to acquire basic data and to develop interview question. The result of the interviews were analysed by coding and categorizing the interview data into some themes. The results of the study are presented in the following section.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the results of questionnaire and interview, there are two categories that explained TPD experiences perceived by teachers. The researchers classified the results into the motivation of joining TPD and the challenges of following TPD.

The motivation of Joining Teacher Professional Development

There are various motivations in doing TPD program. The participants realized that TPD is important for their improvement in teaching. This is the part of their profession. As Fanny said that, "I searched the knowledge. For me, TPD was not for rank promotion. It was for myself. I have been long interested in TPD. I intrinsically was curious about classroom action research. I tried to implement the knowledge to my class. I was curious about the results. If I saw students' learning improvement, I regard it as a reward already."

Fanny admitted that she was curious with new knowledge and wanted to implement it in the classroom. She also searched for knowledge. However, even if TPD was not for certification, she still wanted to do it. She saw the development as a reward of improving her teaching skill. She was also happy doing classroom action research as her teaching professional development. She said that: "Classroom action research was for promotion for some teachers. Nevertheless, for me, I was happy doing classroom action research because I felt happiness. And it brought positive impacts." TPD that can fulfil the need of teachers brings positive impacts. In the same vein, Georgia has slightly different motivation in doing TPD. Georgia said: "For me, TPD was a calling. For example, when there was a TPD program, we consulted our research papers. I had willingness to finish it. I make the questionnaire for my students. But, I cannot say that I have completed it before I saw my students step up to a higher level."

Georgia explained that teaching for 10 years and doing the same thing and always repeating it could be boring for her. The benefit of being civil servant could be also a challenge because she already felt safe because of the stable

salary, even without doing particular teaching innovations. However, Georgia also admitted that teaching college students presented different challenges. She said that it could be easier teaching college students than that of vocational high school students. She went on to exemplify that in vocational high school she should check daily tests and asked students to do their tasks. Nevertheless, simply asking students to do their task was already difficult. Georgia then said that she also experienced professional fatigue following TPD programs: “I used to be happy participating English Teacher Network, attending workshop, being tested for expanding my knowledge. But now, I am tired maybe because of age factor. I am tired if we should think.”

Georgia exemplified that whenever she got new materials from TPD program, she felt motivated and excited. She thought that those materials could be applied for her students. Nevertheless, when she met the students in the classroom reality, all the motivation and excitement flew away, confused how to apply. From her explanation, Georgia implies that there is substantial knowledge discrepancy between theories she obtained from TPD and the classroom realities.

Apart from the above motivation account of the teachers, in this study, the researchers also found some challenges encountered by English teachers in joining TPD in Indonesia which is discussed in the following section.

The challenges of Following Teacher Professional Development

The challenges faced by the English teachers for participating in TPD are presented in the table below with the frequency of occurrence of their responses.

| No | Code | Frequency |
|----|---|-----------|
| 1 | Limited time joining TPD due to teaching schedule | 10 |
| 2 | Limited time joining TPD due to family matters | 3 |
| 3 | TPD materials | 3 |
| 4 | Information related TPD | 1 |
| 5 | Motivation | 7 |

The English teachers tend to face their problems in TPD in two factors. The first challenge is inadequate time of following TPD. The participants still get problems how to match their schedules with TPD. The second challenge is TPD materials. The English teacher tries to find what kind of suitable materials and topics for TPD. Hence, TPD can be followed up to gain the best result. The two challenges are elaborated as follows.

Teaching schedule

The first challenge that English teachers deal with is program timing of TPD. The participants admitted that it was difficult to find the appropriate time to do TPD as they had their teaching schedules in the school. However, TPD program was often held in a timing work. From the results of questionnaire and interview, 10 topics about teaching schedules as challenges emerged. Teachers were demanded to cover her teaching schedules at schools. From the data, timing program of TPD is the biggest obstacle for English teachers. Teachers could not leave the teaching process at schools as sanction would be given to teachers. This

challenge is particularly conveyed by Anne, “Teaching schedules cannot be modified. I will get sanction if I leave my students”.

Although some teachers still keep joining TPD program, they could not entirely focus on the program because they must also think the tasks and materials for the students. As Cynthia expressed, “TPD often collides with my teaching schedule. Therefore, I cannot focus on it”. The participants were often confused and worried how to manage their times between teaching schedules and TPD program. Although the participants had awareness of the importance of TPD programs, they did not want to leave the students because it would consequently multiply their jobs. This is especially admitted by Brigitta: “If we get an instruction to join TPD program, we must give tasks to our students so that they will not be left behind on the learning materials. We need to give detailed instructions as the students sometimes do not understand the materials which they have to do.” With the fact that joining TPD collided with teaching schedule, their chances of meeting their learning community were often limited.

Time to Care for Family

Besides teaching schedules, family seems to be the second challenge for the participants to do TPD program. Based on the data, there are three topics about family as a burden of TPD appears. The data said that TPD decreases teachers’ family time. There is inadequate time due to family matters. Enny wrote her answer of the challenge of TPD as follows:

“I am a mother in my family. Family needs the presence of a mother. I can only meet my family and my children only in the evening.”

She admitted that it was difficult to manage time between TPD and her role as a mother. She did not want to leave her children. This finding is in line with Yuwono’s study (2010). They argue that female teachers, who are usually expected to look after and care for their families at the same time, may feel hesitant or face dilemma to actively join professional development program or to conduct further learning whenever such program or learning takes their time off their families. Alicia also had the same voice regarding to TPD:

“When the school is finished, we have already been tired and we must take care of our children.”

On the contrary, with the two participants before, Fanny showed her different opinion about the family. She realized that TPD might influence her family time. However, she could see the positive side from it. She admitted that:

“If we talk about family, teachers will certainly do not have time to join TPD programs. I understand that some teachers do not follow TPD program because they will not have family time. Nevertheless, I think it is the consequence of being a teacher. We have already chosen our profession to be a teacher.”

Fanny felt that leaving family for a moment is the consequence of her profession to be a committed teacher. She values this challenge as her part becoming a teacher. By seeing the challenges as consequences, she could join TPD without any burdens.

Needs for TPD materials

The diagram below shows teachers’ needs in TPD. Teacher needs at least eight aspects in TPD Program.

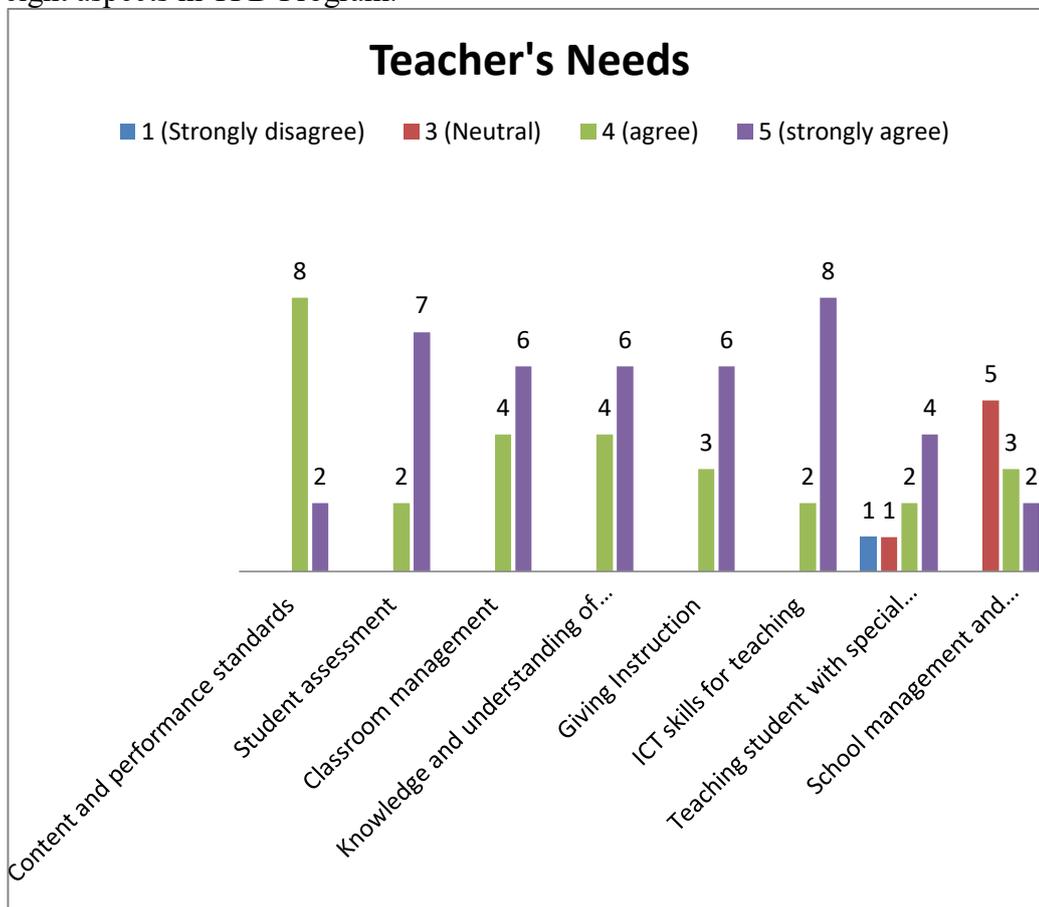


Diagram 2. Teacher’s Needs

From the diagram above, it can be seen that content and performance standards and ICT skills for teaching are wanted by most teachers in joining TPD. It is because they usually get the educational policies from the government in TPD program. They just get how to make a lesson plan and it is repeated too frequently in TPD program. Georgia, one of the participants said: “TPD materials covered learning theories and newest policies from the government. I liked learning theories rather than the policies. I was not interested in the policies. What is it for? Sometimes we were too busy in the policies but I felt that the core was the same, the learning material was the same, and we only reshaped the form and the lesson plan.”

Georgia said that she was not interested in the policies. However, learning theories are needed for Georgia. Next, ICT skills for teaching are also needed as today every person is connected to technology of information and communication. Therefore, most participants choose to have ICT skills for teaching to improve their professionalism.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, this study attempts to answer two research questions, namely the motivations of English Teachers to join TPD program and the challenges and the needs of the English teachers in TPD programs. The findings from the participants include five general topics, namely: limited time joining TPD due to teaching schedule, limited time joining TPD due to family matters, TPD materials, information related TPD, and the teachers' motivation.

The teachers expressed in both the questionnaires and interviews that they clearly have intrinsic motivation to drive their actions, for example to conduct classroom action research. The positive learning result from this classroom action research, for example, has already been a precious reward for the participant. However, the teacher often cannot maintain and implement their teaching plans they gained from the TPD programs as the classroom realities often demand different learning strategies.

Related to the TPD challenges, the teachers mention that the commitment to follow the teaching schedule often conflicted with the program schedule of TPD. Besides, when faced with the decision of priority, the teachers are often confused whether they should look after their children and the family or went to TPD programs. The discretion did not look too obvious. However, the decision often resorted from the teacher's critical reflection that teaching is a chosen profession that they have to uphold with some consequences. As for the needs, most teachers require more training to understand the practices of ICT skills as well as teaching performance.

The suggestion related to TPD centres around the follow-up of the program itself. Some teachers in this research expressed that they have difficulty to implement the knowledge obtained from the TPD programs, as well as to maintain their motivations and strategies to implement the TPD programs in the classroom. Therefore, further research direction can locate teachers' challenges to cope with the classroom reality after the teachers complete some TPD programs, and secondly, what kinds of assistances they need to stay motivated in implementing the strategies with regard to the factual classroom situation.

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