

TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THEIR PERFORMANCE IN CLASSROOM: A CASE OF TWO EFL TEACHERS IN URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: EFL teachers take the position as front-liners in attempt to promote the nation's human resource quality. Unfortunately, overall, in Indonesia the competence of EFL teachers remains low. Some teachers with all their efforts take actions to solve this shortcoming. This research is a case study which was aimed to investigate the participation of two urban primary school EFL teachers in professional development-oriented activities and its qualitative possible impact on their teaching performance in classroom. In the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to the authority and all EFL teachers in both schools, documents were collected, and student questionnaires were administered. Data were analysed using qualitative modes of inductive technique, content analysis, and descriptive statistics. The study has shown the two EFL teachers' participation in professional development was not optimum. True, they tended to take the activities actively above average, but with inadequate attention primarily to content relevance and role taking. With regard to performance in classroom, the study has shown that the two EFL teachers' teaching performance was not optimum. Their personal and social competences were extremely superior to the pedagogical and professional ones. For a better learning process and outcome, the latter should have been more challenging. At last, the study has revealed that the two EFL teachers' less quality participation in professional development-oriented activities was believed to have unsatisfactory impact on their performance in classroom.

Keywords: *quality, participation, professional development, performance, classroom*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers, including EFL teachers, play a vital role in bringing a generation to the bright future. Therefore, they should have high professionalism and performance. Unfortunately, the facts have shown that overall the competence and quality of EFL teachers in Indonesia remains low (e.g. Sukarni, *et. al.*, 2009). One thing for sure, for instance, is the fact that of those certified teachers taking Teacher Competence Exam usually only about twenty per cent pass it. To solve this problem it is not possible to take actions solely through formal teacher training or education. All efforts should be synergized to boost the EFL teachers' professionalism and sharpen their performance.

In Indonesia, efforts by the Government to enhance teacher professional development have become much stronger for the last decade. All models have been tried out in dealing with this issue. Within the national teacher certification program, for example, a few patterns have been implemented and revised, starting from the portfolio model, then short training, to most recently teacher professional education. To the latter itself a few revisions have been made with the inclusion of online course. Up to this research report writing time the authority has extended the online period.

An exciting question arises, then. Is it enough with all such programs, including the most updated teacher professional education to generate better professional and qualified EFL teachers? While initially portfolio scheme gained massive negative reactions, there is no guarantee with the recently implemented model the EFL teachers will perform better.

An alternative answer to the question above is involvement in professional development-oriented activities, to which EFL teachers might have no limit of time and space. Participation of

teachers in such activities as training and workshops, classroom inquiries in action research studies, instructional module writing, student worksheet writing, teaching media development, teacher consultative forum, relevant courses, etc. too many to mention, is promising.

Several studies have exhibited the poor participation of teachers in professional development activities; with no exception of EFL teachers (see Suwartono 2019 and Hartati 2014). Many of them have joined workshops, trainings, and seminars without all their heart. Usually, they have typical reasons of overburden teaching hours or no approval from the school principal. In this case, there is a need for a wise communication. Teachers should be aware that teacher professional development is all their needs instead of obligation. On the other hand, wise school authorities know teacher professional development is needed by their teaching staff to sharpen competence and, therefore, they have to support teachers' efforts and facilitate them by providing them with advice and suggestions as to what, where, and when a training is worth joining (Jalal and Supriadi, 2001: 224).

One indicator of teachers' professionalism is their performance in classroom. According to Gaynor, as cited in Werang (2014), performance relates to what teachers do in the classroom and how that affects student learning. Thus, teachers' performance is observable. What they do during lessons has impact not only on students' learning process but also their learning outcome.

According to Article 14 Year 2005 in the Indonesian Constitution, teacher competence covers four types: pedagogical, professional, personal, and social. These four competences are expected to be equally present in every individual teacher on duty. This research was aimed to describe the EFL teachers' participation roles, capacity, and intensity in their professional development activities, describe the EFL teachers' performance in classroom, and examine the qualitative impact of the EFL teachers' participation on their teaching performance.

METHOD

This descriptive case study research involved two primary school EFL teachers at urban area of Purwokerto, Central Java, Indonesia. Both teachers had been working at different schools – State Junior High School 1 of Purwokerto and State Junior High School 2 of Purwokerto – for eleven years. They were identified as two EFL teachers who actively took activities related with professional development. Within this holistic case study, two analysis units were connected while common characteristics were drawn for conclusion (Yin as translated by Mudzakir, 2014).

Data on teacher participation in professional development-oriented activities were collected through semi-structured interviews with the school authority (principals and vice-principals) and all teachers of English at both schools, including the ones under investigation. The interviews were recorded. Main data on participation were collected through documents. Certificates, acknowledgement or appreciation letters, project reports, and others which confirm involvement in professional development activities were gathered. In addition, closed and open questionnaires were administered to students to elicit data on teacher performance in classroom.

The interview data on teacher participation in professional development activities were analysed using qualitative mode of inductive technique. Content analysis was done to the documents. Questionnaire data on teacher performance in classroom were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while investigation of the impact of the EFL teachers' participation in professional development activities on their performance in classroom was approached by using qualitative inductive technique.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In light of the problem being investigated in the present study, the following are the results to be presented and discussed in this section. First, concerning participation in professional development, the two EFL teachers selected in this study, Mrs. Marshanda and Mr. Hamdan (written under pseudonyms) were passionate, self-confident, and potential EFL teachers. Among colleagues at work, both of them took professional development-oriented activities or events most actively. Mrs. Marshanda, for example, said to have participated in professional development activities because she felt confident enough and indeed needed them. To her, such activities constitute “supplementary” required to improve achievement. Besides being aware of the potential she had, she acknowledged her weaknesses. Just because of her weaknesses, she decided to participate in professional development activities, as she commented on: “Actually I have ideas, opinions, then motivation, and ... creativity, whatever it is. But then, at times, to realize creativity, I am thinking like: is it right?” It is a question which reflects motivation to learn from reliable sources.

The school principal nominated Mrs. Marshanda as the most active English teacher to participate in professional development activities among the three teachers of the same type working at the school. Mrs. Marshanda was also considered to get much involved in the local teachers’ consultative forum as a district instructor. Regarding with her service as a district instructor, she was considered frequent to pass on any information to colleagues at work.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Hamdan has shown himself as a self-motivated, self-confident, and good-learner teacher. Like Mrs. Marshanda, he was aware of his weaknesses, especially in the case of ICT. At his work environment, Mr. Hamdan was known as a teacher who actively participated in professional development activities as well as the one who enjoyed sharing knowledge. A friend at work commented below:

Right, I frequently share with Mr. Hamdan Since he is the chair of our consultative forum, then automatically, I dig the knowledge from him as well. In many things, so I consult to Mr. Hamdan, for example, when I am making a presentation before other teachers, I talk about it with him in advance. In another case, for example, when I am developing a good lesson plan, I always consult to him how to do it and so on.

Actual data on professional development activities collected in the forms of certificates, letters of appreciation, and project reports, have supported the initial information that the two EFL teachers mentioned above were indeed potential. Within a teaching time span of eleven years at present workplace, Mrs. Marshanda had participated at least eighty professional development activities, or 7.27 times per year, while Mr. Hamdan no less than 67 activities, or 5.7 times per year.

In quantity, this achievement much exceeds that of colleagues at the same workplace. Whereas seen from its quality, participation of the two potential EFL teachers in professional development activities can be reported as follows. So far, Mrs. Marshanda has involved herself four times in activities as teacher mentor and source-person in the regency, and ten times attending provincial and national level academic meetings. In the meanwhile, Mr. Hamdan, within an equal period of time has shown better quality participation.

Mr. Hamdan’s Participation in Professional Development Activities

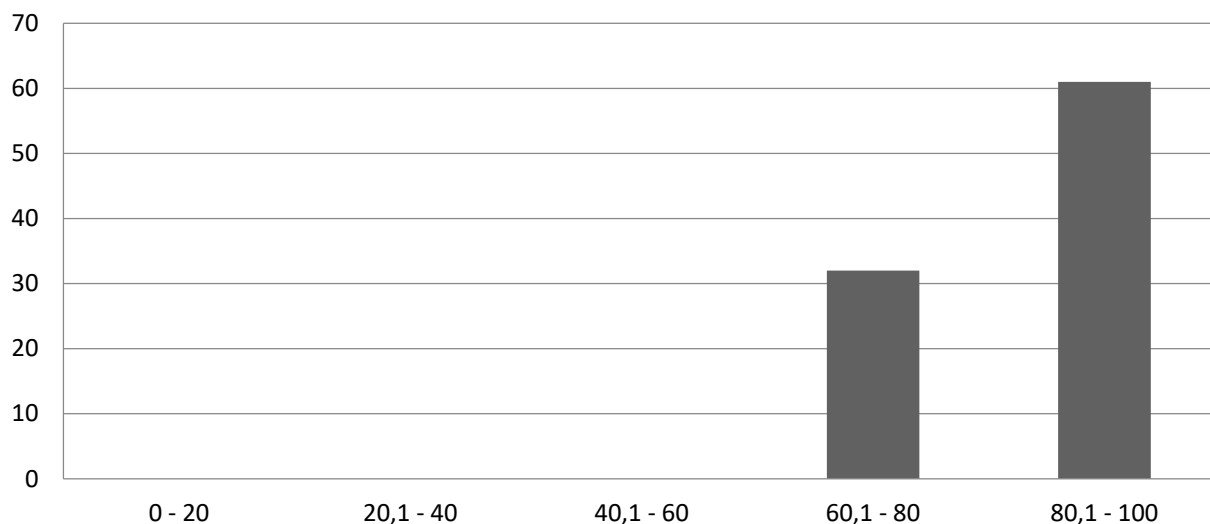
No.	Type	Freq.
1	Instructor in training	2
2	Source-person at meeting	1
3	Chair of organization	1

4	Member of teacher exchange international program (Thailand)	1
5	Writer of module	2
6	Participant at provincial and national academic meeting	5
7	Researcher in classroom inquiry project	1

Viewed from the content, majority of the activities were trainings, workshops, or the like associated with pedagogical competence (e.g. present curriculum and its implementation) and only small portion dealt with field of interest, in this case the English language, e.g. a vocabulary course. Very rare were, for instance, teaching material development and classroom inquiry practice. Worse still, little attention was given to professional competence development-oriented activities.

In regard to performance in classroom, Mrs. Marshanda gained good impression from the students. As many as ninety-three student respondents gave an average score of 83.43 on closed questionnaires.

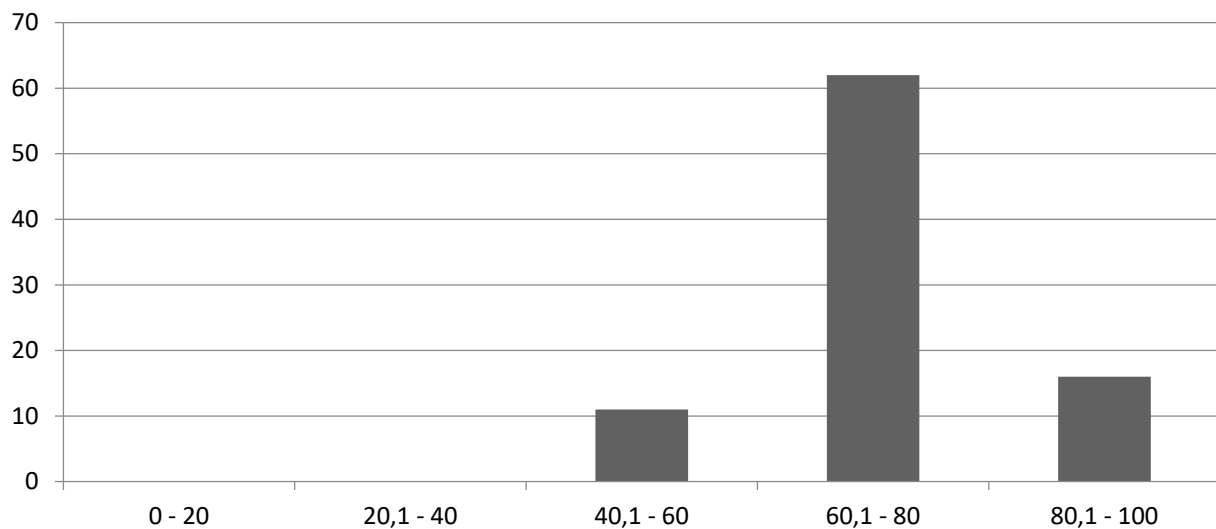
Mrs. Marshanda’s Performance in the Eyes of Students



Further analysis has shown that Mrs. Marshanda had personal and social competences favourable to students. Concerning these competences, Mrs. Marshanda was rated excellent in four aspects associated with personal competence, i.e. the teacher was not rude, the teacher cared, the teacher was encouraging, and the teacher was not bad-tempered, and one aspect related to pedagogical competence, i.e. lessons given by the teacher were felt to help develop their knowledge and skills of the English language. Result of the open questionnaire supported the data. The open questionnaire has shown that three most liked things of Mrs. Marshanda were: she had a smiling face, she looked attractive, and she taught interestingly. Those all were pride! But, since she was too kind, the students rated her low, instead. One of the open questionnaires supported this, where most of students’ feedback was something like they needed a firm and friendly teacher.

While in quality of professional development activities Mr. Hamdan was overall superior to Mrs. Marshanda, his performance in classroom was not rated better than that of Mrs. Marshanda. Students’ ratings have shown that Mr. Hamdan gained average score of 71.80. The chart below shows result of the teacher evaluation in more details.

Mr. Hamdan's Performance in the Eyes of Students



It can be seen that some students gave unsatisfactory rating. Further analysis has shown that seven aspects gained foremost students' ratings: four of personal and social competences, namely: the teacher was not rude, the teacher was not bad-tempered, the teacher cared, and the teacher was encouraging, and one aspect of pedagogical competence, i.e. the lessons he delivered were felt to help develop the language they have been learning, and two of professional competence, i.e. the teacher asked questions during lessons and the teacher answered questions in the class. Result of the open questionnaire supported the data. The open questionnaire has shown that Mr. Hamdan was sympathetic in that he was *often absent*, he was humorous, and he had a relaxed teaching. An eye-opening finding was that the teacher's absence from the class was something his students like. Quite possible it had something to do with the teacher's unpleasant habit in the class. Data on students' feedback over the teacher's performance highlighted that Mr. Hamdan was often sleepy/fell asleep in classroom, rarely wrote and spoke English during lessons, and was not firm to students.

Since teacher competence, according to the national Constitution shall cover four types, namely pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competences, unless pedagogical and professional competences turn superior over the other two, they should at least appear equal. What is expected from an English teacher relative to performance in classroom if his English as major and teaching methodology are worthless to his students? An English teacher with a good mastery of English and classroom instructional activities is more likely to bring about better learning process and outcome even though he is not kind enough to students than the other way around.

Dominance of personal and social competences over the other competences found in the EFL teachers under investigation has implied the undesirable existing condition. Ideally speaking, teachers of English have strong pedagogical and professional competences. The fact is, based on document of participation in professional development; there has been no sufficient evidence that represented competence development activities by the two EFL teachers, especially the ones that trained professional competence to them.

Result of the present study has been consistent to that of a study by Rahmi and Widodo (2014) in the big city of Yogyakarta. According to their study, professional competence of the EFL teachers under their investigation was rated the lowest from different perspectives: school principals and students. It has shown how professional competence was demanding to acquire. A

study by Zaim (2012) reported that training on teacher certification program in Indonesia had nearly no impact on professional competence. Other evidence that supports this matter, among others, is the fact that in the national teacher certification program, knowledge examination (most probably associated to professional competence) becomes monsters because it remains the main cause of failure.

The two EFL teachers exhibited different orientation in professional development participation. While Mrs. Marshanda reached higher quantity, Mr. Hamdan achieved better quality. Of all their activities of involvement, most were dedicated to pedagogical competence development through trainings or courses. Apart from that, only a small portion of participation took more challenging and active roles, such as main author, speaker, instructor, and classroom researcher.

In order for EFL teachers' participation in professional development activities to effectively contribute to their performance in classroom, they will have to take better part in both quantity and quality. Besides, there is a need to keep all four competences balanced. Sadly enough, professional competence of the two EFL teachers has been the least developed. Presumably, it was affected by low participation in activities that enabled this type of competence to develop. At last, when variables of this study—(1) participation in professional development and (2) performance in classroom—are correlated, it can be said that the two EFL teachers' less quality participation in professional development-oriented activities was believed to have unsatisfactory impact on their performance in classroom.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions can be drawn from the present study. First, in terms of content proportion in the development of competences and quantity–quality of participation in professional development activities, the two EFL teachers' participation in professional development was not optimum yet. Compared to all their participation, in majority, both EFL teachers took less challenging roles, e.g. as participant to a seminar or training. Second, in term of performance in classroom, overall, both EFL teachers were not optimum. Both teachers were good in certain competence/s only, especially personal and social competences. Last, the two EFL teachers' less quality participation in professional development-oriented activities was believed to have unsatisfactory impact on their performance in classroom.

Based on the findings mentioned above, it is suggested that EFL teachers' future participation in professional development activities be improved especially in terms of relevance and quality of participation as well as relative balance of activity content, with emphasis on pedagogical and professional competences. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that this study has some limitations. First, it is necessary for future researchers to conduct a research of similar type that involves teacher evaluation from different perspectives, not only from students, in order to reduce bias. Second, it is also necessary for future researchers to do a research of this type that includes data on student learning outcome, as impact of teacher performance in classroom. Last but not least, it is necessary for future researchers to hold a research of similar type that applies quantitative approach, in order to see correlation between variables in more measurable way.

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