

EXPLORING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: Considering the role of teachers which is uneasy, it is necessary to develop an effective means of supporting and retaining teachers to provide good quality learning environment for students and a supportive work environment for teachers. Based on the urgency of professional development for teachers, pre-service teachers' perception towards teacher professional development (TPD) becomes prominent to explore. The survey reflects the pre-service teachers' perception with regard to professional development. The perception covers the most needed topics in TPD and the most needed learning activities which may give high impacts to their knowledge for teaching. This study involves pre-service teachers from English Department Batch 2016 who were taking internship program as English teachers in public or private schools in Banjarmasin. Regarding the pre-service teachers' perception related to the needed topics, classroom management and knowledge of instructional practices in their subject field are the greatest area of development need followed by knowledge of their main subject and also ICT skills. On the concern of pre-service teachers' perception related to most needed learning activities of TPD, courses or workshops is recognized as the most beneficial learning activities to improve teachers' competences. The results of this study are expected to provide the basic thought for the implication for teacher preparation program in the future. Furthermore, the targeted implementation of the findings will give insights on the most needed professional development topics and most preferred learning activities which can be considered by the related institution when conducting teacher preparation program.

Keywords: *pre-service teachers, perception, teacher professional development*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is not an easy thing to do and not everyone can do this. It needs more than just having good knowledge and competence in some sorts of subject matter, but it also needs intention, perseverance, patience, determination, and passion to never stop learning. Teachers must prepare themselves with all the possibilities that can take place in the classroom; starting from students who have a diversity of attitudes, behaviors as well as intelligence, fluctuating moods, changing materials, or teaching techniques that do not work in some ways and so forth. However, we then find that teaching is also a pleasant job; we can hear the students laughing and see their cheerful faces when we tell something funny, or we find our students improving,

or we discover something new and it challenges us to learn more. These bad and good things will go on and on-for a lifetime in our teaching activities.

Considering the role of teachers which is uneasy, there is increasing awareness that teachers must be carefully recruited and developed professionally throughout the course of their careers to be effective (Billingsley, 2004; Burns & Lawrie, 2015). It is necessary to develop an effective means of supporting and retaining teachers to provide good quality learning environment for students and a supportive work environment for teachers. Professional development is necessary to fill in the gaps in the skill sets of new teachers, and to continue to develop the expertise of teachers (Evers et al., 2016). Being updated with the continuously changing practices, and student needs is one of the purposes of professional development. Successful teachers require them to actively participate on well-organized professional development activities. Research also emphasizes that to be successful, teachers need professional development that is a sustained, intensive effort to improve teaching and learning (Richardson, 2003). Researchers have identified professional development program design elements thought to maximize teacher learning, including a strong content focus, inquiry oriented learning approaches, collaborative participation, and coherence with school curricula and policies (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Garet et al., 2008; Santagata, Kersting, Givvin, & Stigler, 2011).

Based on the urgency of professional development for teachers, pre-service teachers' perception towards teacher professional development (TPD) becomes prominent to explore. The survey reflects pre-service teachers' perception with regard to professional development. The experiences cover the most needed topics in TPD and the forms of learning activities which may give high impacts to their knowledge for teaching. This study involves pre-service teachers from English Department Batch 2016 who are taking internship program as English teachers in public or private schools in Banjarmasin. It emphasizes on how the pre-service teachers, who become the future teachers, picture the needed topics and forms of learning activities of TPD that may improve their experiences as teachers afterward.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Needs for Professional Development Activities

Teachers learn best through professional development that addresses their needs (Meissel et al., 2016). Meeting the teachers' needs for ongoing quality professional development will create teachers to become lifelong adult learners. Professional development needs involve many different activities. Some activities focus on students with special needs and managing the classroom. Other activities involve designing curriculum and unit planning (Garet et al., 2001; Pehmer, Groschner, & Seidel, 2015). From the school administrative side, managing budgets and purchasing are emphasized (Sağır & Memişoğlu, 2013). Evers et al. (2016) focused on activities dealing with teaching strategy support, information on where to search for needed resources, classroom management, and parental involvement. Daresh (2003) also pointed out activities necessary for beginner teachers to include how to plan classes, manage student behavior, and work within district rules). Furthermore, personal concerns and teaching concerns are also mentioned. In a survey of new teachers, Yohon (2005) identified assessment tools, student motivation, curriculum development, lesson planning, and standards documentation. The recognition and respect for the leadership abilities of teachers and all

members of the school community is essential (Witte & Jansen, 2016). Teachers need to be equipped with further develop expertise in subject matter content, technologies, and other essential elements that lead to high standards or quality teaching (Korkko, Kyro-Ammala, & Turunen, 2016; Witte & Jansen, 2016). The NSDC (2007) created a set of nine standards that all professional development should follow. They include content knowledge and quality teaching, research basis, collaboration, diverse learning needs, student learning environments, family involvement, evaluation, data-driven design, and teacher learning.

Forms of Professional Development Activities

Structural features that affect teacher learning include the form of the professional developmental activity, collective participation, and the duration of the activity (Haslam & Seremet, 2001). For many teachers TPD has been seen as a task involving a 1-day in-service training or workshop, with little or no expectation of what the teacher should do with the information obtained or how the teacher could share the information with other colleagues. Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet (2000) argued that compared with activities of shorter duration, the activities of longer duration have more subject-area content focus, more opportunities for active learning, and more coherence with teachers' other experiences. It is apparent that longer professional development activities are more likely to provide opportunities for in-depth discussion of the content, pedagogy, and student conceptions/misconceptions. It is also suggested that activities that extend over time are more likely to allow teachers more time to try out new practices in the classroom and obtain feedback on their teaching. With regard to forms of professional development, TALIS (2013) included in its survey nine different choices: courses/ workshops, education conferences or seminars, qualification program, observation visits to other schools, participation in a network of teachers, individual or collaborative research on a topic, and mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching. Collective participation refers to the interest of groups of teachers from the same school, department, or class (or grade level) in professional development (Garet et al., 2001). With collective participation, the professional development programs are designed to help contribute to a shared culture of all participants. As a result, teachers from the same school, grade level, or subject develop a common understanding.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The aim of this study is to get the objective description about the perception of the pre-service teachers from English Department of Faculty of Teacher Training towards teacher professional development as the implication for teacher preparation program. To achieve the objectives of this research, the researcher focused on finding out the pre-service teachers' perception on the most needed professional development activities in the future and the forms of professional activities which may give the highest impact on teacher's knowledge for teaching. Based on the objective and the characteristics of the data, survey research was conducted. The survey design would enable the researchers to provide insights on pre-service teachers' perception on TPD as the implication for teacher preparation program.

Population and Sample

This study was conducted in English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Lambung Mangkurat University. The accessible population of the study was the students of English Department who were in 7th semester who took internship program as English teachers in either public or private schools in Banjarmasin. According to the data from English Department, there were 90 students from 7th semester in total. As the sampling technique, purposive sampling was chosen to gather data. Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select sample from which the most can be learned. In this technique, the criteria of selecting the subjects were created to identify pre-service teachers to be included in this study. Therefore, only the students who were taking internship program as English teachers who could be taken as the sample of the research.

Research Instruments

The instrument used to collect the research data was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2013). At the first part of the questionnaire, the questionnaire items aimed to identify the participants' backgrounds and personal details such as: gender, status, qualifications, and number of hours of instructional activities in a week. Furthermore, this part also examined the pre-service teachers' perception on the most needed topics for professional development and the forms of professional activities which may give the highest impact on teacher's knowledge for teaching. The items for those aspects used Likert-scale.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of the Needed Topics for Their Professional Development in the Future

It can be seen from the results of the questionnaire that pre-service teachers have various answers responding to the topics that they perceive important for their professional development in the future. Interestingly, classroom management is considered as one of the most important topics that should be mastered as a professional teacher followed by knowledge and understanding of instructional practices (knowledge mediation) in their subject field. Similarly, 79% of the pre-service teachers apparently need to learn about student discipline and behavioral problems which they assume may improve their professionalism in the future. Furthermore, some of them (64%) believe that knowledge and understanding of their main subject field is necessary lesson that need to be learned in professional development activities. In addition, it is stated by 57% of pre-service teachers that ICT skill for teaching needs to be provided as a material in learning activities. Half of the pre-service teachers agree that both content and performance standards in their subject and students assessment practices are vital for their teaching development in the future. Moreover, teaching students with special learning needs becomes the expected materials to be given in professional development activities by some of the pre-service teachers (43%).

On the other hand, few pre-service teachers (36%) choose teaching in a multicultural setting as the needed topic for professional development learning activities. The topics related to school management and administration and student counselling are perceived as less important to be learned when they join professional development activities than others that have been mentioned. The last but not least, some of the pre-service teachers also mention that the skills of material development and English for specific purposes are also needed for their improvement as future teachers.

Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions on the Needed Learning Activities for Their Professional Development in the Future

Based on the questionnaire, it can be seen that most of the pre-service teachers strongly agree that several learning activities will give a great impact for their professional development. Almost all pre-service teachers (64%) perceived that courses or workshop is the most beneficial learning activities for their development as future teachers. Additionally, taking further study such as master degree and doctoral degree is believed by half of them to help them improve their professionalism. Likewise, participating Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP), a network of teachers formed specifically for the professional development of teachers, is also assumed to play a great role on their professional development (PD), which is stated by 50% of the pre-service teachers. Furthermore, even though it is only chosen by minority of the pre-service teachers, observation visits to other schools is also considered as beneficial learning activities as future teachers. Another learning activities which are less perceived may help teachers to be professional in the future are joining education conferences or seminars where teachers present their research results and discuss educational problems and conducting individual or collaborative research on an educational topic. Surprisingly, most of pre-service teachers (79%) state that doing a mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching will not really support their professional development although the rest of them believe they still get beneficial impact from that learning activity.

Regarding the less formal learning activities, the majority of pre-service teachers prefer to engage in informal dialogues with their colleagues discussing about how to improve their competences as teachers. It is believed that by doing activity, it will give a great impact for their professional development even though very few of them consider it unnecessary to be conducted. Furthermore, 29% of pre-service teachers consider reading professional literature such as journals, evidence-based papers, thesis papers, and etc. related to teaching and learning may give contribution for their professional development.

Discussion

Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of the Needed Topics for Their Professional Development in the Future

It is a must that professional development is designed and implemented to acquire the teachers' needs properly. One of the characteristics of high quality teacher professional development is teacher-driven, which means professional development should respond to teachers' self-identified needs and interests in order to support individual and organizational improvements.

Professional development is more meaningful to teachers when they exercise ownership of its content and process (King and Newmann, 2000).

Regarding the pre-service teachers' perception related to the needed topics, there are some expected materials that they want to learn when joining the learning activities. Classroom management and knowledge and understanding of instructional practices (knowledge mediation) in their subject field are the greatest area of development need. It is obvious that beginning teachers, and even those who are more experienced, often struggle with creating and maintaining a well-managed classroom where students can learn (Jones & Jones, 2012). Therefore, pre-service teachers cite classroom management as their primary point of concern. Interestingly, as part of classroom management, students' discipline and behavioral problems also become main points the pre-service teachers want to acquire. It is stated that one of the components of effective classroom management is discipline, which is defined as both preventing and responding to behavior problems (Garet, 2014).

Furthermore, highly need of knowledge and understanding of their main subject shows that subject-matter content plays an important role to prepare them to be professional teachers. It is shown that teachers' skills and understandings are directly related to the degree that professional development experiences focus on subject matter content (Birman, Desimone, Garet, & Porter, 2000). In addition, they claim that ICT skills are necessary to be learned for their development. It is true that teachers need to be equipped with further develop expertise in subject matter content, technologies, and other essential elements that lead to high standards or quality teaching (Korkko, Kyro-Ammala, & Turunen, 2016; Witte & Jansen, 2016). It may be a reflection of the speed of technological change which teachers must keep pace with. It becomes a continuing challenge for future teachers that they need to keep up to speed in a fast-moving area and to fully exploit technology for the benefit of teaching and learning. Meanwhile, it may indicate a lack of capacity building in terms of how best to use ICT in the classroom.

Content and performance standards in their subject and students assessment practices are perceived to be vital for their teaching development in the future. Teachers are always required to be adaptable with the changing of era including the changing of curriculum. It is highly possible that the curriculum will be changed continuously following the new trend. Consequently, teachers need to adapt to the new approach in every aspect both content and performance standards and the practice of assessment.

Teaching students with special learning needs is considered important enough to be known by the future teachers. It is in line with one of the nine standards that all professional development should follow created by The NSDC (2007) is diverse learning needs. In contrast, the topics related to school management and administration, student counselling, and teaching in a multicultural setting are perceived as less important to be acquired. It can be caused by the availability of counselling teacher makes the pre-service teachers assume that it is not fully their responsibility talking about student's counselling. In addition, most of the students at every school in Indonesia are homogeneous in terms of the culture. There is no significant difference between one student to another related to cultural aspect.

Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions on the Needed Learning Activities for Their Professional Development in the Future

As it can be seen from the findings, pre-service teachers' perceptions on which learning activities can give a great impact for their professional development are found out. According to Dunne (2002), all the purposes of the professional development activities are reached such as constructing knowledge by attending workshops or seminars, translating knowledge into practice by doing mentoring, practicing teaching by coaching and promoting reflection by doing study groups, case discussion and action research.

Most of pre-service teachers agreed that almost all activities help them to improve their professionalism as a teacher, although very few of them thought that it is not really beneficial for them. However, among all of the activities listed, courses or workshops is recognized as the most beneficial learning activities to improve teachers' competences. According to Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017), "structured professional learning" helps teachers to make positive changes in their teaching practices and to improve student learning outcome. It is also in line with some research stating that effective teacher professional development contributes significant improvement to teacher knowledge, skill, and teaching practice (Parise & Spillane, 2010; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, and Gallagher, 2007). It can be assumed that when the future teachers join the formal learning activities such as workshop, training, seminar, or conferences and when participating in network of teachers formed specifically for the professional development of teachers, they will obtain advantages from both of the activities. Teachers who engage in sustainable teacher professional development attain better knowledge and skills and should use these to improve their teaching practice if they attempt to affect student learning and achievement positively (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarlos, & Shapley, 2007).

Participating Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP), a network of teachers formed specifically for the professional development of teachers, is also assumed to play a great role on their professional development (PD) which is categorized as organizational partnership model and teacher's network, as part of small group or individual models of professional development (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

As the semi-formal professional development activities, engaging in informal dialogues with their colleagues talking about how to improve their teaching is perceived giving more impact to the future teachers' development than reading professional literature such as journals, evidence-based papers, thesis papers, and etc. By discussing in informal way, it gives teachers opportunities to learn from each other. It can help new teachers learn to creatively and effectively meet the day-to-day challenges of teaching.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Regarding the pre-service teachers' perception related to the needed topics, there are some points that can be drawn. Classroom management and knowledge and understanding of instructional practices (knowledge mediation) in their subject field are the greatest area of development need followed by knowledge and understanding of their main subject and also ICT skills. Moreover, content and performance standards in their subject and students assessment practices are perceived to be vital for their teaching development; consequently,

teachers need to adapt to the new approach in every aspect both content and performance standards and the practice of assessment.

On the concern of pre-service teachers' perception related to most needed learning activities of TPD, courses or workshops is recognized as the most beneficial learning activities to improve teachers' competences. As the semi-formal professional development activities, engaging in informal dialogues with their colleagues talking about how to improve their teaching is perceived giving more impact to the future teachers' development than reading professional literature such as journals, evidence-based papers, thesis papers, and etc. It can help new teachers learn to creatively and effectively meet the day-to-day challenges of teaching.

Suggestion

The results of this study are expected to provide better understanding of how pre-service teachers as the future teachers perceive the importance of teacher professional development and the basic thought for the implication for teacher preparation program in the future. Furthermore, the targeted implementation of the findings will give insights on the most needed professional development topics and learning activities of TPD activities preferred by the pre-service teachers which can be considered by the related institution when conducting teacher preparation program.

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