The Impacts of Professional Learning Activities on Teachers' Professional Development

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Abstract---This study is conducted to find out whether professional learning activities influence teachers' professionalism on their professional development. The data was collected through questionnaire distributed to 50 English teachers in Parepare, South Sulawesi. The questionnaire was adapted from TALIS (2010) which covers items requiring the participants' professional activities both formal and informal. The result shows that there is a large impact of six professional learning activities (courses, conferences, network participation, research, mentoring, and reading journal), a moderate impact of one professional learning activity, and a small impact of one professional activity. It also depicts the high level of need of four learning activities, namely content and performance in subject field, knowledge and understanding of subject field, knowledge and understanding of instructional practice, ICT skills. There are two learning skills with a moderate level of need (student assessment practice and teaching in multicultural setting) and five learning activities with a low level of need (classroom management, teaching students with special learning needs, students' discipline and behavior problems, school management an administration and student counseling.

Keywords: English teacher, TPD, professional learning activities, TALIS

I. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, teacher professional development (TPD) has been practiced to develop teachers' quality. However, this TPD does not give influences in developing teachers' professionalism as it can be seen from human development index (HDI). Based on the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) report in 2017, the Indonesian HDI is in the 116th rank among 189 countries. This means that Indonesia is still left behind, whereas as professionals, teachers play an important role in the teaching and learning process especially in improving students' learning outcomes and managing other factors contributing to their success (Boyd, 2006; Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2000; Sanders & Horn, 1994; Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Focusing on teachers' quality, most countries require the candidates to have good academic qualification. In Indonesia, all teachers are compulsory to have bachelor or D-IV degree. Most countries attract the applicants who have strong performance in teaching and make sure the profile of good teacher (World Bank, 2010b; UNESCO, 2014).

Teaching posited as prestigious profession in some rich countries such as Singapore that only chose the top third of high school graduate and Finland recruited 10 percent among the competitors to enter teacher education programs (OECD, 2011b). Meanwhile, the poor countries employ candidates with low academic qualification.

Another effort to develop teachers' quality, Susilo Bambang Yudhonoyo, the president of the Republic of Indonesia in 2012 expressed his concern on Teachers' Day that although most teachers' have additional income for certification and other incentives from local and central government, hold the status as professional teachers', and gain more training. Nevertheless, teachers' still show unstable commitment and enthusiasm towards their job (Toh, et. al., 2016; Watt & Richardson, 2018). Furthermore, the member of the local parliament in South Sulawesi highlighted that the quality of certified teachers' did not meet the expectations. The parliamentary regretted that many teachers' were less discipline to teach and even declined in professional quality that affected the learning process of the students' (BKM, 2014).

In getting effective professional development, with teachers as the front line executors at school and policymakers as regulators at the education department should examine the activities that are suitable and effective for teachers to support the professional development of teachers. In addition, Nielsen (1996) concluded in his study that the government of Indonesia had attempted to enhance the quality of education by strengthening training for all teachers, but the result showed low level of commitment and investment in teachers' professional development that did not produce improved performance. Besides, there is a strong indication that the failure had been caused by the weakness of evaluation as Byork (2015) observed that evaluation mainly focused on ceremonial and managerial issues, but not on teachers' performance. This study was carried out to derive the benefit or influence of professional learning activities both formal and informal in order to develop their professionalism.

Professional Learning Activities

Studies on teachers' professional development have started in 1993. Little (1993) argued that model of TPD is no longer adequate to meet, and is incompatible with, the complex demands of current reform and the equally complex demands of teaching. This newer image of TPD is believed to bring about more powerful impacts on teacher learning and change as well as student learning and outcomes. The result of this paradigm shift, in general, is that traditional forms (formal) of TPD learning activities (for example, workshops or in-service days) are considered less effective than reform types (informal) of professional development such as action research, seminar, publishing paper or study groups.

Another opinion on the effectiveness of formal learning activities is given by Hawly and Valli (1999) who stated that the old paradigm, in-service workshops emphasize private individual activity; are brief, often one-shot sessions; offer unrelated topics; rely on an external 'expert' presenter; expect passive teacher-listeners; emphasize skill development; are rhetorical; and expect quick visible results. They assured that this perspective of learning activities in traditional models of TPD take the form of discrete activities such as workshops, conferences, college/university courses, or in-service days designed for transmitting specific ideas to teachers. These types of learning activities are widely reported to have little impact on teachers or the impacts are superficial and short-lived.

In fact, in the same year, Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) tried to complete the idea of formal learning activities by adding some other activities which they failed to name it as informal learning activities. They discussed the essential differences between the different perspectives of TPD do not reside in the forms used to facilitate learning but in the assumptions made when these forms are used conceptual and empirical research has shown that teachers learn from a vast range of activities that may increase their knowledge and skills as well as develop their personal, social, and emotional characters as teachers.

Then, another researcher also discussed effective formal learning activities (Bolam, 2000). He offered that continuous professional development embraced those the education, training and job-embedded, support activities, engaged in by the teacher, following their initial certification and head-teachers. Such professional learning activities are aimed primarily at adding to their professional knowledge, improving their professional skills and helping them to clarify their professional value so that they educate their student more effectively.

In the same year, Birman et al. (2000) supported that forms or types of teacher professional learning activities in TPD do not matter because both the formal and informal types of learning activities can be effective as long as they have characteristics of effective TPD. Besides, most of the previous studies related to this research formulated the types of professional learning activities that can be effectively and efficiently deliver the expected knowledge and skill for teachers. Moreover, TPD activities are designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might improve the learning of students also can enhance the teacher quality.

Some studies on the TPD activities has shown that "exchanging the traditional workshop format for other activities does not guarantee that the desired learning takes place" (Kelchtermans 2004). The learning activities can be effective and may guarantee the desired learning if the formal learning activities are combined with the informal ones. Desimone's (2009) states that description of the myriad of learning activities for teacher learning makes obvious the inadequacy of designating learning activities in two opposing poles–formal, planned/structured, mandated learning activities on one hand, and informal, incidental, self-initiated or voluntary on the other. What is needed is not a complete rejection of traditional workshops and a wholesale move towards reflective study groups, but a balance or an optimal mix.

The previous studies done by some researchers (Bolam, 2003; Burke, 2000; Hawly & Vally, 1999; Craft 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hill, 2009; Little, J. W, 1993) focused on the formal learning activities. While, other researchers (Birma. et. al. 2000; Desimone, 2009; Kelchtermans, 2004; and Villegas-Reimers, E, 2003) investigated the informal learning activities. as this study conducted learns the impacts of professional learning activities on both formal and informal ones, it fills the gaps as it combines all the elements.

II. METHODOLOGY

To find out how teachers' professional learning activities influence their professionalism, this study collected data through a questionnaire to the 50 English language teachers in Parepare, South Sulawesi. The questionnaire was used to explore the teachers' perspectives and experiences on TPD. The questionnaire is adapted from TALIS (2010). Items in TALIS questionnaires comprehensively capture data about types and features of learning activities that the participants have participated in. The teachers' questionnaire for the current study covers items requiring the participants' professional development activities (both formal and informal) that the participants have participated, for instance that activities can provide contributions in many ways both formal and informal activities. It can be made available through external expertise in the form of activities (course/workshops, education conferences or seminars, qualification programme,

observation visits to other school, participation in a network of teachers, individual or collaborative research, mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching) or (reading professional literature and engaging in informal dialogue with peers).

Participants

In this study, the participants were all the English language teachers (50 teachers) who were teaching in secondary public schools in Parepare, South-Sulawesi. However, the researcher chose those who fulfil the criteria mentioned in TALIS such as their age should range from 18 to 55 years, and they have 1 to 30 years of teaching experiences.
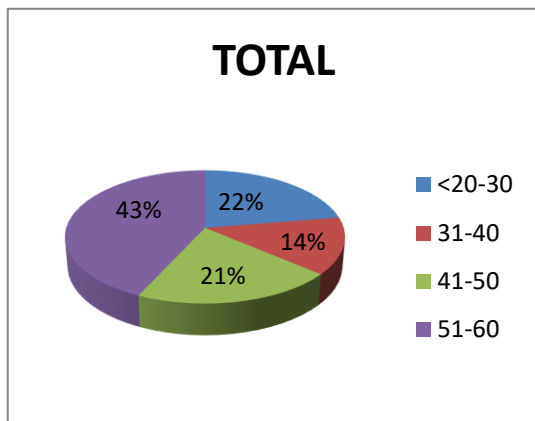

Figure1. Teachers' Age

As shown in figure 1, there is a significant different participation between teachers' age upper 50 years old and teachers who were less than 30 years of age. For instance, there was a 43% teacher who was 50 or above years; followed by the teachers age 20-30 with (22%) and only (21%) who had participated the TPD who were in 41-50 years old. Meanwhile, the lowest chosen was 31-40 years old with 14 % who took part on TPD. This may indicate that the majority of teachers who participated in this study was 50 or above years and they have taken up the TPD as an essential part of teaching.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents data pertaining how the types of professional learning activities engaged can be informative and explaining differences in teachers' average number of activities of professional development participation. TALIS asked teachers about various activities ranging from more organized/formal to more informal professional learning activities.

Types of Professional Learning Activities

The type of professional learning activities engaged in can be informative and it may go some ways toward explaining differences in teachers' activities. TALIS asked teachers about various activities ranging for more organized/formal learning activities to more informal learning activities. In this study there are some activities

which are defined as formal learning activities that teachers had participated in during the 18 months prior to the survey. They are courses/workshop; education conferences or seminars; qualification programme; observation visits to other schools; participation in a network of teachers, individual or collaborative research; mentoring and or/peer observation and coaching. Besides formal, there were informal learning activities that the teachers may have participated in: reading professional literature; and engaging in informal dialogue with peer.

The following table describes the data of teachers' participations regarding the professional learning activities that teachers had participated. The data are taken from the questionnaires of 50 English language teachers on secondary public schools in Prepare, South-Sulawesi. It includes the ninth activities of professional learning both formal and informal learning activities.

Table1. Teachers' Participations on Professional Learning Activities

No	Participations	Professional learning activities
1	45 (14%)	Informal dialogue to improve teaching
2	44 (13%)	Courses and workshop/training
3	39 (12%)	Reading professional literature
4	27 (8%)	Education conference and seminars
5	49 (15%)	Professional development network
6	28 (9%)	Individual and collaborative research
7	28 (9%)	Mentoring and peer observation
8	36 (11%)	Observation visit to other school
9	28 (9%)	Qualification program

Table 1 shows that it has nine instances extracted from the whole data of professional learning activities both formal and informal. The fourth highest percentage mentioned the form of TPD participation are Professional development network, informal dialogue to improve teaching, course and workshop, reading the professional literature with 15%, 14%, 13%, 12% respectively. There were three types of activities (individual and collaborative research, mentoring and peer observation, qualification program) with similar percentages 29% utilized by the teachers who had participated in this study. There were only 8% of the participants who taught that the education conference and seminars can improve their professionalism. The education conference and seminars was relatively the lowest mentioned by participants of TPD participation. When overall

levels of teachers' participation in formal and informal TPD are contrasted, the questionnaire data shows that teachers have engaged more in informal activities than formal ones. It can be accomplished that most of teachers who have participated TPD activities thought that the informal learning activities had the largest impact on their professionalism.

In this study the teachers were asked to indicate the areas of the activities of their work where they had the largest impact on their professionalism. Besides, the activities which were chosen based on the age range of the participant. The aim on this part was to find out the most common activities of TPD mentioned by the participant where those activities had the largest impact on their professionalism through their age.

Table 2. The activities chosen based on the age range

	Activities	Age			
		20-30	31-40	41-50	51>
A	Infor mal dialogue to improve teaching	8 (18.2%)	7 (16%)	11 (25%)	18 (41%)
B	Courses and workshop/training	8 (19%)	9 (21.4%)	9 (21.4%)	16 (38.1%)
C	Reading professional literature	8 (20%)	5 (12.5%)	11 (27.5%)	16 (40%)
D	Education conference and seminars	8 (31%)	5 (19.2%)	4 (10%)	9 (22.5%)
E	Professional development network	10 (22%)	8 (17.4%)	9 (20%)	19 (41.3%)
D	Individual and collaborative research	8 (25%)	5 (16%)	3 (9.4%)	16 (50%)
E	Mentoring and peer observation	8 (23%)	7 (20%)	5 (14,3%)	15 (43%)
F	Observation visit to other school	9 (22%)	7 (17,1%)	6 (15%)	19 (46,3%)
G	Qualification program	10 (32.3%)	6 (19.4 %)	3 (9.7%)	12 (39%)

Based on the tables 2, it looks there were relations among the nine types of TPD activities and the participant chosen based on the age range. For instance:

a. Informal dialogue to improve teaching: This kind of activities was preferred by those who are in the range of 51 or above year old teachers have the highest participation with (41%), other participation who belong to group of 41 to 50 years old of age (25%) obtain this activity, around (16%) of teachers participation on this activity was chose by teachers who are in the range of 31-40 year old. But only (8%) who are classified in the range of 20 to 30 year old takes informal dialogue to improve teaching.

b. Courses and workshop/training: Participation in this activity was most common by those who are in the range of 51 or above year old (38.1%), teacher aged 41- 50 and teacher who are in the range of 31-40 year old have same percentage (21.4%) engage courses and workshop where those activities had impact on their professionalism and only (8%) who belong to group of 20-30 years old.

c. Reading professional literature: This type of activity was chose by those who are in the range of 51 or above year old teachers have the highest participation with (40%), other participation who belong to group of 41 to 50 years old of age (27.5%) obtain this activity, around (20%) of teachers participation on this activity was chose by teachers who are in the range of 20-30 year old. But only (12,5%) who is classified in the range of 31 to 40 year old group undertaking reading professional literature.

d. Education conference and seminars: Teachers 51 or above have the highest participation select this category with (22,5%) consider education conference and seminar had high impact on their professionalism, compared to the other categories in each age range, teachers who are in the range of 41- 50 year old (10%), other participation who belong to group 31-40 years old (19,2%) and (31%) participation in this activity was took part by the teachers who are classified in the range of 20 to 30.

e. Professional development network: Participation in development networks was most common in teachers who are in the range of 20-30 (22%) and particularly in 51 or above year old (41,3%) and (20%) teachers who are in the range of 41- 50 year old, and least common in teachers who belong to group 31-40 years old (17.4%).

f. Individual and collaborative research: More than half of teachers engaged in this activity by those who are in the range of 51 or above year old teachers (51%), and who are classified in the range of 20 to 30 year old (22%), and this activity was less a feature of teachers professional

development in teacher range age 41-50 (20%) and only (17.4%) who belong to group 31-40 years old consider individual and collaborative research impact their professionalism.

g. Mentoring and peer observation: This form of activities was preferred by those who are in the range of 51 or above year old teachers have the highest participation with (43%), other participation who belong to group of 41 to 50 years old of age (14.3%) obtain this activity, around (20%) of teachers participation on this activity was chose by teachers who are in the range of 31-40 year old. And around (23%) mention by the teachers who are classified in the range of 20 to 30 year old takes mentoring and peer observation impact their professionalism.

h. Observation visit to other school: Almost half of teacher participated in this activity by those who are in the range of 51 or above year old teachers (46%), other (22%) mention by the teachers who are classified in the range of 20 to 30 year old, and (17.1%) took part in such visit and observed to other school by teachers who are in the range of 31-40 year old, but only 15 % or less in participation who belong to group of 41 to 50 years old of age.

i. Qualification program: Participation in this programme was most common in teachers who are in the range of 20-30 (32.3%) and predominantly in 51 or above year old (39%) and (19.4%) teachers who are in the range of 31-40 year old, and least common in teachers who belong to group 41-50 years old (9.7%).

Investigating the overall levels of participation in these activities, this proof that there is a significant differentiation activity chosen based on the age range on teacher professional learning activities, where teachers' responses are considered to be reflection of the generally experienced had the largest impact on their professionalism. For the nine types of professional learning activities both in formal and informal are (Informal dialogue to improve teaching, Courses and workshop/training, Reading professional literature, Education conference and seminars, Professional development network, Individual and collaborative research, Mentoring and peer observation, Observation visit to other school, Qualification program). All of these activities had high impact to the teachers those who are in the range of 51 or above year old and teachers who are classified in the range of 20 to 30 year old teachers it can be seen based on the percentages rate and their participation. Meanwhile, the responses of the teacher's participation who belong to group of 41 to 50 and teachers who are in the range of 31-40 year old do not obtain high impact of teacher professional learning activities on their professionalism.

The findings contribute to the development of the teachers' professionalism as it uncovers the ways

the teachers seek to improve themselves in instructional practices. Both formal and formal activities discussed above should be applied by teachers.

IV. CONCLUSION

The findings show that the four most preferred activities chosen by the participants are Professional development network, informal dialogue to improve teaching, course and workshop, reading the professional literature. AAllse activities include in informal activities. Meanwhile the informal activities were chosen by less than twenty percent. This shows that the high school English teachers under the study enjoy informal activities. Through the informal activities that they have conducted it seems that they want to improve the professionalism although they may do it without realizing that what they have done informally are activities to grow their professionalism. Besides, the teachers' participations regarding the professional learning activities that teachers had participated, where those activities had the largest impact on their professionalism, this study also find out the largest impact of TPD on their professionalism through their age.

The findings contribute to the development of the teachers' professionalism as it uncovers the ways the teachers seek to improve themselves in instructional practices. Both formal and formal activities discussed above should be applied by teachers.

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