

EFL teachers' voice diversity on TPD (Teacher Professional Development) learning activities

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Abstract: Teacher Professional development (TPD) has been a substantial issue in contemporary educational research and policy. The implication of TPD learning activities has been differing one to another. Diversity respondent was covering exemplary teachers from elementary, junior and senior high schools. This study was done mainly to get information about EFL teachers' voice about professional development learning activities in the area where they are actively teaching. The collected data from the questionnaire and interviews were analyzed and interpreted from the questionnaire and reports from teacher perception or opinion. The findings reveal that the subjects have diversity views about professional development learning activities. In term of activity, there are two activities got the highest percentage for their professional development; 1) trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice for EFL teachers (53,13 %). Usually, it applied from the result of joining workshop or training due to English topics and 2) applying a variety of learning activities (43.75%), in which they are consciously creating conditions that support the development of their students of teaching as research informed practitioners through the way they approach their teaching practices.

Keywords: professional development learning activity; EFL teachers

Introduction

Professional development is a process of learning and growth in a person's professional life. In an educational setting, the professional development of teachers refers to the processes through which teachers enhance their knowledge, skills, and behaviors in a way that contributes to the academic success of all students (Ucar & Ipek, 2006). Desimone (2011) defined professional development as an array of activities designed to improve the professional knowledge and skills of teachers to improve student achievement.

In practice, professional development for educators encompasses a comprehensive range of topics and formats. Professional development may be funded by the district, school, or state budgets and programs, or they may be supported by a foundation grant or other private funding source. They may range from a one-day conference to a two-week workshop to a multiyear advanced-degree program. Alternatively, they may be delivered in person or online, during the school day or outside of regular school hours, and through one-on-one interactions or in group situations. Moreover, they may be led and facilitated by

educators within a school or provided by outside consultants or organizations hired by a school or district. The thing to remember is the effective PD; According to Mizell(2010), professional development was most effective when it took place during a teacher's daily work schedule and involved teachers from the same school, department, or grade level (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Therefore, study about the importance of professional development learning activities still become something needed to evaluate the program that gives more meaning to EFL teachers. The study proposed a question about TPD learning activities do EFL teachers consider as crucial for their personal, professional development?

Literature review

Professional development has been shown to be capable agent in changing teacher learning and teacher practice (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Research (Croft, Cogshall, Dolan, Powers, & Killion, 2010; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Desimone et al., 2002; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Torff & Byrnes, 2011) described what should be done in order to provide quality professional development. Desimone (2009), an active professional development initiative should include several

qualities: it should be both individual and school-based, incorporate coaching, and embed teaching practices into the daily work of teachers. Next, when professional development focuses on particular instructional practice, in addition to fostering teacher collaboration and involving active learning opportunities and coherence, teacher adoption and use of that practice are highly likely (Desimone et al., 2002). Some term is used referring to professional development activity such as TPD learning activities, TDA (teacher development activities) and others. Here, the writer used the term TPD (Teacher Professional Development) learning activity. Therefore, TPD providers, such as schools or teachers themselves can choose which of these forms or types which are suitable and appropriate for their needs and circumstances (Burke, 2000).

Next, the writer adopts the forms that are suitable and commonly used. The essential differences between the different perspectives of TPD do not reside in the form used to facilitate learning but in the assumptions made when these forms are used (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Forms of TPD learning activities in the literature seem never-ending. Craft (2000), for example, listed a wide range of TPD learning activities which are linked to the contemporary views of TPD, such as : action research, self-directed study, using distance-learning materials, on-the-job coaching, mentoring or tutoring, school-based and off-site courses, job shadow in and rotation, peer networks, membership of a working party or task group, learning partnerships, school cluster projects, personal reflection, experiential 'assignments', collaborative learning and information technology-mediated learning (e.g. Email discussion groups, or self-study using multimedia resources). Next, Burke (2000) listed the many forms or types of TPD learning activities as shown in Table 1. According to Burke, these forms of TPD of learning activities can be customized to meet individual teachers' or group of teachers' needs and concerns and emphasizes the need for teachers to choose their forms of TPD for better results— improved teaching practices and student learning. Furthermore, Burke (2000) categorizes TPD learning activities into four categories. 1) inactive, 2) investigative, 3) formal programs and 4) reflective practices in which each activity has its role, and each one can benefit its users, teachers, schools or systems. 1)

Inactive Activities covers In-service days; After-School Workshops; Conferences; School Visits; Department/Grade Level Meetings. 2) Investigative Strategies involves Study groups; Book Groups; Individual Action Research; Educational Journals and Books; Video of Best Practices; Internet searches and Chat Rooms. 3) Formal programs Distance refers to Learning Courses; Degree Program; Certification Renewal; Summer Institutes; National Board for Professionals Teaching Standards; and Mentoring. 4) Reflective practices are Log entries; Reflective Journals; Videotaped lessons; Self-evaluation; Peer coaching and Professional Portfolios.

However, the forms or types of TPD learning activities are varied and continue to evolve. TPD providers, schools or teachers themselves can choose which of these forms or types are suitable and appropriate for their needs and circumstances. Therefore, the study adopts professional development learning activities which are commonly applied to the activities below:

1. Trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice
2. Sharing experiences and problems with colleagues
3. Reflection on own teaching
4. In service days and training
5. Following professional development programs
6. Working on developing techniques and activities with colleagues
7. Following research literature on own field
8. Asking for professional help from colleagues
9. Gathering information about one's teaching performance
10. Teacher-initiated classroom investigation
11. Training other teachers
12. Peer observation
13. Applying a variety of learning activities
14. Use of lesson study as a form of professional learning
15. Observation of classroom events by heads and administrators

Those 15 items were taken as the questionnaire item during the research.

Method

One of the research designs that fall into the realm of qualitative research is a case study. Multiple methods of data collection were

employed in this study. Methods of data collection employed in this study included a survey by questionnaire and perceived report from teachers' perception or opinion (for the chosen one).

The participant was 32 EFL teachers with different teaching status, level and period. 43,7 % or 14 EFL teachers were fixed term of the contract for a period, but there was a big number of EFL permanent teachers being a participant in the study which was approximately 56,3 % or 18 people. The highest participant was from EFL junior high school teachers (18 people). A part of the participant has more than three years of teaching period; it means that they have sufficient opportunity to get and follow the professional development learning activity provided by parties or individual. So that, they could give more information for the study

Result and Discussion ¹

The result shows that **trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice** for EFL teachers seem to be the highest percentage for their professional development learning activity. Usually, it applied the result of joining a workshop or training due to English topics. There were 53,13 % or (17) teachers do it. Following workshop give them a new paradigm for EFL teaching-learning in any level of education. Therefore **EFL teachers think that it is very important of trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice** after joining the activities or program than other activities as one of the ways to keep their professional development learning activity. However, teachers need moral and technical support to put TPD ideas into practice. The need for this moral support, for example, was highlighted by Susi (not real name) when she pointed out her colleagues' responses to her experimenting or applying TPD ideas in her class. She felt that her colleague's unsupportive responses toward her experimenting or applying an idea gained from TPD discouraged her learning. Therefore, having a group or professional community will enhance for applying the activities especially in its institution or school out of another school.

Peer observation becomes something important for EFL teachers. Approximately 75% or 24 EFL teachers state the same opinion that doing peer observation help them to improve and

evaluate their teaching process in EFL class. It saw as a supportive and developmental process for improving the teaching quality when the primary focus is on helping, sharing and providing mutual support (Bell, 2005), but sometimes the activity remains teachers' confidence in the field. Interview of peer observation ¹⁰ the theory is on the observer selecting a practice performed by a colleague that they could try, through vicariously experiencing the success of that practice (mainly by seeing their actions of student ²). As Schunk and Zimmerman (2007) also argue, "observing competent models perform actions that result in success conveys information to observers about the sequence of actions to use to be successful." The observer learns about how to perform the practice by *seeing it*, rather than being told about it, and comes to believe (strengthening their self-efficacy) that they can also teach in this way, and so is motivated to attempt the practice.

62,50% or (20) EFL teachers state that sharing experiences and problems with colleagues and reflection on their teaching still become necessary for their professional development learning activities. TPD activity that is initiated by teachers can also turn into a form of authoritarian TPD. MGMP, for example, which was initially intended as a collegial network forum for teachers, becomes a mechanism of control and command for communicating what teachers need to do. Knowledge sharing is a common practice that supports the professional development at School. This finding supports previous studies that identify the sharing of knowledge among educators as one of the key conditions for successful teacher learning (Beatrice Avalos, 2011; Decretal., 2008; Garet et al., 2001). However, informal learning in the form of collegial and professional dialogue or discussion, reading teaching-related references or browsing and reviewing educational articles over the internet are encouraged and facilitated by the school and are widely practiced by EFL teachers they said.

In service days and training, following professional development programs and teacher initiated classroom investigation for EFL teachers in this study have the same portions of percentage exactly 56,25% or (18), it means these activities still considered and become important too for enhancing their professionalism. In service day and training

usually include a heavy component and begin with a 'crash course' on pedagogical knowledge that is completed within a brief period (Berry, 2001) therefore, they were interested in following. Though, it is too often the case that in-service training providers transmit the knowledge and skills they have, regardless of their relevance to the recipients they said.

Unfortunately, following research literature on own field becomes somewhat important for them since the portion was 43,17% or (14). This condition caused by the education policy which is required teachers conducting or having at least once researched their field or research study whereas the activity becomes one of the implications of the teacher as reflective practitioner then. The more they read the research literature, the more comfortable they can research their reflective practice.

On the other hand, only 9,38% or (3) EFL teachers think that working on developing techniques and activities with colleagues and training other teachers was little important for their professional development learning activities. Each school has its distinct features that affect teacher learning so that EFL teachers can apply any activities as long as its fit for and needed. The image of teachers as knowledge receivers and TPD providers/facilitators as authorities of knowledge does not only apply to externally developed/provided TPD activities. This also happens in internally initiated TPD activities or school/teacher based TPD activities. One of these activities involved school supervisors as training facilitators. However, what often happens is that the school supervisors play the role of imposers rather than facilitators or trainers. In such TPD, teachers are receivers and implementers of knowledge and skills delivered by TPD providers/facilitators. This practice may be common among teachers because teachers have been conditioned to perform such practices rather than being a trainer.

Gathering information about one's teaching performance also become important in professional development learning activities for EFL teacher. (59,38%) Alternatively, 19 of 32 participants think of the importance of gathering information especially about own teaching performance will give them another experience

indirectly. Tsui (2003) indicates that experience is a key component of teacher development. In line with Schoonmaker (2002) statement that experience is viewed as the sum of an individual's history, including actual events, fictionalized events, and interpretations placed on them when they happened and as they are remembered; 2) time matter gives more opportunity for EFL teachers to have interaction with other EFL teachers from different area and also change to share ideas. Alvarez and Sanchez (2005) study found that the study group helped teachers to become aware of their teaching practices and of the need to update themselves continuously. Additionally, the participants had the chance to share pedagogical ideas and improve their language proficiency. Activities in which the teachers played the role of learners were meaningful for them because they became aware of teaching issues that affect learners.

Applying a variety of learning activities done by 43,75 % (14) EFL teachers. The result was supported the previous item (trying out new ideas or suggestions in practice). Furthermore, to avoid monotonous, doing various activities is a must to help a student being interest on material and catch up the easiest comprehension. Updating activities in particular, during their education, teachers develop a personal, practical knowledge base (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001), or, in other words, their practitioner knowledge (Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler, 2002) that enables them to integrate experiential knowledge, formal knowledge, and beliefs, across subject matter, general pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge fields.

Last, none of the participants reject the importance of professional development learning activities for all item. All agree that EFL teachers need to keep their professional development learning activities to face a changing of students' need and changing. There was variation percentage of professional development learning activities done by EFL teacher. There were factors involve their PD learning activity such as individual efforts and aspiring desire from their internal world which enable them to exploit favorable context and seek chances from unfavorable factors to navigate their professional development. Thus, they may not rely on professional development

provided by parties only. Individual context is regarded as potential external stimuli which exert an effect on professional development learning activities.

Conclusion

Professional development learning activities for EFL teachers considered to be very important or somewhat important caused by many factors such as group focus or strong professional communities which can foster teacher learning each other. This study also shows that the presence of TPD learning activities influences individual teachers and conditions within schools to ensure success individually and institution. TPD will probably remain less than optimal and may have a little impact even for those participating in the TPD opportunities or programs in any condition except experiences. Moreover, since individual efforts and aspiring desire from their internal world enable them to exploit favorable context and seek chances from unfavorable factors to navigate their professional development activities.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to acknowledge the support of LPDP fund.

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