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Submission date: 02-May-2023 07:46PM (UTC-0500)

Submission ID: 2082561623

File name: C30. Sudirman MA.pdf (2.41M)

Word count: 5127

Character count: 29354

Assessing the Contribution of In-service Teacher Professional Training to Teachers' Readiness to Implement the 2013 Curriculum

(An analysis of the developmental progress of English teachers teaching skills in Sumbawa Regency)

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Abstract—To complement with the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, the Government of Indonesia has provided In-service Teacher Professional Training Program (TPETP a.k.a. PLPG) for English teachers in order that they can comply with the demands of the new curriculum. The current research attempts to reveal whether TPETP prepared for the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum has brought about effects on the development of teachers' teaching skills in Sumbawa Regency. This study used a multiple case study approach with a qualitative descriptive method. This multiple case study is used to explain the contributions of the TPETP program on the ability of certified English teachers to implement the 2013 English Curriculum in Sumbawa District. The population of this study was all English teachers who had been identified throughout Sumbawa District. To obtain the data, a purposive sampling technique was used. Data analysis included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. This analysis was done iteratively through triangulation of data. Results of the study show that on the whole TPETP had positive contribution to the developmental progress of teachers' teaching skills. Despite evidence of improved teaching practices, a number of teachers experienced hurdles. Some of them showed a tendency to return to their old teaching practices. The study concludes that the current method of TPETP delivery needs to be re-evaluated.

Keywords—in-service teacher professional training; 2013 curriculum; teaching skills

I. INTRODUCTION

The need for professional development to improve the quality of teacher competences has incessantly become common debates among language educators in Indonesia. The implementation of professional development to improve teachers' competence and performance underwent changes from time to time. Initially it was embedded in the national scheme of Teacher Certification Program in 2003. Subsequently, this certification program was transformed into Teacher Professional Education and Training Program (TPETP) to address the change of School-based Curriculum

(SBC) in 2006 and the coming of the new curriculum of 2013. These varied teachers' professional development programs indicate that the Government of Indonesia has seriously attempted to assist teachers nationwide to develop their teaching and professional competences to meet the national standards of educational services. Despite such ideal expectations, so far few studies reveal the contribution TPETP to teachers' teaching skills and change of practice. Thus, problems, challenges and hindrances to the effectiveness of TPETP undertaking are not well recognized.

Generally, TPETP has been a mandatory training program for all teachers of English in Indonesian junior and senior high schools for the last decade. The provision of the present TPETP aimed to help teachers implement a new English language curriculum, known as 2013 Curriculum, through the introduction of new theories and approaches in language teaching. Generally, the content of TPETP was developed by the Department of Education and Culture and centrally determined by the English language experts hired by the Government. The TPETP activities were run in collaboration with universities all over Indonesia. The practice of strongly centralized TPETP spread throughout the country.

Regardless its virtues, TPETP poses new challenges to teachers regarding the implementation of the new teaching approaches that go hand in hand with the new curriculum. Soepriyanti & Waluyo found that many of English teachers in junior high schools in Mataram still experienced difficulties to apply the new teaching approaches advocated by TPETP because they considered that the approaches were not incongruent with their teaching habits [1]. After returning from TPETP, these teachers were apparently not ready to apply the new teaching knowledge and skills and tended to return to their old teaching practices. A number of studies reported by Murdadi & Sulastri [2], Kusumawardhani [3] and Mulyani, Suwitri, Warella and Sukarno [4] supported the study. Commonly factors affecting teachers' readiness to implement the new teaching knowledge and skills from TPETP were

grouped into three major categories: (1) teachers' courage and motivation, (2) the continuity of teachers' learning activities post-TPETP, and (3) supports from the school management.

Wahyudi & Fisher [5] and Aritonang [6] identify school culture often determine the level of teachers' courage and motivation in applying new knowledge and skills upon their returns from professional development. In a number of instances, teachers who returned from professional development programs often have low courage and motivation to implement what they learn from the program because their efforts to contribute to school performance is neither evaluated nor appreciated by their peers or school management. This uncondusive school climate is very likely to restrain teachers from implementing what they learned from the professional development. This surely demotivates and discourages them to apply the new skills in their daily teaching practices. Consequently, they tend to return to the teaching styles that are centered on themselves (*teacher-focused*) not on student learning needs (*student-focused*). Practices like this are found across research studies as cited above.

In this relation, Zhu et al. found that the principal's supports had a substantial influence to teachers' change of teaching practices [7]. These supports affect not only teachers' work attitudes but also their commitment to create high school performance, which eventually improve student achievement. In the same vein, a number of researchers — such as MnCube, [8], Ghamrawi [9], and Spicer [10] — concur that the success of teachers' professional practice is greatly influenced by the quality of supports provided by the school leaders. Karagiorgi & Symeou [11], Villiers [12], Song [13] and Tanang & Abu [14] also reported similarly. They contended that school supports benefitted teachers to sustain the growth of their confidence in initiating a change of practice in their professional endeavor. Such supports provide a clear guidance for both individual teachers and school principals to arrive at mutual commitment to the change.

Additionally, Lieberman & Pointer-Mace [15] and Phillips [16] reported that not all professional development was successful in changing teachers' professional practices. In many instances, they found that professional development program did not greatly affect teacher's change of teaching practice in the classroom. Oftentimes teachers abandoned what they learned from the professional development when the content of the training was not congruent with their immediate teaching needs. These research findings suggest that to create teacher change of teaching practice, the professional development like TPETP should be directed toward the provision of teachers' immediate needs and on-going supports for their professional practices.

The current research study explores whether the present TPETP contributed to teachers' development of teaching practices. For the purpose, the researchers employed a modified evaluation framework of teacher professional development⁷ proposed by Guskey, which originally comprises of [17]: (1) Participants' reactions to PD, (2) participants' Learning Outcomes, (3) Organizational Support and change, and (4) Participants' use of new knowledge, and (5) Students' Learning Outcomes. As the current study was focused only on

the development of teachers' language teaching skills after taking part in TPETP, the fifth component of Guskey's evaluation framework above was not included in the investigation. In addition, the study also wanted to seek an understanding of teachers' difficulties in carrying out the 2013 Curriculum. Thus, the output of this research¹ is expected to reveal whether TPETP significantly contributed to the development of teachers' teaching skills in the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum.

Overall the current study aimed to (1) describe the contribution of the TPETP to teachers' improved teaching skills in implementing the 2013 English Curriculum in junior and senior⁹ high schools in Sumbawa District; (2) assess obstacles, problems and challenges faced by the English teachers in implementing the teaching skills gained from TPETP and (3) gather lessons learned related to development of teachers' teaching knowledge and skills after taking part in TPETP.

II. METHOD

The current study employed a multiple case study using a qualitative descriptive method. This multiple-case study was chosen to see whether there were links between the cases studied in the study area. Through this multi-case study, the researchers wanted to explain the general characteristics of the phenomena being observed [18]. In general, this research method was used to reveal the impact of the TPETP program on the ability of certified English teachers to implement the 2013 English Language Curriculum in Sumbawa District.

The population of this study was all certified English teachers who taught English throughout the Sumbawa Regency. For the research sampling, the researchers used a Purposive Sampling Technique. The justification for this is that⁸ cause the purposive sampling technique is useful for identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are knowledgeable and/or² have experiences about the phenomenon being studied [19]. Out of the total population, 10 certified teachers from 5 junior schools and 10 certified teachers from 5 senior high schools were² taken purposively as samples of the study. Subsequently, the researchers employed semi-structured interviews to get the data that were relevant to problems being investigated [19]. The selection of this semi-structured interview format allowed the researchers to use open-ended questions that were more flexible than that of the structured interview. By employing a semi-structured interview format, the researchers were able to obtain reliable qualitative data. More importantly, the researchers could change or adjust questions to the level of understanding of the participants.

To note, the study was conducted through a number of stages. Initially, the researchers visited the selected schools to meet the prospective participants and set the agreed place and time for interviews. Then, interviews were conducted for 30 up to 40 minutes for each participant. These interviews were intended to (1) reveal the contributions of TPETP on teachers' teaching ability in applying the 2013 Curriculum in schools, (2) map the obstacles and challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Curriculum. To keep the confidentiality of participants' identities, the researchers used a data coding

system to label each of the results of interviews. Further, the researchers conducted classroom visits to observe teacher teaching practices using the 2013 Curriculum. At this stage the researchers collected the observational data manually and kept the important events through anecdotal records. Finally, the researchers collected samples of documents relevant to the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, such as teachers' teaching preparation (lesson plan), teaching and learning media, assessment tools, textbooks, supplementary materials, and the like.

After all stages were completed, the researchers transcribed, summarized, sorted out and categorized the data. Further, the researchers re-read, coded and grouped the data according to the emerging categories or themes. The data were analyzed iteratively and continuously until they were all saturated. Finally, the researchers presented, reduced, concluded and verified the data [20]. During this process, if there was data whose frequency appeared only once and did not belong to any of the existing categories, then it was considered as an individual peculiarity (*idiosyncrasy*). By using the three data sources in the analysis, the researchers scrutinized more deeply the contributions of TPETP to teachers' teaching ability in implementing 2013 curriculum.

III. FINDINGS

1) *The Contribution of the TPETP to Teachers' Development of Teaching Skills in Implementing the 2013 English Curriculum*

Data analysis show that teachers, as participants of the study, reacted positively toward TPETP. They admitted that TPETP had greatly contributed to the development of their teaching skills. Three themes appeared from the data regarding this issue: 1) benefits of taking part in TPETP; 2) developed learning community and 3) Improved individual teaching skills. As regards the theme 1, benefits of taking part in TPETP, a large number of participants stated that the TPETP was positively beneficial for them because they could gain new insights, teaching approaches and techniques of engagement. A number of junior high school teachers stated that they were greatly inspired by the teaching-learning techniques involving students to work in small groups. "The teaching technique I use makes my students very excited to learn English. I am very happy to see their enthusiasm," said one participant. A number of high school teachers also stated similarly about the benefits of TPETP. The statement from the teacher from Sumbawa Besar High School probably represented the views of his colleagues, "By taking part in the TPETP, I feel my knowledge is refreshed after many years of teaching, teaching and learning. The advantage is that I can discuss with other teachers and can exchange experiences with them" In this relation, a senior high school teacher from North Moyo testified, "I admit that what I learned from TPETP were full of great ideas for my classroom. After participating in the TPETP, I feel more prepared to implement the 2013 curriculum"

These findings show some substantial evidence that teachers experienced improved teaching skills due to their participation in TPETP. As a result of improved teaching skills,

they were able to change their old teaching habits into the new ones. Despite such sound findings, some participants admitted that they had difficulties to implement the new teaching skills at schools maximally because most of their colleagues were resistant to accept the change of teaching practice. Most of them returned to the old teaching practices. This occurs because of the absence of assistance and supervision from their principals concerning the implementation of 2013 Curriculum.

Pertaining to theme 2, developed learning community, substantial number of teachers perceived that TPETP had provided new knowledge and insights in teaching English as there was an opportunity for them to learn from other teachers coming from different schools. A participant from a Senior High School of Sumbawa Besar sub-district stated, "Through the TPETP alumni forum we can also learn from the knowledge and teaching and learning skills of other teachers" The same thing was expressed by one of the junior high school teachers from Alas sub-district, "When I had difficulty to write lesson plans using the format suggested by 2013 curriculum, I discussed it with my colleagues in the TPETP alumni association". According to these teachers they obtained samples of lesson plan from the TPETP and later they developed jointly with other teachers through the association of alumni activities.

Participants from the study concurred that they — as members of learning community — had to work together and help one another to maximize the effectiveness of their participation in the learning community. These teachers admitted that TPETP had made them develop a network forum with other colleagues in the Sumbawa region. Participants from junior high schools added that they were happy to work with teachers from other schools as they received good benefits and experiences from such collaboration. One of the participants explained, "Through the alumni forum, we try to share experiences to solve instructional problems that arise" It was evident from the data that participants valued highly the forum of community learning as they were able to share information and teaching-learning resources. The new experience of working with other fellow teachers in the forum had made these teachers develop consensus to meet regularly to learn new ideas, share lesson plans, exchange learning materials and teaching techniques.

B. *Obstacles, Problems and Challenges Faced by the English Teachers in Implementing the Teaching Skills Gained from TPETP*

Three themes appeared from the data concerning the second research question, i.e. (1) teachers' unpreparedness to try-out new experiences (2) problematic application of a new model of assessments (3) teachers' difficulties in changing mindsets. With reference to the theme 1, i.e. teachers' unpreparedness to try-out new experiences, some junior high school teachers interviewed said that what they learned in the TPETP still left a number of problems. They felt that the teaching material they received from TPETP seemed very sophisticated and not in accordance with the conditions of students in Sumbawa. A junior high school teacher from Alas sub-district said "I returned to using old teaching methods because in my opinion it was more effective than I forced myself to use the approach

that I did not fully understand". According to a number of teachers interviewed, upon their return from the TPETP, they did not receive assistance and/or support from the school principals. One teacher commented, "I did not receive substantial supports from her principal. He even did not ask me about the training. I felt discouraged to implement the new approaches in my class"

Similarly, a senior high school teacher from West Alas contended, "My principal knows that the Scientific Learning approach is not suitable for teaching language. He therefore just let me go ahead with my ways of teaching as long as my students can do the exam" Similarly, the same ideas were also expressed by a number of teachers in from the sub-districts of Labuhan Badas and Uter Uwes. In general they concurred that some of the approaches and materials suggested from TPETP seemed too theoretical and could not be directly applied in the classroom. The statement of one senior high school teacher represented the views of their peers, "Some material from the TPETP is still unclear to me; genre-based material is still very difficult to implement in our school. The ability of students in Sumbawa is still far below the students in Mataram..... I do not like to try out the 2013 curriculum in my class because it is more complicated than what I usually do"

All of these quotations indicate that a number of teachers were unprepared to deal with new approaches and teaching methods introduced by the TPETP they attended. These teachers preferred to use their old ways of teaching because of the absence of the principal support and their fear of trying out new experiences. These findings provide evidence that teacher unpreparedness continued to exist in post-TPETP period due to their lack of appreciation and support from the school principals.

Results of classroom observations were congruent with the interview data. Although all of the classrooms visited were equipped with complete lesson plans and the teachers tried to use a variety of teaching and learning activities based on the approaches suggested by K13. Observations in two senior high Schools A and B yielded similar results: the classroom atmospheres were passive and teachers tended to dominate the talk during the class. Observation in the classroom of junior high school A concurred. In this classroom, the teacher used audio-lingual method all the time with lots of drills although his lesson plan was written based on the 2013 Curriculum. It is evident from these findings that some of the teachers were unprepared to implement the teaching skills gained from TPETP.

Different from the above findings, observation in the junior high school B in Uter Uwes show a different dynamic. In the classroom the teacher conducted the teaching learning based on the lesson plan of 2013 curriculum. She employed problem-based learning activities by giving assignments and activities to students in groups. Before the core activities were carried out the teacher provided illustrations as scaffolding. During the observation the teacher maintained her consistency to apply the learning procedure in accordance with the lesson plan, from the beginning to the end of the class. The teacher was knowledgeable in utilizing internet technology as learning

resources for classroom use. In the end, the teacher provided positive feedback to students before the class adjourned.

Concerning theme 2, problematic application a new model of assessments, some participants interviewed stated that the most problematic issue they brought from TPETP was authentic assessment. One junior high school from North Moyo stated, "Many of the assessment procedures presented in TPETP is too theoretical and complicated. Another teacher contended, I wanted to bring the instructor to my (twelve) English classes and asked him show me examples of how to implement authentic assessment in such overcrowded classes" One of the senior high teachers from Sumbawa Besar sub-district contended, "We were given such ideal methods of assessment but the real situation we faced was far from the ideal situation" These quotes indicate that despite receiving a variety of assessment methods from TPETP, teachers felt unconfident to implement authentic assessment as they fumbled with criteria or standards. With the absence of standards, they found themselves unable to be inconsistent in their grading policy. Some of these teachers felt daunted as they were not familiar with the new assessment system.

Records during the observations show that all teaching and learning activities planned in the lesson plan are not entirely carried out. Of the four teachers who carried out teaching and learning activities, none of them conducted the formative assessment although it was included in the lesson plan. The data also informed that most participants experienced difficulties to compose assessment in accordance with the 2013 Curriculum. This indicates that teachers required further training assistance to meet the demand of the 2013 Curriculum.

Findings regarding the theme 3 — teachers' difficulties in changing mindsets — reveal that participants had varying degree of perceptions pertaining to their participation in TPETP. They considered that they had limited understanding about the knowledge and teaching skills suggested by the 2013 Curriculum. "We are still fumbling to implement the 2013 curriculum as our understanding is constrained by so many complicated concepts. So, I just abandoned what I got from TPETP and felt comfortable with my own teaching method" A junior high school teacher from West Alas concurred, "At first I just tried to apply the new teaching skills to my students, but sooner or later I knew that the old approach was more interesting and lively for my students. So finally after a while I returned to using my old teaching approach; it proved to be more effective". Most of participants interviewed felt they did not get supports from their colleagues in schools. "There are senior teachers who refuse to implement the curriculum with a reason that they want to retire and don't want to be complicated. This really discourages us to try out new things from TPETP" said one participant from one of the senior high schools.

A number of teachers admitted that they faced challenges that pertained to their change of teaching habits. Participant from one junior high school comment may represent all other participants' concerns, "I was educated in the past to become a teacher of the present time. I must be able to educate millennial children in the future. What I am really worried is that I cannot fulfil the learning needs of children today because I tend to rely

on my old teaching approaches” This quote signifies that teachers experienced difficulties in changing their mindsets about teaching although they had participated in intensive TPETP. These participants expressed their worries about their inability to adjust to the new teaching endeavour.

C. Lessons Learned Related to Development of Teachers’ Teaching Knowledge and Skills After Taking Part in TPETP

The study yielded three main points of lesson learned pertaining to the implementation of TPETP. First, the teacher becomes more well-informed with the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum. Together with teachers from other schools, they develop a joint forum to discuss issues related to the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum. Therefore, in the future, to maintain teachers’ developed teaching knowledge and skills, TPETP or professional development like this should maintain a clear focus on developing a network for teachers’ professional practices.

Second, teachers experienced difficulties to implement the knowledge and skills they received from TPETP because of the complexities of the approach used in the TPETP. Thus it is suggested that TPETP provider should be able to simplify its training method so that teachers can benefit maximally from the training. Instructors should consider the real situation in the field, so that the training provided is useful. One common issue that isn’t solved yet is how to conduct an authentic assessment. The current curriculum is quite complicated in its implementation, especially the evaluation aspect. The TPETP training activities should therefore emphasize more on teachers’ practices of authentic assessment.

Third, from the classroom observations, it was learned that there was a collective need among teachers to understand and practice the new approaches and teaching skills. When teachers are well equipped with the skills to implement those approaches, they will feel more confident in teaching and assessing students. Therefore TPETP instructors are expected to provide concrete examples of how to teach school children in an interesting and motivating way.

IV. DISCUSSION

Findings from the current study show two divergent directions of teachers’ change of teaching practice had occurred due to their participation in the TPETP. Teachers who developed positive attitudes toward TPETP show a progressive change of teaching practice. Subsequently, they developed TPETP alumni association and conducted regular meeting to meet their needs. This forum has benefited many of the teachers as it functions to foster collaboration among teachers in the same region. At this point, it can be inferred that TPETP has greatly contributed to teachers’ change of perspectives concerning TPETP. The immediate impact of such a change is that these teachers become confident to develop self-initiative to make an agenda for sharing and maintaining on-going mutual supports among alumni of TPETP. Thus, eventually they can maximize the improvement of their teaching skills and competences.

The current major findings also show that teachers had greatly developed learning community and network after the program ends. Through association of TPETP alumni group, they shared knowledge and teaching skills and sought solutions to instructional problems. These post-TPETP activities had benefitted teachers in many ways. The implication for this is that different forms of supports from school authorities should also be thought of as they have important roles to sustain the success of individual teachers in implementing the mandate of the new curriculum.

Despite such an achievement, there were teachers who reacted negatively toward TPETP. They generally exhibited difficulties in adapting to and adopting the teaching dynamics that grew within TPETP. Teachers of this kind showed a relatively fixed belief about their teaching practices. They considered that the particular teaching skills advocated by TPETP were difficult to implement. They therefore experienced difficulties to change their mindsets regarding their teaching practices although they had participated in TPETP. There was a paradox in their attitudes toward the acceptance of the knowledge and skills they gained from TPETP. On the one hand they showed positive attitudes towards the new curriculum. On the other hand, they prevented themselves from changing their previous teaching habits and supporting collective actions. In general, these teachers resisted the change due to their strong hold on their own personal conviction about their own teaching practices.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study shows TPETP has positively contributed to teachers’ developed knowledge and skills in implementing the new curriculum. Teachers have also developed creative forum to share experiences and problems they found in the field. This self-initiative forum has facilitated teachers to develop learning community. However, the course TPETP implementation experienced a divergent direction due to 3 factors, i.e. (1) teachers’ preconception about TPETP, (2) teachers’ persistence and/or resistance to accepting TPETP, and (3) teachers’ difficulties to change mindsets. This paper concludes that the providers of TPETP should conduct an evaluation on the implementation of TPETP nationwide. Thus, the benefit of TPETP can be assured.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge DIPA BLU research grant No. 1459.W/UN18.L1/PP/2018, University of Mataram.

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