

Self-esteem and task perception development of EFL in-service teachers' professional identities in the "Guru Penggerak" education program

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ABSTRACT

These narratives study reports on teachers' professional identity and work in "Guru Penggerak" education program in Indonesia as the arena of the study to investigate how self-esteem and task perception promote teacher professional identity development. Three EFL in-service teachers from three senior high school were involved in this study. This study employed interviews to collect the data from EFL in-service teacher who have teaching experience for more than 10 years and had participated in "Guru Penggerak" education program. The findings confirm that the "Guru Penggerak" education program increased self-esteem and task perception of EFL in-service teachers. In particular, their learning experience from that program strengthen their understanding toward the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. Second, the use of Coaching and Social and Emotional module helps teachers had better communication skill to the student and supports student-teacher relationship. Third, the need to perform within diverse professional duties and tasks makes EFL in-service teacher experienced burn out, stressed, and frustration. Finally, the data suggest that analyzing self-esteem and task perception in EFL in-service teachers' professional identities allow us to trace how teachers' learning process could influence their job profession in the workplace.

KEYWORDS:

Guru Penggerak Education Program; Indonesian EFL Teachers; Professional Identities; Teacher Professional Development

INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional identity (TPI) is a critical lens for understanding teacher professional development and the process of becoming a teacher. It encompasses various topics such as social recognition, teaching practices, theory use, teaching conceptualization, and teaching methods. TPI research offers insights into the educational development of pre-service, novice, and in-service teachers from various perspectives. Borich (1999) uses Mead's theories to address the components of a teacher's self that influence their effectiveness, while Hamachek

(1999) emphasizes self-knowledge as essential for successful practice. The concept of an inner teacher self is closely related to TPI, emphasizing the more intimate aspects of the individual self. However, the literature in language and mainstream education has primarily focused on professional aspects, neglecting the importance of personal factors in identity development (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Sanchez, 2013).

Professional identity (PI) is a complex concept encompassing two dimensions of knowledge and roles, each with broad traits and meanings. Teachers' identities encompass their knowledge, beliefs, feelings, and motives, while the social aspect suggests macro cultural frameworks related to their professional activities. Analyzing PI is crucial as instructors may interpret multiple responsibilities in education, which must be unpacked. Still other definitions of PI in professional development context, it has been interrogated by numerous literatures thoroughly into several concepts since it can be constructed from multiple factors which establish varied characterization depending on the way we are looking at it. For example, Olsen (2008) defined 'teacher's identity' as 'a tool' and 'a research frame' which interrelated for professional development and one's life experiences (Wenger, 1998). TI also has been discussed in the work of Norton (2000) viewed teacher identity from poststructuralist theorists that it is not given naturally, unstable and changes overtime due to historical time, social space and experience. That is, there is a set of relationships between knowledge, society and power which enable teachers to know how to be, how to act and how to understand. Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) pointed out that teaching practices, beliefs, values, experiences, attitudes, perception embedded in TI and it gave an impact on students' learning especially in classroom atmosphere and the method teachers promote.

Kelchtermans (2009) suggests a personal interpretive framework that includes self-esteem and task perception. Professional self-understanding is a result of meaningful interaction with the environment, culture, and society in a teacher's professional context. This framework is a dynamic outcome of ongoing professional development (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2014). The professional self is the core self-concept for developing teacher identity in specific situations. Self-image is an overall descriptive label developed to affect activities and connect with oneself. Self-image is a crucial aspect of personal connection, as it influences how we perceive ourselves and others. Teachers can designate students as facilitators, role models, or supporters, ensuring their behavior aligns with this classification. Self-esteem, a reflection of a teacher's performance, is closely related to self-image and is highly related to self-esteem. The quality of relationships with students and coworkers is a key factor in high performance. Job motivation in the teaching profession is driven by enthusiasm to choose or stay in teaching, while task perception refers to how teachers describe their employment. Future perspective is a strategy for professional progress or sentiments about the profession. Based on the aforementioned literature, this study proposed one research question as the following, How are self-esteem and task perception developed in the professional identities of in-service EFL teachers in the "Guru Penggerak" education program?

METHOD

In this study, we implemented narrative inquiry to collect the data because we wanted to hear from the teachers about their experiences. We are both interested in professional development in Merdeka curriculum, specifically teacher practices and the social settings in which teaching and learning happen. Our focus was on the teacher' experiences as the

participants of training program which was mandated by MoEC. Further, narrative inquiry suggested us that it was the most suitable method for investigating their learning process and teaching practice (Barkhuizen, 2007; Bell, 2002; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Johnson and Golombek, 2002). As Barkhuizen (2016) have pointed out that narrative inquiry focused on the story which individual tell about their lives. These stories can be a form of individual life experience, make sense of a situation we live or imagine in the future. Thus, it is in line with our purpose of study.

The data were gathered from three female EFL in-service teachers who involved in the "Guru Penggerak" (GP) education program. They came from three different senior high school in Central Java Indonesia. They had been teaching in English language for more than ten years. Consent form and information sheet related to this study was shared to the participants to make sure that they feel protected and their data will not be used for other purposes except for publication and thesis. The data were gathered in two months. we used semi-structured interview with thirty questions which will cover their feelings, emotions, and changes after participating the GP education program. Each participant will be interviewed for forty to fifty minutes. The interviews were recorded in the phone. The interview question will be delivered in English. However, the participants can answer the question in Indonesia for their comfortable. After the interview were transcribed and translated into English, the data were analyzed iteratively to get potential data to be analyzed. Listening to the interview recording several data will help us to catch the potential data with the themes and indicators proposed by Keltchermans (2009). The data was then reviewed retrospectively, with the themes from each teacher compared to other teachers to uncover changes in teacher identity development (Creswell, 2014).

RESULT

Self-esteem and Task Perception Development on EFL Teachers' Professional Identities in the "Guru Penggerak" Education Program

1. Self-esteem

Self-esteem in this first research question is related to the quality of their confidence in job performance during GP education program, how they engage with the environment, and how they perceived the changes to their professionalism. This theme obtained two sub-themes that may influence teachers' self-esteem and task-perception development: learning process to grasp curriculum implementation and career experience to strengthen professionalism

a) Learning process to grasp curriculum implementation

All teachers in the interview were asked what and how this training helps them learn the latest curriculum, they acknowledged great importance to the effect of their participation in the GP education program, as it allows them to 1) deal with the current curriculum implementation, 2) improve their confidence level, and 3) feel at ease in the job. As it represented below:

"The program, in my opinion, is quite good So far, I've participated in this training. The GP training is the greatest, most inspiring, and inspires me a lot to be a better teacher. My confidence was improved to be ready implementing with the curriculum" (Teacher B, initial interview)

“Of course, this also as one of my learning resources. My confidence grows. Because if people are confident, it's because their knowledge has grown, but if they don't know anything, it's the same as before. Here, my expertise and knowledge will naturally grow, which is what motivates me to share it with others.” (Teacher C, initial interview)

In their narratives about how the program contributed to their self-esteem and task-perception, it is obvious that their learning process has an important effect on how teachers understood the curriculum implementation. They claimed that the GP education program as the training program which offered better understanding to the latest curriculum compared to their experience before when they were feeling confused and have no clue. For instance, Teacher B continued that she emphasized her feeling on feeling at ease in the job and satisfaction to her achievement, says:

“Coincidentally, there were 12 persons who participated in the GP education program, so the effect could have been considerably stronger, especially toward school's project planning. So, we could collaborate together in making good practice in the school to fulfill our responsibility as teacher. This quite helped me to feel at ease in my job and of course I feel satisfied with the improvement we had made” (Teacher B, initial interview)

The value of learning experience is emphasized above other training programs, especially for high school teachers. It significantly influences their confidence and impact on the workplace, making them effective in addressing issues and alternatives. Experience is seen as the 'great teacher', as it is empirical and useful, capable of dealing with any issues and alternatives.

b) Career experience to strengthen professionalism

Based on the findings, three participants shared how their involvement in the GP education program has strengthened their professionalism. For instance, their theoretical knowledge may benefit them more in the classroom in order to carry out their duties as teachers. This was reflected in three responses from participants who frequently mentioned these choice of words as follows: 1) knowledge improvement, 2) teacher community, and 3) people acknowledgement

“I think it was enough, we as teachers have to be dynamic, right? But I do not say I do not need to study anymore. For me, the material is enough for improving my knowledge about this curriculum, but it doesn't stop there. If I say it's enough, I will be stuck, because there are many things, especially in implementation which would be different from the theoretical knowledge. All we should do is learn more and more” (Teacher C, initial interview)

“It's clearer now if you compare it. Well, one more thing, because we don't have our own thoughts, we have teacher community in GP education program. When we did a session with other teachers, it really opened our eyes to the fact that there are still teachers out there who are far superior than me, and I can't be arrogant. I must learn more because the other teacher is better and promotes new ideas” (Teacher B, initial interview)

“So other teachers will acknowledge my skill which means I can empower the class. Sometimes people also think I am not stuck there, I'm not just a teacher, but I'm developing professionally. They saw me as a teacher who active in professional activities. Well, that's an achievement that I think is good.” (Teacher A, initial interview)

Teacher C's comment seemed to realize that there is a need to fulfil the demands of professional knowledge. Further, three comments above claimed that teacher professional knowledge, teacher community, and acknowledgment from environment combined with specific purpose that is teachers need to increase professionalism from experience. Thus, they are teachers in senior high school who integrate their professional identities to the students, developing their skills in diverse areas, and understanding their professional growth need further exploration, reflection, and training.

2. Task-perception

Task perception in this sub-theme means teachers' responsibilities to finish legitimate tasks and duties. It encompassed what makes teachers believe they have already done a good job. When asked about their list of tasks during GP education program, three participants experienced stressed due to the numerous assignments from the program and their responsibilities at school. Since all three participants are expected to be professional in their work and training, time management might become a significant issue in some situations. To address this, I asked them how they could lessen their feelings of stress. As a result, three participants shared the similar feelings as it reflected from the choice of words: 1) administrative task, 2) working plan, and 3) inconvenience feelings:

"Since I have lots of administrative tasks, I tried to list what tasks I have and which I must do first. That was my strategy from a long time ago. So that makes me satisfied to finish the task. I can give my best to it. In the end, I can do other things when I have free time. So I was quite optimistic about handling each task and duty although sometimes I was stressed." (Teacher C, initial interview)

"The program's assignments burdened me a lot since I had to complete assignments at school, administrative obligations, family and teaching responsibilities, making it difficult for me to manage the time to complete assignments during the program. But we are motivated by the facilitator since she consistently reminds us to do it quickly, even if the deadline is two days after. We have been reminded to do it immediately because she sometimes lists who has and hasn't completed the task. So, we're motivated to finish as soon as possible. Thus, I listed my working plan to finish the task effectively" (Teacher A, follow-up interview 1)

"I'm definitely burnt out, and I was pregnant at the time. Especially in private schools where each teacher received various administrative duties, sometimes I'm as committee and so on, juggling tasks, teaching class when my fellow teacher is absent. The difficulty is in time management; So, I tried to stuck to my working plan as my strategies." (Teacher B, initial interview)

As data analysis revealed, all teachers experienced inconvenience feeling such as burdened, burn out, and stress from lots of administrative tasks and duties which they have to perform in the school. In another side, they have strategy like a working plan in which it helped them to prioritize their task. They considered making working plan as appropriate and effective to encounter their expectation about the task. Even though there were several useful tips and guidance to manage their time, it seemed this did not resolve the issue. The complex and challenging role of teachers made their identities grew stronger in pedagogical knowledge and opened the chance to contribute more in national education.

In case of what makes teachers believe they have already done a good job in their teaching profession and what can they do better when their understanding of task perception improves. Three participants pointed out that the task influenced their mindset, and professional behavior in the classroom.

"The majority of the assignments I was given were quite beneficial to my understanding. It also increased my integrity. Our behavior was also influenced by that task in terms of growing mindset. In terms of technological knowledge, they do not give us specific readings to technological knowledge, the process of completing these tasks utilizing technology includes things like creating vlogs, movies, podcasts, posters, and so on. So that what I called as educational change. We don't exclude the technology, instead we adapt with them" (Teacher B, initial interview)

"I just feel like everything was preparing for educational change although we faced difficult times back then. Our behavior in the classroom also to be considered in the process of adapting with Merdeka curriculum. My research has grown a lot from there. We make something better from here, without changing anything but adding the points that are lacking. It was good for develop our professional integrity." (Teacher C, follow-up interview 1)

Their growing mindset significantly represented in this case especially when Teacher B mentioned that the task was considered as a part of educational change, the growing of awareness of teachers give valuable experience and positive benefits of what she has learned. Participants evaluated the GP education program's job and responsibilities, highlighting the usefulness of chores in classroom activities. They viewed teaching as a series of applications rather than a process, focusing on preparing activities after examining and understanding the classroom environment. Three participants rated chores as good.

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to examine the development of self-esteem and task perception towards professional identities of EFL instructors in the "Guru Penggerak" education program. It found that two of Kelchtermans' (2009, 2013) self-interpretative framework components positively influenced teachers' professional development. The perception of teachers' professional identities is based on their understanding of their performance and engagement with the context. Identity formation is a process of practical knowledge-building, integrating individual and collective knowledge relevant to teaching (Beijaard et al. 2004).

In the case of self-esteem, they gained several benefits, including increased understanding of the Merdeka curriculum. According to one teacher, this learning experience was beneficial to share with other teachers. This demonstrated a good impact in which the teacher views sharing his experiences with others to be part of his professional growth. This is in line with Jorge, Jaime, and Pablo (2021) indicated that the value of such engagement which promoted meaningful interaction eventually leading to a new behavior. Teachers can practice their expertise and knowledge to broaden the scope of their professional identity by taking action that affects the entire school. As a result, identity awareness has been identified as a crucial role for teachers, which is (re)constructed through experience and the individual's interpretation of those experiences (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014).

For the task-perception indicator, Kelchtermans (2009) encompasses task perception as "the teacher's idea of what constitutes his/her professional programme, his/her tasks and duties in order to do a good job" (p. 262). Based on the findings above, three participants experienced inconvenience feelings such as burdened, stress, and frustration as the result of receiving many administrative task and duties. These findings are consistent with Maslach,

Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001), who identified burnout as a long-term response to ongoing job stress. The pressure to fulfill a range of professional activities and tasks consumed resources and time away from teaching (Vähäsantanen & Hämäläinen, 2019). Further, teacher community allowed three participants to strengthened their identities in educational knowledge and provided opportunities to offer more unique ideas and tips for real situation in teaching. This also indicated their recognition that the professional program aided their development in dealing with classroom settings. Chang-Kredl and Kingsley (2014) pointed out the factors that determine how teachers develop themselves, their attitudes toward the education system, and teacher's role, self-evaluation, and appreciation as factors constructing their professional identity and expectation of their career in the upcoming future. Thus, their identity status can be easily changed because they perceive each change from the environment, policy, and social status.

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that the influence of learning experience from the GP education program and environment, including the professional duties and tasks, teacher community, teacher colleagues, is strong especially in the teachers' professional knowledge and teaching practice (Beauchamp and Thomas 2009). They tended to be aware of the educational change and considered the change also needed time to conform the current curriculum. The mandatory MoEC program through Merdeka curriculum is expected to change a teaching paradigm that influenced learning in the classroom. Three participants demonstrated their understanding of the relevance of the most recent curriculum for educational transformation. It may be useful for teaching to demonstrate that they were more aware of the importance of participating in the GP education program.

To summarize, our contribution to this study is the validity of the analysis of three EFL instructors' professional identities and the formation of professional teacher identities. Exploration of self-understanding about the teacher work profession and appraisal of their learning experience is a viable strategy for addressing particular situations teachers experience that may be judged especially important to their identity growth and creation (Flores, 2020; Xu, 2013). As a result, we recommend that EFL teachers focus on the quality of their teaching materials and practices. The issue of self-image and future perspectives on beginner instructors or EFL teachers could be examined extensively with the five participants to expand the data for future researchers.

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