

## Investing in Teacher Learning: In-service Teacher Professional Training in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to find out what happen in a 10-day in-service teacher professional training in Indonesia, commonly known as *PLPG*. A qualitative study using observations and document analysis was used as the research procedure. It was found that PLPG offered teachers substantial learning experiences covering professional and pedagogical competencies, necessary for teachers to achieve a professional level of quality in their duties. In addition, the activities featured in PLPG were in line with constructivist theory in that they seek to foster teacher-to-teacher interaction through active, contextualized, and collaborative modes of learning. The study suggests the need of a system of peer support and feedback integrated into long-term trainings, and extensively well-designed content-related continuing teacher professional development to improve and sustain teachers' teaching practices.

**Key words:** *teacher learning; teacher certification; teacher professional development, teacher education*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat secara seksama pelaksanaan Pendidikan dan Latihan Profesi Guru (PLPG) di Indonesia. Data penelitian kualitatif ini diperoleh melalui observasi dan analisis dokumen. Riset ini menemukan bahwa PLPG menawarkan pengalaman belajar yang subsbtansial kepada guru yang mencakup kompetensi profesional dan pedagogis, dimana kedua kompetensi ini sangat diperlukan guru sebagai syarat menjadi guru yang profesional. Selain itu, kegiatan yang dilaksanakan dalam PLPG sejalan dengan teori konstruktivis yang mendorong terjadinya interaksi diantara peserta pelatihan melalui metode pembelajaran yang aktif, kontekstual, dan kolaboratif. Riset ini memberikan beberapa rekomendasi, yaitu perlunya dukungan dan umpan balik teman sebaya yang terintegrasi dalam pelatihan jangka panjang, dan perlunya pengembangan profesi guru berkelanjutan yang dirancang secara ekstensif untuk meningkatkan dan mempertahankan praktik pengajaran guru yang berkualitas.

**Kata-kata kunci:** *pembelajaran gur, sertifikasi guru, pengembangan profesi guru, Pendidikan guru.*

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The need for excellent teachers has become an issue of national concern in Indonesia, a developing country in Southeast Asia. This growing focus on quality teachers is attributable to several factors, including the poor academic gains of students and low competency of teachers. Thus, a decade ago, Indonesia issued a package of educational reforms embodied in the teacher and lecturer law no. 14/2005 (hereafter called the teacher law) that includes as a priority improving the quality of teachers in every Indonesian classroom. In particular, the teacher law (which is still in effect) entrusts teacher quality reform to teacher certification program. To date, about one million teachers have earned certification (De Ree, Al-Samarrai, & Iskandar, 2012). This study examined the implementation of teacher professional training, known as PLPG, one of the three pathways offered in the Indonesian teacher certification program. Specifically, this study aims to find out what happen during the training.

### **Constructivism and social interaction**

Constructivism argues that people co-construct their own reality, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs through interactions with the world around them. For constructivists, learning should be active, contextualized, and engaging. Learners within this theory construct their knowledge and discuss their meanings in a socially motivated setting (Yager, 1991). Therefore, constructivist teacher certification programs should develop teachers' theoretical knowledge and higher order thinking skills, and train teachers to respect the uniqueness of each individual student by providing tasks and activities that foster individual strengths as well as communication and collaboration among students (Tetenbaum & Mulkeen, 1986). Vygotsky (1978) recognized the importance of interaction on cognitive

development and argued that individual cognitive development occurs when one interacts with the social world. The integration between cognition and the external social world is termed as the Zone Proximal Development (ZPD). It describes the space between what an individual can do without assistance and what he or she can do with support from or in collaboration with more capable others. The ZPD postulates that in order to develop and perform tasks independently, learners first need scaffolding, or significant support from others, including teachers and more capable peers or by reference sources (Ozkan, 2011; Hammond & Gibbons, 2001). In order to be developmental, education should be aligned with the ZPD, and therefore implement learning "within the context of communication and collaboration between the participants in this process" (Kravtsova, 2009, p. 11). This implies that teacher certification programs should design tasks challenging enough for certification candidates to perform beyond their current capacity, and at the same time, provide teachers with ample support to facilitate their accomplishing the tasks.

### **Adult learning theory and teacher professional training**

Adult learning theory emphasizes the value of the process of learning and assumes that adults are self-directed and -motivated, goal and relevancy oriented, and practical (Knowles, 1984). Thus, high-quality teacher professional development should meet the needs of teachers' career development and patterns of adult learning, and focus on "deepening teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills [including] opportunities for practice, research, and reflection" (Sparks, 2002, p. 12). Relevant activities that can facilitate effective adult learning are, among others, action with reflection (learning by

doing), teamwork in small groups, study group, engagement of the learners in what they are learning, and mentoring (Sparks, 2002). These collaborative learning modes recognize the nature of learning as a social process and the experience that each individual brings to the learning environment (Howlett, 2005). Collaborative learning has gained its significant role in teacher professional development because the teaching profession strongly recognizes the importance of teachers working cooperatively in groups or teams.

### **Teacher professional training in Indonesia**

The laws have mandated that Indonesian teachers must possess four competencies—professional, pedagogical, personal, and social competencies. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) Regulation No. 05/2012, teachers can earn certification through PLPG, one of the three pathways available. PLPG is a training course aimed to improve teachers' professional, pedagogical, personal, and social competencies. Book Four of in-service teacher certification (Rustad et al., 2012) provides detailed information about PLPG process and implementation. According to the guideline, PLPG is conducted on the basis of study program by the appointed certifying universities or teacher training institutions (LPTKs) in collaboration with supporting higher education institutions, which have study programs relevant to the PLPG participants. PLPG lasts ten days with a total of 90 hours of lessons (46 hours of theory and 44 hours of practicum), where 1 hour of lesson is equal to 50 minutes. The hosting LPTKs plan and design PLPG teaching materials in the form of book or modules by considering the four mandated competencies – professional, pedagogical, personal, and social competencies. The teaching materials

should encourage participants to be an autonomous and active learner and must include learning objectives, the intended competencies, explanation of materials, exercises, evaluation, answer keys, and references.

The workshop scenario takes up development of teaching and learning instruments. Toward the end of the training, each participant makes a presentation and reflection on the workshop. At the end of PLPG, teachers take a final competency test comprised of written and performance (practicum) tests. The written test measures professional and pedagogical competencies, while the performance test measures professional, pedagogical, personal, and social competencies as a whole. Instructors/facilitators conduct on-going evaluation toward the four competencies through observations over the course of the training process.

### **METHOD**

This study was conducted under the qualitative approach (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2009) in order to explore the implementation of 2013 PLPG for in-service English language teachers in a public university in Palembang, South Sumatra Province. The research site was the training centre designated by the certifying university (a hotel in the city of Palembang). Three rooms were used as the main venue for the teaching and learning process. Six more rooms (9 rooms in total) were occupied for peer teaching/teaching performance test.

Data were collected through classroom observations and document (artefacts) analysis. Observations were audiotaped and conducted throughout the training between August and September 2013. The researchers observed most of the activities and lessons the participants were expected to participate in one of the three main classrooms where the participants had their training and

workshops, and in three of the nine rooms where they performed their teaching practicum. These observations aimed to see the process of PLPG and chronicle theoretical and practicum activities the participants experienced. Artefacts (learning materials the participants received from instructors and works they produced for the training assignments) and documents (PLPG instructor and participant rosters, and PLPG schedule, and list of courses offered) were collected from either instructors or participants to supplement the data from observations. The use of these multiple data resources or triangulation (Maxwell, 2005) was to increase the credibility of this study.

Concurrent data collection, management and analysis occurred throughout the course of the study (Creswell, 2003; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Maxwell, 2005). To answer the research question, observations notes and audio-recorded transcripts including artefacts/documents were analysed by following Hatch's (2002) inductive analysis procedures.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings were presented in light of the research question. It covered the organization of PLPG, materials covered in PLPG, and activities, support and assessment.

### *The Organization of PLPG*

Demographically, there were 187 teachers participating in the program – 93 joined the first phase of PLPG while the other 94 took part in the second phase of PLPG. Out of 93 teachers in the first cohort, 26 were high school teachers or equivalent, 57 were junior high school teachers, and 10 were elementary school teachers. In the second cohort, out of 94 teachers, 32 were high school teachers or equivalent, 56 were junior high school teachers, and 6 were elementary school

teachers. Teachers in each cohort were divided into three groups (A, B, & C) based on the results of their initial competency test (UKA); while high performing teachers in cohort one were placed in group A, high performing teachers in cohort two were grouped otherwise. Each group in both cohorts comprised between 30 and 32 teachers. They had their lesson and activities in the assigned group for most part of the training, but they went into smaller groups of 10 – 11 during peer teaching (PT) session toward the end of the training. In addition to holding a bachelor (S-1/D-IV) degree, or, if not, being at least 50 years of age and having 20 years of teaching service, teachers have to meet minimum UKA score in order to get admitted in PLPG. The lowest UKA score as shown by the UKA score list of PLPG participants was 21.25.

The instructors of PLPG came from the certifying university, a public university in Palembang, other private universities that administer the English-language education program in Palembang, and the Institute for Education Quality Assurance (LPMP) within the certifying university district. Academically, the instructors held at least a master's degree in English Education, Education or related field, and had at least ten years of teaching experiences in related field (Rosyidi et al., 2013). Sixteen instructors comprised the first cohort of PLPG and eighteen instructors comprised the second cohort of PLPG – some of the instructors in the first cohort also engaged in the second phase of the training (PLPG Schedule and PLPG Instructor Roster). One instructor handled each of the training session, except the teaching instrument workshops and PT, which were facilitated by two and three instructors respectively. More specifically, each of the three PT facilitators was responsible to facilitate as well as assess ten teachers.

PLPG lasted for 10 days: nine days for training and workshop and one day for the final competency test. The first cohort's training was from August 20<sup>th</sup> to August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and the second cohort had their training from September 1<sup>st</sup> to September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013. One day prior to the training, the participants were required to arrive in the training center to sign in, get PLPG materials and a room key. Each day, excluding day 10, they had 10 hours of lessons – each lasting 50 minutes. In particular, they had four hours for policy of teacher professional development, four hours for new curriculum information, 30 hours for content knowledge and language teaching strategy enrichments, eight hours for classroom action research, 20 hours for teaching instrument workshops, and 20 hours for peer teaching or PT (Table 1). Between the lessons, they received three breaks: a 15-minute morning recess, an 80-minute lunch break, and a 15-minute afternoon recess. After dinner was a time for them to learn independently, do individual or group assignments, and take a rest. At the end of the training, the teachers took a final competency test comprised of a 120-minute-national-written-multiple-choice test and an 80-minute-local-written-essay test.

**Table 1. Courses offered in PLPG.**

<b>Courses</b>	<b>Hours</b>
The policy of teacher professional development in Indonesia	4
Introduction of the 2013 curriculum	4
Content knowledge enrichments and teaching strategy	30
Classroom action research (PTK)	8
Teaching set development	20
Peer teaching (PT)	20

The certifying university opened a main secretariat office for the 2013 certification organizing committee in Palembang and designated some venues nearby the office as the location of PLPG. The two cohorts had their PLPG at the same site, an inn located at the centre of Palembang. It had three auditoriums, each of which could accommodate about thirty people, and a dining room large enough for the participants to conveniently have their lunch and dinner. The committee equipped each hall with a whiteboard, tables, chairs, and an in-focus projector. For PT, two additional rooms were prepared for each group, each which was equipped with a teacher's desk, a whiteboard, about ten chairs, and a fan. The room temperature was quite hot and outside noise could be heard from the room, often causing a distraction. Two administrative personnel were available in the secretariat office of the training site to provide assistance to instructors and participants.

#### *Materials Covered in PLPG*

As offered in the syllabus and recorded in the module, the materials covered in PLPG comprised policy of teacher professional development, introduction of the 2013 new curriculum, and theory and practice of English language teaching and learning. Theory and practice of English language teaching and learning material was divided into two main sections – pedagogical aspects or relevant theories and professional aspects or content knowledge. The materials for teaching instrument workshops (lesson plan or RPP, teaching materials, teaching media, student worksheet, and assessment instrument) and classroom action research (PTK) were also supplemented. The following paragraphs describe each of the materials in brief.

Policy of teacher professional development materials aimed to help teachers understand the currently employed policy of teacher professional development as well as education in Indonesia. In line with the desired competency standards, it covered several essential topics: the essence, principles, and types of sustainable teacher professional development as well as teacher competency test and its effect; the meaning, requirements, principles, stages of implementation, and conversion value of teacher performance appraisal; the essence and realm of coaching and development of teachers, especially with regard to professionalism and career; the concept, principles, and types of reward and protection given to teachers including their welfare; and the essence of professional ethics of teachers.

The next course introduced the new curriculum, known as the 2013 Curriculum, which was still in the pilot stage in some schools and planned to be implemented in schools across the country in the academic year of 2014/2015. The course covered the rationales of the curriculum change, including the supportive regulations challenges as well as the demands, and the element changes – particularly the use of the scientific approach, which prescribes classroom teaching and activities to be oriented around the cycle of observing, questioning, associating, experimenting, and building networks. It further discussed the new curriculum's prescription on the teaching and learning of English-language courses to (1) put emphasis on competence to use language as a communication means to convey ideas and knowledge, (2) familiarize students to read and comprehend the meaning of texts as well as to summarize and express them using their own language, (3) get students accustomed to systematic and logical as well effective text composition through text-composing

exercises, (4) introduce students to the rules of appropriate composition in relation to the process of drafting the text (in line with the circumstances of who, what, and where), and (5) enable students to express themselves and their knowledge with convincing language in a spontaneous way. In essence, the new curriculum endorsed students' creativity attained from the scientific as well as contextual process of language teaching and learning, which allow students to observe, question, associate, experiment, and build networks.

Aimed at increasing teachers' mastery of content knowledge and teaching strategies, theory and the practice of English language teaching and learning course included both pedagogical and professional aspects. The pedagogical aspect covered theories of language and language learning, foreign language teaching methods, principles of English instructional design, language teaching media, and language learning evaluation. The professional aspect described the content knowledge, including English functional texts for teaching language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – and grammatical structures. The teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia was very much based on a genre-based approach, i.e., the four language skills were taught according to texts, very much inspired by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell's (1995) concept of communicative competence. In line with the basic competence for secondary school students prescribed by the current curriculum, speaking and listening materials consisted of various texts serving interpersonal functions such as introducing, apologizing, thanking, complimenting, congratulating, wishing good luck, and showing sympathy, care/concern, condolence, anger, annoyance, happiness, disappointment, and boredom, and some speech acts

serving transactional function of language, including ordering/commanding, requesting, promising, threatening, warning, complaining, refusing, and blaming. Reading and writing materials introduced two types of text: short and long functional texts. Short functional texts consisted of announcements, advertisements, memos, invitation letters, labels, postcards, and notices. Long functional texts were comprised of 13 texts: narrative, recount, descriptive, procedure, report, anecdote, hortatory, spoof, explanation, discussion, news item, review, and analytical exposition. Grammar and structure materials encouraged teachers to teach grammar implicitly based on functional texts, the long functional texts in particular.

The teaching instrument workshops aimed to improve teachers' ability to design and develop teaching syllabi and learning tools. It was comprised of guidelines of preparing lesson plans or RPP, competency standards for graduation (SKL) including core competencies (KI) and basic competencies (KD), concept of scientific approach, models of learning, including project based learning and problem based learning as well as discovery learning, and the concept of

authentic assessment of the process and outcome of learning.

To improve teachers' knowledge of the concept and application of classroom action research, classroom action research (PTK) course was introduced covering the basic concept of PTK, planning and implementation of PTK, and PTK writing. The basic concept of PTK described definition and principles of PTK, characteristics of PTK, differences between PTK and classroom research, and benefits and limitations of PTK. The second section explained planning and implementation of PTK, identification of problems or topics, analysis and formulation of problems, improvement planning, implementation of PTK, and methods of designing PTK proposals. The last part described PTK writing, including PTK reports and their components, scientific papers and their components along with samples of PTK proposals and PTK reports.

*Activities, support and assessment*

The study revealed that teachers observed in first (low performing) and second (high performing) cohorts engaged in relatively similar activities with uniform aspects of material content and teaching/learning methods, and similar types of support (Table 2).

**Table 2. Activities and support.**

<b>Activities &amp; Supports</b>	<b>Cohort 1 and 2</b>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short lecture</li> <li>• Individual and or group work – discussion</li> <li>• Seminar-like activities: inter-group discussions</li> <li>• Workshops: teaching tool development and PTK proposal design</li> </ul>
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance: teaching practice</li> <li>• Prompts, suggestion, and clarifications during training activities</li> <li>• Oral and written feedback during PT and on the assigned tasks</li> <li>• In-class consultations during workshop</li> </ul>

*PLPG Learning Activities*

Throughout PLPG, the participants engaged in various learning activities including seminar, individual works, pair work, group work and workshops as well as performance activities or PT (Table 2). Generally, the activities for most of the materials started with a short lecture of theoretical aspects of the corresponding materials by the instructor followed by individual or group work. Then, each group shared the results of their group discussion to the class; this was a seminar-like activity where each group and individual teacher exchanged personal as well as group points of view about the topic or issue being discussed. For instance: after listening to the instructor's theoretical explanation about policies of teacher professional development in Indonesia, the teachers in groups of five discussed an assigned topic by the instructor for about 90 minutes and presented their discussion results to the class (Observation Recordings, August 20, 2013). In another session, after a short lecture by the course instructor, the teachers in groups reviewed a short functional text taken from a PLPG module, based on which they created several questions and addressed the questions to the other groups. The course instructor then randomly assigned teachers from the other groups to answer the questions (Observation Notes, August 24, 2013). In another instance, after group discussion and presentation of concepts, types, and teaching methods of interpersonal text, the teachers listened to the instructor's elaboration on concepts and types of interpersonal text, and performed a role-play in light of the social situations stated in PLPG module (Observation Notes & Recordings, September 3, 2013).

In the second half of PLPG, the teachers engaged in workshops and peer teaching activities. They individually developed two sets of teaching

instruments within 20 hours over two consecutive days (Observation Notes & Recordings, August 25 – 26, 2013; Observation Notes & Recordings, September 6 – 7, 2013). In the second phase of the workshops, they created a PTK proposal (Observation Notes & Recordings, August 23, 2013; Observation Notes & Recordings, September 4, 2013). Toward the end of their training, they performed PT twice using the teaching instruments created in the first phase of the workshop (Observation Notes & Recordings, August 27 – 28, 2013; Observation Notes & Recordings, September 8 – 9, 2013). Conducted in a small room with fellow PLPG participants as the students, each of the PTs lasted for 30 minutes and were observed and assessed by an instructor.

*Participant Support during PLPG*

During the training, the teachers received support from the PLPG instructors, mainly in the form of feedback and suggestions relevant to the materials they learned (Table 2). In most of the sessions, the materials were delivered in a student-centered way, during which the teachers participated actively, with the instructor serving as a facilitator and coach. For example, after giving short introduction and theoretical elaboration, the instructor let the teachers discuss course materials in-group and as a class, and gave them prompts/suggestion and clarifications throughout the activities. With regard to course assignment, in addition to oral feedback, they received written feedback from course instructor and incorporated the feedback in the revised version of their tasks. When developing teaching instruments during the workshops, they had the opportunity to consult with the two instructors in class (Observation Notes, August 25–26, 2013; Observation Notes, September 6–7, 2013). As developing their PTK



proposal, in addition to having a theoretical and conceptual description, they received PTK proposal examples and step-by-step guides for designing a PTK proposal, including techniques and procedures of identifying PTK problems, creating PTK titles and formulating research questions (Observation Notes, August 23, 2013; Observation Notes, September 4, 2013). In terms of PT, the teachers received feedback in their first performance and got assessed in the second one (Observation Notes & Recordings, August 27 – 28, 2013; Observation Notes & Recordings, September 8 – 9, 2013).

*Assessment of PLPG Participants*

Assessment during and after professional development programs should be intended not only to ensure that candidates have a minimum level of knowledge and competency but also to predict their future effectiveness in the classroom (Feuer, Floden, Chudowsky &

Ahn, 2013). PLPG certification employed several methods of assessment, including peer assessment, participation assessment, workshop process assessment, PTK proposal assessment, PT assessment, and a final written competency test (Table 3). Putting emphasis on teachers’ competence as professionals, the last two types of assessment were very much decisive on the passing or failing of certification. While the written final competency test aimed to measure teachers’ professional and pedagogical competencies, PT intended to uncover teachers’ professional, pedagogical, and personal, as well as social competencies as a whole. These two assessments made up 25% and 30% respectively of the final passing score of PLPG certification. In what follows, we briefly describe the components of the two tests including the minimum score candidates should accomplish.

**Table 3. Types of assessment.**

<b>Assessment Types</b>	<b>Indicators Measured</b>	<b>Contribution to Final Score</b>
Peer Assessment	Discipline, appearance (neatness and fairness), behavior, cooperation ability, communication skill, commitment, exemplary, passion, empathy, and responsibility.	10%
Participation Assessment	Readiness to learn, perseverance in learning, learning activeness, creativity, and ideas.	10%
Workshop Process Assessment	Responsibility, autonomy, honesty, discipline, work ethic, innovation and creativity, and ability to communicate as well as ability to cooperate.	25% (combined with PTK proposal score)
PT Assessment:		30%
• Lesson Plan	Clarity of learning objectives, selection of teaching materials, organization of teaching materials, use of teaching media, clarity of teaching stages or scenario, fitness between assessment and learning objectives, and completeness of assessment instruments.	

• Teaching Practices	Pre-, whilst- and post-learning activities	
Final Competency Test		25%
• National Test	80 multiple-choice questions: 20 pedagogical knowledge questions and 60 content knowledge question	
• Local Test	2 sections of essay questions: lesson plan development and outline of PTK design	

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PT assessment was designed to gauge teachers' instructional practices and teaching instruments and included lesson plan and teaching practice assessment. The former judged the teaching set the teachers used in their teaching in terms of the clarity of learning objectives, selection of teaching materials, organization of teaching materials, use of teaching media, clarity of teaching stages or scenario, fit between assessment and learning objectives, and completeness of assessment instruments, each of which was worth one to two points. The latter evaluated teachers' instructional practices concerning pre-, during- and post-learning activities; the pre-learning activity covered how teachers motivated learners to learn and introduced the targeted competencies and activities of learning. The during learning activity embraced teachers' mastery of teaching materials, use of educative teaching and learning strategies, application of scientific approach, utilization of teaching media and sources, involvement of students in learning, learning activities that boost and maintain student engagement, and assessment of process and assessment of product of learning, as well as use of language; each indicator had a weight of one to five points. Teachers should at least have a total score of 65 on the assessment in order to earn their certification.

The final competency test assessed what the teachers have learned during PLPG, specifically measuring teachers' professional and pedagogical competen-

cies. This standardized written test was divided into two sections: national and local tests. The first section contained 80 multiple-choice questions: about 20 questions related to pedagogical knowledge and 60 to content knowledge. Teachers had 120 minutes to complete this national test, which was scored using a computer program administered and supervised by the central committee of the teacher certification program. The local written test asked essay questions pertaining to pedagogical knowledge. In particular, based on a given teaching scenario, the teachers created a lesson plan (in the first part) and designed an outline for action research – title, research question, and methods (in the second part). The teachers had 80 minutes to complete this local test and local PLPG instructors scored their answers. In order to earn certification, candidates should at least achieve a total score of 60 on the final written test with a minimum score of 42 on the national section.

## DISCUSSION

Historically, to ensure uniform implementation of PLPG and to achieve the targeted goal of the program, the training program is guided by the in-service teacher certification guidelines prescribed in a 5-book series published by MOEC. The aspects of these guidelines that are most vividly implemented are the organization of PLPG, the materials covered, the activities chosen, and the assessment of

the participants (Rosyidi et al., 2013). The materials covered both professional/content knowledge and pedagogical skills of the teachers, both of which are deemed necessary for teachers to achieve a professional level of quality in their duties (Sparks, 2002). The activities featured in PLPG are in line with constructivist theory in that they seek to foster teacher-to-teacher interaction through active, contextualized, and collaborative modes of learning. For example, the teachers engaged in learning-by-doing activities, teamwork, small group collaboration, and study groups. Sparks (2002) and Vella (1994) have highlighted the effectiveness of these features in adult learning. Furthermore, collaboration substantiates the social nature of learning and the richness of each individual's personal experience for learning.

Yet, there were some parts of the implementation that were inconsistent with the guidelines. In particular, Book 1, the Participant Stipulation Guidelines, required the provision of PLPG module or materials to participants long before they were to attend the training program in order to provide them with ample time to review the materials and make substantial preparation (Rosyidi et al., 2013). This was one of the crucial changes made for the 2013 PLPG and beyond. However, as observed by the researchers, PLPG local committee did not distribute the materials until the participants arrived at the training center, one day before PLPG began. Furthermore, the participants were informed that they were accepted as PLPG participants less than a week prior to the training program, contrary to the schedule prescribed by the guideline, which states that teachers should be informed at least two months prior to PLPG implementation (Rosyidi, et al., 2013). If they had been informed about their participation earlier and received

PLPG materials in accordance with the recommended PLPG program guidelines, they would have been able to make more adequate reading preparation for PLPG and competency test. This process of reading preparation has been argued to be vital in improving teachers' quality before and during certification process (Hunzicker, 2006; Kelley & Kimbal, 2001) as it allows teachers to review and analyse their teaching practices, and various teaching approaches and professional knowledge contained in the module.

Another reservation with the implementation of PLPG pertained to the grouping of the participants. Each cohort was assigned into three classes of about 30 teachers based not on the grade they taught, but on their UKA scores. Thus, each class consisted of elementary, junior high and senior high school teachers. While the content knowledge taught in each level, junior and senior high school in particular, was relatively similar, there were significant differences in levels of difficulty and unique challenges to deal with by the teachers, and thus required them to put into practices different instructional and classroom management strategies. Classifying these teachers this way may have substantially diminished the effectiveness of PLPG in improving the teachers' professional knowledge and pedagogical skills.

Another problematic aspect about the grouping of teachers by UKA scores was that both low and high performing groups received material and instruction of a relatively comparable degree of difficulty and similar support and treatment with no modification for participants with a low UKA score. Unless there are special support and treatment given to the participants with low UKA score, it is argued that it is better to group the participants according to the grade levels they teach regardless their UKA score. Variations in terms of UKA score among

the group members would permit effective collaborative learning as the high performing teachers could help their counterparts during peer or group activities. Interaction and collaboration with more capable peers would optimize the level of potential development of the low performing teachers (Vygotsky, 1978). Effective professional development should encourage teachers to collaborate and continuously assess their own competency (Peckover, Peterson, Christiansen & Covert, 2006). Furthermore, teachers would have grade-level specific experiences and challenges to share, thus increasing the relevance of their collaborations.

The observations during the program also displayed many important aspects of knowledge and skills contained in PLPG module the teachers did not learn. That is, some components of the courses or materials offered in the syllabi and module were not enacted in class during training program (Feuer et al., 2013). This was likely due to the short schedule of PLPG; ten days were far from being enough for the instructors to cover and for the PLPG participants to master all of the prescribed materials. Thus, the instructors seemed to pick and choose the materials they thought to be important for PLPG participants to know, but the rationales behind the choices were not made clear (further investigation involving the instructors was urged to do to find this out). This indeed risked the depth and thoroughness of knowledge and skills these teachers learned. The observations further exhibited variations in terms of aspects of subject content taught by PLPG instructors; i.e., instructor(s) of the same course from the first and second cohorts appeared to teach different aspects of the course. Thus, comparable perception and understanding among teacher professional development/training instructors is vital to ensuring the program participants

acquiring fairly uniform knowledge and skills in accordance with their professional and pedagogical needs.

## CONCLUSION

The major findings obtained from the data can be summarized as follows. First, concerning PLPG administration and implementation, it was found that there were 187 English-language teachers joining the first and second batches of the 2013 PLPG certification in a public university in South Sumatra province, each of which was divided into 3 groups. There were 16 instructors in the first cohort and 18 instructors in the second cohort who mentored the participants over the course of 10-day (90 hours) of the training. PLPG covered several courses categorized into professional or content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Over the course of the program, the teachers engaged in various learning activities including seminar, individual, pair and group works, workshops and teaching performance. During the training, they received feedback and suggestions from PLPG instructors to support their learning, and were assessed using several methods, including peer assessment, participation assessment, workshop process assessment, PTK proposal assessment, final performance and written competency tests. The rationale underlying the grouping of the participants appeared to be dubious, and both low and high performing teachers judged by their UKA score received similar types of support as well as treatment.

The findings of the study suggest some pedagogical implications as follows. First, teacher professional development through teacher certification could be a powerful learning experience for teachers when it addresses the needs of teachers' career development and pattern of adult learning. Constructivist

teacher certification programs should focus on improving teachers' professional knowledge and pedagogical skills, providing them ample opportunities for practice, research and reflection, and engaging them with contextualized and collaborative activities with sufficient support from certification mentors. In addition to giving sufficient supervision and improving teaching and learning facilities, MOEC should provide teachers with opportunities for meaningful on-going teacher professional development, one that helps teachers increase their teaching motivation and develop their teaching practices. Research has suggested that extensively well-designed content-related continuing professional learning, approximately 50 hours annually, is effective to improve teachers' teaching practices (SCOPE, 2010).

Importantly, what did work more than anything else during PLPG – despite the overwhelming content-cram based on delay in getting materials to candidates in advance, and despite the rather unfair length of time to produce lessons, and research projects – teachers were very collaborative and helpful to each other. This suggests that a system of peer support and review/feedback might be integrated into long-term trainings – over a period of time – as a way to give teachers time to integrate their learning experience into their classroom.

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