The Learning Leverage of Teacher Professional Training in Indonesia

Umar Abdullah[1]
umarfillah@yahoo.com

Abstract: Drawing upon Hunzicker's (2008a, 2011) interpretive tool of learning leverage, the study aimed to find out the influence of teacher professional training, known as *PLPG,* on teacher learning. This study was conducted under the qualitative approach involving six high school English-language teachers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The study found that the majority of the participants agreed that the rigor, reward, and risk of PLPG had boosted their motivation to learn, and thus perceived PLPG as a powerful learning experience. In particular, two teachers considered rigor (high standards and expectations) of PLPG as the most influential factor. One teacher was very much concerned about the risk of not earning certification. Three teachers counted reward as most important in their PLPG experience. This study therefore suggests that teacher professional development through teacher certification could be a powerful learning experience for teachers when it incorporates an appropriate balance of rigor, reward, and risk.

Keywords: *learning leverage, teacher learning, teacher professional training, teacher education*

Abstrak: Mengacu pada *Learning Leverage Interpretive Tool* yang dikembangkan oleh (Hunzicker's (2008a, 2011), penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat pengaruh Pendidikan dan Latihan Profesi Guru (PLPG) terhadap pembelajaran guru. Penelitian kualitatif ini melibatkan enam orang guru Bahasa Inggris sekolah menengah. Data penelitian diperoleh melalui wawancara bebas terpimpin. Riset ini menemukan bahwa sebagian besar peserta setuju bahwa *rigor*, *reward*, dan *risk* PLPG memotivasi mereka untuk belajar dan mereka menganggap PLPG sebagai pengalaman belajar yang efektif. Khususnya, dua orang guru menganggap *rigor* sebagai faktor yang paling berpengaruh. Satu orang peserta sangat mengkhawatirkan resiko (*risk*) tidak lulus sertifikasi. Tiga orang peserta lainnya melihat reward sebagi faktor paling penting dalam pengalaman pembelajaran PLPG. Karena itu, riset ini merekomendasikan bahwa pengembangan profesi guru melalui program sertifikasi dapat menjadi wahana pembelajaran yang efektif bagi guru manakala program tersebut mengintegrasikan keseimbangan yang tepat antara *rigor*, *reward*, dan *risk*.

Kata-kata kunci: *learning leverage, pembelajaran guru, pengembangan profesi guru, pendidikan guru*

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[1] *Lecturer of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang*

Since 2007, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia (MOEC) has implemented the certification program for in-service teachers. To earn certification, incumbent teachers must hold a minimum of a four-year college degree of academic qualification in a related disciplinary field and must successfully pass a paper-based portfolio assessment. Should they not pass the portfolio assessment, they have to undertake Teacher Professional Training, known as *Pendidikan dan Latihan Profesi Guru* (PLPG). Revisions and improvements have been made to ensure that the program meets its desired goal. The most recent changes to the program include the administration of Teacher Professional Education, called *PPG*. The longer version of PLPG, this program takes one to two semesters for certification candidates to complete. This study attempted to explore the influence of this certification program on improving the quality of Indonesian teachers. Drawing upon Hunzicker's (2008a, 2011) interpretive tool of learning leverage, the study aimed to find out the influence of PLPG on teacher learning.

Learning leverage is an interpretive tool that describes why a certification program is a powerful learning experience for teachers joining the program. It refers to "an uncomfortable yet positive pressure that usually leads to substantial teacher learning [characterized by] the dynamics of rigor, reward, and risk" (2008a, pp. 10–11). Ideally, learning tasks should be difficult enough to require the learner to work hard, struggle, and push the limits of his/her understanding. Such effort may not be comfortable, but it can bring deep satisfaction when the goal is accomplished. In some cases, however, a learner may become easily discouraged and give up. Hunzicker (2008a, 2011) identified three factors – reward, rigor, and risk – whose interaction varies across individuals and can be useful in describing which combinations assisted learners in persevering – or not -- through difficult challenges. The appropriate balance of rigor, reward, and risk is termed as learning leverage, which generates "uncomfortable yet positive pressure that usually results in substantial teacher learning" (Hunzicker, 2011, p. 202).

This interpretive tool helps describe why many certification candidates view the certification process as a powerful learning experience, and some of them reported to have learned much from the program while some others did not. Learning leverage

was conceptualized based on the findings of Hunzicker's (2006, 2010) studies on the influence of the certification process on three teachers' learning during the program. It is further inspired by five studies of teacher learning through a national certification program (Burroughs, Schwartz, & Hendricks-Lee, 2010; Gaddis, 2002; Lustick, 2002; Lustick & Pool et al., 2001; Sykes, 2006).

The first dynamic of learning leverage, *rigor*, requires certification candidates to closely align themselves with the certification standards of teaching practices. To earn certification, candidates within a short period of time have to:

Scrutinize their professional practices, master the use of technology, demonstrate knowledge of content and pedagogy, provide evidence of student learning, participate in educational and professional organizations, and articulate accomplished teaching practices through written language. (Hunzicker, 2011, p. 200)

Candidates' rigorous alignment with the certification standards occurs through the process of professional reflection, analysis, and initiatives, to increase their opportunities to earn their certification. Candidates purported to learn most through this alignment process. Thus, *rigor* has been argued to be a catalyst for teacher learning during certification program (Burroughs et al., 2000; Tracz et al., 1995). Teachers strongly motivated by rigor are most interested in learning and resolute to earn certification (Hunzicker, 2008a).

The second dynamic, *reward*, highly motivates candidates to pursue certification. Certification is not an easy process, and therefore, earning certification is a significant achievement for teachers, increasing their professional status, respect and authority, and importantly, salary (Hunzicker, 2006; Lustick & Sykes, 2006; Vandevoort, Amrein-Beardsley, & Berliner, 2004). These extrinsic rewards have boosted the National Board Certification (NBC) candidates' motivation to earn their certification (Hunzicker, 2011). NBC is a teacher certification program formed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), an independent, non-profit, non-governmental national organization in the USA. Candidates energized by reward are most interested in obtaining acknowledgment as a professional teacher (Hunzicker, 2008a).

The last dynamic, *risk*, "pushes National Board candidates out of their professional

comfort zones" (Hunzicker, 2011, p. 201). Certification is difficult to achieve, and only half of candidates are successful on their first effort (Boyd & Reese, 2006). Because it is a substantial professional risk, many teachers avoid joining the program, and many of those undergoing the program are anxious throughout the entire process. Certification programs are also risky because they are public and challenging; "National Board candidates confront and remediate their professional weaknesses, complete the certification requirements within a narrow timeframe, and receive their pass-or-fail certification results on the same well-publicized date nationwide" (Hunzicker, 2011, p. 202). All candidates have such risk experience, but the strength varies according to the degree of their capacity and self-efficacy. The discomfort of risk resulting from completion of certification requirements could be a powerful motivator, which in turn brings about teacher learning; however, when the risk are too overwhelming, they could make candidates doubtful and sceptical, and prevent them from earning certification (Hunzicker, 2008a).

The precise blend of rigor, reward, and risk generates learning leverage that could stimulate and push certification candidates to learn in order to accomplish certification. The interactive dynamics of learning leverage is visualized in figure 1 below.
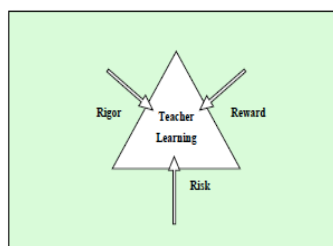

Figure 1. Learning Leverage Graphic
Source: Hunzicker (2008a, 2010, 2011)

Learning leverage interpretive tool can assist us in understanding how PLPG certification influences English-language teachers' learning. It is useful as a descriptive device in identifying what resources the teachers draw on to motivate their accomplishments and to what degree they draw on them. In particular, it is helpful to identify which factor(s) across the teachers is most important in fuelling their motivation to align with PLPG standards and complete PLPG requirements. This study is significant in terms of policy decision-making. That is, the results of the study can provide evaluative information for MOEC and related stake holders such as the Indonesian Board of Teacher Certification and certifying universities or LPTK, on the initiative's efforts to strengthen the quality of (EFL) teaching and learning in Indonesia, and offer input for future educational policy decisions concerning PPG which is currently in effect.

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). Six purposefully selected high school English-language teachers agreed to participate in the study. They were selected because they taught English in Palembang city high schools and nearby regencies, which were close to the researcher's proximity. In particular, the participants worked in high schools from three different regions (Palembang, Banyuasin and Ogan Ilir), each of which were represented by two teachers. Of the participants, four taught English to junior high school students and two taught English to senior high school students. Three teachers were from the first cohort and the rest from the second cohort. Demographically, the teachers were between 27 and 50 years old. They had a minimum of a four-year degree of academic qualification (S1 or D4) in English Education or equivalent, and had years of experience in English-language teaching.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were used to elicit the participants' learning experience particularly their view about PLPG as professional development. The participants were interviewed three times; one was in the beginning of PLPG, the second was in the middle of PLPG, and the third was at the end of PLPG before final competency test. Participants' data were assigned a pseudonym.

Concurrent data collection, management and analysis occurred throughout the course of the study (Creswell, 2003; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Maxwell, 2005). Data from interviews were transcribed verbatim. To answer the research question, interview transcripts were analysed by following Hatch's (2002) inductive analysis procedures. The researcher began by identifying *frames*

of analysis. He then made several domains in light of semantic relationships that emerged within frames of analysis, classified salient domains, and gave them a code. Finally, a master outline portraying relationship within and among domains was created, and data excerpts were attached to support elements of the outline. The researcher then assigned the *included terms* and *a cover term* and linked them with the semantic relationship (Spradley, 1979).

FINDINGS

Drawing on learning leverage interpretive tool (Hunzicker, 2008a, 2011), this section shows the teachers' views of rigor, reward, and professional risk of PLPG and how these dynamics influenced their learning. The following parts briefly describe each of the dynamics, the most influential dynamic, and the learning leverage display for each teacher.

Rigor of PLPG

Rigor is pertinent to the high standards and expectation of PLPG certification program. Agus said that PLPG had standards and expectations that are not easy to align with. For him, these were good for measuring the quality of Indonesian teachers because PLPG was aimed to improve their quality and professionalism. So, teachers, according to him, should meet high standards and expectations of PLPG in order to earn certification. However, the high standards and expectations were not something he was afraid of; he said, "this [high standards and expectations of PLPG] is not something to be afraid of and the most important thing is that I am ready and will keep trying to improve my professionalism and quality" (Interview 3, August 28, 2013). Since failing PLPG after 10 days of struggle was not an option for him, Agus was motivated to study and try harder in order to align himself with PLPG standards and expectations.

For Ahmad, it was his second PLPG attempt and he was aware that his previous failure was mostly due to his inadequate preparation. Learning from his previous experience, he made more thorough preparation and completed all the needed requirements. With regards to the rigor of PLPG, he said, "I am okay with the high standards and expectations of PLPG because I believe I have met the standards and expectations" (Interview 3, August 28, 2013). Ahmad further said that he was not afraid of or stressed by the high standards and expectations of PLPG; these

even motivated him to complete PLPG requirements including assignments and rules, and he was thus convinced to have aligned with these standards.

Lisa believed that she would be able to meet the standards and expectations of PLPG. However, she worried about the final competency test at the end of PLPG; not yet knowing what to expect on the test, she predicted that the questions would be related to topics/aspects she learned before relatively similar to Initial Competency Test, called *Uji Kompetensi Awal* (UKA). Importantly, Lisa acknowledged that she struggled to meet the high standards and expectation of PLPG, and the process was very arduous, making her anxious. To align with the standards, she asked PLPG tutors when she had problems or questions, shared with friends/colleagues, and took breaks as necessary. She confessed that she sometimes cried to help her relieve the pressure of PLPG.

Another teacher, Risa, admitted that the high standards and expectation of PLPG became a problem for her. She found that some of her fellow teachers failed on their first PLPG attempt. This indeed decreased her sense of conviction, and she started asking herself whether she would be able to earn her certification. However, since she wanted to align herself with the PLPG standards and expectations, she became more disciplined, responsible, and motivated to study. In other words, the high standards and expectations of PLPG motivated her to study and try harder in order to earn certification.

For Bambang, having a high standard was a good thing because learning started with and required high standards and expectations. For him, as a never-ending process, learning could occur in any time and place. As one of the places for teachers to learn, PLPG should recharge teachers' motivation to teach and improve teachers' professional and pedagogical competencies. The high standards and expectation of PLPG boosted his motivation to learn and much of the learning experiences would appear in the final competency test, which in turn help him earn his certification. However, according to him, motivation came from the teacher him/herself. To put it in his words "motivation is not about what PLPG asks from me but I believe that I have to be responsible for everything I do" (Interview 3, September 9, 2013).

As an experienced teacher, Amir thought the standards and expectation of PLPG

did not seem that high. He said that most of his fellow participants had a sense of conviction to pass their PLPG, but they had little motivation to work hard because they thought that they would all pass it at the end. As evidence, those who failed PLPG last year were invited to take PLPG again this year without any test. Although this was not a good thing, Amir understood how difficult it was for them, especially senior teachers, who were unable to give their best effort again, to earn certification. For them, according to Amir, the most important thing was perhaps just to undergo PLPG smoothly and not to retake PLPG in the following year. Apart from his sense of conviction to have met the standards and expectations of PLPG, Amir joined all PLPG activities, complete the assignments, and read books or materials related to PLPG before going to bed. Rather than wondering about his ability to align with PLPG standards and expectations, he instead worried about his fellow friends' ability to face the final test because he knew that many of them were not sufficiently proficient in English.

Reward of Earning PLPG

Reward from earning PLPG certification included obtaining the title of certified teacher and extra income. Although improving his teaching competence was his main goal of taking PLPG, Agus admitted that receiving additional income and holding the title of certified teacher were very important for him. These rewards of earning certification strongly motivated him to work hard to earn it. However, according to him, meeting the high standards and expectations of PLPG was much more important than getting the title and additional income because his main goal was basically to look for knowledge. Agus emphasized that he did not want to simply pass PLPG and earn his certification without improvement; he hoped to get more knowledge so that after PLPG, when others asked him what he experienced, he could explain the materials and skills he learned.

Getting the title of certified teacher and additional income is very important for Ahmad. First, according to him, teaching thus far had been an informal occupation, but through certification, teaching was formally acknowledged as a profession by institution, government, school, and public. Professional teachers, those who hold the Educator Certificate, would improve the academic performance of their students. In addition to

recognition, certification was the way used by government to increase the welfare of teachers as, once certified, teachers received additional income. The title and the salary increase in particular had to be accountable to institution (Diknas), government, and especially God. Ahmad said, "if teachers cannot account for the additional income earned from certification, they just like stealing money from government" (Interview 3, August 28, 2013). In terms of the additional income, Ahmad said that the salary he earned from teaching was enough for him and family, and the additional income from certification would make his family's financial situation even better. Holding the title of certified teacher and particularly receiving salary increases motivated him to study in order to earn his certification.

The reward of certification, receiving salary increase, was important to Lisa. She said that the extra income would help her improve her teaching practices in several ways. First, she could use the additional salary to buy teaching equipment such as laptop, printer, and projector. In addition to support teaching practices, the laptop and printer could be used to make RPP. Additionally, some portion of the extra salary could be used to purchase books and other teaching sources. Buying the equipment and teaching sources using her own money received from her current salary was not feasible because (1) laptop, printer, and projector were very expensive; and 2) English textbook and related teaching sources often changed or needed to be updated from year to year in line with the demands of the times and the needs of students. Thus, the extra salary was very important for Lisa, and it motivated her to give her best effort in order to be successful in the pursuit of her certification.

Like Agus, Ahmad, and Lisa, holding the title of certified teacher and receiving additional income were very vital to Risa. It was so, according to her, because, first, teachers holding the certificate of educator were recognized as accomplished teachers. In addition, extra income would improve teachers' teaching practices in the way that she could allocate the extra money to buy new book or create interesting teaching materials/media, which would motivate her students to learn. Thus, holding the title and receiving additional income motivated her very much to pass PLPG. She said, "I want to get the certificate, be acknowledged as a competent teacher, and receive salary

increase to improve my teaching practices and family's financial condition" (Interview 3, September 9, 2013).

Bambang held a different view from most of the participants regarding the additional income received from certification. He believed that if he did his profession including all the assignment attached to it in his best way, he would earn good income. He had held this perspective long before being an English teacher. To put it in his words, "I don't say that the additional income is not important but I would say that money will come, income will come if we do everything at our best" (Interview 3, September 9, 2013). With regards to the title of certified teacher, although it was not really important, according to Bambang, it was good if government gave him certification, indicating that he was qualified enough to be a professional teacher. In terms of the monetary rewards of certification, the additional income in particular, on the pursuit of his certification, Bambang admitted that it was hard to say because it was related to money; he stated that even if there were no money, he would keep pursuing certification to develop his competence. However, Bambang frankly admitted that the salary increase would motivate him in the pursuit of his certification and in fulfilling his teaching duties.

For Amir, holding the title of certified teacher was very important in order to gain professional recognition of an accomplished teacher from his colleagues because he did not hold a Bachelor degree. He also confessed that salary increase received subsequent to certification attracted him and his fellow teachers to join PLPG certification. He recounted that some of his colleagues had even said: "If after taking PLPG, I just receive salary increase of 300 rupiahs per month, I do not want to join the program" (Interview 3, September 9, 2013). Amir admitted that the salary increase positively influenced his effort to pass PLPG; he could use the additional income to finance his family life, e.g., to fund his second daughter's higher education. In other words, professional recognition and extra income increased his motivation to pursue certification.

Risk of Not Earning PLPG

Agus considered the risk of not earning certification with the final competency test taken at the end of PLPG. He said not passing meant that he did not understand the test questions, which was mostly due to his poor English proficiency because the questions were all in English. Agus said, "I have to pass tomorrow test. Honestly, I am nervous and afraid to face the test" (Interview 3, August 28, 2013). Thus, he would try hard to study and read the materials given in order to pass the test and PLPG.

Another teacher, Ahmad, said that if he did not pass PLPG, he might consider going back to his previous profession as a technician because not being able to pass PLPG indicated that he was not professional enough to teach. Attempting a second time, Ahmad did hope to earn his certification because, if he did not, he would be very ashamed to his colleagues and family. Similar to Agus, Ahmad considered the final competency test as the major determiner of the success of his certification. The professional risk of not earning certification boosted him to do independent learning by reading PLPG module and materials and answering the test sample questions from PLPG module. To illustrate the independent learning, Ahmad said, "I practice answering essay questions without seeing the provided key answers and, out of 15, 10 answers are correct. Before I answered the sample questions, I read the corresponding materials for one hour" (Interview 3, August 28, 2013).

Lisa admitted that she was afraid of not earning certification. If she did not pass PLPG, she would feel embarrassed, her self-esteem lowered, and very disappointed that she would have to retake this program, which would consume more effort, time, and sacrifice. To her, what mattered, however, was that she kept trying as best as she could. The risk pushed her to make more efforts; for instance, asking, studying more, and reviewing PLPG materials. However, Lisa asserted that her hope of earning certification was much more than the fear of not earning certification; this fear did not make her down.

Risa said the professional risk of not earning certification made her worried; she heard that if she did not pass PLPG, after 2015 she might have to undergo one-year teacher professional education. Additionally, this risk would badly sadden her because she had given up many things, including living away from her family in order to participate in the 10-day training. However, this risk also brought a positive influence that it motivated her to study hard in order to earn certification.

With regards to the professional risk of not earning certification, Bambang said not

passing the PLPG meant that he was not a competent teacher and thus did not qualify to teach. If he still wanted to teach, he had to try harder to upgrade his competency because incompetent teachers would not be able to improve students' academic performance. Although he believed that he had tried hard and done quite well since the beginning of PLPG, he would use the remaining time wisely to prepare for the final competency test. If he did not earn his certification, he would feel shame in front of his colleagues because it showed that he was not a qualified teacher. In short, for Bambang, rather than making him down, the risk instead motivated him to study.

If he didn't earn certification, Amir said he would continue his duties as an institutional teacher teaching at his current school while looking for a side job to make ends meet. He added that he would be ready to retake final competency test. However, Amir contended that he had given his best since the beginning of the program by attending every session and being active in class – expressing his opinions and arguments. Amir was pretty confident that he would pass his certification. He said, "So I am sure, if I am not successful, there will be more teachers [other PLPG participants] who would be upset, disappointed or even stressed, something like that" (Interview 3, September 9, 2013).

The Most Influential Dynamic

Indicated by interviews, the teachers perceived rigor, reward, and risk of PLPG as influential factors in their pursuit of certification. Rigor was perceived by the teachers as the "high standard and demands" of PLPG. Reward was interpreted as "higher salary" by most of the teachers, and also as "professional recognition from colleagues" by Amir. Risk was defined as "fear of not passing PLPG" and "shame of failure."

Rigor appeared to be a constant factor for most of the teachers - they thought the training was difficult and challenging. However, Bambang and Agus explicitly stated the significant role of risk in their certification experience. For instance, Bambang said that the high standards and expectation of PLPG were very important because certification was given to accomplished teachers only, those who met the standards and expectation of PLPG. Without discounting the value of the reward of certification, Bambang contended that with or without the reward, he would continue to join PLPG to improve his competence. Sharing similar view to Bambang, Agus asserted that aligning his teaching practices with the standards and expectations of PLPG was much more crucial than having the additional income. Responding to this dynamic positively, they became more interested in learning in order to meet or even surpass the standards.

Reward was most influential factor to those who wanted to improve their standard of living and seek professional acknowledgement from fellow teachers. For instance, despite her worry over the rigor, which challenged her to make arduous efforts to align with the standards and expectation of PLPG, Lisa counted salary increase as most influential dynamic in her certification journey. Because he did not hold a bachelor's degree yet had a sense of conviction in his teaching effectiveness and content knowledge, Amir considered holding the title of certified teacher as very important for him in order to gain professional recognition of an accomplished teacher from his colleagues.

Risk was important especially to those who felt they would feel shame in front of their co-workers if they did not pass certification. Ahmad was the teacher who was most concerned with the risk of not earning certification. Motivated by this fear, he became motivated to earn certification on his second attempt.

Among the six teachers, two – Lisa and Ahmad – failed their first 2013 PLPG attempt. Lisa was unsuccessful because her scores on both national and local final competency test did not reach the minimum cut-off score. Ahmad failed because his local final test results did not reach the minimum required score. The following section illustrates learning leverage display for each of the teachers.

Learning Leverage Display for Teachers

Interacting differently with PLPG discourse, individual teacher's response to rigor, reward, and risk would adjust his/her PLPG experience, which in turn influences his/her learning and chance of earning certification (Hunzicker 2008a, 2011). The following examples demonstrate different ways of learning leverage exhibited during PLPG based on PLPG certification experience of Agus, Bambang, Amir, Risa, Lisa, and Ahmad.

Agus

Agus considered PLPG standards and

expectation very rigorous but it was not something he was afraid of; it even motivated him to study hard in order to align more closely with the standards and expectation. As the most influential dynamic in his PLPG experience, rigor was perhaps the longest side of Agus' leverage triangle with reward close behind (see figure 2 below).
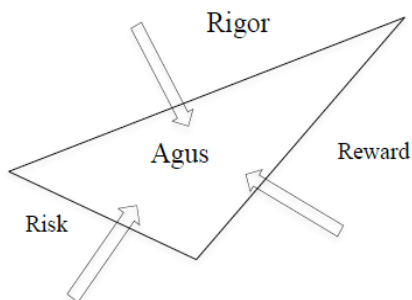

Figure 2. Agus' Learning Leverage

Both dynamics of rigor and rewards boosted his motivation to learn in order to earn his certification. While his fear of not earning certification was not absent, it was slightly insignificant but still beneficial in sustaining his effort to study and review PLPG module as well final competency test questions.

Bambang
In spite of his accomplished teaching practices, Bambang viewed the high standards and expectations of PLPG as an important factor in his certification journey. Motivated by challenge, he was very interested in learning new things and exerted various efforts to meet and even exceed the high standards required by PLPG. Thus, the longest side of his leverage triangle was most probably the dynamic of rigor with reward as the second longest side and risk close behind, as shown in the following figure.
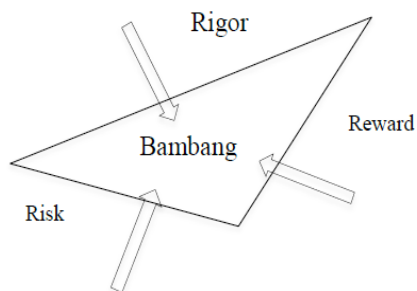

Figure 3. Bambang's Learning Leverage

He did not discount the prestige of holding the title of certified teacher and

salary increase, and the risk of not earning certification. However, he believed that he would automatically receive affirmation or recognition if he possessed excellent professional and pedagogical competencies. Confident with his content knowledge and teaching practices, he was not worried about the risk of not earning certification, which instead helped maintain his effort and determination to align with certification standards even closer.

Amir
Seeking professional recognition, from colleagues in particular, motivated Amir very much to pursue PLPG certification. He would love to prove to his fellow teachers that he is a professional teacher and able to earn the title of certified teacher even though he did not have an undergraduate (S1) academic qualification.
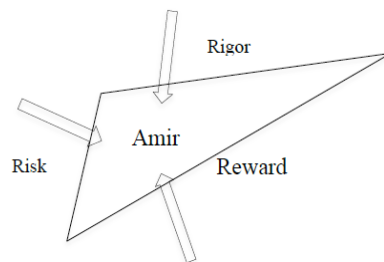

Figure 4. Amir's Learning Leverage

At the outset of the certification process, he had a strong sense of conviction that his teaching practices were already in line with PLPG standards but was still interested to learn new professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills from PLPG. Fear of not earning certification was not significantly influential in his experience of learning. Having said that, the longest side of Amir's learning leverage was most likely the dynamic of reward closely followed by rigor, and risk as the least influential dynamic, as depicted by figure 4 above.

Risa
Risa displayed a relatively similar learning leverage triangle to Amir's. She looked for financial recognition of her teaching profession through PLPG certification. For her, salary increase earned from certification would not only improve her welfare but also teaching practices as she could use some of the money to buy teaching equipment and resources. Thus, reward was the longest side of her learning leverage triangle (see figure
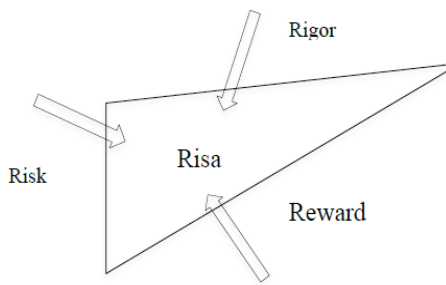
5 below).

Figure 5. Risa's Learning Leverage

Closely behind the reward, rigor was her second most influential dynamic, which motivated her to learn in order to match her teaching practices with PLPG standards. Creating the least side of her learning leverage triangle, the dynamic of risk for not earning certification fuelled her determination and persistence to attempt every effort to complete PLPG requirements.

Lisa
The longest side of Lisa' learning leverage appeared to be reward, and this was corroborated during interviews that it was receiving salary increase that motivated her most in her pursuing certification (see figure 6 below). However, during the process of certification, she was also worried much with the high standards, rigor, of PLPG and responded to it by exercising various efforts to situate her teaching practices within the high standards.
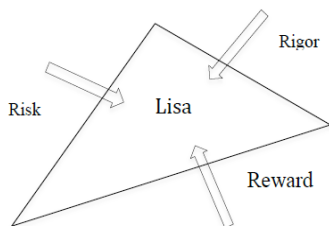

Figure 6. Lisa's Learning Leverage

At the same time, she had an enormous amount of fear of not being able to meet the standards. Although she claimed that her expectation of earning certification outweighed her anxiety of not earning certification, it appeared that risk of not earning certification, which made her overwhelmed with scepticism, was the second longest side of Lisa's learning leverage triangle closely followed by the dynamic of rigor. Despite her strong enthusiasm for earning salary increase

and learning, Lisa failed her first certification attempt and had to retake final competency – national and local tests.

Ahmad
Ahmad's triangle of learning leverage was different from others. He was interested in learning to align his teaching practices and content knowledge to the standards of PLPG, and valued the prestige of holding the title of certified teacher as well as the reward of earning extra income. Because it was his second attempt, Ahmad was extremely afraid of not achieving certification, which boosted his motivation to do every effort to successfully complete the certification requirements. Thus, the dynamic of risk created the longest side of Ahmad's learning leverage triangle, with rigor and reward respectively behind, as shown in figure 7 below.
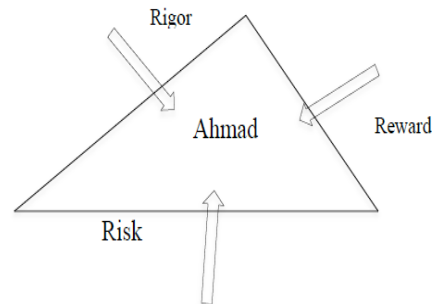

Figure 7. Ahmad's Learning Leverage

However, his fuelled determination to avoid embarrassment of not earning certification was not enough to make him successful in one of the two components of the final competency test, which is highly decisive in passing or failing certification. Ahmad retook the local final test a month after the training and was successful in earning certification this time.

DISCUSSION

Teachers may experience three dynamics of learning leverage (rigor, reward, and risk) in different amounts, varying from teacher to teacher as they align with certification discourse in dissimilar manners (Hunzicker, 2008a). Rigor, reward, and risk are the reciprocal driving forces that influence the learning experience teachers gain from certification and such influence can be either positive or negative to their learning depending on the way they interact with the dynamics. In this study, while the influence of the dynamics on teacher's PLPG journey

was reciprocal, some teachers asserted that the dynamic of rigor was most influential in their PLPG endeavour. The teachers who were motivated by this dynamic appear to be most interested in learning and became resolute to satisfy or even surpass the high standards and expectations of PLPG because they were energized by the challenge. Those teachers who cited the importance of the dynamic of reward in their certification journey were more motivated in gaining professional respect from fellow teachers and financial recognition from government – not only was it to increase their welfare but also to improve their teaching practices. The fact that there was a possibility of not earning certification indeed gave fear to some of the teachers. The teachers were aware that the main factor deciding their passing and failing was the final competency test. The one teacher who was most motivated by this fear became more determined to meet PLPG requirements.

While this study indicated that most teachers perceived the elements of rigor, reward, and risk positively influential to their learning (Hunzicker, 2008a, 2011), the effectiveness of learning leverage seemed also to be contingent upon several contextual factors. First, learning leverage would not work well when certification candidates approach the program with minimal alignment to certification standards (Lustick, 2002). Unlike National Board Certification (NBC) in the U.S., PLPG is a mandatory certification for in-service teachers in Indonesia. That is, all Indonesian teachers have to take the program regardless of their quality of teaching prior to the program. Although teachers had to take *UKA* before participating in PLPG, the test appeared to be the means to determine who would join PLPG first and who would join later, instead of the tool to decide whether or not one qualifies for the certification. The teachers who approached their certification with minimal alignment to PLPG standards would likely face difficulties in meeting the standards and not qualify for recognition as an accomplished teacher. Also, learning is not an instant process but rather develops over time. Contrary to NBC process that takes one to three years to complete, PLPG was administered for 90 hours of training and workshops within 10 days. This short timeframe provides exposure but does not afford the necessary time for teacher to learn well or digest the amount of knowledge nor perfect the skills offered in the program. As shown in the findings chapter, most of the teachers complained about the tight schedule of PLPG, which made their learning not optimal.

In spite of the above reservations, the learning leverage interpretive tool helped evaluate the balance of rigor, reward, and risk of PLPG. An appropriate balance of the elements could lead to substantial learning for teachers (Hunzicker, 2008b). Drawing on the teachers' perspective, this study indicated that one major deficiency of PLPG was attributable to the insubstantial professional risk of not earning certification. As a mandatory program, PLPG certification allows candidates to take the final competency test up to two times within one to two months should they fail their first attempt. Importantly, since the certification was compulsory for incumbent teachers, all of them would earn certification in the end, i.e., if they were not successful at the first time, they could pursue it in the following year. Thus, the risk for not earning certification appeared to be not as significant as the other two dynamics in fuelling teachers' effort to meet and complete PLPG requirements.

CONCLUSION

The majority of the participants in this study agreed that the rigor, reward, and risk of PLPG had boosted their motivation to learn, and thus perceived PLPG as a powerful learning experience. Specifically, two teachers considered rigor (high standards and expectations) of PLPG as the most influential factor. One teacher was very much concerned about the risk of not earning certification. Three teachers counted reward as most important in their PLPG experience.

Despite some contextual issues, the participants' perspectives in this study supported the interpretive tool of learning leverage (Hunzicker, 2008a, 2011) and at the same time provided evaluative information concerning the leverage of PLPG certification. While indicating that the rigor and reward of PLPG certification were quite influential in the teachers' pursuit of certification, the findings doubted the balance of rigor, reward, and risk of PLPG, as the dynamic of risk of PLPG appeared to be not as significant as the other two dynamics in driving candidates' motivation to complete PLPG requirements. In order to be a powerful learning experience for teachers, a certification program should apply learning leverage with an appropriate balance of rigor, reward, and risk.

This study therefore suggests that teacher professional development through teacher certification could be a powerful learning experience for teachers when it incorporates an appropriate balance of rigor, reward, and risk. Drawing upon the learning leverage interpretive tool, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) should incorporate an appropriate balance of rigor, reward, and risk into its current teacher certification program, i.e., PPG, and future in-service teacher professional development programs.

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