



Teacher Development from the Perspective of an English Teacher: A Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract: *Teacher development (TD) has become an essential pathway for teachers to develop themselves and their teaching, and to enhance their students' achievement. This study examines a relatively new area that has emerged from the growing body of teacher development literature. It focuses on a teacher's perceptions and beliefs regarding teacher development values, specifically in five sub-components: teacher development as a moral process; teacher research values; career development values; marginality and advocacy values; and teacher education values in English language teaching. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the participants' views on, and experiences of, the topics. The data analysis employed an interactive model consisting of data collection, display, condensation, and conclusion-drawing. The results indicate that the teacher undergoes specific teaching and learning processes within each component, contributing to his belief in teacher development. This study also recommends that solid communication and collaboration among teachers, students, and officials lead to a better quality of education.*

Keywords: *Career development; Marginality and advocacy in ELT; Teacher development; Teacher education, Teacher research*

INTRODUCTION

As a core factor in education, teacher development has improved teaching quality (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2015; Dreer et al., 2016; Palermo & Thomson, 2018; Postareff et al., 2007). Moreover, teacher development carries important values in shaping the quality of education. This continuous development has enhanced teachers' personal and professional growth. Numerous professional development (PD) programmes have been implemented – for instance, workshops, professional learning communities (PLC), lesson demonstrations, or graduate schools (Mundy et al., 2015). Moreover, initiatives to enhance teachers' knowledge and skill have considered their satisfaction and career advancement; in other words, a wide range of teacher development activities revolve around teachers' personal and professional development (Johnston, 2003). According to Evans (2002), teacher development involves strengthened professionalism on the teachers' side. Another value underlying the moral process is when teachers use their curiosity to understand what students want, maintaining their relationship with them (Johnston, 2003). Thus, teacher development has been one of teachers' quality factors.

Several studies have investigated the significance of teacher development for teachers. Dreer et al., (2016) surveyed 129 in-service German teachers to investigate the contribution of individual and situational factors to teacher development. They found that individuals, programmes, and environmental factors had crucial effects. Despite its research limitations, Dreer et al. (2017) suggest exploring the relationship between the effect of knowledge and skills transfer on teachers' development and school improvement. Palermo and Thomson (2018) examine teachers' motivational characteristics using a performance assessment programme. The results show that teachers have high internal motivation related to their pedagogical value and professional development. Moreover, teachers are reported to hold affirmative beliefs in the usefulness and the importance of their professional development. Thus, it can be learned that investigation reveals many factors that enhance teachers' growth.

However, little is known regarding teachers perceived professional development values and beliefs; the present study seeks to reveal these. This research focuses on an English teacher's perception in five sub-components (Johnston, 2003): teacher development as a moral process; teacher research values; career development values; marginality and advocacy values; and teacher education values in the English language teaching context.

The research questions formulate the focus for this study: (1) What is the teacher's perception of teacher development as a moral process? (2) What is the teacher's perception of teacher research? (3) What is the teacher's perception of career development? (4) What is the teacher's perception of marginality and advocacy in English language teaching? (5) What is the teacher's perception of teacher education? Thus, this paper investigates teachers' values regarding teacher development, as reflected in the research questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher development

Context, content, and stakeholders are crucial in understanding and researching the teacher's professional development (Sato et al., 2019). Avalos in Sato et al. (2019) suggest further that constant studies are needed to examine, discuss, and evaluate teacher improvement, the expectation of their education system, and the opportunities to advance their career and education. How teachers professionally grow involves limitless information about student learning and outcomes, supported by classroom theories and practices, all measured by curriculum implementation, instruction, and shared joint efforts (Sato et al., 2019). Therefore, external elements such as curriculum and other stakeholders influence how teachers develop themselves.

Motivation is one of the considerations that contribute to TD. Cohen (1983) states that choices around motivational change belong to every individual, and teacher development is also a choice for everyone. Engaging in a development programme makes teachers collaborate with their peers or colleagues. It is helpful to avoid narrow utilitarian values (Liu et al., 2008) that usually drive teachers to become less motivated to establish innovation in their

teaching. Maintaining motivation is essential for teachers' career progress (Claudia, 2015), supporting their sustainability in teacher development.

Moreover, Ankrum and Bean, as cited in Mundy et al. (2015), describe teacher PD characteristics that influence student outcomes. They are embedded in the profession, suitable for teachers' needs and goals, and arranged and provided during the school year. Despite the advantages of PD, teachers sometimes see it as irrelevant to their classroom (Lieberman and Mace, as cited in Mundy et al., 2015). This dissatisfaction suggests that PD needs to be delivered using effective strategies (Mundy et al., 2015); even though PD has been accepted as bringing benefits, it still has barriers to overcome.

Teacher development as a moral process

Teacher learning should be seen as a sustainable process in which teachers as educators and moral beings are given the freedom to question and share opinions (Sato et al., 2019). Although PD has been promoted, the results of deep professional learning are ineffective if teachers do not want to implement or change their practices (NCCA, 2018; Opfer and Pedder, 2011, as cited in King, 2016). Teachers, being placed as moral models and exemplars, are also assumed to be directly affecting students' moral development (Osguthorpe, 2008). In detail, Osguthorpe categorises three reasons why teachers are inclined to be honest characters. Teachers should exhibit particular characteristics and dispositions that students can see and emulate. Second, they are considered to deliberately and intuitively transmit excellent moral character. Finally, they are expected to provide moral guidance through a specific curriculum. Although little is known about teachers' moral characteristics in relation to students' personalities, teaching morality is based on sound teaching by good teachers.

Teacher research values

It has long been known that teachers are consumers of knowledge, and that they are placed to be the executors of research findings in which sometimes their roles and contribution are less recognised. Research conducted by teachers has a high value, with teachers and learners producing and using the conclusions (Johnston, 2003). They can identify problems, collect data, and analyse them. This differs from traditional research, which sees learners as the object to be studied; in teacher research (henceforth TR), students play important roles as they get involved in research.

There are various benefits of conducting TR. Borg and Sanchez (2015) state that TR influences teachers' confidence, self-esteem, classroom practices, autonomy, motivation, collegiality, and enthusiasm, and positively impacts schools and students. One way to sustain TR is through networking for teachers to help and share in TR (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990). As part of teacher research, action research (AR) is defined by Koutselini (2008) as "generally considered to be a process of teaching and learning that facilitates teachers' involvement in authentic, context-bound problems and supports the generation of new knowledge, which can emancipate them from imposed curriculum delivery." She further

explains that the willingness to conduct AR to improve teacher-student relationships and solve problematic classroom cases should be enhanced.

Teacher career development values

Topkaya and Uztosun (2012) researched the motivation for choosing teaching as a career among pre-service teachers in Turkey. They find that male participants have higher ratings for job security and employment possibilities. Teachers' interest in teaching, career choice satisfaction, and professional plans are positively related (Eren, 2012). Burden (1982) states that teacher career development involves changes that teachers experience in three aspects: (1) job skills, knowledge, and behaviours; (2) attitudes and outlook; and (3) job events.

Career development may not have the same linearity and clear structure as well-established professions (Johnston, 2003). Johnston further explains career development as follows:

Changing jobs; taking on a different kind of teaching, for example, one that involves a new skill area or elective topic, or learners of different ages or ability levels to those with whom one has previously worked; getting involved with curriculum design and renewal; taking a promotion; returning to school to study for a master's degree or a Ph.D.; moving into a position of responsibility, such as section coordinator or department chair; moving into administration, for instance, as director of studies or principal; deciding to write teaching materials for publication, and many other possibilities. (Johnston, 2003, p. 103).

Here, the values in deciding teachers' plans are not based solely on professional criteria (Johnston, 2003); career development could be influenced by personal as well as professional factors.

Mizell (2010) states that teachers face significant challenges in subject content, current instructional methods, technological advancement, and students' learning needs. Development needs thoughtful planning and mindful implementation with feedback to fulfil the teachers' needs to be effective. Moreover, teachers should develop theoretical and practical knowledge in order to evaluate performance (Galaczi et al., 2018). Continuing learning is mandatory for teachers, as trends and issues in education evolve.

Marginality and advocacy in ELT

Marginality in language teaching can be seen in how teachers are not paid enough, work extra hours, lack recognition, and have limited access to teaching resources. In many non-English-speaking countries, English teaching specialists are only native speakers and are blonde (Johnston, 2003). These phenomena have failed to value teachers in ELT. Teacher development will not be successful if teachers' lives are ignored. Advocacy is needed to change and improve teachers' work conditions and daily struggles. It is hoped that their work can be recognised and appreciated outside ELT, starting from teachers' efforts to respect and value their own profession (Johnston, 2003). Promoting teachers' well-being and improving support systems will be significant in teachers' development.

Teacher education values

Evidence of a high-quality, sustainable education system is lacking. The debates are centralised on what constitutes good-quality teaching, and how to examine and develop teachers (Anderson, 2004; Leu and Price-Rom, 2006; Mpokosa and Ndaruhutse, 2008, as cited in Peng et al., 2014). In this context, teacher learning is distinguished as a learning process that leads to teachers' professional expertise (King, 2016). Cited in King (2016), Evan describes changes in practice – as perceived from the knowledge, understanding, skills, behaviours, values, and beliefs – to explain the process.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is qualitative because it refers to meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, and descriptions, rather than to counts and measures (Berg, 2000). Besides, qualitative research is often effective when the main objective is to explore, explain, or clarify (Leavy, 2017). Further, this study employs a narrative inquiry to discover how humans perceive the world and create meaning from their experience (Clandinin, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Therefore, a narrative inquiry was considered the most appropriate method that dug into values related to teacher development (TD), as perceived by an English teacher.

The research was carried out online to explore values in the teacher development of an English teacher. The participant in this study was a male English teacher from Bandung, Indonesia. He has a bachelor's degree in English education and is a professional teacher with government certification. He is also a state teacher and at the time of the study was pursuing his master's degree. The participant was selected purposefully for his enthusiasm for developing his career as a teacher, and to share his values.

This participant had accomplished numerous achievements that motivated this current study to explore his teaching development. He was an awardee of a prestigious scholarship that fully funded his place on an ELT graduate programme. Besides, he had passed a very competitive selection to be an English teacher in a formal school, and was accepted as a civil servant. Thus, his perspective and views could be considered a lived experience to explore.

Semi-guided interviews were conducted to collect the data. Interview questions were composed from the research questions, and developed based on the theoretical foundation. Moreover, the interviews followed the participant's responses to the questions to probe more deeply. The discussions took place through a mobile phone online chatting platform, chosen for its user-friendliness in connecting people from different places, including cities. The researcher sent the questions via messaging, and the participant replied to them in his free time. The set-up was casual, encouraging the participant to feel free to express his ideas. He was also permitted to confirm any points if he wished.

The data analysis employed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman (1994), and followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) in comprising four

phases. These were data collection, display, condensation, and conclusion-drawing. First, the interview through the online chat texts was compiled and displayed. Next, the data were condensed by marking them based on their themes under the conceptual framework proposed by (Johnston, 2003). The data then were presented again for conclusions to be drawn.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the results and discussion of the study. Based on the analysis, the results and discussions are grouped into five regions based on themes from the research questions. The first is the teacher's perception of teacher development as a moral process. The second is the teacher's perception of teacher research. The third is the teacher's perception of career development. The fourth is the teacher's perception of marginality and advocacy in ELT. The last is the teacher's perception of teacher education.

Teacher's perception of teacher development as a moral process

As a moral process, teacher development (TD) is often used in two different professional contexts: viewing TD as an a-prepared-set way, and viewing TD as its own initiative (Johnston, 2003). The teacher gave his opinion about this, as shown in this script excerpt:

R: "There are two views of TD definition. One is putting teachers as the object in which they receive the training or workshops by the trainer, while the other definition explains that teachers should be the ones who initiate their development. Which definition do you agree with and why?"

T: "Rather than 'views,' I would see them as 'ways.' There are two ways of teacher development, and both are equally good. Joining workshops or seminars would give me more insights and introduce me to many fellow teachers. Initiating my development by reading books or leading a sharing session with my colleagues would also contribute to my development significantly."

(Henceforth R: Researcher, T: Teacher)

From the excerpt, it is suggested that the teacher agrees with both sides; he views them both as good approaches for his development. He values any opportunity that enables him to develop, no matter the source. His values could relate to his motivation in his story. This aligns with a study by Cohen (1983) that states that every individual has a personal choice to decide whether to engage in motivational change. Therefore, it cannot be compulsory to pursue external or auto-initiating motivation.

The research suggests that the rich atmosphere of honestly exploring education constructs positive meanings for teachers, and this can probably be realised through their joining workshops or seminars. Besides offering insight into this pathway, the participant mentioned that it allowed him to meet more fellow teachers, and this factor – where teachers can share each other's experiences and strategies – is very important to help a teacher avoid narrow utilitarian values, as stated by Liu et al., (2018), by overestimating that their efforts are the best.

The teacher led a sharing session with his colleagues, as one of the teacher-initiated contributions to his development, as Liu et al., (2018) indicate. When a teacher's experiences are validated by the teaching environment and his colleagues within it, strong positive emotion is generated, resulting in the formation of intrinsic motivation. Teacher motivation plays a critical role in defining policies to attract, retain, and develop teachers (Claudia, 2015). The teacher's perception of TD as a moral process is reinforced in that teacher development does not depend on the source of opportunity; it relies more on how he responds to an opportunity and uses every possibility to develop his career and maintain his motivation and commitment to growth and personal and professional development, as Johnston (2003) argues.

Teacher's values of teacher research

Teachers' environments can be fruitful sources for inspiring research. They provide what is needed for analysis: problems, data, phenomena, and possibilities. Therefore, research in this field may produce high-value evidence of beneficial findings for their surroundings (Johnston, 2003). In this case, teachers can be practitioners and researchers all at once. Regarding this issue, the teacher shared his values of teacher research in the following excerpt:

R: "TR is a way to value teachers and their classroom experience. They own the research and knowledge. Could you share your experience related to TR or Classroom Action Research? How significant is the impact on your development? Would you suggest other teachers frequently conduct study or research in their classroom?"

T: "I have little experience in conducting Classroom Action Research (CAR), but I have several colleagues who have conducted CAR several times. I get many insights and constructive feedback from those teachers, so conducting research improves teachers' capabilities significantly. I would highly recommend teachers – including myself – to conduct research frequently to answer and give solutions to the problems that teachers face in the classroom."

Through his statements, the teacher shares his limited experience in conducting CAR. Despite employing it rarely, he values it highly for seeking solutions to challenges he faces in the classroom. He recommends it to himself and others. When he researched his classroom, he became the producer of knowledge, not just one of the consumers from various sources. He underlines his role's values that he can use more than using. He believes that conducting research has a significant impact on improving teachers' capabilities. His belief is aligned with what Borg and Sanchez (2015) report: that TR influences a teacher's performance in many aspects.

Teacher's values of career development

It is said that identifying and placing one's core values at the centre of one's career exploration process can help one make meaningful connections between skills and career interests (Schram, 2015). The following textual evidence shows how the teacher values his career development:

R: “Referring to the term ‘development,’ how do you see yourself being ‘developed’? Is it getting higher education, a higher career position, or maybe something else?”

T: “For me, it is about self-satisfaction. Getting higher education is also a way to teacher development. For example, I joined some seminars and applied what I’ve got in my class, then the students showed improvement in their learning process; I would consider myself to have developed as a teacher. I would also say that getting a higher position and salary is a way to develop as a teacher.”

The excerpt shows that the teacher relates self-satisfaction to a developed parameter. This parameter is very subjective to measure because he can mention that. However, his choice to establish himself was a voluntary initiative rather than an obligation. He identifies several indicators of his self-satisfaction. These are: (1) improving students’ learning process by applying theory and practice; (2) getting higher education; (3) getting a higher position and salary.

His indicators somehow match the indicators of teacher career development by Burden (1982). His first indicator is related to Burden’s first indicator. This concerns the teacher’s change in his practice because of new knowledge from the workshops, which add to his skills and behaviour in teaching and, therefore, improve students’ learning process. His second indicator is related to attitudes and outlook. In this case, he mentions getting a higher education. By doing this, he may add more images of teaching, confidence and maturity, and willingness to try new teaching methods, strategies, etc. His third indicator aligns with Burden’s job event. It is also allied with the research finding (Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012). In this case, getting a higher position and salary can be one way to job security and employment possibilities.

The teacher was also asked about the biggest reason for his career development. An excerpt of his answer follows:

R: “What is the biggest reason (s) for developing yourself as a teacher?”

T: “The challenges. Teaching is not easy as you will encounter many different characteristics of classes and students. I’ve faced many situations in which I felt frustrated and stuck when teaching my students, so I find the need to develop myself as a teacher to answer those challenges.”

This is similar to what has been said by Mizell (2010), who states that teachers face significant challenges in subject content, current instructional methods, technology advancement, and students’ learning needs. As a result, teachers should continually expand their knowledge and skills to implement the best practices to answer those challenges, take students to higher achievement, and improve their teaching quality. To be effective, the development needs thoughtful planning and mindful implementation, with feedback, to fulfil its needs. Moreover, teachers should develop theoretical and practical knowledge and evaluate performance (Galaczi et al., 2018).

Teacher's perception of marginality and advocacy in ELT

Marginality in English language teaching (ELT) causes teachers' values to fail to be recognised (Johnston, 2003). In this session, the teacher gave his perception of three related phenomena: minority, freedom to choose, and vast gaps in the classroom. The following textual evidence addresses the first phenomenon, which is about minority:

R: "As a male teacher, you are considered a minority in this career field. What makes you stay?"

T: "I am fortunate to get experience teaching various levels of students, from preschool to university students. While there are more female than male teachers in young learners, almost equal numbers of both genders teach in high school and university. I believe your intention and motivation to be a teacher will make your stay in this field."

From his statement, he discloses that he has been in both situations, where gender proportions are equal and unequal. He does not mention any unfairness or barriers regarding gender minorities. However, his value shows that staying depends on intention and motivation, which becomes the basis for committing to staying in the field. This belief has been mentioned by Maria and Gracia (2006, cited in Badri et al., 2016) that the availability of long-term commitment is essential for the successful implementation of any professional development.

The following excerpt relates to the freedom to choose the teacher's aspiration:

R: "From a book chapter, there is a story of a doctoral student candidate pursuing study in the US. He has to bring his whole family (wife and three children). His main concern at the time was only about getting higher education for a better career. But then he realised it wasn't the best decision as his family should leave their hometown and other relatives. Have you been in this sort of story? Like being forced to choose and regretted the result of your choice?"

T: "I have. I am experiencing it now. I initially had to choose between leaving my home town and my job to continue my master's degree. 'Fortunately,' this whole Covid situation makes it possible for me to continue my master's degree by temporarily not leaving my home town and my job. Having a supportive family is essential to handling this kind of situation. Listening to your family is crucial as you must consider many different aspects. For me, it is a waste of time to regret your own decisions – what we can do is move forward and learn from it."

The teacher valued those consequences that follow the freedom to choose. He considered all crucial related aspects in order to carry out careful planning. Once a decision was made, what then existed was the opportunity to learn whether it was successful or not. He does not regret the chance to learn and consistently innovate. Moreover, he values the role of a supportive family in his career development. The supportive family becomes an excellent environment in which to grow and develop.

Thirdly, related to marginality in the classroom, the teacher's perception is captured in the following textual evidence:

R: "Every classroom is unique with its dynamics. Sometimes you get the majority of diligent and ambitious students, while most students are slow and less motivated. Do you have any moral values that you think are applicable in any classroom?"

T: "Treat others as you want to be treated. I believe in this attitude as teachers recognise their students' uniqueness and capabilities. Teachers have to design their lessons to fit the needs of their students, and ultimately to change their behaviour to be better."

Students' gap characteristics also cause a gap in attitude towards learning English, becoming a barrier to English teaching (Anburaj & Christopher, 2015). The teacher treats students fairly as he wants to overcome this. His belief shows the learner-centred view in his teaching that he is concerned about students' uniqueness and capabilities and the need to change to better behaviour (Tyler, 1981).

Policymakers should also facilitate advocacy for teachers' marginality. On the other hand, teachers might be able to advocate for themselves, as Jones suggests (2009). It is hoped that continuing professional development programmes, conducting research, sharing, bolstering efforts, introducing oneself to policymakers, and offering the best thinking, aligns with Johnston's (2003) statement. It should begin with teachers' attempts to respect and value their professions. Their work will be recognised and appreciated outside of ELT.

Teacher's values of teacher education

Teacher education is crucial in developing teachers as 'change agents' who can create a more equitable and sustainable world (Inman et al., 2011). This notion of teacher education can also be seen in the interview excerpt below:

R: "If you are given choices for your education, what topics do you want to study more or what pedagogic knowledge do you need to understand more?"

T: "The study of the curriculum. In my experience, many teachers, including myself, find it hard to understand the curriculum and what it wants. In practice, this becomes problematic as there are many different views and ways to achieve the learning goals. Then, how to link what the curriculum wants with the condition of our students."

Teachers, as practitioners, have the chance to experience first-hand the problems that come out in the school, and they need to overcome the difficulties by looking for practical solutions. In the answer above, it can be seen that the teacher interviewed had identified his challenges and the solutions that he needed. In most cases, teachers cannot overcome the problems by themselves. A support group must exchange ideas, gain knowledge, get insight, and apply solutions. As pointed out by UNESCO (Inman et al., 2011), institutions of teacher education fulfil vital roles in the global education community; they can bring changes within education systems that will shape the knowledge and skills of future generations.

Teachers can seek and find what they need to learn by being involved in a community. For instance, the curriculum study and its implementation mentioned in the interview can be shared and discussed in the community. Avalos (2011, in Sato et al., 2019) suggests that to deal with teacher professional development, it is necessary to constantly research, experiment, communicate, and portray issues such as the history and traditions of particular teacher groups, the academic needs of their school students, the standards of their educational systems, the working conditions of teachers, and the learning opportunities available to them. These opportunities to learn contribute significantly to teacher development as a whole.

CONCLUSION

To cite Johnston (2003), teacher development is primarily about change. Developing oneself as a teacher involves joining seminars and workshops, conducting research, developing a career, understanding advocacy, and pursuing teacher education. Applying to seminars and workshops is a way to establish oneself as an obligation. Another way is by initiating the activities oneself. These are the two approaches to teacher development, and in the interview, the teacher implied that both are equally important.

Teachers from classroom experiences will always find particular issues in their classrooms. Finding a solution by researching specific topics or problems is another path to teacher development. From the interview, it is known that the teacher had not carried out the research himself, but he states that conducting research plays an essential role in teacher development.

Developing as a teacher also means creating a career, including: personal, professional, position, and even salary. Those have nothing to do with marginality and advocacy, especially the aspect related to gender. The teacher explains in the interview that he has been in several institutions experiencing different situations. Some may employ more female workers than men, and some may not. He realises that every career has its pros and cons, and, as a male, he seems not to be bothered with the situation as long as he maintains interest and motivation in developing his career.

Regarding teacher education, the study shows that one needs to be part of a community or even an institution in order to share, discuss, and develop as a personal and professional teacher. The existence of a community brings many benefits; teachers can even give advice and recommendations to the officials or the ministry about particular topics to be learned. To sum up, each of the five components discussed makes a specific contribution to teacher development. Each piece contributes significantly to communication and collaboration among teachers, students, and officials in the school and the ministry. Building teamwork among teachers also plays a key role, so a strong community of teacher development in Indonesia has to be built.

There are limitations in this study. The number of participants – low due to time constraints – is considered negligible. It was also challenging to select participants meeting similar criteria. However, the findings could be used as a reference in the area of teacher development (TD). Future researchers could

explore this area further by recruiting more participants. Moreover, investigating the perspectives of the school principal, colleagues and family could enrich the result related to teacher development (TD) values.

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