

Exploring Teacher's Professional Development through Ethnography

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Abstract : *This essay explores the strategies that principals in rural Indonesia can employ to provide affordable education and professional teaching in early childhood institutions. The expansion of early childhood education in Indonesia since 2008 has led to a significant increase in services, but not necessarily in qualified teachers. This gap calls for professional development (PD) training to improve teaching quality in these areas. Through the narrative ethnography, the essay begins by discussing the role of the principal in teacher development and leadership style, reflecting on personal experiences and providing a strategic plan for educational change. It emphasizes collaborative approaches such as professional learning communities (PLCs) and weekly training to enhance teacher skills. Implementation considerations such as motivation, clarity, complexity, and quality are addressed, as well as the role of local government and external networks in supporting PD initiatives. Through careful reflection and strategic planning, the essay demonstrates how principals can lead educational change to improve the quality and accessibility of early childhood education in rural Indonesia.*

Keyword : *School Principal, Teacher training, early childhood*

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INTRODUCTION

The early childhood education is well-known in 2008 by the government initiative to widen access for poor children in 3000 villages across 50 districts. Thus, the number of early childhood services increased significantly. However, this expansion was not followed by the availability of professional teachers. Consequently, many schools employ the teachers who have no educational background in early childhood education. I would like to initiate the professional development (PD) training for teachers in early childhood education in a rural area to improve their skills. The purpose of addressing this issue is to explore the nature, challenges and opportunities of the school leader in improving the teachers' professional competence in early years centre in Indonesia.

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Furthermore, the significant of this issue is to develop the teachers' professional skill and increase the awareness to be a professional teacher in kindergarten.

In brief, there are three reasons why the principals cannot employ the professional teachers. First, being an educator in early childhood services is not regarded as lucrative profession for young people. Salary is not as high as an employee and the principals in rural area cannot afford the professional teacher. Second, the early childhood education is not familiar and popular in the community. Also, there is no standardisation to be a teacher in early childhood education in rural area.

However, the government has anticipated this issue with some regulations. For instance, give the training or workshop for the representative teachers in all districts, use the data gathering to improve the teacher's standardisation and support the teachers who are qualified with funding or incentives. However, as described in the previous discussion, this alternative is not effective to develop the teachers' professional skill to all teachers in rural areas.

In this light, the principal must take an initiative to find the solution through a program to improve teachers' teaching quality through the PD training. Thus, the important role in developing teacher's professional skill and principal's identity will be elaborated.

METHODE

Through the narrative ethnography, the essay begins by discussing the role of the principal in teacher development and leadership style, reflecting on personal experiences and providing a strategic plan for educational change. Narrative ethnography is designed to convince readers of the reality of the events and situations described. This type of observation can be done through researcher's initial reflection on details of events and behaviors through note taking (Bryman, 2012). This essay will also emphasizes collaborative approaches such as professional learning communities (PLCs) and weekly

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training to enhance teacher skills. Implementation considerations such as motivation, clarity, complexity, and quality are addressed, as well as the role of local government and external networks in supporting PD initiatives.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

My Role, Identity and Leadership Style

From my experience, I was a principal since 2010 until 2015 in kindergarten. In my first year, my responsibility is not only as a principal but also as a teacher. Before teaching in the class, I had some training to help me understand how to teach the children age three to four. In fact, I found most of the teachers who attended the workshop had no basic knowledge or degree in early childhood education. I realise that the main factor is because the early childhood services are not familiar. As a teacher, I understand that there are a lot of challenges in the classroom and the teacher must know how to handle the situation. Thus, early childhood teachers should have knowledge about how children grow and learn before planning for the activities in the classroom (Browne & Gordon, 2013).

In this issue, I will take my role as a principal and explore my identity. As principal, I consider the problems among the teachers in kindergarten. It has been shown that the role of principals in teachers' development training in early childhood education is important (Gumus, 2013). Hence, I would like to enhance the teachers' professional skill in the rural area. Furthermore, Inman (2014) argues that the leaders' life history can be used as a reflection to generate powerful leadership learning for current practice and help their leadership in the future. In this part, I will reflect on my own life history and professional identity for leadership learning and apply this for future leadership challenges.

To my knowledge, I have learnt the leadership from my parents. When I was a child, I remember that my father was a leader in a boarding school. We lived in near the school area. Sometimes, I liked to follow my father and saw how he talked or communicated to other people. Then, when I was in grade

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three primary school, we moved to another city. Two years later, my mother established a kindergarten school and became a principal. The school was near my house. Sometimes, I played and watched how she taught and talked to the teachers. In senior high school, I was eager to be a leader in a club or organisation in the school. However, I was not brave enough. Then, after graduated, I established an early childhood service. Also, at the university, I joined an organisation and led a project which practices my leadership. These experiences have taught me about how different people had different leadership types and inspired me to be a good leader.

Reflect on my history, I think my leading style is therapist leadership. I motivate my team and try to solve their problems. For example, after the class, I always ask the teachers their difficulty in teaching. Sometimes, I give them advice and some ideas to solve the problems. I believe that it is important to improve the teamwork and personal growth of each member. The strength of therapist leadership style is empowering through engaging individual and team. Through listening and finding ways, it is useful for human resource function and ethos of human development. However, there are some weaknesses for a therapist leader whom does not build strong cultures and lack of strategic/systems focus (Western, 2012).

In my perspective, I like the notion of collaborative teamwork. Somebody cannot do everything by himself. Thus, we need to work together to achieve the goals. However, Western (2012) reveals some weaknesses of my leadership style such as lack of dynamism, energy, focus on individual rather than systems. Even though he also mentions some strengths, it helps me understand that I need to consider what I need to do as a leader. Some of the weaknesses in my leadership style must be combined with my understanding as a leader. For example, when I become a therapist leader, I recognise that I lack big picture and strategic focus. Then, I need to make a change or initiative and thinking about how to overcome my weaknesses.

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Moreover, I believe that a leader must be able to modify his/her leadership style to face a different situation. For example, I will use the controller leadership style when I want to accomplish a project. I need to focus on the task and the output. I give them the target and expect the teacher to give me the result that I want. As Western (2012) mentions four type of leadership such as controller, therapist, messiah and eco-leadership. Each discourse may stand alone and dominate different organisations. In other words, I may act differently in leading the team as my strategy to achieve the goals.

In addition, Fullan (2013) states that the new evidence reveals that effective principals use multiple innovations. It is necessary to employ different leadership styles to support teachers both psychologically and with resources. For instance, in an emergency a leader need an authoritative leader to decide something. However, when organisational change is required, people need support and coaching. Thus, the leader will be able to focus on building emotional bonds and relationship to the members.

Furthermore, Hickman (2012) urges that change may require the compilation of leadership concepts. The multiple combinations (leadership) are possible in most change processes. The leaders must prepare, adapts and modify the pattern, behaviours and capabilities to perceive variation in the environment. Also, to take the right action at a critical moment. In general, three styles of leadership probably influence my action as a leader. As mentioned above, I will use the eco-leadership to lead my team. Alternatively, I will use the distributed leadership and therapist leadership style in leading the educational change. Thus, as a principal, I would like to initiate the PD training for teachers in early childhood education.

On the other hand, I consider another type of leadership that is important to be applied in the school. The distributed leadership. Spillane (2006) claims that distributed leadership more than the shared leadership. It provides the principals and those who work with them a set of analytical tools to support their observations on leadership practice. For instance, the leadership is not only the

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action of the leader but also the interaction between leaders and other members. Shared leadership possibly will enhance the teacher to take responsibility and understand their role as part of the team.

In this context, as a principal, I will communicate to the teachers about the idea of my educational change. Then, I will ask their opinion and suggestion about how to improve their professional enquiry based on their perspective. At the same time, this effort will help me to deliver the concept of my educational change to the members. Similarly, Moos (2012) describes that in distributed leadership, the teacher should be involved in leadership to feel respected and valued. Also, they should be given the opportunity to learn from each other and participate in decision-making.

Regarding this issue, I argue that eco-leadership style is the most effective style for my educational change. First, this paradigm takes an ecological perspective, which recognises not only the short-term consequences but also have long-term sustainability. Second, this leadership will exemplify tension between organic growth and strategy plan. Indeed, it will be beneficial for designing the strategy and sustaining the strategy in the future.

Moreover, Western (2012) states that leadership success will be to harness knowledge to provide a better quality of life and a sustainable future. I agree with the notion that a successful leader will consider the environment as the part of the change and has a vision for the future. In this case, the leader will think about how to improve the teachers' professional skill for long-term affect. Hence, short-term and long-term purposes are important for a leader to design a successful educational change in their school.

Strategies for Change

In designing an educational change, the strategies must be a broad vision that is challenging and sustainable in the long-term (Davies & Davies, 2012; Mintzberg, 1994). In this context, I will find the strategy of how a leader provides an affordable education and professional teachers in early childhood institutions in the districts in Indonesia. In this essay, I will initiate a collaboration with other

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principal to conduct a weekly training for teachers. This strategy can be applied in every district in Indonesia. Thus, I consider this strategy based on two reasons, first the significant role of principal to teachers' PD and the impact of collaboration in improving the teachers' quality.

In suburban area, the principals have a dilemma in providing both of an affordable education and the professional teacher in their districts. However, the best strategy to tackle this issue is to discover the teachers' skill in teaching the children. The teacher in kindergarten may not have basic education about teaching in early childhood education. Therefore, they can be taught and trained to be a professional teacher. In this light, the principal can work together to improve their teachers' professional skill and competency.

Moos (2012) states that if the leader gives people room to manoeuvre, they will fill out and increase their skills. The principals should realise their teachers' potential. Moreover, the principal should engage their teachers to develop their skills in teaching through developmental teacher tutoring. Gumus (2013) claims that the school leaders have significant roles in increasing the teachers' PD activities. He argues that there are significant associations between leadership style of principal and teachers' participation in PD activities. In this light, I can practice the eco-leadership to engage the educators and view them as part of the network and make spaces for leadership to flourish.

The other reason to consider is the collaboration. The principal can make a collaboration with other principal to conduct a weekly training for the teachers. The previous researcher called this as professional learning communities (PLC). Stoll (2013) identifies PLC as an inclusive supportive group of people with a collaborative, reflective and growth-oriented approach towards learning more about their practice rather than improving pupil's learning. It appears that PLC generates sustainable improvements because they build the capacity that helps schools progressing.

In other words, the principals in a rural area can collaborate to conduct a weekly training to improve their teachers' professional skill. First, the principal

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can initiate the tutoring every week. The principal who alternately coach the teacher can share their experience and knowledge in teaching the children. Alternatively, they can invite a professional teacher to coach the teachers and help them to improve their teaching. Moreover, sharing experience will not acquire any cost, and all of the stakeholders will get the benefit from this partnership. In fact, this strategy is practical and reasonable for pupils in the rural area.

The Implementation

According to Fullan (2013), there are three main factors affecting implementation. They are characteristic of change, local characteristic and external factors. In implementing the strategies, I would like to consider these factors to my issue. First, factors that relate to the characteristic of change are the need, clarity, complexity and quality.

The first character is the need of the teachers. In this plan, the main goal is to improve the teachers' teaching competency. However, the well-designed strategy could be ineffective if the teachers are not motivated to improve their skill. The leader must consider this issue that may affect the implementation and find the solution to find "the need" of the teachers. Thus, the most "buy-in" initiative is to convince the teachers that they will get the benefit from this tutoring. For instance, the training is useful for their future career and skills or to give the reward for "best teacher" every month or year. This appreciation probably will enhance the teachers to attend the seminar and learn how to improve their skill in teaching the children.

The other option is to give the consequences of having no basic knowledge in early childhood education. For example, they will find it difficult to teach the children or the children cannot explore their potential because they are not teaching them appropriately. Thus, the PD training is important for the teachers. Fullan (2013) adds that some teachers who are self-actualized and have a greater sense of efficacy lead them to persist in the attempt required to bring about successful implementation.

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In addition, there are no standards for early education teaching in the rural area. However, the principal can use the NAEYS standards for initial and advanced early childhood preparation program. For example, promoting child development and learning or using content knowledge to build meaningful curriculum (Browne & Gordon, 2013). This information will help the teachers to think about knowledge and find out more to fulfil the standards. The teachers' enthusiasm will affect their performance in training.

Moreover, the principals are invited in this strategy. Thus, they also must be informed about the advantages of improving their teacher's professional skill. As mentioned above, the can improve their teachers' competency which will affect their school progressing. In addition, the principal may have the different capability in teaching the teachers. However, it is essential to achieve a variety of skills within a team with all members contributing their strength (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2012). For example, social aspects of leadership such as the ability to inspire and motivate the teachers are centrally important.

The other characteristic of change is clarity. The teacher must be informed clearly about what is the strategy and why they need the PD. Lack of clarity of the goals of implementation will lead to the major problem at the implementation stage (Fullan, 2013). Teachers and other principals will not find the value of the strategy and the training probably just becomes a regular activity. In this case, the goals need to be clarified.

The aims, goals and time should be clearly stated. For example, in the first term, the teachers will be trained to improve their standards in promoting child development and learning for three months. The aim is to help the teachers know and understand young children's characteristic and needs. Then, the teachers can reflect on their experience, find some difficulty and get the solution from the discussion or other's experience. This collaboration will help them to learn from their partners. The professional collaboration potentially holds a critical key to the capacity building as all teachers are learners with their colleagues (Stoll, 2013). In other words, clear and specified change will help the

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teachers and principals implement the strategy and find the benefits of this collaboration.

On the other hand, there is two characteristics change that affects the implementation. They are complexity and quality. These characters require hard work, responsibility and continuous effort to make it successful. For example, some teachers may be not interested in the training anymore or the principals are not capable to coach the teachers. In this stage, consistency is crucial. To prepare the principals and teachers from these issues, monitoring and evaluation are important. The teachers must be invited to give their opinion or suggestion for the next tutoring session. Hamre and Hatfield (2012) recommend conducting the PD that is fun and easy for teachers, rather than challenging and focused on children's learning. In other words, the lesson in the training must be relevant for the teachers, and demonstrate evidence which will improve teachers' practice and learning.

Moreover, Hamre and Hatfield (2012) remind about the issue in implementing the PD, such as limitations of the workforce in delivering the tutoring. They suggest that the effective PD trainers should be highly educated people such as a master degree or highly specialised mentors. In fact, principals and teachers in the rural area lack of networking to the professional teachers. Also, it is difficult to conduct an effective PD training without any fund or help from the other organisations. Thus, the principals need to collaborate with non-profit organisations or find volunteers to involve in this program.

In addition, the previous research suggests using existing and new communication networks to build bridges between research and practice (Hamre & Hatfield, 2012). Some organisations such as the Association of early childhood teacher and personnel of Indonesia (HIMPAUDI) can help the teachers to improve the early childhood teachers' competency. These networks potentially support the principals to give the training to the teachers. On the other hand, it has been shown that there is an impact of the teachers' organisation for the educators. Heisner and Ledeborg (2010) find that child

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development associate training can be an effective means of increasing self-beliefs and self-reported practices of early childhood teachers, which will impact the classroom quality.

In sustaining the strategy, I need to promote self-monitoring and feedback to the principals and teachers. Hamre and Hatfield (2012) describe that although teachers continuously develop their skills in the training, they also need to focus on the effectiveness of these efforts. The mentors or principals can help the teachers to self-monitor their processing and provide individual feedback to improve the accuracy of the self-monitoring process. In other words, the leader will provide many opportunities to educators such as PD, self-monitoring, evaluation, and feedback through the regular tutoring. Thus, it is likely to strengthen the teachers' consistency to get the benefit of their PD training.

Furthermore, the principals can continue to start the other terms of training to the teachers with other goals, aims and duration. Some evaluations should be made to improve the coaching. Also, if necessary, they can collaborate with other schools who want to contribute and develop their teachers' professional skill. In this strategy, the school can start to cooperate with two or three schools in their district. Then, when the first term is successful, they can invite the other school who need the PD tutoring.

On the other hand, the external factors, such as local government, are important to help the principals work professionally. The local government can make a policy to collaborate the principals in their district to improve the professional teachers in the rural area. Hence, they can supervise the teachers' PD training run smoothly and regularly. Moreover, the principals should use this policy to expand the network and partnership with other schools to improve the quality of their teachers.

In addition, the principals in a district area need to make communication with other principals. In this light, the role of local government, as the agency, is important to cooperate the schools in their own district. Fullan (2013) states that the quality of relationships across these groups is crucial. Especially, to support

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change efforts and reconcile problems when there is conflict among these groups.

Reflection

From the discussion above, I would like to reflect on my understanding of how to lead an educational change. First, I have learnt that my leadership style influences the organisations, team and the school's success. Thus, there is some weaknesses and strength of my leadership which is important to help me learn and improve my leadership skill in the future.

Second, the discussion about strategic implementation helps me to see a broad picture about causes and consequences and the concept of leading the organisation. For example, considering not only what I need to do to improve the quality of teacher but also why the teachers need to improve their quality. In other words, I have learnt to understand what is the value of the teacher, their characteristic and how to encourage them to take responsibility and have the same view as the leader. I have seen that the teacher's intention and need should be considered. In my opinion, the most beneficial learning is understanding the factors of implementation such as the need, clarity, complexity and quality.

Lastly, the discussion helps me to find the suggestion and perspective from the researchers about my ideas and educational change. In addition, it allows me to think about the external factors such as the government and other organisations. I realise that the network from the other corporations can be helpful to enhance the successful of my educational change. Indeed, it is not easy to be a successful leader. However, this discussion helps me to develop my skill and understanding in leading the educational practice.

Finally, the educational change and the strategic implementation have been discussed. To conclude, the principals have an important role in improving the teachers' development training in their district. I have discussed my role, identity and leadership style in leading the educational change. Also, how the strategy should be implemented and the factors that should be considered.

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Moreover, some potential solutions have been described. Hopefully, this discussion has explained the strategy about how the principal provides an affordable education and professional teacher in early childhood institution in a rural area in Indonesia.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

The author is trying to explore her identity as the principle in the pre-school which is located in the sub-urban near Medan, Province of Sumatera Utara. Through the ethnography, the researcher reflects on her previous actions and experience to elaborate the insight and practical solution to enhance the quality of teaching and teacher's professional development.

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