

## **BLENDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR PRIMARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS: DESIGN AND EVALUATION**

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**Abstract:** The professional development of Primary English teachers has not received adequate attention from the government. In addition, time and financial constraints have been the common problems for teacher professional development (TPD) in Indonesia. Blended TPD which combines face-to-face and online interaction is perceived to be a better alternative for TPD. The purpose of this study is to examine how blended TPD program benefits primary English teachers' participation in Bandung SEA-Language (BSL) program. A survey was used with help of a set of questionnaires, interview and online discussion scripts and instruments to find out the participants' attitudes and perception towards BSL program. The results included categorization based on the PD evaluation model adapted from Guskey (2000) which comprise, participant reaction, participant professional learning, participant use of new skills, organizational culture and students learning outcomes. The results revealed that participants have strong positive attitudes toward the program due to its usefulness and contribution to professional development of teachers.

**Keywords:** Blended Learning, Teacher Professional Development.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Although teaching English at primary level in Indonesia has been conducted for more than 20 years, the professional development of Primary English teachers has not received adequate attention from the government. This is probably due to the fact that English subject is not part of the curriculum of the primary education. The 2013 curriculum states that there is an alteration of the status of English language at primary level from a local content to an extra-curricular subject. As an extra-curricular, English subject is not necessarily delivered within school hours. However, for many primary schools in Bandung, English subject is still regarded as on the curriculum contents referring to the Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture No. 060/U/1993 explaining that a primary school may teach English as a local content subject to students in years 4, 5, and 6 bearing in mind that the school can cater for the requirements and able to attain qualified teachers and sufficient facility required to conduct English teaching and learning.

Issues related to the quality of primary English teachers in Indonesia have been growing in accordance with the ever increasing number of elementary schools which offer English subject as local content at their schools. These schools try to respond to the demands from parents and the society in providing English subject, regardless of the availability of qualified English for Young Learner (EYL) teachers and facilities.

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In consequence, many teachers – whether or not they have the qualification as EYL teachers – are ‘forced’ to teach English at elementary level.

Studies conducted to investigate the quality of Primary English teachers in Indonesia show that the majority of English teachers at primary level have not received any formal training for teaching English, let alone teaching English for primary level. They also lack professional, pedagogic competence and have limited proficiency level (Asriyanti, Sikki, Rahman, Hamra, & Noni, 2013; Chodidjah, 2008; Suyanto, 2009). The inadequacy of pre-service education in preparing teachers to teach English at primary level is one of the determining factors of the poor quality of primary English teachers (Zein, 2014). The impact goes to parents who start to complain and express their dissatisfaction with the quality of English education at primary level (Chodidjah, 2008).

The needs for teacher professional development is pivotal for the improvement of primary English teachers’ competence. EYL teachers are faced with the urgency to improve their quality of teaching which is believed to be the most influential in improving learners’ achievement. On top of that, the growing number of innovations in English language teaching method and literature provides opportunities for teachers to keep updating their knowledge and skills and cope with the ever growing changes in English education. In relation to this, Teachers Professional Development (TPD) programs can serve as the foundation in shaping and reshaping the English teaching practices.

The common problems in conducting TPD are related to adjusting to teachers’ busy schedule and getting fund for conducting TPD is fairly challenging. Blended TPD program which combine the face-to-face with online interaction can be an alternative in the attempt to improve the quality of EYL teachers. The nature of online interaction which allows participants to join the program at anytime and anywhere convenient to them (Charalambos & Michalinos, 2004) can cater the need for flexible TPD time. The financial constraints can also be minimized because teachers do not need to be removed from their schools to the TPD venue (Duffy et. al., 2006). Meanwhile, the sense of belonging and trust necessary to build a learning community (Charalambos, Michalinos, & Chamberlain, 2004) can still be established through the utilization of face-to-face and online interaction in blended learning model.

In light of improving Primary English Teachers quality, this study is conducted to investigate how Primary English Teachers involved in this program can benefit from the blended teacher professional development. The result of this study is expected to be able to inspire training designers and providers to use blended TPD as an alternative to full face-to-face programs which are commonly conducted in

Indonesia. The purposes of the study are to examine how the blended TPD program benefits teachers participating in BSL program and to inform training designers and providers on the design of blended TPD which can be utilized for improving the professionalism of Indonesian teachers.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study can be twofold – contributing to the literature of TPD in Indonesia and providing information to some personnels related to TPD. The findings of this study will contribute to the literature of teacher professional development in language teaching by providing more information on the benefit of conducting blended teacher professional development program for teacher quality improvement. The findings can help course designers and material developers in considering the teachers' needs and some strategies to be implemented in blended TPD. Schools and stakeholders can get information from the findings on the type of TPD required to be enrolled by the teachers and how it may contribute to improvement in students' learning outcome.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review discusses some related theories and researches used in this article as the springboard and foundation of the study, covering the topics of blended learning, teacher professional development, blended teacher professional development, primary English teaching and related researches on blended teacher professional development.

### **Blended Learning**

There are many different interpretations of blended learning as the term itself keeps evolving from time to time. Up to now, there are approximately four different description of blended learning, (1) the combination of conventional face-to-face instruction with technology-based instruction (Thorne, 2003), (2) the combination of different types of technology such as off-line and web-based technology (Owston, et. al., 2008), (3) the combination of pedagogical approaches such as constructivism with behaviorism without paying attention whether or not technology is involved (Owston, et. al., 2008), (4) the combination of instructional technology with specific tasks to be accomplished (Finn, D, & Bucci, 2004; Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

The implementation of blended learning models is based on the assumption that there is a wide range of benefits contained in face-to-face interaction, (among students and among students and teachers) as well as online interaction. Therefore, the purpose of the use of blended learning models is to obtain a harmonious

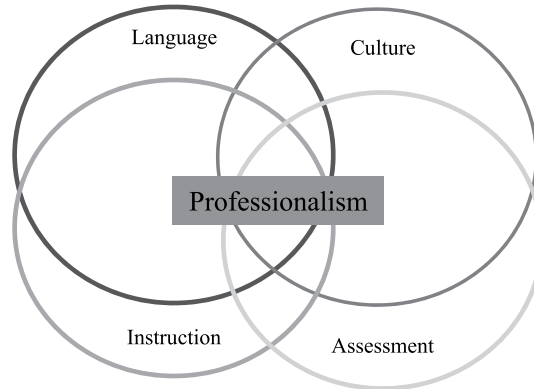
balance between online and face-to-face interaction (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003). The benefit of implementing blended learning can be investigated from different perspective such as the contribution to the improvement of learning outcomes, flexibility and accessibility of learning, and cost effectiveness (Owston, et. al., 2008). Regarding the first benefit – which is related to the improvement of learning outcomes – it is believed that the combination of face-to-face and online learning makes it possible for the learners to be engaged in a spontaneous verbal communication but also in a thoughtful discussion and reflection in online platform. This will help learners to be connected to their learning community be it co-located or not. The second benefit – flexibility and accessibility – are the most cited reason for implementing blended learning. The nature of online learning, which is accessible 24/7, allows the participants to have the full flexibility of learning. Meanwhile, conducting face-to-face interaction at some points of the program will make it possible for learners coming from a distance to join the program. The last benefit – cost effectiveness – is actually very much related to which cost factor being measured. Blended learning might reduce the cost for transportation and accommodation for learners coming from different areas, it can also reduce the cost of paying the substitute teachers (Owston et. al., 2008). However, when talking about the technology tools or internet connection, blended learning might not be as cost savvy as it was thought.

### **Teacher Professional Development**

The needs for continuous TPD are crucial to the development of the quality of the teachers which will certainly give impact on the quality of student learning. For teachers, following professional development program does not necessarily mean that they are unqualified. It is simply because of the fact that not everything teachers need to know can be provided at pre-service level, as well as the fact that the knowledge base of teaching constantly changes. (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Through TPD program, English teachers can update their knowledge in areas such as curriculum trends, second language acquisition research, composition theory and practice, technology, or assessment. By updating their knowledge, teachers will gain more confidence about their teaching practice, and obtain more clarification and understanding on their principles, beliefs and values of their teaching. (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Improvement and changes in teacher professional development are likely to result on better students' achievement and outcome (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; Gupta, 2014; Guskey, 2002)

In defining what constitutes as professional teachers, the Indonesian law no. 14/2005 on Teacher and Lecturer stated that teachers should have four competences.

Among others are pedagogical, personality, social and professional competence. Meanwhile, borrowing the standards of professionalism from TESOL P-12, the basic standard of professional English teachers should cover their quality and knowledge in language, culture, instruction and assessment, (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010) as depicted in the interlocking diagram below.



**Figure 1: TESOL P-12 Teacher Education Program (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010)**

Based on the picture above, the standards in language include the teachers' knowledge on the language as a system and the language acquisition development. In terms of culture, teachers should be able to consider the culture that will affect student learning and the strategies to cope with the cultural differences among students and students as well as students and teachers. As for instruction, teachers should have some competences in planning and implementing content instruction as well as using resources and technology effective for classroom instruction. Lastly, in term of assessment, it is important that teachers understand the issues of assessment for ELLs including the language proficiency assessment and classroom-based assessment (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010).

In the attempt to help teachers approach and meet the professionalism standards, Richards & Farrell (2005) posited some types of activities for teacher professional development program, such as self-monitoring, journal writing, critical incidents, teaching portfolios, action research, peer coaching, peer observation, critical friendship, team teaching, case studies, teacher support groups and workshops.

### **Blended Teacher Professional Development**

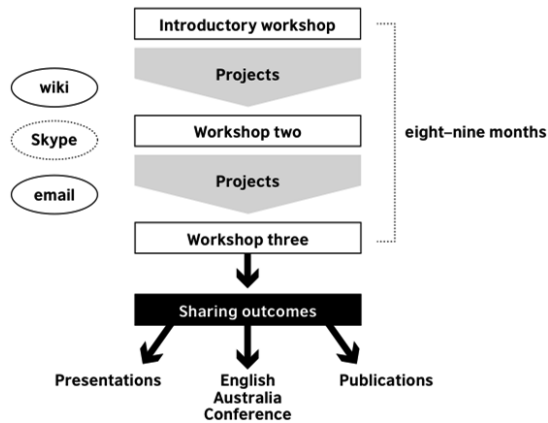
One of the issues with TPD program is the teachers' hesitance to implement what they have obtained into the classroom. Some researches show that effective PD might

take place when it is conducted in a long term, involves collaboration, focuses on students learning and links to the curriculum (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). Blended TPD has the potential to cater to these requirements due to its flexible and accessible nature. The extended length of TPD would be possible to be conducted through online interaction because teachers do not need to leave their schools to participate in TPD sessions. The face-to-face sessions can be arranged for a few short meetings after school hours. Through conducting a longer TPD program, it is more likely to have more changes in the teaching practice (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

Collaboration should be the highlight in any TPD program, whether it is a face-to-face collaboration or online collaboration (Schlager & Fusco, 2003). Through implementing blended learning model, both kinds of collaboration are possible to happen and can complement each other. The face-to-face collaboration can be done among teachers within the same school focusing on material development, lesson planning, or review and reflection. Meanwhile, the online collaboration can be done with other participants from different schools discussing similar activities being conducted in each other context (Owston et. al., 2008).

Owston et. al. (2008) also added that blended learning can create the possibility of providing TPD program which focuses on student learning and links to the school curriculum. A careful design needs to be made to select which aspects of the program that need to be conducted online and which aspects that need to be conducted face-to-face. By implementing blended model in TPD program teachers are able to immediately try out the ideas that they obtained from the online community into their classroom. Northrup & Rasmussen (1999, in Owston et. al., 2008) used the term 'just-in-time' professional development to describe the immediate chance for teachers to directly implement what they learned into the classroom practices.

In blending the online and face-to-face interaction, the face-to-face interactions can be placed at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the program. Burns & Edwards (2014) did a blended TPD for classroom action research program in Australia using the model depicted in the picture below. The program was conducted for eight months. This program was initiated by an introductory workshop which is aimed at familiarizing the teachers with the concept or CAR, refining the research plans, developing some initial questions to frame the research process, identifying teaching strategies to be trialed and nominating ways to collect data for action and reflection. Having finished the first workshop, the teachers work at their schools to put the ideas into action.



**Figure 2: Blended TPD Model for Classroom Action Research (Burns & Edwards, 2014)**

The second workshop was conducted to sharpen the participants’ research plan through an extensive discussion and debate. After the workshop, the teachers go back to their schools again to continue their research. At the final workshop, teachers reported and reflected on how they have finalized their research. This program was ended by conducting a joint colloquium in which the participants should present the result of their CAR and the experiences they obtained throughout the program.

**Primary English Teaching**

The teaching of English at primary level needs different approaches compared to those of adults. Therefore, the implementation of the teaching of English at the primary level requires qualified and competent teachers who have specific training on the teaching English for young learners. There are some classification of EYL teachers as mentioned by Vale & Feunteun (1995), among others are (1) teachers with EFL experience, but with no experience working with children, (2) teachers with experience of teaching children, but with little or no experience of teaching EFL, and (3) teachers who are training to teach EFL, possibly to children. This is in line with the three classifications of EYL teachers in Indonesia as stated by Suyanto (2009), (1) classroom teachers who have not been to English teaching college, (2) English teachers who attend English teaching college but have no experience working with children, and (3) teachers who have English background and experience working with children.

Indonesian students who learn English do not have sufficient exposure of using English outside school and they will be very much dependent on the ways English is taught and used in the classroom. This condition provides challenges to the teaching of English as Lightbown (2000 in Hayes, 2007) explains that the success of English learning depends on the exposure, opportunity, and the length of time for

using English. Likewise learning a first language, learning English requires support and conditions for the learners to master the language for daily communication (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). However, English learning in EFL classroom is very limited by time. The implication therefore suggests English language teaching in the classroom provides the students with as much exposure as possible and opportunity for using the language within the given time.

The allocated time for learning English in Indonesian school is varied depending on the level of education. In primary school, which is the main focus of this study, an English lesson generally lasts for about 60 minutes per week. The time allocation will also differ in every school as English is introduced in primary curriculum as local content which means it is optional to be taught to children. Amid its status as local content, the government has recommended English lesson to be taught to primary school students starting from year 4 to year 6. Surprisingly, due to high demands from parents, many schools teach English since year 1 where students in that level are still struggling to learn to read and write in Bahasa Indonesia as their first language (Chodidjah, 2007)

Many criticisms were given to this early implementation due to several reasons. The first concern is related to the possibility that children who learn English would have tendency not to use their first language. Second reason which is contradictory to the first one, children would develop negative attitude toward English as many children complain that English is a difficult subject. Looking at these two reasons, it seems that the first one is debatable as an English lesson which is delivered in 60 minutes per week will not easily contribute to the children's proficiency.

As far as children motivation is concerned, the second reason is more apparent. Children are potential to develop negative attitudes when English lessons are not presented in a child-friendly way. In doing so, primary English teachers are required to be skillful in handling children and knowledgeable in teaching English to children. It means that the teachers should have sufficient English proficiency to deliver the lessons through activities that accommodate the ways children learn. Otherwise, incompetent teachers who treat children as adult learners in learning English will give negative impacts on children's motivation and the quality of English produced by the children (Damayanti, 2008)

Negative impacts on children's motivation and proficiency are possibly anticipated by equipping primary English teachers with sufficient pedagogic competency. They need to be well-informed regarding theories of child development and theories of language and language learning. They are also expected to be proficient so that they are able to deliver child-friendly activities which mainly focus on the use of English actively. The ability to design varied activities for children and to give effective instructions in English will help children learn English and motivate them to learn more and use the language (Graddol in Hayes, 2007). In sum, primary English teachers have responsibility to motivate and enable children



to learn English through variety of child-friendly activities that accommodate children's characteristics in learning.

### **Research on Blended Teacher Professional Development**

Some research on blended learning model for teacher professional development have been conducted in several different contexts. Holmes, Polhemus, & Jennings (2005) did a research to investigate the blended TPD for k-6 teachers. This research used blended approach in introducing the use of technology by facilitating teachers to work in a learning community and assisting them to be independent learners. From this study it was found out that blended learning has helped the teachers when participating in this program to have better understanding toward the use of technology and to implement the knowledge in their classroom practice.

In another study Kocoglu, Ozek, & Kesli (2011) did a study on blended learning approach for in-service teachers of English. They investigated the effectiveness of using blended learning compare to the face-to-face classroom interaction. The result shows that there was not any differences in content knowledge acquisition between the groups receiving blended learning instruction with those receiving face-to-face instruction.

Similarly, Leake (2014) conducted her research to investigate professional development outcomes of two groups of teachers participating in two different mode of TPD program. One group belongs to the blended course program and the other group belongs to the face-to-face TPD program. The results of this study show similar changes and instructional beliefs for both groups. Additionally, the blended group shows higher satisfaction with the course content, materials and instructor involvement. However, this study revealed that although the participants show that they obtain new knowledge on instructional strategies, they are reluctant to apply them in their classroom.

The literature review above show positive attitude from the participants as well as satisfying result regarding the content knowledge obtained by the participants. However, when being compared to face-to-face interaction, the result of the blended TPD program did not show any significant differences. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that Blended learning is better than face-to-face interaction. It is necessary to bear in mind that implementing blended learning is not due to the fact that it is better than face-to-face interaction, but it is due to the fact that there are some constraints, such as time and financial, that can be minimized through implementing blended TPD model.

### **Research Methodology**

This part of the article covers the research design, the participants, the explanation of the blended TPD, the data collection, and data analysis.

### **Research Design**

This study was carried out using a qualitative case study approach to provide an in-depth investigation on the use of blended teacher professional development for primary English language teachers in 5 elementary schools in Bandung. Through case study, a collection of rich data collection can be drawn ensuring the relevancy to the reality and providing the basis for generalization (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003). Cohen et. al., also added that case study can establish cause and effect by recognizing them in the real context. To Hitchcock & Hughes (1989), case study approach is beneficial for researcher who has little control over events. They elaborated some characteristics of case study as follows:

- It is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case.
- It provides a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case.
- It blends a description of events with the analysis of them.
- It focuses on individual actors or groups of actors, and seek to understand their perception of events.
- It highlights specific events that are relevant to the case.
- The researcher is integrally involved in the case
- An attempt is made to portray the richness of the case in writing up the report. (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989)

### **Participants**

The participants of this study are five primary English teachers from five different schools in Bandung. A purposive sampling was used to choose these five teachers. They were willing to join the blended TPD program and agreed to conduct the implementation of the material given in the TPD program in their class. Based on the result of the preliminary study, these teachers have 3-15 years of English teaching experience in grade 4-6 of elementary school. Four of the teachers graduated from English education department, while the other one is a classroom teacher graduated from elementary school teacher education.

### **The Blended TPD Program**

This Blended TPD program is called Bandung SEA-Language program. It is a teacher professional development program which is specially designed for primary English teachers. This pilot program was intended to help teachers in integrating technology into their classroom practices using Android mobile applications. The use of these mobile applications were embedded into a project based learning model which required the participants to design a project plan and create materials for elementary school students in creating digital storytelling. This program was delivered for 3 month periods with the combination of face-to-face meetings and

online interactions. The face-to-face meetings were delivered for three times – at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the program. Meanwhile, in between the face-to-face meetings, participants were given opportunities to access to online materials and have online discussion using two platforms – Edmodo as the social learning network and Telegram as the smartphone-based instant messaging.

The face-to-face meetings were conducted for only four hours after school hours. The first meeting was used to give overview of the program, explain the stages and the requirements in creating digital stories and introduce the teachers to the android application. The stages of digital storytelling were adapted from the 8 steps to great digital storytelling proposed by Morra (2014). The stages are (1) mind mapping ideas, searching information, picture taking and selecting, storyboarding, script writing, presentation practicing, picture compiling and voice recording. Meanwhile, the android applications being introduced in this meeting are, (1) PicCollage for Picture editing, and (2) Clarisketch for sound recording. The second meeting was conducted for sharing the implementation progress of the digital story project, and discussing some problems and solutions encountered during the first half of the implementation. At the second meeting, the teachers were introduced to another mobile application – VivaVideo. This application can create a short slideshow movie and record students' voice in creating digital story. The last face-to-face meeting was used for reporting the result of the digital story project and reflecting on the lesson learned and further action to be taken for the future.

The online interactions were utilized for sharing problem and solution encountered during the implementation. Most of the problems are related to the technical problems and some stages of the digital storytelling. In addition, Edmodo was used for providing more materials about digital story telling through video lectures and articles related to digital storytelling.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection method used for this study are a close-ended questionnaire, interview and online discussion transcript.

### **Questionnaire**

Anchoring from a set of questionnaire adapted from Guskey's evaluation of professional development to examine how the participants benefit from the blended TPD program. The investigation was based on five elements, among others are (1) participant reaction, (2) participant professional learning, (3) participant use of new skills, (4) organizational culture, and (5) student learning outcome (Guskey, 2000). This questionnaire consists of 15 Likert-scale questions with scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. (See appendix 1 for the questionnaire form). This questionnaire was distributed to the participants using google form at the end of the blended TPD program. The link to google form was posted in the Telegram

group, an online short message group specially built for online communication among participants and the TPD tutor.

### **Interview**

Interview was used to get a more in-depth understanding towards the participants' perception on the blended TPD program and how it contributes to their professional learning. A set of interview protocol consists of five questions was used to interview all teachers participating in this study. Cohen et. al. (2003) mentioned that it is important to keep the participants anonymous in order to protect the participants. (See appendix 2 for interview protocol). This interview was conducted after the participants filled out the questionnaire to get confirmation towards the participants' answer in the questionnaire.

### **Online Discussion Transcript**

The online discussion transcripts taken from the discussion in Edmodo and Telegram were analyzed to look at how teachers utilized these two platform for their professional learning. The online discussion transcripts are categorized using Hellmig's (2009) scale for grading the online discussion thread. There six categories are, (1) Posting by the moderator without reaction, (2) Posting by the participants without reaction, (3) Posting and one answer, (4) posting and one answer without tutor, (5) discussion between a participant and the tutor, (6) discussion without participation of the tutor.

### **Data Analysis**

To answer the two research questions, the data taken from questionnaire and interview were analyzed using the three stages of qualitative analysis proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994), data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Data reduction began by re-reading the result of questionnaire and interview in the lights of the two research questions: (1) How do the participants benefit from the blended TPD Program? (2) How do the participants perceived the TPD program to contribute to their professional learning? The result of the questionnaire were categorized and tabulated based on the five PD evaluation from Guskey (2000), whereas the result of interview were coded to look at the similarities, differences and the uniqueness of the answers from the participants and see the relevancy with how the participants perceived the Blended TPD program. The result of online discussion transcript were counted and coded based on the six categories form Hellmig (2009)

For the data display, the result of the tabulation from the questionnaire were then converted into graphic display to clearly show the trends on how the Blended TPD program has benefit the participants. As for the result of the interview and

online discussion transcript, the quotations were grouped and sorted as different findings to be discussed further.

The final stage is the analysis to draw conclusion from the data being displayed. This phase required the re-reading of the data display, hypothesizing and synthesizing the trends and checking the evidence which might confirm or contradict the analysis. It is occasionally needed to go back to the raw data for further elaboration or clarification.

**Findings and Discussion**

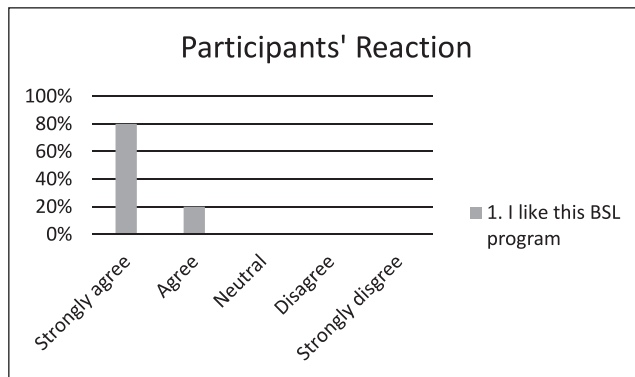
This section of the article will discuss the findings drawn from this study followed by a more in-depth discussion by connecting the findings with some related theories relevant to them. The discussion will be organized based on the two research questions postulated at the beginning of the article.

**Research Question 1**

The first research question deals with the design and implementation of blended TPD program which can be beneficial for the teachers. The description of the findings will be based on Guskey’s (2000) five stages of evaluation. The discussion will be elaborated based on the result of the questionnaire and online discussion.

**Participants’ Reaction**

Based on the questionnaire, all participants show their enthusiasm and positive attitude toward the blended TPD program (see Figure 3). There are 80% of the participants “Strongly agree” and 20% of the participants “Agree” to the statement “I like BSL Program”. The three face-to-face meetings were attended by all participants. They always actively participated in the training and show their excitement when being a introduced to new technology application.



**Figure 3: Participant Reaction**

The strongly positive response above shows a slightly different result compared to the analysis of online discussion in Edmodo and Telegram. The online interaction in Edmodo did not meet the researcher's expectation. Most of the discussion threads in Edmodo were tutor-initiated announcements or discussions without any meaningful reaction from the participants. Most of the participants only respond to the posts to say "thank you" or show agreement to the statement. The online discussion in Telegram was utilized more intensively by the participants. There were many posts posted and discussion taking place with or without the existence of the tutor. The online discussion in telegram was mainly about sharing ideas for classroom practice, brainstorming topics for digital storytelling, sharing teaching materials for students, sharing problems and solutions during the implementation of Digital Storytelling Project, giving supports to each other when encountering difficulties and sharing result of students' project.

Out of the five participants, teacher A was the most active participant. She always responded to any posts given by either the tutor or other participants. Besides responding to other posts, A also shows her eagerness through initiating discussion topic, giving suggestion to other participants related to technical problem or problems with students' motivation, sharing materials and classroom practices. In one of online discussion session conducted in telegram, teacher A gave full support to other teachers who encountered difficulties in managing her class and motivating her students to create the digital story. She said,

"I know it is difficult...it's difficult for me too. We are here together, let's support each other and finish this program together"

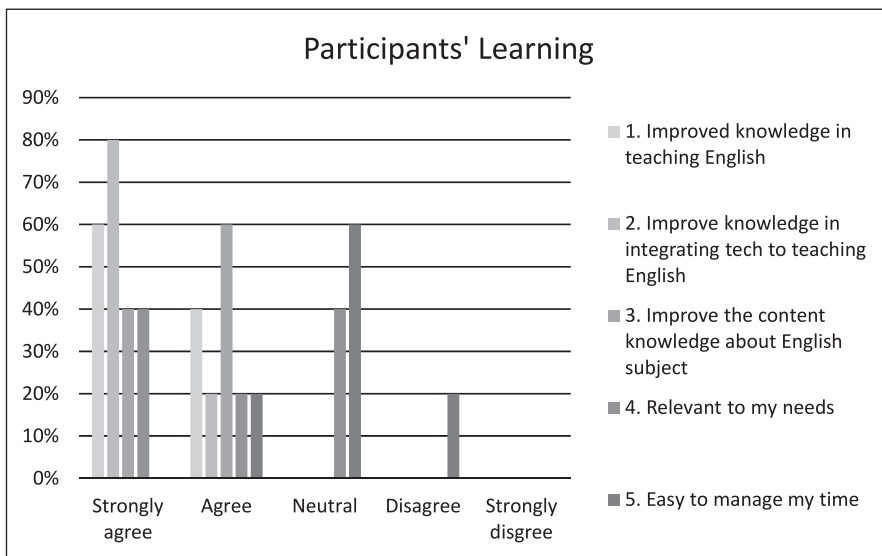
Teacher B, C and D are moderately active participants, they only show up in online discussion forum when they have problem or question to be asked to the tutor. The questions are basically about the teaching procedure that they have to undergo regarding the making of digital story. Teacher E is the quietest participant. He never joined any online group discussion and only responds to the private message given by the tutor.

This finding shows that the blended model using online learning platform such as Edmodo is still a big challenge to be implemented as blended TPD model in Indonesia. Teachers are not yet familiar with the virtual learning environment which demands independency on the side of the learners. This challenge goes to the TPD designer in integrating the online discussion as a part of learning activity in the online learning and raising the participants awareness that their involvement in the online discussion can be an added value for their learning process (White, 2003). Meanwhile the use of instant massaging such as Telegram is fairly useful to conduct online discussion. The nature of instant messaging which is immediate and less formal probably can bring the climate of 'social presence' (White, 2003) and made the teachers felt more comfortable to respond to the discussion and express

their ideas. The conversation among participants and tutor tend to go on naturally and made it easier to come up with agreements and solutions.

**Participants’ Learning**

The participants’ professional learning from this blended TPD was investigated from three aspects, (1) improvement in their knowledge of teaching English, (2) improvement in their knowledge in integrating technology into teaching English, and (3) improvement in their content knowledge about English subject. The result of the questionnaire – as shown in figure 4 – shows that all participants think that the blended TPD has helped them in improving their knowledge in teaching English, integrating technology to teach English and the content knowledge about English subject. When they were asked if the content of the training relevant to their needs, the result shows that 40% of the participants says strongly agree to the statement, while 20% says agree and the other 40% choose to be in a neutral position. However, the participants show a slightly negative response towards the question about time management. Only 20% of the participants agree to the statement that they found it easy to manage their time, while 60% of them say neutral and the other 20% disagree to the statement.



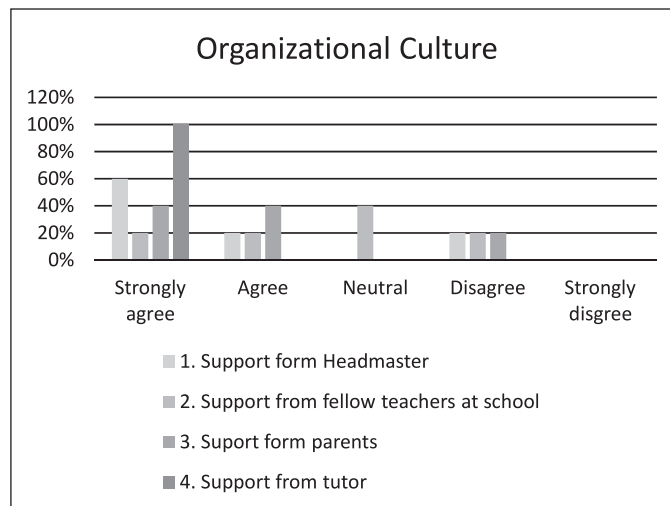
**Figure 4. Participant Learning**

In response to the relevance of the blended TPD to the participants’ needs, it can be inferred that this blended TPD program did not perfectly fit the current needs of the teachers. This can be due to the fact that many of them are not ready to deal with the new challenges (Clifford & Friesen, 2003) or they need more choices of TPD

materials relevant to their context (Duffy et. al., 2006). TPD designers, in this case, need to be able to draw linkages between the learning resources and concepts and the classroom practice to ensure that material and learning experience are relevant to the learners (Duffy et. al., 2006).

### Organizational Culture

In terms of support from headmasters, fellow teachers, and parents, different teachers experienced different kind of situation. The majority of the participants (60% strongly agree and 20% agree) that they were supported by headmasters and parents, only 20% of the participants disagreed to the statement that they are supported by the headmaster and parents. The amount of support from fellow teachers are different from one school to another. Some participants were given positive support from their fellow teachers (20% strongly agreed and 20% agreed), while some others seemed to get less support from their colleagues (40% neutral and 20% disagreed). In addition, 100% of the participants strongly agreed that they were given full support from the tutor in both face-to-face and online TPD interaction.



**Figure 5: Organizational Culture**

After reviewing the data obtained from the questionnaire, it was found out that there was only one participant (teacher E) who experienced lack of support from the headmaster, fellow teachers and also parents. This was probably happened because TPD is still regarded as the responsibility of the teacher at the individual level. This is contradictory to what is suggested by Burns & Edwards, (2014) about continuing professional development. They mentioned that to ensure the sustainability of TPD program, there should be a careful design in managing the TPD from the macro

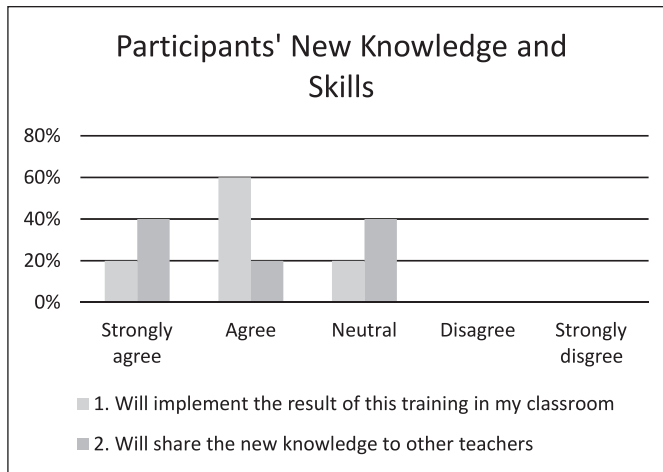


level – school/institution – all the way to the individual teachers at the micro level. By creating this harmonious synergy, each party that has potentials to contribute to the success of TPD will work hand in hand to support each other.

Such harmonious synergy can be seen at teacher’s A school. According to teacher A, she was fully supported by the headmaster, parents and fellow teachers. The headmaster helped her to socialize the digital story project to the parents, so that the parents were aware of their kids’ activities. In addition, the headmaster also assigned one of the ICT teachers at her school to assist her when she has problems with technology. In this manner, the TPD program at teacher’s A school has been regarded as the whole school program which was acknowledged and supported.

**New Knowledge and Skills**

When asked about the use of new skills (see figure 6), most of the participants show their strong confidence (20% said strongly agree, 60% agree and 20% neutral) that they are going to implement the result of the training into their classroom practices. Some of them (40% strongly agree and 60% agree) also stated that they are willing to share the new knowledge to other teachers within their schools and also the schools in the surrounding areas.



**Figure 6. Participant New Knowledge and Skill**

The teachers’ positive attitude and confidence towards the new knowledge and skills obtained from this blended TPD and their willingness to make changes in their teaching practices can be a good sign of students’ improvement in their learning outcomes. Through PD, teachers can make a fundamental change in their classroom practices, which will effect the student learning outcome and also change in their beliefs and attitudes towards their teaching (Guskey, 2002). This finding

highlights that the blended TPD model which was conducted for approximately 3 months allowed the teachers to have the opportunity to directly implement (Northrup & Rasmussen, 1999, in Owston et. al., 2008) their knowledge and skill from TPD into the classroom practice within the provided duration. Teachers are also provided with the full assistance and guidance from the tutor and the other participants as a learning community. Therefore, one of the problems with conventional TPD, in which participants were reluctant to bring the knowledge from their TPD program into their classroom, has been successfully minimized, if not eliminated.

### Student Learning Outcomes

This Blended TPD program introduced the participants with the stages of digital story project starting from the brainstorming stages up to the production and sharing. The participants were encouraged to follow the nine stages, among others are brainstorming, information searching, story writing, picture collecting, storyboarding, script writing, rehearsing, video recording and video sharing. These stages allow the students to practice their writing and speaking skills as well as gained more confidence to write and speak in English through step by step process.

When asked whether their students have gained improvement in their writing and speaking skills (see figure 7), all of the participants strongly voiced that their students show improvement in their speaking skills (40% strongly agree and 60% agree). However, the writing skills improvement is not as good as the speaking skill, as there are 40% of the participants gave neutral respond toward this statement. Most of the participants also think that their students have gained improvement in their confidence (40% strongly agree, 40% agree and 20% neutral) after doing the digital story project.

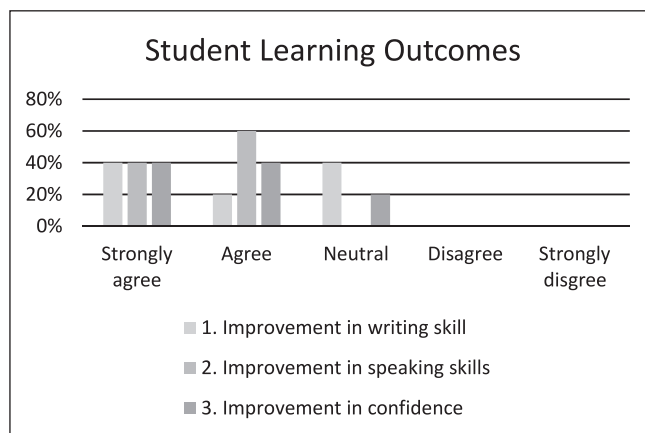


Figure 7. Student Learning Outcome

From one of the online discussion in Telegram, teacher A stated clearly that after creating several digital story projects, her students began to develop their writing skills. They are able to develop their ideas in their stories and have more confident to speak up. Teacher B and C also agreed to teacher A statement. They added that their students show more enthusiasm in learning English because they are allowed to 'play' with their gadget and smartphone while creating the digital story.

### **Research Question 2**

The second research question deals with the participants' perception toward the blended TPD program and how it contributes to their professional learning. Drawing from the result of interview conducted after the blended TPD program, the findings and discussion will be elaborated based on three aspects blended TPD perceived by the participants, 1) the positive aspect of blended TPD, 2) the challenge with blended TPD, and 3) Future plan.

#### **The positive aspect of Blended TPD**

From the interview with the teachers, it was found out that there are some positive aspects that they see from joining the blended TPD program for creating digital storytelling. They elaborated that there were some improvements in their students' learning outcome as well as attitudes towards learning English.

Teacher A stated that the students have gained improvement in their writing and speaking skills.

“I can see that my students have started to show development in arranging sentences into a quite interesting story.... Added by ideas that they have”

Teacher B stated that the students are happy when being introduced to some technology tools to facilitate them in learning English.

“My students can understand a new ways of learning in English at school and can be introduced to the use of social media for learning”

Similarly, teacher C and E highlighted their reaction towards the use of technology for learning English

“I got new knowledge about the use of more advanced technology and able to implement it into other teaching materials” (Teacher C)

“I now know how to use digital media into teaching and learning process” (Teacher E)

From the excerpts above, it is obvious that the participants show positive attitude towards the blended TPD program. They feel that they have gained more knowledge which is also have impacted in their teaching learning process and their students' attitude towards learning English.

### **Challenges in Joining Blended TPD**

The result of the interview has drawn some teachers' perception towards the challenges that they have to face when involving in the blended TPD program. They emphasized the challenges in the implementation stages of working on the digital story project.

Time management has become one of the problem that they have to face. This is also in line with the result of the questionnaire in which they stated that they found it hard to manage their time. As stated by teacher A:

“For the sake of this program, both my students and I have to sacrifice a lot of time. I myself have to spend my weekends to help my students in working on the digital story. Fortunately, my students are willing to spend more time as well.”

Second to teacher A, teacher D also stated:

“It is difficult to manage the time in working on the digital story”

Other than the problem with time management, some participants also mention about the challenges in motivating their students. Teacher C said,

“the challenge is motivating and encouraging the students, because this digital story project does not contribute to their academic score at school”

In the same manner, teacher E said,

“It is difficult to improve students' motivation to work on the digital story”

The other challenge faced by many of the teachers is related to the internet connection. The process of creating the digital story involved a lot of activities which demand reliable internet connection. Therefore, teachers and students got difficulties when following the stages of digital story project, as it was stated by teacher D,

“Internet connection is not reliable”

### **Further plan**

In the interview about the participants' future plan after joining the Blended TPD, they show the eagerness to continue their professional learning by digging more knowledge and information regarding the integration of technology in English class. Teacher A stated,

“I still want to learn how to deliver interesting English lesson to my students so that I can make my students feel more interested in learning English.”

In addition, teacher C also stated her willingness to learn more methods in teaching English with technology. Teacher C said,

“I want to learn new methods in using more advanced technology”

Regarding their future plan, almost all the participants stated their intention to share the knowledge and skills that they obtained from this training to other teachers. Teacher A clearly stated,

“I want to share to teachers at my school so that this program can be used by other teachers. It will of course take a long time to train them.”

Similar to Teacher A, Teacher B also stated about her willingness to introduce this program to her fellow teachers,

“I will transfer my new knowledge about teaching English using digital media to other English teachers at my school”

Meanwhile, teacher B stated that she want to expand this training to teachers from other school,

“I want to extend this program to schools which need to know more about digital media in language teaching although I have limited capability”

The result of the interview has shown that the participants valued their learning experience in this blended TPD program. They think that the knowledge and skills that they obtained during the training was enriching and would be useful for other teachers who did not join this program. It is obvious that the benefits that they got have surpassed the challenges and difficulties they encountered. Challenges that they faced did not hinder them from being enthusiastic to continue their professional learning development.

## CONCLUSION

This study on has revealed that there are many aspects of blended teacher professional development which are beneficial for the participants. The nature of blended learning model which is flexible and accessible have given more opportunity for the participants to improve their professionalism within their busy schedule. The online learning community dedicated for this blended TPD training was utilized by the participants as a mean to share and discuss some problems and solutions during the implementation stages. The result of the study shows that participants prefer to use Telegram as instant messaging rather than Edmodo, as it can represent the immediate communication as it is available face-to-face in environment.

The result of this study also show that the TPD program need more collaboration in the macro level to ensure that the participants get sufficient support by the school as the institutions and also parents. This study also suggests that upon finishing this TPD program, the participants have gained more confident in the integration of technology for language teaching and learning at primary level and have the

willingness to share the knowledge to their colleagues within their school and also to other schools in the surroundings. In addition, the findings also show that the students have gained improvement in their writing and speaking skills after the teacher implement the strategy of digital storytelling in the classroom.

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