



Developing a Mentoring-based Booklet for the Professional Development of Indonesian Novice Teachers of English

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Introduction

Teachers' competence and professionalism has been a major concern in the Indonesian educational landscape. The Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14/2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers states that as professional educators, teachers need to have the required academic qualifications, competences, and teaching certificate; be physically and mentally healthy; and have the ability to effectuate national education goals. More specifically, the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 16/2007 on Academic Qualification Standards and Teacher Competences states that teachers must have a minimum academic qualification of at least a four-year diploma or a bachelor's degree in the study programs of the respective subjects that they are supposed to teach. Teacher competences as referred to in Article 8 of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14/2005 include pedagogical competencies, personal competencies, social competencies, and professional competencies obtained through professional education (Article 10, Paragraph 1), while the teaching certificates are granted to teachers upon fulfilling the requirements (Article 11, Paragraph 1).

Competency demands directed toward experienced and professional teachers as mandated by the laws are also apparently directed toward novice teachers, including English novice teachers. This might become specific challenges for the novice teachers, especially in cases where their new teaching environments do not offer much professional help nor support. The transition period from pursuing pre-service education to becoming professional practitioners at schools, according to Cherubini (2009), can be a daunting struggle for novice teachers as while they are trying to meet the demands of their professional tasks, they are to concurrently grasp the new moral and ethical expectations encountered in the field.

Prior to becoming experienced teachers and professional teachers, surely there are phases and routes of a personal and professional journey that all English novice teachers should live through. These phases and routes are highly conceivable to be the gap faced by English novice teachers, as somebody who has just completed their pre-service education program yet must immediately engage in carrying out the professional duties and obligations as a teacher. The early teaching periods are, in fact, critical in the



development of teacher professionalism (Farrell, 2009), a crucial time that will greatly affect teacher retention (Jin, Li, Meirink, van der Want, & Admiraal, 2019). Therefore, practices of providing support and assistance for novice teachers are commonly found in such countries as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom through a program known as teacher induction (Cherubini, 2009).

In the context of preparing, professionally mentoring, and then continuously supporting novice teachers of English, programs such as the teacher induction model seem to be non-existent in the Indonesian context. Therefore, empirical evidence about novice teachers are quite limited, contrary to the data concerning experienced and professional teachers, which is abundant as has been reviewed by Widiati, Suryati, and Hayati (2017), some of which are, for example, studies by Musthofa (2011), Triyanto (2012), Abdullah (2015), and Irmawati and Widiati (2017). Meanwhile, at the international context, much research on novice teachers has revealed that the initial years of teaching are often marked with confusion, challenges, and tensions (see, e.g., Jin et al., 2019; Liu, 2014; Mann & Tang, 2012; Mesa Villa, 2017; Senom, Zakaria, & Shah, 2013). Referring to this phenomenon, in 2017 we proposed a 3-year research project to the Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education on the empowerment of novice English teachers, with three main objectives: unraveling the challenges of novice Indonesian teachers of English, developing a booklet for professional development (PD) in response to the problem areas that have been identified, and measuring the effectiveness of the booklet. In the first year of our research project, we managed to document the challenges among novice teachers of junior and senior high schools (Widiati et al., 2017). The challenges concern planning and implementing a lesson based on the 2013 Curriculum, designing and applying motivating learning strategies and assessment procedures, and managing big classes. In the second year, we developed a draft of an English teacher PD booklet, which is also the prototype of an alternative program that is expected to help overcome the challenges of English novice teachers. By giving attention to the various needs of novice teachers identified in the first year of our research, we developed PD materials in the second year of the research to cover the following topics: orientation for novice teachers, basic knowledge and skills required for English teachers according to the TPACK framework, and self-study materials (workshop and lesson study series with mentors). This article reports on the results of the booklet development, the validation process, the try-out, and the field testing of the booklet in the second and third research years.

Method

Booklet Development Stage

The second-year research was aimed at designing a teacher PD booklet, which can be used independently by novice teachers or by involving mentors such as senior teachers at schools. The selection of a mentoring model was adjusted to the needs of the participants which had been identified in the first-year research and which underpinned the development and the design of the booklet.

In the development of the mentoring booklet, we referred to some of the criteria proposed by Sherman, Dlott, Bamford, McGivern, and Cohn (2003) suggesting that PD materials need to use or include: (1) materials and instructional strategies appropriate to adult learners with background knowledge and personal and professional experiences, (2) clear, challenging, and appropriate goals for the audience, (3) discussion of how new skills and knowledge can be applied to individual learning environments, and (4) well-organized, easy-to-understand, and easy-to-use contents. Considering the challenges faced by novice teachers of English, we decided to develop nine broad topics covered within the nine chapters in the booklet selected based on the empirical findings on the challenges that novice English teachers, particularly those in Indonesia, are likely to encounter. The booklet is thus expected to provide the necessary support and resources for beginning teachers as they embark on their professional teaching career, which can often be challenging. It starts with an introduction to being a novice teacher along with illustrations of the challenges and some coping strategies while highlighting the importance of

understanding school culture. The next chapter provides a general overview of the important principles of English language teaching (ELT). Following this, the subsequent three chapters are devoted to understanding the text-based curriculum and the relevant instructional materials through topics, such as, developing lesson plans, discussing text types, and deriving exercises and tasks from the texts. After that, the booklet continues on to examine the teaching and learning process with chapters on classroom English, managing large classes, and motivating EFL learners. The booklet concludes with a chapter on assessment *for, as, and of* learning.

Each chapter in the book is organized in a similar way which begins with a section explaining the aims of the chapter. After that, a brief introduction to the contents of the chapter is presented to ensure that prospective users have a clear overview of what the chapter is about. Next, some key concepts related to the topic covered in the chapter are discussed, along with examples and illustrations. The users' understanding of the contents can be self-evaluated when they do the discovery activities following the section on the key concepts. Further, users are invited to reflect on their experiences to link what they have learned to their own context in the next section of each chapter. All chapters then end with a brief review of what has been discussed throughout the chapter.

Product Validation by Experts and Prospective Users

The developed booklet was then moderated in two stages: first by experts and then by prospective users. Moderation by experts involved two lecturers: a content expert and a media and instructional design expert. The content expert who was asked to validate the mentoring booklet was a senior English faculty member at a university in Malang, Indonesia, who has a doctorate degree in the field of ELT and 25+ years of teaching experience. The media and instructional design expert involved in the validation was a senior faculty member with a doctoral qualification and 20+ years of teaching experience from the Educational Technology Department of the same university. They were asked to complete a questionnaire to evaluate the booklet and provide some feedback.

After the validation, the next stage was revising the booklet based on the validators' suggestions and comments. The revised booklet was then tried-out with prospective users. There were two groups of users in this regard: prospective users as novice teachers and prospective users as mentors. The booklet was tried-out in a teacher professional program (*Program Pendidikan Guru – PPG*) pre-service class of 2018 ELT group, with a total number of 20 research subjects. They were chosen with the consideration that they were undergoing pre-service education and thus were representative of the characteristics of novice English teachers. This try-out process was intended to test the practicality and feasibility of using the booklet for prospective users. The *PPG* students were asked to read all the sections of and use the booklet. The results of the try-out with the *PPG* students were then used as the basis for the next booklet revision.

In 2019, another try-out was conducted by involving 14 English teachers from various regions in East Java, Indonesia, who were pursuing their master's degree in ELT at Universitas Negeri Malang. These teachers were positioned as prospective mentors with the conceivable duty of assisting novice teachers. The try-out process was intended to test the practicality and feasibility of using the booklet for prospective mentors.

Results and Discussion

Specification of the Product

The research-based booklet developed is intended to help English novice teachers prepare themselves before carrying out their professional duty in schools after their pre-service education. This material can be used as a self-study material or through *mentoring* programs. The *mentoring* program by utilizing the booklet is a PD activity in the form of mediation by way of facilitation and collaboration through more

intensive school and university partnerships as well as through the establishment of a *learning community* (Avalos, 2011). These are believed to be advantageous in overcoming the gap between education and the development of *pre-service* and *in-service* teachers and in overcoming the lack of orientation for novice teachers and mentors at schools, as stated by the respondents involved in the first year of the research. A mentoring activity was chosen due to its proven benefits in various studies, especially in the context of novice teachers, related to increasing teacher retention, quality of learning, and student learning outcomes (see, e.g., Delaney, 2012; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Langdon, Alexander, Ryde, & Baggetta, 2014; Mann & Tang 2012).

Ingvarson (1998, cited in Villegas-Reimers, 2003) states that nowadays, the conservative system in teacher PD, also known as *in-service training*, seems inadequate due to its being of a *top-down* approach, where the program is generally set by the government, carried out in a short time, and not necessarily accommodative of teachers' practical needs. Therefore, a teacher PD in the form of '*standard-base system*', which is a PD program based on the real needs identified by teachers themselves in carrying out their daily tasks, needs to be taken into account, as the one we did through this 3-year research project.

The results of the needs analysis serve as the basis for developing an alternative program prototype of novice English teacher professionalism, especially in terms of planning of learning, implementation of learning, classroom management, and professional identity development. The model referred to in this study is the *Holistic Approach* developed by Niemi (2015) to put continuing PD of English teachers into force. This model refers to the signs of teacher PD as outlined in *The European Commission* (Niemi, 2015). Fundamentally, the development of this alternative material refers to the core values of PD of teacher competencies (Rajakaltio & Marita, 2014), which covers the principles of competency development as follows:

- *Life-long learning*
- *Knowledge and research-based orientation*
- *Effectiveness*
- *Anticipation of future needs and competences in education*

Another important element of the booklet is how it engages the novice English teachers in reflection, particularly through the sections on *Discovery Activities* and *Link to Your Context*. In this case, the novice teachers are facilitated to self-evaluate their understanding of the key concepts presented in each unit and link between the theory and the practice. As Mehrpour and Moghadam (2018) found in their study, self-assessment and reflection could help novice teachers develop identities as real teachers and improve their maturity. The sections in the booklet also provide some sort of training of reflective practice for the novice teachers, which, as Yin (2018) suggests, is crucial for teachers to develop the capacity to conduct effective and regular reflection and continuously improve their teaching.

Results of Validation by Experts

The results of validation assessment by the content expert in ELT indicate a total score of 121 with an average score of 81.75. This score suggests that the product belongs to the category of "*valid with revisions*". Suggestions pointed out by the content expert are that the Introduction section should be made clearer, for example, by adding the outline of the materials being discussed or a suitable *advanced organizer*. Each unit may require images, graphs or tables to make the materials more comprehensible for the users and more user-friendly. The assessment result by media and instructional design expert indicates an average score of 76.14 out of the ideal score of 88. This score suggests that the product belongs to the category of "*adequately valid with revisions*".

Based on the experts' comments and suggestions, the revision of the booklet was geared towards the inclusion of these three essential elements: orienting novice English teachers, covering understanding the teaching profession as *agent of change*, internalizing *school culture*, and comprehending *job description*

as English teachers; equipping novice English teachers with knowledge and skills following the *TPACK framework* comprising *technological knowledge*, *content knowledge*, and *pedagogical knowledge*; and providing mentoring materials in relation to planning a lesson, motivating students, managing big classes, and assessing students' competence and performance.

Results of Validation by Prospective Users

The results of validation by prospective users in the form of a try-out to 20 PPG students representing novice English teachers indicate that the research subjects in general agreed that the booklet is favorable in terms of appearance, presentation techniques and benefits. This is indicated by the average score obtained for each item of above 3.00 on a scale of 1 - 4. In terms of image display and the compatibility of images and materials, however, this booklet could be improved considering the obtained average score of below 3, that is of 2.85 and 2.7 respectively. Suggestions by the try-out respondent students are as follows: (1) 15 research subjects suggested that the book be improved in terms of the quality and the quantity of the images and illustrations, including adding attractive colors; (2) 14 subjects suggested that the layout be improved, whilst also pointing out a few spelling errors and unclear instructions.

The results of validation by prospective users through a try-out with 14 English teachers as prospective mentors suggest that this mentoring manual is of good quality. On average, out of a 1-4 scale, the booklet was scored 3.3 in terms of product display, 3.4 in terms of material presentation, and 3.6 in terms of benefits. What is intriguing about this finding is that out of all aspects being assessed, the aspect of benefits yields the highest score. This implies that the mentoring booklet is seen as highly advantageous by prospective mentors as the material for novice teachers training.

Overall, the results of validation by content expert and media and instructional design expert indicate that the booklet is appropriate to use for novice English teachers' professional development. Assessment by the prospective users as the representatives of novice English teachers indicates a favorable result, similar to that of the prospective users as the representatives of mentors. As teachers' professional development is a complicated long-term process (Jin et al., 2019), the mentoring booklet we have developed can be used as important external sources of support from expert teachers during novice-teachers' development. More specifically, Jin et al. (2019) highlight that expert-teachers' support not only provides feedback and suggestions for alternative teaching methods, but also encourages and maintains novice-teachers' learning.

In the last few decades, teacher professional development, according to Villegas-Reimers (2003, p. 12), is seen as "a long-term process that includes regular opportunities and experiences planned systematically to promote growth and development in the profession". Such a shift of paradigm on teacher professionalism is one form of revolution in teacher education and preparation. The result of a comprehensive literature review led Villegas-Reimers (2003, pp. 13-15) to the conclusion that a new paradigm in teacher professional development has the following characteristics: it must be *constructive*, *long-term*, *contextual*, *directly related to school reformation*, *reflective*, *collaborative*, and *it must come in various forms according to the setting*. The mentoring booklet that we have developed in this research project is to meet those qualities.

Conclusion

The article presents the contents of the booklet for the PD of novice English teachers and the results of expert moderation and try-out. Overall, this research contributes to addressing the gap between pre-service and in-service teacher education and PD through the development of PD materials based on empirical research findings revealing problem areas encountered by novice English teachers. This study also fills the gaps in the current literature, particularly with regards to studies on novice teachers of English in Indonesia, a country with one of the largest teacher workforces in the world. Further, this study

contributes to the discussion on how novice teachers might best be supported in developing the knowledge and skills for continuous PD. Findings of the study should also be beneficial for novice teachers of English in other parts of the developing world where there are serious concerns over teacher competence and professionalism and the quality of the teaching and learning process at schools.

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