

TEACHERS' PROFESSIONALISM AND ITS AFFECTING FACTORS: A REVIEW ON EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are believed to play direct roles on the achievement of education goal. This implies that teachers' professionalism matters, as professional teachers make better achievement. As teachers' professionalism becomes an important issue, it is crucial to trace factors underlying professionalism. This paper tries to elaborate a number of factors that affect teachers' professionalism acquisition. The discussion covers current theoretical issues on the affecting factors of teachers' professionalism and the finding of a study on EFL teachers' perceptions towards the affecting factors of professionalism. This study was conducted to 119 EFL teachers of senior and junior high schools. Data were taken through questionnaire designed in Presence-Absence Questions and Rank-Ordering Questions, to reveal respondents' opinion towards the contribution of the variables used in the study on teachers' professionalism acquisition and to disclose respondents' opinion as to the order of importance of each of the variables towards its contribution to teachers' professionalism. Six variables used in this study were General Knowledge Ability, Focus Training, Knowledge of Subject Matter, Teaching Experience, Certification, and Academic Degree. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings of this study suggest that respondents believed that all of the variables have positive contribution to the acquisition of EFL teachers' professionalism. Thus, the writers believed that the six variables have to be considered in developing teachers' professionalism.

KEYWORDS: EFL teachers, professionalism, affecting factors.

INTRODUCTION

Common belief on the role of teachers as one of important contributors towards the achievement of learners is acceptable. It is because teachers are the ones whose job directly affects students' success (Hattie, 2003). According to Hattie, teachers make the second most significant contribution to students' achievement. Hattie argues that the first factor that affects students'

achievement is an internal factor that comes from students themselves which accounts for about 50%, while teacher factor accounts for about 30%, and other factors only account for 20%. Teachers are held responsible for the success of learning. In Indonesia, the issue of teachers' role in education has been widely discussed as the government has officially acknowledged that the job of teaching is a profession. The affirmation of teachers' job as a profession by Indonesian policy makers is mandated by a number of regulatory documents (Law No. 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, Government Regulation No. 74/2008 on Teachers, and National Education Ministry Regulation No. 16/2007 on Teachers' Academic Qualification and Competencies).

The effect of teachers on students' achievement suggests that teachers' professionalism is a crucial factor in education. Thus, there is a need for finding out innovative and systematic approaches to teachers' professional development, including factors that have strong contribution to teachers' professionalism building.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Nature of a Profession

To understand teaching as a profession, one cannot separate teaching profession from the basic characteristics of other professions. The term 'profession' is a broad concept that involves many aspects (Sanusi et al., in Saud 2008; Shulman, in Bransford et al., 2005; Hamied, 2009; Sockett, 2009; Banks et al., 2005, and Kaufman, 2009). Sanusi et al., (in Saud, 2008) elaborate a number of terms related to the concept of profession which include the terms *profession* which means that the job requires expertise, *professional* which refers to the performance of the person carrying out the job as required by a profession, *professionalism* which refers to the commitment of members of the profession to improve their ability, and *professionalization* which refers to the process of professional development to meet professional standards.

Another concept of profession is mentioned by Shulman (in Bransford, et al., 2005). Shulman mentions six characteristics shared by all professions. A profession is a job that entails a service to society, requires a body of scholarly knowledge, demands engagement in practical actions, maintains dynamics, takes into account the importance of experience, and grows as the development of a professional community.

Hamied (2009) also mentions a number of characteristics of a profession. According to Hamied, a profession must maintain a significant social function in communities and its members must have expertise which is gained from accountable education or training. He also adds that members of a profession should uphold high discipline and ethical conduct and should gain income from the profession.

Teaching as a Profession

As a profession, teaching also upholds general principles shared by all professions as mentioned in previous sections. However, there are specific aspects that are attributed to teaching profession. In Indonesian context, as mandated by Law No. 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, and Ministry Regulation No. 16/2007 on Teachers' Academic Qualification and Competencies,

teachers must qualify for four competencies: pedagogical competency, personal competency, social competency, and professional competency, each of which is measured through a number of indicators (Government Regulation No. 74/2008 on Teachers). The regulation provides the competency standards on each subject for different levels of schools. The standards seem to have been based on theories of good language teaching (Brown, 2001).

Good teaching theories have long become dynamic discussions by educators and education researchers. In discussing teaching as a profession, Bransford et al., (2005) mentions three aspects on essential knowledge required for teaching which comprises knowledge of learners and their development in social contexts, knowledge of subject matter, and knowledge of teaching.

Knowledge of Learners

The importance of knowledge of learners for teachers has been discussed by a number of scholars (Banks, et al., 2005; Luke & Elkin, 1988; Clark & Medina, 2000; Nikitina & Fumitaka, 2009; and Gebhard, 1996). According to Banks et al., (2005), one of the aspects that teachers should know about their learners is learner diversity. Diversity is the nature of human being and students are always different from each other. Their differences can include their culture, economic background, cognitive ability, and motivation. Professional teachers should know how to handle culturally diverse students. Teachers need to have a broad set of teaching strategies to deal with students with different cultural backgrounds. Banks et al., (2005) add that the knowledge of culture can include knowing of self and of others. Besides knowing their students' cultural backgrounds, teachers should also know that learners also live in social setting where literacy practices are always changing. This situation demands that teachers need to be familiar with the uncertainty and dynamics of learners' daily life (Luke & Elkins, 1988; Clark & Medina, 2000).

In addition to such external factors as cultural backgrounds, literacy practices, and discourses, internal factors coming from learners are also dominant aspects that construct diverse learners (Nikitina & Fumitaka, 2009; Gebhard, 1996). Nikitina & Fumitaka (2009) and Gebhard (1996) argue that these internal factors are such factors as motivation and cognitive ability. Different learners may have different motivation when learning. Some learners may have high motivation while others may have low motivation. Similarly, different learners may have different cognitive ability. Teachers should be prepared with the knowledge of learners' diversity and the knowledge of how to deal with the diversity.

Banks et al., (2005) emphasize the importance of knowing the diversity on learners' cultural background, Clark & Medina (2000) and Luke & Elkins (1988) point out the importance of understanding diversity on learners' daily life environment, and Nikitina & Fumitaka (2009) and Gebhard (1996) concern with the importance of knowing learners' diversity on cognitive and motivation differences.

Knowledge of Subject Matter

Bransford et al., (2005) mention knowledge of subject matter as another aspect that a teacher should possess. Knowledge of subject matter includes knowledge of subject being taught and

knowledge of how to teach the subject. Knowledge of subject matter is scholarly knowledge that a teacher has gained from schooling as well as from individual knowledge development.

Grossman et al., (2005) and Darling-Hammond & Berry (2006) also mention the importance of knowledge of subject matter for teachers. According to Grossman et al., teachers should possess deep knowledge of the subjects they teach. Similarly, Darling-Hammond & Berry (2006) also acknowledge the importance of knowledge of subject matter. Darling-Hammond and Berry say that a teacher's knowledge of subject matter has a significant role on students' achievement.

Knowledge of Teaching

Knowledge of teaching is also an important aspect that triggers the success of teaching. Theories of knowledge of teaching have been proposed by a number of researchers (Alatis, 2007; Jenkins, in Bransford et al., 2005; Borko et al., 2009; Harmer, 2007; Pennington, in Brown 2001; and Brown, 2001). According to Alatis (2007), in language teaching, good teaching will be met when the teachers meet the following aspects: competency, encouraging personalities, and care. This statement implies that there are prerequisites for successful teaching. First, it must be done by competent teachers; second, it requires non-discouraging teachers; third, the teachers must use accommodative approaches; and fourth, the teachers must care for the students lovingly. These prerequisites imply that good teaching can be understood as a part of nurturing.

There are many variables that apply across teaching situations (Jenkins, cited in Bransford et al., 2005; Borko et al., 2009). These variables can be grouped into four categories: nature of the content, teaching and learning activities, characteristics of the learners, and criterial tasks. These variables affect the effectiveness of teaching. Jenkins (in Bransford et al., 2005) also mentions that teaching practice happens as a collaborative process of four aspects : content, activities, tasks, and learners – each of which has an important role in the achievement of the practice. Thus, it can also be justified that teachers must know knowledge of teaching content, knowledge of teaching activities, knowledge of learners' characteristics, and knowledge of criterial tasks. Knowledge of criterial tasks is the knowledge on the level to the extent students should attain in their learning. These are such levels as to recognize, to recall, or to practice problem solving.

Jenkins (in Bransford et al., 2005) further elaborates her idea that appropriate levels of difficulty should also be taken into account in selecting and designing teaching materials so that the materials can function as a means of attaining goals, that the teaching and learning activities should be made varied that may include lectures, simulations, hands-on (offering active participation), and problem solving, and that the students should develop motivation and attitudes to foster their achievement in attaining knowledge and skills, while the tasks should include recognition, recall, problem solving, and should create effectiveness of new learning.

EFL Teachers' Professionalism and Its Indicators

On the issue of professional characteristics, a number of writers have elaborated the concept of professional teachers. Brown (2001), for example, identifies qualities of professional language teachers by classifying his ideas into four categories: technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities. First, foreign language teachers must be

knowledgeable on a number of aspects such as linguistic system, principles of language learning and teaching, knowledge of language skills, knowledge of how language is learnt, knowledge of the connection between language and culture, and knowledge of issues on language through conference and workshop attendance.

Second, professional foreign language teachers must be skillful in two aspects. These are pedagogical skills and interpersonal skills. Language teachers must be well-informed with theories of language teaching and various teaching techniques. This will help teachers make classroom decisions. They should also be able to design and execute lesson plan. Professional language teachers should not be dependent on others. They must be self-subordinated and they should not be under the control of other teachers. They must be under self-control. Professional teachers must be the ones who are ready to give optimal feedback to their students. They must promote student interaction and create teamwork. They also should be creative, effective, and innovative.

Third, professional foreign language teachers must have interpersonal skills. The interpersonal skills include: the awareness of cross-cultural differences and the sensitivity of students' cultural background, ability to respect students' opinion, a sense of patience, ability to promote students' critical thinking, good cooperation with colleagues, and positive habit of knowledge-sharing.

Fourth, professional language teachers must have personal qualities. They must be well-organized, conscious in meeting commitments, and dependable. They must also be flexible when things go awry. Professional language teachers must always curiously try to create new ways of teaching. Next, professional teachers must have short-term and long term goals for their continued professional growth. Last, they must maintain high ethical and moral standards.

In discussing the qualities of EFL teachers, Allen (in Brown, 2001) mentions nine characteristics of good EFL teachers. According to Allen, a professional EFL teachers must hold a degree in TESL/TEFL, love English language, be critical thinkers, be persistent to upgrade oneself, be independent, get ready to go extra mile, be familiar with cultural adaptability, be a professional citizenship, and love the job of teaching English. From these characteristics, we can argue that in order to become a professional EFL teacher, one must hold an academic degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, must have positive attitudes of English language, must have positive attitudes on language teaching profession, and should be a critical person.

A professional EFL teacher must hold a degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. In Indonesian context, based on Law No. 14/2005, English teachers must hold a four-year college education (undergraduate degree) in English language teaching. This becomes the basis of the licensure for the teachers. This is an important issue since one of the problems of education (in Indonesia) is the fact that there are still many teachers who do not hold this degree. A significant number of them only hold a two-year college or three-year college education. Many of them even do not have degree at all in English education. They are out-of-field teachers. Of 2,783,321 teachers in Indonesia less than 35% of them hold an undergraduate degree in their subject

(Hamied, 2008). Thus, about 65% of teachers have not met the requirement of teaching profession.

Positive attitudes of the English language is also an important factor for EFL teachers (McGroarty, 1996). It becomes the initial and crucial factor for becoming creative EFL teachers. McGroarty also adds that positive attitudes of the English language will raise teacher's and students' awareness to use English. The awareness of using English is an important factor for the success of the teaching process considering that in EFL situations, the opportunity to use English in community is very minimal especially for speaking. Therefore, interaction in the classroom becomes the major opportunity for students and teacher to practice using the language. According to Sockett (2009), positive attitude is part of teaching disposition that becomes one of qualities that a professional teacher must possess along with knowledge and skills. Thus, positive attitude of the English language is part of teaching dispositions for EFL teachers. It is a virtuous aspect that can trigger the teachers to become more creative and to become more motivated in doing their job (Sockett, 2009).

Professional EFL teachers are supposed to be knowledgeable and sensitive to cultural differences that exist between English language and learners' first language (Yeh, 2005; Boyle-Baise, 2005). Language is part of culture. Thus, having positive attitude of the English language includes having positive attitude of the English cultures as teaching language entails teaching cultural aspects of the language. For example, some students feel confident when their errors are corrected directly, while other students like indirect correction (Houten, 1980). Wrong treatment of student's error may hinder interaction.

Professional teachers must promote critical thinking. They are the architects of intellect (Fogarty & McTighe, 1993). Current educational practices move from teacher center to learner center and this requires teacher to give learner more opportunity to express their ideas, argument, and reasoning. Classroom practices should not oppress learners by depositing knowledge to learners (Freire, 1993). Learner center practices require the interaction among learners and learners and interaction between learners and teacher. For this reason, teachers must possess a certain level of cognitive ability since cognitive ability becomes the prerequisite to thinking.

Gebhard (1996) argues that foreign language teachers must create an interactive classroom. Good language teaching should provide opportunities for students to interact. To create an interactive classroom, teachers must understand aspects that can promote students interaction. At the same time, they must also recognize some aspects that may hinder students to interact. Gebhard adds that to do so, teachers must learn from their experience, must realize their role, and must be able to identify the problems that EFL/ESL teachers face in teaching. Knowing the principles of interactive classroom is fundamental for current foreign language teaching as the teaching of foreign language has changed to a new direction, that is shifting from teaching grammar to teaching communicative function.

The previous practices of foreign language teaching had undergone a fashion where teacher-centered model became common traditions (Gebhard, 1996). Besides teacher-centered fashion,

the materials were focused on grammar. This kind of practice did not promote interaction between teacher and students and between students and other students. And when interaction happened the role of teacher was very dominant. In order to promote classroom interaction using the target language, teacher needs to provide opportunities for students to interact. Gebhard also argues that interactive classroom requires teachers to create situation where students talk more and teacher talk less. This can be done only if teachers are creative in making or providing topics which are interesting to students and accommodative to the students' cultural differences.

A professional foreign language teacher must be able to accommodate every student's cultural differences; otherwise, he/she will not be able to create interactive classroom (Yeh, 2005). Interactive classroom is the one that is culturally responsive (Grant & Gillette, 2006; Boyle-Baise, 2005). According to Grant & Gillette, a culturally responsive teaching means that the teachers must accommodate expectations and needs of all learners. Similarly, Boyle-Baise also argues that teachers who practice culturally responsive teaching accommodate learners' experience. Therefore, in their teaching, they see every learner as a student, family, and community member.

Teachers should also let students express their opinion and ideas in their own ways (Gebhard, 1996). This may mean that what is meaningful for teachers may not be so for students and what is not interesting for teachers may be interesting for students. In promoting interactive classroom, students must be given opportunities to negotiate meaning between students. Teachers should let students ask and clarify their opinion. The topics of interactive classroom should not come from teachers only but can also come from student.

Factors Affecting Teaching Professionalism

In this section, the writers elaborate theoretical issues on aspects that affect teachers' professionalism. Drawing ideas from a number of sources on the issue of teachers' professionalism (Whitehurst, 2002; Alatis, 2007; Bransford, 2005; Sweed, 2008; Kealing, 2008) the writers believe that the acquisition of teachers' professional characteristics does not come from one source. The writers believe that at least six aspects play a significant role on teachers' professionalism. These are general knowledge ability, focused-training, teaching experience, knowledge of subject matter, certification, and academic degree.

General Knowledge Ability

One of the aspects that influences the success of teaching is believed to be the teachers' general knowledge ability (Whitehurst, 2002). This is one of the reasons why a teacher candidate is required to hold a specific degree or qualification. According to Whitehurst, general knowledge ability is the cognitive ability to acquire knowledge. It is a mental action or process of acquiring knowledge through thought, experience, and the senses. This general cognitive ability takes an important role in forming teachers' professionalism (Whitehurst, 2002; Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996). A teacher with high cognitive ability is able to design learning activities that inspire learners' interest in order to strengthen learners' motivation (Cochran-Smith, 2003).

Focused -Training

Teacher professional development has an important role on teachers' professionalism (Smith, 2005; El-Okda, 2005; Henze, Driel & Verloop, 2009; Levin, Hammer, & Coffey, 2009; Cohen and Hill, in Whitehurst, 2002). Smith (2005) argues that professional development involves learning to improve existing conditions. Similar argument is proposed by El-Okda (2005). According to El-Okda, professional development is part of teacher learning process and it must be conducted continuously a long with teacher life-services (El-Okda, 2005). El-Okda also adds that inexperienced teachers must get more training, as there is distinct expertise between experienced and inexperienced teachers. Teacher training is essential for inexperienced and novice teachers because they are often unable to attend students' thinking until they are able to identify classroom routines (Henze, Driel & Verloop, 2009). They add that teacher training is also believed to have an important impact on teacher competence (Henze, Driel & Verloop, 2009). According to Levin, Hammer, & Coffey (2009) teacher training must include many aspects of teaching that comprise curriculum, materials development, teaching techniques, and teaching evaluation.

A study by Cohen and Hill (Cited in Whitehurst, 2002) on the role of professional development training suggests that training has a significant contribution on teacher professional development. Whitehurst suggests that training should be focused on subject matters, academic content, and curriculum.

Teaching Experience

Teaching experience is also believed to be one of important aspects that make up teachers' qualities (Johnston et al., 2005; Yeh, 2005). The role of teachers' experience on the acquisition of professional qualities has been studied by Johnston et al., (2005). Their study revealed that teachers' experience takes a crucial role on the development of teachers' professionalism acquisition. Alatis (2007) also argues that experience contributes to teachers' theory building. Alatis mentions several aspects that make up teachers' theory building. These are teachers' experience as a language learner and as a teacher, professional development (training), classroom practices, and teaching reflection. These all become teachers' collection of cognitive information. The collection of cognitive information then shapes the teachers' characteristics and their characteristics are represented in their daily teaching activities along with their teaching career development.

As has been mentioned, teachers' experience is part of aspects that form teachers' characteristics and this in turn affects teachers' personal theory building that affects teachers' classroom teaching practices (Levin & He, 2008). It is a common practice that teachers learn from their daily activities to improve their teaching performances. Teachers' experience can be derived from two periods which include the period of before teaching services and the period of while teaching services (Alatis, 2007; Woods, 1996). According to Woods, experience during services enriches teachers' theory building along their career. Thus, there is a cyclical process involving teachers' experience and their theory building.

Knowledge of Subject Matter

A teacher's knowledge of subject matters is the essence that directly affects students' achievement (Whitehurst, 2002; Grossman et al, 2005). As Grossman et al. argue, this comprises two major aspects (the knowledge of subject being taught and the knowledge of how to teach the subject). A teacher's knowledge of subject matters is gained from many different sources such as from academic institution, training, and self-development.

Certification

It is a common sense that good teachers are the ones who are talented in teaching and educating learners and good teachers might not be made through certification. Thus, good teachers are communities certified teachers. However, from the authority point of view, certification program can be seen as one of government policies aiming at improving teacher quality (Tamir & Wilson, 2005). Teacher certification has long been at issue in education (Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Klein, 1999; Whitehurst, 2002). In Indonesia, teacher certification has been an important issue. It has been part of professional development policy of the Ministry of National Education which has gained support from the Indonesian law makers (Law No. 14/2005).

Academic Degree

Academic qualification is one of triggers of teachers' professionalism acquisition. The contribution of a teacher's academic degree is in most part resulted from the conceptions of professional teaching standards set up by the academic institution a teacher candidate spent his/her study. The conceptions of professional teaching standards have been designed by policy makers, educators, and teacher educators. The process setting professional teaching standards involves academia from various universities and government agencies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was aimed at answering the following research questions:

- Do respondents agree on the positive role of the six variables used in this study towards the development of EFL teachers' professionalism?
- What is the order of importance of each of the variables?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this were 119 EFL teachers of senior and junior high schools from 3 districts in Cimahi, West Java-Indonesia. Subjects were taken from 31 schools through quota- random sampling.

Instrument

The instrument used in this study was questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in two types (Presence-Absence Questions and Rank-Ordering Questions, based on Jackson, 1995). The Presence-Absence questions were to reveal respondents' opinion towards the contribution of the variables used in the study on teachers' professionalism acquisition, while the Rank-Order

questions were used to disclose respondents' opinion as to the order of importance of each of the variables towards its contribution to teachers' professionalism. Six variables used in this study were *General Knowledge Ability*, *Focus Training*, *Knowledge of Subject Matter*, *Teaching Experience*, *Certification*, and *Academic Degree*.

Procedure

Data were taken through a number of steps. First, the researchers chose 31 schools out of 77 schools from three districts. The choice of the schools was based on the status, level, location, and classification of the schools. Of the 31 schools chosen, 14 schools were junior high schools, 10 schools were senior high schools, and 7 schools were vocational schools. The total number of English teachers from the 31 schools was 124. Second, questionnaire was given to 124 teachers with 119 of them responded the questionnaire and 5 of them did not respond it. The final step was analyzing the data using descriptive statistics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that *Knowledge of Subject Matter* got the most positive response where 100% (119) of respondents said *Yes* and 0% said *No* towards the contribution of this factor to the acquisition of teachers' professionalism, followed by *Focused-Training* with 116 (97.5%) respondents agreed and 3 (2.5%) respondents disagreed. Third place was for *General Knowledge Ability* and *Teaching Experience* with 122 (94.1%) respondents agreed and 7 (5.8%) respondents disagreed. The fourth place was for *Academic Degree* with 101 (84%) respondents agreed and 18 respondents (16%) disagreed, while *Certification* got the lowest agreement from respondents with 87 (73%) agreed and 32 (27%) disagreed. This suggests that respondents believe that all factors discussed above have important contribution to the acquisition of teacher professional characteristics. The results also show that *knowledge of subject matter* is believed to be the most important aspect of the acquisition of teacher professional characteristics while *certification* is the least aspect that contributes to the acquisition of teachers' professional characteristics.

The findings also suggest that most respondents considered *General Knowledge Ability*, *Knowledge of Subject Matter*, and *Academic Degree* have a strong effect on teachers' professionalism acquisition. On *General Knowledge Ability*, 47% respondents put it in the first rank and 11.7% in the second rank, on *Knowledge of Subject Matter*, 45.37% respondents put it in the first rank and 34.45% respondents in the second rank, and on *Academic Degree*, 47.89% respondents put it in the first rank and 10.08% put it in the second rank. In the middle rank were *Focused-Training* and *Teaching Experience*, while the lowest rank was *Certification* where only 24.36% put it in the first rank and 45.37% respondents put it in the sixth rank.

From the findings, it can be said that most respondents believed that all six factors have positive contribution to the acquisition of teachers' professionalism. These findings confirm the theories that claim the six aspects to have positive contribution to the acquisition of teachers' professionalism (Whitehurst, 2002). Of the six factors, certification is an interesting phenomenon. Although certification is believed to have positive contribution to teachers' professionalism acquisition, the number of respondents who disagree on it is relatively significant

which made up of (27%) of the total respondents. This suggests that certification is not as important as other factors in fostering professionalism development. In addition, although respondents considered that certification has contribution on professionalism, its contribution was relatively minimum.

Respondents agreed on the mastery of knowledge of subject matter as the most contributing aspect of professional EFL teachers because of two reasons. First, knowledge of subject matter is the essence of teachers' qualities. It is the reason for a teacher's presence in the class. Another reason is that teachers without subject knowledge mastery will not be innovative. Knowledge of subject matter can be gained from many different sources such as formal education (academic degree), training, teaching experience, and such individual factors as general knowledge ability, learning motivation, and learning strategies.

General knowledge ability is an individual factor. This deals with a person's level of intelligence. It is believed that smart teachers are able to think creatively and therefore can build their professionalism faster. Teaching experience, academic degree, and focused-training also have positive contribution to the acquisition of teachers' professionalism. Experienced teachers are believed to be more professional than inexperienced teachers as they learn from their experience when dealing with students' problems. Academic degree also has positive contribution to teachers' professional development. Holding academic degree takes a long process of learning which has to be gained from a formal institution such as a college or a university. Focused-training is another factor that is believed to have positive contribution to teachers' professionalism. Focused-training includes activities that have to be taken during teachers' in-service periods as part of teacher professional development.

The controversy over the importance of certification on teacher professional acquisition is due to a number of reasons. Respondents who believe that certification has positive contribution to teachers' professionalism development argued that certification program, indeed, motivates teachers to work better. It also reminds them to teach better. In spite of their positive justification about certification, respondents also acknowledged that certification is a controversial program. For them, certification is also a reward that should have been given automatically without taking a test of it. Teachers who believe that certification does not contribute significant professionalism for teachers also have a number of reasons. For them, certification does not change teachers' personalities and behavior. Respondents who have negative perceptions on the contribution of certification acknowledge that certification is a government effort to improve teachers' performance but they believed that the beneficial effect of certification happens to teachers' welfare instead of to their professionalism growth. Certification does not guarantee teachers' professional acquisition.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed EFL teachers' professionalism and its affecting factors from both theoretical contexts and research findings. From theoretical point of view, teachers' professionalism is a broad aspect in which in order to acquire professionalism, one must take into

account a number of aspects that are believed to trigger the acquisition. The finding of the study suggests that the variables used in this study (General Knowledge Ability, Focused-Training, Teaching Experience, Knowledge of Subject Matter, Certification, and Academic Degree) are believed to have positive contribution to the acquisition of teachers' professionalism. This means that, in general, the finding of the study confirms the existing theories. Drawing from the findings of this study, the writers offer three suggestions. First, the policy makers in education take necessary measures to control the quality of teacher education. This is to make sure that teacher candidates undergo all standards mandated by the educational regulations. Second, the process of teacher recruitment should apply high academic standards to make sure that the accepted teachers are those who qualify for the job. Finally, on the issue of certification, there should be periodical evaluations to those who have been certified to make sure that they maintain their qualification and that they improve their quality.

The findings have revealed EFL teachers' beliefs on factors having positive contribution on the development of teachers' professionalism and have provided new insights and elaborative explanations on aspects that support teachers' professionalism development. In addition to its positive contribution, this research also has limitations. First, the number of participants was relatively small (119 EFL teachers), and therefore, the findings of this study may not always apply for different groups in a different period. Second, the design used in this study was descriptive quantitative. Thus, to some extent, the findings may be subjective in nature.

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