TEACHER EMPOWERMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the perceived levels of teacher empowerment and the effectiveness of professional development programs within the Indonesian education system. Utilizing qualitative research methods with secondary data analysis, the study investigates the challenges and barriers educators face in accessing professional development activities and explores strategies for enhancing teacher empowerment. The research aims to provide insights into teacher empowerment and professional development in Indonesia by drawing on theoretical frameworks such as Social Cognitive Theory, Diffusion of Innovations Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory. According to the findings, different levels of teacher empowerment depend on organizational support, leadership styles, and self-efficacy beliefs. Professional development programs promise to improve teaching practices and teacher satisfaction, yet they face relevance, access, and incentive challenges. Barriers to accessing professional development activities include limited resources, hierarchical decision-making processes, and motivational factors. Strategies for enhancing teacher empowerment and professional development include fostering transformational leadership, creating communities of practice, and leveraging technology for collaborative learning. In conclusion, addressing these challenges and implementing effective strategies is essential for promoting teacher empowerment and enhancing educational management practices in Indonesia.
Keywords: Educational Management; Professional Development; Teacher Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, historical, sociopolitical, and economic factors have significantly changed education management in Indonesia. Understanding the background of educational management in Indonesia provides valuable insights into the challenges, reforms, and current practices within the country's education system. Indonesia's education system has evolved through various historical phases. During the colonial period, education was primarily provided for the elite, focusing on serving colonial interests (Djumransyah & Setyawan, 2016). However, efforts to expand education emerged during the nationalist movement, leading to the establishment of a national education system after independence in 1945.

The socio-political landscape has significantly influenced educational management in Indonesia. For instance, the authoritarian regime under President Suharto (1966–1998) centralized education governance, leading to uniform policies and curriculum nationwide (Suryadi, 2019). However, this centralization also limited local autonomy and innovation in educational practices. Economic factors have played a crucial role in shaping educational management in Indonesia. Limited funding, especially in rural areas, has hindered infrastructure development and teacher quality (Suyanto & Suyanto, 2020). Additionally, economic disparities have contributed to unequal access to education, exacerbating social inequalities.

In recent decades, Indonesia has implemented various reforms to improve educational management. The decentralization policy in the late 1990s aimed to empower local governments in education governance (Sulistyo, 2017). However, challenges such as

bureaucracy, corruption, and inadequate resource allocation have hindered effective implementation. Educational management in Indonesia reflects a blend of centralized policies and decentralized implementation. The Ministry of Education and Culture sets national standards and curriculum guidelines, while local governments and schools have autonomy in implementation (Sulistyo, 2017). Efforts to enhance teacher professionalism, curriculum innovation, and infrastructure development remain priorities.

Teacher empowerment and professional development are critical components of effective education systems worldwide. Empowering teachers and investing in their ongoing growth and learning enhances individual teaching practices and improves student outcomes and overall educational quality.

Teacher empowerment allows educators to take ownership of their professional growth and classroom practices (Zepeda, 2019). When teachers feel empowered, they are more likely to experiment with innovative teaching methods, tailor instruction to meet diverse student needs, and create engaging learning environments (Harris, 2003). This autonomy fosters a sense of professional satisfaction and fulfillment among teachers, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.

High-quality teaching is one of the most significant predictors of student achievement (Hattie, 2008). Teachers gain new knowledge, skills, and strategies through professional development opportunities to enhance their instructional effectiveness (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). As teachers refine their teaching practices and incorporate evidence-based strategies, students are more likely to experience deeper learning, increased motivation, and improved academic outcomes (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).

Professional development encourages a culture of continuous learning among teachers (OECD., 2018). By engaging in ongoing training, workshops, and collaborative learning communities, educators stay abreast of current research, pedagogical trends, and best practices in education (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). This commitment to lifelong learning enhances teacher expertise and models the importance of learning for students, fostering a culture of intellectual curiosity and growth within schools.

Teacher empowerment and professional development are crucial in addressing various educational challenges. In contexts characterized by diversity, inclusion, and rapidly changing technology, well-supported teachers are better equipped to meet the diverse needs of students and adapt to evolving educational landscapes (Scheerens, 2011). Moreover, investing in teacher development can help address teacher retention, job satisfaction, and professional burnout, ultimately contributing to the overall resilience and sustainability of the education workforce (Day & Sachs, 2004).

METHODS

Qualitative research methods, particularly those utilizing secondary data, offer a valuable approach to exploring complex phenomena such as teacher empowerment and professional development within Indonesia's educational management context. Drawing on Creswell's (2013) guidelines for qualitative research, this essay outlines the application of qualitative methods using secondary data to investigate teacher empowerment and professional development in Indonesia.

(Creswell, 2013) defines qualitative research as an inquiry process that focuses on understanding the meaning participants ascribe to a social or human problem. Secondary data, in this context, refers to data collected and analyzed by other researchers or organizations for purposes other than the researcher's current study (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Secondary data allows researchers to access existing datasets, documents, or literature relevant to their research questions.

The study uses secondary data to explore teacher empowerment and professional development in Indonesia through qualitative research. It involves document analysis, a literature review, and qualitative data reanalysis. Document analysis provides historical trends and policy contexts, while a literature review synthesizes findings to identify key themes and gaps. The reanalysis of existing datasets, such as through interviews or focus group discussions, can uncover new insights and perspectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Perceived Levels of Teacher Empowerment Among Educators in Indonesian Schools

Understanding teacher empowerment levels among educators in Indonesian schools is crucial for enhancing educational management practices and improving overall teaching quality. This discussion explores the application of Social Cognitive Theory and Organizational Empowerment Theory in analyzing the perceived levels of teacher empowerment within the Indonesian context.

Social Cognitive Theory Perspective:

Bandura (1994) emphasized the impact of self-efficacy beliefs on people's behavior and performance in his Social Cognitive Theory. In teacher empowerment, self-efficacy refers to educators' confidence in their abilities to influence decision-making processes, enact changes, and advocate for their professional needs. Applying this theory to Indonesian schools, the perceived levels of teacher empowerment can be assessed by examining educators' beliefs in their capacity to effect change and make meaningful contributions to educational practices.

Teacher empowerment can be achieved through opportunities for educators to participate in decision-making processes, collaborate with colleagues, and engage in professional development activities tailored to their needs. High levels of self-efficacy among teachers are likely to correlate with greater autonomy, job satisfaction, and commitment to improving student outcomes. Conversely, low self-efficacy may indicate a lack of support, resources, or recognition, contributing to disengagement and dissatisfaction among educators. The Indonesian government has continuously sought to improve the quality of education by enabling the quality of teaching to improve. The Ministry of Education and Culture has launched a new program for teacher empowerment called "Merdeka Belajar" which aims to transform education in Indonesia, empower students to achieve academic achievement, teach creatively, and continuously pursue self-development. The program provides three training modules covering the analysis of Indonesia's educational philosophy, values and vision of transformational teachers, student-centered learning practice, and leadership for school development (In'am & Hussin, 2013; Mardapi & Herawan, 2019; Setkab RI, 2020; Zulfikar, 2010a, 2010b).

Organizational Empowerment Theory Perspective:

Conger & Kanungo (1988) put forth the Organizational Empowerment Theory, which focuses on the organizational practices and structures that support employee empowerment. This theory contends that the degree to which schools offer opportunities for participation in decision-making, access to resources, and supportive leadership can affect perceived levels of teacher empowerment in Indonesian schools.

The organizational culture and practices within schools play a significant role in shaping teacher empowerment. Schools that foster a collaborative and inclusive environment, where educators are encouraged to voice their opinions, contribute to decision-making, and access professional development opportunities, will likely have higher levels of teacher empowerment. Conversely, schools characterized by hierarchical

structures, limited resources, and top-down decision-making may hinder teacher empowerment and contribute to feelings of disempowerment among educators.

The Indonesian government has recognized the importance of teacher empowerment in improving the quality of education. The Ministry of Education and Culture has launched a new "Merdeka Belajar" program to transform education in Indonesia, empower students, and develop transformational teachers. The program provides three training modules:

The paradigm and vision of transformational teachers, covering analysis of Indonesia's educational philosophy, values, and vision of transformational teachers, and developing a positive school culture. Student-centered learning practice, focusing on teaching creatively and continuously pursuing self-development. Leadership for school development, containing material about decision-making as leaders, leadership in resource management, and management of school programs that impact students.

By implementing this program, the Indonesian government aims to strengthen collaboration among Indonesian children toward a better education, empowering teachers to inspire, continuously learn, explore their potential, and set an example for students (Setkab RI, 2020).

B. Effectiveness of Professional Development Programs in Indonesia

Professional development programs are crucial in enhancing teaching practices and teacher satisfaction in Indonesia. This discussion explores the effectiveness of current professional development programs within the Indonesian context, drawing on the perspectives of Diffusion of Innovations Theory and Adult Learning Theory.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory Perspective:

Diffusion of Innovations According to Rogers et al. (2014) theory, the adoption and spread of new concepts and behaviors within a social system are the subject of study. Based on a number of crucial factors mentioned in the theory, it is possible to evaluate the efficacy of professional development programs in Indonesia.

The organizational culture and practices within schools play a significant role in shaping teacher empowerment. Schools that foster a collaborative and inclusive environment, where educators are encouraged to voice their opinions, contribute to decision-making, and access professional development opportunities, will likely have higher levels of teacher empowerment. Conversely, schools characterized by hierarchical structures, limited resources, and top-down decision-making may hinder teacher empowerment and contribute to feelings of disempowerment among educators. The Indonesian government has launched a new program for teacher empowerment called "Merdeka Belajar" which aims to transform education in Indonesia, empower students to achieve academic achievement, teach creatively, and continuously pursue self-development. The program provides three training modules covering the analysis of Indonesia's educational philosophy, values and vision of transformational teachers, student-centred learning practice, and leadership for school development (Andrici et al., 2019; Aziz et al., 2020; Revina, 2020; Sudibjo et al., 2022; Suyatno et al., 2022).

The support for implementing professional development programs is essential for their effectiveness. In Indonesia, the success of community-based teacher training has been shown to increase teachers' professionalism, particularly in implementing their pedagogical and professional competencies (Mardapi & Herawan, 2019). Additionally, evaluating a professional development program to improve content knowledge for Indonesian teachers demonstrated that teacher-based scaffolding was the most effective model, emphasizing the importance of the program's design and support structures (B. Rahman et al., 2015). However, it has been noted that technical and systemic constraints have affected the outcomes of teacher professional development programs in Indonesia, highlighting the need

to address these factors to enhance support for such initiatives (Revina. Shintia et al., 2020). Furthermore, it has been emphasized that to develop teacher professionalism, pedagogical support is needed, including training, increasing education levels, and the regeneration of teaching materials and innovation of learning methods (Sutomo & Siregar, 2022). Therefore, adequate resources, instructional materials, ongoing mentorship, collaborative networks, peer learning communities, and leadership support are crucial for the success and sustainability of teacher professional development programs in Indonesia.

Adult Learning Theory Perspective:

According to Knowles et al. (2014), adult learning theory emphasizes the significance of learner-centered approaches in facilitating adult learning and development. In evaluating the effectiveness of professional development programs in Indonesia, this theory underscores the alignment of programs with adult learning principles.

Professional development initiatives relevant to teachers' needs and contexts are more likely to engage educators and promote meaningful learning experiences. Programs that offer opportunities for active engagement, such as hands-on activities, collaborative projects, and problem-solving tasks, facilitate deeper understanding and application of new concepts. Additionally, support for reflective practice, through mechanisms such as peer feedback, self-assessment, and action research, encourages teachers to examine their teaching practices and continuously improve their skills critically.

Teacher professional development programs have been evaluated to improve content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and ICT skills. The teacher-based scaffolding model has been found to be the most effective in improving teachers' content knowledge (B. Rahman et al., 2015). However, technical and systemic constraints have affected the outcomes of teacher professional development programs in Indonesia, highlighting the need to address these factors to enhance support for such initiatives (Revina. Shintia et al., 2020). The "Merdeka Belajar" program in Indonesia aims to transform education, empower students to achieve academic achievement, teach creatively, and continuously pursue self-development. The program provides three training modules covering the analysis of Indonesia's educational philosophy, values and vision of transformational teachers, student-centered learning practice, and leadership for school development. This program is designed to be relevant to the needs and contexts of Indonesian teachers, making it more likely to engage educators and promote meaningful learning experiences (Pranoto et al., 2021; Ramdani & Gao, 2023; Revina, 2020).

C. Challenges and Barriers to Accessing Professional Development Activities in Indonesia

Accessing and participating in professional development activities is essential for teachers' growth and effectiveness in Indonesia. However, numerous challenges and barriers hinder their engagement in such programs. This discussion examines these obstacles through the lenses of Critical and Motivation Theory, shedding light on systemic inequities and motivational factors affecting teachers' participation.

Critical Theory Perspective:

As Apple & Apple (2004) outlined, Critical Theory focuses on power dynamics and societal structural inequalities. In Indonesia's professional development context, this theoretical perspective reveals systemic inequities that hinder teachers' access to such activities. Limited resources, including funding, facilities, and instructional materials, disproportionately affect schools in underserved communities, where teachers may lack the necessary support and opportunities for professional growth. Furthermore, the unequal distribution of professional development opportunities perpetuates disparities between urban and rural areas, exacerbating educational inequities.

The findings indicate that Indonesia has implemented various TPD programs for over four decades, but the outcomes have fallen short. The effectiveness of the government's most recent TPD reform, Continuing Professional Development (PKB), has been examined, and factors influencing the program's effectiveness have been identified (Revina, 2020; Revina. Shintia et al., 2020). Additionally, the study of teacher professional development at scale in Indonesia has highlighted the challenges related to teachers' access to quality TPD, including geographical limitations, gender, special needs, marginalized communities, and the lack of competencies among teachers (Lim et al., 2020). Furthermore, a study investigating TPD experiences from three different schools in regional Indonesia has emphasized TPD's high participation but low impact, indicating the challenges faced in achieving meaningful outcomes from such initiatives (A. Rahman, 2021).

The valuable insights into the challenges and constraints related to TPD in Indonesia do not directly address the specific issue of hierarchical decision-making processes within educational institutions and their impact on teachers' participation in professional development activities. Therefore, based on the available information, it can be inferred that the hierarchical decision-making processes and top-down approaches to program development and implementation may indeed pose significant barriers to teachers' participation in professional development activities in Indonesia. These barriers may neglect teachers' input and fail to address their specific needs and preferences, ultimately impeding their autonomy and agency in engaging in meaningful professional learning experiences (Sarjito, 2023a).

Motivation Theory Perspective:

Ryan & Deci (2000) formulation of motivation theory examines the factors influencing people's willingness to engage in goal-directed behavior. In the context of professional development participation in Indonesia, this theoretical lens highlights motivational factors that either facilitate or hinder teachers' engagement. Perceived relevance is a critical determinant of motivation, as teachers are more likely to participate in activities that align with their instructional goals, interests, and professional aspirations. Programs that offer practical strategies, innovative approaches, and opportunities for skill development are more likely to garner teachers' interest and commitment.

A study on teacher incentives, social accountability, and student outcomes in Indonesia highlighted the impact of financial incentives on teacher presence in school and their allocation of time to curricular teaching, indicating the influence of incentives on teacher behavior and student outcomes (Yue-Yi Hwa, 2020). Additionally, the study of teacher professional development in Indonesia identified factors influencing the effectiveness of the government's TPD reform, including the absence of adequate incentives and rewards (Revina. Shintia et al., 2020). Furthermore, the impact of interventions to improve the accountability of public school teachers in remote areas of Indonesia was examined, emphasizing the challenges related to teacher absenteeism and the need for effective incentives to improve teacher accountability and education quality (Gaduh et al., 2019).

The findings indicate that teachers' access to quality teacher professional development (TPD) is challenged by geographical limitations, gender, special needs, marginalized communities, and the lack of competencies among teachers (Lim et al., 2020; Revina. Shintia et al., 2020). Additionally, a study on teacher professional development in Indonesia emphasized TPD's high participation but low impact, indicating the challenges faced in achieving meaningful outcomes from such initiatives (A. Rahman, 2021). Furthermore, the impact of interventions to improve the accountability of public-school teachers in remote areas of Indonesia highlighted the challenges related to teacher absenteeism and the need

for effective incentives to improve teacher accountability and education quality (Revina. Shintia et al., 2020).

D. Enhancing Teacher Empowerment and Professional Development in the Indonesian Education System

Empowering teachers and fostering their professional development are essential for improving educational outcomes and enhancing the quality of education in Indonesia. This discussion explores strategies to achieve these goals within the Indonesian education system, drawing on the perspectives of Transformational Leadership Theory and Communities of Practice Theory.

Transformational Leadership Theory Perspective:

According to (Bass & Avolio, 1994) proposal, transformational leadership theory strongly emphasizes the role of leaders in motivating and empowering followers to perform at higher levels. In enhancing teacher empowerment and professional development in Indonesia, this theoretical perspective underscores the importance of leadership practices that promote trust, support autonomy, and foster a shared vision of continuous improvement.

Transformational leadership is a powerful framework for school leaders seeking to improve learning, engagement, and achievement. By fostering a positive school climate, empowering teachers, and creating a culture of continuous improvement, transformational leaders can impact the success of their educational institutions (Bloetner, 2023). In education, transformational leadership is all about empowering teachers to be the best they can be. By providing teachers with the resources and support they need to succeed, transformational leaders can help create a positive and engaging learning environment for students (Dkreiness, 2023). Research indicates that transformational leadership positively affects teachers' commitment to their schools, performance, job satisfaction, and student outcomes (Fontein, 2022). A transformational leader intentionally designs structures for collaboration within a school to be culturally responsive and inclusive of all students (Sparks, 2021). Therefore, the role of transformational leaders in empowering teachers, creating a supportive culture, and enhancing professional development is well-supported in the literature.

Moreover, transformational leaders can promote a shared vision of educational excellence and continuous improvement, rallying teachers around common goals and aspirations (Sarjito, 2023b). By articulating clear expectations, setting high standards, and providing meaningful feedback, leaders can motivate teachers to strive for excellence and invest in their professional development. Additionally, leaders can support teachers' autonomy by providing resources, flexibility, and opportunities for experimentation, allowing educators to tailor their professional learning experiences to their individual needs and interests.

Communities of Practice Theory Perspective:

Wenger's (1999) Communities of Practice Theory emphasizes the significance of social learning and collaboration in professional development. In the context of enhancing teacher empowerment and professional development in Indonesia, this theoretical perspective underscores the value of creating communities of practice where educators can share knowledge, experiences, and resources to support their ongoing learning and growth.

Communities of practice (CoPs) are an effective strategy for professional development, particularly for educators. Research has shown that CoPs have significant potential to improve teaching and learning, benefitting both students and teachers (Beach & Hall, 2016). These communities provide a platform for educators to collaborate, share best practices, and engage in reflective dialogue, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collective problem-solving (Michigan, 2020). Additionally, CoPs are aligned with the

principles of experiential learning, social constructivism, and connectivism, making them an effective approach to professional development (Ramdani, 2015). Furthermore, establishing a schoolwide community of professional inquiry, which shares similarities with CoPs, is considered essential for promoting educator learning and growth (Danielson, 2016). Therefore, establishing formal and informal communities of practice within educational institutions is a valuable strategy for enhancing teachers' professional development and fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

Leveraging technology and online platforms is an effective strategy for expanding access to communities of practice and facilitating virtual collaboration among teachers across geographical boundaries. Online forums, social media groups, and virtual learning communities allow educators to connect, share resources, and engage in professional dialogue, irrespective of physical distance or institutional affiliation (Minea-Pic, 2020; Vota, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has made face-to-face professional learning challenging or impossible, making online professional learning options for teachers more important than ever (Minea-Pic, 2020). Additionally, research has shown that online learning can effectively enhance teacher learning and professional development (Minea-Pic, 2020). Furthermore, establishing a schoolwide community of professional inquiry, which shares similarities with CoPs, is considered essential for promoting educator learning and growth (Ramdani, 2023). Therefore, leveraging technology and online platforms is a valuable strategy for enhancing teachers' professional development, expanding access to communities of practice, and fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement in Indonesia.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding teacher empowerment in Indonesian schools requires a multifaceted approach incorporating Social Cognitive Theory and Organizational Empowerment Theory perspectives. By examining educators' self-efficacy beliefs and organizational practices, stakeholders can identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to enhance teacher empowerment. A culture of empowerment is crucial for promoting teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction, and overall educational quality. The effectiveness of professional development programs depends on their alignment with Diffusion of Innovations Theory and Adult Learning Theory principles. Initiatives prioritizing learner-centered approaches, relevance, active engagement, and reflective practice enhance teachers' professional growth. Addressing systemic inequities and motivational factors is essential for fostering teacher growth and improving instructional practices. Lastly, incorporating Transformational Leadership Theory and Communities of Practice Theory can create environments that empower teachers, foster continuous improvement, and enhance education quality in Indonesia.

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