

## EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON THEIR PARTICIPATION IN SUBJECT MATTER TEACHER GROUP

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengetahui persepsi guru yang ikut dalam MGMP di Kota Palu. Untuk melakukannya, delapan sampel terdiri dari enam guru, satu kepala sekolah dan satu ketua MGMP dipilih. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan fenomenologi sebagai dasar pendekatan penelitian. Untuk memperoleh data, penelitian ini menggunakan interview semi terstruktur secara mendalam untuk mengkaji lebih jauh persepsi guru. Penelitian ini mengindikasikan bahwa partisipan menganggap partisipasi mereka di MGMP berpengaruh besar terhadap kompetensi mereka, terutama kompetensi profesional. Sebagai akibatnya, mereka menganggap bahwa pengajaran mereka lebih baik daripada sebelum mengikuti MGMP dan kemajuan tersebut berpengaruh positif terhadap motivasi siswa dalam proses belajar. Akan tetapi, partisipan mempercayai bahwa partisipasi mereka tidak berdampak terhadap hasil belajar siswa.

**Kata kunci:** mengeksplorasi, persepsi guru, partisipasi, Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran.

A number of efforts have been made by the government to support teacher learning. In the past, the main program to improve teachers' competences was through training. Such training used to be conducted centrally by educational agencies such as BPG (*Balai Pelatihan Guru, Teacher Training Centre*), P4TK (*Pusat Pengembangan dan Pemberdayaan Pendidik dan Tenaga Kependidikan, Central Institution for Teachers and Educational Staff Development and Empowerment*), and regional education agencies. Such training was mostly intended for upgrading teachers' competence.

Until a recent decade, the pendulum has been shifted from such top down training - in which training was provided by the government - into a bottom up level - where teachers themselves initiate the program. This trend is marked through remarkable forums exist to date, such as KKG (*Kelompok Kerja Guru, Subject-matter Teachers Group for Primary School*), MGMP (*Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran, Subject-matter Teacher Group*), FKKG (*Forum Kelompok Kerja Guru, Subject-matter Teacher Group for*

*Primary School Forum*), FMGMP (*Forum Guru Mata Pelajaran, Subject-matter Teacher Group Forum*) MKKS (*Musyawarah Kelompok Kerja Kepala Sekolah, Working Group of Junior, Senior or vocational School Principal*), KKKS (*Kelompok Kerja Kepala Sekolah, Working Group of Primary School Principal*).

*Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teacher and Lecturer* has added impetus for the shift. The Law in article 20 stipulates teachers to constantly develop their competence in order to meet the constant change in science and technology. The change is so fast, which may affect learning and teaching practice. For example, the instructional media switches from OHP into LCD Projector, the introduction to a new curriculum and the utilize of digital books in some schools. All these changes radically affect the teaching practice in classroom. To address these challenges, teachers need to be informed and prepared to anticipate the changes. Participating in teacher forum such as Subject-based Teacher Group (henceforth MGMP) is one alternative solution to

anticipate such changes.

The government endeavors to support such program is reflected by a substantial fund allocated for such program. Data from LPMP (Educational Quality Assurance Council) of Central Sulawesi records the government funding for MGMP is around 800 million (for regular project) and approximately 321 million for BERMUTU project from year 2000 to 2011 (LPMP Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah, 2012). This fund beyond the expenditure given to the schools in the forms of BOS (*Biaya Operasional Sekolah*, School Operational Cost) fund. indicates that the government has a strong commitment to increase teachers' competence.

While there is an immense fund granted for the project, less effort has been done to assess the effectiveness of MGMP toward the teaching practice. For example, while there is a growing body of research assessing the MGMP impact on teachers competences (Antony, 2006; Milka, 2013; Rusdi, 2012; & Triani, 2008), study on the impact of MGMP toward students academic attainment has been overlooked. What those researchers failed to realize were student achievement frequently associated with education quality.

Developing teacher programs need to link to students achievement. Without linking to students' academic attainment, a professional development could be lost in its focus. The program may expose teachers to particular knowledge, yet it does not facilitate teachers how to deliver the content in classroom effectively. We may have found a teacher who is keen on a particular subject matter yet he or she encounters a problem in delivering the subject to his or her class. Therefore, teacher program, such as MGMP, needs to consider students' achievement first when designing programs.

Some factors may cause researchers to reluctant to explore the issue. First, recorded data is scarcely available. Teachers commonly

do not preserve students' report card more than 2 years. Keeping the cards needs a special room, which is not available at their home or school. Given the lack of data, a researcher will find it difficult to measure student improvement before and after teacher joining an MGMP forum.

The second possible answer is complication in data collection. Many factors, such as family, student, and environmental factors play interwoven roles to students' achievement. Isolating all of these factors is almost impossible to achieve. Moreover, leaving one single factor to correlate with students' outcomes could threat research validity.

Another factor is conducting such study needs two-stage process. Researchers cannot directly relate teachers' participation in MGM and students' result. In fact, researchers should first measure the relationship between MGMP and teacher competences before moving to students' results. These processes need more time and sophisticated method compared to common research. Consequently, fewer researchers are interested in investigating such study.

In Indonesian context, the only study attempting to address the issue was conducted by Arifin (2011). He investigated a wide sample research to assess whether teachers' participation in MGMP correlated to students' achievement. In doing so, he used the National Examination result as an indicator of student academic attainment. He found that teachers' participation in MGMP affect positively toward students' result.

Nevertheless, several issues are noted when using National Examination to link with the MGMP impact. Schools are not the only institution which aim at increasing student results in National Examination. Many parents enroll their children to dedicated courses to pass the examination. Indeed, some students begin the courses a year before the National Examination to prepare them well. The significant impact of the courses is

evidenced that the subjects such as Math and English, which commonly taught at courses, have a higher score in National Examination than Bahasa Indonesia, which is rarely taught in the courses.

Another problem is not all teachers participate in MGMP. Arifin's study assumed that all teachers participated in MGMP and that this participation affects National Examination Result. In fact, not all teachers actively engage in MGMP forum for some reasons. If some teachers who do not participate in MGMP teach the upper class, for example class 9 for Junior High School, then all of the test result did not derive from MGMP participation.

In addition, Arifin's study assumed that the teachers who participated in MGMP employed national examination to assess students' achievement. Nevertheless, the teachers who participated in MGMP employed different assessment for different class. For example, teachers at class VII and VIII at Junior High School level measure students' achievement using teacher-made test while at class IX they measure it using both using teacher-made test and National Examination. This example indicates several variations in assessing students' achievement each class. Therefore, using National Examination result as the only output variable needs to be reconsidered.

Given that the previous researcher potentially displayed oversimplified generalization, the current study employs qualitative case study. Instead of using National Examination result, this study uses teachers beside a headmaster in discovering student achievement through an interview. Teachers' judgment is considered as a valid data to assess student performance. A number of studies indicate that by using the right instrument, teachers' self-assessment is still a valid source for assessing students' result without much distorted with subjectivity. This occurs since teachers generally could identify which progress comes from their own

teaching result and which progress derives from external factors.

## METHOD

The current research employed phenomenology. Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research that attempts to seek intensively the meaning of individual experience on particular phenomena (Morse & Field, 1996: 124) through description provided by participants (Nieswiadomy, 2011).

This research took place in Palu. This region was chosen since it was easier to access by the researcher. Qualitative research generally takes more time in the process of contacting participants, transcribing and analyzing the data. Since in conducting these stages took an iterative process therefore choosing an accessible location enabled the researcher to easily get and analyze the data.

The participants in this research consisted of 8 participants: 6 teachers, 1 headmaster and 1 chairperson of MGMP. For teacher participants, their names were replaced with TP which stands for *Teacher Participant*, followed by a number, such as P1 or P2. For headmaster participant, the participant name was replaced with HP, which stands for *Headmaster participant*. While the chairperson of MGMP was replaced with CP or *Chairperson (of MGMP) Participant*. Each participant was coded and support with data except the chairperson data. For the chairperson data, the gender (and age) column was left blank to keep the anonymity of the participant. This occurs since two opposite genders led two MGMPs in Palu. By putting the gender status in the column it would reveal the identity of the chairperson. Other data was filled since both chairpersons shared the same data.

The main data collection instrument in the research was in-depth semi structured interview. Semi structured interview occurs when a researcher sets up a questions revolves

under particular topics but not necessarily follow the order of the questions (Bailey, 2007: 100). Yet, the questions more often arise from interview setting but still related with the research topic.

In this research, the interview was recorded by using a mobile phone, Samsung Ace 2 in relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Before it, the researcher made a small talk to create a more relaxed circumstance that encourage the interviewee to speak freely which was related to a light topic such as surrounding situation. Next, the researcher made a brief explanation about the purpose of the study to build trust to the researcher and to encourage interviewees to engage in an interview session.

The interview was conducted once or more depends until the intended data was reached. Its result was transcribed and summarized. The summary was confirmed to the interviewee to check whether it has captured the interviewee’s intent or not. If it has not, the interviewee could correct the summary. The process of data analysis in this research can be seen on the next page.

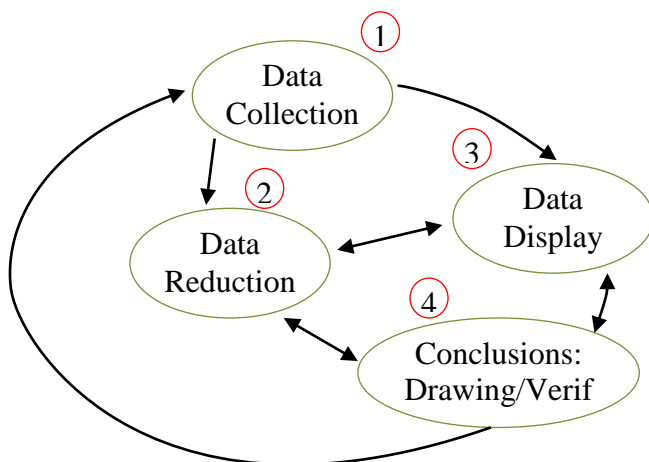
with other data. The second stage is data reduction (2). Miles and Huberman (1994: 11) state that the function of data reduction is to "sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards and organizes data in such way that "final" conclusion can be drawn and verified". The compressed data will not be meaningful without being presented to the reader in meaningful ways. To do so, the next stage, data display (3) is introduced. In this stage, the data is presented to show the interrelated data simple and meaningful ways. The data presentation could use different charts, networks figures or text (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to display it. The last stage is drawing a conclusion (4). In this process, the data which has been analyzed and presented is then summarized to show the main points of the findings. In all of the process, it should be noted that the stages in the model is iterate that is the stages were linked each other and not individually separated.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

It was found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations contributed toward teachers’ participation in MGMP. Intrinsically, most participants reported that they participated in MGMP since it benefitted for their teaching method. For example, TP4 stated that that she involved in MGMP since it could improve her teaching skills. This statement supported by Gagné and Deci (2005: 331) that people will participate into a program when they find the program interesting and satisfying their needs. It indicates that the participants involved into the forum derived from intrinsic motive.

Beside intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation was also reported by participants as the reason to engage in MGMP program. Extrinsic motivation is an action driven by the intent to achieve external goal (Amabile, 1996). Three types of extrinsic motivations have been identified in this research. They are

**Figure 1 Model of Data Analysis**



Source: (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 12)

In this model the first stage is collecting data (1). The result of data collection would be sorted, classified and simplified to get its meaning and to correlate

a leader-follower relationship, personal responsibility, and group identity compliance.

The first extrinsic motivation is *follower-relationship relationship*. In this factor, the participants participated in MGMP to obey the order of their or their headmaster. Headmasters usually encouraged their teachers to participate in teacher development program such as MGMP for school benefits. While not directly stated in the interview, some participants frequently cited "school" which represented the headmaster control, for example, by stating "school required" (TP6) or "School appointed" (TP5). One of participants, HP reported that he usually facilitated his teachers to participate in MGMP based on their subject matter. Since teachers saw the headmaster as the most authoritative person in a school setting, many of the teachers then obeyed his or her instruction. Irawanto et al. (2011) argue that in Asian culture such as in Indonesia, where the communities mostly adopt paternalism, they put respect to their leader. Apparently, the respect derives from a leader's benevolence and power.

The second extrinsic motivation identified is accountability. In this circumstance, a person consciously aware of the consequences for what is being assigned to him (Freeman, 2000) and deliberately fulfill it. Failing to perform the task will be perceived endorser as participants as negligent or irresponsible person. TP5 for instance expressed that he frequently participated in regular MGMP since the school has invitation from the MGMP committee which then appointed him. Such request made him was felt honored. Therefore, when he was appointed by school then he would inherently feel needed to comply the request to participate in MGMP.

The last extrinsic motivation identified in this research is group identity comply. Stavrou (2008: 3) Stets and Burke (2000: 226) identify that a person may participate in an activity due to sense of belonging to a group.

In other words, when a person identified her or himself belongs to particular group she or he will behave based on the norm in the group. This view is hold by a participant value, TP6. In her perspective, once a person becomes a teacher he or she automatically becomes a member of MGMP. Furthermore, she believes that one of obligation of the member is to participate in MGMP whether he or she likes or not. This value is supported by Gagné and Deci (2005) that a person may aware of a group regulation and internalized it as his or her value which drive him or her to make an action. Thus, for some participants, their participation serves as a compliance with their group's rule.

Another interesting finding was participants' perception on the their improvement after attending MGMP program. They believed that their competence improved significantly after participating in it. For example, TP6 stated that more or less her participation in MGMP affects her method in teaching her students.

According to the participants, the most affected one was pedagogic competence. Pedagogic competence refers to teachers' mastery of instructional related skill. TP3 explained that such program related to daily teaching practice such as designing administration, media, method, assessment, and class management. All of these programs were closely related to pedagogic competence. Previous studies (Anwar, 2010; Arifin, 2011; Milka, 2013; Rusmana, 2010; and Triani, 2008) confirmed the result. For example, Milka (2013) found that MGMP program contributes significantly on pedagogic competence. Clearly, MGMP program improved teachers' pedagogic competence.

Pedagogic competence gained by teachers has significant impact on classroom practice. Some teachers stated that before involving in MGMP they directly went into the lesson without building students' readiness first. For example, TP5, stated that

he directly told his student, “now open page xx” when starting his class. Such teaching method would lead student into boredom. After participating in MGMP, he could varied his method to raise his students’ interest in learning. Apparently, this occurs since in MGMP, the participant has a greater chance to observe how other teachers teach such as in peer teaching session. Archibald et al. (2011) argue that such type of active participation could affect greatly on teacher instruction at class. This is particularly true if the teachers have an opportunity to observe how other teachers put it into practice.

Professional development has been cited widely brings a significant impact on students’ achievement (Anwar, 2010; Birman, et al., 2000; Blank et al., 2008; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Nevertheless, this research found a contradictive result. In this study, most teachers indicated that their participation in MGMP did not affect student achievement. For instance, while TP4 admitted that her teaching method improved gradually and raised students’ interest in her class after joining MGMP, it did not affect her students’ achievement significantly. This point has been alarmed by Ames (1990: 410) that “Motivation is not synonymous with achievement, and motivation cannot necessarily be inferred by looking at achievement test scores”. As such, associating teachers’ professional development with students’ achievement needs to reconsider.

Relating to this problem, several factors may contribute to the causes. Firstly, the MGMP program still emphasized on teachers' learning. For instance, TP4 and TP6 admitted that MGMP program was designed for teachers’ competence and not for students’ learning. The program mostly aimed at assisting teachers to master a set of skill to support a new curriculum. For instance, the MPGMP held programs which assist teachers designed annual program, syllabus, lesson

plan, teaching method and assessment which suitable for a new curriculum implementation.

Secondly, there was almost no special program in MGMP to address student problem in learning. Differently from aforementioned studies, the MGMP has not been explicitly set a goal for students’ achievement. The goal was mainly on teaching mastery. Even some efforts were done for student aspect, most of them just as infix programs.

Many researchers suggest to link professional development with students’ achievement. For instance, Guskey (1997), Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) suggest a professional development committee to regularly asses the contribution of the program toward students’ achievement by assessing students’ work and building commitment between committee and member to set target after a period of time (DuFour, 2004: 10). Such activity clearly indicates a strong commitment to improve students’ achievement.

Thirdly, disclosed problem. The learning process needs some stages before reaching the expert level. During initial level, some mistakes are made. In learning process in MGMP forum, some teachers did not open about their problem at school. For example, one of the participants, P1 stated that some teachers were reluctant to perform peer teaching at their school since they afraid of negative judgment by their peer toward their schools and their performance. This indicates that some MGMP members were still worried much of the image of their teaching. However, such fear or shyness would prevent another member to see the real problem in a school and provide positive feedback on improving their teaching strategies.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

1. The participants were motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsically, they participated in MGMP to improve their instructional skill. Extrinsically, they participated in it for the leader-follower relationship, Personal responsibility, and group compliance reasons.
2. The government has guided MGMP committee to conduct three programs in MGMP: generic, core and developmental program. However, the MGMP committee emphasized more the core program that related to teaching preparation. The program covers annual and semester program, syllabus, lesson plans, instructional media and assessment designs.
3. Most participants perceived that MGMP programs were valuable and affect their competences particularly their professional competence. Apparently, this impact is closely related with the program they received in MGMP. Moreover, they perceived that their teaching practice improved after participating in MGMP by adopting teaching method they received from MGMP program. In addition, the method affects students' motivation in learning proces.

### Recommendations

1. The government needs to encourage teachers to participate in a professional development program by linking career development with teachers' activity in MGMP program. For instance, by giving points to teachers each time they participate in MGMP forum. In addition, the government also needs to award special points to teachers who become

committee on a teacher development forum such as MGMP. In such way, it is expected that teachers and MGMP committee will be motivated and has a strong commitment toward their program.

2. The MGMP committee is advised to arrange MGMP program into two different days in a month instead of just one day. This functions to accommodate other teachers in schools. Generally, Junior High schools in Palu have more than one English teacher. By providing different days, the chance for other teachers to attend MGMP forum will be greater.
3. To date, the content of MGMP has only been aimed at improving teachers' competence. This effort is a positive progress, yet in the future the teachers' empowerment should also be aligned with students quality improvements. The government needs to evaluate all teacher empowerment programs, including trainings and workshops and special programs such as MGMP to assess whether such programs are linked to students' outcome since improvement in teachers' method does not affect the students' outcome directly as shown by the finding.
4. The MGMP committee needs funds to manage the program, for example, buying books/materials and cost for inviting speakers or tutors. Therefore, the regional educational agency needs to allocate sufficient money to provide funding for the regular MGMP. The school also needs to allocate some money from BOS (school operating budget) for the MGMP operational program.
5. The headmaster needs to provide a flexible time for teachers who attend MGMP. Many participants stated that they were still required to assign an attendant list at school even at the same time they should attend MGMP program. This policy would affect teachers' time in

the participating MGMP program. When teachers are still required to attend school before departing for MGMP meeting, many distractions would arise such as chatting with other teachers, distracted with other small tasks, or perhaps being assigned a small task by their vice principal. These possible distractions might reduce teachers' hour to present on time at the MGMP site.

6. Since MGMP is only one media for developing their competences, teachers need to complement with other learning media to improve their competences.

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