

---

# TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH JOURNAL WRITING

**Asdar**

asdarnur@student.upi.edu  
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

## ABSTRACT

Teachers have many tasks that they should do. So, they have to be professional in teaching. One of the ways to be professional is to know how to think critically toward their teaching. In this case, journal writing will help them to know about their strength and weakness in teaching. Based on the observation done by the writer, some teachers think that journal writing helps them to reflect about their teaching in the classroom. But, the others feel that it is too difficult to conduct. In this paper, the researcher tried to explain the complete result of his observation toward the real situation teachers in their teaching and learning process as well as their attitude toward journal writing and give some solutions for increasing their ability to think critically toward journal writing.

**Key Words:** *Professional development, professionalism, journal writing, reflection, teacher*

## INTRODUCTION

The curriculum of English in Indonesia has continuously changed by time to time. The curriculum or program developers often fail to take into account the teachers, students, and the culture in which the new curriculum or practices have to be embedded. This change influences the teachers. It will give a burden to English teachers. Teacher should start over based on the new curriculum. Teachers cannot run the learning process well because they have to adjust with the new curriculum. Teachers need to know whether they have adjusted with the new curriculum or not. Teachers' reflection on their teaching and learning is very important to reach it. It will help them to know about their teaching and learning process in the classroom.

Teacher education programs must turn away from focusing on producing proficient practitioners because such practical skills related to instruction and discipline (e.g. Creating and delivering lesson plans, classroom management, and implementation of an assortment of content-specific methods) can be learned over time during their everyday school work with their students. It means that teachers should be more active in the process of teaching including pre-teaching, teaching and post teaching. Teachers can learn from their teaching experience to enrich their teaching skill.

Teachers prepare the better education to the students. They need to know how to develop their skill by mastering their subjects and also how to understand their students' personality. In order to reach these things, teachers need to develop their professionalism. This process

reflects upon their competencies, keep them updating information, and develop them further.

Continuous professional development will be effective if it is collaborative, uses active learning and delivers to groups of teachers; including periods of practice, coach, follow-up, promote reflective practice, encourage experimentation, and respond to teachers' needs. It means that reflective is one of the ways that teachers need to do if they want to develop their professional.

Teachers should be familiar with reflective thinking in order to develop their professionalism. Dewey (1910) further claimed that teachers' lack of reflective thinking leads to intellectual dependency on those persons who give them clear-cut and definite instructions as to just how to teach this or that. Some teachers just endure themselves to teach without thinking about how to improve their skill.

The usefulness of teacher education program becomes a concern among teacher educators. Richards (2009) stated that this growing concern relates to getting teachers prepared for educating the young. The lack qualities of teachers become boomerang for education itself. Teachers should achieve abilities, knowledge, competencies and skills for the effective and efficient learning and teaching process in the classroom. They must know how far their achievement in order to make them develop their professionalism as teachers. Based on the statements above, the researcher formulates research question; what is the teachers' attitude toward journal writing?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers have their own roles in the classroom to make the learning process success. Harmer (2007a) explained 5 roles of the teacher in the classroom. They are controller, prompter, participant, resource, and tutor. Moreover, Harmer (2007b) in his book, entitled "How to Teach English", mentioned 3 other tasks in teaching. First, a teacher should be well-prepared, needs to keep the students' records and should be reliable in managing the time allocation for the activities in the classroom. Students' record can be written on journal writing.

Teachers need to prepare themselves to develop their professionalism. Professional development (Why Is Teacher Development Important? : Because Students Deserve the Best, 2008) is ongoing, experiential, collaborative, and connected to and derived from working with students and understanding their culture. Teachers should be more patient in increasing their ability both in teaching and learning.

Evans (2002) in her journal stated that the concept of teacher development is unclear. It is still vague among educators. Teacher development is essential to those who are concerned to categorize work in the field within clear parameters. Establishing the parameters of what may be considered to constitute teacher development work is impossible to do without a clear understanding of the concept of teacher development.

Calderhead (1989) stated that a variety of approaches in currently used to help teachers develop a critically reflective approach to their teaching, including action research, case studies, ethnography, and journal writing. While Hatton & Smith (1995) teacher educators considered pre-service teachers' reflective journal writing in the system often limited to descriptive/ technical reflection, consistent with the literature that the reflection levels in pre-service teachers'

writings were primarily descriptive or technical rather than critical/ transformative.

Gebhard (2009) stated that the purpose of writing in a journal is to have a place to record our observations of what goes on in our own and other teachers' classrooms, write about our discussions, consider teaching ideas, and reflect on our teaching. Teachers reflect on what they have done in the classroom. Zeicher and Liston (1996) said that reflective teaching is a recognition, examination, and rumination over the implications of one's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, and values as well as the opportunities and constraints provided by the social conditions in which the teacher works.

Based on Gebhard (2009), he said that there is a list of what some teachers include in their journals; the descriptions of classroom interaction collected in their own and other teachers' classrooms, as well as analyses and interpretations of these descriptions; Second, tally sheets, transcripts, sketches, and coding as a part of their description and analysis; photo (snapshots) and descriptions of what goes on in each photo; summaries and reflections on discussions with other teachers; lists of alternative ways to teach aspects of lesson; stream of consciousness writing; reflections on language-learning experiences; thoughts on beliefs about teaching and learning; questions about teaching and learning; answer to their own questions; summaries and critiques of journal articles and books; and lesson plan and teaching ideas.

Additionally, Richards (1998) said that the teachers' journal writing was consisted four general categories. These refer to some topics. They are about theories of teaching, approaches and methods used in the lesson, evaluating their teaching and teachers' self awareness of strengths and weakness. Theories of teaching consist of two points; theories and belief about teaching and learning and applying theories to classroom practice. In theories and beliefs about teaching and learning, teachers write down about a belief of teaching, an expert's view, a justification for something and a personal opinion while applying theories to classroom practice, we need to write about how a theory was applied, contradictions between theory and practice and how theories changed.

Approaches and methods used in the class also include topics of journal writing. Some points of these topics are about approach and methods in teaching, content of lesson, the teachers' knowledge (pedagogical knowledge, knowledge and experience), the earners' background information and the school context. Then, the third topic is about evaluating their teaching which is consisted of three points; evaluation lesson (positive or negative), diagnosing problems (students' problem, classroom interaction and teachers' problem) and solution to problems (alternative ways of presenting a lesson, deciding on a plan of action and seeking solutions from the tutor). Last, teachers' self-awareness of strengths and weakness are the last contains of journal writing. Teachers write about their perceptions of themselves as teachers (their teaching style and comments on their language proficiency), recognition of personal growth such as how confidence has developed and about their self development.

## **METHOD**

Twenty English teachers had completed the questionnaire and open ended question. The questionnaire is about teachers' attitude toward journal writing. To complete the

questionnaire, the teachers firstly had known about journal writing. It would be difficult to answer it if the teachers did not know or never wrote journal for their reflection. And the researcher aimed to analyze the process of teacher's development through journal writing; reflective thinking by giving open ended question about the teacher development. So, the researcher decided that design of this research was mixed method. The goal of this research is to find whether journal writing is effective toward the teachers' professional development and to know the teachers' attitude toward journal writing itself.

## FINDINGS

The questionnaires were distributed to the teachers to know their attitude toward journal writing. This is indicated by the students' ordinal score got from the questionnaire as shown in the following table:

No	Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1.	I am very delighted to write my reflection on journal writing.	15.0	70.0	10.0	5.0
2.	Journal writing can help me to develop my professionalism as teacher.	30.0	65.0	0	5.0
3.	Journal writing can make me focus to develop my teaching skill.	35.0	55.0	0	10.0
4.	Journal writing gives me additional motivation to improve my skill.	30	65.0	0	5.0
5.	Writing my reflection on journal makes me focus on assessing my students.	35.0	50.0	5.0	10.0
6.	Writing my reflection on journal improves my self-confident in teaching.	30	55.0	5.0	10.0
7	Writing my reflection on journal helps me decide what method that I will use for the next teaching.	45.0	45.0	0	10.0
8	Writing my reflection on journal is effective and efficient to improve my skill.	30.0	55.0	10.0	5.0
9	Writing my reflection on journal does not limit my idea in teaching.	30.0	55.0	5.0	10.0
10	Writing my reflection on journal can make me realize my strength and weakness in teaching.	55.0	35.0	5.0	5.0
Mean		33.5	55	5.5	6

**Table 1. Teachers' attitude**

This implied that the teachers' attitude toward journal writing is good because just some teachers stated disagree or strongly disagree about journal writing. We can see that mean of strongly disagree about journal writing is 6 percent, the mean of disagree about journal writing

is 5.5 percent, while 55 percent agree about journal writing and 33.5 percent strongly agree about journal writing.

Based on teachers' mean of questionnaire, it is found that the higher percentage is 55 percent which is categorized as agree. Then, the smaller percentage is 5.5 percent which is categorized as disagree category. Most of the teachers' attitude indicated agree and strongly agree as the positive statements about teachers' professional development through journal writing or journal reflective.

Open ended questions were also distributed to the teachers to know about the development of their professionalism. First, it is about the source of language teaching. There are some sources that the teachers mention such as, books, journals, material from the internet, existing knowledge of the target language (song or poetry) and teachers' experience. The material of these sources should be delivered by effective methods and variety of techniques. Second about their position in the professional development, some teachers think that they are in a standard position and some teachers are in progressing to be a professional teachers or better teachers. Third, it is about their strategy in developing their professionalism. They do some strategies such as being observed by colleagues, doing reflection, reading a lot, learning more teaching methods, joining seminar or workshop, self reflecting, and keeping change to be better teachers.

The questions are also about the teachers' strengths, weaknesses and the contradiction in their teaching. Some teachers believe that they feel energized, confident, creative and close to the students. These make them able to teach in the classroom and find other methods to make the students feel joyful and motivated in learning. But, there also some weaknesses in teaching process such as the different level of the students, lack of experience for new teachers, limited time to do reflection and providing interesting media to the students. These things become obstacles in learning process. Most of teachers think that there is no any contradiction in their teaching, but some do not think so.

Other questions are about how the teachers improve their skill, how they help their students and what satisfaction that they get from teaching. They conduct some activities to improve their skill such as sharing and discussing with other teachers, reading some books, being observed, finding creative methods and looking for many new resources. But, they never forget to help their students. They give the students feedback and suggestion, stimulate and motivate them. Furthermore, teachers get satisfaction when they teach the students such as when the students can comprehend the learning material, achieve their dreams and develop their language ability. Teachers are also satisfied when they can learn about the students' character and development, share idea, knowledge and life experience.

## **DISCUSSION**

Writing reflection is one of ways to develop the teachers' professionalism. Writing reflection can be on journal writing. Using journal writing to reflect the teachers' teaching experience in the class room enable to make their professionalism develop because in journal writing, teachers can learn more about their teaching in the classroom, find out their weakness,

strength, solve the class problem and many more. Knowing their weakness during teaching process can make them aware for the next teaching because teachers should know and change their mistake in teaching. Richard (1998) stated that whatever the types of journal writing that teacher engage in, it provides useful benefits for teacher.

Those who thought that it can help the teachers' professional development because it provides them many benefits in their teaching such as they can focus and be motivated to improve their skill and self-confident, they can realize their strengths and weaknesses and they can easily assess the students through it. Walker (2006) stated that journal writing can grow self confident and gain trust.

Some thought that it cannot help the teachers' professional development because it gives them awareness and boredom when they want to teach so it can be burden for them when teaching and wasted more time. Burns (recited in Richards, 1998) said that keeping journal writing is time consuming and initially interesting.

Teachers continuously try to develop their professionalism in many ways. Doing reflection to their teaching experience that written in a journal is one of their ways.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study suggests that journal writing can be one of ways that teachers do to improve their professionalism. They can do better when they have guideline, and then journal writing can be their guideline for the better teaching in the next time. It is not easy to be professional because it needs sacrifice. We need to spend our time by thinking and doing something in order to develop our teaching professionalism. However, some teachers still cannot apply it because they are lack of insight about it. So, it is very delighted if the government provides any training for teachers about the implementation of journal writing.

## REFERENCE

- Calderhead, J. (1989). Reflective teaching and teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 5(1): pp. 43-51. doi:10.1016/0742-051X(89)90018-8
- Dewey, J. (1910). How we think. The problem of training thought. Retrieved from <http://rci.rutgers.edu/~tripmcc/phil/dewey-hwt-pt1-selections.pdf>
- Evans, L. (2002). What is teacher development. *Oxford Review of Education*. 28 (1). Retrieved from [www.education.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/staff/papers/What-is-teacher-Development.pdf](http://www.education.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/staff/papers/What-is-teacher-Development.pdf)
- Harmer, J. (2007a). *How to teach English*. China: Pearson Education Limited.
- Harmer, J. (2007b). *The practice of English language teaching*. Malaysia: Pearson Education Limited.
- Hatton, N., & Smith, D. (1995). *Reflection in teacher education: Towards definition and implementation*. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 11(1). pp 33-49. doi: 10.1016/0742-051X(94)00012-U
- Gebhard (2006). *Teaching English as a foreign or second language (2nd)*. USA: the University of Michigan.
- Richards, J. C. (1998). *Beyond training: perspective on language teacher education*. New york: Cambridge University Press. pp 162-163

- 
- Richards, J. C. & Burns, A. (2009). *Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Walker, S.E. (2006). Journal Writing as a Teaching Technique to Promote Reflection. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 41(2): pp 216–221. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1472640/>
- Why Is Teacher Development Important?: Because Students Deserve the Best . (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.edutopia.org/teacher-development-introduction>
- Zeicher and Liston. (1987). Teaching Student Teachers to Reflect. *Harvard Educational Review*: 57 (1). pp. 23-49. doi: 10.17763/haer.57.1.j18v7162275t1w3w

