

SELF-DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH: AN ALTERNATIVE TO ENHANCE VOCATIONAL TEACHER'S CHARACTER ^{*)}

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Abstract

This paper is arranged as an ideas contribution to integrate character building into self-directed professional development for vocational teachers. The implementation of vocational education is always kept abreast of technology and workforce development. Vocational teachers have an important role in achieving the educational success in school. The professional development for vocational teachers is required continuously to accommodate changes that occur in society. Self-directed professional development approach is one of an alternative to enhance a vocational teacher's competencies in order to enriching their professionalism, learning improvement, and school improvement. In learning process, self-directed professional development has applied the principles of adult learning that covered inside the principles of character education. Developing teacher's characters can be done through activities that are useful to themselves. By implementing self-directed professional development, vocational teachers can able to plan, do, check, and act their activity needs to enrich competencies themselves that include: knowledge, skills and attitudes. Consequently, vocational teachers must report to their school management if ever they want to obtain recognition on their professional development activities that have been done. Here, the role of the teacher's characters is examined in reporting their learning achievements that have been conducted through self-directed professional development.

Keywords: vocational education teacher, self-directed professional development, character education

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1. Introduction

In the globalization era nowadays, many countries have been racing each other to compete in a various fields. A country must have started to think about how to compete among other countries in the world, especially in the advantages of human resource development rather than the advantages of its natural resources. Here, education has hold a key role, as a basic approach, in a nation-building to achieve the quality improvement of human resources development. Thus, educational achievement has influenced strongly on the nation's competitiveness.

The Indonesia's competitiveness on the global level has been increasing yearly. Reference [1] and [2] reported the Indonesia's rank in the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) rose from 54th rank of 133 countries in year 2009 to 44th of 139 countries in year 2010. In an economic perspective, this fact indicated that education has an impotent role in improving the quality of human resources to strengthening the nation's competitiveness.

Indonesian government has been improving continuously in education policy, in terms of quality, relevance and equity. Improving the educational quality could not be separated to improving the teacher's quality its self, because teachers have held a central role in an

education development sector. The educational quality can also be affected to teachers' quality. A good quality teachers are expected be able to increase their quality in teaching. Reference [3] clarified that the core of education is teaching and learning, and teaching-learning connection works best when we have effective teachers working with every student every day. The above statement can be concluded that education can't be separated from teaching and learning activities and teachers as agent in education itself.

The Indonesian government has appreciated to a teachers as a profession that reinforced by issued of the Act Number 14 Year 2005 regarding Teachers and Lecturers. Teachers in carrying out their profession should have four competencies, i.e. pedagogical competence, personal competence, social competence, and professional competence. And also, teachers in implementing their professionalism should have an obligation to improve and to develop their academic qualifications and competence continuously in line with developments in science, technology, and art, which is often referred to the term of "professional development" or there is also a mention of "continuing professional development". In reference [4] described that professional development refers to skills and knowledge attained for both personal development and career

advancement. Individuals may participate in professional development because of an interest in lifelong learning, a sense of moral obligation, to maintain and improve professional competence, enhance career progression, keep abreast of new technology and practice.

The above statements indicate that there are various factors that influence a teacher to participate in the professional development; a sense of moral obligation is a psychological factor that can determine his or her success. Here, the role of character building is a crucial aspect to teachers to attend in the professional development. Teachers' professional development is opened to all teachers in all education levels in Indonesia. In this paper, the study will focus on one of approach type of the professional development, i.e. self-directed professional development, in terms of building a character of vocational education teachers, especially teachers in Secondary Vocational High School (VSHS).

2. Professional Development in Education

Vocational education is an educational program that is always changing in accordance with a manpower and technology development. Reference [5] explained that teachers today are faced with a rapid change and a high standard demand, so that teachers require improving their skills through in-service education and training. This statement is a simple terminology of professional development, which is one form of learning that describes a movement of teachers' increased knowledge or skills. Reference [6] defined clearly that professional development is development of teachers and support staff to enhance their knowledge and understanding, and their skills and abilities to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Reference [7] described the professional development standard is that of the opportunities teachers and other educators should have in order to learn what they need to know and be able to do in order to assist students to achieve the content standard. Professional development standards consider two dimensions: the content of professional development – that is, what teacher need to learn – and the pedagogy of professional development – that is, how should learn it. The above statements can be expressed that the professional development is required for teachers to improve their pedagogic knowledge based on standard requirements. The results of the professional development of teachers are expected to improve their teaching quality.

Similar to the above statements, reference [8] defined the professional development as “a combination of experiences that empower

individual educators, educational teams, and educational organization to improve curriculum, instruction, and student assessment in order to facilitate student growth and development”. There are three the essential elements in this definition, individual educators, educational teams, and educational organization that concerned with capacity building. Capacity building does not directly affect student learning, but increase the ability of individual, groups, and school to affect student learning. The end element, facilitate student growth and development, is the ultimate purpose of professional development. Furthermore, the next three elements, improvement curriculum, instruction, and student assessment, are core elements of professional development.

Furthermore, reference [9] explained the aim of professional development is to improve the quality of education is a perfectly respectable aim in its own right, and is one that will always continue, that should always continue, whatever successes may be achieved on way. It is related to Fullan and Stiegelbaur statement in ref. [9] that educational changes depend on what teacher do and think it's as simple and as complex as that.

Based on those of the professional development concepts, the professional development that intended in this paper is to increase capacity building of teachers to improve their quality of pedagogy knowledge and subject knowledge according to the needs of teachers that related to the school context and also to enhance their professional and career. So, professional development for teachers cannot be separated between the individual development and the school improvement.

3. Self-directed Professional Development in Vocational Education

Several the descriptions of professional development for teachers have been generally described in the above paragraphs. In reference [10], vocational education teachers are change agents in schools. Furthermore, reference [11] delivered the profession profile of vocational teachers, i.e. (1) teachers are teach in formal schools and they are vocational subjects, and (2) teachers have an industrial experiences in order to improve their skills and ability. This argument suggests that the vocational teachers needed to perform self-development that can be able to adapt to changes that occurred in carrying out their duties. Thus, the vocational teacher professional development is one part of personnel development that cannot be separated from the role of schools.

In reference [12], the personnel development is an important part in vocational education, especially for teachers in order to improve their skills.

Personnel development is defined as all activities designed to contribute to improve the learning effectiveness and professional efficiency of teachers and staffs. Furthermore, reference [13] describes the personnel development for vocational education teachers can be done through three ways, i.e. professional development, technical development, and general development. Professional development encourages strengthening the teachers abilities that are expected to contribute in improving the educational quality. Technical development efforts to increase the technical capability of teachers so that relevant to a world work changes. General development refers to fluency in written and oral communication. The above description can be resumed that professional development refers to the teachers competencies needed for each teacher, while the technical development and general development is more specifically suited to the each teacher respectively.

Reference [14] illustrated the individual professional development in several different forms as be presented in Figure 1. These forms can be viewed on continuum from intensive individual assistance to independent development: intensive individual assistance collaboratively planned, self-directed: approved and supported, and self-directed: independent. Intensive individualized assistance is reserved for teacher who is having serious professional difficulty. It is assistance, and should be provided only until the teacher has reached a level of basic competence. Collaboratively planned individual development is appropriate for teacher who is moving toward autonomy but still needs some assistance from staff developer or colleague in planning and implementing his or her professional development. Self-directed professional development can be planned by teacher and then reviewed, approved, and supported by school, or it can be carried out independently. Independent professional development might consist of teacher participating in graduate program, conference, or network unassociated with school, or in private reading, research, or reflective writing. The above descriptions show that self-directed professional development is one of alternative approach that can be used to enhance teacher professionalism process



Figure 1 Individualized Professional Development on the Continuum Form (Source: Gordon, 2004:219)

Related to the professional development program for teachers, reference [15] explained that the traditional professional development programs often have focus on assisting teachers to comply with state or district directives, training in the latest teaching fad, or attempting to remediate administrator-perceived weaknesses in classroom instruction. There are six the integrating dimensions in developing the whole teacher through the professional development: self-concept and self-efficacy, cognitive development, pedagogical development, moral development, physical wellness, and integrating dimensions of teacher development. Similar statement was expressed in reference [16] that to be effective and successful, teacher professional development (TPD) must be of high quality and relevant to teachers' needs. TPD is the tool by which policymakers convey broad visions, disseminate critical information, and provide guidance to teachers. Effective TPD begins with an understanding of teachers' needs and their work environments—schools and classrooms. TPD then combines a range of techniques to promote learning; provides teachers with the support they need; engages school leadership; and makes use of evaluation to increase its impact. Essential techniques include mentoring, teamwork, observation, reflection and assessment. TPD programs should engage teachers as learners—typically involving the process of “modeling”. TPD can be divided into three broad categories: (1) Standardized TPD that is the most centralized approach, best used to disseminate information and skills among large teacher populations, (2) Site-based TPD that is intensive learning by groups of teachers in a school or region, promoting profound and long-term changes in instructional methods, and (3) Self-directed TPD that is independent learning, sometimes initiated at the learner's discretion, using available resources that may include computers and internet.

4. The role of character building in the self-directed Professional Development

As described above, a sense of moral obligation is one of the factors that can influence a teacher to attend professional development. And, the self-directed professional development is one of an alternative approach of the individualized professional development that can be chosen by teachers.

Reference [16] stated that the goal of self-directed professional development is to lead teachers to identify areas for professional improvement, and then to assist them in guiding their own development in particular growth area. Furthermore, self-directed professional development was concluded that related to self-

directed learning and adult learning. Self-directed learning is based on the idea of learner control, as opposed to the role of instructions as sole decision makers. There are three factors that had to be present in order for individuals to be in control of their learning: independence to choose goals, support in the form of human and nonhuman resources to achieve goals, and personal ability required to achieve goals. Thus, teachers must have a strong character to follow the self-directed professional development.

Teachers as learners can be categorized as adult learners. According to reference [17] there are four viable definition of adult: (1) adult biologically, (2) adult legally, (3) adult socially, and (4) adult psychologically. One of the most importance of those fourth definition is the adult psychologically with regard to learning. On the other hand, the development psychology has contributed a growing body of knowledge about changes of age through the life span in such characteristics as physical capabilities, mental abilities, interests, attitudes, values, creativity, and life styles. The discussion above shows psychologically that the teachers have been implementing a learning process in domain of andragogy.

Andragogy in practice, there are six cores of adult learning principles: (1) the learners' need to know, (2) self-concept of the learner, (3) prior experience of the learner, (4) readiness to learn, (5) orientation to learning, and (6) motivation to learn [Ref. 17]. Those descriptions can be shows that adult learning in order to ensure that professional development is congruent with the teacher's need, it is depending on a character of each teacher its self. Here, the character means as such mental abilities, interests, attitudes, values, creativity that mentioned above.

In recent years there has been a return to "character education", discussions of culture and nation's character, in our nation's classrooms. In reference [19], Ministry of National Education of Indonesia in early 2010 has acknowledged the community needed on a the cultural education and the nation's character. Culture is defined as the whole a thinking system, values, morals, norms, and belief that produced human society. The thinking system, values, morals, norms, and belief are resulted from a human interaction among each other and the natural environment. Furthermore, the character is traits, morals, or personality which is formed from the internalization of various virtues which is believed and used as a basis for perspective, think, attitude, and act.

Reference [20] informed Character Counts as organization promoting character education suggested to advance character education in teaching by the Six Pillars of Character, i.e. trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship, while reference [21] had a

notion that character education involves teaching children about basic human values including honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality, and respect. The goal is to raise children to become morally responsible, self-disciplined citizens.

Reference [21] was defined that character education is the intentional effort to develop in young people core ethical and performance values that are widely affirmed across all cultures. To be effective, character education must include all stakeholders in a school community and must permeate school climate and curriculum. Based on the practices of effective schools, they have proposed the Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education, i.e. (1) promotes core values, (2) defines "character" to include thinking, feeling, and doing, (3) uses a comprehensive approach, (4) creates a caring community, (5) provides students with opportunities for moral action, (6) offers a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum, (7) fosters students' self-motivation, (8) engages staff as a learning community, (9) fosters shared leadership, (10) engages families and community members as partners, and (11) assesses the culture and climate of the school. The above description can be concluded that the definition of character education has a different point of view among each others that dependent on the way of life their society or their nation.

Related to this paper, self-directed professional development as an enriched professionalism of teachers is expected to improve the quality of the teacher's character in learning process and after attending professional development. Based on those of statements, the characters are proposed to grow in self-directed professional development approach, i.e. awareness, honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, perseverance, self-discipline, and citizenship.

5. Conclusion

Implementation of vocational education is always kept abreast of technology and workforce development. Vocational teachers have an important role in achieving the success of the education in school. The professional development of vocational teachers is required continuously to teachers to accommodate changes that occur in society. Self-directed professional development approach is one of an alternative to enhance a vocational teacher's competencies in order to enriching their professionalism, learning improvement, and school improvement. In learning process, self-directed professional development has applied the principles of adult learning that covered inside the principles of character education.

Developing teacher's characters can be build during learning process and would able to put into practice

in teaching and learning activities. In implementing self-directed professional development, vocational teachers can able to plan, do, check, and act their activity need to enrich competencies themselves that include: knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The character has a very broad sense depends on the community perspective on culture and trait. Through self-directed approach to professional development, teachers are possessed characters of: awareness, honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, perseverance, self-discipline, and citizenship during the learning process and after completion their learning.

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