



## EXPLORING IMPACTS OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION (PPG) ON TEACHER PRACTICE: A CASE OF TWO EASTERN INDONESIAN RURAL SCHOOL TEACHERS

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**Abstract:** Several studies have shown the benefits of joining the teacher education profession (PPG) for English teachers. However, little research still exists on its positive impact on teachers in disadvantaged or rural areas. This research examines the benefits received by English teachers in rural areas in eastern Indonesia. This qualitative case study research examines teachers from Central Sulawesi and East Nusa Tenggara as PPG Tadulako University 2022 alums. Data was collected using in-depth interviews and supported by documentation data and observations during the PPG period. The thematic analysis results show that teacher participation in PPG impacts increasing pedagogical knowledge and skills, increasing teacher awareness, and changing teaching practices, ultimately impacting student motivation in learning. This research contributes to the discourse on teacher professionalism development to improve the quality of teachers and education in Indonesia, especially teachers in rural areas.

**Keywords:** Impact, Rural School, Teacher Professional Education, Teacher Practice

**Abstrak:** Beberapa penelitian telah menunjukkan manfaat mengikuti profesi pendidikan guru (PPG) bagi guru bahasa Inggris. Namun demikian, masih sedikit penelitian dampak positifnya bagi guru-guru di daerah tertinggal atau pedesaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji manfaat yang diterima oleh guru Bahasa Inggris di daerah pedesaan, Indonesia timur. Untuk mengetahui hal ini, penelitian kualitatif studi kasus ini meneliti guru dari Sulawesi Tengah dan Nusa Tenggara Timur sebagai alumni PPG Universitas Tadulako 2022. Pengambilan data dilakukan dengan wawancara mendalam dan didukung data dokumentasi dan pengamatan selama masa PPG. Hasil analisis tematik menunjukkan bahwa keikutsertaan guru dalam PPG berdampak pada peningkatan pengetahuan dan ketrampilan pedagogis, peningkatan kesadaran guru, dan perubahan praktik pengajaran, yang pada akhirnya berdampak pada motivasi siswa dalam belajar. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada diskursus pengembangan profesionalisme guru sebagai cara untuk meningkatkan kualitas guru dan pendidikan di Indonesia, terutama guru-guru di pedesaan.

**Kata Kunci:** Dampak, Sekolah Pedesaan, Pengembangan Profesionalisme Guru, Praktek Guru

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## INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional education program or *Program Pendidikan Guru* (PPG) has been treated as a pathway for Indonesian teacher professionalism, aiming at enhancing teachers' quality (Mariani et al. 2021). In-service PPG has a long history in Indonesia as the mechanism to develop Indonesian teachers' capacity and certify them to get a "professional teacher status". The latest PPG mode is conducted through an online one with a 12-credit learning course, learning various relevant knowledge and skills for

facilitating teachers to be professional and engaging in teaching practicum by implementing what has been learned (Dirjen Guru & Tenaga Pendidikan, 2022).

Research on the involvement of teachers at in-service PPG is relatively scarce, particularly its impact on teachers' practices. Some research attempts to explore the teachers' challenges attending PPG (e.g., Utami, 2018; Lailatussaadah et al., 2020; Rukmini et al., 2022) and mentor-teacher involvement in PPG (Suyanto & Mahmud, 2022). Particular research exploring the impact of PPG involvement on in-service teachers' soft skills was conducted by Huda et al. (2022). Drawing on interviews with 15 teachers, they found that teachers had an initial understanding and obtained soft skills learning from PPG, including self-confidence, collaboration, hard work, respect for culture, patience, wisdom, maturity, mental resilience, humility, responsibility, creative thinking, positive thinking, cooperation, humility, respect for others, and tolerance. In particular, Putri and Fatimah (2021) found that 45 English teachers, alums of PPG, perceived PPG involvement impact on their performance and the improvement of their professional and pedagogical competencies.

Despite those aforementioned studies providing information about the impact on teachers' involvement in PPG, very few studies report its benefit for teachers in rural areas. Studies have confirmed that Indonesian rural teachers commonly have low pedagogical and professional competence due to a lack of sufficient training, which impacts poor learning students' achievement (Anwar, Ubaidillah, & Sulistiyo, 2020; Unicef, 2016; Susanti, Priebe, & Bah, 2020). These issues imply the need to upgrade rural teachers' capacity through various professional development initiatives by the government, one of which is conducted through the PPG model. Attempting to fill the void of the impact of PPG initiated by the government for rural teachers, this current study explores this issue by shedding light on the central question: What are the impacts of involvement in the teacher professional education program (PPG) for rural teachers?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **PPG as a means of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) in Indonesia**

Following the issue of the Teacher Law in 2005, the Indonesian government has been actively developing teacher capacity through various teacher professional development initiatives and running a teacher certification program nationally. To get a "certified status", teachers must have a bachelor's degree qualification and have passed a certification test, following their prior TPD activities in developing the four competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional, as exemplified by the PPG program. Initially, as stated by the Ministry of Education Act, no 82 2013, the PPG program is designed by the government to prepare future professional and qualified teachers from fresh graduates of teacher (or non) training education through a year-intensive training, and will get a "professional status" once they pass the accreditation process. The in-service PPG model is designed for accreditation purposes, particularly for teachers who enter the teaching profession in 2015 and beyond. The program takes place for a semester with a credit system applied for teachers to complete.

The in-service PPG has been following several improvements since 2017, from the hybrid model in 2018 to the online one in 2020, allowing more teachers from rural areas to attend this government-initiated TPD. In this new mode of PPG, teachers are required to complete 12-credit modules consisting of three main courses: pedagogical-related materials, designing innovative teaching with well-prepared teaching tools (e.g., lesson plan writing, media and materials planning, students' activities sheet, and assessments design), and teaching practicum. Two mentors from the university and the school teacher facilitate this learning process. Afterward, teachers must sit on the performance test (*Ujian Kinerja* (UKIN)). Once they pass the test, they are awarded a "professional status" and are eligible to receive a monthly allowance/incentive from the government (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

While this PPG initiative has been running for years to improve the quality of teaching task forces in Indonesia, a dearth of studies has explored its impact on teacher practices. Huda et al. (2021) investigated the soft skills development of teachers from Java and Jakarta following their PPG involvement. In addition, Jab, Kesuma, and Fatima (2021) found that there has been an increase in 21 English teachers' performance in West Sumatra. Zid et al. (2021) surveyed 468 teachers, PPG alums of Jakarta State University, and found that teachers gain benefits such as acquiring knowledge, learning innovation, and improving their communication skills with their superiors, colleagues, and student's parents. A similar study was conducted by Putri and Fatimah (2021) with 45 in-service English teachers in West Sumatra. Drawing from questionnaire data, they found that English teachers and PPG alums of UNP experience professional and pedagogical competence improvement. In this case, the impacts are visible on the teachers' ability to integrate technology into their lessons, use relevant teaching approaches and methods, conduct good assessments, and understand and apply well the construction of lesson plans (e.g., describing core competencies and essential competencies on indicators section).

The above findings suggest that the involvement of English teachers in the PPG program a top-down TPD initiated by the government – positively impacts teachers' practice. However, more similar studies need to be conducted to investigate its impact on teachers in a rural area context. This current study will explore this issue further. As reported by existing studies, The characteristics of teachers in rural areas and how they engage in TPD are elaborated below.

### **EFL Teachers in Rural Schools**

Research has documented that schools in Indonesian rural areas are associated with a lack of qualified teachers, limited infrastructures and resources, a shortage of teachers, and other contextual factors (Asian Development Bank, 2015; Febriana et al., 2018; Nama & Ate, 2022). These facts have also affected teaching quality and student learning achievement (Febriana et al., 2018). Regarding the teacher condition, the Ministry of Education has highlighted the shortage of teachers in rural schools due to the unbalanced distribution. It is also found that many teachers have low competencies in their subject, and teachers sometimes are forced to teach other subjects that do not fit with their expertise (Febriana et al., 2018; Kemendikbud, 2012).

Studies have uncovered the challenges regarding English teachers in rural schools. For instance, Fadilah et al. (2023) found that two teachers in West Sumatra rural schools encountered challenges in their practices, such as the limited school facilities, which were unsupportive for good teaching and learning process, lack of training about the new curriculum and development, and low motivation of students in learning English. In the context of elementary school, Rahayu (2016) found that teachers have no English education background, which results in ineffective teaching. In addition, a study conducted by Songbatumis (2017) with five teachers of a secondary Islamic school in West Sumbawa, West Nusa Tenggara, suggests that in addition to facing challenges with students and school conditions, the teachers have to cope with their issues, such as shortage of teachers' training, lack of English proficient and teaching method, limited knowledge and skill of using IT, and limited TPD opportunities.

As described above, the English teachers in rural schools found considerable challenges impacting their teaching practices. The government seems to resolve the lack of TPD opportunities by providing opportunities for them to attend the PPG program. However, since its impact on teachers' practices is relatively under-explored, this study aims to uncover it. Also, it is paramount to delineate how teachers cope with their students' issues with the new knowledge and skills gained from the PPG program.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative case study exploring the impact of the PPG program on teacher practices of English teachers in rural schools (Stake, 2006). Creswell (2014) maintains that a case study is a research design that investigates a detailed case analysis, such as a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Using this design, the researchers can vividly understand the impacts of teachers' involvement in PPG for their practices.

### **Participants**

Two teachers who met the criteria were invited to participate in this study, and both were alums of the PPG program conducted by FKIP, Universitas Tadulako, in 2022. The first author became the facilitator in this program, along with one mentor school teacher and six other teachers in their group. One of them (hereafter Jane-pseudonym) started her teaching career 2018 as an honorary teacher and got her PNS status in 2019. Who is then posted in *Sekolah Satu Atap*, located in the rural area of Parimo Regency, Central Sulawesi. The other one (hereafter John-pseudonym) has been in teaching service since 2013 as the honorary teacher in his village, deemed as the disadvantaged region, located in Alor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. Before attending PPG, they had limited opportunity to engage in the government-initiated TPD.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data were collected through in-depth interviews via a phone with Jane, which lasted 45 minutes, and a Zoom meeting with John, which lasted 60 minutes. In addition, the interview data were triangulated with a module of PPG issued by the Dirjen GTK and corroborated with the observation by the first author during his facilitation with them.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze interview data employing Brown's (2014) procedure: data transcription, data coding, verifying, and concluding similar themes. Interview data were first transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Manual coding was used to locate phrases or statements, coded as sub-themes, and compiled in a table to find the central theme as the conclusion of the answers to this study's central question. Meanwhile, content analysis was used to identify the relevant responses of the two teachers from the document gained. Member checking and data triangulation was done to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

This current study explores the impact of PPG involvement on the practices of two English teachers from rural area schools. The results of this study confirmed that there are four big themes: (1) improvement in pedagogical knowledge and skills, (2) enhancement of teacher awareness, (3) change in teaching practices, and (4) increase in student learning motivation. These findings are elaborated and discussed as follows.

#### **Impact on Teachers' Practices**

Interview data shows that the pedagogical-related knowledge and skills have improved after participating in the PPG program. Both teachers affirm that they become knowledgeable with different teaching models, methods, and techniques, such as problem-based learning, discovery learning, inquiry learning, project-based learning, various language games, and ice-breaking activities.

Additionally, they both agree that they know how to design teaching media using PowerPoint (PPT) or Canva, choose relevant videos for teaching, and operate the LCD projector. Furthermore, the knowledge and skills of writing a lesson plan, following a proper format issued by the government, have also heightened. In particular, they asserted that they finally know how to construct an excellent basic competence and competence indicator of a lesson plan. In addition to learning and constructing a good lesson plan, they become well-informed by creating attractive learning media, student worksheets, and assessments. Some excerpts of the teachers' views are presented below:

*Before attending PPG, I barely knew about how to write a lesson plan and new teaching methods...I learned them from PPG, and I know them well now. (Jane)*

*...my knowledge and skills about using IT are increasing...I am now using Canva and Infocus (LCD projector) when teaching... (Jane)*

*....through this PPG, I understand now how to construct a good lesson plan...I learned too about innovative learning models... (John)*

*....I learned how to use technology in teaching...when teaching, I prepared the materials in PPT format to be delivered the next day... (John).*

The above fact might be associated with the content of PPG courses that have to be learned by the teachers. In this case, they are required to learn four learning model as mentioned above and integrate them into their teaching during teaching practicum at schools. In addition, under the guidance of facilitators (a school teacher and a lecturer), they were trained to construct a good lesson plan and implemented it for four meetings during the practicum. In terms of ICT, as they were required to integrate ICT in teaching, they did self-study via YouTube on how to design a learning media using PPT or Canva and other IT-related skills (Document & Observation).

In addition to improving pedagogical-related knowledge and skills, interview data also show that teachers' awareness of their profession increased. Jane, for instance, becomes more aware of her performance in class. Before the PPG program, she never cared about what to wear when coming into the class, nor did she care how her students would understand the lesson delivered. Similarly, John is becoming aware of his student's interest in learning English and tries to accommodate it through enjoyable learning (e.g., games and ice-breaking). They both share similar ideas in that they want to learn innovative teaching techniques to motivate their students continuously.

*I tend to think now, if I teach in such a way, will my students comprehend my explanation?... Previously, I never thought about it...(Jane).*

*Following my involvement in PPG, I am always concerned with my performance, like what clothes to wear...previously, I did not....I came into the classroom, taught students, and got a salary... (Jane)*

*I now utilize technology in my classroom; I have never used it before....As my students have mobile phones, I asked them to find topics a day before the class so they will be ready to learn and have initial information about it... (John).*

Lastly, the PPG program engagement has changed John and Jane's teaching practices compared to prior to attending it. They both claimed that before PPG involvement, instead of composing their lesson plans, they copied and pasted by taking someone's lesson plan from the internet as a teaching document. However, it is changing now. Due to the knowledge and skill gained as described above, they have prepared teacher-made lesson plans to guide teaching. As a result, they continued arguing that their teaching became more organized than before, following the procedures in the lesson plan. Both teachers agree that they have left the traditional teaching way – lecturing and asking students to take a note only – to interactive teaching by involving more enjoyable activities and using ICT. Indeed, following their PPG experience of learning and utilizing ICT in the classroom, they continue to explore the use of ICT, such as PPT (for John) and Canva (for Jane) media, videos, and LCD projectors. For Jane, in particular, the change in using ICT is not only for herself. She also has shared this experience with her colleagues, who have learned how to design a learning media using Canva and an LCD projector in their teaching. Below, the excerpt of their views is displayed:

*My teaching was not previously in a good order...now, I am teaching according to the lesson planned, starting from pre-activities, whilts, and post-activities...*

*...I used to adopt a teacher center: lecturing and giving tasks to students...Now, I am including games in my teaching, and the students enjoy learning...I sometimes play the video and ask them what they have watched from it. I am starting to use audio-visual media (Jane)*

*Before attending PPG, I only used the lecturing technique, gave students tasks, and done..now it is becoming more interactive...I am using ice-breaking too to make learning more enjoyable (John)*

*I never used technology when teaching...now, I am using PPT as a medium to deliver a lesson, as I did when doing my practicum at PPG... (John)*

*Previously, I never prepared a lesson plan before teaching...now, I am preparing and applying it when delivering the lesson...it is more organized...(John).*

### **Impact on Students' Learning Motivation**

In addition to bringing positive benefits for John and Jane, their involvement in the PPG program indirectly impacts their students' learning motivation. John, for instance, admits that previously, due to the adoption of traditional teaching, students were inactive and less motivated to learn English. The application of joyful learning immediately sparks students' interest in learning English in the classroom and outside. John asserts:

*..." Students' learning motivation is increasing...they become more active asking questions...It was not like this before...they were afraid to ask and answer questions....".*

*One day, I met some students outside the classroom...they asked me, "Sir, is it correct the spelling of these words?...previously, they never did this...this is something outstanding for me.."*

Similarly, Jane expressed excitement when finding students' activeness in her class. As she recalled, technology has induced their motivation to learn English. She also taught grade 9 students to use the Canva application to create their projects when implementing a project-based learning model.

*If I use media, like Canva slides and videos, they are enthusiastic and motivated to learn in the class (Jane)*

*I assigned Class 9 a project to design an advertisement using Canva Application; they did it for two weeks...I found their designs were excellent...I conclude students are getting motivated and active in learning when integrating technology in my teaching...*

### **Discussion**

This study explores the impacts of PPG involvement experienced by two teachers from rural schools on their teaching practices. First, it was found that they gained improvement in pedagogical knowledge and skills. Following this engagement in PPG, they can prepare teaching materials, media, and learning tools (lesson plans, students' worksheets, and assessment sheets), and they can integrate technology into their teaching. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Putri and Fatimah (2021), who found that teachers' knowledge and skills about teaching techniques, ICT, and lesson plan design are improved after PPG engagement. In the context of the impact of TPD on rural school teachers, this study affirms Harjanto et al.'s (2017) study that suggests long-term TPD brings good benefits to teachers' teaching practices.

The increase in teachers' knowledge and skills might be associated with the intensive learning they engage within the PPG program. In this regard, they learned 12-credit modules consisting of three main courses: pedagogical-related materials, designing innovative teaching with well-prepared teaching tools (e.g., lesson plan writing, media and materials planning, students' activities sheet, and assessments design), and teaching practicum. Additionally, the teachers were engaged in sharing and reflection meetings

after teaching practicum, in which they also learned from the feedback and practices of their colleagues. John, for instance, learned a lot from his PPG mates in designing a lesson plan and games in the classroom. While learning collegiality is not common among Indonesian teachers (Rahman, 2016), the PPG allowed them to learn from their colleagues. Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) maintain that effective professional development should support collaboration, allowing teachers to share ideas and collaborate in their learning. This collaboration will eventually benefit changing the culture and instruction in their classroom (Nasution, 2017).

In addition, this study also identifies that the two teachers become aware of their profession. These awareness changes may be linked to reflection activities conducted each time after the teaching practicum ended. In this case, guided by the first author and the mentor school teacher, these two teachers had to reflect on what had been successful or what challenges in their teaching and how they would resolve the challenges in the next meeting. Research has also documented the connection of teachers' reflection activities with the growth of awareness (York-Barr et al., 2006). In addition, Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) also assert that engagement in reflective practice can develop a sense of self-awareness, which is a crucial tenet for teacher professional growth.

Another impact of PPG engagement is related to the practice change in teachers' teaching. In this case, the two teachers have transformed their practice from traditional teaching (e.g., lecturing only and asking students to take notes) to innovative one, such as adopting project-based and discovery learning and employing games, ice-breaking, and exciting media. The impact of PD engagement on the change of teachers' classroom practice, in this case, attending the PPG program, was voiced by Guskey (2002) many years ago. He proposed a model of teacher change through PD involvement and claimed that teachers' involvement would change their classroom practice, leading to a change in students' learning outcomes and their beliefs and attitudes. Additionally, the perceived change by the above teachers might be associated with the concept of teacher self-efficacy – teachers' belief about their ability to improve their students' learning achievement (Ross & Bruce, 2007).

Regarding EFL teachers, a study conducted by Averina and Kuswandono (2023) revealed that engagement in TPD improves teachers' self-efficacy. In particular, Alibakhsi et al. (2020) found that high self-efficacy in teachers affects their teaching practices, such as using ICT in teaching. In this regard, John and Jane's sense of efficacy is heightened when they find that what they have done has worked for their students.

As delineated above, engagement in PPG by the teachers brings changes to their knowledge and skills, awareness, and teaching practices. This study also found that these changes have affected students' learning motivation. Students become more active and feel enthusiastic about learning English. Experts in TPD have also echoed the finding about teachers' involvement in PD affecting students' learning achievement. Guskey (2002) reiterates that the ultimate goal of teachers engaging in TPD is for the sake of improving students' learning. In the context of EFL teachers in Palu City, a study by Mukrim (2017) revealed that teachers' participation in one of the TPD programs – a collaborative action research – has considerably impacted students' learning motivation.



In addition to TPD-related factors that spark students' learning interest in English can also be related to the change in teachers' instructional strategy in delivering the lesson. Renandya (2016) strongly asserts that teacher and teaching methodology are the key ingredients, besides text, task, and test, for increasing student motivation in learning English. He further argues that when teachers are enthusiastic about teaching and are passionate about it, their students are motivated to learn. Furthermore, he argues that student motivation in learning English is stimulated when teachers adopt varied teaching techniques and carefully structure learning activities to attain the lesson objectives.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research found that the engagement in PPG by two EFL school teachers in remote areas positively impacted their teaching practices. The teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills increased, such as being knowledgeable with new teaching models and techniques, designing good lesson plans, and using technology-based teaching media. Additionally, the teacher's awareness of their practices heightened, marked by being cognizant of students' learning needs and their performance in the classroom. More importantly, the teachers' teaching practice experiences a transformation, such as using a teacher-made lesson plan, leading to more organized teaching and applying interactive teaching with games and technology use. It is also worth noting that the change in teachers' practice ultimately affects students' motivation, in which they become active during the lesson and enjoy learning English.

### **Contribution**

This small-scale case study may enhance our understanding of the virtues of teachers' engagement in PPG, a TPD program initiated by the government, particularly for rural school teachers. Providing opportunities to participate in the PPG program will give them ample opportunities to develop professionally.

### **Limitation**

It is a small-scale study involving only two teachers from rural school teachers, so the finding may not reflect teachers in other geographical contexts. Hence, more studies should be conducted to explore its impacts in the context of difficult circumstances, like teachers in rural areas. Additionally, this study only focuses on the benefits of teachers' involvement in PPG.

### **Recommendations and Future Studies**

Drawing from this small-scale study, the authors propose some points of recommendation for related parties as well as for future researchers.

#### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the researchers put forward practical recommendations as follows:

- a. Teachers in rural areas should be given equal opportunities to participate in professional development programs initiated by the government, schools, and teacher organizations. They may engage in a top-down TPD model, such as attending workshops, online/offline seminars, or training.

- b. School principals should encourage and motivate teachers to engage in self-directed TPD programs: webinars, reading articles, exploring teaching-related videos, etc.
- c. As teachers learn best collectively, EFL teachers in rural areas could maximize the MGMP network as a venue for learning and sharing best practices among them. For instance, teachers who have attended the PPG program could be mentors for their colleagues.

### Future Studies

The authors argue that future research may involve more participants from different geographical contexts in Indonesia so that we may understand comprehensively the virtues of engaging in PPG programs by teachers in rural areas. Additionally, future research should explore teachers' difficulties when attending PPG, the support they gain, and the sustained practice after the PPG program. Investigating these topics may inform the related stakeholders on supporting teachers in rural areas to grow professionally.

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