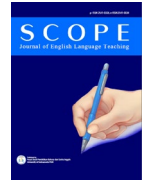




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Research Article

## English Teachers' Perspective on Keeping a Teaching Journal as Their Professional Development

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### KEYWORDS

Indonesian English teacher;  
 Teacher professional development;  
 Teaching journal;  
 Teachers' perspective.

### ABSTRACT

Keeping a teaching journal is one way that can be done to assist in the improvement of professional development. One approach that is becoming increasingly popular nowadays. Using a qualitative case study methodology, this research aims to explore the English teachers' perspectives on journal writing as a way of professional development. The study enlisted the participation of 21 English teachers to complete a demographic survey. In accordance with the aims of the study, participants were recruited using a technique of purposive sampling. In this case, the researcher selected the participant based on their experience in writing a teaching journal. The researcher utilized a questionnaire and an interview as instruments for data collection. The purpose of the questionnaire is to collect demographic information as well as respondents' perceptions about the benefit of keeping a teaching journal for professional development. The interview was then conducted to obtain further information regarding the participants' responses to the questionnaire. Five English teachers voluntarily participated in the interview process and in analyzing data, thematic content analysis was used in this study. The outcomes of the study revealed that English teachers got a range of benefits from strengthening their professional development, including encouraging a positive attitude toward teaching, enhancing English teachers' critical thinking, and improving teaching quality. This study suggested that keeping a teaching journal has a profound influence on English teacher development.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is crucial for both the growth of an organization and the improvement of schools that teachers and other staff members continue their professional development because the education of children is directly tied to the quality of the education that pupils receive (Bubb & Early, 2007). If educators desire to see an increase in the level of academic achievement displayed by their students, they need to be able to teach in a way that is both successful and efficient.

Teachers need to get the appropriate training in order to be able to apply evidence-based instructional strategies in order to provide students with high-quality instruction in all curricular areas (Didion et al., 2020). Teacher professional development (PD) is the method that should be utilized in order to involve currently working teachers in cutting-edge research-based practices (Didion et al., 2020). The majority of individuals believe that professional development can assist teachers in becoming better educators. Teachers are required to participate in professional development on an annual basis, as this

requirement is included in nearly all of the nation's teaching contracts (Kennedy, 2016). The concept of continuing professional development (PD) for educators is garnering a growing amount of attention across the world, including in Indonesia (Kennedy, 2005). For instance, the issues surrounding teachers' continuing professional development are crucial for Australian modern pedagogical thought and practice (Mukan et al., 2019). Also, emerging nations in Africa and elsewhere are realizing the value of investing in their teachers in order to achieve meaningful educational achievements (Bett, 2016). This also occurred in Indonesia, where CPD is intended to increase teachers' competency (Surjanti & Soejoto, 2018) and CPD is perceived as teacher performance evaluation, government supervision (exosystem), personal development activities (individual), and others believe CPD to be religious principles (Widayati et al., 2021). PD can be accomplished in a variety of ways, including attending formally structured classes or gaining knowledge simply by performing the duties of one's job. Unquestionably, one of the most well-known applications of PD is the updating of professional knowledge through the participation in formally structured and condensed training programs provided by occupational groups (Collin et al., 2012). There has been an increase in the amount of attention paid to determining whether or not professional development for educators is successful in bringing about desired changes in the classroom (Lydon & King, 2009).

Recent years have seen a rise in the amount of focus placed on the professional development of educators. In contrast to the conventional techniques, which were founded on the idea that teaching should be a one-time event, the vast majority of contemporary approaches to education are geared toward enhancing the knowledge, abilities, and behaviors of instructors (Abbasian & Esmalee, 2018). These encounters may take the form of formal, structured seminars on a particular topic that are presented on in-service days or they may take the form of casual, everyday "hallway chats" with fellow instructors about teaching strategies that are woven into teachers' daily work lives (Desimone, 2009). It is extremely crucial that instructors participate in professional development because, if it is done well, it has the potential to influence how teachers learn, how teachers teach, and how students learn (Loucks-Horsley et al., 2003).

There are three ways in which professional development has an effect on the achievement of students (Yoon et al., 2007). In the beginning, teachers' knowledge and skills are improved through professional development. Second, increased knowledge and capabilities contribute to an improved learning environment in the classroom. Thirdly, improved teaching leads to increased levels of student achievement. If even one link in the chain is missing or

weak, it is hard to foresee any improvement in student learning. For instance, students will not benefit from a teacher's professional development if they don't incorporate new ideas learned during professional development into classroom instruction. This is because students are more likely to retain information if it's presented in a way that's engaging and relevant to them.

It is a well accepted fact that engagement in professional development (PD) can assist teachers in becoming better educators (Kennedy, 2016). Over the course of the past several years, there has been a rise in concern regarding the professional development of educators (Borko et al., 2010; Yang & Liu, 2004). In order to be more effective in the schools of today, educators need to engage in continual learning in order to keep up with the rapid pace of innovation and the high-quality standards (Yang & Liu, 2004). It is believed that ongoing professional development for teachers has a favorable influence and benefits on the academic achievement of both students and teachers in the classroom (Desimone, 2009; Giraldo, 2014; Hilton et al., 2015; Onchwari & Keengwe, 2008; Walker et al., 2012). Since the teacher is at the heart of everything that takes place in the classroom, professional development should focus on meeting the changing requirements of teachers (Duță & Rafailă, 2014; Lee, 2005; Lucilio, 2009; Zhang et al., 2015) as well as the evolving interests of teachers (Duță & Rafailă, 2014; Lucilio, 2009; Zhang et al., 2015; Bowles, 2002; Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013; Patton et al., 2015; Postholm, 2012).

Kennedy (1998) offered a comprehensive overview of the ways in which the development of teachers influences the students' academic achievement. In this analysis, the benefits of professional development programs in mathematics and science are compared with regard to their impact on student achievement. This evaluation takes into consideration the topic, subject focus, skill grade, teaching style, and other aspects of professional development (intensity and concentration). In addition, Blank and Alas (2009) investigated the relationship between teacher professional development and the academic performance of students in mathematics or science. The findings of their meta-analysis indicate that mathematics-oriented professional development considerably increased student achievement, and that the associations between these two variables are regulated by the format aspects of the mathematics-oriented professional development (e.g.: workshops).

Many researchers conduct the effectiveness of professional development for the learning process in many ways (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Desimone, 2011; Guskey, 2003; Van Veen et al., 2012), such as the effectiveness of workshops in improving teachers' professionalism (Cruz et al., 2018; Naizer et al., 2017; Yang & Liu, 2004); the benefits of peer

coaching in teaching (Abbasian & Esmalee, 2018; Castañeda-Londoño, 2017; Galbraith & Anstrom, 1995; Yee, 2016); the use of critical incidents (Alanazi, 2018; Joshi, 2018; Mohammed, 2016); peer-observation in facilitating teacher professional development (Batlle & Seedhouse, 2022; Cirocki & Farrell, 2019; Fletcher, 2018); team teaching (Roberts et al., 2021; Tsybulsky & Muchnik-Rozanov, 2019), but there hasn't been a lot of research done on keeping a writing journal yet, despite the fact that, according to the demographic data that was collected, there is a significant amount of teacher participation in keeping a writing journal at this present.

Writing journal is a form of professional development that may be applied to not only improve teaching but also improve student learning. The practice of keeping a journal in education classes has been more common in recent years as a kind of reaction and as a means for teachers to monitor, examine, review, and assess students' development in order to improve their teaching (Maloney & Campbell-Evans, 2002). A teaching journal is a continuing written version of observations, thoughts, and other ideas about teaching that can be used as a basis for discussion, reflection, or evaluation. A teaching journal can typically be found in the form of a notebook, book, or electronic format (Hiemstra, 2001; Richards & Farrell, 2005). The journal can be used to keep track of incidents, issues, and thoughts that arise in class; it can also serve as a chronicle of a group of students that the teacher would like to investigate or revisit later; and it can act as a repository for knowledge that can be transmitted to others (Richards & Farrell, 2005). However, maintaining a professional journal enables us to take a step back from the activity and record our impressions, feelings, and thoughts in a way that is objective and reflective. If we think back on what we have written, we will be able to use the notebook not just as a tool for memory but also as an indicator of how our comprehension has changed (Holly, 2002). This will allow us to explain why a particular lesson was either successful or unsuccessful (Murray, 2010).

The journal is essential for bridging professional practice and research participation because it provides a forum for thinking aloud, experimenting with ideas, taking action and weighing the consequences, and evaluating the success of change-initiating efforts without the need to present a confident public face (Holly, 2002). A journal can aid teachers in exploring their own ideas and habits and in expressing their own thoughts (Richards & Farrell, 2005). In addition, in an adult classroom, this instructional method is utilized to facilitate students' personal development, knowledge synthesis, and/or reflection on newly acquired content (Hiemstra, 2001). Viewing and responding to a teacher's diary can inspire introspective inquiry and make it easier for peers, supervisors, and mentors to address difficulties and concerns (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Keeping teaching journals has been popular and is already

being used, but little study has been conducted on the topic. As a result, this study investigated the use of teaching journals as part of professional development for instructors. In addition, the purpose of this study was to investigate the teachers' perspectives on keeping teaching journals as part of their professional development. Considering the gap in the existing literature, this study addresses the questions:

1. How is the engagement of teachers in developing their professional development in teaching?
2. What do English teachers perceive as the benefits of keeping a writing journal as a way of supporting teachers' professional development?

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study since it is not explored from a single standpoint but exposing the phenomenon's numerous facets (Baxter & Jack, 2008 as cited in Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022). This study examined the perspectives of English teachers who have kept a writing journal for professional development. The study recruited 21 English teachers to complete the demographic survey. Participants were selected using a process of purposive sampling in accordance with the study's objectives. In this case, the researchers chose the participant based on their familiarity with writing a teaching journal. The researcher employed a questionnaire and an interview in order to collect the data. The purpose of the questionnaire is to collect demographic information as well as respondents' perceptions about the benefit of keeping a teaching journal for professional development. The interview was then conducted to obtain further information regarding the participants' responses to the questionnaire related with the benefit keeping a teaching journal. Five English teachers voluntarily participated in the interview process that was done in English. The researchers analyzed the data using thematic content analysis, which aimed to identify themes through three coding steps, including pre-coding, initial coding, and final coding (Terrel, 2016 as cited in Fithriani et al., 2019). The purpose of utilizing the coding technique during the process is to assist researchers in making decisions on the outcome of the collected data in a more straightforward manner by determining themes.

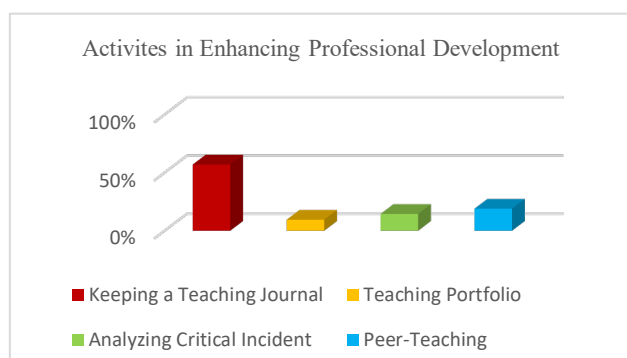
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to investigate the English teacher perceptions' of keeping a teaching journal as facilitating in enhancing teachers' professional development. The data collected in this study could be categorized into two sections: first, English teacher engagement in doing activities, such as : keeping a teaching journal, teaching portfolio, analyzing critical

incident and peer-teaching that can improve in-service English teacher development and second, in-service teacher perceptions of keeping a teaching journal activity in enhancing their professional development. The following are the results of data analysis concerning two categories.

### ***English Teachers' Engagement in Developing Their Professional Development***

According to the findings of the data analysis, in-service teachers have participated in a variety of activities to improve their professional development as teachers. These activities include critical incident analysis, keeping a teaching journal, teaching portfolio, and peer-teaching. Among those activities mentioned, keeping a teaching journal is the activity that English teachers undertake the most to advance their professional development from 21 in-service English teachers in total of this study (in Figure 1). In this case, the participation of English teachers in keeping a teaching journal counts for the largest number, which is greater than fifty-seven percent of the total. The second position was followed by "peer teaching," specifically (n = 4) carrying out peer coaching activities in the interest of improving their professional development. After that came other activities carried out by English teachers in the interest of improving their professional development, specifically (n = 3) of 21 participants chose "analyzing critical incidents". Whereas only two participants (n = 2) chose a "teaching portfolio" as activity that can be done in improving their professional development as teachers, this indicates that English teachers were still unfamiliar with teaching portfolios. On the other hand, keeping a teaching journal was something that English teachers were very familiar with.



**Figure 1.** English Teachers' Experience in Improving Professional Development

One of the factors that can influence this is teacher is more likely to do classroom reflection by personal and private such as keeping teaching journal (Widayati, 2008) because when the evaluation or reflection is carried out by another teacher, the teacher will feel in a intimidation situation (Ali, 2007). Besides that, keeping a teaching journals are considered to be one of the most common strategies employed as teachers' reflection because of the practical

utilization in many educational context (Bolton, 2010; Dymont & O'Connell, 2003; Göker, 2016; Lee-Davies, 2007; Moon, 2006), since teachers only put their thought ideas, feeling and reflection. That is why teachers prefer and are interested in keeping a teaching journal as their professional development than other activities.

### ***The perception of English teachers regarding the benefit of keeping a teaching journal***

Based on the data analysis of English teachers' perception regarding the benefit of keeping a teaching journal in improving teacher professional development, the researchers identified three significant themes related to the benefit of keeping a teaching journal for the in-service English teacher as an endeavour to improve their professional development, namely:

- Encouraging English teachers' positive attitude in teaching
- Enhancing critical thinking of English teachers
- Developing English teachers' quality in teaching.

#### ***Theme One: Encouraging English teachers' positive attitude in teaching***

The majority of the participants, who are in-service English teachers, believe that maintaining a teaching journal after teaching each class can encourage in-service teachers to maintain positive attitudes toward teaching. This outcome is based on data collected from two different sources, namely a questionnaire and an interview. as is seen from the following excerpt:

*"Writing a teaching journal forces me to explore various strategies in teaching English"* (**Excerpt 1, Questionnaire**)

*"I usually evaluate my teaching by re-reading the teaching journal that I keep after each lesson, and any shortcomings in the learning process that I discover, such as students who are still not active in class, motivate me to look for references to other methods or strategies from YouTube, articles, and so on that can be used at the next meeting to get all students to participate actively in the classroom."* (**Excerpt 2, Interview**)

As can be noticed from the aforementioned quotation, English teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the manner in which they educate, particularly with regard to the method or medium that is employed in the process of learning. The teacher can evaluate and find out the strengths and weaknesses of each strategy and medium that he applies in class by keeping a teaching journal. This allows the teachers to minimize the difficulties and problems that arise in the classroom while they are teaching by finding the appropriate strategy to use in the

future. Writing in teaching journals provides educators with the motivation to seek references to more engaging instructional methods, strategies, and media. When teachers have completed an evaluation based on their own self-analysis, they will be aware of their shortcomings, and this will encourage them to teach better in the future. Writing a teaching journal can be a useful learning tool for teachers to create awareness of their current teaching practice from their evaluation, as stated by Goker (2016). In addition, teachers can utilize a teaching journal to explore their own ideas and behaviors, as well as provide a venue for their own thought (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

### **Theme Two: Enhancing critically thinking English teacher**

The second benefit that found from keeping a teaching journal is enhancing English teacher to think more critically, since writing teaching journal need to answer some question related to teaching-learning process critically. As seen in the following:

*“By keeping a teaching journal, I answer numerous questions concerning my approach to instructing students in the classroom. These are questions that require more in-depth responses than simply “yes” or “no,” such as “which component of the lesson was the most effective?” As a result, the teacher in this situation is not simply taking notes; rather, the teacher is required to examine and think critically as part of the process of writing a teaching journal.”* (Excerpt 3, Interview)

*“By routinely writing teaching journals, I have been accustomed to critically explaining classroom situations.”* (Excerpt 4, Questionnaire).

There are general procedures that can be carried out in order for teaching journals to be written effectively, these procedures include deciding the audience, focusing on the lesson, theory, method, and question framed, making teaching journals consistently, and reviewing what you have written. As a result of this theory, it is possible to see that writing teaching journals demands the specific things that were discussed earlier. In addition, Brock et al. (1992) asserted that keeping a teaching journal was one of the best ways for a teacher to improve his or her ability to think critically. This is because, in order to keep a teaching journal, a teacher must analyze the solution to "complex and ambiguous problems" that arise in the classroom during the process of teaching and learning (Calderhead, 1989). It is also confirmed by Boyd and Boyd (2005), who said that the highest-order thinking will occasionally occur in the critical dimension of reflection.

### **Theme Three: Developing English teachers' quality in teaching**

The last benefit that researchers discovered from this study was developing English teachers' quality in teaching. As can be seen in the following:

*“Writing a teaching journal after a teaching session enables me to reflect on my own teaching and determine if it was effective or not”* (Excerpt 5, Questionnaire)

*“Through the notes in my teaching journal, I can improve the quality of my teaching; things that did not go well in previous teaching recorded in my teaching journal will be corrected and improved for the next teaching so that I do not make the same mistakes”* (Excerpt 6, Interview)

As can be seen from the aforementioned excerpts keeping teaching journals has a very good impact on teachers, particularly in terms of assisting them in their efforts to further their professional development. The last benefit that was discovered from writing teaching journals in this study is that teachers have improved their teaching quality in comparison to previously. This improvement cannot be divorced from the fact that teachers consistently write teaching journals as a way of teaching reflection. As is well known, teaching journals are a continuously updated written record of thoughts, reflections, and other perspectives regarding teaching that can serve as a foundation for either self-reflection or professional evaluation (Hiemstra, 2001; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Writing in a teaching journal provides not only as a tool for recollection but also as an indicator of how our awareness has progressed (Holly, 2002), and it shows why a particular lesson was effective or not (Murray, 2010). According to Göker (2016), a teacher is able to engage in reflection and evaluation of their current teaching practice by writing in a teaching journal. Following this, the teacher is able to learn from the evaluation (their shortcomings) in order to enhance their teaching in the future. As a direct consequence of this, the standard of instruction that they provide is now higher than it was previously. The process of writing in a teaching journal affords educators the chance to investigate their very own pedagogical methods, which is another benefit of keeping such a record (Cole & Knowles, 2000). This finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Byrd, 2010), which showed that writing teaching journals allowed in-service and pre-service teachers to reflect on classroom situations and make better decisions based on their experience; as a result, their quality of teaching has improved.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the majority of schools and institutions nowadays, teachers are expected to keep abreast of advancements in their profession, particularly in teaching English to

frequently assess and improve their teaching skills. It is considered that keeping a teaching journal is a popular and successful tool for language teachers to advance their professional development. Consistent with the findings of the study, which revealed that English teachers gained a variety of benefits from enhancing their professional development, such as encouraging English teachers' positive attitude toward teaching, enhancing English teachers' critical thinking, and enhancing English teachers' quality of teaching. Due to the narrow scope of this study's topic, it is recommended that future research concentrate on additional methods of advancing professional development, such as the efficiency of teaching portfolios in enhancing teacher professional development.

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