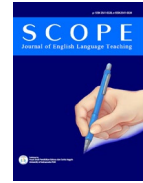




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Research Article

## Pre-Service English Teachers' Experiences in Conducting Classroom Action Research

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### KEYWORDS

Pre-service English teachers;  
 Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG);  
 Action research;  
 Reflection;  
 Teaching quality.

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### A B S T R A C T

Action Research allows teachers to carry out their own classroom-based investigation. Numerous studies reported the action research conducted by teachers to improve their students' academic performance. Focusing on finding out what the students knew about action research, this qualitative study had the pre-service English teachers of the Teacher Profession Education Program or *PPG Prajabatan* at Faculty of Teacher Training and Education within Sriwijaya University, as the participants of study. A list of open-ended questions were given to the participants and their responses were analyzed qualitatively, yielding the following results: action research is about improving teachers' teaching quality and conducting action research involves steps which can start with reflection as the starting point.

## INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003 and the Indonesian Teachers and Lecturers Law Number 14 of 2005 point out that teachers are professionals who have academic qualifications and competencies. In addition, they have to own an Educator Certificate and to accommodate this, the Indonesian government has done the Teacher Profession Education and Training (*Pendidikan dan Latihan Profesi Guru* or PLPG) program which is currently known as Teacher Profession Education (*Pendidikan Profesi Guru* or PPG).

PPG has been designed for both the in-service and pre-service teachers. In the Technical Guideline of PPG Program for In-Service Teacher or *PPG Dalam Jabatan* (Directorate General of Teacher and Educational Personnel, 2023a), the in-service teachers are both the civil and non-civil servants who have taught in education units

organized by the central government, regional governments, or education provider communities that already have work agreements or collective labor agreements. Meanwhile, the Pre-Service Teacher Profession Education Program or *PPG Prajabatan* is an educational program designed for the graduate of undergraduate programs (education and non-education) to obtain an Educator Certificate so they are eligible to teach at the early childhood education, primary education, and secondary education (Directorate General of Teacher and Educational Personnel, 2023b). Sriwijaya University is one of the Indonesian tertiary institutions that conduct PPG Program for both the in-service and pre-service teachers.

In the official website of PPG (Directorate General of Teacher and Educational Personnel, 2023c), the Pre-Service PPG Program is aimed to have new generation of Indonesian teachers who are aspire to be a teacher, a professional, and a role model and who love the profession

and become a lifelong learner. The journey to become the New Generation of Indonesian Teachers or *Generasi Baru Guru Indonesia* starts with a series of selection process and 2 semesters of study. PPG Program is a professional education program that is equal to Level 7 within the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework or *Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia* (KKNI). This has the implications for the expected learning outcomes at the professional level. One of the learning outcomes of Specific Skills for the graduates of Pre-Service PPG Program is to be able to reflect so they can improve the quality of learning on an ongoing basis. The conduct of action research which is a part of their teaching practicum can help them to do it.

Referring to what other scholars have defined, Efron and Ravid (2020, p.2) refer action research as “an inquiry conducted by educators in their own settings in order to advance their practice and improve their students’ learning”. It is research with a view to teachers making judgements about how to improve their own practices (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). The terms *action research* and *practitioner research* are often used interchangeably in education since both types of research emphasize the role of practitioners in conducting investigations in their classrooms and schools (Efron & Ravid, 2020). Action research is used to identify the researches conducted by the practitioners of an issue (Ocal, 2018). For Efron and Ravid (2020, p.2), practitioners are not only teachers, but also “other school members, such as administrators, specialists, counsellors, tutors, aides and others who are involved in education”.

The term *action research* was introduced by Kurt Lewin, known as the father of action research, since he was the first person who coined the term in his article entitled *Action Research and Minority* in 1946 (Yaumi & Damopolii, 2016). Kurt Lewin’s model of action research as interpreted by Kemmis (1980, as cited in Elliot, 2001, p.70) is as follows (Figure 1).

Lewin’s model involves a spiral of cycles with the basic cycle of activities as follows (Elliot, 2001, p.69): identifying a general idea, reconnaissance, general planning, developing the first action step, implementing the first action step, evaluation, and revising the general plan. From this basic cycle, the next step spiral into developing the second action step, implementation, evaluation, revising general plan, developing the third action step, implementation, evaluation and so on.

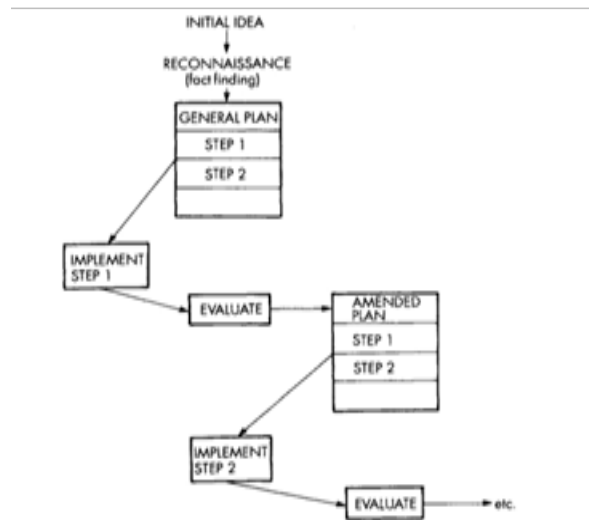


Figure 1. Lewin’s Model of Action Research

Another model of action research to help teachers do action research is Elliot’s model (Figure 2) which is a revised version of Lewin’s model (Elliot, 2001, p.72).

Elliot (2001, pp.72-77) acknowledges that this model is similar to Kemmis and McTaggart’s model with the steps as follows: 1) identifying and clarifying the general idea, 2) reconnaissance (describing and explaining the facts of the situation), 3) constructing the general plan, 4) developing the next action steps, and 5) implementing the next action step(s).

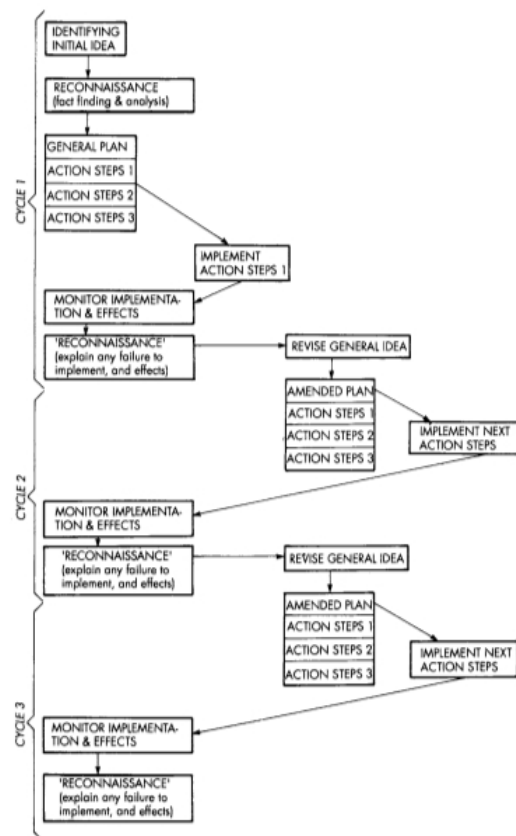
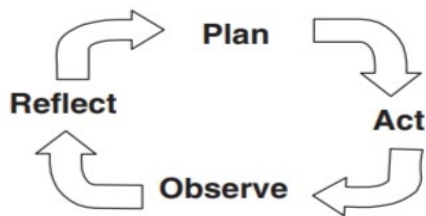


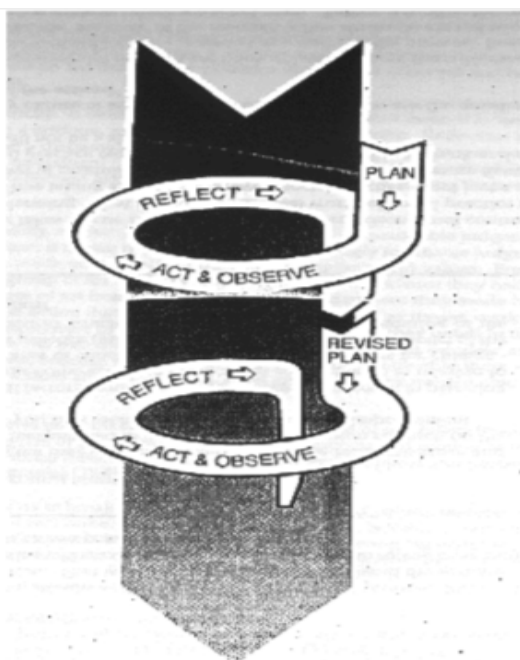
Figure 2. A revised version of Lewin’s Model of Action Research

The following is the model of action research proposed by Richards and Lockhart (1994) which cycles include doing the initial reflection to identify an issue or problem, planning an action (to solve the problem), implementing the action, observing of the action, and doing the reflection on the observations (Figure 3).



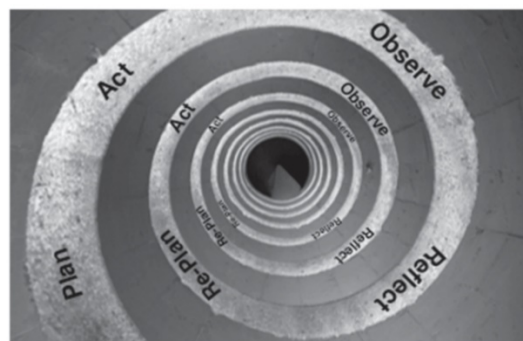
**Figure 3.** Richards and Lockhart (1994) Action Research Spiral/Cycle

Although, there are formulations of the action research spiral or cycle, but the Kemmis and McTaggart model (Figure 4) has been widely used, and is well documented (Maxwell, 2003). This model comprises of four basic steps in a cycle of research: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.



**Figure 4.** Kemmis & McTaggart (1988) Action Research Spiral/Cycle

In their later work, Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2014, p.18) describe the process of action research as the spiral of self-reflective cycles of planning a change, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, reflecting on these processes and consequences, re-planning, acting and observing, reflecting, and so on (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** The action research spiral

There are numerous studies on action research within the Indonesian different educational contexts and field of studies, including the ones within the context of PPG Program. A careful search (using the keywords *classroom action research+PPG students+Indonesia*) through Google and Litmaps search engines led to the two following relevant previous studies. First, the study conducted by Supriyadi (2022) who did an action research-based study aiming to improve the reading comprehension of 30 in-service English teachers of PPG Program at Universitas Khairun in Ternate. Second, an action research-based study by Stevanus, Budhayanti, and Wijaya (2023) which aimed to improve the regulatory abilities of the in-service teachers of PPG Program at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Atma Jaya, Jakarta.

Although the two studies by Supriyadi (2022) and Stevanus et al., (2023) were action research-based, they got involved the in-service teachers of PPG Program (*PPG Dalam Jabatan*) as the participants of study. These two studies also focused on PPG students as the object of investigation which aim was to improve their abilities at the end of the treatment. The study reported in this article got involved the pre-service English teachers of PPG Program (*PPG Prajabatan*) in the academic year of 2022/2023 at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education within Sriwijaya University as the participants and they are the New Generation of Indonesian Teachers or *Generasi Baru Guru Indonesia*. In addition, this present study did not impose the classroom action research as the strategy of improving the participants' ability, but mainly focused on investigating what they knew about action research. Gaining the information about this is necessary since the pre-service teachers of PPG Program at Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Sriwijaya University are required to implement action research in their Teaching Practicum II or *Praktik Pengalaman Lapangan II (PPL II)* and write a report on it.

**METHOD**

This study was qualitative research approach in nature since it “attempts to broaden and/or deepen our understanding of how things came to be the way they

are in our social world” (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 2007, p. 4). Qualitative research is the research approach aiming to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). Specifically, this study employed a qualitative intrinsic case study since it only aimed to acquire better understanding of a particular case of interest (Stake, 1995).

In this present study, the aim was to gain the information from a group of pre-service teachers of PPG at Sriwijaya University. Specifically, the participants of this study were four female and one male English Education students of the Pre-Service PPG Program at Faculty of Teacher Training and Education within Sriwijaya University in the Academic Year of 2022/2023 (Batch 2 of 2022) who were under the supervision of the first writer for doing their Teaching Practicum II.

The data were collected by using a questionnaire with one question asking about what the participants knew about action research. The data were analysed qualitatively which involved making sense of the participants’ responses by reducing the volume of raw information, identified the significant patterns from the reduced data and drew meaning and built a logical chain of evidence from it (Patton, 2002).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purposes of this study were to find out what the participants knew about action research. The findings and the discussion were presented into three sections as follows.

### *Improving Teachers’ Teaching Quality*

Action research was perceived by all the participants as teachers’ effort to improve the quality of their teaching. As one of the participants mentioned, “*Do the [action] research helps us improve our weaknesses in teaching*” (Female2). Basically, improving teacher quality is a strategic program since teacher quality has a chain effect on other education components while not all teachers can improve their ability to respond to dynamic issues related to education (Budiasih & Wijayanti, 2019). The participants’ responses are in line with what Hopkins (1985) states that classroom action research is a classroom investigation initiated by teachers or researchers who look critically at their own practice with the purpose of understanding and improving their teaching and the quality of education. Teachers who conduct action research attempt to answer questions related to some aspect of their

professional practice; They collect and analyse data, reflect on what they discover, and then apply it to their professional practice to implement the action research (Wallace, 1991).

### *Reflection as Part of the Initial Process*

All the five participants considered action research as a reflection, especially at the initial process. They perceived classroom action research as a way that helps teacher to reflect their own teaching through the conduct of a study or research. As they described, the idea of their research-based that they implemented in their Teaching Practicum II as the result of having a reflection in relation to what they did during their Teaching Practicum I. As Balzquez (2007) emphasizes, reflection serves as a necessary condition for action research.

The participants also mentioned having done a reflection as part of the initial process prior to conduct their action research. Reflection is a process of self-examination and self-evaluation in which effective educators regularly engage to improve their professional practices (Shandomo, 2010). As one of the participants acknowledged, she came up with the idea for conducting her action research based on reflecting all the activities she had done from previous sessions of her Teaching Practicum I, “*I made some notes about things happened during my teaching practice. For example, what the students still could not do or what aspects of my teaching that I should improve*” (Female1). She further explained that the notes helped her to reflect on what she had done. This is also emphasized by Shandomo (2010) who emphasizes that writing about their experiences in classroom teaching gives teacher candidates means to remember, recall, reconstruct, re-create, and represent what they learn of their teaching practice under supervision.

The other four participants also mentioned about having notes concerning their teaching practices, as what one of them said, “*[Writing about] what happened during my teaching in the classroom or [writing] the feedback from the teacher*” (Male5). What these five participants did (e.g., keeping notes on their teaching practice) is in accordance with McNiff and Whitehead (2006) description about action research that it is “an approach to personal and professional development that enables practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work –to monitor what you are doing- and to create their own theories of practice”. Similarly, as Mathew et al., (2017) explains, the reflective practice is a cyclical process, because once it is started to implement changes, then the reflective and evaluative cycle begins again; As a result of reflection, a teacher may decide to do something in a different way, or may just decide that what she/he has been doing is the best way. Therefore, being a teacher, one needs

to reflect on the experiences or activities one is doing for one's growth (Mathew et al., 2017).

According to Shandomo (2010, p.107), since reflective practice involves what a teacher does before entering the classroom, while in the classroom, and retrospectively after leaving the classroom, teacher candidates are therefore required to distinguish among *reflection for practice* - anticipatory reflection on future experiences, made by stepping back from or out of the situation to consider the various alternatives and their possible consequences, *reflection in practice* -thinking on one's feet, acting in a flash, reflecting in the moment of acting, and *reflection on practice*. The kind of reflection described by the five participants is what Shandomo (2010) refers to *reflection on practice* which is the most traditional form of retrospective consideration of the past experiences.

Simply put, action research is a tool for reflective practices (Mathew et al., 2017 & Ocal, 2018). It is a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by teachers to understand their practice and improve the way they address issues and solve problems and it also helps student teachers to become aware of what is happening in the classroom by identifying common problems and hypothesising about possible causes and solutions and attempting to apply an action plan (Mathew et al., 2017). Action research has been reported as a self-learning tool for pre-service and novice teachers to see how the classroom environment runs and changes; it is also a powerful method to reflect their experience and push themselves do things better (Ocal, 2018). However, student teachers should be provided with appropriate opportunities for reflection since critical reflection does not come naturally to most teachers (Yang, 2009). This suggests that reflectivity is a skill that needs to be acquired by learning and not by automatic occurrence (Mathew, et al., 2017).

### **Steps in Conducting Action Research**

All participants were aware that there are steps in action research and they all referred to Kemmis and McTaggart model. Stated by one participant, "*The research articles I have read applied Kemmis and McTaggart model*" (Female3). The other participant added, "*That [Kemmis and McTaggart model] I found in the research done by the Indonesian teachers*" (Female4). According to Maxwell (2003), although there are other formulations of the action research spiral or cycle, model of action research by Kemmis and McTaggart has been widely used and is well documented. This is apparently the reason why the participants in this study were more familiar with this model. Additionally, in the Indonesian educational context, for instance, there is a great number of actions research-based that are published in Bahasa Indonesia. Reading in one own's language certainly can help to understand a topic better.

Although Kemmis and McTaggart's model is still used as the reference for conducting action research, this model which appeared in *The Action Research Planner* (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), has been fully-updated and the reworked version of the classic book (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014) provides a detailed guide to developing and conducting a critical participatory action research project. As they explain in the book, being critical is an intrinsic part of participatory action research and this book flows helpfully from theoretical to practical (Zuber-Skerritt, 2016).

### **CONCLUSION**

The students of Pre-Service Teacher Profession Education Program or PPG *Prajabatan* are New Generation of Indonesian Teachers or *Generasi Baru Guru Indonesia* who are expected to be professionally engage in teaching and learning process and never stop learning. This study shows that the participants perceived action research is the way to improve teachers' teaching quality and it is also concerned with reflection. They were also aware that action research involved steps in doing it. Definitely, practising the action research during their study at the PPG Program will provide the pre-service teachers with practical experience, but finding out what the participants do know about action research can certainly help the educators or lecturers to guide and facilitate the students in carrying out their action research.

This study entails two important points to suggest. First, reading how to conduct action research references that are translated from English to Bahasa Indonesia undoubtedly helps the participants understand more about action research. However, since the participants are from the English Education background, it is also worth reading the original work in English. Second, reading diverse references about action research by the same or different scholars helps the participants to see it from different perspectives and understand the topic better.

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