



## Factors affecting the professional development of elementary English teachers

Subhan Zein

To cite this article: Subhan Zein (2016) Factors affecting the professional development of elementary English teachers, Professional Development in Education, 42:3, 423-440, DOI: [10.1080/19415257.2015.1005243](https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2015.1005243)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2015.1005243>



Published online: 17 Mar 2015.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1100



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 10 View citing articles [↗](#)

## Factors affecting the professional development of elementary English teachers

Subhan Zein\*

*University of Canberra English Language Institute, 14 Erdos Street, Bruce, Canberra, ACT 2617, Australia*

*(Received 1 November 2014; accepted 5 January 2015)*

The poor classroom practices of English teachers at elementary level in Indonesia have been attributed to the inadequacy of pre-service education. Yet, whether in-service professional development (PD) also plays a role is unknown. This study investigated the perspectives of 23 teachers, 14 teacher educators and 3 school principals regarding the efficacy of in-service PD in preparing elementary English teachers. The results demonstrate that the shortage of quality teacher educators contributed to the inadequacy of in-service PD. While this study calls for more systematic efforts to tackle the shortage of quality teacher educators, it also highlights the needs for PD of teacher educators. Furthermore, the intrusion of educational administrators adversely affected the design and administration of teacher preparation programs, resulting in the poor training management and the ambiguous selection of training participants. The study further asserts the necessity for empowerment of teacher educators in order to enable them to contribute to the much-needed transformation of in-service PD.

**Keywords:** professional development; elementary teacher education; English teacher education; decentralization of education

### Introduction

In many Asian countries that teach English as a foreign language, elementary English education has recently witnessed a wide-ranging nationwide reform (Baldauf *et al.* 2011). This has occurred specifically in Indonesia where English is currently playing more important roles than ever. Based on the rationale that English teaching at secondary level had been considered a major failure, English was officially introduced into the elementary school curricula as a local content subject to students in Year Four through the Decree of Minister of Education and Culture No. 60/U/1993. An expectation arising from the policy was that early English instruction would positively contribute to providing a robust foundation to children prior to entering secondary schools (Huda 1994, Sadtono 2007).

As a local content subject, the teaching of English in elementary schools is determined by the societal necessity in which the school is located as well as the availability of proficient teachers to carry out the instruction. Parents in particular, however, are increasingly aware that world developments have placed a strong demand on the need to encourage the younger generations' creativity and

---

\*Email: [subhanzein@gmail.com](mailto:subhanzein@gmail.com)

competitiveness through the mastery of English language. They hold onto the popular belief 'the younger, the better' and thus are more inclined to only send their children to study in a school that offers English instruction (Chodidjah 2008).

Such societal pressure inevitably has pushed school principals to provide English instruction for the sake of enrolment, resulting in the increasing number of elementary schools that introduce English to children as early as Year One (Suyanto and Chodidjah 2002, Lestari 2003, Chodidjah 2008). The increasing interest in elementary English education was then captured in the release of the Decree of Minister of National Education No. 22/2006 that formally stipulates English as a local content subject to students from Years One to Six, meaning English is taught at elementary level for at least 35 minutes/week.

Unfortunately, the appointment of teachers with no proper qualifications has become the main problem confronting the teaching of English at elementary level. The employment of teachers with poor English proficiency and no relevant qualification is ubiquitous, since it is recorded in areas as wide as Bandung (Nizar 2004, Damayanti *et al.* 2008), DKI Jakarta (Suyanto and Chodidjah 2002), Medan (Ernidawati 2002), Palangkaraya (Karani 2006), Malang (Rohmah 1996, Rachmajanti 2008), Sidoarjo (Susanto 1998) and Blitar (Agustina *et al.* 1997). Teaching areas with which teachers were having difficulty included spelling, the use of technology in language teaching, classroom management (Asriyanti *et al.* 2013), pronunciation (Suyanto and Chodidjah 2002), the use of textbooks and teaching materials (Karani 2006) and language fluency (Chodidjah 2007).

Personal agency has been largely exercised to compensate for the ineffective instruction of English in public schools. Even within schools with relatively advantageous conditions for learning, it is conceded that real progress in English is only possible by studying privately outside the school. Parents with better economic standing aspire for their children to attend private English tuition outside school in order to acquire better literacy in English (Lamb and Coleman 2008).

Pre-service education has been argued to not be doing enough to solve this issue. Approximately a decade after Bismoko (2003) and Luciana (2006) called for an overhaul in the pre-service education for a better system of preparation for English teachers, Zein (2014) reiterated their contention. He specified that both the Primary School Teacher Education and English departments, the two streams of pre-service education that produce English teachers at elementary level, are not adequate means for preparing qualified and competent English professionals at elementary level. Although the extent to which pre-service education has contributed to the poor quality of English education at elementary level is known, it is unclear whether the lamentable situation is also attributed to the delivery of in-service professional development (PD).

It is the aim of this paper to investigate the delivery of in-service PD in preparing teachers of English at elementary level. This is vital in order to initiate a framework of reference for a language policy proposal on teacher education for elementary school English teachers. The continuing advocacy for a language policy at any polities is dependent upon an adequate framework of the context in which the policy is situated (Cooper 1989, Kaplan and Baldauf 1997, Spolsky 2009, Zein 2012). This study has great importance to Indonesia and is relevant to other countries where decentralization of education is implemented and where the transformation of English education currently takes place at elementary level.

The presentation of this paper is as follows. The next section discusses the implementation of Indonesian's decentralized system of education in relation to in-service PD for elementary English teachers. Then, the methodological tenets for both the collection and analysis of the data are presented. This is followed by the presentation of the findings generated from the study. Finally, a discussion section appears to analyze the findings and relate them to the available literature and draw implications for teacher education.

### **The context: in-service professional development within Indonesia's decentralized education**

For 32 years, from 1966 to 1998, Indonesia was led by the New Order regime, notorious for its top-down approach in policy-making and centralistic governance. Along with the toppling of the regime, a call for more decentralized government was made in 1998. The aspiration materialized a year later when Act No. 22 and Act No. 25/1999 were established. A decentralized education that came as a result of these acts was expected to bring about changes such as simpler educational bureaucracy and more effective pedagogic delivery.

A major consequence of this drastic educational policy was the implementation of school-based management (SBM) in Indonesian schools. SBM places a large emphasis on school autonomy, because school principals are now rendered more authority to manage their operational and administrative functions of education without direct supervision from the central government.

SBM is based on the philosophy that the extent of a school's success is largely dependent on intensive collaboration with the community. This leads to the creation of a school council consisting of key figures in the community where the school is located as well as representatives of parents and teachers. The council has a primary consultancy function with the principal. However, the council is also empowered to formulate and approve the school's policies and annual budget, assist in the planning of school development, help determine the learning standards, and maintain networks and partnerships with external organizations including the local educational administrators, among others (Bandur 2012).

In order to achieve their goals, SBM schools are provided with annual financial assistance as well as technical assistance and consultancy. Such supports, however, are no longer received from the central government. The reason is because the central government no longer plays direct guidance and supervisory roles; it instead places itself as a facilitator to schools' endeavors in achieving their academic goals. The aforementioned supports are within the authority of the local educational administrators working in the Educational Office of Primary School at the provincial level. In addition, the local administrators are expected to refocus the allocation of the district budget and help assist with the school supervision and PD of teachers (Indriyanto 2003).

In a more decentralized context of educational management that Indonesia is currently embracing, it is now the responsibility of both educational administrators at the local level and the government-based training institutions to assist with the PD of teachers at elementary level. The Decree of Minister of National Education No. 15/2003 on Standard Minimum of Service of Elementary Education at the District Level bequeaths authorities and autonomy to the Educational Office of Primary

School at the district level and the local policy authorities and government-based training institutions to do so.

In the country, there are three government-based training institutions whose primary responsibility is providing in-service training to teachers, namely: The Center for Development and Empowerment of Language Teachers and Education Personnel (Pusat Pelatihan and Pendidikan Personel Bahasa); The Center of Training and Development of Language Teachers (Pusat Pelatihan dan Pendidikan Guru Bahasa); and The Center of Human Resources Development and Educational Quality Assurance (Lembaga Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan [LPMP]). These institutions provide training services to teachers through programs such as short training for teachers, distance training programs, training for teachers in remote areas and Eastern Indonesia, assessment for language teachers, training for writing research papers, training for teachers in non-formal education, and conducting seminars and workshops.

Teacher educators working in these institutions, however, are facing difficulties in exercising their PD roles, especially when dealing with the local educational administrators. Chodidjah (2010) reported that they are left with unclear directions as to how they should professionally act under the newly implemented decentralized education. Confusion often appears on their part due to the uncertainty of roles that they should play within the currently implemented decentralized system.

It remains unknown as to how such uncertainty and confusion affect the delivery of in-service PD for elementary English teachers. Whether in-service PD brings positive changes to teachers of English at elementary level under the new decentralized education is still an underexplored area. The exploration of the efficacy of in-service PD for elementary English teachers is the primary concern of the present study.

## **Methodology**

### ***Design of the study***

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to collect data for this study. All participants were asked the following research question: ‘What are your perspectives concerning in-service education under the decentralized education in the professional preparation of teachers of English at elementary level?’ Teachers were asked an additional question as to whether they attended in-service education: ‘Have you attended any in-service teacher education to prepare you as an English teacher?’

### ***Participants***

The study was designed in a way that allowed the identification of insights from teachers, teacher educators and school principals of various regional and institutional backgrounds. There were 23 teachers (T1–T23), 14 teacher educators (TE1–TE14) and 3 school principals (PSP1–PSP3) participating in the study. Previous studies on elementary school English teachers were conducted in areas such as Bandung (Sary 2003, Nizar 2004), Medan (Ernidawati 2002), Blitar (Agustina *et al.* 1997), Sidoarjo (Susanto 1998), Palangkaraya (Karani 2006) and Salatiga (Astika 1996). I decided to conduct research in other areas such as Tomohon and Manado (North Sulawesi), Denpasar (Bali), Lombok (West Nusa Tenggara), Rempoa (Banten) and Tegal (Central Java) in order to cover areas that had not been included in previous research. Earlier research in two cities – Malang (Rachmajanti 2008) and DKI Jakarta (Suyanto and Chodidjah 2002) – was conducted as early as a decade ago

and needed to be followed up, so it was decided to involve teachers in these two cities too. The teacher educators worked in various institutions including English departments, general teacher education colleges, government-based training institutions and private training institutions, while the three primary school principals worked in either public or private schools. Further information related to the participants is specified in Appendix 1.

### ***Procedure and analysis***

Participants' consent was obtained prior to their participating in the study. While most of them chose to be interviewed in Indonesian language (in which some code-switched from Indonesian to English or *vice versa*), two teacher educator participants (TE1 and TE4) preferred English as the language of interview. Each of these interviews was digitally recorded, transcribed and translated into English, where necessary.

Several stages of data analysis in this study followed grounded theory principles. First, meticulous reading of the interview transcriptions was undertaken. This was followed with selection of appropriate keywords and associates. They were then entered into the Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software package NVivo9 that aimed to 'open up data' and identify initial codes (Birks and Mills 2011, p. 95).

Next, data from NVivo9 were categorized in a focused coding process to allow identification of certain sub-categories. The sub-categories were then scrutinized during the process of theoretical coding in order to identify core categories (Dey 2004). The core categories were triangulated with the memos that were written out throughout the entire process of data analysis. Finally, codes pertaining to the categories and their frequency of reference were presented in tables to visually represent the data (Birks and Mills 2011).

### **Results of the study**

The findings of the study are presented and discussed under the following sub-categories:

- (1) Inadequate in-service education.
- (2) Inadequate teacher educators.
- (3) Issues with training management.
- (4) Ambiguous selection of training participants.

#### ***Inadequate in-service education***

Table 1 highlights the inadequacy of in-service education. General findings from this study demonstrate that most teachers did not attend in-service education to prepare them to teach English at elementary level. Only four teachers (T11, T12, T13 and T23) did. Even so, these four teachers were not fully satisfied with the contents and management of training programs conducted by government-based training institutions.

Table 1. Codes relating to the inadequacy of in-service education.

Code	Frequency
No in-service education available	27
Teachers did not attend in-service	19
In-service education not adequate	13
Teachers attended in-service	4
In-service education sporadic	3
In-service education: a big mess	1

Evidence generated from the school principals and teacher educators confirms teachers' concerns. Training programs by government-based training institutions were identified as 'not adequate', 'sporadic' and 'a big mess'. Even two teacher educators (TE5 and TE6) who worked in the same government-based training institution (LPMP) acknowledged it. TE6, for example, stated that in-service training programs provided by government-based training institutions had 'not been adequate' to specifically prepare teachers of English at elementary level.

Because of these limitations, TE2 pointed out that 'their training programs are less than satisfactory'. TE4 pointed out that in-service training provided by government-based training institutions 'actually doesn't really give impact, eh, to the teachers'. Specific issues contributing to this dissatisfaction are not discussed here but will be further examined in the subsequent sections.

### *Inadequate teacher educators*

Data in Table 2 highlight the issue related to the quantity and quality of teacher educators. TE3 and TE6 maintained the imbalanced proportion between English teachers and teacher educators. The number of elementary school English teachers who need in-service teacher education far outnumbered the number of teacher educators (TE3, TE6, TE9, TE11 and TE14). Participants suggested that there are 'too many teachers, too many to be trained' (TE3), especially with an institution like LPMP North Sulawesi where there are 'only 16 teacher educators available for one province, from elementary school level to senior high school level'.

Other participants argued that even the currently employed trainers 'were not necessarily those who understand teaching English for Young Learners (EYL)' (TE2). T9 concurred with TE2, TE7 and TE13, as he stated that 'the teacher educators, not all of them could teach English at elementary level', a view resembling the other teachers including T1, T2, T4, T6, T17, T18 and T19. The specific expertise needed for teaching English to Young Learners was missing because there was 'no specialization on this (EYL) during their teacher education' at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels (TE2).

Table 2. Codes relating to inadequate teacher educators.

Code	Frequency
Teacher educators limited in number	19
Teacher educators lacking expertise	14

**Issues with training management**

Table 3 presents the codes referring to issues related to training management at government-based training institutions.

First and foremost, teacher educators including TE1, TE3, TE5, TE6, TE10, TE11 and TE12 pointed out the poor managerial skills displayed by government-based training institutions when it comes to the implementation of training programs. Participants suggested that in-service training programs had ‘no follow up’ (PSP1, PSP2, PSP3; TE1, TE4, TE6, TE8; T1, T2, T9, T10, T11, T14, T16 and T23). TE6’s statement ‘this year we have training for English teachers’ but ‘next year we have none’ confirms that training was usually held once without assurance that a similar program would occur in the future. The sporadic fashion of in-service education was also observed by TE3, who gave an example that in-service education activities in ‘East Java, especially Malang’ still exist but ‘are not very regular’. Furthermore, T11 stated that once she ‘had training for three days, for example, for a couple of days, right? But it was condensed into only one day’, an experience shared by T10 who attended a training session by a government-based training institution.

Often the issue of management was caused by conflicting interests of the authorities. TE5 stated that when teacher educators ‘were going to train teachers’, they were required to ‘ask permission from the local education office’. She also raised the concern that teacher educators could not ‘visit the school without the office’s permission because the schools and the teachers belong to it’ (TE5). In some cases, teacher training was ‘made for projects’ (TE13), which means its implementation is ‘dependent upon whether or not it can make money for the director of the government-based training institution’ (TE6). Some bureaucrats expressed their willingness to ‘get involved, and those bureaucrats from the local educational office wanted to get involved since they wished to benefit financially from the training programs’ (TE3).

Participants suggested that the bureaucrats often have the final say regarding the contents of training programs. As a consequence, content selection was predominantly based on assumptions rather than the true needs of the teachers (TE13, TE4 and TE2). More often than not, ‘they did not know the proficiency level of their participants’ (TE4), hence ‘not designing their training programs clearly’ (TE2). The provision of theoretically based components was prominent. T12 illustrated that ‘in most workshops we attended, we only got theories, so the practical input was very limited’. Even when the training had practical orientation, it ‘was very limited. It was limited on how to apply the theories, and we had known it already’ (T12).

T12’s lamentation was echoed by TE3, who highlighted ‘how on earth would English teachers at elementary level be given linguistic theories?’ T3 maintained that

Table 3. Codes relating to issues with training management.

Code	Frequency
Prone to political intervention	29
No follow-up training	14
In-service impractical	13
Lack of planning	7
Shortened in duration	3



the training programs provided were ‘very general, not for elementary school teaching’. TE1 stated that ‘so much time was spent on preparing or planning for the exam, or looking at the curriculum, nothing was practical’, while TE12 stated ‘no provision was made on teaching techniques’.

### *Ambiguous selection of training participants*

Table 4 presents codes indicating issues related to the selection of participants in training programs held by government-based training institutions.

Several teachers who lived in rural areas, including T2, T3, T13, T8 and T10, all pointed out that they had not undertaken any PD supports from the government-based training institutions primarily because specific training for English teachers at elementary level was not available. Furthermore, teachers who teach in schools with lower status, such as T7, T8, T13, T2, T3 and T10, did not have the opportunity. T8, for example, reported: ‘In my experience, I’ve been teaching for 22 years. And I’ve been asked to teach for that long, eh, English is a local content subject, so far there hasn’t been any trainings for us’, while T3 stated that ‘since teaching here, I haven’t attended any training that equips me with my particular discipline that I’m currently teaching, English language’.

Two principals confirmed the aforementioned statements by the teachers. They agreed that in-service training programs held by government-based training institutions were not generally accessible for elementary school English teachers. Both PSP3 and PSP1 highlighted that in-service training programs were ‘very limited’ (PSP3 and PSP1) and were not ‘widely accessible’ (PSP1) to teachers, especially those in rural areas and whose school has lower status like T7, T8, T2, T3, T10 and T13.

This situation was in stark contrast with teachers who teach in prestigious schools. T4, who worked for SDN Muhammadiyah 2 Denpasar, Bali, said that she had attended trainings ‘held by the Ministry of National Education about teaching English in elementary schools’. PSP3 stated that, as an international-based standard school, his school received support from the central government in terms of training for teachers. This explains why two of his teachers, T4 and T6, were given the opportunity to attend in-service trainings even though both were not civil servants.

PSP2 stated that ‘in RSBI schools, or schools with international standards, the teachers generally have much better proficiency in comparison to regular public schools’. Reflecting on the pedagogical situations of teachers in North Sulawesi, TE6 pointed out that teachers ‘in cities like Manado, in general they are okay. But those who live outside the cities such as in Minahasa, Mobagu, Bitung, they are far from adequate.’

Table 4. Codes relating to access to in-service training.

Code	Frequency
Training not available in rural areas	19
Participant selection based on connection	17
Training available to civil servants	12
Gap of quality between teachers in rural and urban areas	11
Training available to prestigious schools	9
Shortened in duration	3

Furthermore, evidence from the study points out the intransparency of participant selection. Many eligible participants were not given the opportunity to attend the training because ‘selection of participants was really based on favoritism and connection’ (TE4). Those who attended the training programs ‘were not eligible’, since their attendance was primarily ‘because of connection’ (TE6).

The findings of the study also reveal that the delivery of in-service teacher training programs was largely focused on teachers with civil servant status. A lot of teachers, because of their status as a teacher in a private school or as a non-civil servant teacher, ‘never had any in-service training at all’, and the reason for this was ‘because there was no money available or because it wasn’t considered important’ to train these pools of teachers (TE1). TE1 illustrated that a predominant view amongst the local bureaucrats running education programs was that once ‘you finish your training, so you are a teacher now therefore you don’t need any more, you can carry on’.

### **Discussion and implications**

The scope of the study was particularly limited to trends in the groups of participants identified in this study. Generalizations from this relatively small sampling study are therefore undesirable. It is necessary to conduct further research where larger numbers of participants are involved and where more diverse data collection instruments are employed. Other contextual factors surrounding the teaching of English at elementary level, including English teaching at secondary level, the provision of materials, the relationship between English and the Indonesian language and the local languages, among others, merit consideration in the conduct of the future research.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study are highly relevant to the present context of in-service education for elementary English teachers in Indonesia. The findings do not only demonstrate the educational tensions presently occurring in the Indonesian context; they also add another grim picture to the problematic situations surrounding the implementation of in-service PD for elementary English teachers in Asian countries such as Japan, China, South Korea, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Taiwan (Nunan 2003, Li 2007, Hamano 2008, Hamid 2010, Kaplan *et al.* 2011, Nguyen 2011). Even so, the implications drawn from this study may offer relevant insights to these English-as-a-foreign-language countries whose contexts are quite similar to Indonesia.

The study in particular demonstrates the inadequacy of in-service PD in Indonesia in preparing elementary English teachers to reach the desired professional level, mainly due to the shortage of quality teacher educators. Statistics show that only 41 English teacher educators are currently employed to provide training to the currently existing 47,475 English teachers at elementary level (Center for Development 2014). What these numbers demonstrate is that the increasing number of elementary schools offering English instruction goes hand in hand with the growing number of appointed elementary English teachers who need quality in-service PD. But this increase is not perfectly matched with the supply of teacher educators.

Educational policy-makers at the national level seem to have forgotten the fact that the imbalanced ratio between teacher educators and teachers is a major factor contributing to the lack of continuity and limited access of teacher training programs

held by government institutions. A continuous and rigorous process of teacher education recruitment, which would enable the adequate portion of teacher educators to serve the teachers, seems to have escaped their attention.

### ***Recruitment and professional development of teacher educators***

The administrative functions relating to the recruitment of new teacher educators and the education of the currently appointed ones have failed to keep up with the societal aspiration for better English instruction. This is indicative of the poor administrative vision that deteriorates the teacher education system in the country. Such poor administrative vision, however, is not exclusive to Indonesia. Instead, it is a major issue enmeshing the educational systems of developing economies aspiring to enhanced English instruction. This is evident, for instance, in the cases of India, Vietnam, Thailand and Kenya whose poor administrative system is also deteriorated by lack of funding (Nguyen 2013), social class and a hierarchical educational system (Mooij 2008), disorientated bureaucracy (Graham 2011) and limited material resources (Onderi and Croll 2008).

With such complicated situations, and burdened by the extreme shortage of teacher educators, only focusing on training greater numbers of teachers within a short period of time would not offer a long-term solution. Ignoring the foundations of teacher education and hoping for the possibility of teachers to learn and improvise as they carry out their professional duties are futile. In fact, this is the reason why the PD of elementary English teachers in Bangladesh, Japan, China, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan and Hong Kong fails to reach the desired outcomes (Nunan 2003, Butler and Iino 2005, Li 2007, Hamano 2008, Hamid 2010, Kaplan *et al.* 2011, Nguyen 2011).

The focus of overcoming such poor administrative vision should therefore be raising standards for teacher education. This requires an organized strategy for the enhancement of teacher education. The strategy needs to commence with a rigorous and systematic process where groups of prospective teacher educators can be recruited on a continuous basis. The need for continuous recruitment of more diverse teacher education personnel who have good experience with language teaching and teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts (Jacobs *et al.* 2011) is manifest. They also certainly need to be familiar with the current knowledge related to teaching EYL as well as the occupational demands attached to it.

The recruitment of such teacher education personnel need not be reliant on educational bureaucrats. Even up to the implementation of decentralization of education, educational bureaucrats have determined the employment and recruitment of new teacher educators. The findings of this study, however, suggest that rather than relying on the bureaucrats, we must ensure greater roles are rendered to teacher educators. The current in-service teacher educators could play substantial roles in the effort to overcome the limited number of teacher educators at government-based training institutions. Strategic initiatives need to be developed by teacher educators in association with local educational policy-makers and teacher educators at pre-service level in determining the quota of recruited teacher educators, their deployment and budgetary calculations.

The PD of teacher educators is also of significant importance. This study concurs with Smith that PD of teacher educators is inevitable and that it is 'a built-in part of

improving education in general' (2003, p. 213). Those working within the in-service system serve as models of lifelong learning involved in the continuous development of prospective teachers. They need to professionally evolve on a continuous basis on whatever paths they may choose (Swennen and Bates 2011).

Areas in which teacher educators' characteristics and competencies are supportive to improved learning in the in-service program (Celik 2011) and where they can utilize modeling to enhance instruction (Hogg and Yates 2013) need to be clearly defined. This is especially needed not only for the current in-service teacher educators but more importantly the newly recruited ones. The establishment of intercollegiate PD of novice teachers where teacher educators from government-based training institutions work collaboratively with those in the universities is necessary (Shagrir 2010). This would afford them opportunities to perform collaborative learning where they can present the knowledge they have developed and familiarize themselves with the knowledge developed by others. In an increasingly fast-paced world where knowledge and learning innovations develop so rapidly, the presence of such PD opportunities is undeniably vital in order to assist teacher educators with sufficient knowledge and skills to teach EYL to teachers.

### ***Facing bureaucrats' intrusion***

In this study, the shortened duration of training programs, the ambiguous and somewhat discriminatory participant selection, and the mismatch between the course contents and the contextual and professional needs of the teachers have all been highlighted. These issues are instances where the implementation of a top-down oriented teacher education (Uysal 2012) is marked by the intrusion of educational administrators. These educational administrators are responsible for shifting power from the central government, but only to concentrate it at the provincial level (Indriyanto 2003). It appears that the centralization of power occurring at the provincial level has made it possible for bureaucrats with no expertise to be involved in the design and management of in-service teacher education.

Clearly the participation of these bureaucrats was not professionally oriented. The occurrence of bureaucratic involvement driven by incentives in teacher preparation programs as demonstrated in this study echoed Reeves and Drew (2012). Contestation between bureaucratic decisions and the nature of teachers' PD appears when administrators took advantage of their authority for financial gain, often by adeptly making their way through the poor accountability practices enmeshing the educational system. This is evident in the involvement of educational administrators in committee meetings where they can earn incentives for their attendance despite their limited contributions. The shortened duration of training programs in which expenses could be tightened to a minimum might also be due to their insistence. Teacher educators in Pusat Pelatihan and Pendidikan Personel Bahasa, in Pusat Pelatihan dan Pendidikan Guru Bahasa and in LPMP might have felt powerless when such a problem occurs, primarily because of the bureaucrats' assumed power that is associated with holding administrative office at the provincial level.

The situation is even more complicated when these bureaucrats were deeply involved but unable to warrant transparent and fair selections of training participants. The findings of the study confirm Chodidjah (2010) in that only teachers who were close to power wielders at the local level were given the opportunity to take

part in various in-service training programs. The fact that supports are more likely to be available to teachers with civil servant status or those coming from schools with high status and that are located in urban areas greatly marks the supposition.

Furthermore, the incongruence between the contents of the training programs and the professional and contextual needs of the teachers occurring at the pedagogical level was caused by the intrusion made by the bureaucrats. The fact that training programs designed by these bureaucrats often did not match the needs of the teachers as well as the contextual situations in which they work demonstrates the administrators' narrow understanding of the depth of English language teaching. It further reveals their lack of appreciation for the cultural profession in which teacher educators should have played substantial roles.

### ***Teacher educator empowerment***

Grimmett *et al.* (2009) argued that those working at the policy level need to refrain from making unjustified intrusion; the PD domain needs to be free of bureaucracy. High-quality instruction for in-service teachers is viable only when supportive environments where teacher educators work are created.

But it is difficult for teacher educators to fully participate in training programs that could bring positive impacts to the professionalism of teachers, if their roles are constrained to minimal. This suggests the need to delegate autonomy for the design and administration of in-service PD programs from local educational authorities to the authorized teacher educators. Clearly there is an urgent need to shift the authorization for preparation and administration of in-service education from the central to the local level (Karagiorgi and Symeou 2007); it is even more so when teacher educators could play larger roles. Bates argued that government, as represented by educational administrators, should not perceive and regulate teacher education from a mere administrative point of view, but it should 'regulate the conditions of teaching and teacher education in ways that preserve the autonomy of educators' (2004, p. 168).

A call for more sustainable engagement of teacher educators in the political arena has been made by Feuerstein (2011). Teacher educators need to play greater political roles and make more vigorous attempts to counter the 'common sense' assertions coming from educational administrators, which often do more harm than good. Resistance to the adoption of bureaucratic orientation is necessary in order to foster greater teacher PD practice. From the Indonesian context presented in this study, full implementation of decentralization of education means greater roles rendered to teacher educators in the enhancement of teachers' professionalism. This is important not only in the demonstration of the power of pedagogical knowing for student learning that redefines PD as integral to teacher quality and student achievement (Kelly and Williamson 2002), but also in the exercise of political power when designing and implementing training programs. The same case applies when stronger involvement in which they could also monitor and support the progress of teachers is expected for better outcomes of in-service education (Waters 2006).

Teacher educators must now become fully independent in exercising both their professional and political roles. First of all, they must be provided with greater autonomy in the design of the teacher training programs, especially when deciding the contents of the programs. This is essential in an attempt to provide training programs that well attend to the particular needs of elementary English teachers.

The main reason is because long-term sustainability of teacher PD programs is dependent upon whether or not the course delivery matches the participants' needs and expectations. Constant adjustments to the delivery mode, course contents and teaching methodology to cater for the needs of teachers are mandatory (Yan 2007). Furthermore, the provision of practical components in PD activities to attend to the needs of elementary English-as-a-foreign-language teachers needs to be made. This makes a perfect alignment with the contention that PD activities which do not place large emphasis on practice have been increasingly questioned for their inadequacies.

An in-depth investigation of the needs, beliefs and understanding of training participants as well as the specific contexts of the teaching environment is equally important (Kabylov 2006, Bumen 2009, Uysal 2012, Vefali and Tucergil 2012, Kabilan and Veratharaju 2013). Teacher educators in government-based training institutions therefore need to consider the conduct of 'naturalistic inquiries into their trainees' and trainers' beliefs in order to ensure efficacy of their training services, improvement of teaching practices, and promotion of professional growth' (Vefali and Tucergil 2012, p. 52). The fact that 'with the introduction of English at the primary school level, teachers need special training in the needs of younger learners' (Nunan 2003, p. 609) makes the argument even more plausible. Only through the provision of such PD programs/activities that cater for the aforementioned areas can a more robust foundation in teaching EYL be accomplished.

Second, the empowerment of teacher educators also means the provision of authority where they can play more dominant roles in the selection of training participants. Procedures in which no more participants are selected on the basis of the status of their school, their employment status or their connection with local power wielders should be created. Neither should those possessing a civil servant status be favored over those who do not.

Representation to training participation must be based on merit and needs rather than on geopolitical and or socioeconomic factors. As Bates (2006, p. 282) put it: 'the issue of representation is crucial in the linking of education with social justice and public policy'. Teacher educators should therefore serve as the educational spearhead in ending social injustice instead of exacerbating it.

### Acknowledgements

The author would like to express sincere thanks to all of the teachers, teacher educators and school principals who participated in this study. The author also extends gratitude to the reviewers whose comments on the earlier drafts of this paper have been very helpful.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

### References

- Agustina, R.T., Rahayu, S., and Murti, T., 1997. The implementation of English teaching in primary schools [Pelaksanaan pengajaran Bahasa Inggris di Sekolah Dasar]. *Ilmu Pendidikan*, 24 (2), 187–196.
- Asriyanti, E., et al., 2013. The competence of primary school English teachers in Indonesia. *Journal of education and practice*, 4 (11), 139–146.
- Astika, G., 1996. Teaching-learning processes in English classes in some primary schools in Central Java and Yogyakarta. Paper presented at *TEFLIN Regional Seminar II: Jawa Tengah & DIY*, Universitas 11 Maret Surakarta, 1–2 March.

- Baldauf, R.B. Jr, *et al.*, 2011. Success or failure of elementary second/foreign language programmes in Asia: what do the data tell us? *Current issues in language planning*, 12 (2), 309–323.
- Bandur, A., 2012. School-based management developments: challenges and impacts. *Journal of educational administration*, 50 (6), 845–873.
- Bates, R., 2004. Regulation and autonomy in teacher education: government, community or democracy? *Journal of education for teaching: international research and pedagogy*, 30 (2), 117–130.
- Bates, R., 2006. Public education, social justice and teacher education. *Asia-Pacific journal of teacher education*, 34 (3), 275–286.
- Birks, M. and Mills, J., 2011. *Grounded theory: a practical guide*. London: Sage.
- Bismoko, J., 2003. Does our English teacher education need re-designing? *TEFLIN journal*, 14 (1). Available from: <http://journal.teflin.org/index.php/teflin/article/view/54/21> [Accessed 16 January 2015].
- Bümen, N.T., 2009. Possible effects of professional development on Turkish teachers' self-efficacy and classroom practice. *Professional development in education*, 35 (2), 261–278.
- Butler, Y.G. and Iino, M., 2005. Current Japanese reforms in English language education: the 2003 action plan. *Language policy*, 4 (1), 25–45.
- Celik, S., 2011. Characteristics and competencies for teacher educators: addressing the need for improved professional standards in Turkey. *Australian journal of teacher education*, 36 (4), 73–84.
- Center for Development and Empowerment of Language Teachers and Education Personnel, 2014. *Profile center for development and empowerment language teachers and education personnel*. Jakarta: P4TK.
- Chodidjah, I., 2007. Teacher training for low proficiency level primary English language teachers: how it is working in Indonesia. In: British Council, ed. *Primary innovations: A collection of papers*. Hanoi: British Council, 87–94.
- Chodidjah, I., 2008. English in primary school: gem in the mud in Indonesia. Paper presented at the *international conference on teaching English to your learners*, 4–7 January, Bangalore, India.
- Chodidjah, I., 2010. *Innovative in-service teacher training for basic education in Indonesia*. Jakarta: LB LIA.
- Cooper, R.L., 1989. *Language planning and social change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Damayanti, I.L., Muslim, A.B., and Nurlaelawati, I., 2008. *An analysis on the relevance of English for Young Learners with the needs of teaching English in primary schools [Analisis relevansi mata kuliah English for Young Learners dengan kebutuhan pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Sekolah Dasar]*. Bandung: UPI Penelitian Hibah Pembinaan.
- Dey, I., 2004. Grounded theory. In: C. Seale, *et al.*, eds. *Qualitative research practice*. London: Sage, 80–93.
- Ernidawati, T., 2002. The teaching and learning English at the elementary schools at SDNP Malang and SDNP Sei Petani Medan. Unpublished MA thesis. Graduate programme in English Department at State University of Malang.
- Feuerstein, A., 2011. The politics of accountability and teacher preparation. *Action in teacher education*, 33 (1), 3–23.
- Graham, S., 2011. From the bottom up: a case study of teacher training for primary school teachers of English in a Thai school in north-eastern Thailand. *English language teacher education and development*, 12, 31–43.
- Grimmett, P.P., Fleming, R., and Trotter, L., 2009. Legitimacy and identity in teacher education: a micro-political struggle constrained by macro-political pressures. *Asia-Pacific journal of teacher education*, 37 (1), 5–26.
- Hamano, T., 2008. Educational reform and teacher education in Vietnam. *Journal of education for teaching: international research and pedagogy*, 34 (4), 397–410.
- Hamid, M.O., 2010. Globalisation, English for everyone and English teacher capacity: language policy discourses and realities in Bangladesh. *Current issues in language planning*, 11 (4), 289–310.

- Hogg, L. and Yates, A., 2013. Walking the talk in initial teacher education: making teacher educator modeling effective. *Studying teacher education: a journal of self-study of teacher education practices*, 9 (3), 311–328.
- Huda, N., 1994. The teaching of English in elementary schools: issues and problems. *TEFLIN journal*, 6, 82–90.
- Indriyanto, B., 2003. School-based management: issues and hopes towards decentralization in education in Indonesia. Paper presented at the *3rd International Forum on Education Reform*, Bangkok, Thailand, 8–11 September.
- Jacobs, J., Assaf, L.C., and Lee, K.S., 2011. Professional development for teacher educators: conflicts between critical reflection and instructional-based strategies. *Professional development in education*, 37 (4), 499–512.
- Kabilan, M.K. and Veratharaju, K., 2013. Professional development needs of primary school English-language teachers in Malaysia. *Professional development in education*, 39 (3), 330–351.
- Kabylov, T.B., 2006. What is needed to improve teacher in-service education in Kyrgyzstan? *Professional development in education*, 32 (1), 123–128.
- Kaplan, R.B. and Baldauf, R.B. Jr, 1997. *Language planning from practice to theory*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Kaplan, R.B., Baldauf, R.B. Jr, and Kamwangamalu, N., 2011. Why educational language plans sometimes fail. *Current issues in language planning*, 12 (2), 105–124.
- Karagiorgi, Y. and Symeou, L., 2007. Teachers' in-service training needs in Cyprus. *European journal of teacher education*, 30 (2), 175–194.
- Karani, E. 2006. *The implementation of the teaching of English at elementary schools in Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan*. MA thesis. Graduate programme in English Language Education, State University of Malang.
- Kelly, P.P. and Williamson, M.G., 2002. Decentralisation of professional development: teachers' decisions and dilemmas. *Journal of in-service education*, 28 (3), 409–426.
- Lamb, M. and Coleman, H., 2008. Literacy in English and the transformation of self and society in post-Soeharto Indonesia. *International journal of bilingual education and bilingualism*, 11 (2), 189–205.
- Lestari, L.A., 2003. Should English be a compulsory subject in the elementary schools? *Jurnal Bahasa dan Seni*, 31 (2), 197–213.
- Li, M., 2007. Foreign language education in primary schools in the People's Republic of China. *Current issues in language planning*, 8 (2), 148–160.
- Luciana, 2006. Developing standards for language teacher education programs in Indonesia: Professionalizing or losing in complexity? *TEFLIN journal*, 7 (1), 19–28.
- Mooij, J., 2008. Primary education, teachers' professionalism and social class about motivation and demotivation of government school teachers in India. *International journal of educational development*, 28 (5), 508–523.
- Nguyen, M., 2013. The curriculum for English language teacher education in Australian and Vietnamese universities. *Australian journal of teacher education*, 38 (11), 33–53.
- Nguyen, T.M.H., 2011. Primary English language education policy in Vietnam: insights from implementation. *Current issues in language planning*, 12 (2), 225–249.
- Nizar, H., 2004. EFL teachers' performance at the elementary schools: a case study of three elementary schools in the city of Bandung. Unpublished MA thesis. English Education Department, Graduate School, Indonesian University of Education Bandung.
- Nunan, D., 2003. The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region. *TESOL quarterly*, 37 (4), 589–613.
- Onderi, H. and Croll, P., 2008. In-service training needs in an African context: a study of headteacher and teacher perspectives in the Gucha district of Kenya. *Journal of in-service education*, 34 (3), 361–373.
- Rachmajanti, S., 2008. Impact of English instruction at the elementary school on the students' achievement of English at the lower secondary school. *TEFLIN journal*, 19 (2), 160–185.
- Reeves, J. and Drew, V., 2012. Relays and relations: tracking a policy initiative for improving teacher professionalism. *Journal of education policy*, 27 (6), 711–730.
- Rohmah, Z., 1996. A comparative study of the English proficiency of the students of Sekolah Dasar Negeri (SDN) Percobaan Malang dan Sekolah Dasar (SD) Dharma Wanita IKIP



- Malang. Unpublished undergraduate thesis. The English Department, FPBS, IKIP Malang.
- Sadtono, E., 2007. A concise history of TEFL in Indonesia. In: Y.H. Choi and B. Spolsky, eds. *English education in Asia: history and policies*. Busan: ASIA TEFL, 205–234.
- Sary, F.P., 2003. A practice in teaching EFL for young learners: a case study in one primary school in Bandung. Paper presented at the *TEFLIN International Conference*, Bandung, 21–23 October.
- Shagrir, L., 2010. Professional development of novice teacher educators: professional self, interpersonal relations and teaching skills. *Professional development in education*, 36 (1–2), 45–60.
- Smith, K., 2003. So, what about the professional development of teacher educators? *European journal of teacher education*, 26 (2), 201–215.
- Spolsky, B., 2009. *Language management*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Susanto, 1998. Pelaksanaan pengajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai Muatan Lokal di Sekolah Dasar [The implementation of English teaching as local content subject at primary level]. *Media Pendidikan dan Ilmu Pengetahuan*, 21 (2), 139–155.
- Suyanto, K.E. and Chodidjah, I., 2002. The teaching of English in elementary schools: the policy, implementation, and future direction. Paper presented at the *50th TEFLIN International Conference*, Surabaya, 29–31 October.
- Swennen, A. and Bates, R., 2011. Introduction. In: T. Bates, K. Jones, and A. Swennen, eds. *Professional development of teacher educators*. London: Routledge, 1–6.
- Uysal, H.H., 2012. Evaluation of an in-service training program for primary-school language teachers in Turkey. *Australian journal of teacher education*, 37 (7), 14–29.
- Vefali, G.M. and Tucergil, C., 2012. Exploring in-service English language teacher trainees' and trainers' practice and beliefs in northern Cyprus. *English language teacher education and development*, 15, 42–56.
- Waters, A., 2006. Facilitating follow-up in ELT INSET. *Language teaching research*, 10 (1), 32–52.
- Yan, C., 2007. Teachers' needs: an important factor for longer-term sustainability of cross-cultural INSET programs. *English language teacher education and development*, 10, 10–18.
- Zein, S., 2012. The contexts of English language teaching at elementary level in Indonesia. *Journal of teaching and education*, 1 (3), 85–90.
- Zein, S., 2014. Pre-service education for primary school English teachers in Indonesia: policy implications. *Asia-Pacific journal of education*, doi:10.1080/02188791.2014.961899.

**Appendix 1. Participant profiles**

Table A1. Teachers' profile.

Type of teachers	Teacher	Sex	Pre-service education		
			Degree	English to Young Learners	Experience
Teachers without English background	T15	Male	Primary School Teacher Education	No	2 years
	T2	Female	BA in French	No	2 years
	T3	Male	BA in Physics	No	2 years
	T7	Female	School for Primary Teachers	No	38 years
	T8	Female	Primary School Teacher Education	No	22 years
Teachers with English background	T14	Female	Primary School Teacher Education	No	3 years
	T1	Male	Diploma 3 in English	Yes	1 year
	T4	Female	BA in English Language & Literature and Certificate IV in Education	No	2 years
	T5	Female	Bachelor in English Education	No	10 years
	T6	Male	Bachelor in English Education	No	11 years
	T9	Male	Bachelor in English Education	No	18 years
	T10	Female	Bachelor in English Education	Yes	2 years
	T11	Female	Bachelor in English Education	Yes	7 years
	T12	Female	Diploma 3 in Business English and BED in English Education	Yes	5 years
	T13	Male	Bachelor in English Education	Yes	8 years
	T16	Female	Bachelor in English Education	Yes	4 years
	T17	Male	Bachelor in English Education	Yes	2 years
	T18	Female	Bachelor in English Literature	No	2 years
	T19	Female	Bachelor in Education	No	2 years
T20	Female	Bachelor in English Education	Yes	2 years	
T21	Female	Bachelor in English Language	Yes	2 years	
T22	Female	Bachelor in English Language	Yes	2 years	
T23	Female	Bachelor in English Education	Yes	3 years	

Table A2. Teacher educators' profile.

Teacher educator	Education	Experience
TE1	MA in TESOL	25 years
TE2	PhD in Early Childhood Education	27 years
TE3	PhD in TEFL	40 years
TE4	PhD in Language Education	35 years
TE5	PhD in Language Education	18 years
TE6	MA in TEFL	12 years
TE7	PhD in Education Management	38 years
TE8	PhD in English Education	37 years
TE9	MA in TEFL	10 years
TE10	MA in TESOL	20 years
TE11	MA in Education	15 years
TE12	MA in TESOL	7 years
TE13	MA in TESOL	15 years
TE14	MA in TEFL	30 years

Notes: TEFL, Teaching English as a Foreign Language; TESOL, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Table A3. Primary school principals' profile.

Primary school principal	Education	Experience
PSP1	MA in Education	30 years
PSP2	MA in Education Administration	35 years
PSP3	Bachelor of Education	40 years