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Professional development as viewed by EFL teachers at lower secondary schools

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In the developed world, teachers are compelled to be professional in handling instructional process for students' optimum learning. There are many ways for teacher professionalism. This study deals with an exploratory survey to probe EFL teachers' views of teacher professionalism on the areas for professional development or learning. A number of 302 EFL teachers of the lower secondary level of education are conveniently drawn from a number of cities/regencies as samples of the present study representing EFL teachers with diverse teaching experiences in East Java. A questionnaire was developed to collect data on teachers' ideas connected with aspects of developing themselves professionally. The results of the present study are discussed pertaining to EFL teacher normative responsibilities and concepts on professional development/learning. Pedagogical and theoretical implications of the findings are drawn with reference to the context of English instruction.

Keywords: professional development, EFL teachers' views, public and private schools

INTRODUCTION

Being professional teachers are undeniably of utmost importance for students' optimum learning. Harrison and Killion (2007) conceptually outline a various number of ways teachers may contribute to effectiveness of their instructional process. Professional teachers are indispensable required in order to change education- for better or worse as exclaimed by Jones (2003). It is always and has been in the hands of teachers the education relies on despite the emergence of technology. Henceforth, there are some roles teachers are possessed Keller (2011) describes teachers' attributes in the classroom in a more operational level. They may play roles as a class controller, learning assessor, class manager, management stylist, resource person, participant, investigator, and a role model. Another expert roles for a teacher to play as follows substitute parent, class disciplinarian, mentor, counselor, bookkeeper, and a planner. Henceforth, teachers may have lots of essential tasks to tackle during the instructional process the ultimate goal of which is students' optimum learning. Therefore, teachers' role has become a hot topic among those concerned with education quality elsewhere

However, in different countries, professional standards and the assessment work of teachers are set up diversely depending on one country's education policy landscapes and cultural context. In the Republic of Ireland, for instance, the standards are underpinned by core values like respect, care, integrity, trust, and the complexity of teaching (Council, 2012). In Indonesian context, the importance of teachers' role is vividly reflected in the law about teachers and lec-

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urers-the Law no. 14 year 2005-that has mandated the government to qualify teachers and lecturers alike academically in terms of their competences the achievement of the goal of the national education.

1 Pertinent to the essential roles teachers have, upon the completion of their formal education and throughout their teaching career, teachers need to update and qualify further their skills to impact students' learning better, that is to say, to boost their educating capacities for students' successful learning, they have to always develop themselves professionally. The medium within which teachers can qualify themselves is commonly called professional development – PD (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Calvert, 2016), or it also refers to continuous professional development – CPD since they are expected to have the development throughout their career. Other terms such as staff development, in-service, training, professional learning, or continuing education are also commonly applied Mizell (2010). Recently, however, scholars have distinguished between the terms 'professional development' and 'professional learning' (PL for short) – a more recent term that essentially has a similar underlying concept which has been widely accepted and practiced.

According to Calvert (2016), and Labone and Long (2016), PL is associated with more modernized conducts with interactive nature being evidenced during the process. The latter is more proliferated by technology advancement in which teachers are provided by options for learning by themselves online any time beyond the set-up-school-based professional development program (Loughran, 2010; Stevenson et al., 2016). According to Ambler (2016), online professional learning caters for teachers to fulfill their self-interest or what they think they need. In other words, teachers as a matter of fact can professionalize themselves by synergizing school-based professional development program and personal online learning Beltran and Percy (2014); Campana (2014). The term professional learning is used throughout in the rest part of the article to mean any attempts made purposefully by teachers, be they individually or in group, in a formal or informal context, to always qualify themselves so as to make meaningful impacts on students' learning achievement. There exist two questions in this study:

1. How is a professional English teacher?
2. What attempts have the teachers done to be professional?

METHOD

As the study intended to investigate EFL teachers' views on their professional development/learning, an exploratory survey was adopted aiming at examining their perceptions on professionalism. To do so, a convenience sampling technique was employed in this study Gall et al. (2007). As the samples of this study, 302 English teachers were randomly selected from 5 (five) cities/regencies in East Java, i.e. the Regency of Kediri,

Kediri City, the Regency of Trenggalek, the Regency of Tulungagung, and the Regency of Nganjuk. The English teachers as the respondents of this study mostly teach at public lower secondary schools.

The instrument used to collect data in this study is an open-ended questionnaire giving opportunities for English teachers to openly state their opinions and perspectives. The questionnaire focuses on 2 major variables: perceptions and attempts on the continuous development program. Moreover, the questionnaire also collected data on the English teachers' backgrounds such as teaching experience, teaching certification status, as well as their highest education. After being collected, the data were coded and descriptively analyzed. First, descriptive statistical analyses were utilized to examine the data on respondents' background by using frequency count. Next, the collected data on respondents' perceptions and attempts were statistically analyzed with frequency count.

The characteristics of the samples in this study were elaborated in Table 1 up to Table 4. As evidence, 50 out of 302 respondents (16.5%) did not fill any information on their backgrounds, but they still elaborated their ideas on perceptions about professional teacher and some attempts that they committed on having sustainable professional development. Possibly, the respondents who do not provide their teaching backgrounds in the questionnaire would like to provide objective opinions on the issues without being related to their current status. Table 1 contains information on the respondents' background of education.

TABLE 1 | The Respondents' Educational Background

Levels of Education	F	(%)
Bachelor degree	217	72
Master Degree	35	11.5
Not mentioned	50	16.5

Based on the results of descriptive statistical analysis displayed in Table 1, it reveals that out of 302 respondents, only 11.5% percent of them hold the master degree, whereas, the majority of the respondents (72%) have got the bachelor degree. Unfortunately, 16.5% of the respondents did not mention their educational background. Next, in Table 2, the lengths of respondents' teaching experiences are justified.

TABLE 2 | Teaching Experience

Length of Teaching Experience	F	(%)
<5 years	28	9
5-10 years	48	16
11-15 years	83	27.5
>15 years	93	31
Not mentioned	50	16.5

As depicted in Table 2, viewed from work experience, the respondents of this study have different lengths of teaching

experiences. As evidence, most of them (> 50%) are categorized as senior and expert teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience. However, 16.5% of them did not state the teaching period. With regard to certification, [Table 3](#) elaborates the detailed results of descriptive analysis of respondents' certification status.

TABLE 3 | The Respondents' Certification Status

Certification Status	F	(%)
Bachelor degree	195	65
Master Degree	57	19
Not mentioned	50	16.5

As displayed in [Table 3](#), the majority of respondents (cumulatively 84% in which 65% holding the Master degree) are certified English teachers in which they receive professional allowance from the government. The professional allowance is granted to teachers to financially facilitate them to sustainably improve their professionalism such as studying further to a higher level of education, presenting scientific electronic books/references professional support engagements.

In brief, the majority of the respondents in this study were considered academically competent as most of them achieved the minimum standard of education (Bachelor degree holders) as stipulated in the Law of Republic of Indonesia Number 14 Year 2005 and were legitimately certified, and even sufficiently experienced with more than 10 (ten) years of teaching experience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents in this study filled an open-ended questionnaire on two major questions: how a professional EFL teacher is and what attempts they have done to be professional. [Based on the results of the analyses of the survey data from](#) the questionnaire, the findings are categorized into 2 (two) domains aforementioned. After scrutinizing the questionnaire, it comes up with data in 2 (two) tables that is [Table 4](#) contains the summary of the EFL teachers' responses to the first question, and [Table 5](#) discusses their attempts to be professional.

The results in [Table 4](#) indicates that based on the respondents' perceptions, there are 23 (twenty-three) criteria of a professional English teacher in total with a wide range of percentage, ranging from the lowest, 0.3% for being professional in the dimension of collaborating and sharing teaching knowledge and experience with other teachers up to the highest, 16.9% for being professional in mastering the teaching materials.

According to the respondents' perceptions, a professional EFL teacher should have such following attributes as being up to date with current trends in ELT and Curriculum (15.6%), communicating in English (12.6%), having good personality, i.e., being punctual, responsible (10.3%), recognizing students' characters, and being pedagogically, professionally, personally and socially competent (9.9%), teaching by using suitable

strategies and methods (8.9%), being able to transfer knowledge and skills to students (7.3%), being creative and innovative in designing classroom activities (6.6%), applying pedagogical theories into practices, and having a good classroom management (5%), mastering technology and implementing it to support during the teaching learning activities and assessing students' competences (4.3%), planning teaching learning activities and designing a good lesson plan (4%), making students master the English skills (3.9%), being able to be a facilitator in the teaching learning process (2.6%), being professionally certified teachers (2%), creating fun learning atmosphere, being a model for the students and the source of information for the students, and applying student-active learning (1.6%), understanding and applying the 8 Standards of National Education in the 2013 Curriculum, and utilizing various teaching media (1%).

Referring to the roles of teacher in the classroom as proposed in [Harmer \(2009\)](#), these 23 (twenty-three) aspects actually cover holistic qualities that should be possessed by a professional EFL teacher, namely:

Teacher as a controller

As the controller in the classroom, teacher is expected to be able to control the classroom by telling students what they should and should not do and in charge to lead all teaching learning activities as well as knowledge transmission process during teaching learning activities. Regarding teachers' role as a controller, the qualities mentioned the respondents are as follows: having good classroom management, being able to make students mastering English skills, being able to transfer knowledge and skill to students, being able to master the teaching materials, being able to be a model for the students and the source of information for the students, and being able to create fun learning atmosphere.

Teacher as an organizer

As an organizer, teacher is expected to be able to arrange set of learning activities and the instructions on how to complete the tasks as well as time allotment to do it and the instruction to do it individually, in groups, or in pairs, including to give models and feedback towards students' works. Regarding teachers' role as an organizer, the qualities mentioned the respondents are as follows: being able to master technology and use it to support teaching learning activities, creative and innovative in designing classroom activities, and being able to plan teaching learning activities and construct good lesson plan

Teacher as an assessor

Teacher is responsible to assess students' achievement to find out whether the learning objectives have been accomplished or not and also in charge to provide corrections and grading. Regarding teachers' role as the assessor, the quality mentioned

TABLE 4 | EFL Teachers' Perceptions on Being Professional

No.	Dimensions	f	(%)
1.	Making students master the English skills	12	3.9
2.	Being able to transfer knowledge and skills to students	22	7.3
3.	Being creative and innovative in designing classroom activities	20	6.6
4.	Teaching by using suitable strategies and methods	27	8.9
5.	Applying student-active learning	5	1.6
6.	Recognizing students' characters	30	9.9
7.	Being able to be a facilitator in the teaching learning process	8	2.6
8.	Being pedagogically, professionally, personally and socially competent	30	9.9
9.	Mastering technology and implementing it to support during the teaching learning activities	13	4.3
10.	Understanding and applying the 8 Standards of National Education in the 2013 Curriculum	3	1
11.	Mastering the teaching materials	51	16.9
12.	Being up to date with current trends in ELT and Curriculum	47	15.6
13.	Communicating in English	38	12.6
14.	Assessing students' competences	13	4.3
15.	Planning teaching learning activities and designing a good lesson plan	12	4
16.	Creating fun learning atmosphere	5	1.6
17.	Being a model for the students and the source of information for the students	5	1.6
18.	Collaborating and sharing teaching knowledge and experience with other teachers	1	0.3
19.	Applying pedagogical theories into practices	15	5
20.	Having good personality, i.e., being punctual, responsible	31	10.3
21.	Having a good classroom management	15	5
22.	Utilizing various teaching media	3	1
23.	Being professionally certified teachers	6	2

the respondents is as follows: being able to assess students' competences.

Teacher as a prompter

Teacher, as a prompter, is required to provide learning stimuli to enhance students' mastery on the target language (English in this case). Regarding teachers' role as a prompter, the quality mentioned the respondents is as follows: utilizing various teaching media.

Teacher as a participant

To create more student-centered learning atmosphere, teacher and students may share ideas and thoughts in classroom discussions or question answer sessions. Thus, teacher would not dominate the teaching learning activities in the classroom. Regarding to teachers' role as a participant, the quality mentioned the respondents is as follows: being able to apply student-active learning.

Teacher as a resource

As resource, teacher needs to guide students and to confirm what the students have learnt through learning sources or in discussion. Regarding teachers' role as a resource, the quality mentioned the respondents is as follows: being able to be facilitator in teaching learning activity.

Teacher as a tutor

As tutor, teacher should be able to help students completing their projects. Harmer (2009) refers teacher's role tutor as the combination of roles of teacher as prompter and resource.

Teacher as an observer

As an observer, teacher is in charge to observe classroom issues such as what their students' need, what their characters are, what their problems are, what strategies and methods to overcome the learning problems, and whether their students have some difficulties in mastering particular topic, etc. Regarding teachers' role as an observer, the quality mentioned the respondents is as follows: being able to teach by using suitable strategies and methods, being able to understand students' characters.

Teacher as a teaching aid: Language model

Teacher also has the role as language model in which teacher should expose the students to target language environment. In this case, English is the target language. Regarding teachers' role as language model, the quality mentioned the respondents is as follows: being able to communicate in English.

In addition to the professional roles of teachers in the classroom, the perceptions of EFL teachers on the qualities possessed by professional teachers based on the respondents' perceptions are also affected by Indonesian educational policy. There are 3 (three) respondents (1%) stating that "A professional teacher must be able to understand and apply the 8 standards of education in Indonesian curriculum (K-13)." The Decree of Minister of Education no.16 year 2007 mentions that professional teacher should master 4 (four) competences, namely: pedagogic competence, professional competence, social competence, and personal competence. The respondents in the present study mention that "A professional teacher should be able to master and apply teacher competences such as pedagogic competence, professional competence, assessment competence, and personal competence." As the implementation of pedagogic competence, the respondents justify that "A professional teacher should be able to apply pedagogical theories into practices."

Further, as part of the professional competence, some respondents mention that "A professional teacher must be up to date with current trends in ELT and Curriculum." Still, others justify that "A professional teacher should be professionally certified." Regarding the social competence, several respondents say that "A professional teacher should be able to collaborate and to share teaching knowledge and experience with other teachers." Moreover, a professional teacher must possess personal competence. The respondents mention that "A professional teacher must have good personality i.e. punctual, responsible, etc."

In fact, despite the complete images of a professional teacher based on EFL teachers' responses, it needs to be highlighted that the percentages of all qualities and ideas on professional teacher are less than 20%. It implies that even though the respondents are mostly senior teachers, each respondent might only focus without paying much attention to the prerequisite and the holistic instructional process. Meanwhile, as Harmer (2009) stated, the roles of teacher as stated above are dependent one another containing the respondents' attempts as parts of their continuous professional development

As displayed in Table 5, there are 10(ten) attempts made by the respondents to sustainably improve their professionalism, ranging from the least percentage (0.3%) for writing classroom experiences in research articles until the highest (37.7%) for joining workshop, seminars, or conferences. Pertinent to the respondents' points of views on being professional, they have put some efforts into work as joining Teachers Forum (MGMP) (16.2%), reading current updates of ELT theories (13.2%), sharing experiences and discussing classroom issues with other teachers(11.3%), improving abilities to use technol-

ogy and interactive media (7.6%), watching English movies/ listening to English radio/other sources i.e. internet to improve English proficiency (4.9%), teaching reflection (3%), continuing studies to a higher level of education (1%), and having an English program to improve teachers' and students' speaking skills(0.7%).

To sum up, based on the results of the analysis in Table 5, joining workshops, seminars, and conferences is assumed to be the most popular way to improve the respondents' professionalism (37.7%). What comes next are joining Teachers Forum (MGMP) reaching the percentage of 16.2%, reading current updates of ELT theories (13.2%), sharing experiences and discussing classroom issues with other teachers (11.3%), and improving abilities to use technology and interactive media (7.6%). In reverse, such efforts as watching English movies/ listening to English radio/other sources i.e. internet to improve English proficiency (4.9%), doing reflection (3%), continuing studies to a higher level of education (1%), having an English program to improve teachers' and students' speaking skills (0.7%), and writing classroom experiences in research articles (0.3%) are not up to the respondents' view points for professional learning or development.

Our observations as presented in the previous sections indicate that EFL teachers are as a matter of fact aware of learning or developing themselves to be more professional, especially due to the life dynamic in the global era, the enhancement of digital era, and the most importantly for the sake of the students' academic and non-academic achievements for the future life. Snoek (2009) opines that teachers are considered the most important in-school impact factor on the quality of students' achievement. They have great opportunities to elevate knowledge and skills on conducting research, writing articles in journals, and sharing ideas based on their research. This is theoretically reinforced by Barber and Mourshed (2007) providing evidence that the primary driver variation in student learning at school is the teachers' credentials.

Another study carried out by Rahman et al. (2011) verifying that there existed a relationship between teachers' joining training and their students' learning achievement. The study was addressed to a number of 80 female teachers and their corresponding 180 girl students of Grade X. The teachers' data were collected from questionnaires, whereas, the students' performance was gained from examination scores. It was then found out that teachers' training was positively correlated with students' learning achievement. Another similar study conducted by Rozati (2017) examined the relationships between EFL teachers' professional identity as well as EFL teachers' institutional identity and their teaching efficacy with professional identity. It was concluded that EFL teachers' teaching efficacy was verified as the best predictor. In other words, quality EFL teachers are pedagogically required which can be boosted through many pedagogical ways, particularly for those who feel that they still belong to the novice. As evidence, a study by Nurichsan and Rachmajanti (2017) revealed that the low achiever teachers(categorized as early

TABLE 5 | EFL Teachers' Attempts for Having Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

No.	Attempts for CPD	f	(%)
1.	Reading current updates of ELT theories	40	13.2
2.	Joining workshop, seminars, or conferences	114	37.7
3.	Joining Teachers Forum (MGMP)	49	16.2
4.	Sharing experiences and discussing classroom issues with other teachers	34	11.3
5.	Watching English movies/ listening to English radio/other sources i.e. internet to improve English proficiency	15	4.9
6.	Having an English program to improve teachers' and students' speaking skills	2	0.7
7.	Improving abilities to use technology and interactive media	23	7.6
8.	Teaching reflection	9	3
9.	Writing classroom experiences in research articles	1	0.3
10.	Continuing studies to a higher level of education	3	1

career teachers)engaging in the SM-3T program, one of the Indonesian government programs for teachers' professional learning by experiencing teaching practices in underprivileged areas, accomplished improvement in their pedagogical competences. Effective teaching is in some extent influenced by putting the pedagogical competences into classroom practices. Moreover, classroom practice provides a condition for creative professional learning, and in reverse. Through active participation in professional discussions with students and colleagues may stimulate the teachers' thinking skills about the work and professional identities Syahrudin et al. (2013); Doecke et al. (2014).

Surprisingly, with the emergence of the latest paradigms of teaching incorporating the notion of student active learning, the many roles of a teacher, and the application of the 21st attributes in the instructional process, some of the respondents have had low perceptions on these millennial phenomena (shown by quite low percentages). It might be influenced by one's personal disposition in being pedagogically professional. A case study by Utami and Prestridge (2018) examined 4 (four) Indonesian EFL teachers discovering that professional enthusiasm plays a vital role in whether or not teachers will improve themselves professionally. According to them, self-driven professional learning is more beneficial on the part of the teachers than policy-driven one.

Based on the data in Tables 4 and 5, it is identified that what the teachers perceived as being professional does not go congruent with what they attempt to accomplish, that is, firstly, it seems that the EFL teachers regard reflective teaching by means of conducting action research is not worth doing as it would be a burden for them. This is empirically evidenced by a study disclosing that writing a research-based article for publicizing their professional experience in a journal, and presenting their professional experience in a seminar posed them with some hurdles. Most of the subjects felt that they did not have sufficient confidence in performing these two academic endeavors (Rachmajanti et al., 2018). Secondly, most

EFL teachers (37.7%) rely on workshops, seminars, and conferences to enhance their professionalism, in which, according to Bissonette and Caprino (2015); Caprino (2015) are not always effective to develop teachers' professionalism due to limited teacher-centered activities where teachers are able to apply the theory. Even if each participant in the workshops has plenty of time to practice, the lack of follow-up stages after the workshop is the main reason on why teachers rarely apply what they have learnt in actual classroom.

Other popular attempts to improve EFL teachers' professionalism are joining teachers regional forum/MGMP (16.2%) and discussing pedagogical issues with other teachers (11.7%). Both of them could be effective ways on solving locally contextualized classroom issues (Kent, 2009). However, it requires teachers' self-awareness and self-motivation to learn to make them fully advantaged for EFL teachers. A study on the involvement degree of EFL teachers' CPD demonstrates that teachers having high participation in CPD do not necessarily have high professional enthusiasm, in which factors such as motivation and government regulation also affect the teachers' professional behavior (Utami et al., 2017).

Surprisingly, although the percentage of discussing and sharing classroom issues with other teachers is considerably high, collaborative teaching as the application of 21st education attributes is not mentioned as one of the possible solutions to improve teachers' professionalism and to enhance students' learning at the same time. Lesson study allowing teachers to set the learning objectives, to develop teaching aids, to design the teaching learning activities collaboratively, and to foster students-active learning and critical thinking skill is one the ways to improve teaching quality as well as teachers' professionalism by applying the 21st education attributes (Cerbin, 2011). Lesson study has been empirically supported to bring such positive effect for both teachers and students Cheung et al. (2014); Godfrey et al. (2019). Unfortunately, it seems to be not popular among the EFL teachers.

Moreover, watching English movies and other sources i.e.

internet, YouTube has unexpectedly gained high popularity among EFL teachers to improve their English proficiency. It might be beneficial for teachers; however, it might not be effective to learn English for teaching contexts. Teachers need to specifically learn how to deliver instructions and how to ask critical questions. In fact, lesson study is empirically evidenced to be more effective to improve teachers' ability to deliver instructions and critical questions Lewis and Hurd (2011).

CONCLUSION

Viewed from two diverse angles- the teachers' perceptions of being professional and their attempts to be a professional, it can be concluded that in one hand, they are sub consciously aware that professionalism is undeniable for the sake of students' betterment in learning English; however, on the other hand, the attempts to do so are not congruent with their perceptions. Again, it all depends on much one's own internal drive, the so-called "enthusiasm" – no matter from which kind of school

(state or private) a teacher is dedicating her/his life for.

To know how a professional English teacher is and the attempts the teachers have done to be professional can be explored more through deep investigation across different area of teaching English such as the teachers who teach in remote area and not. Another interesting chance is that future studies are recommended to carry out the related study qualitatively through in-depth interview and observation. Additionally, there is a call for the next investigation on the issue about factors and attitude of teachers in joining workshops, seminars, and conferences including getting involved in online professional learning communities to facilitate teacher research competence.

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