EFL In-Service Teacher Training Program in Indonesia: An Analysis of Teachers' Self-Esteem and Task Perception Development

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of the "Guru Penggerak" program (PGP), a key component of Indonesia's "Merdeka Belajar" educational initiative, on the professional development of in-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. Focusing on three EFL teachers who participated in PGP, the research examines the development of self-esteem and task perception during the training. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, narrative frames, and examination of relevant artifacts. Results indicate that PGP effectively aids teachers in understanding and implementing the Merdeka curriculum, enhancing their self-esteem and task perception. Specifically, the study identifies two indicators of improved self-esteem: enhanced understanding of curriculum implementation and engagement in professional learning communities. Similarly, two indicators of enhanced task perception were noted: improved job performance and effective utilization of training modules in teaching. Additionally, the study highlights challenges faced by participants, including shifts in teaching beliefs, increased workload, and perceptions of their role in the program. These insights suggest avenues for refining in-service teacher training programs to better support EFL teachers' professional growth.

Keywords: Guru Penggerak education program; Indonesia EFL teachers; in-service teacher training program; professional development; narrative inquiry

INTRODUCTION

Effective in-service teacher training programs are crucial for enhancing the professionalism, knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teachers. Such training plays a key role in helping educators navigate the complexities of the educational system, contributing significantly to the quality of teaching and learning (Fullan, 2001; Hustler et al., 2003; Saiti & Saitis, 2006; Önalan & Gürsoy, 2020). Well-trained and professionally qualified teachers are essential for ensuring high-quality education (Ulla & Winitkun, 2018). Participation in diverse in-service training programs can broaden teachers' instructional skills, leading to

long-term educational and professional advantages (Hayes, 1995; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Uztosun, 2017). These programs often focus on fostering a growth mindset, encouraging participation in learning communities, and strengthening commitment to the teaching profession. The overarching goal is to enhance instructional performance and thereby improve educational outcomes.

In line with these principles, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) launched the PGP program in 2021 as a part of the broader Sekolah Penggerak initiative. This initiative aims to elevate school learning quality, boost principal and teacher competencies, and implement digital tools for more efficient and flexible learning processes, aligning with the goals of the Pancasila student profile (Ministry of Education of RI, 2021). The PGP program, which began in 2021, is delivered virtually over nine months, comprising classes, workshops, and mentoring sessions. It is designed to give teachers a deep understanding of learning and pedagogy within the context of the Merdeka Belajar (freedom of learning) approach, particularly focusing on the Merdeka curriculum. The program emphasizes the development of innovative teaching styles and classroom management techniques using technological tools. As a result, teachers enhance their competencies, fostering student-centered learning strategies and creating more engaging learning environments.

Numerous studies have highlighted the role of in-service teacher training programs in enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and competencies (Apriliyanti, 2020; Ayvaz-Tuncel & Çobanoğlu, 2018) and their perspectives on professional development (Baecher & Chung, 2019; Egert et al. 2018; Mohammadi & Moradi, 2017). Research has also focused on teachers' growth mindset (Girardet, 2017; Önalan & Gürsoy, 2020; Ronkainen et al., 2019). However, there is limited research on the development of self-esteem and task perception among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers participating in Indonesia's PGP program. This study aims to explore these areas, along with attitudes toward educational changes, growth mindset, and the challenges and tensions experienced during the program. Kelchtermans' (2009) personal interpretive framework is particularly relevant here. It posits that professional self-understanding emerges from the interaction between teachers and their environment, culture, and society. This framework, viewed as a dynamic process of ongoing professional development, includes five dimensions essential for understanding teacher identity development: self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception, and future perspective (Kelchtermans, 1993).

Self-image, influenced by personal beliefs and external perceptions, guides a teacher's actions. Self-esteem, an evaluative self-concept, reflects how teachers measure their performance against professional standards (Kelchtermans, 2009). Job motivation encompasses the reasons for choosing, staying in, or leaving the teaching profession. Task perception involves how teachers define their roles (Richter et al., 2021). Lastly, future perspective relates to plans for professional growth and feelings about teaching. Together, these dimensions offer a comprehensive view of a teacher's identity and performance in the teaching profession.

Furthermore, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on the impact of the PGP program, an in-service teacher training initiative, on the development of teachers' self-esteem and task perception. Such insights are particularly relevant in contexts like Indonesia, where frequent changes in educational curricula due to ministerial shifts pose

challenges to teachers' professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, and methodologies. Understanding in-service teachers' perspectives is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of teacher training programs in adapting to these changes. The objectives of this study are twofold: Firstly, it seeks to investigate the development of self-esteem and task perception within the professional identities of in-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers participating in the PGP program. Secondly, it aims to explore the tensions and challenges that these teachers face in their professional identity development, specifically regarding self-esteem and task perception, within the context of the PGP program. By addressing these objectives, the study hopes to offer practical insights for improving in-service teacher training programs, thereby contributing to the quality of education in settings undergoing frequent educational reforms.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the experiences and perceptions of individuals or groups in social or human contexts, as outlined by Creswell (2014). The chosen approach for this investigation is narrative inquiry, a method that enables teachers to assess their performance and articulate their interpretations by constructing and sharing their professional experiences (Barkhuizen, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The primary aim of narrative research is to facilitate reflection and a nuanced understanding of meanings within specific contexts, often focusing on the experiences of one or two individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, three in-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers were selected as participants through purposive sampling. Criteria for selection included being an in-service EFL teacher at a senior high school, participation in the nine-month Guru Penggerak education program, and possessing 10-20 years of experience in teaching English.

Data collection was conducted using a combination of semi-structured interviews, narrative frames, and artifacts. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for their ability to foster a natural and engaging dialogue, allowing participants to contribute their expertise (Kumar, 2014). Narrative frames, consisting of stories with incomplete sentences and empty spaces of varying lengths (Barkhuizen et al., 2014), were employed to encourage participants to weave coherent narratives from their experiences (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008). Additionally, documents, tasks, and reflective notes were utilized as supplementary data sources. To maintain confidentiality and protect participants' identities, especially in a context where they may be familiar with each other, all data collected will be anonymized. The interviews, lasting between forty-five minutes and an hour, were conducted in English but translated into Indonesian when necessary to ensure understanding and comfort. Participants had the option to respond in either English or Indonesian, enhancing clarity and ease of communication.

In narrative studies, data analysis often employs techniques similar to those used in other types of qualitative research. These include iterative processes of reading, discussing, and writing about the data, all approached with an open mind (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008). For this study, the thematic analysis framework proposed by Barkhuizen et al. (2014) was utilized to interpret the data. This framework encompasses three key strategies: first, repeated readings of the data to fully immerse in the content; second, classifying and categorizing data extracts; and third, reorganizing these extracts under thematic topics.

Such a strategy aids in identifying significant themes, thereby enriching the narrative and deepening the understanding of personal experiences (Creswell, 2012). Researchers typically identify a manageable number of themes, often ranging from five to seven. These themes are then either woven into the narrative describing an individual's story or presented as a distinct component within the study (Creswell, 2012). This approach ensures a focused yet comprehensive analysis, capturing the nuances of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION
Development of Teachers' Self-Esteem in In-service Training Programs

Self-esteem refers to an evaluation of his/her value as a teacher in their job performance. Kelchtermans (2009) noted that this aspect is connected to teachers' self-evaluation and became crucial for feeling at ease on the job, fulfilling tasks or assignments, performing good teaching, and experiencing job satisfaction. Taking into account the result of the interview, the emerging sub-themes were identified as follows: 1) the learning process to grasp curriculum implementation and 2) the teacher community for professional learning.

Learning Process to Grasp Curriculum Implementation

The learning process to grasp curriculum implementation encompassed teacher experience participating in in-service teacher training programs, which could strengthen teachers' knowledge to meet educational goals. Based on the interview result, this sub-theme yielded positive self-esteem focused on the quality of confidence level in understanding the Merdeka curriculum implementation, as indicated in the interview result below:

> *"The Merdeka curriculum is a valuable learning resource, fostering confidence and knowledge growth. As expertise and knowledge naturally develop, it motivates me to share with others, enhancing overall confidence and learning experience."* (Teacher C, interview 1, March 2023)

Teacher C's self-confidence increased significantly during her participation in the PGP program, as she better understood the curriculum and believed her professional knowledge would benefit her colleagues. This positive impact improved not only her job performance but also her surroundings. In a similar vein, Teacher B also stated her higher confidence level as the result of the PGP program as a meaningful experience:

> *"The PGP program has been highly inspiring and motivated me as a participant to become a better teacher, ensuring readiness for curriculum implementation. Overall, the program is considerably good."* (Teacher B, interview 1, March 2023)

Teacher B's opinion indicated that the PGP program may impact her readiness to confront the newest curriculum. She had a better understanding of how the learning process in the *Merdeka curriculum* is carried out. Meanwhile, Teacher A expressed excitement about the relevant and valuable material but expressed concern about her busy teaching schedule and administrative responsibilities. She put it:

> *"I am eager to participate in any program to assist me in class. When I was involved in it, the activities in this program were extremely good and appropriate to the teachers'*

requirements. However, I was also concerned that I would not be able to complete the assignment because of my role at school, which required me to handle student activities and administrative work, both of which were extremely exhausting. Nonetheless, I had a great time partaking in the entire sequence of activities." (Teacher A, interview 1, March 2023)

Teacher A experienced various emotions while participating in the PGP program, including enthusiasm, worry, exhaustion, and enjoyment. She believed the material of the program supported her teaching needs and boosted her confidence. However, her anxiety and tiredness from school tasks undermine her confidence in completing tasks and the program. Despite this, she finds the program helpful and enjoys participating in activities. In sum, three participants reported positive confidence and insightful learning during the program, particularly in the provided material. They also found the program better than other programs in helping them understand the curriculum, despite two out of three experiencing feelings of inconvenience.

The PGP program supported participants' professional knowledge and skills to conform with the latest curriculum implementation. It is further validated by Dilek and Altas (2022), who highlighted that EFL educators with high subject-matter expertise could create effective communication models for student and student interaction in their social settings. In this case, the PGP program contributed to the EFL in-service teachers' professional knowledge to strengthen the learning process in the classroom. By extension, three participants mentioned that the PGP program was insightful, valuable, thoughtful, and inspired for them to perform their jobs better. It is important for their classroom practice to raise their awareness about how the learning process should be conducted. Identity formation is a process of practical knowledge-building characterized by an ongoing integration of what is individually and collectively seen as relevant to teaching' (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Teacher Community for Professional Learning

The teacher community also plays a significant part in developing teachers' professional development by providing support and collaborating with peers, which can create a comfortable conversation environment as teachers can focus on exchanging ideas and tips for school and the classroom. Three participants exhibited varying responses on how the teacher community enacts their professionalism, as follows:

"Teacher community is important for us as teachers, where we can collaborate with colleagues and share our knowledge, hoping that others will also benefit. A positive culture fosters this collaborative environment, allowing for growth and development." (Teacher C, interview 2, March 2023)

"The PGP program fosters a teacher community, allowing teachers to learn from other teachers. Teachers learn to be more open-minded and promote new ideas, highlighting the importance of learning from others and not being arrogant. This fosters a sense of shared knowledge and improvement." (Teacher B, interview 1, March 2023)

"Sure, the teacher community is one of the communities that could make us share good practices as teachers. It strongly influences my professionalism in terms of pedagogical

knowledge. This undoubtedly has a great impact. So, I should make sure of myself being participated" (Teacher A, interview 1, March 2023)

Three participants highlighted the significance of a "teacher community" in their teaching practices, highlighting its role in sharing ideas, developing knowledge and skills, and creating a comfortable environment for exchanging ideas and tips regarding instructional problems. They also discussed how their experience in the PGP program influenced their surroundings, students, and colleagues. The teacher community may also suggest that the PGP program helped teachers compensate for perceived gaps in professional knowledge.

The teacher community played a pivotal role in their professional development, as they could discuss their points of view and understand their implications for work and school (Trent, 2010). Initial education, teaching practicum, and teacher training contributed to identity construction, a reconstructive process that entails the value of experiencing meaningful interaction and can shape new positions (Canrinus et al., 2012). The teacher community could be considered a professional learning opportunity, focusing on student engagement, learning, and achievement (Wei et al., 2009). It also offered engaging participation in an in-service teacher training program and facilitated the participants to be mindful of their ability to learn from their experience.

Teachers' Task Perception Development in In-service Teacher Training Program

Task perception refers to teachers' understanding of legitimate tasks and duties and the area they must be responsible for to do "a good job" (Kelchtermans, 2009). Based on this, this variable was focused on the impact of experienced teachers and modules that could boost participants' duties and task performance. Thus, it yielded two indicators were found, which include *1) the growth of teachers' job performance and 2) the use of modules for teachers and the teaching process.*

Growth of Teachers' Job Performance

The discussion centered on teachers' perceptions of their professional performance and the potential improvements they can achieve by improving their understanding of task perception. Three participants agreed that task completion impacts their professional knowledge about duties, with Teacher A highlighting the potential impact of tasks on her identities:

"As long as my work has met all of the required criteria and elements. I think it already satisfied me and enough." (Teacher A, interview 1, March 2023)

"The assignments, such as creating vlogs, movies, podcasts, and posters, were beneficial in understanding technological knowledge. These tasks can be used in class to apply these ideas, although specific readings are not provided. Indeed, we were instructed to finish the task in such that form" (Teacher B, interview 1, March 2023)

Teacher A found assignments during the PGP program beneficial for self-growth and self-development by using ideas in class to create creative tasks that empower students. Meanwhile, Teacher B imagined the future direction of their work, using technological knowledge like vlogs, movies, podcasts, and posters to expand students' creativity and

reinforce them in national and international competitions. However, Teachers C and B expressed regret due to time constraints, as they could not put as many ideas into the task:

> *"I just feel like something is missing, so I think I will do something better when I find the same task. My research has grown a lot from there. We make something better from here without changing anything but adding the lacking points."* (Teacher C, interview 2, March 2023)

> *"I was thinking that I could put more ideas and creativity into my task at that time. But with limited time, I did not have enough time to finish as I wished. so, in the future, when I encounter the same task, I wish I could put more ideas."* (Teacher B, interview 1, March 2023)

Teacher B expressed her regret about not putting more ideas into her task due to limited time. It may imply that her creativity in putting more ideas into the task is her strength. In this case, she could empower her students with valuable experience and positive benefits through her creativity. Hence, her participation in the PGP program reflects her commitment to developing her strengths for future work.

Referring to the interview above, three participants revealed the task of the GP education program helped them understand their role as teachers, particularly in positioning themselves in the Merdeka curriculum. The program has a reasonably active role in supporting teacher identity development; the structure of experience in the GP education program allowed teachers to perform teacher identity development even though they could not put more ideas into their tasks due to limited time. The growth of teachers' job performance in the PGP program resulted in a beneficial experience in providing diverse learning methods through technological tools (Shakoor et al., 2013). Taken into account, in-service teacher training programs led to better preparation of content and delivery (Richter et al., 2021) as well as enhanced teacher efficacy toward curriculum implementation (Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Prussia et al., 1998). Thus, their task perception during in-service teacher training programs may favorably impact their job satisfaction (Türkoğlu et al., 2017).

The Use of Modules for Teachers and Teaching Process

This indicator discussed which modules are the most applicable and which are not and their perceptions toward the applicability of the modules to their learning activity in the classroom. Based on the findings, three participants agreed that the applicability of coaching and social-emotional modules in student-teacher relationships was reinforced positively and promoted respect, enjoyment, and thoughtfulness. As indicated in the interview below:

> *"The coaching and social-emotional module are valuable materials as they apply to the student, family, and colleagues. It also emphasized patience and understanding of the environment to prevent trauma to the student and ensure that students have a positive learning experience."* (Teacher B, interview 1, March 2023)

Referring to the interview above, the coaching social-emotional module in the in-service teacher training program aimed to help participants feel responsible for teaching and understanding students' character. The modules addressed teachers' concerns and

perplexity when dealing with students, providing theoretical understanding that is applicable and useful. They became more aware of the changes, views, and limitations of the teaching profession. It was also critical in constructing, reconstructing, and deconstructing their teaching methods. Subsequently, in the reflective note with the narrative frame, Teacher B also mentioned the applicability of *Ki Hajar Dewantara's* (KHD) educational concept for her professional knowledge and *pembelajaran berdifferensiasi* (differentiated instruction) for her teaching process:

> *"KHD's educational concept is the one that most touches my deepest heart since it truly is the starting point. The second part is about differentiated instruction, which I mentioned earlier, and the third is about coaching. The last one is social-emotional module. I learned a lot about overcoming the issues that I have been encountering from there."* (Teacher B, narrative frame)

Referring to the excerpt above, Teacher B mentioned four modules that are useful for her pedagogical knowledge and real-world classroom situations. She acknowledged that education is not just about the job profession but also understanding her social environment. Teacher B also added her argument about how those four modules helped her role as a teacher:

> *"My role as PIC teacher faced dilemmas dealing with problematic students and their families, despite school rules. I had to consider ethical issues, social dilemmas, and other problems, as these were taught in the module that there must be a reason for the student's behavior. Despite the rules, I had to navigate these challenges to ensure the well-being of both students and their families."* (Teacher B, interview 2, March, 2023)

The excerpt above also supported Teacher A's narrative frame and interview in which she also mentioned the coaching module as an applicable module in teaching practice, as the following:

> *"Coaching module taught me how to improve my problem-solving. So, when students do not do their homework, I could figure out the reasons"* (Teacher A, narrative frame)

> *"The module aimed to increase students' awareness of discipline by establishing rules and agreements during class, preventing judging, punishment, or rewards. However, issues remain, such as weak discipline regarding mobile phones. Students struggle to remember their initial commitment and may even complain about returning their phones if they need something."* (Teacher A, interview 2, March, 2023)

Teacher A found the "coaching module" was beneficial in improving student-teacher communication skills. Instead of judging or punishing students, she focused on asking why they did not complete their tasks. Teacher A also highlighted her attitude in demonstrating herself within social contexts. However, she faced challenges disciplining her students regarding cellphones, which could also be a challenge in implementing the module in real classroom situations. In summation, providing relevant modules for teachers will facilitate their ability to address real-world teaching challenges and enhance their social engagement with students, coworkers, and the community. As Teacher C noted:

"The material is suitable for teaching and society as a whole, as it focuses on human behavior and dealing with people. It is enjoyable and can be read multiple times. The knowledge is helpful for everyone, including teachers, employees, and children at home. The material is relevant for children and all, making it a valuable resource for educators." (Teacher C, interview 1, March 2023)

The excerpt indicated that the module meets teacher expectations in professional work and learning. The word "behave" suggests that her attitude and capacity may influence others, particularly in behavioral engagement. The sentence "read multiple times" highlights her growth in perspective and lasting contribution to national education development.

Related to participants' responses toward the applicability of modules, they highlighted emotional-social learning and coaching as the most applicable modules, which play a role in dealing with students and various situations in the classroom environment. Through the emotional-social learning module, teachers learned how to exhibit and manage participants' emotions in front of students with diverse characteristics (Brown et al., 2014; Soini et al., 2015). The applicable modules were relevant to Ayvaz-Tuncel and Çobanoğlu (2018), who discussed that the content should be considered contemporary and valuable. To acquire attitudes and values holistically, skill and knowledge growth should be combined.

Tensions and Challenges Experienced by EFL Teachers During the "Guru Penggerak" Education Program

Developing self-esteem and task perception can be challenging, particularly when engaging in professional training. The teacher was required to have a growth mindset, knowledge, attitude, and behaviour linked to the specific topic after completing the program. With this in mind, the third research topic addressed numerous challenges that impacted teacher professionalism and self-development. Therefore, this second research question resulted in three indicators to demonstrate tensions and challenges experienced by the participants: *1) changes in teachers' beliefs, 2) number of duties and tasks, and 3) teachers' perceptions of their participation*.

Changes in Teachers' Beliefs

Three participants in this theme experienced a shift in knowledge and beliefs due to curriculum changes, leading to higher self-esteem. They shared various approaches to cope with the transition to the Merdeka curriculum, with Teacher B and Teacher C sharing similar opinions:

"I was initially surprised by KHD's educational concept. Despite being familiar with Dewantara's ideas, I did not fully understand its implications on the teaching and learning process. After reading a module on KHD's educational concept, I found it quite interesting. We are always overseas-oriented about education and knowledge, but his educational perspective makes it accessible. I was impressed by the concept and found it valuable to their understanding of educational ideas." (Teacher B, narrative frame)

A belief shift marked Teacher B's response to KHD's educational concept. She recognized the concept as superior to foreign scholars and adapted her teaching practices

to meet the changing educational environment. Modules like coaching, differentiated instruction, and learner-centered concepts shifted her beliefs to knowledge. This resulted in a growth mindset towards teaching and learning, allowing her to adapt her everyday habits and meet the demands of the changing educational environment. Further, the development of a growth mindset toward teaching and learning is illustrated below:

"My mindset has significantly changed since participating in the PGP program, including the KHD's educational concept. I had a basic foundation when I was in college knowledge but gained valuable information through PGP program, including the modules I have mentioned. This change in mindset has influenced my understanding of my teaching profession." (Teacher B, interview 2, March, 2023)

From the above excerpt, Teacher B experienced a transformation in her mindset due to her social environment. She differentiated herself before and after enrolling in the PGP program, contrasting her views on education and teaching methods. KHD's concept could reconstruct the national education system that the MoEC embraced for dominating groups to exercise power. The PGP program allowed her to exercise KHD's concept, and she was more willing to accept curriculum innovation, including modules, outcomes, and experiences. This change in mindset allowed her to embrace curriculum innovation and experience thoughtful and positive transformation. Overall, the PGP program provided her with an opportunity for thoughtful and positive change.

By and large, Teacher C was primarily concerned with developing new habits with her community due to curriculum implementation. As demonstrated in the following excerpt:

"I think it was already implemented, especially in the social-emotional module. Since the beginning of class, we have ice-breaking to prepare the students before learning. Related to learning reflection and whether or not the students understand. It is best to explain what and how in today's learning. Progress is being made, but building a habit requires repetition and time. It is crucial to continue incorporating these strategies into the learning process" (Teacher C, interview 1, March 2023)

Teacher C attempted to implement the social-emotional module in her classroom, demonstrating the positive impact of her PGP program experience on her teaching practice. However, she acknowledged that the changes require repetition to build a good habit. The Merdeka curriculum offers more opportunities for children to learn as they wish, making it a promising educational shift. Teachers can create flexibility by providing choices that appeal to higher cognitive skills like creativity. This approach optimizes the classroom learning process, as illustrated by Teacher A's statement:

"The main point is to become learning leaders, empowering the classroom by acting as facilitators for students, thereby enhancing the learning process, which presents a challenge for me as a teacher." (Teacher A, interview 2, March 2023)

Teacher A's self-confidence was challenged due to her role as a facilitator in the learning process, resulting in a livelier learning process. This adaptation in her classroom aligned with her beliefs, influencing her position toward curriculum transformation. Hence,

three participants shared their conflicts and struggles regarding their attitudes toward education, teaching, and learning.

Based on the interview and narrative frame above, three participants experienced changes in mindset, knowledge transformation, and self-acknowledgment. The changes resulted from their beliefs about education, teaching, and learning, which appeared to result in their higher self-esteem. The positive impact of Ki Hajar Dewantara's (KHD) philosophical beliefs on three participants' mindset transformation in education yields positive changes. The participants gained a better student-centered perspective, learning concept, and perspective toward education (Schmidt et al., 2015; Soini et al., 2016). This belief shift is also influenced by various factors, including modules, teacher community, and social environment. Teachers with a growth mindset recognize students as individuals, provide emotional support, and assist them in finding appropriate learning methods (Rissanen et al., 2019).

Number of Duties and Tasks

The participants revealed various concerns about their roles and tasks in the PGP program, which are impacting their job performance. Three participants expressed feeling overwhelmed, and workloads were not decreasing, as they still manage teaching time and student activities, which will likely increase their workload. These diverse perspectives highlight the challenges faced by teachers in their roles:

> *"It is increasing our duties and tasks since the program is implemented online. It is obvious that there are so many assignments; almost every day, there are assignments."* (Teacher A, interview 1, March 2023)

> *"I am getting bored. I am bored while working on the assigned task; the results will be unsatisfactory"* (Teacher A, narrative frame).

Teacher A reported numerous daily assignments and workloads, indicating that her institution needs to alleviate her workload for self-development programs. The PGP program, conducted remotely, may allow teachers to complete other school-related tasks, but this can hinder their professional development and lead to low job satisfaction. MoEC should encourage school principals to reduce teachers' workloads during training programs like the PGP program to maintain an understanding of the Merdeka curriculum implementation. The term "boring" was used to describe the negative emotions experienced by teachers who struggle to balance their professional progress with the numerous tasks. Teacher B also pointed out her difficulties dealing with situations in the school and her project:

> *"It should be Aksi Nyata program because we must be creative. We also have to catch up with time, for example, there is the Aksi Nyata program, and sometimes the school has a program and it is running. So when should I implement the project? I think it is the most difficult, but so is the implementation, and the program itself is excellent. Imagine if there is no Aksi Nyata as the output. We are simply participating in the program with no substantial impact."* (Teacher B, interview 1, March 2023)

> *Teacher B reported the challenges and tensions she faced in implementing the Aksi Nyata program in her school, highlighting the need for a supportive environment and a focus*

on professional growth. The Aksi Nyata is a program designed to assess teachers' understanding of training topics, enabling them to apply theory and demonstrate mastery through an activity that they can apply in their classroom. On the other hand, Teacher A also mentioned the word "creative" as her challenges and tension when completing the task:

> *"It is monotonous for me since there is nothing special to me. We must be creative in completing the task based on our creativity. As you can see, the activities were collaboration room, reflection, discussion with the facilitator"* (Teacher B, interview 1, March 2023)

The excerpt above described her struggle with completing a monotonous assignment amidst multiple schedules, describing it as challenging and demanding attention, as well as the constant monitoring due to the remote webinar. The task required significant time and energy, and the activities during the PGP program were highly challenging, making it difficult for her to perform effectively and creatively. On the contrary, Teacher C acknowledged her ability to manage her PGP program duties and tasks effectively, demonstrating her calmness and ability to reduce boredom and finish the task on time. As stated below:

> *"I continue to teach while engaging the PGP program despite increased workloads and the need to adapt to a new environment. The program does not disrupt my work schedule, and collaboration rooms are available once a week. Learning new things is challenging but allows for adapting teaching methods and a better understanding of the new environment."* (Teacher C, interview 1, March 2023)

Teacher C actively supported the Merdeka curriculum and saw numerous opportunities to support student learning. They can effectively complete their work in the PGP program and meet all conditions during the training program. The biggest challenge for them is time management for administrative duties. However, she accepted the need to develop new knowledge and skills for learner-centered teaching. She believes that challenges, uncertainties, and tensions are part of working in a changing environment and that time will resolve these uncomfortable situations.

Overall, in developing professional knowledge and skills, participants needed to be more engaged with administrative tasks related to school and professional training programs, leading to exhaustion, burnout, stress, boredom, and a lack of time management. Teaching loads of tasks and the number of teaching hours were also identified as barriers to successful professional growth for EFL teachers (Borrero et al., 2018). Educational institutions should work to eliminate constraints that hinder successful professional learning so that instructors may reflect on their practice and pursue long-term professional growth (Mohammadi & Moradi, 2017).

Teachers' Perceptions of Their Participation

This theme aimed to understand participants' opinions on the PGP program, focusing on whether it was merely a mandatory program or if it encouraged professional development and knowledge of teaching and learning strategies. Three participants found the program challenging to manage their time, monotonous, and boring. Two participants aimed to improve job performance, gain better salary, and meet promotion requirements, while one felt obliged to participate:

> *"The program is mandatory from MoEC for teachers to adapt to the Merdeka curriculum. It aims to change the teaching paradigm and promote positive thinking. The program is responsible for professionalization, and results can be used in class and presented as research. The program participation certificate qualifies for promotion, and I believe in continuing to grow and improve"* (Teacher C, narrative frame)

The excerpt above highlighted Teacher C's participation in the PGP program as a mandatory program and her role as a teacher to develop professionally, which is expected to change the teaching paradigm and influence classroom learning. She emphasized the need for professionalization and the potential benefits of licensing for teaching certification. They also use the phrase "research" to maintain professionalism by learning about challenges, information, and experience. The statement "certificate qualifies for promotion" suggests that her participation in the program has improved their job satisfaction.

By and large, the second opinion was stated by Teacher B, whose comment was similar to Teacher C's above. However, since she taught English language in a private school, the PGP program's certificate cannot be applied for a job promotion, as she explained:

> *"Teachers in public schools can qualify for school principal positions, but private school principals are often monks. A certificate can improve my salary and professionalism, but participating in this program helps me understand the profession and better prepare me for my roles."* (Teacher B, interview 1, March 2023)

From the quotation above, even though she was qualified to be a school principal, her participation in the PGP program impacted her salary satisfaction and professionalism. She admitted that it was voluntary, as she tended to understand her profession. The statement "this program helps me understand the profession and better prepare me for my roles" highlighted the importance of professional development. Further, she felt she was trained more successfully and, hence, more efficiently. It was noteworthy that both Teacher C and Teacher B were conscious of their own needs and interests regarding their professional practices and advancement. Despite difficulties with time management, family affairs, and responsibilities, they still have time to do so.

On the other side, Teacher A's response to whether her participation in the PGP program was necessary or if she recognized the need for professional development in her job profession. She pointed out that her participation in the PGP program was due to the school's credibility. Despite her fatigue, she could not optimize her learning process during the program. However, her experience was closely related to learning-centered coaching, technological advancement, and social and emotional management.

To sum up, it was found that participants were willing to develop professionally due to administrative tasks and feelings of inconvenience (Mizell, 2010). Three participants gained certificates, proving their ability to implement the Merdeka curriculum (Ulla & Winitkun, 2018). One participant used the certificate for administrative fulfillment, while another received higher incentives. Salary satisfaction for in-service teachers significantly impacts the profession's image and attractiveness, with better salaries boosting motivation to remain active in the teaching profession (Gobena, 2018; Khaliq, 2018). Finally, the current study of EFL in-service teachers is the research subject. The discussion showed

that the dynamic process of self-esteem and task perception of the three participants' involvement in the PGP program influenced their professional identities.

CONCLUSION

The study examines the impact of the PGP program on teachers' self-esteem and task perception development. The PGP program significantly influenced teachers' professional identities, particularly in self-esteem and task perception dimensions. The study found that self-esteem development promoted a better learning process, improved professional knowledge, and improved teaching practice. The teacher community provided new ideas and practices related to classroom management, promoting teachers' professional selves and allowing others to share their opinions.

Regarding job performance growth, multimedia tools during training programs improved job performance by enhancing technological knowledge, empowering students and teachers, and promoting creativity. These technological tools allowed teachers to accommodate various learning methods. Social-emotional learning and coaching modules were considered beneficial, applicable, and insightful as they helped participants strengthen student-teacher relationships and enhance empathy for students with diverse socio-economic backgrounds. This sparked the organizing committee in other in-service teacher training programs to consider the positive insights of materials and contents, effective learning methods, and careful organization to prevent teachers from working late at night as one of the key factors hindering successful in-service teacher training programs in the future.

Last, related to the tensions and challenges participants faced during the PGP program, such as administrative tasks and student activities, which could be barriers to their professional growth. However, they also realized their profession's growing demands influenced students' academic and workplace success. Thus, they choose to endure the feelings of inconvenience as one of their strategies to keep updated with the current knowledge of teaching strategies. It implies that school institutions should analyze the workload experienced by teachers to avoid factors hindering their professional growth. By reducing administrative work and involvement in student activities, teachers have more space to perform their work during the in-service training program. Future research is worth exploring EFL teachers' stories in the current context, employing narrative inquiry to explore their experiences, and investigating the role of emotion in in-service EFL teachers in the classroom, especially in the Merdeka curriculum. Future research with a larger scale of participants and extended time will enrich the data.

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