Educator Professionalism Development: A Review of Kindergarten Teachers' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Professional development is mandatory for educators who have completed their educational qualifications. This aims to ensure that educators can continue to improve their knowledge and skills by changing times, which, of course, have an influence on the world of education. The research aims to analyze professional development at the educator level for kindergarten-age children. Quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design type. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires in form. The research subjects consisted of 43 respondents. Data analysis was carried out using statistics. The research results show that of the various types of professional development programs, many teachers participate in training, workshops, educational conferences, and seminars. These two types of programs fulfill a lot of knowledge and skills. Even though teachers have obstacles in developing professionalism, such as time, funds, and suitability of training materials to their needs, they still try to do it with their desires. Support from education unit leaders and the impact on their competencies felt after participating in the development program are other factors in implementing the development of educational professionalism. The implication is that professional development program organizers need to carefully consider various things so that more educators can participate in the programs provided, including analyzing the knowledge and skills teachers need.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development, education and care of early childhood has become a priority for the government and international bodies, including Indonesia (Urban et al., 2019). The importance of paying great attention...
to early childhood is based on four reasons, namely that Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is the initial foundation in increasing children's ability to complete higher education, as well as reducing grade repetition rates and school dropout rates. Economic reasons, PAUD is a profitable investment for families and the government. Social Reasons, PAUD is an effort to stop the wheel of poverty. Legal reasons, PAUD is every child's right to obtain an education guaranteed by law. Education for early childhood is also a long-term investment (Aprilina Tarian, 2020; Rahmayanti et al., 2021). Investments in high-quality early education programs have the highest rate of return of any social investment. To make this happen, quality teaching needs to be provided because the quality of teaching is an important factor that influences student learning. Quality teaching can only be provided by professional educators. Increasing individual professionalism is an important component of professional development.

Professional development is the process by which an individual acquires or improves skills, knowledge and/or attitudes for better teaching practices (Mitchell, 2013). Teacher professional development can also be interpreted as the learning that teachers do, how they learn to teach and how they apply their knowledge to support student learning (Avalos, 2011). Professional development is a teacher’s activity in applying science and knowledge, technology and skills to improve quality, both for the teaching and learning process and the professionalism of other education staff (Zainal & Elham, 2007). So, through professional development, educators can perfect their teaching tasks to meet the needs of their students (Manggioli, 2004). Every educator must always strive to develop his or her professionalism. This aims to anticipate changes and the enormous demands in the era of globalization on the teaching profession, which primarily emphasizes mastery of knowledge (Coolahan, 2002; Ondi & Aris, 2010), so that educators can act constructively in a rapidly changing society (Coolahan, 2002). The changes that occur will certainly have an impact on changes in learning objectives, learning materials and methods, as well as classroom management which must be in accordance with applicable learning principles. The aim of professional development carried out by educators is to update knowledge about a subject related to the latest advances in the field of education. Updating skills, attitudes and approaches regarding the development of new teaching objectives and techniques, new circumstances and the latest educational research. Enables teachers to implement changes to the curriculum or other aspects of teaching practice. Enables schools to develop and implement new strategies regarding the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice. Exchange information and expertise between teachers and to help weaker teachers become more effective (OECD, 2019).

In order for the professional development programs provided to provide benefits and have a positive impact on increasing the professionalism of educators, educators as adults who carry out professional development efforts must be viewed as they should be. To see the efforts and learning processes of adults and the results in improving the learning process, the theory of Andragogy is used. Andragogy is a deliberate, professionally guided activity aimed at changing an adult (Knowles et al., 2005). The Andragogy model is based on the assumption of the need to know. Adults need to know why they have to learn something before committing to learning it. Students’ self-concept, adults have a self-concept about being and being responsible for their own decisions. The existence of this self-concept results in the need to pay attention to how adults want to be treated. The role of students’ experience, adults have more quality knowledge and experience compared to their previous knowledge and experience. Differences can also be seen in background, learning style, motivation, needs, interests and goals so that they have an impact on the teaching and learning strategies that will be used. Willingness to learn, adults will be ready to learn something according to their needs and can be used to overcome problems effectively in real life situations. So it is important to pay attention to the timing of learning experiences that coincide with these developmental tasks. Orientation to learning, adult learning is centered on life or on problems. The strongest motivation for adult learning is internal motivation, namely the desire to increase job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life, and liking.

In Indonesia, the obligation for educators to carry out professional development is outlined in various regulations issued by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, including providing a Professional Teacher Education Program for In-Service Teachers and a Professional Education Program for Pre-Service Teachers. Based on the literature review, it is known that there are other professional development programs that have been implemented, including in-house training (IHT), internship training, school partnerships, distance learning (online), tiered training and special training, personal school coaching, discussion of educational problems, seminars, Workshops, Research, Writing books/teaching materials, Making learning media, Making technological works/works of art (Pangestika & Alfarisa, 2015). There is tiered training starting from basic training, advanced training and advanced training as a professional development program for educators. The various stimulation efforts provided by educators in the learning process will influence the way children think and behave. To ultimately form a generation of the nation that is in line with the goals of national education, namely forming a young generation who have

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faith and devotion to God Almighty and have noble character, have knowledge and skills, physical and spiritual health, a stable and independent personality and a sense of responsibility, society and nationality. Kindergarten teachers’ views on professional development will show what they think, expect, and do as early childhood educators. The aim of this research is to analyze professional development at the educator level for kindergarten age children. This is important to do considering that educators for early childhood are educators who lay the foundation for children to be able to grow and develop optimally. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide an overview of professional development from the perspective of kindergarten educators so that policy makers and interested parties can determine concrete steps so that existing professional development programs can be followed by educators optimally and provide maximum impact for educators themselves.

2. METHOD

The research was conducted using a quantitative approach with a survey design. The survey research design procedure aims to describe attitudes, opinions, behavior, or characteristics of the population, where the researcher collects quantitative and numbered data using a questionnaire sent via gform. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires to kindergarten teachers in the Kebayoran Baru District area, South Jakarta through the head of the Kindergarten Teachers Association. There were 43 respondents who filled out the gform within 3 days. The questionnaire contains 4 aspects which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Instrument Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Question Focus</th>
<th>Question Items</th>
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| 1.  | Motivation and Efforts to develop professionalism | 1. motivation to become an early childhood educator  
2. number of professional development programs attended in the last 3 years  
3. the type of professional development most frequently participated in over the past 3 years  
4. the time span for implementing professional development that has been followed in the last three years  
5. the main reasons for carrying out various types of professional development  
6. the most desired knowledge for self-professional development  
7. the skills you most want to master for your professional development |
| 2.  | Leadership support in developing professionalism | 1. leadership support for the development of professionalism of educators  
2. the form of support provided is related to finances, time and facilities |
| 3.  | Barriers to professional development | 1. frequency in carrying out professional development  
2. barriers to implementing professional development |
| 4.  | The impact of professional development | 1. High impact professional development  
2. Low impact professional development |

Data analysis was carried out using statistics to describe responses to the questions asked. Interpretation of meaning is related to the results of statistical tests with previous research studies (Creswell, 2002). Thus, the existing results are not intended to explain cause and effect. The type of survey used is a cross-sectional survey design to examine teachers’ current opinions and practices. Of the 43 respondents, it is known that 65.1% of respondents were PAUD graduates, 18.6% were non-PAUD graduates, 11.6% were non-education graduates, and 4.7% were high school graduates/equivalent. As for the accreditation status of institutions, 58.1% are accredited A, 25.6% are accredited B, 9.3% are accredited C, and 7% are not accredited. Regarding teaching experience, 66% worked for more than 15 years, 12% worked for 12-15 years, 7% worked for 10-12 years, and 5% worked for 1-9 years.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

First, motivation and efforts to develop professionalism. Based on the survey results, it shows that the motivation that educators have for being involved in the world of education is love of children and their world (30.23%); to produce a generation of people who are moral, dignified, think critically, are skilled and
develop quality human resources (30.23%), and is a job that is enjoyable and proud (9.30%). Other motivations are initial aspirations/passion, calling of the heart, honing teacher creativity, and continuing the business. With this motivation, 100% of respondents stated that they needed to develop their profession. This form of motivation is carried out by teachers by participating in various types of professional development programs. Based on the results of the questionnaire, it is known that in the last three years 60.5% of teachers participated in professional development programs 1-3 times, while the other 20.9% participated in 4-6 activities. The development program that was most frequently participated in was training and workshops for 24 people with an activity time of $\frac{1}{2}$ day – 1 day (around 4-9 hours). The types of professional development that are followed are presented in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. The Types of Professional Development Followed](image)

The main reason why kindergarten teachers take part in professional development is because of self-desire which is shown by 65.1%, and the remaining 34.9% take part in professional development activities because they follow the school principal’s orders. The knowledge required by kindergarten teachers is presented in Figure 2.

![Figure 2. The Knowledge Required by Kindergarten Teachers](image)

Figure 2 shows the knowledge information required by kindergarten teachers. As many as 29% of kindergarten teachers want knowledge about how to educate children, followed by knowledge about the curriculum, children with special needs, and the use of IT. Teachers’ need for this knowledge has been obtained by participating in professional development programs. Based on the information obtained, it is known that training programs and workshops as well as educational conferences and seminars are two types of professional development programs that are able to meet their knowledge needs. Others stated that their needs were met through reading professional literature/references, professional development networks, as well as peer mentoring and observation. Meanwhile, 23.3% of respondents answered that they
had not received the expected material because they had not found a way, there were not many sources who updated them about interesting children’s games, they had not been programmed, the knowledge gained had not been maximally applied to children, at the same time as the teaching schedule. Apart from the need to gain knowledge, professional development carried out by teachers is also aimed at meeting skills needs. The needs of kindergarten teachers for skills are presented in Figure 3.

![Figure 3. The Kindergarten Teacher Skill Needs](image)

Regarding efforts to fulfill the need for mastery of skills, 55.8% of kindergarten teachers stated that most of these needs had been met by attending training and workshops. Others stated that the need for skills mastery was met by reading literature, professional development networks, individual and collaborative research, visits and observations to other schools, and through qualification programs. Meanwhile, the reasons why respondents have not obtained the skills they are expected to have are limited time, there has been no opportunity to take part in professional development, they have not found a way, no one has taught them, and there have been no workshops regarding this matter.

Second, leadership support in developing teacher professionalism. Based on the survey results, it is known that 90.7% of respondents stated that institutional leaders require educational staff to carry out professional development. However, 9.3% stated the opposite, that institutional leaders do not require their teachers to carry out professional development. The forms of support provided are 40% of time, 37% of facilities, 16% of finances, and 7% of all three (time, facilities and finances). For respondents who stated they received financial support, 80% stated that all funding was allocated in the RAB and 20% stated they received some funding. Regarding time support, 100% (16 respondents) received support in the form of a substitute teacher to teach in the class they left behind. Meanwhile, for facility support, 77.78% received support for using computers and/or printers, while the rest received support in the form of transportation funds, WiFi networks and shuttle vehicles. Barriers to professional development. Professional development efforts occurred when 55.8% received assignments, and 44.2% carried out professional development even though they were not assigned. It can be said that teachers continue to carry out professional development whether assigned or not. However, if someone refuses to be assigned, several reasons are the reasons. The obstacles experienced by teachers when they do not carry out professional development are due to the formation of a teaching schedule (64%), activities that take too long and costs are too expensive (11%), materials that do not suit their needs (8%), and not having specified prerequisites (6%). The impact of professional development. Professional development carried out by teachers certainly has an impact, the highest impact felt is when teachers take part in professional development in the form of educational conferences and seminars (28%), observation visits to other schools (18%), courses and workshops (12%), development networks professional (12%), and qualification programs (11%). Meanwhile, the types of professional development that were considered low impact by respondents were reading professional literature/references (29%), peer mentoring and observation (16%), individual and collaborative research and qualification programs (13%), and observation visits to other schools and conferences. and Education seminars (8%).
Discussion

Motivation and efforts to develop professionalism. Motivation can be interpreted as a strong feeling or inspiration to act (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017), and is concerned with what moves people to think and develop (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Motivation is said to be the strongest motivator in adult learning, especially internal motivation (Knowles et al., 2005). The research results show that the biggest motivation to become an educator is to love children and their world and the desire to produce the nation’s generation and build quality human resources. To be able to provide an environment that is appropriate to the child’s world, namely play, educators need the ability to design learning that is in accordance with the principles of early childhood learning. There are five learning principles that must be considered in implementing the Merdeka curriculum, which is currently in use, namely that learning is designed by taking into account the current stage of development and level of achievement of students, according to learning needs, and reflecting the characteristics and development of diverse students so that learning becomes meaningful and fun. Learning is designed and implemented to build the capacity to become a lifelong learner. The learning process supports the development of students’ competencies and character holistically. Relevant learning is learning that is designed according to the context, environment and culture of students, and involves parents and the community as partners. Learning is oriented towards a sustainable future. These five principles must be visible in the learning process presented by educators in the classroom, so educators need the ability to be able to design learning that is in accordance with existing principles. The quality of teachers is demonstrated in their classroom practices, as teaching and learning are designed, planned, and facilitated by teachers. Professional development programs designed to improve teaching and learning are essential for sustainable development in education (Ajani, 2020).

The motivation that educators have encourages them to participate in professional development (Cherrington & Thornton, 2013; Cotton, 2013; Ukkonen-Mikola & Fonsén, 2018). Educators carry out professional development based on their own desires. Everything that is done based on one’s own desires will certainly provide more results that can be obtained. This is because educators will invest more energy in investigating the benefits they can get from what they are or will learn. Love for children and their world motivates educators to learn so that it will increase the number or intensity of educators to carry out professional development.

Various online seminars are held so that educators can attend them without having to leave the house or their area. The material provided in the seminar was in accordance with the conditions prevailing at that time. So even though the existing conditions do not allow educators to carry out education as usual (face to face offline), having information in the form of knowledge or skills obtained from seminars will really help educators in providing maximum learning. As for the types of activities that educators participate in, it is known that most of them take part in development programs in the form of training and workshops as well as educational conferences and seminars. This form of professional development also meets the knowledge and skills needed by educators. The knowledge that educators are expected to have is more about how to educate young children, while the skills that are expected to be mastered are skills regarding information and technology, followed by artistic skills, as well as various learning media. Educators need knowledge about how to educate children in accordance with the skills and characteristics of educators who are considered important to be able to facilitate high quality services and results. These skills and characteristics are a good understanding of children’s development and learning, the ability to develop a child’s perspective, the ability to praise, comfort, question and be responsive to children, leadership skills, problem solving and development of targeted lesson plans, good vocabulary and abilities, to bring out children’s ideas (OECD, 2010). Regarding the time for implementing the professional development program, it is known that more respondents took part in the activity within 1 day or around 9 hours starting at 08.00 – 16.00 WIB. The amount is inadequate if it is related to mastering the material which requires more time to understand and must also be accompanied by practice in applying the material.

Leadership support become one of the supporting factors in developing the professionalism of teaching staff. Support is provided in the form of time, facilities and finances. Time is the first form of support provided by leaders so that educators can carry out professional development. Not a few education units only have 1 educator for 1 class, so that when educators decide to take part in a professional development program, their students lose the opportunity to learn. To address this, it is not uncommon for the principal to become a substitute teacher in the class. On the other hand, limited teaching staff also has an impact on the length of time that activities can be carried out. So that more educators will take part in professional development programs in just ½ day to 1 day. Facilities are the second form of support provided by the leadership of the Institution. Educators can use laptops or printers if needed to implement development programs. Internet quotas are also sometimes provided so that it does not become an obstacle for educators when the program they are taking is online. The third form of support is financial. Even though it is not much, the leadership has tried to provide financial support that can be given to educators to take...
part in professional development programs. This is generally included in the Annual Activity Plan and Budget. The amount of financial support provided is of course adjusted to the strength of the education unit itself. For educational units that appear to be strong in terms of funding, educators often receive full fees according to the specified nominal amount, but there are also those who only provide part of it, so educators have to spend funds to pay for it. On the other hand, for units that do not have sufficient finances, they have to spend their own funds or even choose not to take part in development programs that are held for a fee.

Whatever form of support the education unit leader provides, of course this shows the leadership's attention to the professional development of its teaching staff. The support provided by institutional leaders plays an important role in ensuring that early childhood educators build a positive school climate, experience, and provide positive relationship experiences (Bayly et al., 2020; Hunsu et al., 2016). Regarding support, there are 4 types, one of which is the opportunity for educators to practice. The opportunities given by leaders to educators to practice the results of professional development will of course show how well educators understand what they receive and how precisely the knowledge gained is implemented (Dunst et al., 2019; Newman & Newman, 2021). The attention from leadership to the importance of applying the knowledge or skills acquired will motivate educators to be serious about gaining experience through professional development and make maximum efforts to be able to apply it. In this way, it is not impossible that educators will be able to create quality learning, which shows themselves as professional educators.

Barriers to professional development. The quality of society depends on the education provided and the quality of the education provided depends on the quality of the human resources involved, namely teachers (Rojhe & Sulochna, 2013). The quality of teachers depends on the quality of the professional development programs they participate in. In efforts to carry out professional development, educators often experience obstacles, based on survey results it is known that most of the obstacles occur due to the implementation time which coincides with the teaching schedule and the length of the activity. The obstacles experienced were costs that were too expensive and materials that did not suit needs. Barriers to implementing professional development are limited time, limited funds, and training that does not meet needs (Basri & Suryana, 2023). Barriers to professional development occur due to negative attitudes towards in-service training courses, inappropriate course times, monotonous course content, ineffectiveness of course trainers, exhaustion of content knowledge, unsatisfactory performance evaluations, heavy workload, financial problems, as well as, lack of opportunities. undertake professional development (Eroglu & Kaya, 2021; Riastini, 2021).

Based on the results of the survey and two other studies, as mentioned above, it can be seen that there are still professional development programs that provide material that does not meet the needs of educators, apart from the main thing being that the timing is not right. While Knowles (2005) clearly states that adults will be willing to learn if what they are going to learn is in accordance with their needs, especially related to various problems faced in learning. The experience of educators also needs to be taken into consideration when providing a professional development program. The more experience educators have as professional development participants, the more discerning they will be in choosing the type of program they will participate in and will also determine their level of willingness to learn. Educators' participation in professional development activities has a positive impact on their beliefs and practices as well as students' performance in learning (Chiu & Churchill, 2016; Salmawati et al., 2017; Tanang et al., 2014). Professional development programs should provide various relevant activities so that educators can update their knowledge, understand students who come from various backgrounds so that they are able to provide appropriate treatment, create innovation in learning, and improve their ability to utilize technology. If this happens, it is not impossible that educators will take the time and seriously participate in existing professional development.

Professional development carried out by educators will certainly have a positive impact on everyone who follows and applies it in learning. Carrying out professional development is an absolute must for every educator considering the progress of the times and technology which is developing very quickly. Initial and ongoing professional development plays an important role in increasing the level of teacher competence due to the many current professional demands and reforms (Ukonnen-Mikkola & Fonsen, 2018). Types of professional development that have a high impact on educators are educational conferences and seminars followed by observation visits to other schools, professional development networks, courses and workshops, and qualification programs. Types of professional development such as educational conferences and seminars provide educators with the opportunity to hear best practices from a variety of other participants. Teacher conferences are a form of case study conducted by PAUD teachers (Emda, 2017; Jambi, 2019; Matsui, 2021). Discussions are carried out using various source materials such as notes, photos and videos, carrying out dialogues with varied themes, as well as development strategies for specific children, teaching practices, and strategies for building relationships with children. This conference
provides an opportunity for teachers to improve teaching practices that are in accordance with the principles of early childhood learning, namely child-centered learning.

The knowledge gained from the development program that is followed as well as the examples of good practice presented by each participant who takes part in the program will certainly provide special understanding for educators. Examples of solutions used to overcome problems that may be the same can give educators confidence and self-confidence to do similar things in their respective institutions. Professional development supports individual self-confidence and self-efficacy (Gaudin & Chaliès, 2015; MacKay, 2017). Professional development will also be meaningful and effective when supporting practice that addresses the complexity of issues faced in local communities (Brown & Englehardt, 2016; Kusumaningrum et al., 2020). In the end, the benefits obtained from the professional development process carried out will increase dependency and support motivation to obtain further professional knowledge (Fonsén & Ukkonen-Mikkola, 2019).

Sufficient understanding of the importance of developing oneself to fulfill one’s needs in carrying out the profession as an educator (Salmawati et al., 2017; Yusutria, 2017). Adults must know the reasons why they have to learn and whether what they will learn meets their needs or not. Based on this, adults will be willing to learn and learn something because they are sure they will benefit from what they will learn. The possibility that can also be seen as the cause of the development program having a high impact is the atmosphere they feel. Adults learn best in informal, comfortable, flexible and non-threatening settings. And, this is also the basis for the emergence of the theory of Andragogy. Meanwhile, professional development programs that have a low impact on the professionalism of educators are primarily reading professional literature/references. Reading literature as part of a professional development program must form a reading circle to maintain educators’ commitment to regularly reading professional publications. However, it is also said that this type of program is the most underappreciated type of learning. Lack of time is the main obstacle, as well as difficulties in accessing relevant reading and its availability.

The second professional development program that has a low impact is mentoring and peer observation. In a class there are generally two educators. One person is the main teacher and the other is the assistant. The existence of the main teacher can basically be used to record what the accompanying teacher does during the learning process. An observation sheet containing assessment points can be made based on effective and quality learning criteria and then used when making observations. The accompanying teacher can observe the learning process presented by the main teacher, based on the existing observation sheet. Next, the main teacher and accompanying teachers together carry out critical reflection on the learning that has been carried out. This is like what is done in Japan in the lesson study program. This program helps visualize educators’ knowledge and skills, and engages feedback and suggestions from colleagues through critical and reflective thinking (Matsui, 2021). Practitioners’ professionalism can be enhanced through systematic dialogue and exchange among colleagues, which enhances their ability to provide judgment in dealing with everyday problematic situations (Lazzari et al., 2013). However, this was not the case for some respondents who answered that mentoring and peer observation had a low impact on the professional development of educators. The possible reason that can be given is related to teaching experience and the type of professional development in the form of mentoring and peer observation is because educators with long periods of teaching time have high self-confidence in their experience in mastering the classroom and learning. Educators with more experience (6–10 years and >10 years) rated themselves as having significantly higher levels of understanding and confidence than their less experienced colleagues (<5 years) (Dyment et al., 2014). So maybe they don’t need peer mentoring and observation, especially if their colleagues have much less teaching experience than them.

4. CONCLUSION

Educators should not be complacent with the knowledge and abilities they currently possess, even though they have quite a long teaching experience. Some of these include conducting visits and observations to other schools. In this way, educators can directly see best practice learning carried out by other educational units and educators can ask questions about things they don’t understand. However, if finances are an obstacle in carrying out visits, educators can still carry out professional development, namely conducting research individually and collaboratively. Often problems arise in the learning process. Both related to the use of media or methods that make children unable to achieve the expected learning goals. With individual and collaborative research, solutions will be found to overcome them, and this can be used when similar problems arise at different times. Leadership support also needs to be a concern for education administrators. Having support in the form of opportunities to take part in professional development programs accompanied by internal discussions to get an overview of the knowledge and skills acquired can motivate educators to try to understand it better so they can explain it to colleagues and leaders.
5. REFERENCES


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