

TEACHER’S EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT A POORLY ACCREDITED ISLAMIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL (ALIYAH MADRASA SCHOOL) IN JAMBI CITY

Tartila
tartilaogute@yahoo.com

UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi

ABSTRACT

The study aims at describing an uncertified non-civil servant teacher’s experience in teaching at a lowly accredited private Aliyah madrasa school. The study was phenomenology research by means of qualitative data gathering. The data in the research was obtained from individual interviews. The research participant was an uncertified non-civil servant teacher working at a poorly accredited private Aliyah madrasa school in Jambi city. The data analysis was conducted following phase of Colaizzi’s technique by finding and describing themes from the participant’s statements. The results of the study showed that the teacher encounter many problems in teaching at a poorly accredited private Aliyah madrasa school, such as lack of teaching resources and support from the school administrators.

Keywords: Aliyah Madrasah School, Teaching English Teacher’s experience,

A. INTRODUCTION

Aliyah madrasa school is a type of school for Moslem students with the age above 15 years old. Recently, more parents want to send their children to madrasa school because the students there will receive both general and Islamic lessons (Alawiyah, 2014; Zuhdi, 2018). Aliyah madrasa schools consist of state and private schools. The state aliyah madrasa school obtain funding from the government fully. The private aliyah madrasa school also receive funding from the government. However, due to the large number of private aliyah madrasa school in Indonesia, the funding received from the government is limited because the government prioritize the state schools as models for the private ones (Alawiyah, 2014; Anwar, 2017).

Teachers at aliyah madrasa schools consist of civil servants and non-civil servants. Civil servant teachers are appointed by the central government. Non-civil servant teachers are those with non-permanent status who are appointed by local government or schools to teach. Mostly, civil servant teachers work at state aliyah madrasa schools. Civil servant teachers

obtain monthly salary. When they retire, they will receive monthly retirement benefits. On the contrary, the non-civil servant teachers will not receive any money when they retire. The workloads of being civil servant teachers and non-civil servant teachers are almost the same. As a result, many people want to be civil servant teachers due to great salary and guaranteed old age. However, to become a civil servant teacher is not easy because the teacher must pass a series of exams administered by the government. The non-civil servant teachers are usually recruited owing to the lack of teaching staff.

Mostly, private aliyah madrasa school teachers are non-civil servants. The non-civil servant teachers receive very little salary which is far below the Indonesia minimum wage (Fadlilah et al., 2021; Qoyyimah, 2018; Widayati, 2017). Nevertheless, since the government has issued the teacher certification program which allow teachers to receive additional salary monthly, non-civil servant teachers have chance to increase their monthly income (Decree of the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020). However, it is not always easy for teachers to pass all requirements of being certified teachers due to many requirements to be fulfilled.

Being a foreign language teacher at aliyah madrasa school surely gives much experience for the teachers. So far, private aliyah madrasa school students are perceived to be those who do not fulfill the passing criteria determined by the state aliyah madrasa school (Woodward, 2015). In other words, they are assumed to have lower academic capability compared to the state aliyah madrasa school students (Syar'i et al., 2020). Besides academic capability, according to Woodward (2015), those who study at private aliyah madrasa school usually come from low-income families.

Students' socio-economic status more or less affect teacher's experience in teaching English language. Students with high and middle socio-economic status are able to enroll in English language courses outside the schools to receive additional lessons. Consequently, the students who join additional English courses outside the schools have better capability in English language than those who only rely on the lesson from school.

According to Indonesia Minister of Education and Culture (2018), school or madrasa accreditation is recognition conferred by an accrediting body that the school maintain a certain level of education standards. Each school must be accredited once in five years. There are two statuses of school after accreditation: accredited and not-accredited. For the accredited school, the accreditation levels are excellent (A), moderate (B), and low (C). The better the quality shown by a school, the better the school's accreditation level.

Being an uncertified non-civil servant teacher who is struggling financially in the low accredited private aliyah madrasa school is of course not easy. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the teacher's experience in teaching at the low accredited school. In addition, it is also necessary to explore the teacher's problems in teaching. The purpose of the study was to describe the teacher's experience in teaching English at a poorly accredited private Aliyah madrasa school in Jambi city.

B. METHOD

The study was phenomenology research under the qualitative approach. According to Qutoshi (2018) and Yin (2016), phenomenology type of qualitative research is to identify and describe the participant's experiences by using interpretation and meaning making to understand the real actor's lived world related to a phenomenon. The study tried to investigate the teacher's problems in teaching English at a poorly accredited private Aliyah madrasa school.

The participant of the current research was an uncertified non civil servant teacher working at a poorly accredited aliyah madrasa school. The current research used purposive sampling in selecting the participant. According to Etikan et al. (2016) and Yin (2016), purposive sampling is a deliberate choice of participants because of the quality that they have in order to yield the most relevant and plentiful data. The researcher deliberately chose the participant who is disadvantaged (lacking in the basic resources or conditions, such as lack salary and lack opportunity to have professional development) and working at the weak school to obtain information about her experience as the purpose of this research.

The participant was an English language teacher working at a low accredited aliyah madrasa school in Jambi city. She is the only English language teacher at the school. She was Mrs. A. She taught all grade levels at the school (grade 10, 11, and 12). The school where the research participant worked was the only low accredited private aliyah madrasa school in Jambi city which had an uncertified non civil servant English language teacher. Therefore, in this case, the goal to have information-rich sources can be achieved with one research participant only Yin (2016). In addition, Mapp (2008) and Bartholomew et al. (2021) suggested that the large number of participants is not necessary in phenomenological research because the intention of the research is not to make generalization.

Interview was the only technique of data collection carried out to obtain data in the research as Bevan (2014) argue that interview is an effective means of explicating lifeworld experience. Additionally, Bartholomew et al. (2021) found that most phenomenological studies that utilized interviews have higher quality than those that did not. The researcher applied phenomenological interview proposed by Bevan (2014). The interview consists of three structures: (a) contextualization by asking descriptive questions, (b) apprehending the phenomenon by asking participant to describe the events and activities, and (c) clarifying the phenomenon by generating variational questions from participant's descriptions of experiences (Bevan, 2014).

The interview was conducted three times to reach saturation. Mapp (2008) maintains, "the length of a phenomenological interview is guided by the process of saturation i.e., when the narratives become repetitive, and no new data is revealed (p.310). In addition, Seidman (2006) claims that the interview should be carried out more than once per participant to obtain in-depth exploration. The results of interviews were recorded.

The data analysis of the records was conducted using Colaizzi's method. On their paper, Praveena and Sasikumar (2021) identify seven phases of Colaizzi's data analysis: (a) obtaining a general sense of each interview transcript by reading the transcripts many times; (b) extracting significant statements from the transcripts; (c) formulating meaning from the significant statements; (d) organizing formulated meaning into clusters of themes; (e) describing the phenomenon by combining all theme clusters, emergent themes, and

formulated meanings into a description to create an overall structure; (f) describing the fundamental structure of the phenomenon, and (g) returning to the participants to validate the findings.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

By referring to the result of individual interviews, the teacher's experiences were classified into several themes: (a) lack of professional development, (b) lack of attention from school administrators, (c) lack of teaching facilities and resources, (d) lack of colleagues to collaborate, and (e) lack of student engagement.

1. Lack of professional development

When the research was conducted, the research participant (Mrs. A) had been teaching at the lowly accredited private aliyah madrasa school (Madrasa X) for eight years since she graduated from her undergraduate degree. Unfortunately, she had never joined any training both inside and outside the school. She said, "My colleagues and I have never been invited to join any training. Our school also has never conducted any training for teachers." She also said that whenever there were changes to curriculum, she only knew from news on tv and internet.

Mrs. A stated that one of the reasons for the lack of professional development was because most of the teachers at her school were non civil servants. In addition, many of them are uncertified teachers. So far, due to the lack of government funding, the professional development activities are sometimes only for civil servant teachers. Additionally, the teachers who have been certified are demanded to join professional development activities for maintaining their certification status. Regarding the school in the current research, teachers' status has made them take it easy even though they have received less professional development.

In my school, very few teachers are willing to seek knowledge on their own initiative. Only those who are already certified are willing to bother looking for information about the training for them to take part in. That is also because they are obliged to update their knowledge. If it is not mandatory, they may also not bother with training.

Thus, the lack of professional development experienced by the teacher was not merely due to the lack of opportunity given by the government. But also, because the teachers themselves do not have strong intention to update their knowledge.

2. Lack of attention from school administrators

Mrs. A reported that the school principal and vice principals did not motivate the teachers to improve their teaching skills. The teachers were left alone to find the latest information on education. In addition, the school superintendent did not approach each teacher. The school superintendent only met the school principal and vice principals whenever he came to the school. This kind of service made the teacher reluctant to talk to the school superintendent.

Additionally, Mrs.A said that whenever there was a change or revision that the teachers should implement, the vice principal only let the teachers know. Unfortunately, the vice principal did not motivate or encourage the teachers to implement the changes. Once the teachers said that they did not know how to implement the changes because they had never joined any training about that, the vice principal and school principal would understand.

When the government issued one page lesson plan, the vice principal announced that informally in the teachers' office. Then, when the vice principal asked the teachers to submit the new version lesson plan, the uncertified non civil servant teachers like me just said that we did not know the way to make the new version lesson plan to the vice principal. She then understood and did not mind anymore. This way has made us easily did not implement the government policy.

In addition to the lack of attention from school administrators, Mrs.A reported her disappointment with the school principal when she proposed an idea of conducting a regular learning session among teachers at the school. The school principal seemed to agree with the idea but there have been no efforts given by the school principal to realize the idea. Mrs. A proposed the idea of regular learning session because she felt that all the teachers at her school were very left behind in terms of updating knowledge and skills on teaching.

I feel that it has been so long I do not update my knowledge on teaching. Surely, there have been many changes in education that teachers must know about. Of course, I cannot always rely on the knowledge I obtained in university. The world has changed so much, right?

3. Lack of teaching facilities and resources

Mrs. A reported that she was very overwhelmed in teaching because the students did not have an English textbook. The students also did not have published student worksheets (Lembar Kerja Siswa/ LKS). The unavailability has made the teacher run out of time in teaching because she had to write learning content on the whiteboard. According to Mrs.A, the book unavailability was because the government published the electronic books for all subjects, including English. Unfortunately, not all students can afford to buy a smartphone or laptop to access electronic books.

As a low accredited school, the facilities at our school are of course very minimal. Not only do we have inadequate facilities, but I have also never found any English books in our school library, let alone the latest English books. So, there are no English textbooks that can be lend to students at our school. The government prohibits teachers from selling books or LKS. There will be punishment for those who break the rules.

Thus, the government's efforts to promote affordable education have not been effective because the students need to buy gadgets for using the electronic textbooks. Many students who study at the private aliyah madrasa schools come from low-income families that cannot provide smartphones or laptops for the children.

4. No colleagues to collaborate

The school has only one English language teacher because it has a small number of students. Most other subjects also have one teacher. As a result, Mrs.A felt isolated. She did not have colleagues to share and learn together. Whenever the government issued new policies and rules, as the only English language teacher, she had to implement the new policy by learning alone as stated in the following interview transcript:

When I had to determine student minimum completeness criteria (KKM), I did it without knowledge. When I asked other teachers who have different subjects, they said they decided 70 as the KKM. Because of that, I copied them by deciding 70 for English language subject. Then, I regret that 70 is very high for students to achieve.

Mrs. A's statement indicates that she regrets to determine score 70 as the KKM for English language subject at her school because the students have low English capability. She thought if only she had colleagues to share, she could be more informed in making decisions on KKM. This quote shows that being the only English language teacher negatively affect the

instruction and student learning. Therefore, Mrs.A felt very lonely and isolated. She really needs colleagues to collaborate to enrich their teaching and improve student learning.

5. Lack of student engagement

Mrs. A argued that sometimes the students were disengaged from the lessons. She also mentioned that the reason for the students' disengagement was their lack of English competence. Mrs. A reported that she was overwhelmed in teaching. She could not teach all the learning content. She was only able to teach the easy learning content. When she taught the complex learning content, the students found it hard to understand. The students became easily bored when they found the learning content was very challenging as stated by Mrs. A as follows:

When I teach difficult subject matter, the students find it difficult. They get bored. Well, when they get bored, they do not focus. They become sleepy, yawn, play cell phones, leave class, and play pranks on friends. I lose my enthusiasm to teach when I see they are not focused. The students here have very low academic abilities. I feel it is useless to teach difficult material. They would not understand. So, I had to really make the subject matter fun and easy, and that was tough for me.

Thus, the lack of student engagement was caused by some reasons, such as low capability students and complicated learning content.

This study set out with the aim of identifying an uncertified noncivil servant teacher's experience in teaching at a low accredited private aliyah madrasa school. The current study found that the teacher lacks professional development. It is somewhat surprising that no training and workshop were experienced by the research participant whereas the teachers should have training or other professional development activities at least twice a year Musfah (2016). This result is consistent with that of Qoyyimah (2018) and Apud (2020) who found that private school teachers had limited opportunities to access professional learning. There are possible explanations for this result. The lack of training and workshops for teachers may be due to the lack of adequate funding both from the government and the school. In addition, this result might be related to the teachers' reluctance to upgrade their pedagogical skills.

Another important finding was that the teacher experienced a lack of attention from school administrators. The school administrators seemed to not care about the teacher's teaching quality by preferring not to deal with teacher's needs and demands related to regular learning

sessions. This finding was unexpected and suggested that the school administrators lowered the teacher's motivation to build her capacity which led to low teacher performance. Argon (2014) page 1 stated "the teacher whose performance gets lower develops feelings like unhappiness, uneasiness, insignificance against himself/herself; dissatisfaction and dislike against the profession; loss of trust and alienation etc. against the organization". It is difficult to explain this result, but it might be related to the school administrators' lack of professional development activities about personal evaluation and their personal effects on teachers (Argon, 2014).

In this study, school lack of teaching facility and resources was found to add the teacher's problem. It is somewhat surprising that no English textbooks based on the latest curriculum from the government was available in the school library. The government tended to ask the teachers and students at private madrasa school to access electronic book. Because many students came from low-income family, they were not able to access the online book due to the lack of gadgets both at home and school. This finding is consistent with that of Syar'i et al. (2020) who stated that madrasa school is not supported with the adequate resources. The policy issued by the governments usually adds burden to the development of madrasa schools (Syar'i et al., 2020). This result may be explained by the fact that the number of private madrasa schools is very high compared to the state ones which is about 92% of all madrasa schools in Indonesia whereas the governments do not have sufficient funding (Shaturaev, 2021).

Another important finding was that the teacher had no colleague to work and share. So, the teacher felt lonely because she is the only English language teacher at the school. What is surprising is that the teacher who is still very young must make her own decisions in teaching without the guidance and input from other English language teachers. This result is in accord with recent study indicating that madrasa schools lack general subject teachers (Syar'i et al., 2020, p. 7). This result is likely to be related to the low number of students the madrasa school has. This result might also be due to the madrasa school focus to religious subjects which make them invest few efforts to improve the quality of non-religious subjects (Muttaqin et al., 2020).

The current study also found that the students sometimes were not engaged in the lesson. The teacher had to be careful in choosing the learning content to make all students interested in the lesson. The students had very low capability in English language. This outcome is contrary to that of Muttaqin et al. (2020) who found that students at private madrasa schools had good academic performance. The reason for this current research result is not clear but it may have something to do with insufficient school facilities, lack of teacher's pedagogic competence, inappropriate learning contents, uncomfortable classroom condition, bad classmates' attitudes, and student lack of self-confidence (Erlina et al., 2020).

D. CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the problems faced by an uncertified non-civil servant teacher working at a private aliyah madrasa school in teaching. The results of this investigation show that the teacher experience lack of professional development, lack of attention from school administrators, lack of colleagues to collaborate, and lack of student engagement. Taken together, these results suggest that governments should give better support to improve English language teaching at private aliyah madrasa schools such as sufficient funding and teacher professional development activities for private aliyah madrasa school teachers. Besides providing opportunity to join professional development activities, the governments should also motivate the teachers to regularly update their knowledge. Because it is useless if there are many kinds of professional development activities available but the teachers are reluctant to join. Through the professional development activities, the teachers are able to meet teachers from other schools which enable them to collaborate. This study adds to the growing body of research that indicates the inadequate support received by non-religious subject teachers at madrasa schools.

This study was limited by the absence of classroom observation which could help the researcher to obtain data about the teaching and learning process of English language teaching. The small sample size also did not allow generalizability of the findings. In spite of its limitations, the study certainly adds to our understanding of the problems of the uncertified non-civil servant teacher teaching at a poorly accredited private aliyah madrasa school. Further research, using more research participants, could shed more light on the experience of teachers teaching at low accredited private aliyah madrasa school. Greater

efforts are needed to ensure that all teachers at private aliyah madrasa schools receive similar supports as certified and civil servant teachers regarding their professional development, teaching facilities, and resources. After all, the number of uncertified non-civil servant teachers is far higher than the number of certified and or civil servant teachers. Therefore, when they feel empowered, they will be able to improve the English language teaching quality at madrasa schools.

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