

The Practice of Learning Community on Teachers' Development: A Case of Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to evaluate the programs organised by a professional learning community in Indonesia, MGMP (Subject Teacher Conference), as a forum for teachers' professional development with two principles: communal deliberation and subject teachers. Forty teachers were randomly selected and surveyed (N = 40), and three school inspectors were interviewed (N = 3). This recent study employed a mixed-method design. Furthermore, a content analysis was carried out to study the standards of MGMP development. Findings revealed that the programs have been consistent with the underlying principles of MGMP and are effective for Social Science teachers' development. Although more attention should be given to teachers' real performance in classes, the researchers believe regular meetings have provided teachers with opportunities to exchange ideas, discover solutions, and create a pool of current information and valuable experiences. The communal deliberation is contextual to the practice of PLC in Indonesia. It never changes the goal objective to improve teachers' professional development to improve student's quality of learning. It strengthens the spirit of collegiality in teachers' cooperation and collaboration.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The reform in Indonesia's school curriculum has brought changes in the teaching of Social Studies (Sopantini, 2014). Used to be taught as separate subjects, Economics, Geography, and Sociology are now integrated into one theme-based syllabus. The various potential abilities of teachers in teaching social studies subjects, the different qualities of teachers, and the increasing demands of teacher professionalism in facing technological progress are consequences of the changes (Sahudra et al., 2021). Hence, Social Studies teachers gather in a professional learning community to seek input, facilitate communication, consultation, exchange of experiences, and recommendations to find solutions to overcoming emerging problems (Daryanto et al., 2020).

Japan has a lesson study to help teachers improve their skills in a learning community. Indonesia has the Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran to do the same thing (MGMP). It is a place for teachers to improve their skills, and it is based on two main ideas: communal discussion (*Musyawarah*) and teachers who teach similar courses (*Guru Mata Pelajaran*). Collaboration is one of Indonesia's three most important indigenous assets. (Bourchier, 2019; Bowen, 1986; Golden, 2020). It underlies all Indonesians' collective social interaction for cooperatives and mutual assistance. It is asserted that communal deliberation is consistent with Indonesia's national character. (Neoh & Saifulloh, 2020). It is also a mechanism for informal collaboration (Pervez, 2019). In Indonesia, decision-making through deliberation is preferable to solving problems in a community (Kemal et al., 2019). Deliberation represents the fourth principle of Indonesians. The emphasis is to seek consultation for a consensus (van Engelenhoven, 2020). Yudhoyono in Rosyidin (2020) affirmed that before an agreement is achieved, there is a comprehensive consultation process in which all perspectives are aired and all interests are considered, including those of minorities. This is how we attain harmony in our incredibly diverse society. This forum's principle of communal deliberation refers to the concept of collective social interaction. The intention was to get all instructors together to collaborate on teaching-related topics.

Meanwhile, the principle of subject teachers is meant to develop teachers in line with their background teaching education and experiences. A characteristic shared by lesson study and MGMP is that the area coverage (a city, a village, etc.) determines each professional development program (Chen & Zhang, 2019). Therefore, this forum is considered a means for teachers in the coverage area to collaborate.

As a teacher forum established in the 1970s, MGMP is nationwide and supported by the government and placed as a non-structural teacher professional and non-hierarchical relation to other governmental organisations. In practice, the MGMP must adhere to certain requirements, especially the Ministry of Education and Culture's requirements for the development of activities. The MGMP should initiate the activities through a three distinct time period scheme: short-, medium-, and long-term objectives. It is envisaged that MGMP will serve as the communication platform to expand instructors' horizons, raise their material and teaching knowledge, and enhance their comprehension of outstanding teaching techniques.

In principle, MGMP is a professional learning community (PLC). It has the characteristics of PLC: (1) a forum for teachers to share new knowledge through interaction with one another, (2) it aims to improve practices (Sigurðardóttir, 2010) and (3) it encourages regular meetings. Previous researchers found that MGMP can improve teachers' professionalism as long as it follows the standards and fulfils its members' needs through in-depth analysis (Fakrurridha & Nurdin, 2019). The positive perceptions of MGMP were brought forward, such as the effectiveness of MGMP in revitalising teachers' professional competencies (Ramlan & Farizawati, 2019) and improving teachers' performance (Sasongko et al., 2021). Despite its strengths, there was also a weakness in the practice of MGMP. Daryanto et al. (2020) found that scheduling and teacher assigning could hinder MGMP from strengthening teacher competencies.

To enhance professional performance, PLC can be an effective collaborative learning environment for pre-service teachers (Alwafi et al., 2020; Karlberg & Bezzina, 2020) and continuous professional development for in-service teachers (de Jong et al., 2019). It is increasingly believed that PLC is effective as learning mainly occurs in a community (Karlberg & Bezzina, 2020). In addition, as a community of practice (Kirschner & Lai, 2007), PLC is also recognised as a social learning process where a group of professional teachers share the willingness to collaborate to share the same interest in topics or issues of the teaching-learning process to develop their teacher professional performance (Kosanovich et al., 2020). Another point to note is that professional development must be organised, programmed, and carried out with the approval of Government policy (Karlberg & Bezzina, 2020). The conventional perspective of teachers' professional development is that it is the most effective means of enhancing teaching techniques and enhancing students' learning. (Lantz-Andersson et al., 2017). The product of PLC is the exchange of ideas, the discovery of solutions to everyday challenges,

and the creation of a pool of available and current information and experiences of quality teaching (Kirschner & Lai, 2007).

PLC cannot be well-defined as the concept is not universal and derives from many contextual references (Stoll et al., 2006). Yet, the central attention of the professional learning community has never changed, and they are: to strengthen the school and student learning and to represent the formal and informal cooperation and engagement of teachers within schools. More interesting is that PLC should be based on confidence and collegiality (Rosenholtz et al., 1986). Moreover, there are four main characteristics of the PLC. They are (1) members of PLC have shared values and vision that is the unwavering focus on student learning and achievement (Olivier & Huffman, 2016); (2) members improve their professional practice through collaborative work (Domingo-Segovia et al., 2020); (3) members' inquiry of quality teaching practice is based on reflective practice (Liang et al., 2020; Stoll et al., 2006), (4) members' regular meeting is encouraged to learn new topics, share ideas, and solve problems (Kosanovich et al., 2020; Zhang & Yuan, 2020).

There were several forms of a professional development programs. They are (1) courses or workshops on the particular focus or topic, (2) conferences at which teacher researcher disseminate their successful teaching practice; (3) school visit; (4) participation in a community of teachers specifically created for the professional development; (5) mentoring/ peer observation; (6) peer coaching; (7) job training; (8) cascade training (Mestry et al. 2009 in Xaso et al., (2017). Following the study of Karlberg & Bezzina (2020), it was found that university courses and courses organised by the municipality are the two most effective forms of professional development perceived by teachers.

2. METHODS

This study used a mixed method approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to evaluate programmes in accordance with the CIPP framework. Quantitative information was collected through the use of descriptive statistics on the questionnaire responses participants provided. The qualitative information, however, was gathered through interviews with members of the steering committee. In-depth, context-dependent, subjective meanings of the statements served as the major research instrument and were the focus of qualitative data analysis. The analysis consisted of five stages: (1) data reduction, with the goal of streamlining the data; (2) data display; (3) data analysis and interpretation; (4) conclusion drawing and verification; and (5) report writing. (Cohen et al., 2018).

The population of this study consisted of 119 junior high school teachers from East Jakarta. All of them are Social Studies teachers with different majors of studies: Geography, Sociology, Economics, and Social Studies. Sixteen teachers are on the steering committee, and the rests are members of MGMP. Convenient sampling was conducted from 55% female and 45% male teachers. Forty members participated in the quantitative data collection. Meanwhile, three representatives from the steering committee and participants voluntarily participated in the semi-structured interview. There were three age groups of members, the largest group being 36 – 45 years old. Most teachers are Geography teachers (38% of the population). The researchers used data triangulation by using three different research instruments to gain valid results: a questionnaire, an interview, and a document study.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of this study will be discussed in relevance to the research questions. The main research question was: To what extent the programs of MGMP have been consistent with the underlying principles and been effective in Social Science teachers' development in the professional learning community? To answer the main question, there were four sub-questions: (1) To what extent have the programs been correlated to the context of MGMP; (2) To what extent did the principles of MGMP contribute to achieving the goal objectives of MGMP; (3) To what extent have the principles of

MGMP correlated to the process of achieving the goal objectives of MGMP; and (4) To what extent the products of MGMP programs have been adequate to the members of MGMP.

To what Extent Have the Programs Been Correlated to the Context of MGMP?

To identify to what extent, have the programs of MGMP been correlated to the context, were collected and summarised. The result indicates that the average correlation response was 4.44 (SD = 0.54), with means ranging from 4.28 to 4.55 and standard deviations of 0.50 and 0.63, respectively. It suggests that almost all participants perceived a high correlation between programs and the context. The table also tells us that there was only one variation in the scores. There was a cluster unevenly spread for item 5. The high score of means can indicate that the respondents' views on programs of MGMP are very consistent with the context of practising MGMP as a professional learning community.

Based on the Standards of MGMP Development stipulated by the Ministry of National Education and Culture, teachers are required to develop their professional performance through workshops, academic publications and a learning community (MGMP). However, there was not yet a significant increase in the performance of MGMP based on the education quality indicators used. Four factors were causing this low performance, they are:

1. Less attention was given to the performance process of MGMP. As a matter of fact, the process performance largely determines the output of activities of MGMP.
2. The practice of MGMP was still connected to the local government's bureaucratic system; therefore, the issued policies are inappropriate for fulfilling the immediate needs of local teachers.
3. Performance accountability has not been carried out well.
4. The absence of a manual is used as the reference for program coherence.

Using evidence from surveys and in-depth interviews, we can predict with high confidence that these four elements will play out in response to our efforts to reach a consensus through open dialogue and debate. Members' requirements have been met. Specifically, the members' impression that the programme is consistent needs work.

To what Extent Have the Principles of MGMP Correlated to the Inputs to Achieve the Goal Objectives of MGMP?

The frequency, percentages, means, and standard deviations of the participants' answers were calculated to determine how the principles helped the MGMP reach its goals. The standard deviation was 0.55, and the average answer was 4.44. This assumes that almost all respondents agree that the MGMP principles have made a big difference in reaching the goals and aims of each process. Participants, instructors, schedules, goals, facilities, infrastructure, and financial management were all things that went into the programme. In short, the principles of communal deliberation and subject teachers have helped all management decisions be made in different ways to help MGMP reach its goals.

The participants' interviews revealed that additional requirements should be added in selecting instructors. This belongs to the standards of Human Resources. It was found that the emphasis on internal recruitment and the five-year experience was not sufficient to be taken for the instructors' selection. Meanwhile, the volunteer from the steering committee claimed that all the required standards had been fulfilled. Therefore, the steering committee is confident that all their programs have been in line with teachers' professional development needs in a learning community.

The development standards of MGMP stipulated by the Ministry of National Education and Culture have prescribed eight standards (1) Program Standards; (2) Organization Standards; (3) Management Standards; (4) Standard of Facilities / Infrastructure; (5) Human Resource Standards; (6) Financing Standard; (7) Quality Assurance Standards; and (8) Standard Operational Procedure of KKG / MGMP. Based on the findings, the principles of MGMP have contributed to achieving the goal objectives of MGMP. The principles have assisted the decision-making in strategies, operational plan,

resources, and agreements. However, referring to the instructors' experience requirement, the standards are 10-year experience.

To what Extent Have the Principles of MGMP Correlated to the Process of Achieving the Goal Objectives Of MGMP?

Descriptive statistics were used to determine how closely the MGMP principles related to the goals and objectives of the MGMP. The result shows that, on average, respondents ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.57$) put a high value on the contribution of the principles. This showed that the people who answered the survey thought that the MGMP principles significantly impacted the steps needed to reach the MGMP goals.

The following were used to verify the results of the analysis of the interviews. The MGMP steering group organises and plans three distinct kinds of programming. There are three types of programmes: standard, growth, and general. Learning issues, curriculum analysis, teacher assignment training, and tool preparation are recurring topics in both the general and regular programming. The development programs such as seminars, workshops, colloquium, or classroom action research were carried out according to teachers' immediate needs.

To what extent have the Products of MGMP Programs Have Been Effective for The Members of MGMP?

Descriptive statistics were generated and displayed. It shows that the general mean of respondents' responses was 4.33, with a standard deviation of 0.56. This indicates that almost all respondents believe that most members perceived MGMP Programs have effectively positively impacted their quality improvement in the teaching/ learning process.

The qualitative results obtained from the interview align with that of the questionnaire. There are four competencies that social studies teachers should have: (1) professional competencies, (2) pedagogic competencies, (3) social competencies, and (4) personality competencies. Each of the competencies was measured using two indicators in the questionnaire. In the interview, these indicators were explored in more detail.

Two participants explained that at least several aspects of their teaching competency improved during their regular participation in MGMP meetings. They are:

1. Teachers' comprehension of the subject matter's content, structure, concepts, and scientific attitude.
2. Teachers' creativity in subject-matter development is enhanced.
3. Teachers' abilities in using information and communication technology to assist the teaching/ learning process strengthened.

The last interview participant justified that the programs to continuously develop teachers' professionalism are needed to assure the quality teaching/ learning process. There was only one weakness in the practice of MGMP: although the meeting is regular, the teachers cannot attend the programs as they have to come in turns. Another finding was that the exchange of information during "the Question and Answer" session has resulted in the ideas of solving encountered problems and large current teaching-relevant information and valuable experiences.

Discussion

This study intends to determine whether the MGMP principles have been consistent with the fundamental ideas and effective in teachers' professional development of Social Science teachers in a professional learning community utilising the CIPP model. Concerning the first research sub-question that asks to what extent the programs have been correlated to the context of MGMP, the results of the three tools (questionnaire, interview, and document) are highly correlated. The researchers attribute that taking communal deliberation as the underlying principle of MGMP is the best decision because it reflects the national personality of each teacher. The thorough process, from preparing the areas of discussion or lessons to be given to all members of the MGMP to providing the question-and-answer

session during the regular meetings, has been the mirror of social studies teachers' goal objectives expressed in harmony. The values of communal deliberation and the idea of collaboratively solving teaching professional-related issues have been consistent with the effectiveness of MGMP as a professional learning community. The disagreement of whether or not the coherence program has been fulfilled has been justified because the teachers have to come in turns. Therefore, they cannot achieve the full level of mastery.

The second answer to the question indicates that communal deliberation has underlined all management decision-making. However, the inputs to the program that there should be an additional requirement of instructors might be firstly intervened by following the standards that are 10-year experience.

The communal deliberation has been consistently internalised in the context of MGMP, and the evaluation of the process clarified that communal deliberation has contributed significantly to each process. Any intervention in the future should be in line with this underlying principle. This is consistent with the results of Antinluoma, Ilomäki and Toom (2021) that PLC can have the best result from collective learning. Concerning the final domain "product" and to what extent the MGMP Programs' products have effectively impacted the members using the Stufflebeam Model, the result revealed that the overall goals' of programs had been achieved and resulted in positive outcomes.

The reform of the education system worldwide has brought teachers to optimise their professional performance and professional development through social interaction. Not only that, Jen, Mathijssen, and Hoogeveen (2022) agree that the interaction of professional educators through active participation can be the solution-building paradigms, i.e., examining what worked and could be built upon rather than examining and analysing difficulties encountered. MGMP, as a professional learning community, can facilitate this interaction. Through this, teachers can get large access to user experiences and resources; consequently, their professional performance improves and continuously develops. This study's interaction happens in a specific environment (Social Studies Teachers in Junior High School) and a limited area (East Jakarta).

Referring to what has been discussed, the quality of interaction should be attended to and emphasised in MGMP. The quality of learning in a professional community can constantly be improved with several considerations for better practices in the future. Although more attention should be given to teachers' real performance in classes, the researchers believe that regular meetings have provided teachers with opportunities to exchange ideas, discover solutions, and create a pool of current information and valuable experiences. The communal deliberation is contextual to the practice of PLC in Indonesia. This is relevant to what has been found by Myllykoski-Laine, et.al., (2022) that the community focusing on developing the skills of teaching and pedagogy is influenced by distinct contextual elements. Therefore, communal deliberation never changes the goal objective to improve teachers' professional development to improve student's quality of learning. In practice, it strengthens the spirit of collegiality in teachers' cooperation and collaboration.

4. CONCLUSION

The research showed that the activities were beneficial to the professional growth of Social Science teachers and were in line with MGMP's guiding principles. Researchers feel that regular meetings have offered instructors a chance to share ideas, find solutions, and build a pool of up-to-date information and important experiences, however, greater focus should be placed on teachers' actual performance in the classroom. In the framework of PLC, as it is practised in Indonesia, the communal discussion makes sense. The quality of education for students is prioritised above all else, with the constant aim of enhancing teachers' professional growth. Because of this, there is a greater emphasis on collegiality among educators. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has altered virtually every facet of society. In particular, over the past two years, it has sped up the transition to digital. In light of this, an assessment of post-pandemic Teacher Professional Development implementation is required to pick up the slack.

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