

**A Need Assessment of Indonesian EFL Teachers:  
Does the Length of Service Year Matter?  
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**Abstract:** *The study mainly investigated the association between different length of service years and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) needs. The subjects of the study were three English teachers from which the data gathered through open-ended interview protocol. The paper discusses the importance of defining needs to be able to interpret the types of needs each finding represent. The study revealed that length of service year indeed contributes to the different needs of professional development of these English teachers.*

**Key words:** *Professional development needs, teacher competences, length of service year*

### **Introduction**

Many studies have revealed that teachers' quality is one of the contributors to students' achievement (Coleman, et al, 1966; Schereens and Bosker, 1977; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Cunningham, 2007). It is believed that good quality teachers will do their job effectively which can enhance students good achievement.

Indonesian government has attempted to improve teachers' quality for several times (Fahmi, Maulana and Yusuf, 2011). For example, under the law of 1989, the teacher basic level was increased from secondary education to higher education. Some years later, in 2005, the government issued the teacher Law no 14 of 2005, which requires teachers to have the minimum qualification of 4 year degree of university.

To support teacher professional development movement, Indonesian government or authorities often run 'project-based' professional development program which is top-bottom or centralized (Sajidin, 2010). This centralized and predetermined policy trend makes teachers less appreciative and cooperative to participate in such program.

Some studies on teacher PD in Indonesia have revealed there is a gap between what the teacher's needs and the program offer (Evan, et. Al, 2009; Ashadi, 2010). Teachers have been bored with the repeated and irrelevant trainings and workshop conducted by related parties.

In relation to meeting teachers needs scholars (Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Rhodes & Beneicke, 2003; Lee, 2004-2005; Wall, 2008; Kennedy and McKey, 2011) have done CPD need assessment. Need assessment is very crucial because it is a means to avoid mismatch between the real causes of poor performance and the professional development support offered Rhodes & Beneicke, 2003). Thus, it is important to explore teacher's CPD needs as a foundation to develop a professional development program.

CPD needs investigation can be done based on teacher length of service year. Kennedy and McKey (2011) conducted a study of CPD needs of early career teacher in Scotland. The investigation on teachers' PD needs seeing from their different length of service year has only been revealed through a national online survey study, and has not yet been confirmed through interview assessment. This study encourages some other investigation of PD needs in other career stage. In relation to this call, the current study investigated the association between CPD needs of three English teachers in Indonesia and their different length of service year.

## **Methods**

This study was a case study which involved three English teachers with different years of teaching career. The first teacher was AL (male), a fresh graduate who has been teaching for 2 years, the second was AS (female) who has been teaching for 11 years and the last was BU (male) who has been teaching for 29 years. All these three teachers were selected purposively for attaining the objective of study. Thus, these teachers were not selected based on their achievement or their quality of performance. Limited in scope, this study was intended to be descriptive, rather than hypothesis-driven.

Data were collected in Singaraja, a city in Indonesia. The instrument used in this study was an interview guide and voice recorder. The data were collected by less formal, open-ended interview protocol which uses a list of desired information, but allows the interviewer to change the order and phrasing of the questions within each individual conversation to best fit the participant and the situation (Denzin, 2001).

## **Findings**

### **AL's CPD experience and CPD need (with 2 years of teaching).**

AL is a new senior high school teacher who has been teaching for 2 years at the school where he works. He is a non-civil servant teacher with unstable status of employment, thus he is paid not by the government but by the school fund which normally not as much as civil servant teachers' payment.

During his teaching career in 2 years, AL has not had the opportunity to attend seminar, workshop yet; and this is because there are other English teachers who are assigned to. In his

school, the seminar or workshop invitations are managed by the leader of MGMP (association of teacher teaching similar subject) and the chance to participate in the activity is given in turn.

Also, AL barely has experience in doing research in his career; his last research experience is the one he did for his S1 thesis. Despite this lack of experience, AL actually has interest in doing research especially related to how to manage students' behavior. He has heard a school which implements meditation strategy to manage students' behavior and he thinks he would prove how effective this meditation strategy is. However, his unstable status of employment, as a temporary contract teacher, discourages him to do his ambition. With his status, he sees a little of importance to do research.

AL implies that the most urgent matter to shape his professionalism is improving his ability in mastering content of subject matter knowledge and his English proficiency. He admits that he still struggles in developing his own English proficiency in mastering content of subject matter and in some pedagogical areas such as how to make lesson plan and assessment instruments.

From his responses, it can be concluded that he has done more personal learning such as reading books, web browsing, doing self-reflection and joining online course than participating in a more formal and planned professional development activities. For him browsing the internet and seeking guidance from senior teachers are the most effective way to learn. He believes that colleagues support is very important especially for an early teacher like him. He needs help in shaping his teaching preparation, and instructional management. This response implies his need to be guided or coached by senior teachers.

In his classes, AL focuses more on identifying how to make the students like his teaching, instead of finding solution to solve students' learning problem such as innovative and effective strategy. Thus, he needs to learn about various interesting classroom activities. This response can be linked with his problems in controlling students' behavior. He mentions when he can win students' attention by having attractive classroom activities, he believes he can teach more effectively. This implies his need on attractive EFL strategies and controlling students' behavior.

AL considers managing students' behavior is one of the most challenging part of doing teaching profession. Although he has positive evaluation on his self-emotional control ability, he admits that it is difficult to control his emotion especially when students do not want to listen to what teacher says anymore. Sometimes he needs to show some power of authority such as giving punishment or verbal warning to let students know he is in charge in controlling the class. He embarrassedly admitted that he often show his emotion especially anger when he has to deal with naughty students. This implies that he still needs to learn about how to control his emotion, despite his positive evaluation on his self-emotional control ability.

**AS' CPD experience and CPD needs (with 11 years of teaching).**

AS is a teacher with master degree qualification; she graduated from postgraduate program (S2) in 2011. She has been teaching English for 11 years in a vocational senior high school. Beside this school, she also teaches in other school to fulfill the requirement of 24 hours teaching contract; since for teacher who hold teacher certificate this requirement is to be fulfilled.

She has a very positive view on participating in CPD activities. She has more experiences in participating in CPD activities than AL. She has attended seminars, workshops and conferences which either conducted in school or out of school. In fact, she has graduated from postgraduate program in a state university to attain her master degree in language education.

Besides, her school culture supports its staffs' professional development. The school requires teacher to do annual research, be observed by the school supervisor, to collaborate with other teachers, and to produce a report or plan of activities to be done in one semester. Moreover, the school administrator manage to have professional development sessions by inviting expert in particular field such classroom assessment, and educational counselor to facilitate teachers' needs.

Beside those CPD experiences mentioned previously, she is also eager to do personal learning such as doing professional dialogue with colleagues, web browsing, learning from self-evaluation and learning from assessing and reviewing students' work.

Among these activities she admits that doing research, collaborating with other teachers, producing a research report or plan of activities and assessing and reviewing students' work are very effective in developing her professionalism.

AS reveals that even though she has been teaching for 11 years she still needs support to improve her knowledge on EFL teaching strategies, using effective media and national curriculum. She believes that teaching strategies and national curriculum are very dynamic and continuously changing over time following the changes on teaching paradigm. Thus, she believes that all teachers need to improve their knowledge about teaching strategies and national curriculum as well as how to use effective media in the classroom.

Besides, she also believes that she should improve her ability to control students' behavior. For her, students' uncontrolled behavior is the most challenging part in teaching, especially in her school. In her school context, lessons are categorized as productive and normative lessons. Productive lessons are lessons done in the workshop, where students have to deal with electricity or automotive and other job-related practices. Other lessons such as English,

math, religious, sport and other unrelated directly to job practice are called normative lesson. Normally, the students pay respect more on productive lesson and less attention and respect given to normative lessons. That is why students in her school give less respect and pay less attention in English classes because they think it is not directly related with the job-practice and thus it is of a little importance for them.

AS, after years of teaching, makes evaluation from her experience. She learns that these students cannot be treated strictly. On the contrary, they should be treated mildly, as friends rather than students. The distance between teacher and students should be reduced to minimum.

She also concerns on her lack of ability in using IT in the classroom. She hopes she can have more training on how to use IT in the class, but she knows there is not much training about it.

Also, she concerns on her ability in making good social interaction. She said she is too busy because of the workload. Her teaching job in more than one school requires her to be so mobile; this limits her time to socialize with other teachers. As teacher with professional certificate, AS should fulfill 24 hour teaching contract; thus, she often rushes to another school to teach. This response related with her needs to improve her ability in working in team. She admits that she prefers to work alone, because it is more comfortable and less time consuming.

### **BU's CPD experience and CPD needs (with 29 years of teaching.**

BU is a senior teacher with 29 years teaching experience. He teaches in a private senior high school, the same private school where AL also teaches. Being compared to the first two teachers above, he has more CPD experiences. He has done all CPD experiences mentioned by the previous two teachers and has done two things that other teachers have not experienced yet: coaching other teachers and doing teacher-lecturer collaborative research.

During his in-service teaching career, he has been sent to participate in some intensive teacher training for several times. From these trainings, he improves his own teaching practice knowledge, as well as learns about the skills of delivering teaching practices tutorial for other teachers. He admits that these skills are very important for him, especially because he is frequently asked to coach some junior teachers. He implies for senior teacher like him it is important to know the skills of sharing and leading other junior teachers.

He believes that English teachers should be always updated with innovative teaching strategies. BU believes that personal learning such as web browsing or book reading can help teachers in improving their pedagogical as well as professional knowledge.

He also emphasizes the importance to understand or to analyze national curriculum as well as what learning strategies are applicable in Indonesian context. He thinks teachers should be critical in selecting teaching methods and strategies; not all innovative teaching methods and strategies are applicable in EFL context such as in Indonesian English classrooms. For him, he needs to be able to analyze these innovative but applicable teaching strategies to help other English teachers who keep practicing conventional teaching practices. In general, he feels he has responsibility to know better about any educational issues so that he can help other junior teachers.

BU revealed that age and repeated experiences help him in shaping his self emotional control. He said he used to be very emotional in handling students with mischief behaviors; however, experiences teach him how to approach students with this behavior effectively. He said teacher should reduce the distance between teacher and students, for instance, by having lunch together outside the class in the school canteen. For him, having lunch in the same canteen as the students is actually a way of building trust. Once students think that he belongs to them then they will trust him; consequently, he believes, he can communicate with them more easily. His answer implies that he has good knowledge on controlling emotion as well as building student-teacher relationship.

The result of interview reveals some similarities and differences across these teachers with different length of service years. All the three teachers have admitted their needs on English curriculum and EFL teaching strategies knowledge. Among these three teachers, each has exclusive needs which has not mentioned by others. These exclusive different needs majorly felt by AL such as the needs on content of subject matter, English proficiency, emotional-self control, students behavior management, working motivation and the need to be coached. The interviews show AS' exclusive needs on social awareness and classroom management skills and BU's exclusive need on coaching skills.

Table 1. Similarities and differences across length of service years

Subjects	Similar needs	Need types	Different needs	Needs types
AL (2 years)	English curriculum	Felt need	Content of subject matter	Felt need
			English proficiency	Felt need
			Emotional-self control	Felt need
			Working motivation	Felt need
			To be coached	Felt need
AS (11 years)	EFL teaching strategies	Normative need	Social awareness	Felt need
			Working in a team	Felt need
BU (29 years)		Normative need	Coaching skill	felt need

The findings reveal that inexperienced teacher (AL) tend to have more needs to be accommodated than experienced teachers (AS and BU) who have longer service year. AL needs cover all the four competences, and majorly to support pedagogical and professional competences. Meanwhile the more senior teachers' (AS and BU) needs shift from how to work with others into skill of analyzing and evaluating pedagogical issue and later how to coach other (junior) teachers.

Similarities are also found among these three teachers' needs such as EFL strategies and English curriculum. However, these similarities among these teachers cannot be taken for granted. What types of needs, those needs belong to should be carefully interpreted. This discussion of types of needs will be saved for later in the discussion.

## **Discussion**

The study shows that AL, AS and BU have different needs and clearly these discrepancies of needs between these 3 teachers can be associated with their different length of service years or experience. AS and BU with their longer years of service than AL, have more CPD experiences than AL such as in dealing with content of subject matter as well as language skills mastery and may have better knowledge which they have learned during their professional development experiences. The needs of these two aspects seem decreased as the year of experience increase. Similar findings are reported in the survey result in Kennedy's (2011) study. It can be understood that new teacher, especially, need years to gain the skills they need to be effective in their roles. The findings suggest that new teachers have crucial needs on subject matter content as well as general pedagogy.

Even though AL has earned his S1 degree in English education, he still has needs to understand subject matter content and language skills mastery. In relation to this phenomenon, Saracho (1993) and Ackerman (2004) found that field experience are more optimal than university course; the real introduction to teaching happens when teacher have the opportunity to see first-hand or practice what they have learned in the university. Thus, college can not provide extensive range of learning experience necessary. Once they are employed they learn from the experience.

AL's effort in joining online course to improve his English proficiency can be influenced by his rather limited teaching experience. Similarly, even for English teachers, especially non-native teachers, they still need to improve English skills, in fact it is seen as the majority need



(Butler, 2004, Wall, 2008; Kabilan and Veratharaju, 2013). Wall (2008) observed the need of some Thailand English Teachers. What make AL different from the subjects of the studies by Wall (2008) is that he realizes his needs of language skills mastery and does something about it; meanwhile, these English teachers in Wall's study are not aware that they need language proficiency improvement. They do not see the relevance to improve their English proficiency, despite their low score in speaking ability which were measured during the interview.

It seems that there is a tendency that CPD needs on students' behavioral management is decreased as the year of experience increase. Both AL and AS have crucial CPD needs on students' behavioral management knowledge, but BU thinks it as less urgent. Similarly, Kennedy and McKay found the decrease by year of teaching service in the identification of behavior management strategies as a CPD need. This can be associated with the experience that they have in handling students. The more experienced teacher may know and learn effective strategies in handling students. However, it does not mean that they stop learning about students' management; it means that they have known better and consequently need less about it compared to beginning teacher. A number of studies confirm findings from existing research that, on average, brand new teachers are less effective than those with some experience under their belts (Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor 2007; Harris and Sass 2007; Ladd 2008)

Other different needs are on controlling students' behavior and self emotional control. Both AL and AS still have needs in how to control their emotion to face naughty students. The different between AL and AS is the ability to identify strategy to deal with students' behavior. AL is still in the process of finding ways to be able to control his students, while AS has already identify strategy to control his students by reducing distance between students-teacher relationship. Even so, AS still think it is very important to know more about how to handle students with disruptive behavior, more importantly is how to control emotion. Meanwhile, BU with his 29 experience, do not see controlling emotion as his problem. However, he admits in his early time of teaching he has also struggle on controlling his own emotion in handling students' behavior.

A study done by Georgia Institute of technology (2009) provides evidence that older people are better at controlling their emotion than young people because they have a wealth past of experience in regulating their emotions. Older adults are so efficient at dealing with their emotions that it doesn't cost them any decrease in performance, while young adult do not tend to regulate their emotion which throws away resources to perform well in particular task. From this it can be understood that teacher with inability to control emotion is partly influenced by age or experience in regulating emotions. When they are good at controlling emotion, they can be very effective in performing their role as teachers, and this gets better as they have more experience in regulating emotions.



Still in relation to the different needs, all three teachers have needs on social interaction. The differences are AL has been struggling with how to interact with naughty students, AS has been struggling with her peer interaction such as, social awareness ability and team work ability; while BU emphasizes his need on the ability to lead other teachers and to help them with their task.

These different needs can be also associated with their different length of service years. As BU have more experience in teaching than the other two, thus, he has already experienced in interacting with students and colleagues. For him, this is not urgent matter anymore. What matters for him is how to coach and how to lead other teachers because he has experiences and the potency to share these experiences. Meanwhile, AL and AS do not see yet the need to coach others, they see the need to be coached instead. Other than that, they have the needs to build better interaction to students or colleagues to survive in their profession.

Beside different needs, similar needs are also found. However, as it has been previously highlighted, defining needs is a very crucial matter to interpret the data. The findings show 2 of four social concepts of needs by Bradshaw (1972), they are 'felt needs' and 'normative needs'. Bradshaw (1972) defines *normative need* as needs which is defined by expert and *felt need* which is limited by individual perceptions and knowledge. Thus, in the context of this study, *Felt needs* are needs which are expressed by the individual because of their perception (which derives from their inexperience or their lacking of enough experience in particular PD foci). Meanwhile, *normative needs* are such needs derive from the norms or what they believe a teacher should need to be able to serve their function professionally. Normative needs does not mean derived from the respondents' lacking of enough experience but rather it derives from their experience that teachers in general may needs particular PD foci.

These three teachers mention similar needs on knowledge of EFL teaching strategies and national curriculum. AL feels he needs to know about curriculum and EFL teaching strategies. He implies that as an early teacher, curriculum knowledge help him to know the objective and the content scope for his class and EFL strategies knowledge help him to have variation in teaching; to keep his classes interesting. Meanwhile, AS and BU agree that all teachers have to know about curriculum and EFL teaching strategies and they need to be active in improving their knowledge. However, this similarity is not really similar needs, because AL's need of curriculum is *felt need*; he needs it because he needs to know about it more or that he does not have it enough. Meanwhile AS's and BU's need of curriculum knowledge is *normative need*. It is not because they need it in the sense they lack of it, but they need it as general teachers' needs; to show the standard or norm of what teachers should know based on their experience.

Related to the need of national curriculum knowledge, Kennedy and McKay's survey finding (2011) indicates identification of need related to Curriculum for Excellent (CfE) goes up slightly with the year of experience. To this extent, the difference between the current study and

Kennedy and McKay's perhaps lies on the reason why this result happens. Kennedy and McKay describe the finding as the indication that recent qualified teachers (early teachers) are more confident with CfE to imply that the senior teachers are less confident. Meanwhile, in this study, there is an indication that the senior teacher (BU) is motivated to know more about curriculum so that he can guide other junior teacher related with curriculum. This is consistent with BU's need on the knowledge of how to coach and leadership development. Thus, the finding of this study suggest that the more senior a teacher is, the more motivation he has to improve his knowledge, to share his knowledge and help other teachers.

The study suggests there is an association between teachers' length of service year and their CPD needs. As the year of service increases, the need for content subject matter, students' behavior management and emotional self control decreases; meanwhile, the need for sharing the experience increases. Thus, in-service training program can see the length of service years of the participants to predict what they may need. Thus, diversity in-service training or on-the job training curriculums may facilitate teachers effectively

There is a tendency that new teacher's PD needs (AL) are majorly supported by personal learning. Similarly, Turner (2006) found that informal learning has important role in improving early teacher's professional growth. The current study suggests that the unstable employment status of early teacher indirectly influences teacher to focus his professional development activities through informal learning such as book reading, web browsing and joining online course.

## Conclusion

Early teachers tend to have major needs in professional and pedagogical area such as content of subject matter and how to manage students' behavior. Meanwhile, more senior teachers have needs centered on social competence such as how to work with others and on building ability to coach the junior teachers such as leadership development and skills in analyzing and evaluating pedagogical issue. In other words, early teachers struggle shaping their professionalism in content and teaching skills area; while, more senior teachers who have more experiences struggle in increasing skills in sharing their knowledge to other junior teachers.

In general, there is a tendency that as the year of service year increases *felt needs* to support professional and pedagogical decreases and *felt needs* to support social competence increases. Thus, this study suggests that teachers with different length of service years have different needs. Therefore, diversity curriculum of PD program should carefully address these different needs.

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