

EXPLORING THE CONTRIBUTION OF MASTER'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAM ON TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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Abstract

Teacher professional learning (TPL) has been considered a significant need to strengthen teachers' professional growth, which in turn fosters high-quality teaching and enhances students' learning experiences. It has become a prominent interest in education around the globe, including in Indonesia. However, little is known about the contribution of a university program, especially a Master's program, towards TPL in the Indonesian context. This study aims to investigate the contribution of the Master's English Language Education (MELE) Program towards TPL on graduate students who have become teachers at once. The data were collected from graduate students of the program. A focus group was conducted with nine representatives of two classes that were categorized into two different groups. Constant comparison analysis was used as the data analysis method. The findings revealed three important themes namely applying knowledge into practice; transforming teaching through teachers' self-inquiry; and improving knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward academic publication. The paper also presents the empirical evidence that takes place during the program and how it contributes to their professionalism.

Keywords: professional development, teacher education, teacher professional learning

Introduction

Teacher professional learning (TPL) has been given prominent attention over the years (Akiba & Liang, 2016; Ping et al., 2021; Popp & Goldman, 2016; Tam, 2015). In TPL, teachers are engaged in continuous professional learning activities that are crucial for the improvement of knowledge, beliefs, and instructional practices (Akiba, 2012). The process requires teachers to undergo effective activities such as working together with others and critically evaluating their teaching practices in an ongoing, timely, reflective, collaborative, and intensive environment (Mostafa, 2021). It is expected to result in positive changes for both teachers and students. In this idea, teachers do not simply improve the quality of their teaching skills but focus on making significant contributions to student

learning (Stoll & Louis, 2007). Therefore, TPL has been considered a significant need to strengthen teachers' professional growth, which in turn fosters high-quality teaching and enhances students' learning experiences.

Since TPL is essential to promote teachers' development and contribute to effective collective practices with a high degree of professionalism (Boeskens et al., 2020), many experts have published empirical works to assist teachers with the process. Literature shows that TPL can be conducted through two different approaches: formal and informal (Mostafa, 2021). In formal learning, teachers are involved in courses, seminars, workshops, etc. Meanwhile, self-study without monitored outcomes, peer exchange, and collaboration are some instances that tend to be less formal and take place in teachers' workplaces (Boeskens et al., 2020). Although they seem to be different, they have the same crucial elements to be attained including (a) teachers as the recipient and providers of TPL, (b) schools, and (c) systems that can shape teachers' professionalism through formal involvement (Boeskens et al., 2020). TPL then can be facilitated not only through their role as a teacher and involvement in the school environment but also through the system that can shape them with professionalism. Hence, TPL is likely to be actualized through many activities by considering all the elements to be fulfilled. The significance of TPL has been increasingly growing, proven by numerous previous studies. Research on TPL, professional learning activities, and professional learning communities (PLCs), e.g., professional development programs, teacher collaborations, university courses, professional conferences, and individual learning activities have been previously undertaken. They were directed at different contexts such as centering around teacher educators in the Netherlands and China (Kwakman, 2003; Ping et al., 2021; Tam, 2015) and English language arts in America (Popp & Goldman, 2016). They mainly focused on investigating the TPL of elementary, secondary, and higher education teachers.

In the Indonesian context, TPL has been gaining recognition. As per government decree No. 62/2013, teachers are required to obtain professional certification through teacher professional training and education (known as PPG [*Program Pendidikan Profesi Guru*]) provided by the Indonesian government to improve their teaching quality (Permendikbud, 2013). However, several researchers (e.g., Komariah et al., 2019; Kuswandono, 2013; Trilaksono et al., 2019) have investigated TPL as part of teacher professional development (TPD), proving that teachers' professionalism can be improved in many other ways. Literature indicates that TPL through pre-service teachers' reflection and online training has been conducted (e.g., (Bamrungsin & Khampirat, 2022; Kuswandono, 2013). Moreover, a study of PLC, a new term that is argued to replace TPD, has been conducted in high schools in Eastern Indonesia (Trilaksono et al., 2019) to explore the most effective PLCs by school principals and teachers. In addition to PLCs, academic supervision as part of the activity was also conducted to improve teachers' performance (Komariah et al., 2019). The existing evidence suggests that TPL has become a prominent interest in Indonesian education. However, it signifies that little is known about the contribution of a university program, especially a Master's program, towards TPL in the Indonesian context.

For these reasons, this study aims to investigate the contribution of the Master's English Language Education (MELE) Program towards TPL to graduate students who have had dual roles both as teachers and students at the same time.

Thus, it attempts to answer the following question: In what ways does the MELE program contribute to the TPL? This study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by exploring the empirical evidence that takes place throughout the program and how it contributes to teachers' professionalism. The term TPL in this study refers to some main categories of professional learning frameworks proposed by Ping et al. (2021). The present study used the adapted version in which the order was reorganized to help answer the research question more logically. They include three main focuses namely (1) 'reason' referring to the intention of being involved in the program, e.g., personal ambition, professional role transition, and external requirements; (2) 'content' referring to what teachers have been learning, e.g., knowledge base, professional identity, research and reflection; and (3) 'activities' indicating the projects, tasks, and other activities to be completed.

Method

Research design

This study was qualitative in nature, with a focus group approach. A focus group is used to gain an understanding of a group of people's experiences, meanings, attitudes, opinions, knowledge, and/or beliefs of the issues under question (McLafferty, 2004). Thus, a focus group in this study was intended to generate more elaborative explanations from a particular group of people who experience a similar process.

Participants and sampling

The data were collected from graduate students of the MELE program at a state university in the Special Territory of Yogyakarta, class of 2021. This batch was selected because the students were currently undergoing the second semester of their study when this research was conducted. The first two semesters were the important period when most of the theoretical and practical courses were given. In the program, there were three different classes with a population of around 90 students. However, only 9 students (10%) were selected as the sample. The selection criteria were based on two underlying reasons: (1) convenience sampling because they happened to be available and accessible at that time (Cohen et al., 2018), and (2) dual roles status both as a student and a teacher. The time constraint was also the underlying factor for selecting the sample. To avoid confusion, the participants are referred to as 'teachers' for the rest of the sections.

After having been selected, they were divided into two mini focus groups, each consisting of 4 members, that were categorized based on their classes (class B and C). Unfortunately, those from class A could not be interviewed because most of them had resigned and focused on being full-time students. The groups are referred to as Group 1 and Group 2 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Sample distribution of participating teachers

Group	Name (Pseudonym)	Teaching Experience	
1	Ms. Andita	Non-formal education (NFE)	1 year
	Ms. Ilsa	Junior secondary school (JSS)	3 years
	Ms. Dian	NFE	8 years
	Mr. Dendra	JSS	1 year
2	Ms. Indri	JSS (<i>Madrasah Tsanawiyah</i>)	3 years

Group	Name (Pseudonym)	Teaching Experience
	Ms. Elsa	Higher education
	Ms. Rara	SHS
	Mr. Majid	JSS

Furthermore, McLafferty (2004) asserted that focus groups do not always require a large number of participants, but can also be in the range of four to six participants. Focus groups can also be used when the topic needs to be explored in greater depth and when participants have long and substantial experiences to share with the group (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). In this study, they had both similar and different characteristics. Their status as teachers and students showed the homogenous characteristics of the group. Meanwhile, they were heterogeneous in terms of the level of education they were teaching, and the years of teaching experience they had. The heterogeneity allows the teachers to produce rich information, while their homogeneity facilitates rapport among them (McLafferty, 2004).

Data collection

Before collecting the data, a consent form was given to the teachers. It consisted of the consent form and background information related to their age, education history, and teaching experience. It is important to dig deeper and know the participants before getting involved in the study. It is also useful for the interpretation of the findings that might be influenced by the teachers' background. The primary data were collected from focus groups. This technique is designed to solicit information, perceptions, and attitudes from the participants who possess similar experiences of the phenomena under the study (Kelly, 2003). It was a guided interview because the first researcher acted as the facilitator. The facilitator is recommended to know the participants to build better rapport so the discussion can be more enjoyable and fluid (Kelly, 2003). The questions were adapted from the quantitative instruments by Ping et al. (2021) that were reconstructed into qualitative questions.

To validate the instruments, a pilot focus group was conducted using a convenience sample of two graduate students of the program who used to teach English and two English teachers in the field. The purpose was to test the consent form and the focus-group guides as well as to evaluate the quality of the questions and the length of time required to obtain meaningful information (McLafferty, 2004). The results indicated the following refinement. Since the consent form used Google Forms to collect the data, questions that required answers in the form of 'date' were changed into the format of the short essay answer to make it more accessible to different devices. Moreover, the questions regarding education history were revised by including the terms 'graduate' and 'undergraduate' to articulate the clarity of the questions.

As for the focus-group guides, there were initially seven questions comprising: one question about the reason, two questions to explore the content, and four questions regarding the activities of TPL. However, one question from the content and activity overlapped. Thus, they were simplified into one question and given at the end of the interview as the closing remark. Likewise, since the research focused on the MELE program, concrete examples such as the names of courses, webinars, workshops, etc. had to be mentioned before the beginning of the

questions, especially for the questions related to content and activity. Overall, the focus group required at least a 1-hour duration to obtain meaningful information.

Data analysis techniques

The focus groups were transcribed and analyzed using a constant comparison analysis (CCA). CCA was initially proposed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 to generate a theory in the grounded study. Nonetheless, it can recently be utilized to generate a set of themes. CCA was used because there was more than one focus group analyzed in this study. It aims to gain saturation from data in general and across groups in particular (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008). The procedures included three major steps (a) open coding to break the data into smaller chunks; (b) axial coding to group the codes into similar categories, and (c) selective coding to develop one or more themes that represent the content of each group. In these manners, the coding process was triangulated through three different categorizations.

Findings and Discussion

As data were analyzed and themes were identified, the variability of responses to the research question stood out. As a result, three major themes emerged, depicting the contributions of MELE to TPL. Initially, 135 codes, that emerged from the open coding analysis, were derived from the two focus groups. Then, in the axial coding, 6 themes were constructed with the reduction in the number of the codes, 59 in total. Finally, three major themes, as the umbrella representing both data, were constructed. They were (1) applying knowledge into practice, (2) transforming teaching through teachers' self-inquiry, and (3) improving knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward academic publication (see Table 2 for more details).

Table 2. The contributions of MELE to TPL

Themes	Codes
Applying knowledge to practice	Developing assessment tasks/test items based on the principle of Bloom's Taxonomy Developing syllabi and learning materials that reflect students, language, and institution needs and 21 st -century demands
Transforming teaching through teachers' self-inquiry	Deepening knowledge through various workshops that are based on needs and cases Reading books or journal articles as additional references Utilizing social media for innovative teaching e.g., YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and the internet Joining organization for teachers' association
Improving knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards academic publication	Deepening knowledge and skills in scientific writing through scientific writing and publication workshops

Applying knowledge to practice

The first theme indicated that the knowledge gained during the study could be applied to their pedagogical practices. There was no doubt that all courses offered had benefits for academic and professional development. However, some of them had a direct positive impact on the process of teaching, especially the courses covering the issues of syllabus and materials development as well as English language assessment. The details will be more elucidated in the following paragraphs along with some focus-group excerpts.

It was found that three courses benefited the teachers the most. Two of them were closely related to the syllabus and materials development, called English Language Teaching and Technology (ELTT) and English Curriculum and Materials Development (ECAMD). The findings signified apparent reasons for this. For non-formal and private higher education institutions, many aspects from syllabi to learning materials were to be developed by either the teachers, curriculum developers, or both based on different needs. On the other hand, it is known that for formal state education, e.g., junior and senior high schools, many aspects have been regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture, such as through graduate competence standards (No. 20/2016), content standards (No. 21/2016), process standards (No. 22/2016), and core and basic competence standards (No. 37/2018); Yet, teachers are still required to develop lesson plans accordingly (No. 14/2019). Although some e-books have been provided, the decision to select additional textbooks is also further regulated (No. 8/2016) (Permendikbud, 2013, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2018, 2019). Because of these needs, they must be equipped with the basic knowledge and skills to fulfill their duty.

Excerpt 1

What I found useful was Study Pack... I didn't know about CEFR, but I do now. It slightly opens up my perspective. -Mr. Majid

Excerpt 2

I'm more into ELTT, the one with ICT integration. It's in semester 1, isn't it? As we're currently in the 21st-century era, I can directly implement the materials (with ICT) to the students. I had learned about the CEFR principles from the lecturer before developing the materials. I also had to be creative so the students wouldn't feel bored. -Ms. Ilsa

Excerpt 3

There was a new extracurricular activity at my school that didn't exist before. The school gave me and my colleague a mandate to teach there, so we had to make a new syllabus I believe sooner or later, the materials from ECAMD (need analysis and syllabus design) will be useful for my professional work. - Ms. Indri

Further, ELTT and ECAMD courses have contributed to deepening their understanding of basic knowledge of developing syllabi and learning materials. Excerpts 1 and 2 showed that the teachers were facilitated with the ability to develop lesson plans focusing on different language skills along with a study pack (learning materials). In addition to the study pack, after the teachers had learned that the materials should be designed by considering the learning objectives, they also eventually realized that they had to follow the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) which is an international standard for describing language ability (Council of Europe, 2022). It means that the student's language proficiency

level was another indicator to be taken into account. Since ELTT focused on technology, ICT integration was another equally important point to consider, especially to conform with the 21st-century demands. In excerpt 3, they were equipped with the skills of a more complex process such as developing a syllabus for one particular program, designing lesson plans for one semester, and developing language materials appropriately. The skills were useful because they were used in the development of curricular activities at the participant's school. It can be seen that these courses are interrelated and allow teachers to see the connection between the skills they have learned and real-life teaching purposes.

The second issue that was frequently encountered concentrated on the assessment process. It is in line with a previous study reporting that assessment tends to be neglected because it is the last part of educational practices that seem to be insignificant (Fulcher, 2012). Meanwhile, in reality, students' progress and achievement, learning objectives, and program evaluation cannot be measured without appropriate assessment instruments (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018). Excerpts 4 and 5 showed that the challenges were indeed evident. Teachers were required to develop appropriate test items for mid and final exam purposes based on the demands of their institutions. Thus, the course of Language Assessment brought to light the skills to properly select valid and credible assessment instruments as well as to design and develop appropriate ones. The highlighted principle that they could practically implement was the development and organization of the test items from easy to difficult, following Bloom's Taxonomy principles.

Excerpt 4

The useful one was Language Assessment, such as how to arrange test items from the easiest to the most difficult ones.

I usually made my test items for mid-semester exams, so it must be arranged based on that principle. -Mr. Dendra

Excerpt 5

(It's) the assessment part because I was given a project in my workplace to develop mid- and final exam questions. Well, the knowledge is pretty useful here. -Ms. Elsa

In conclusion, creating a syllabus for one particular program, designing lesson plans, and developing learning materials entail a complex process that requires teachers' conceptualizations of their knowledge base for teaching. Such conceptualization influences the quality of teachers' teaching and learning process. Moreover, to ensure the achievement of the learning objectives, designing an assessment plan cannot be neglected. Assessment instruments and processes have to be carefully designed to ensure the effectiveness and coherence of the whole procedure.

Transforming teaching through teachers' self-inquiry

Although the teachers enrolled in the study program for a number of reasons, including but not limited to knowledge infusion, the result indicated that the classroom educational practices were not the only environment in which learning took place and were not necessarily sufficient. They found their ways of taking advantage of activities outside of the class as ways to transform their teaching.

Therefore, the second theme showed teachers' self-inquiry in terms of figuring out new ideas and methodologies, testing them, and revising their perceptions of teaching and learning (Canh, 2004). They also showed the process of learning how to learn, how to solve problems, and how to use reflection and self-assessment (Chuprina & Zaher, 2011). Table 3 shows the activities they willingly participated, in that have helped them grow in terms of deepening their knowledge of the pedagogical understanding focusing on language teaching methodology and innovative learning media.

The findings indicated that the process of the inquiry was driven because of personal reasons. The activities included joining workshops and reading books. As the following excerpts 6 to 8 showed, the workshops they participated in were based on the necessity of their classroom situation, their interest, and the practicality of the workshops. Practical workshops could be easily linked to the teachers' experiences in the classroom. Had the workshops not presented the materials that were needed, they would have become insignificant to them. Therefore, despite all available workshops organized by the faculty, they would not be compelling for teachers if their needs or interests were not fulfilled. Additionally, some workshops were also facilitated by the English Teacher Forum (*Musyawaharah Guru Mata Pelajaran* [MGMP]) specifically for the practical topics that were required in the classroom, e.g., developing test items. However, although workshops were attended on top of the primary classroom activities, they were still not adequate for their classroom transformation process. Thus, excerpt 9 showed that reading books were also needed to deepen their understanding of the topics of their interest.

Excerpt 6

My reason for joining workshops was because of my needs and personal interests. I would look for the one I need. If it didn't fit, I wouldn't participate. If I don't like linguistics, for instance, then I won't register. (It is) based on my needs. -Ms. Dian

Excerpt 7

...as speakers, they gave more practical materials. Let's say, there were one or two cases that were closely related to what I experienced. Then, I could implement everything right away - well not everything, but I got an overview of what I had to do if I faced the issues of students, let's say, whose camera was off all the time and didn't give any responses. In my opinion, a webinar with such practical materials is really useful. I've participated in such a workshop. -Ms. Elsa

Excerpt 8

At school, there was an MGMP (English Teacher Forum). I was provided with a workshop about how to develop test items. -Mr. Dendra

Excerpt 9

Another self-development activity, it's reading books.... -Mr. Majid

It can be inferred that teachers have received input from various endeavors. Despite all the theoretical and practical knowledge that they have learned, classroom problems were indeed unavoidable. Therefore, other practical ways were discovered to help them solve the issues. One of them was through the use of social media and the internet (see excerpts 10 to 13).

Social media, e.g., YouTube, Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp, have significantly contributed to the teaching-learning transformation. First and foremost, on top of providing various topics, YouTube was also one of the social media apps that could be easily accessed in any place and at any moment. As for Instagram, it has provided teachers with features that could improve their educational practices such as educational hacks, educational reels, and the like. Even if they were not active Instagram users, they could still use it for other purposes. Nonetheless, the teaching tips on this app were not presented by Indonesians, thereby, leaving them with the need to adapt the information based on their contextual situations. Moreover, it is impressive to see how WhatsApp and Telegram could be utilized to connect teachers in joining professional teacher associations, such as the English for Specific Purposes (EPS) group. It suggests that more association groups can be discovered to improve teachers' professionalism in the aspects of their needs and interests.

Excerpt 10

The easiest and the most flexible one is to look for innovations and tutorials on YouTube. -Ms. Andita

Excerpt 11

I agree with the use of YouTube because it helps to find information a lot easier... -Mr. Dendra

Excerpt 12

Instagram is the same. I usually watch education hacks so I can get many ideas. Although the Instagram reel is only one minute, it teaches me how to teach. I'm not an active Instagram user, but I am using it to find useful information. Thus, I followed a lot of educational hacks on how to teach kids. However, most of the teachers are Caucasians, not Indonesians -Ms. Dian

Excerpt 13

...I happened to join several groups on Telegram and WhatsApp. I joined the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) Teachers group on WhatsApp too... -Mr. Majid

The findings demonstrate that they have become effectively independent in solving the issues in their educational process. Although the MELE program has provided them with access to many beneficial workshops, it does not necessarily provide them with direct solutions. It implies that many other ways have been utilized for problem-solving purposes. If one proposed solution does not work, they are likely able to undergo another cycle or find different ways to find solutions. Most importantly, they have already got the skills that are required to find the information for the sake of improving the quality of teaching for student learning.

Improving knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards academic publication

In addition to the teaching-learning process, the courses have also contributed to improving teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards academic publication. As scholars, they were encouraged to conduct small-scale research as part of their investigation concerning the issues in ELT. Although the thesis was the biggest picture of all, small-scale research projects have been emphasized since the first semester of the program. Research is important in the graduate program because it promotes the process of shaping future experts in the field by obtaining

new knowledge, solving theoretical and practical problems, self-inquiry, and self-realization (Ruchina et al., 2015). Because of these situations, many publications workshops were provided by the faculty and university to improve their academic writing skills.

Excerpts 14 to 16 reported that in addition to the program courses and workshops related to teaching, many also joined publication or academic writing workshops. The reasons for joining such events varied from personal interest, and university to working requirements. Through these workshops, they were facilitated with the skills to find research gaps including their novelty, select credible journals, decide on research procedures, and even complete the article as a whole. Moreover, the importance of research can also be seen in how the workshops were promoted by the lecturer at the faculty and university levels.

Excerpt 14

I sometimes participated in the workshops that were shared by Mrs Ana and that's because of my personal interest. The topics were mostly about writing articles, research, and the like. The last time I participated in a workshop was the one whose speaker was a researcher from Gadjah Mada University. -Mr. Majid

Excerpt 15

During my Master's study, the workshops and trainings that I participated in were about publications...

...most of them discussed how to select a journal, how to find a research gap through several sites, the procedure, etc. -Ms. Andita

Excerpt 16

Then, for scientific writing, the material was coincidentally similar to the class I had to teach, paper presentation. Thus, I learned something so I could teach others. -Ms. Elsa

The findings demonstrate that the requirements of conducting small-scale research projects were one of the reasons that have encouraged them to willingly participate in academic writing workshops and learn from them. Additionally, the available workshops were also beneficial to deepening the understanding of those who are interested in scientific writing and need it for professional purposes.

Discussion

The findings have shown that the teachers had different reasons underlying the decision to continue their studies while working as English teachers. The causes included (a) personal reasons, e.g., internal motivation, the need for personal knowledge infusion through an effective environment, and failed plans, as well as (b) external reasons, viz., parents' encouragement, work requirements, supportive working environment, and the needs to fulfill social demands for better career opportunities. These results are in line with the reasons reported by Ping et al. (2021) and can be categorized into three including personal ambition, external requirements, and professional reasons.

They also have revealed to answer the research question in two ways. The contributions of the MELE program to TPL are closely related to improving teachers' professionalism in teaching and their skills in academic writing. The improvement of their teaching professionalism is related to the content area of

professional identity (Ping et al., 2021). As future educators, they understand their workload and find ways to keep up with the changes within. As for their skills in academic writing, it can also be associated with the content area of research and reflection (Ping et al., 2021). They are expected to develop research profiles, conduct small-scale research, and improve their teaching practices.

These are also in line with the MELE program exit objectives. Upon the completion of the program, graduates of the program are expected to be able to (a) develop English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in response to the current trends including EFL teaching and learning, curriculum, materials, and media; (b) develop professional performance reflected in the depth and breadth of analysis and the comprehensiveness of problem-solving; and (c) solve EFL education problems through research using inter-/multi-disciplinary perspectives (Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, 2022). Therefore, the improvement of the teachers is the reflection of the program's exit objectives.

Throughout the program, there are at least two courses that are directly beneficial for the teachers. First of all, the advantages of the two courses are related to the improved teaching practices. It is proven by the skills, e.g., designing a syllabus, developing lesson plans and learning materials, and designing assessment instruments, that can be immediately implemented in diverse educational situations their contexts. It shows that the courses offer contextual and meaningful learning experiences that are important for long-term retention (Brown & Lee, 2015). Then, teachers' professionalism is promoted in a way that they focus on building their capacity to understand subject matter and pedagogy and guide the development of student learning (Borko et al., 2010). Therefore, it is important to design a process that promotes teachers' professionalism in a practical, experiential, theoretical, and inspirational manner to help them have more knowledge in ELT, and have increased practice in using the skills (Prabjandee & Fang, 2022).

The improved teaching practices through the program courses are related to the content area of the knowledge base (Ping et al., 2021). The knowledge base includes, but is not limited to, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of curriculum design, and curriculum materials. Understanding these aspects will be practical for the teachers' profession as their base knowledge and their work at school.

Moreover, it is shown that they attempted to find solutions to classroom problems through the use of social media, the internet, workshops, books, and the like. It demonstrates that graduate school encourages students to be involved in self-inquiry outside of the classroom context because the answer to every problem cannot be necessarily found in the MELE classes. Conducting self-study is proven to be one of the popular and effective ways to improve teachers' professionalism (Ping et al., 2021). Moreover, the core of TPL is about "teacher learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students' growth" (Avalos, 2011, p. 10). It indicates that one of the reasons for TPL occurred because of classroom challenges that hinder the process of teaching. It then requires students to be the agents of change for educational transformation (Bowden, 2014), who get involved cognitively and emotionally to re-examine their beliefs and enact some alternatives for the changes (Avalos, 2011). These changes can improve instructional practice (Akiba, 2012) and facilitate students with high-quality learning experiences.

Furthermore, the program study requires them to conduct small-scale research that stimulates them to participate in research-related professional development such as academic writing workshops. Teachers can be assisted in such practice by researching, evaluating, and identifying teachers' and students' professional needs about the needs of the institutions (Kabilan & Veratharaju, 2013). Therefore, the need for research is promoted because it builds up their passion for inquiry, updates their knowledge, develops their intellectual potential, and provides tools to tackle educational problems with creativity and confidence (Ruchina et al., 2015). The successful outcomes of their TPL can be identified from the development of research skills, e.g., critical thinking, creativity, reasoning abilities, increased awareness of educational practices, renewed enthusiasm for teaching, and continued commitment to professional development (Kabilan & Veratharaju, 2013). In short, teachers' professional growth is achieved through examining their teaching practices systematically and gaining increased experience.

Despite the findings, this study has some limitations. Firstly, since this study incorporates a small number of participants for the focus groups, the generalization of the findings of the study must be carefully drawn. Therefore, it is recommended that further research is conducted with a bigger number of participants; thus, researchers can get richer data and more triangulation processes to validate the findings. Moreover, the teachers' current work experience varied from teaching junior to non-formal education. Further study can aim at investigating those who are teaching at the same educational levels. Different methods, data collection, and analysis methods can also be used. Despite the limitations of the study, it is hoped that more courses at the graduate level can provide teachers with more practical experiences that they can directly contribute to student learning.

Conclusion

The present study confirms that the MELE program has contributed to TPL, especially in teachers' improved teaching practices. Despite the case, important findings need to be highlighted. In the TPL process, teachers need more than just fact-based knowledge, but also learn about content and pedagogy, and then implement theory into practice. They also must take on new roles in which they are key actors in directing and arranging their learning processes that contribute to professional development. All professional activities, from courses of the program, workshops, and research, to self-inquiry practices that have been undertaken, are vigorously connected to the demands for continuous improvement of teaching practices which in turn fosters quality teaching for student growth.

These findings have significant implications for students with single and dual roles as well as lecturers of the programs. Regarding the teachers' dual roles, supervision can be given to conduct a mini research project, especially in solving problems they are currently experiencing in the classrooms. Confusion is indeed inevitable when it comes to deciding educational issues to be investigated. Thus, encouraging teachers to think of their classrooms' problems can give more contextual and empirical evidence to be solved. Moreover, these dual roles can be favorable circumstances for students with a single role. Working collaboratively, especially at the beginning of working on a research paper, is a great opportunity not only to develop their research skills but also to gain more experience in creating high-quality learning.

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