EFL Teachers Experiences in a Digital Technology-Based Community of Practice as a Continuing Professional Development

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ABSTRACT

EFL teachers are demanded to develop their competence and professional experiences to improve their professional practices in this digital era. In addition, the demand for digital technology-based teaching increases both online and blended learning in this digital era. Studies on digital technology-based CoP for teachers' professional development had been done with different focuses, i.e. lesson study, TPACK, reflection in various platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, mobile-based programs. This CoP is the blend of online and offline to equip teachers with different technology tools, such as Google Docs, Xournal, Google Jamboard, e-portfolio, and smart class. This study aims to describe and explain the learning experiences the teachers have after engaging in a digital technology-based Community of Practice. This study employs a qualitative research approach. The data were collected through observation, Focus Group Discussion, and teacher reflection and analyzed using the content analysis convention (Krippendorff 2013). The argument built in this research is that teachers' engagement in digital technology-based Community of Practice supports their digital technology-based teaching skills and their good perception of digital technology in EFL class. The manifestation of Wenger's CoP model in this research may also become a kind of example of implementing digital technology-based professional development practice aimed at facilitating teachers

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Dewi, N. M., & Tarwiyah, S. *EFL Teachers Experiences in a Digital Technology-Based Community of Practice as a Continuing Professional Development*

185

INTRODUCTION

The quality of teaching has become a significant concern for any educational institution. Diaz-Maggioli[1] defined professional development as an ongoing process that teachers should learn and adjust teaching to meet learning needs. With different learning needs, expectation, and preferences of teachers, professional development had been proven to potentially direct to the development of professionalism[2]. Klink[3], in addition, recognized that professional acts can only be engaged through professional development carried out the entire teachers' career.

To make professional development more successful, a community of practice is considered as an effective event that can be made by teachers since they can share what they do and concern with others in a group[4]. Community of Practice (CoP) is a capacity to support teachers' transformation process, practices, and innovation that involves development of identity, relationship building, and social structure production[5].Continuous meeting. Therefore, is crucial because Indonesian teachers typically require direct meeting in a collaborative professional development to discuss important topics related to teaching for their professional growth[6]. However, the establishment of CoP for professional development in English language teaching context of Indonesian teachers has not yet to be investigated, especially the one with digital technology setting.

To fill the gap stated above, the current study examines how digital technology-based learning community support EFL teachers' experiences in language teaching practice. CoP for professional development will be significant for teachers in this study because of the requirement of online classes during Covid-19 outbreak.

This study is aimed to describe learning experiences the teachers have after engaging in and as the representation of their engagement in digital technology-based Community of

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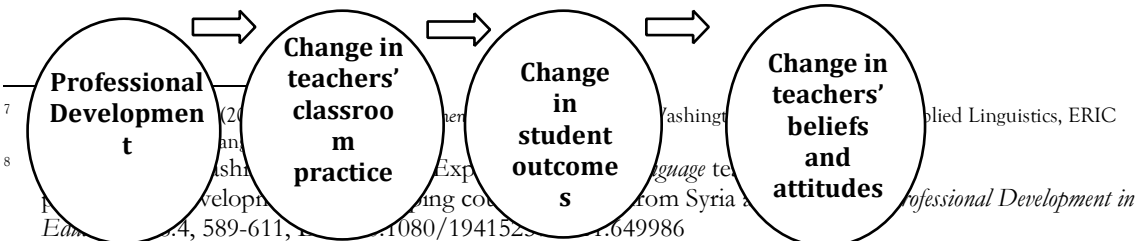
186

Practice project implementation. There may be different learning experiences viewed from the teachers' perspectives. Teachers' engagement and interest may influence the number of experiences the teachers have.

Professional Development

Professional development refers to teachers voluntarily engagement to learn and adjust the teaching conducted to meet students' needs, which is varied in forms and developed over the time[7]. The models of professional development depend on the nature and the kind of involvement made by teachers, such as peer coaching, study group, dialogue journals, peer, coaching, study groups, dialogue journals, professional development portfolios, mentoring and participatory practitioner research[8]. To be effective, professional development should involve learning communities, leadership, adequate resources, and data, learning design, implementation, and outcomes[9].

Professional development provides access to different resources and expertise, so it should be done in a long term and comprehensively by involving others through collaboration toward goals set before, but administration with adequate funds and participants[10]. It cannot be denied, tools are needed for professional development training and practice, including technology. Technology had been viewed as a means that leads to an end, not as the end itself[11] and the activities made should not differ. As resulting from training and formal qualification, the owner of a profession is expected to work professionally. Professional means "engaged in an activity as paid occupation rather than as an amateur"[12].

A teacher is a professional who needs to always develop his competences to meet the requirement of ideal teaching in his age. Based on the process of his professional development, teachers may fall into ". those who have twenty years' expert. Here is the model of teacher 'change for continuing professional development:

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9   Learning Forward. (2012). *What we stand for: Definition of professional development*. Retrieved from http://www.learningforward.org/standfor/definition.cfm.
10 Richardson, V., (2003). The dilemmas of professional development. *Phi delta kappan*, 84 (5), 401–406.
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Model of Teacher Change (Guskey, 2002, p. 381)

Creemers[13] uses effective teaching instead of effective and efficient learning process. He mentions nine clues of effective teaching, i.e. (1) having positive attitude, (2) developing pleasant social/ psychological classroom climate, (3) having high expectations of pupil achievement, (4) prioritizing lesson clarity, (5) managing time effectively, (6) structuring lesson strongly, (7) using varied kinds of teaching methods, (8) using and incorporating pupil ideas, (9) using appropriate and variety of questioning.

Renandya[14] confirms three reasons for professional development, especially for Teacher of English as a foreign language. They are knowledge change (grammar, phonology, vocabulary, discourse analysis, syntax, etc.), the different needs of teachers at different times (novice teacher, senior teacher, supervisor, materials developer, testing specialists, etc.), and the different needs of schools at different times.

Teacher education and training, as the representation of professional development may be aimed at: (1) learning to use effective classroom management strategies, (2) adapting the text book to suit learner needs, (3) using effective questioning techniques, (4) giving effective oral and written feedback, (5) dealing with less able learners, (6) learning to conduct a reliable oral proficiency test, (7) understanding the process on language, (8) understanding the change of roles according to the needs of the learners, methods etc., (9) understanding to make appropriate instructional decisions, (10) employing different styles of teaching, (11) reviewing theories, principles, and practices of language teaching.

Teacher professional development covers professional, pedagogical, interpersonal, and social competence. Professional development through coaching program in this research is focused on pedagogical competence. In order to reach the competence, it must generate three levels of results, i.e. knowledge and skills result from participation, improved teaching and leadership, and increased student learning and achievement [15]. It is highly recommended for

13   Farikah, Nurkamto, J. & Sofwan, A. (2013). Improving the Students' Competence in Developing a Paragraph of Discussion Texts Using Theme-Rheme Negotiation with Cooperative Learning Method. *Jurnal Pengembangan Humaniora*, 13 (1), 1-11

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188

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those who devote their life to be teachers. There is no reason for not developing professionalism as teachers if the teachers want to be usable, facilitate learners to learn more and better. This awareness must be planted to pre-service and in-service teachers.

Community of Practice (CoP)

Community of Practice (CoP) is the community that gives its members an environment to share views about what they do and how their views are meaningful for their surroundings[16]. It can sustain the process of teachers' transformation and professional practices, even innovation[17] with dynamic, rich, and complex processes[18]. To establish CoP, three crucial dimensions are identified namely *mutual engagement, a joint negotiated enterprise, and a shared repertoire of negotiable resources* accumulated over time[19]. He argued that mutual engagement referred to networking and building a relationship on a platform where teachers could actively involve. A joint enterprise was about two aspects that were sharing the same goals for improving student learning and negotiating an enterprise involving teaching communications and team working. Finally, negotiation over a shared repertoire was about exchanging ideas, providing peer feedback, as well as sharing reflections on teaching.

There are 3 (three) crucial characteristics to propose that community is a group of people for practicing, those are:1) The Domain; It is considered as an association of work, which is not simply a staff of colleagues, but it also takes a character of a split domain of activity. 2) The Community; In conducting the member's involvement in the domain, they take part in cooperative activities and discussion, help each other, and share information. 3) The Practice; A community of practice is not only a community of interest people who like certain kinds concerned, but they are also professionals. The implementations of a community of practice in schools or educational institutions are their own legality to develop their knowledge challenges such as in teacher training as peer-to-peer professional-development activities.

A community of practice is also regarded as a group of people that having an ongoing communication, fulfilling their needs as the community's enterprise by continuously creating,

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Dewi, N. M., & Tarwiyah, S. *EFL Teachers Experiences in a Digital Technology-Based Community of Practice as a Continuing Professional Development*

189

reenacting, and improving knowledge. Some activities such as sharing thought, oral communication and physical activities can be done simultaneously and supported by tools, especially to fulfill the current demands, digital technology.

To associate practice and community, there are three dimensions of the relation by which practice is the source of coherence of a community. The three dimensions and their characteristics are as follows[20]:1) Mutual engagement. Membership is not just a matter of social category, declaring allegiance, belonging to an organization, having a title, or having personal relations with some people. 2) Joint enterprise; It results from a collective process of negotiation that reflects the full complexity of the mutual engagement. It is defined by the participants in the very process of pursuing it. 3) A shared repertoire; Through mutual engagement, participation and reification can be seamlessly interwoven.
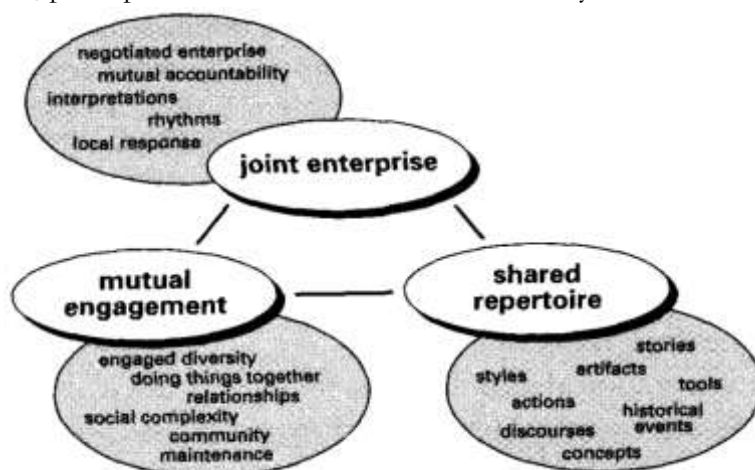
Model of Community of Practice

Another study highlighting online CoP was carried out by Anas[21].He described the ESL teachers' engagement in a Facebook-mediated communication as a means of virtual professional development (PD) community from the teachers' perspectives. The data were taken from the member's posts, comments, replies, live group chats, personal messages, likes, and shares. A micro-ethnographic study was employed. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and systemic functional linguistics (SFL) It

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[20] Wenger, Etienne. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, Community*. New York: Cambridge University Press

[21] Anas, I. (2018). Teacher Professional Development in an Online Community of Practice (OCoP): Teacher's Engagement and Participation in a Facebook-Mediated Communication (FMC). *Asian EFL Journal*, 20 (5), 113-130. http://www.asian-efl-journal.com.

Dewi, N. M., & Tarwiyah, S. *EFL Teachers Experiences in a Digital Technology-Based Community of Practice as a Continuing Professional Development*

190

functioned as a medium for a social and academic interaction which might shape a social learning culture.

Digital literacy is one component must be integrated in the teaching- learning of the 2013 Curriculum. it is explicitly mentioned in its fourteen principles; "learning which makes use of information and communication technology to enhance the efficiency and the effectiveness of learning."[22]

The research is different from this research in terms of its focus, which was Online Learning Community, and its subject, which was bigger. This research is subjected to 7 teachers with varied pedagogical competences and experiences in implementing digital applications. Online and offline communication and sharing is done to enhance the participants' digital literacy.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design (Creswell 2009)[23] by gathering data from various sources such as participants' responses, reflection, focus group discussion and interaction excerpts from discussion forum in WhatsApp's group. The group was created with the purposes of 1) uploading any teaching materials including power point, audios, even videos so teachers can share each other, 2) reporting the progress of teaching and students performance after class, which can be in the form of teaching reflection, 3) discussing and giving feedback or responses to the teaching issues shared by other teachers, 4) discussing problems or issues faced in each class right after the class session end, 5) sharing and designing individual or structured tasks for students, individually or collectively, in the class or out of class, weekly or throughout the semester.

A. Research Subject

This study was conducted in EFL Department, UIN Walisongo, Semarang for several reasons. Participants of this study are EFL teachers of the English Language Education Department at UIN Walisongo Semarang. For privacy concerns, these teachers will be pseudonyms and they will be named with Teacher 1, 2, and so forth.

B. Research Procedures

This research was carried out through the following procedure: 1) Revising research proposal by referring to the feedbacks from reviewers,2) Arranging and validating

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[22] Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional. (2013). *Permendiknas No. 22/2016 on Process Standard.* Jakarta.

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Dewi, N. M., & Tarwiyah, S. *EFL Teachers Experiences in a Digital Technology-Based Community of Practice as a Continuing Professional Development*

191

instruments,3) Socializing CoP projects and voluntarily participant assignment,4) Implementing CoP Projects and collecting data,5) Analyzing data,6) Arranging research report

The data was gathered from the interaction between both online and offline programs. Teacher reflections were used for further understanding of how the participants perceive while experiencing the digital technology-based CoP. Since this study also focuses on the interaction, the data will be also collected through a focus group discussion attended by teachers.

C. Data Analysis

The data of the study coming from different sources will be analyzed by using content analysis convention (Krippendorff, 2013)[24]. It is based on the consideration that content analysis has developed into a repertoire of methods of research that promise to yield in inferences from all kinds of verbal, pictorial, symbolic, and communication data.

The data was staged by coding and re-coding to meet consensus for re-alibility and validity purposes. Themes identification is based on the (Wenger, 1998)[25] three dimensions of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire from reflective journal, group chat interaction, and focus group discussion. The identified themes are then analyzed based on the manifested study in each three dimensions.

FINIDINGS

Teachers get some beneficial experiences after engaging in a digital technology-based community of practice, such as different learning experiences viewed from the teachers' perspectives, teachers' engagement and interest may influence the number of experiences the teachers have, and some barriers the teachers get in implementing the tools.

Learning experiences of the EFL teachers of the ELE Department of UIN Walisongo have after engaging in digital technology-based Community of Practice

After engaging in a digital technology-based community of practice, teachers got a lot of experiences of the EFL teachers in the ELE Department of UIN Walisongo seen from their reflections written. There are 6 learning experiences that are very beneficial and useful for them in the teaching and learning process as implementing Google Drive, Google Jamboard,

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[24] Krippendorff, Klaus. (2013). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

[25] Wenger, Etienne. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, Community*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Dewi, N. M., & Tarwiyah, S. *EFL Teachers Experiences in a Digital Technology-Based Community of Practice as a Continuing Professional Development*

192

Xournal, Google sites (e-Portfolio), Padlet, and Smart Class in online, offline, and blended learning. A lot of beneficial experiences gained by all the members of CoP as they write in their reflections, as stated in the table below that showing as follows:

The participants' learning experiences in the exposure of google drive

1	After getting knowledge and practice of google documents, all the members know that they can utilize the GD as cloud-based storage.
2	GD such as in Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms, can be used to carry out tasks or jobs to be more easily
3	Although they have known GD, there are many features that they didn't know such as making files that can be shared non-personally.
4	They understand more about the features of google space for documenting and document collaboration.
5	They can create documents from pdf files in GD
6	Doing some exercises make them understand more about using new features of GD
7	They have new experiences in giving comments, suggestions collaboratively.

The Participants' Learning Experiences in the Exposure of Google Jamboard

1	They practice using Google Jamboard features for presentations, making worksheets, handouts, etc. in the teaching and learning process
2	Having to know more about the use of Jamboard as an interactive display board for students' exercises
3	Creating the jamboard presentation and make it in a PDF presentation

The Participants' Learning Experiences in the Exposure of Xournal

1	*Using the google site to create an online portfolio*
2	*Google sites for student portfolio collection*
3	*Google sites for student projects*
4	*Maximizing google sites*
5	*Using google site to create an e-portfolio*

The Participants' Learning Experiences in the Exposure of Google Sites

1	Getting experiences of using xournal as a digital whiteboard with many

Dewi, N. M., & Tarwiyah, S. *EFL Teachers Experiences in a Digital Technology-Based Community of Practice as a Continuing Professional Development*

193

	features such as how to make annotations and doodles on zoom meeting, share sound, and background of powerpoint in an online presentation
2	Maximize the use of zoom by taking advantage of more features

The Participants' Learning Experiences in the Exposure of Padlet

1	Use padlets for various purposes: presentations, portfolios, modules
2	Creating a padlet
3	functions and benefits of padlet features

The Participants' Learning Experiences in the Exposure of smartclass

1	Using the smart class in this digital era is something that is really needed, therefore the ability to use smart classes is very crucial for them to support technology in education.

The data got from observation show that the participants engaged is up and down. Day 1 all participants involve in the exposure activity so that all have something to write about their learning experiences. The next day only 3 participants write about their learning experience. Day 5 their motivation is recovered. 5 students describe their experiences. Although all participants came in every session, the last day is the day with the least participation.

The last day has the least participation since there was same program from the faculty: socialization of smart class use. The participants might go to use the second chance, from the faculty. In addition, the participants might also bore with joining CoP practices, which were done twice a week in 3 weeks successively.

DISCUSSION
A. The experiences viewed from the data gained from observation

In this session, the participants practice using organizing files in Google Drive, making, and forwarding links on Google Drive, using Google Docs to translate, record voice, revise documents cooperatively.

The purpose of learning Google Jamboard is to make online class more interactive. When learning the material, the participants were guided to make attractive presentation by combining text with pictures, interesting background, text forms and attractive sticky notes. It is also possible to write or draw something spontaneously. That's why Jamboard is also called digital board.

Learning experiences, the participants got after the exposure of Xournal was using the application to put some notes, correction, feedbacks on the existing documents. The notes are not automatically integrated with the document. It only last temporarily. It is only used to support explanation or presentation. To give notes more easily, teachers need to have separated digital board and its pen, which in fact becomes the barrier in employing it.

The function of Padlet is like e-portfolio. It may content a collection of texts or documents. Each document is written separately but the link between them is clearly visible. By using Padlet, a presentation may be given differently. Padlet helps users draw a mam, write a narration, etc.

Google Sites help participants compile documents in the form of portfolio. Putting documents in e-portfolio give as easy access to readers of the portfolio owner, since they do not need to download a document before reading it. In this session, the participants were assigned make an outline of portfolio.

Some participants were triggered to socialize the use of portfolio to their students. One of them is implementing e-portfolio in teaching internship course. Students were required to put their teaching kits in the portfolio.

During the Covid-19 outbreak, the existence of smart class is essential. It makes blended learning possible. Some students are studying from home, some others are studying in class. Smart class is provided with a smart TV which functions as LCD projector and as board.

In this session the participants were engaged in operating the smart TV, starting from turning on, connecting laptop with the smart TV, accessing documents from USB, YouTube, lap top, giving notes on the existing documents, writing notes or drawing something on the board with colorful pens, erasing the notes, moving to the next board screen, and turning it off.

B. The barriers of the EFL teachers of ELE Department of UIN Walisongo have after engaging in digital technology-based Community of Practice

Some barriers faced by teachers in using the new tools and applications in the teaching and learning process, as follows:

The use of technology in education makes difficult to engage student participation in the online learning process. They also must practice more about learning and implement technology in education that supports work in their busy and limited times. They still have some difficulties in creating some questions, quizzes, and collecting assignments in GD because they seldom use it before, need a lot of practice in creating digital learning media in GD, and still confused about managing digital technology applications in the teaching and learning process. They still need more practice in implementing e-portfolio for students since it is the

Dewi, N. M., & Tarwiyah, S. *EFL Teachers Experiences in a Digital Technology-Based Community of Practice as a Continuing Professional Development*

195

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new one for some of them, a lot of help in creating learning media using Jamboard, student engagement in lectures by taking advantage of newly learned features makes teachers overworks. The activity to support professional development, especially in online teaching and learning makes teachers should keep more time for learning and practice. The material provided in a portfolio which can improve the quality of the process in e-portfolio sometimes cannot be caught by students.

The activity is very useful to improve self-quality and facilitate and make learning more interesting under technological advances, but it was not supported by a good internet signal. They still need more about technological literacy that makes them easier them to carry out the teaching and learning process using digital technology. Many new features in smartclass need continuous practicing. There are too many new applications and features as new experiences for them. It was difficult for all members to apply the teaching and learning process in class. However, with training in using smart classes, it will make it easier for them to package classes as the demand of the new era in digital technology

CONCLUSION

The Community of Practice was built by voluntarily recruiting the members, who then became the participants of this research. CoP with formal organizers was established by disseminating the results of the projects of temporary CoP. Through engaging in CoP projects the participants got many experiences in using Google Drive, Google Jamboard, Xournal, Google Sites, Padlet, and Smart Class mainly to facilitate them doing their duties in teaching. The sessions also supported their research and community service.

Regarding the process of digital technology-based Community of Practice supports the EFL teachers of ELE Department of UIN Walisongo in building their professional development, it was found that it starts from CoP material design, which is based on the needs of participants and put context and participants' belief into account. CoP course materials were designed by referring to the model of course design offered by Dubin, F. & Olshtain, E. (1986). The assessment was not planned in order not to burden the participants, as the practice stage made sure their comprehension.

Dewi, N. M., & Tarwiyah, S. *EFL Teachers Experiences in a Digital Technology-Based Community of Practice as a Continuing Professional Development*

196

participants' objectives; (3) creating the atmosphere of mutual symbiosis between participant and participant, between participant and researcher by prioritizing care besides share.

The CoP model used in this study is Wenger model. Having proven that Community of Practice projects contributed to teacher professional development, this study strengthens the theory of Community of Practice as stated by Wenger (1998). The manifestation of Wenger's CoP model in this research may also become a kind of example of implementing digital technology-based professional development practice aimed at facilitating teachers in doing their duties mainly in conducting teaching.

Finally, We would like to thank all participants, the Lecturers of English Language and Education Department, UIN Walisongo Semarang for their enthusiastic participation in this study, and LP2M of Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang, for supporting this study with DIPA BOPTN research funding.

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197

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198

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199