

# TEACHER AGENCY OF NON-FORMAL EFL INDONESIAN TEACHERS IN CURRICULUM STANDARDS IN ENGLISH EDUCATION CONTEXT

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## **Abstract**

English courses in Indonesia face stiff competition. English is in great demand in society. In light of this, English courses have their own standards in place to meet the needs of students seeking to improve their English skills. One of the English courses in Yogyakarta is well-known for its effectiveness in helping students improve their English abilities. Because having a solid curriculum applied in the course is not the only thing that matters, the capacity of the instructors to appropriate the curriculum is more interesting to explore in this research. The researcher develops research questions on curricular adaptation techniques and teacher agency development elements. Participants are selected from among senior and novice instructors. In the research, a qualitative method is used through conducting interviews with teachers on their teaching experiences. According to the conclusions of this research, teachers should envisage their students' abilities as part of their teaching preparation, assign various tasks to students depending on their level of ability, create an enjoyable English learning paradigm, and concentrate on the most relevant items to discuss. Experiences, training, weekly up-grading, teaching observations, and interactions with class advisors all contribute to their teacher agency growth.

**Keywords – curriculum, non-formal education, teacher agency**

## **Introduction**

The term of education refers to the individual learning process that leads to increased knowledge. It has a close connection to the events, ideas, and settings that take place throughout the process of learning. Other fundamentals are also involved. It also entails acquiring new information or knowledge, as well as the necessary attitudes and abilities. Therefore, one's level of education should be a priority in their day-to-day existence. Formal and informal settings may both be used to provide educational experiences. Formal education may be described as an education model that is well-organized, methodical, and well-structured. It is governed by the laws and regulations that are established by the ministry of education. Formal education includes attainment at settings such as schools, colleges, and universities. On the other hand, education that is not formal tends to

focus on the acquisition of skills and information that are distinct from formal education. Formal education, as proposed by Ward et al.<sup>3</sup>, appears to better cater to the specific requirements of individual pupils. There are three primary categories that may be used to classify non-formal education. The first type is that the directed activities are specifically offered for the purpose of enhancing the employees' existing abilities and expanding their knowledge. The second reason is because the events are organized primarily with the intention of helping individuals, most especially young people, find employment. The third reason is because the activities are intended to cultivate skills, knowledge, and understanding that go beyond the realm of the working world.

The researcher notes in this study that taking an English class might count towards one's non-formal education

requirements. Since English is the language that is spoken as a first language by around 400 million people all over the world, it has been designated as the official language of 53 nations throughout the globe. The need for fluency in English has been consistently high throughout society, notably in Indonesian society. People who have a strong command of the English language have access to a wealth of options. In light of this reality, English classes make an effort to cater to the requirements of the academic world. As an adjunct to students' regular schooling, a variety of English language classes have been developed in an effort to further students' linguistic competence and familiarity with the language. In addition to this, it provides programs that are flexible enough to respond to the individual requirements of the students.

An English class that is part of a non-formal education can choose whichever curriculum it feels is best fitting for its students. There is a well-known English class in Yogyakarta that has been demonstrated to be highly effective in assisting students in the development of their English abilities. The researcher is of the opinion that the course should have a curriculum that is organized and well-structured. This English course has a vision to become the English learning center for the youth of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in addition to being a well-known and highly qualified English course in Yogyakarta. It establishes a mission to contribute to the enhancement of the students' abilities and potentials in preparation for higher education. It is intended to assist young people in becoming competent, self-reliant, mature, and moral so that they may better meet the challenges of the outside world. The challenges presented by the materials are of a particularly demanding kind. The steps in the learning process have been carefully prepared. Each and every meeting will last for a total of sixty minutes for the learning process. It is

divided into the beginning of the lesson, the explanation given by the teacher, and the conclusion. The first twenty minutes are often reserved for informal small chat, a discussion of moral values, and a review of the information presented thus far. The first thirty-five minutes of the teacher explanation are dedicated to the presentation of new terminology, pre-work assignments, the teacher explanation, and the finishing of the assigned activity. The conclusion will take place within the last five minutes. The students are encouraged to participate in a follow-up activity and/or to write a lesson recap. In addition to those more traditional learning processes, the students will also participate in other forms of evaluation. The evaluations are done on a monthly basis and are called Progress Tests. There is a final examination given at the conclusion of each semester that serves the purpose of evaluating the students' current level of English ability. However, best curriculum will not work effectively if the teachers are not capable to appropriate it. Having this view, the researcher aims to analyze the teacher agency of non-formal EFL Indonesian teachers towards the curriculum standards in English non-formal education context with two problem formulations. The first is how the senior and junior non-formal EFL teachers in this course appropriate the curriculum standards in English non-formal education context. The second is what factors have influenced their development of teacher agency to appropriate the curriculum standards.

### **Teacher Agency**

It is expected of teachers that they will assist students in developing their learning. The teachers give the students agency. For this reason, it is essential to provide teachers with agency in the form of working settings that support their own professional development. According to Passeggi and Cunha's definition (2013), agency is the capacity to determine one's

own behaviors based on self-knowledge, self-esteem, and the ability to self-regulate. The term of teacher agency refers to the decision-making process that teachers go through in regard to their own professional growth, as well as the choices and decisions that teachers make in the classroom in order to foster the students' learning. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), agency is explained by situating it in a temporal framework. They state that it is only possible to get an understanding of agentic processes if they are shown to be inextricably related to the shifting temporal orientations of placed actors. This means that the temporal orientations of situated actors must be changed.

In order to comprehend the teacher agency, a graphic illustrating the essential components of the teacher agency model is provided below. Iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative are the three dimensions that are considered.

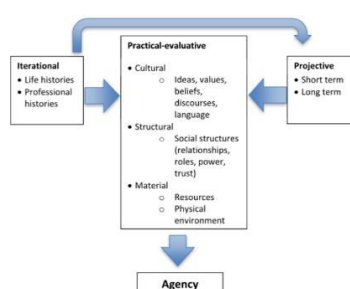


Figure 1. Understanding Teacher Agency by Priestley et al (2013)

The iterative component focuses on the personal and professional lives of the instructors. Personal capacity (skills and knowledge), beliefs (both professional and personal), and values are iterative components that contribute to the agency of teachers. From what Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson (2015) have to say about the topic, we may deduce that professional education plays a relatively little influence in the construction of teachers' professional experiences. The day-to-day experiences that teachers have in the

classroom, conversations with their coworkers, cultural exposures, and trainings given to teachers are all viewed as crucial.

The second type of dimension is the projective dimension, which differentiates between the orientation of activities in the near term and the long term. The ambitions may be constructive, having to do with the growth and wellbeing of the students (Lasky, 2005), and they might lead to an agency that looks out for the students' best interests (Osborn et al., 1997). The goals and motives of the teachers have an effect on the experiences they've had in the past.

The third dimension is a contrast between cultural, structural, and material components, and it is called the practical-evaluative dimension. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), agency is a combination of orientations towards the future, influences from the past, and participation with the present. According to Priestley, Biesta, Philippou, and Robinson (2015), agency is always exercised within a real environment, which is both restricted and supported by the cultural, structural, and material resources that are accessible to teachers.

## Methodology

The researchers choose to conduct their investigation using a qualitative case study. A qualitative case study is a form of research that focuses on an in-depth analysis of a particular instance or phenomena within its real-life environment. This type of study may be used to investigate a wide range of topics. Collecting information that is rich, extensive, and subjective in order to obtain a greater knowledge of the case that is being investigated is an essential part of it. This method allows them to gain a deeper comprehension of the phenomena of teacher agency by focusing on a single instance (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). It was essential to have the viewpoints of the teachers in order to demonstrate the

variables associated to the creation and execution of teacher agency. According to Denzin (1989), this technique offers a detailed and comprehensive explanation of these effective educators.

### *Setting*

In the course of this research, an English class has been running continuously in Yogyakarta since the year 1995. The program is still active in the modern day and is achieving ever-greater levels of success. The English class is not particularly extensive, but it does split into two distinct halves, which are labelled Branch A and Branch B. All of the instructors are women who received their degrees from the English Education Department Program. The pupils have attended a variety of educational institutions, including public schools, private schools, and international schools. Students as young as three years old and as elderly as adult learners can participate in the programs.

### *Participants*

In order to conduct this study, the researcher solicited the participation of four different instructors. Branch 1 is represented by two of the instructors, while Branch 2 is represented by the other two. Two teachers, one experienced (a senior teacher) and one less experienced (a novice teacher), are selected to represent each of the branches. Branch 1 is represented by both Teacher A, an inexperienced educator, and Teacher C, an experienced educator. Branch 2 is represented by both Teacher B, an inexperienced educator, and Teacher D, an experienced one.

Table 1. Table of Participants

Participants	Length of work	Office
Teacher A	2 years	Branch 1

Teacher B	2 years	Branch 2
Teacher C	10 years	Branch 1
Teacher D	10 years	Branch 2

### *Data gathering*

It was requested that each of the four teachers fill out the form, which included questions on their names, ages, offices held, lengths of employment, job positions, and lists of duties. The second set of data was compiled from the interviews that focused on the respondents' overall sentiments on the structure of the English class's curriculum. The should offer their opinions regarding the most challenging aspect of the curriculum to teach, the ways to appropriately address it, their considerations to put the strategies into action, and ultimately, the variables that affected how well they taught.

The researcher decided on a site for the get-together and scheduled a meeting with teachers to take place after they had ended their shift. Because of a variety of different considerations, it was agreed that the interview would not take place at their place of business or during their typical operating hours. The first problem was that they were too busy teaching during their regular working hours in the institution. The second aspect was the sense of freedom that the teachers had to fill out the questionnaire, conduct the interviews, and share their experiences while they were not in the office area. Both of these things were taken into consideration and accounted for. The interview was carried out in a laid-back and casual fashion. The completion of the questionnaire and the interview with each student took between thirty and forty minutes for each instructor.

### *Data analysis*

In order to facilitate data analysis, the audio recordings of the interviews with the participants were transcribed after being played again. The research split the large key topics by employing a template

analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 1999) to focus on the activities that teachers may take to appropriately incorporate the curriculum into their lessons. The results of the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire and the interview were interpreted with reference to the attainment of agency diagram in Figure 1. The researcher took into consideration the iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative dimensions in their research. During the course of the interview, the educators discussed the many facets of their professional life as well as their professional growth. The aspects are considered to be components of their ongoing growth as English instructors as a professional identity.

### **Findings and Discussions**

Agency gives people the freedom to make their own decisions and act on their own. When it comes to education, teachers are used as a way to look at agency from the teachers' point of view. They are sometimes seen as change agents whose actions and decisions vary depending on how the curriculum is implemented, interpreted, adapted, changed, replaced, subverted, or made (Campbell. 2012).

#### *Teacher agency in practice*

Teaching a class of pupils with varying academic abilities presents difficulties for the four participants (Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C and Teacher D). In order to present materials on time and adjust to many factors, such as the curriculum, the teaching resources, the lesson plans, and the students' skills, they need carry out well-planned teaching. It is consistent with Wyse et al. (2015), who outlined an ecological model for understanding teacher agency, drew the official curriculum that should be created and modified for the students in the classroom, and suggested that children should take part in the selection of topics and teaching materials when those

materials are unsuitable for them. As a result, teachers have the option to filter items introduced into the classroom to safeguard certain kids whose comprehension is lacking (Philippou et al, 2014)

The four teacher participants discussed how they could best prepare for their jobs as instructors by visualizing the capabilities of their pupils as well as the learning process. The teachers provide questions that range in level of difficulty in order to accommodate the wide range of skills possessed by their pupil population. There are times when they have to hand out more activities; the simple ones are for the pupils who are struggling, while the more challenging ones are for the students who are already doing well. The instructors need to cultivate the mindset that studying English is not difficult and may even be enjoyable. Because of this, they need to devise activities that are not only entertaining but also difficult.

The teachers concur that students should concentrate on the most pertinent information for the final test. They believe that it would be better to exclude some elements that are less significant and instead use the time to discuss materials that are more vital owing to the preparation for the final test. On the other hand, some teachers are on board with the idea of inviting children who are struggling academically to an additional session of school dubbed the Open House Class in order to help them catch up. It is an extra class for students who need more assistance in learning English beside the regular class the students attend.

#### *Teacher agency challenges*

Teacher A and Teacher B as novice teachers have to contend with a number of obstacles that make it more difficult for them to properly exert their authority as teachers in the classroom. They shared their difficulties over the course during the interview. The first challenge is having a limited amount of classroom experience,

which can make it challenging for them to make judgements and take chances with complete confidence. The second challenge is their limited pedagogical knowledge. They could have a strong theoretical grasp of various teaching strategies, but they might not have the practical knowledge and experience necessary to put such strategies into practice successfully. This might make it more difficult for them to make educated judgements on the curriculum, the teaching methods, and the evaluation criteria. Another challenge is self-efficacy and confidence in teaching. They state that they struggle with a lack of self-confidence, which can have a negative effect on their willingness to take chances and express their agency. They could be reluctant to break from conventional teaching procedures or to adapt to the established curriculum. They also mention that time management in teaching has challenged them so far. The responsibilities of lesson preparation, grading, and various other administrative chores sometimes place novice teachers in a position where they are constrained in terms of their available time. Due to the restricted amount of time they have available, it might be difficult for them to investigate new teaching tactics, participate in reflective practices, or pursue chances for professional development.

The senior instructors (Teacher C and Teacher D), like the novice teachers, confront issues with their teacher agency in approving curriculum in the classroom despite having more experiences. The first challenge for them is the institutional constrain. Senior instructors may be constrained by institutional limitations such as tight curriculum rules, standardized assessment requirements, and administrative expectations, which limit their autonomy and decision-making ability. These limits may limit their capacity to deploy new instructional practices or make curricular adjustments.

Besides, they face burnout and fatigue in teaching. Senior teachers who have been in the profession for a long time may feel burnout and weariness, which can decrease their desire and passion to exercise agency. This is especially true if they have been in the classroom for a lengthy period of time. This might lead to a lack of vitality, which can make it difficult to investigate new approaches to teaching, participate in professional development, or accept extra duties.

### *Teacher agency development*

The institution has offered the teachers with some helpful programs to increase their teacher agency, which is a positive development to overcome the difficulties the teachers have in the classroom.

#### *a. Teacher Training*

It is possible for teacher training program to play a significant part in the enhancement of teacher agency. These programs may provide educators with the information, skills, and mentality that are required to exercise autonomy and make well-informed decisions in their professional practice. The institution provides the teachers with continue training starting from Teacher Basic Training, Primary 1 Teacher Training, Primary 1 Teacher Training, Junior High School Teacher Training, Senior High School Teacher Training, General English Teacher Training, English for Specific Purpose Teacher Training, TOEFL Teacher Training and IELTS Teacher Training. Each training is held for a different amount of time, ranging from two to six months.

The need of continuous professional growth during a teacher's career should be emphasized throughout the training that teachers receive. Training programs ought to supply instructors with materials and direction on how to look for and participate in professional development opportunities that are aligned with their interests and goals, and these

opportunities should be included in the training. This helps to foster the evolution of teacher agency by encouraging teachers to take an active role in their own ongoing learning and professional development.

b. Regular teacher upgrading

Weekly, there is an upgrading class for teachers provided by the institution. A teacher upgrading program strives to provide chances for professional development, improve pedagogical knowledge and abilities, and promote the development of teacher agency. During the upgrading, teachers learn to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and skill including having an awareness of different learning styles, methods that are effective for managing classrooms, varied approaches to evaluation, and differentiated instruction are all important. The more instructional strategies that a teacher has in their toolbox, the more flexibility they have in selecting and modifying those strategies to best suit the requirements of the kids in their classroom.

Teacher do personal reflective Practice as well as a strategy of cultivating teacher agency. Teachers should be encouraged to routinely reflect on their pedagogical practices, the consequences of student learning, and their own personal and professional development. Training programs can include reflective tools and approaches, such as journaling, peer feedback, or video analysis, to encourage the development of reflective abilities in educators. This can help instructors make improvements to their teaching.

c. Authentic Classroom Experiences

It is necessary for the institution to provide opportunities for novice teachers to participate in real-life classroom settings so that they may develop and improve their teaching abilities. These might take the form of observing other teachers in the classroom, applying for positions as teaching assistants, or participating in micro teaching practices. They have the chance to put their skills and knowledge to practice in real classroom settings while

still having access to guidance and direction from more experienced educators thanks to these experiences. Doing so allows teachers to develop their sense of self-assurance, teaching autonomy, and teacher agency as they take on increasing degrees of responsibility for decision-making and classroom management to match the curriculum over the course of their careers.

Each of the four teachers believes that the experiences they have had in the classroom in the past have given them more independence. In addition to this, they are given support with the trainings that are administered by the institution. In addition, there is a class for upgrading, as well as a forum for discussion, sharing, and practicing micro teaching. Both of these things are included. The novice teachers stand to gain in a variety of ways from the feedbacks from senior teacher class observations. They get benefits from sitting in the senior teacher classes to observe the ways the teachers handle the students and adapting the curriculum in class. In addition, there are senior teachers as advisors who are ready to offer directions and advice to the novice teachers who are in charge of classes that come under their supervision.

## Conclusions

The concept of teacher agency refers to the ability of educators to make choices and conduct actions that will have a beneficial influence, not only on their own teaching practices, but also on the learning outcomes of their students. In the context of novice teachers, who are those instructors who are still in the early phases of their professions, the concept of teacher agency plays an extremely important part in the development and advancement of their professional careers. It is important for teachers to consider the capabilities of their students as part of their preparation for teaching, to provide students a variety of assignments that are appropriate for their skill level, to cultivate a pleasurable

environment for English language study, and to focus on the topics that are most important to address. Their progress as teachers is influenced by a variety of factors, including their experiences, the training they get, the weekly upgrades they receive, the classroom observations they undergo, and the relationships they have with their class advisors. In order to have a successful curriculum for the students' English skill development, the instructors need to be supplied with strategies that are appropriate for the curriculum. The conclusions of this study suggest that teachers should design an entertaining paradigm for English language acquisition, visualize the capabilities of their students, present a range of challenges, and focus on more relevant things to discuss. Their development as educators comes from a wide range of sources, including their own experiences, training, advancement opportunities, interactions with the class advisor, and observation and participation in the lessons of other teachers.

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