

Subject and Classroom-Based Teacher Forums in the Realm of Teacher Professionalism in Indonesia

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Abstract

The demands of education in today's world undeniably requires the presence of professional teachers who are knowledgeable, skillful, independent, creative, innovative, visionary, and character. This premise accentuates that teachers at all level of education need to acquire at least four main competences: professional, pedagogic, social, and personal. These main competences would enable them to perform current expected teaching demands. The article employs theories of professional development and social constructivist learning in which social and practical aspects of learning and teaching are taken into account. It draws on personal observations, reflections on current events, and experience of the authors while taking into accounts some empirical findings of researchers in the field of education. Given the central role of professional teachers in the era of industrial revolution 4.0, the article discusses three main issues in regards to current teaching and learning realms: a) teacher professionalism; b) challenges to teaching profession in contemporary world and how teachers deal with them; and c) urgency for effective Subject-based Teacher Forum - STF and Classroom-based Teachers Work Group - CTWG that are expected to support teachers to achieve their professional goals. Hence, the article is expected to provide conceptual and practical information regarding teacher professionalism and its challenges and how STF and CTWG forums support teachers to perform their teaching tasks and responsibilities and overcome the ever-increasing challenges to teaching setting in contemporary educational settings. In particular, the article informs the urgent needs of teachers' forums which are able to promote teacher professionalism and provide solutions for the improvement of learning and teaching practices in Indonesia.

Keywords: Teacher Professionalism, Subject-based Teachers Forum (STF) and Classroom-based Teachers Work Group (CTWG)

Introduction

The demands of education in today's world undeniably necessitate presence of professional teachers who are knowledgeable, skillful, independent, creative, innovative, and visionary. Moreover, teachers are strongly required to have good character and be aware of challenges and demands of teaching in the era of industrial revolution 4.0. In other words, teachers needed today are those who should be able to maintain high standard of teaching (Darling, 2006; OECD, 2009) as required in this noble profession. Nevertheless, a number of speculations arise that the role of teachers is likely to be marginal along with rapid development of communication and information technology. It has been widely discussed that

students may no longer need teachers to extinguish their hunger of knowledge. Nowadays, it is true that students simply jump on to *Google* or *Wikipedia* or any search engine provided via online to generate information and knowledge they need for their questions (Jennings, 2008; Colón-Aguirre, & Fleming-May, 2012; and Blikstad-Balas, 2016). Likewise, although not all, Indonesian high school students with sufficient budget could simply subscribe *Ruang Guru* as an online learning provider (Bardwaj et al, 2020 and Ulanova, 2021).

Currently, it is a fact that the authors and many other teachers and lecturers experience a number of challenges during the online learning and teaching activities. For example, in many ways teachers, lecturers and students alike were not used to engage in online learning mode. Moreover, poor internet connection or limited bandwidth available makes their learning and teaching activities even worse. In addition, in the online learning and teaching activities, teachers would find it hard to convey moral messages to their students which in Azra's view is the most important part of learning and teaching (Azra, 2020). He elaborated that moral messages of the material presented to students are the foundation for their character building (Azra, 2020).

Reflecting on the argument, the role of professional teachers at all levels of education is still very demanding. In Indonesian context, Arifin (2012) and Rivkin et al (2005), for example, emphasize that the role of teachers as professionals remains essential especially when the government of Indonesia has put special priority for the improvement of learning achievement of students. This view is supported by a number of education experts in Indonesia, including Kunandar (2007), Fathurrohman and Suryana (2012), and Priatna and Sukanto (2013). The former Minister of National Education in the Soeharto's era, Wardiman Djoyonegoro especially highlighted that the main factors affecting the quality of Indonesian education were the incompetent and unprofessional teachers (Mulyasa, 2009: 3).

Regarding the important role of professional teachers in the industrial revolution 4.0, the article discusses three main issues: a) teacher professionalism; b) challenges to teaching profession in the future and the ways teachers need to deal with them; and c) the needs for effective Subject-based Teacher Forum (STF) and Classroom-based Teacher Work Groups (CTWG) forums to solve teachers' problem in teaching. In this context, STF and CTWG forums would take the main part of discussion because it is expected to provide solutions for the improvement of learning and teaching quality as well as professionalism of teachers. The article employs theories of professional development in which practical and social aspects of learning and teaching are taken into account.

The discussion about the issues of teacher professionalism, the challenges teachers encounter and the ways they approach teaching and contributions of the STF and CTWG as the needed professional forums are mainly based on previous literature regarding these matters. Therefore, this is designed as a library-based research. Bryman (2004; 2008) and Creswell (2005; 2007) elaborate that research design reflect priority made for a research process. This means that the framework of this research needs to provide a systematic direction for the researchers to map out which works come first and which come later (Ruslin et al, 2022). Hence, the discussions regarding the issues of teacher professionalism would become robust as they are strongly backed up with data and information which are derived from well-founded resources (Lichman, 2010 and Ruslin, 2017: 119; Ruslin et al, 2022).

With the library-based approach, this research aims to examine and narrate data and information related to concepts, thoughts, practices and rules regarding the issues of teacher professionalism (Lichman, 2010). The study employed library resources to collect data regarding the issues and practices of reading amongst high school students (Zed, 2004: 2-3). The data were derived from different resources.

However, the main data and information resources were derived from journals, proceedings, and handbooks that are relevant to the issues being investigated. Data collection was carried out through a process of observing various profiles of teacher professionalism as well as practices that took place in different level of basic and secondary education in Indonesia. It also cover the data concerning the ways of teachers conceptualizing professionalism in teaching and exercising their understanding about the concepts on a daily basis throughout their teaching tenure. The data collected was then mapped out, analyzed and interactively triangulated. This technique was used to ensure relevance, validity and reflexivity of the data in order to properly address the questions raised up in the research. Hence, the article is expected to provide conceptual and practical information regarding teacher professionalism and effective STF and CTWG forums for better teachers' teaching practices in Indonesia.

Review of Relevant Literature

Teacher Professionalism

In the context of teaching, Kramer (2003) describes that professionalism is beyond just professional as a job. It is rather a calling for responsibility and caring for children (Kramer, 2003). In various disciplines of teacher education across the globe, it is clear that “educators are expected to develop the characteristics of a professional and model professionalism every day” (Kramer, 2003:22). Initially, professionalism was perceived as a concept that represents meanings and qualities of ideal teachers starting with having necessary credentials (Etzioni, 1969 cited in Jansem, 2018:141). The concept of professionalism in teaching is commonly discussed on sociological, educational, and ideological bases (Demirkasmoglu, 2010; Kennedy et al, 2012; and Evetts, 2014) In teaching context, Sockett (1993) describes that characteristics of professionalism are demonstrated in teachers' character, commitment to change and continuous improvement, subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and obligations as well as working relationships beyond the classroom (see also Demirkasımoglu, 2010). However, there were previous authors who argued that teacher profession was a semi-professional job (Leiter, 1978 and Samuel, 1970 cited in Demirkasmoglu, 2010: 2047). This is due to the fact that most teachers do the job of teaching on the basis of the provided standards which are usually prepared by their superiors (Demirkasmoglu, 2010).

Prior to the discussion of teacher professionalism, it is imperative to look at what *professional* has been commonly defined. The word *professional* is defined as a situation where someone has or shows skills or qualities of a professional (Hamalik, 2002; Sudjana, 2008; and Jansem, 2018) or having professional dispositions (Brehm et al, 2006; Grady et al, 2008; Brown and Ferril, 2009; Creasy, 2015). This helps researchers and educational practitioners to better understand the concept of professionalism in a broad sense.

Inspired by the western concept of professionalism, Fathurrohman and Suryana (2012) explain that the term '*professional*' comes from the word '*profession*' which means analogically "*able*" or "*expert*". In their view, profession is an occupation based on intellectual study and is equipped with specific training. Professionals in regards to performance standards (abilities, behaviour and attitudes) of professional members reflect conformity with professional code of ethics (Fathurrohman and Suryana, 2012). Meanwhile, profession, as stated in the Law No. 14, 2005 (a law which rules and regulates teaching and teachers/lecturers' profession), contains activities carried out by a person and it becomes a source of income. It requires expertise, knowledge, and skills that meet certain standards or norms recognized by an independent professional agency (*Badan Nasional Sertifikasi Profesi – BNSP*). Hence,

professionalism is regarded to have included quality, attitude, and behavior that constitute characteristic of a profession (Sutrisno, 2013).

In literature of teacher education, most researchers define that a professional should demonstrate behaviors which portray knowledge and skills required in that profession. Hence, professionalism is defined as “*an ideal to which individuals and occupational groups aspire, in order to distinguish themselves from other workers*” (Pratte & Rury, 1991: 60 cited in Creasy, 2015: 26). This definition puts an emphasis on ideal characteristics required of individuals which show distinctions from other workers (see also Shon, 2006). However, Pratte and Rury (1991) argue that teaching profession is fundamentally different from those that gain the greatest public recognition such as medical doctors and lawyers. For Pratte and Rury, teachers could not yet be called as professionals as mentioned in the conventional sense of the term (Pratte and Rury, 1991). Despite the case, Pratte and Rury admitted that teaching activities require professional preparation of teachers (therefore deemed to be called professionals) in order for them to be able to perform their works effectively and professionally (Shon, 2006).

In the context of Indonesia, the Law No. 14 2005 has clearly highlighted that teachers are fully considered as professionals. It states that teachers are professional educators entitled to do main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing and evaluating students’ learning. Kunandar (2007) explains that professional teachers are those who have competencies required by teaching profession. It enables them to carry out their educational and teaching tasks. This view is supported by Balqis et al (2014) in which they made mention that professional teachers are those who have certain qualities and expertise in the field of teaching. Similarly, Ruslin (2019) describes that professional teachers are those who have been fully qualified and trained in subjects they teach in the classroom. Likewise, Arifin (2012) and Rivkin et al (2005) reinforce the role of teachers as a professional as they have a huge influence on the improvement of learning achievement of students which advanced technology could not do. Reflecting on the Law No 20, 2003, Supriadi (1998; 2003) proposed five aspects that must be acquired by teachers in order for them to be called professional. First, teachers must have a strong commitment to help students develop their potential up to the maximum level. This includes provisions for a goal-oriented learning and well-designated learning plan and process. In this context, commitment of teachers to the successful performance of their students should be their main concern. In Indonesia, teachers are demanded to develop a lesson plan on the basis of 21st century competences, i.e. creative thinking, critical thinking, collaborative, and communicative. To achieve these demands, teachers need to be able to implement HOTS and TPACK. All these requirements have been included in the current autonomy curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka).

Another aspect that is equally important for teachers to be professional is that teachers should have in-depth mastery of content and learning strategies. The mastery of learning materials and how to deal with them is one of the most important demands for teacher professionalism (Fathurrohman and Suryana, 2012: 6). This pedagogical aspect need to become a notable account for professional teachers and this would become an indicator for their professionalism (OECD, 2009; Priatna and Sukanto, 2013; Balqis et al, 2014; and Ruslin, 2019).

Third, teachers need to be responsible for monitoring students’ learning outcomes through a variety of assessment techniques such as observing students’ behavior and various types of exams. Based on the authors’ observations, the efforts of the government to enrich assessment types and students’ learning outcomes are quite respectable. This has been proved in the continuous improvement of curriculum, i.e. the School-based Curriculum (SBC) and the 2013 Curriculum, well-known with *K-13* where various

techniques and assessment methods were introduced to teachers (MoNE, 2006). However, Wijayanto (2014) and Ruslin (2019) describe that various assessment methods have not been fully implemented in the classroom because not all teachers are well-informed to the assessment methods. In this regard, Torrance (2007) explains that assessment techniques where portfolios and other artifacts used in teaching activities tend to be narrowly understood by many teachers. The assessment of traditional type (measuring one aspect of learning, i.e. intellectual/cognitive aspect) was previously criticized by Vygotsky (1978). In his view, school examinations that are commonly practiced various levels of education including in Indonesia where measures of abilities or intelligence are specifically paid attention, should now be directed towards achieving higher competencies. Vygotsky (1978) describes that exams or tests should be designed to test and hone their ability to solve their problems not only when they are in school but also when they become a part of the community where they live in (Ruslin, 2017: 28).

Fourth, teachers must be able to think systematically about what they are doing and learn from their experience. In this context, it is better for teachers to always take some time to reflect on and correct what they have done and achieved in their classroom (Schon, 1987). Ironically, up to this present, only very few teachers could reflect on their teaching activities in their classroom. Most likely, it's very rare for us to hear teachers ask questions like: *have I met the requirements for creative learning? Have I made my class satisfied? How often do we hear teachers have a strong desire to improve the quality of their teaching every time they are disappointed with the results of their assessment?* Even teachers who hold the title as professional certified teachers rarely reflect on their plans and teaching processes alike (Ruslin, 2019). This situation occurs almost at all levels of primary and secondary education in Indonesia. This was stated by a number of senior teachers at a Vocational School in Tolitoli that the Lesson Plan (*RPP*) was merely a routine task for teachers (Ruslin 2019). The lesson plans are old-fashioned styles where they are aimed to fulfill requirements for receiving monthly allowances and supervisions. Thus, the opportunity for teachers to reflect on their poor lesson plans and their implementation in the classroom is mostly ignored in practices. Whereas both individually and in groups (*STF / CCTWG*) teachers must continue to think of finding solutions for any deficiencies they experience in their classroom.

Fifth, the teachers must be a part of the learning community in their professional environment. Priansa (2014) argues that functions of teachers are growing broader and no longer limited to the context of scholarship that is spiritual and intellectual intelligence. Rather, other intelligences which Howard and Garner (n.d. quoted in Priansa, 2014: 35) called multiple intelligence are getting more urgent especially due to challenges caused by rapid advances of information and communication technology. Moreover, Priansa (2014) views that positions of teachers in a learning community remains central and strategic despite some changes may have happened.

The Article 20 in the Law No. 14 2005 states that one of the obligations of professional teachers is to plan learning, implement quality learning processes, assess learning outcomes, and improve and develop academic qualifications and competencies in a sustainable manner in line with the development of science, technology, and art (see also Priansa, 2014). In the last part of the article, the emphasis of teachers as part of a learning community in their profession gets an equal portion of teacher's main tasks: planning, implementing, and evaluating learning outcomes. In the present context, the traditional role of teachers is inadequate. Sustainable improvement of teachers' academic qualifications and individual competencies is unequivocally needed. It is essential for teachers to have skills and ability to create a

good atmosphere of educational communication. This aspect can only be achieved when they continuously improve their skills and competences through productive learning societies. One way for teachers to continuously update their knowledge, skills, and understanding of dynamic learning tasks is to be actively involved in a forum called Subject-based Teachers Forum (STF) and Classroom-based Teachers Work Group (CTWG).

Challenges Encountered by Teachers as Professionals

Supriadi (2002) cited in Fathurrohman and Suryana (2012: 5) questioned the quality of teachers as professionals. The data derived from the Competency Test for Teachers of English (Uji Kompetensi Guru – UKG) in 42 junior high schools held in Yogyakarta in 2015 (Kemendikbud 2016: 69) show that competencies of teachers of English were found relatively low with an average score of 62.26. This was estimated to have a positive correlation with the national exam scores for English in 42 schools that were sampled in the study (Kemendikbud, 2016). The result, as Geist and Sparks (2002) and Fathurrohman and Suryana (2012) explained was in contrast to the recognition of teachers' professionalism in which they are required to be experts in their fields.

In the attempt to boost quality of the Indonesian national education, the government made various constructive and systematic efforts. The provision of professional allowances for teachers who passed certification test an equivalent to one month basic salary. This is clearly mandated by the Law No. 14, 2005. In addition, the government also provides opportunities for teachers to continuously improve their professionalism through education and training in a directed and coordinated manner. The continuing professional development (*Pengembangan Keprofesian Berkelanjutan – PKB*) is one of the activities designed to create professional teachers (Ministry of National Education, 2010 and Priansa, 2014).

In the context of continuing professional development of teachers, the government of Indonesia establishes best practices in the form of scientific activities and learning innovations as a pre-condition for a better achievement of teachers. Priatna and Sukamto (2013) elaborate that prerequisites for functional ranking promotion amongst teachers, especially for teachers who are at the beginning of their teaching careers (third rank and above – *Golongan III ke atas*), are innovations which could be in the form of articles or empirical researches. Priansa (2014) emphasizes continuous development of teachers' professionalism in four main activities: planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection. Through these four main activities, teachers are expected to be able to accelerate their pedagogic, professional, social, and personality competencies in order to advance their professional careers (Priansa, 2014: 117). The development of teachers as mentioned in Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) conducted by OECD 1998 and OECD 2009 covers the following aspects:

- a. To update individuals' knowledge of a subject in light of recent advances in the area;
- b. To update individuals' skills, attitudes and approaches in light of the development of new teaching techniques and objectives, new circumstances and new educational research;
- c. To enable individuals to apply changes made to curricula or other aspects of teaching practice;
- d. To enable schools to develop and apply new strategies concerning the curriculum and other aspects of teaching practice;
- e. To exchange information and expertise among teachers and others, e.g. academics, industrialists; and
- f. To help weaker teachers become more effective.

(OECD, 2009:49)

The central role of teachers as agents of change in the world of education remains urgent (see Balqis et al, 2005) even though our educational dynamics have been strongly influenced by rapid development of information technology. Muliati (2013) made mention that teachers in order to be professional, they have to play at least these roles: (1) Educator, (2) Teacher, (3) Learning resources, (4) Facilitator, (5) Class manager, (6) Reformers, (7) Mediator, (8) Actor, (9) Evaluator, and (10) Motivator.

Based on the arguments, the role of teachers is to place the creation of meaningful, fun, and goal-oriented learning activities. However, campaign for an effective learning becomes difficult to achieve because the demands of profession as described in TALIS (OECD, 1998; 2009) are increasingly challenging. Thereby, many of those teachers who do not update their knowledge could not bring meaningful and purposeful learning as expected in this contemporary teaching realm. The problems have not yet included how teachers prepare **Lesson Plan** or *Rencana Program Pembelajaran – RPP*, strategies implemented, and assessments. Hence, the possibility for the creation of meaningful, fun, and goal-oriented learning at the initiative of teachers may be very little even though supporting learning facilities such as school libraries and computer laboratories may be available at school.

Research Method

This research was grounded on relevant literatures derived from a great variety of resources such as books, journals, articles developed from teaching practices, and other relevant research reports. The records in the form of notes derived from the mentioned resources and research materials (Zed, 2004, p.2-3) were processed into a complete portrait of the relevant literatures. Here, the resources were mapped out on the basis of the research questions developed to inform the concepts and the practices of teachers' forums as the focus of this research.

This research employed an inter-textual approach, which referred to the conception of interrelationships, and interdependence between texts and discourses (Cresswell, 2014) about the practices of teachers' forums. This approach places teachers' forums in the fields of teaching and common identity of teachers as professionals into unified and interconnected texts.

Findings and Discussion

Subject-based Teachers Forum (STF) and Classroom-based Teacher Work Group (CTWG) in Indonesian Teachers' Professionalism

Subject-based Teachers Forum (STF) and Classroom-based Teacher Work Group (CTWG) are forums for subject-based and classroom-based teachers where learning and teaching qualities are the main concern. These forum are usually set up on the basis of zone such as district / city / sub-district / area (see Widodo, 2012; Shandy, 2012; Sutrisno, 2013). According to Widodo (2012), the scope of the STF covers all associations / allied teachers or a level at junior high / madrasah (level of junior high – *Tsanawiyah*), senior high school (SMA) / Islamic senior high school (MA), and Vocational High School (SMK), both full-time teachers (*Pegawai Negeri Sipil – PNS*) and private teachers. Meanwhile, Classroom-based Teacher Group (CTWG) is a place for gathering classroom-based elementary school teachers on the basis of clusters in an area within a sub-district. This is based on the decision of the General Director of Elementary Education, Ministry of Education and Culture No: 079 / C / KEP / I / 1993 where guidelines for the implementation of teacher professional development system through formation of school clusters were set up. Typically, number of schools in a cluster is limited to 6 to 10 elementary schools (Rahmawati, 2016).

In the Indonesian context, STF and CTWG forums are identified as independent, non-structural, and family-based organization (Widodo, 2012; Rahmawati, 2016) in which teachers engage voluntarily in order to continuously improve their skills in planning, implementing, guiding, assessing, and evaluating learning outcomes. The larger goal of the STF forum is to strengthen subject matter expertise amongst teachers and increase the range of curricular resources available to teachers for their classroom transactions and to support new models of teacher professional development based on creating '*teachers learning communities*' (ITforchange.net, 2014).

In the context of teachers' professionalism in Indonesia, as professional-based discussion forums, STF and CTWG are aimed to improve subject or classroom teachers' professionalism based on their fields of expertise. The existence of the forums brings opportunities that will help teachers enhance their knowledge and develop new instructional practices (Borko, 2004:03). The essence is that teachers of the same subjects gather to discuss and solve their daily problems in teaching. Through STF and CTWG forums, teachers are able to communicate their problems they experienced in their classrooms and then jointly find the solutions. Accordingly, the presence of STF and CTWG in Indonesian teaching context is oriented to provide solutions towards teaching problems of teachers (problem solving - oriented) independently and collectively (Sutrisno, 2013).

The identity of STF and CTWG lies on the effectiveness of teaching strategies of teachers which could be context or purpose-based strategies in enhancing learning quality of students. The forums should play role as a vehicle for empowerment and enhancement of teacher professionalism. Borrowing the term of Creasy (2015), both STF and CTWG in Indonesian context should be able to foster *the culture of professionalism* amongst teachers. Since the establishment of the STF and CTWG, these forums have been determined to unite teachers' insights in viewing learning problems in their classroom. Moreover, through these forums, teachers step together to find solutions to the learning problems they face when carrying out their daily tasks.

The STF at the *junior and senior high schools* and CTWG at the elementary level does not merely offer a number of strategies on how teachers minimize teaching problems in their subjects. However, the presence of STF and CTWG ignites the interest and motivation of teachers to continue for improvement. Moreover, as admitted by many teachers both STF and CTWG play role as media for strengthening friendship of teachers as well as vehicles for competing in a healthy and professional manner.

As a subject-based and class-based teacher association, STF and CTWG offer a number of dynamic solutions both individually and collectively. The practices of the STF and CTWG could become an enlightenment for teachers in their attempts to better understand approaches, methods, techniques and teaching strategies in their classroom. It is undeniable that pedagogic knowledge and understanding and perhaps also the learning content that teachers get from campus (read: universities developing educational staff) are getting weaker (dying out) after several years in the teaching place. Moreover, it could become worse when a teacher is placed in a remote and outermost area where access to *up-to-date* information is very limited and even non-existent. In addition, teachers must be able to plan their learning, organize the learning environment as well as possible, make use appropriate teaching aids, arrange learning materials and be actively involved in productive learning activities (Satori, 1989 in Riyati, 2007: 2).

Through STF and CTWG, teachers hope to be able to refresh their understanding and knowledge of the fields or subjects they are in and the dynamics of their teaching assignments. Moreover, today the digital and information era with all its complexities tends to continue to influence classroom dynamics very

quickly. Particularly in urban schools, the organization of learning in the classroom is no longer traditional and conventional. Hence, each individual teacher is required to update their understanding and knowledge as well as the quality of teaching, guiding, and assessing their students according to the current demands of the subjects.

Challenges to Teacher Professionalism

In contemporary teaching literature, STF and CTWG as teachers' professional development forums have not yet been broadly and globally discussed. These forums are limitedly known to teachers in Indonesian context. Consequently, it is undisputable, in practice there are a number of obstacles encountered by teachers, principals, and supervisors as well as all education stakeholders. These constraints vary greatly from organizational to financial issues. Moreover, distance could be one of main obstacles for teachers to have sustainable discussions. Rahmawati (2016) for example explained that the quality of deliberation management and group work still needs to be improved. In this context, the author considers that supervisors and school head teachers have strategic positions. Supervisors and school head teachers are very urgent to conduct periodical evaluations or monitor the performance of teachers both individually and collectively. The premise is that superintendent and School head teachers are responsible for quality improvement at school level. In fact, the progress of an educational institution is closely related to the effectiveness of management of head teachers and supervisors. Likewise, the learning leadership of head teachers largely determines the effectiveness of learning in school. Nevertheless, the role of teachers as the spearhead for improvement of the quality of education is still very dominant. In addition, both supervisors, head teachers, and teachers at large have institutional responsibilities in the improvement of learning quality as mandated by the 2003 National Education System Law and the Law No. 14, 2005.

In addition to the quality management, Rahmawati (2016) further considers that the quality of STF and CTWG activities does not match the needs of teacher professional development. In relation to group discussions and performance of teachers, Fathurrohman and Suryana (2012) assess that when the goals are not in line with what has been put in practice, a commitment to successful performance of teachers in group tends to be under-privileged. Consequently, the commitment to achieve a common goal that is, increasing professionalism of individual teachers is difficult to bring into practice. To sum up, minimal funding for operational activities in the STF and CTWG has resulted in stagnation of the implementation of a number of organizational agendas.

In many cases, there is a general impression amongst teachers (both teachers at the secondary school level and at the elementary school level) that STF and CTWG can only be implemented when there is adequate subsidy or funding from the local education authority (*Dinas Pendidikan*). This type of mentality, as admitted by a senior school head teacher in Tolitoli, is one of the inhibiting factors when it comes to the improvement of teacher professionalism. He even describes that STF and CTWG had not yet fully reflected as professional teachers' forum. STF and CTWG have been often used where teachers share stories outside the context of teaching and learning (for example, gossip about how leadership and incentives they receive at school). Juwairiyah (2014: 1) for example, said that STF was still impressed as unproductive and have not yet contributed to substantial changes in the improvement of the quality of education. Furthermore, Juwairiyah (2014) viewed that STF is rated as a 'bridge' for higher career positions such as head teacher and supervisor. In fact, STF and CTWG should be a place for professional teachers to find solutions for subject-based teaching problems as well as self-development, scientific publications, and innovative work. The last two are rarely discussed at the STF or CTWG

levels. This is somewhat ironic considering that the demands for a teacher's promotion require these two core aspects for teacher performance appraisal.

In the view of Juwairiyah (2014: 1-2), there are a number of important aspects that cause why STF and CTWG forums have not optimally carried out their mission. First, these forums have not been able to bring a better communication amongst teachers of the same subjects. The role of these forums as professional organizations could not yet facilitate teachers to communicate their daily teaching problems and issues effectively. Moreover, the function of these forums has not yet been developed as expected. This was indicated by poor agendas/programs, lack of funding, and limited organizational networks of stakeholders involved in these forums. In addition, effective and efficient strategies for well-developed and sustainable STF and CTWG have not been put in place. This has been aggravated by a situation where the Local Education Authority has not yet provided sustainable assistance for STF and CTWG to develop independently.

STF and CTWG Teaching Forums as Effective Solutions

STF and CTWG as recognized teaching discussion forums should become effective solutions for the learning and teaching problems. The existence of the forums as they were previously established for should become the aspiration of all education stakeholders in Indonesia. These forums have become more urgent considering the demands of the Law No. 14, 2005 towards teachers and lecturers as professionals. Moreover, the Regulation No. 16, 2009 issued by the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reforms of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemen-PAN RB) reconfirms functional positions of teachers as professionals in which their rank is measured on the basis of their achievements shown in credit points accumulated. Continuing teacher professional development requires self-development through functional training and teacher collective activities in the context of increasing competency and professionalism (see Director General of PMPTK Ministry of National Education, 2008; 2011). One of the collective activities referred to is the teacher's activities in the STF and CTWG, which to date have not been able to capitalize their potential. The aspects of continuing development of teachers' professionalism have been reflected in Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) conducted by OECD 1998 and OECD 2009.

To bring the effectiveness of STF and CTWG into practice, there are at least four aspects needed to be taken into serious account and these must be improved by education stakeholders (teachers, head teachers, local education authority stakeholders as well as students and their parents) both at secondary level and basic education. First, synergistic management of existing STF and CTWG (Teachers, Head Teachers, and Supervisors) is absolutely necessary. A number of previous studies indicate that the management of STF and CTWG is relatively poor. Exemplified by Amirudin (2017), it is found that STF participants in many ways seem quite lack of discipline. He describes that in many cases which was also experienced by the authors, the agendas of STF and CTWG did not involve experts in their discussion forums. Experts in this context could be professional instructors from universities or ministry of education and other far-reaching experts in the field of teaching. This has been compounded by lack of funding to support the implementation of the STF agendas (Pratama et al, 2018).

Second, adequate and accountable funding support is becoming essential if effective STF and CTWG are expected. However, reflecting on the experience of one of the researchers when it comes to the issue of funding for such teaching discussion forum, a number of obstacles continuously appeared in each and every agenda of the discussion forum. Transparency in managing funding subsidized by the local

authority of education has been disputed by members of the forum. In many cases, members were not fully informed in regards to budget available for discussion agendas. Even if teachers were informed about the budget, they would never entirely know how it should be used for teaching problem discussions. Another obstacle for the effectiveness of the forums (STF and CTWG) is related to unreliable funding provided by the government. As experienced by one of the researchers, being appointed to be an instructor for English subject at vocational education level in the District of Tolitoli, he found out that funding (subsidy/grant) for the teaching discussion forum was not consistently provided. Consequently, semester-based teaching problem discussions should be escaped for teachers would never come without transport incentives provided. Both Amirudin (2017) and Pratama et al (2018) found that one of the main obstacles in organizing STF and CTWG as teachers' effective discussion forums was funding sustainability.

Third, synchronization of STF and CTWG programs and activities is ongoing. The experience of the authors as a member of the English STF at the vocational level shows difficulties in synchronizing STF programs or work plans at a practical level. There are a number of factors that make it difficult for STF administrators to generate work programs that are synchronous with activities. Fourth, effective communications between stakeholders are needed. Effective communications between all stakeholders is crucial to enable successful agendas of both STF and CTWG in the future.

Conclusion

Drawing on the analysis of the study, the article provides conceptual and practical information regarding teachers' professionalism and its challenges in the Revolution Era 4.0 and how STF and CTWG support teachers to perform their teaching tasks and responsibilities and overcome the ever-increasing challenges to their teaching settings in contemporary learning and teaching field. In particular, this article informs the urgent needs of teachers' forums which are able to promote *the culture of professionalism* amongst teachers and provide solutions for the improvement of learning and teaching practices in the Republic of Indonesia.

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