

HOW TEACHERS BECOME “GOOD” AT WHAT THEY DO A NARRATIVE APPROACH

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***Abstract:** The research was purposed to explore how teachers learn from their professional experience to become ‘good’ at what they do. The research was a replication of the a study project conducted by School of Education at University of Aberdeen in 2012 . The current research was an effort to investigate the teachers’ learning from their professional experience in different context and participants. The study is an interpretation of narratives of two primary school teachers from SD Muhammadiyah Klaten Utara, Indonesia. The narratives materials are taken from the research project undertaken in Klaten jointly conducted by the Department of Education at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta and SD Muhammadiyah Klaten Utara. This study is a narrative reseach approach. The analysis in this report is using narrative approach because the materials are the narratives of two teachers of primary teachers. The finding shows that two things that makes them become good teacher. The first one is the teacher’s will to always learn from problems they faced. Their persistent concern to make a positive rapport with children and parents*

***Keywords:** narrative research, becoming good teacher, professional experience*

Introduction

The study is an interpretation of naratives of two primary school teachers from SD Muhammadiyah Klaten Utara, Indonesia. The narratives materials are taken from the research project undertaken Klaten jointly conducted by the Department of Education at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta and SD Muhammadiyah Klaten Utara. The research was purposed to explore how teachers learn from their professional experience to become ‘good’ at what they do. Teacher plays very central role in education. They are the most important subject in teaching learning process. Naturally, the quality of the learning at school is affected and shaped by the quality of the teachers. Literatures mention various definitions about the required qualities for a teacher to be called good or successful.

There is wide range of definition of what is meant by good teacher. The literature show two common definition of what make good teacher. The first definition from the perspective of the researchers and schools or government and second is from the perspective of students. For instance, a research conducted by Cheng (2011) states that a good teacher requires at least twelve qualities. They are prepared, having integrity, being discipline, being a willing teacher, being selfless and caring, learning more than students, widening knowledge, being role model, motivating and persuasive, being credible helps, applying various ways of teaching. Another criterion is defined by Olivia (1980) a good teacher should require at least five skills. They are technical skills, intrapersonal skills, basic knowledge, administrative skills, and communication skills. Another research on stu-

dents' perception on good teacher conducted by Jules (1993) suggests that good teacher is teacher who accommodates learning students' involvement in discussion and builds a relationship with students. These definition can be differently elaborated, however, what is become the starting point of this report is to understand the characteristics of good teacher from the voice of the good teacher themselves. The literature has shown many categorisation of good teacher, yet it is essential to understand this from the good teachers' voice to elaborate more about what they learn from what they do. As McArdle (2010) indicates that to capture what it takes to be a good teacher, we need to look to teacher. In this report, the researcher is of the same opinion with the idea of McArdle that the meaning of good teacher can be better known by exploring it from the teachers' voice themselves. The analysis in this report is using narrative approach because the materials are the narratives of two teachers of primary teachers. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) states that narrative is well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning. Experience happens narratively; therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively. Therefore, it is appropriate to apply narrative as inquiry since the purpose of the report is to find out about the teachers' view on what thing make them good at what they do. Lieblich (1998) states that narratives provide us with access to people's identity and personality. The report is an interpretation of two transcriptions from the story of two primary teachers in Scotland.

Method of Research

Riessman (2008) states that there are four approaches to narrative analysis. They are structural analysis, thematic analysis, structural analysis, visual analysis and dialogic or performance analysis. Among these

four methods of analysis in narratives, thematic analysis is particularly chosen by the researcher to interpret the data. The researcher subscribes to the view that thematic analysis offers more suppleness in action. As Richard Boyatzis (1998) states that one of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility. This is suited the data the researcher has; two transcriptions of primary teacher in Scotland. Considering that, the transcription analysed was a ready result in which the previously has been done by another researcher. Hence, the researcher believes that the appropriate method of analysis is the approach which is pliable. The researcher has no sufficient information about how the participants were selected and importantly the rationale of the research. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to explore the theme emerge in more flexible way. By this approach, the researcher wants to find out the theme appear across the rich data from individuals on the phenomena. Accordingly, Braun (2006) argues that thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data. It minimally organises and describes the data set in rich detail. It can explore and interpret many aspect of the research. Thematic analysis offers an accessible theoretically- flexible approach to analysing the qualitative data. Generally, it searches for theme emerges in the data available. Part of the flexibility of thematic analysis is that it allows the researcher to determine themes in a number of ways. For this reason, thematic analysis to explore the data. Using thematic analysis, the researcher believes that the result is generally accessible to educated general public can highlight similarities and differences across the data set.

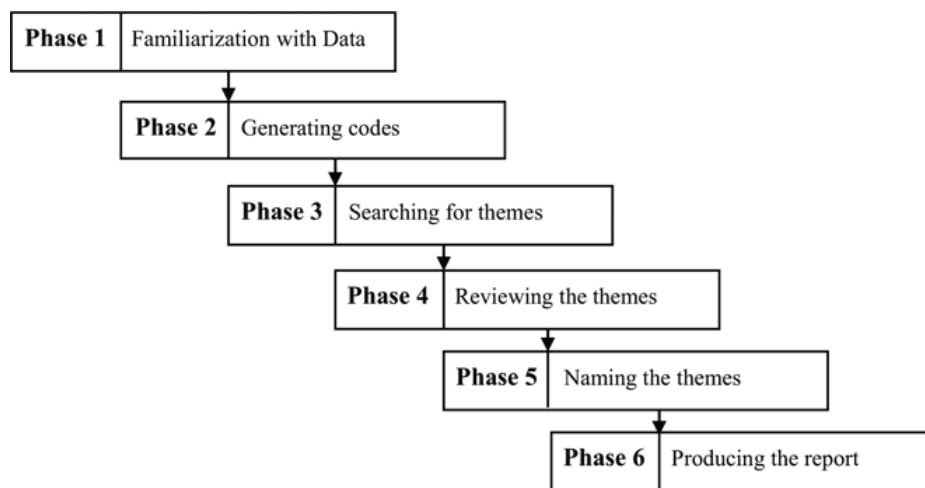
The researcher wanted to find commonalities theme across the data from the two individuals on because the thematic approach is useful for theorizing across a number of cases finding shared thematic elements across

research participants and the events they report (Riessman, 2008). Like other approach in qualitative analysis, thematic analysis has its limitation. The limitation of thematic analysis is that it does not involve significant attention to the context of the utterance in the interview. It concerns more with the content of the text. Hence, interpretation is mostly driven from data. However, the method is confined to explore the message literally on the transcription which decontextualizing the

narratives (Riessman, 2008). The process of thematic analysis was conducted by procedures; familiarization with the data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, naming the themes and producing the report as the end result of the analysis. The researcher is not strictly applying the analysis procedure order technically. Nevertheless, there are some modifications and flexibilities which were done for the sake of the data analysis.

See table 1

Table 1 modified from Braun 2006



The Analysis

The analysis here is not to report the definition of what make good teacher good at what they do. There is no universal definition of good teacher. Most individuals have had some exposure to schools and teachers, and as a result of that exposure almost everyone different conception of the good teacher. It is varied from many background and condition (Murphy, 2010). Therefore, it is difficult to come to a specific definition of things that make teacher good. Teacher deals with complex situations and challenges; consequently it is not an easy task to generalize it. Hence, the researcher believes that the definition of what make teacher good at their teaching is

depend on the perspective in which it is derived from. At this point, the researcher explores the perspective of the teachers from Scotland. Korthagen (2002) argues that it is even impossible or pedagogically undesirable to formulate a definitive description of “the good teacher”. The researcher tries to describe the essential point of things that make teacher good at what their do. The participants were simply chosen by the researcher based on the convenience sampling. Consequently, the choice was mainly based on the careful forethought of the researcher. At this point, the choice of the participants was subjectively made by the researcher. As it has been previously explained, the report uses the thematic analysis to explore the

data. Basically, the analysis was conducted in some phases. It started with getting familiar with the transcription by reading the verbatim repeatedly and carefully. The text was then highlighted by the researcher. After getting some general highlighted sentences then the researcher made comments on the margins of the highlighted sentences. It then was followed by identifying the important point from the stand out issues from the narratives highlighted. The researcher then identify any shared themes emerged between the two stories which then be linked to literature review related to the theme. It was done to get the general idea of the two participants' stories. This was then followed by the coding done by the researcher by highlighting the initial theme emerges throughout the transcript. Both participants are picking up numerous issues they concern in their teaching experience through reflection they have. There are many themes emerge, however, the researcher picks two major issues which significantly appear as the things which makes good teacher. These are the following themes;

Teacher always learn from the experience

The two participants apparently show their concern on the view that teaching is a continuous process of learning from experiences. Frequently, the two teachers elaborate their concern on their idea of perplexing condition during their teaching practices. However, instead of perceiving this experience as a problem, they take it as a chance to learn new knowledge and develop their expertise. In other words, the two teachers keep being open minded to face the hustle and predicament along their day-to day experience in the classroom. What is interesting is the teachers' response toward the problems. The teachers always try to learn from their obstacles. The persistent mentality of the teacher clarifies the effort of the teachers to always learn from the problems. This attitude enable the teach-

er to find out the solution and better knowledge to solve each difficulty they faced in the classroom. The idea of problems as a room for learning is interesting. Teacher needs to learn and cope with change and uncertainty, and cast all aspects of school as problematic rather than given. They response the problems an opportunity to learn and find out what is need to be done to improve their teaching. However, teaching and learning are demanding and as are equally as frustrating and contradictory for the teacher educator Lounghran (1997). The teachers were not skeptical, but see the problem as something prevalence and repairable. The teacher even can learn from everything even the problems. The researcher sees this consistency of learning from problem mentality make them become even better teacher. And this in line with what Whitman (1991) has indicated, that is, the great teacher should learn from their mistakes and even learn from their students' problems. The interviews show the continuous emphasis of the teachers' reflection on learning from problems. For example the second teacher's interview reflects how the teacher obviously realizes the the problems made her become more tough as a teacher. Literally, the teacher suggested that a teacher should not stop learning in order to develop his or her skills.

P11 ...if you are going to be a good teacher, you've got to be learning all the time and open to learning.. so you should be reading about book of education.

The similar idea is also revealed by the first teacher who reflectively learns from the experience she faced not necessarily from the classroom activity but also from the parents rappsorts.

P4 a bit of parental pressure there that I had never experienced before as well, because parents were much more interested in what was going on that I'd ever experienced before so that gave me another insights into

what the job would be like. And then I have to say that teacher I worked with at the time was a real inspiration em..and some of the things she did I still do today..based on some of the ideas that she used.

P5 I had a really difficult experience but a really useful experience.

The two teachers constantly learn lesson from every situation they face. Every time they come up with problems, there is always an initiation to analyse what is the cause or at least what can be learnt from the predicament. The teacher reflect and evaluate the problem. This idea is frequently stated by both two teachers quite similarly.

Teachers' relationship with students

The communication between the student and the teacher serves as a connection between the two, which provides a better atmosphere for a classroom environment (Jones, 1981). The two teachers throughout their story similarly address the commitment of building a good rapport between teacher and the students for the success of teaching learning. The idea of relationship commitment is not precisely stated by the two teachers, but generally they both are share the idea of how important is the relationship between teacher and students to succeed the better outcome of the teaching. This is well elaborated by the teachers in the stories. Literally, their attempt in any effort is to get close to students and parents. Among the ideas on the relationships, there is an aspiration from the teachers to involve the parents not only when the students get problem in the school. This is explained how the rapport is not only between teachers and students but also with the parents. Therefore, the better the communication, the teacher has with the students and parents, the more information the teacher has about the students challenge and needs in the learning process. This explains the teach-

ers' believe in the significant role of rapport in teaching learning process. They consistently use communication as the means of understanding the students. The first teacher has a good example of the serious determination of building a relationship with students. The first teacher frequently emphasizes the idea of crucial connection between teacher and children in the school. Nevertheless, the relationships is also with parents and other staff or teachers. Both teachers shows examples of how this relationships are maintained.

P 15 yes it is..it is..I think the relationship is just so key, you know. Children as well as inter-staff relationship..you know, it's quite funny..we've been talking about this social kind of side.

P 15 well the key thing for me is the relationship..is understading where the children come from...so that if you are going to teach in the school, the first thing you've got to do is walk round that area...

P 15 I often start that way when I'm talking to parents..”I'm not a parent so you have to take my word for it that I've had this experience

The above account shows the consistency of the two teachers in the commitment for making a constructive relationship with children. The second teacher similarly shares this idea. However, it is in a different dimension. The first teacher emphasizes the importance of rapport solely with children and the second teacher similiarly confirms the same concern include relationship with parents. Yet, the two teachers generally refer to the significance of the rapport with children. In long term impact, the good rapport between the teacher and students eventually appear. This is what happened to the second teacher who maintains the bond that last for event

when the students are already graduated from the school.

P 13 And you know, I've still got kids who used to come here that come back on a regular basis..you know, they are twenty-something and they've got jobs and still..well I've still got one that writes from who was in my first class..she's forty now but she still keeps in touch..

According to Pianta (1999) positive student-teacher relationships are characterized by open communication, as well as emotional and academic support that exist between students and teachers. This idea of teacher- students-parent rapport is something that is given more attention as crucial elements of teaching. The similar idea is stated in one of the teachers story as following account;

P13 the relationship you have with children and their families is so crucial to how you get on around here

P17 ... but you've also got to be able to engage with parents appropriately and not, you know this, this parents!" or ..as though they're something different.

The relationship with students and parents is the way to better understand the problems the students have. It allows the teachers to have more insights and perspectives to deal with the problems. The teachers expose three important rapport roles in teaching and learning. They are rapport with children, with parents and with other teachers or staff. This engagement according to the teacher is central and indispensable in teaching. Literally, the two teachers admit this idea as the one of the underlying key issues that makes a good teacher. It can be seen in one of the following accounts of the second teacher. However, making a positive relationship with chil-

dren and parents is not an airy fairy thing to do. The rapport Hatton (1994) states that teaching demands a commitment in rapport. It needs a consistency and commitment through experiences. Bullough (1995) states that the teachers need continuous experiences to be able to build a good rapport with children and parents. The rapport can be started by giving motivation to students. The second teacher literally state this idea in the account.

P 11 ...if we don't get children engaged and enthused and motivated by coming to school, then we're never going to teach them anything. It doesn't matter if it's the best teacher...

Finding

The researcher realizes this analysis is confined to narrow context. The researcher is not fully hold the background of the project. This due to the, the researcher lack of information deals with nature of data, how the data are collected, even how the participants were selected. At this point, the researcher was working with stories of two teachers with no sufficient prior knowledge and background of the project. Therefore, the analysis is mainly decontextualize the rationale of the research.

In conclusion, the two teachers stories shows two things that makes them become good teacher. The first one is the teacher's will to always learn from problems they faced. This includes the predicaments that enable them to improve their ability deals with future challenges. It is consistently stated by the two teachers. The second thing that make them become good teacher is their persistent concern to make a positive rapport with children and parents. Apparently, these two elements reflects the aspects that a good teacher should have. However, these ideas of rapport and learning will are coming from from the teachers' personality. In other words, the researcher concludes that the personal attitude

and mentality are the factors that make them become good teachers. The study has not explored the possibility of how the rapport between teachers and other staff or other teachers can contribute to the good teaching. The issue of the teacher community discussion or group is very interesting. Apart from the finding, the researcher believes that there should

be more comprehensive investigation on the issue of what possible capacity can school contribute to support and enable the good rapport between teacher and students. How the school support the teachers. The teacher should not stand alone to make this happen. The investigation on school contribution on teacher students rapport will be interesting.

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