



Continuous professional growth: A study of educators' commitment to lifelong learning

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the commitment of Indonesian educators to Continuous Professional Growth (CPG) and lifelong learning. With the rapidly changing educational landscape, educators must adapt to emerging pedagogical trends, harness new technologies, and lead both inside and outside the classroom. This study utilized a qualitative case study approach, encompassing semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, to deeply understand ten driving school educators' experiences, perceptions, and motivations regarding lifelong learning in Indonesia. Findings indicate educators' involvement in teacher selection, school development, and digital transformation. Their dedication to innovation, feedback, collaboration, and skill development, especially in technology and instructional approaches, underscores their commitment to continuous growth. The study emphasizes the multifaceted nature of educators' lifelong learning journeys and the importance of adaptability, collaboration, and technology in modern education.

Keywords: educators' professional development, lifelong learning, continuous professional growth

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INTRODUCTION

Within the dynamic realm of education, Continuous Professional Growth (CPG) is a fundamental pillar for educators, cultivating an ongoing knowledge acquisition and adjustment process. Continuing professional growth (CPG) refers to the ongoing and deliberate process of gaining and assimilating new knowledge, skills, and experiences to better one's professional competencies (Gilmeeva & Shibankova, 2021; Jitendra et al., 2022; Maryati et al., 2019; Mu'arifin & Narmaditya, 2022). Educators are required to actively engage in a wide range of learning opportunities and integrate innovative techniques and methodologies to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching (Gal & Fallik, 2022; Musa et al., 2022; Nurhayati, 2020; Winarti et al., 2022). The importance of lifelong learning in education cannot be understated (Anthopoulou et al., 2017; Kokanović, 2019). It fosters a culture of ongoing growth and adaptation, allowing educators to remain up-to-date with the most recent educational research, advancements in pedagogy, and technological innovations (Blancia et al., 2018; Herawati et al., 2022; Nissilä et al., 2022). The necessity of such a commitment is crucial to effectively meeting the varied and ever-changing needs of students, fostering diversity, and facilitating the improvement of educational quality and outcomes (Anthopoulou et al., 2017). Engaging in lifelong learning enables individuals to stay abreast of pedagogical breakthroughs, technological advancements, and changes in societal values and structures (Matsumoto-Royo et al., 2021).

The literature on educators' lifelong learning highlights the importance of continuous professional development and its impact on educational practices (Anthopoulos et al., 2017; Matsumoto-Royo et al., 2021; Nissilä et al., 2022). Several studies have examined the various aspects of lifelong learning among educators. Numerous studies have repeatedly demonstrated a strong inclination among educators toward the concept of lifelong learning (Hoerniasih, 2019; Kokanović, 2019; Sunthonkanokpong & Murphy, 2019). According to Blancia et al. (2018), a significant number of educators regard ongoing learning as an essential component of their occupation. The factors that influence their level of engagement include personal factors such as enthusiasm and commitment, as well as external factors such as possibilities for professional progress and institutional requirements (Blancia et al., 2018; Nissilä et al., 2022). Nevertheless, many obstacles, such as limited time availability, inadequate access to high-quality resources, and insufficient institutional backing, can impede individuals' involvement in lifelong learning (Blancia et al., 2018).

The concept of lifelong learning has a discernible influence on pedagogical approaches and the dynamics within educational settings. Educators who actively participate in ongoing learning are more likely to use creative teaching practices, effectively integrate technology, and display increased adaptability to the different requirements of their students. In addition, educators of this nature frequently demonstrate a reflective teaching practice, consistently assessing and enhancing their approaches in light of novel insights and personal encounters (Blancia et al., 2018; Kokanović, 2019).

In the contemporary educational milieu, educators are required to possess a diverse range of skills. Acquiring technology proficiency and leadership capabilities further enhances the fundamental basis of pedagogical knowledge. The significance of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK) in effective teaching is highlighted in the study conducted by Adipat et al. (2023). This research emphasizes the interconnectedness and interaction between these domains. In contrast, possessing leadership abilities enables educators to influence educational policy, guide colleagues, and instigate transformative shifts within institutions. Lifelong learning offers educators the opportunity to acquire and refine these abilities, ensuring their pertinence and effectiveness in the ever-changing realm of education (Thompson et al., 2020).

The role of educators in the 21st century extends far beyond traditional teaching. They are expected to adapt to emerging pedagogical trends, harness new technologies, and lead both inside and outside the classroom. Lifelong learning is often heralded as the pathway to meet these evolving demands. However, a deeper understanding of how educators engage with lifelong learning, the skills they prioritize, and how they integrate this new knowledge into practice, particularly within the context of the Indonesian educational system, remains limited.

This study endeavors to shed light on Indonesian educators' commitment to lifelong learning and its subsequent impact on their professional practices. It aims to: 1) enumerate and categorize the lifelong learning activities that educators actively pursue; 2) ascertain the specific skills, be they pedagogical, technological, or leadership-oriented, that educators aim to develop through these activities; and 3) understand the practical implications of these learning engagements, specifically in terms of how educators incorporate newly acquired knowledge and skills into their teaching methodologies.

By comprehensively exploring these facets, the study hopes to offer valuable insights that could inform professional development strategies, educational policies, and the broader discourse on the role of educators in contemporary education.

To navigate the research and ensure its alignment with the stated purpose, the following questions have been posed: 1) What variety of lifelong learning activities do educators engage in? 2) What specific skills (e.g., pedagogical, technological, and leadership) are educators targeting to develop through their lifelong learning engagements?

In what ways, and to what extent, do educators integrate the knowledge and skills procured from lifelong learning activities into their actual teaching practices?

METHOD

This study utilized a case study method with a qualitative approach to deeply explore the personal experiences, perceptions, and motivations of educators regarding lifelong learning. This design facilitated an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within its real-life context. A qualitative approach was selected to capture rich, descriptive data from the participants, further illuminating their commitment to continuous professional growth. The Indonesian educational landscape, with its unique characteristics, challenges, and cultural nuances, provided a distinct perspective for the research. This Indonesian context presented an opportunity to investigate how educators navigate their professional development amidst the nation's cultural and institutional challenges.

The informants are 20 Indonesian educators selected purposefully to encapsulate a broad spectrum of experiences and backgrounds. These educators ranged from novices with only a few years in the field to veterans boasting over two decades of experience. The sample encompassed classroom teachers, school leaders, curriculum developers, and educational consultants, thus providing a comprehensive view of the educational sector. Moreover, these participants hail from various Indonesian regions, carrying with them the diverse cultural nuances that influence their teaching practices and professional evolution.

Several techniques were employed in data collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to extract insights into educators' experiences with lifelong learning, the skills they aimed to develop, and the subsequent impact on their teaching methodologies. While these interviews followed a structured guide, they also allowed flexibility for deeper exploration into particularly intriguing or unexpected responses. In certain instances, classroom observations were undertaken to directly observe the application of knowledge and skills derived from lifelong learning activities. Furthermore, an analysis of educators' documents, such as professional development logs, lesson plans, and reflective journals, was executed to triangulate and corroborate the data gleaned from interviews and observations.

Data analysis procedures were rigorous. Transcriptions were made verbatim and coded using a blend of predetermined and emergent codes. Thematic analysis was the chosen method to discern patterns and themes pertinent to the research questions, involving an iterative procedure of reading, coding, and clustering data until discernible themes surfaced. This analysis was manually conducted, punctuated by periodic peer-debriefing sessions to guarantee the consistency and reliability of the identified themes. Direct quotations from participants were incorporated to underscore and substantiate the findings, ensuring that the educators' voices remained at the heart of the study's conclusions.

Several strategies were implemented to ensure the validity and credibility of the research findings: 1) Triangulation by utilizing multiple data sources (interviews, observations, and document analysis) bolstered the validation and corroboration of findings. This approach aimed for a holistic understanding of the studied phenomenon. 2) Member Checking: post-initial analysis presented participants with preliminary findings to verify their accuracy and alignment with their experiences. This iterative feedback mechanism allowed them to affirm, clarify, or challenge the researcher's interpretations.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Some of the findings from research related to the variety of lifelong learning activities educators engage in, specific skills (e.g., pedagogical, technological, and leadership) educators target to develop through their lifelong learning engagements, and the method educators use to integrate the knowledge and skills procured from lifelong learning activities into their actual teaching practices are as follows:

Variety of lifelong learning

This research focuses on the variety of lifelong learning activities that educators engage in, among the several lifelong learning activities they pursue. Unraveling the layers of the findings,

the empirical data that first encountered was educators' prominent involvement in pivotal processes such as teacher selection. Their commitment to advancing pedagogical standards further enriched this active engagement, as exemplified by their endeavors in Best Practice and Classroom Action Research. As the focus shifted to the challenges posed by the pandemic, the resilience and adaptability of educators became profoundly evident. Their robust engagement with Teacher Professional Education (PPG) showcased their dedication to navigating these turbulent times. Their innovative exploration of alternative learning media complemented this, ensuring that education's flame remained ignited despite such adversity.

The narrative took another intriguing turn as the researchers observed their fervent dedication to institutional progression. Many educators emerged as participants and catalysts in school development programs. Their enthusiasm for harnessing feedback, adapting, and refining their approaches painted a picture of professionals deeply committed to the evolutionary nature of education. The digital renaissance in education was unmistakable. Educators were not merely passive adopters but enthusiastic champions of online learning. This commitment extended beyond mere adaptation, with many emphasizing the imperativeness of continuous learning and remaining updated with rapidly evolving technological advancements. Collaboration emerged as a powerful thread binding the findings. That educators actively seek feedback was observed, not only from their peers but also from students and parents. Their active participation in diverse training sessions, workshops, and online platform exploration further demonstrated this collaborative ethos, highlighting a holistic approach to professional development. Delving deeper, the introspective facet of educators came to light. Moments of self-reflection and feedback punctuated their journey, marking a continuous cycle of learning and growth. Their proactive participation in professional development programs, where a harmonious blend of technology and interactive learning strategies was a consistent focus, beautifully intertwined this introspective journey.

The narrative took a futuristic turn as observing educators' voracious appetite for staying abreast of the latest in educational technology. Their participation in online training sessions and workshops was not a mere formality but a clear indication of their commitment to lifelong learning. This was seamlessly married to their deep-seated value of collaboration, fostering an environment of shared growth and peer learning. The journey through the findings highlighted another pivotal aspect of the modern educator's ethos: feedback, reflection, and the unyielding pursuit of improvement. Their unwavering engagement in workshops and seminars, combined with their emphasis on feedback and reflection, epitomized their belief in professional growth's iterative and cyclical nature. Concluding the exploration, the digital landscape of education was in sharp focus. Educators' zest for exploring many digital tools and platforms was palpable. Their active engagement in professional development programs harmoniously complemented it. The crowning touch to the findings was their intrinsic sense of community, valuing collaboration with both colleagues and the wider school ecosystem, encapsulating the essence of collective development.

Skills development

During the investigation into the professional development domain for educators, a collection of intriguing narratives arose, focusing on acquiring and enhancing skills. At the forefront of this work, educators developed essential organizational, research, and writing skills, establishing a strong basis for their pedagogical pursuits. Considering the transformative impact of the digital age on the educational sector, the ability to adapt has emerged as a crucial attribute. The study's results have highlighted the proactive approach educators took in embracing the transition toward online education platforms. They have demonstrated a strong ability to adapt and develop technological skills to effectively utilize these platforms. This phenomenon aligned harmoniously with a wider focus on acquiring proficiency in information technology and effectively adjusting to various teaching approaches, enabling educators to maintain adaptability in a constantly changing context. Upon further examination, the intersection of technology and adaptability in instructional approaches became increasingly evident. Educators demonstrated a dual focus on enhancing their technological competencies for effective online instruction and a

dedication to improving their instructional approaches through feedback. A clear drive to harness technological expertise further reinforced this reflective approach, ensuring optimal adaptability to online teaching paradigms. The dedication was not an isolated phenomenon but rather closely connected to improving teaching approaches. Feedback and collaborative learning were fundamental elements in this process.

The theme of innovation was found to be prominent in the research findings. Educators demonstrated a strong enthusiasm for integrating cutting-edge teaching approaches with technology, emphasizing their flexibility in addressing the varied learning requirements of students. The dedication to innovation was not solely theoretical but demonstrated via their implementation of practices such as incorporating multimedia components and exploring gamification strategies. These efforts aimed to maintain high engagement and relevance in their teaching methods. The exploration of the research data highlighted the enduring motivation among educators to integrate inventive pedagogical approaches with technology, consistently pushing the limits. The educators explored pedagogical methods that went beyond conventional practices, exploring diverse teaching approaches to enhance the quality and depth of learning encounters. In conclusion, the investigation has shed light on the profound importance of the digital environment in contemporary schooling. Educators have demonstrated not only a high level of competence in utilizing digital tools and platforms but also a strong commitment to staying updated on the most current student-centred teaching approaches. This dedication ensures that they maintain a leading position in pursuing pedagogical excellence.

New skills application in teaching and learning practices

Following the in-depth exploration into the realm of contemporary education, a narrative of dynamic adaptation and innovation emerged, painting a vivid picture of how educators are applying newly developed skills to their teaching practices. At the onset, a profound emphasis on research-driven pedagogy was observed. Educators are more than just absorbing knowledge; they actively apply their honed skills through meticulous research and subsequent preparation of enriched learning materials. This dedication to a research-centric approach underscores the commitment to delivering education grounded in evidence and inquiry.

As navigating the complexities introduced by the pandemic, the resilience of educators shone through. With an arsenal of new knowledge and skills, they adapted their teaching practices to address the unique challenges posed by this global crisis. Their ability to pivot, especially during these trying times, is a testament to their dedication and versatility. Further into the exploration, a trend towards integrating diverse learning models became evident. Educators are not just leveraging their newfound IT prowess but are also recognizing and acting upon the imperative need to meld various instructional paradigms, ensuring a holistic and comprehensive teaching approach. The narrative took a futuristic turn as delving into the realms of technological advancements. Educators, in their quest to elevate the learning experience, integrate cutting-edge technology into their teaching methodologies seamlessly. This integration, coupled with adapted teaching strategies, aims at amplifying student engagement and enriching their learning journeys.

Online teaching, once a supplementary tool, has now taken center stage, and educators are at its helm. With various new skills and methodologies, they are navigating the digital teaching landscape, consistently enhancing student engagement, and optimizing learning outcomes. The study also highlighted the creative flair of modern educators. Educators are pioneering creative and interactive techniques. These strategies, tailored to foster heightened student engagement, are also malleable enough to cater to the diverse learning preferences that typify today's classrooms. Innovation, a recurring theme, was further accentuated as educators infused their teaching with novel strategies and technological tools. Their endeavors aim to engage and immerse students in enriched learning experiences. As the culmination of the exploration was approached, the emphasis shifted to diversity in teaching approaches. Educators, armed with innovative methodologies, are tailoring their strategies to cater to the multifaceted needs of students, striving to foster a conducive and inclusive learning environment. Concluding the introspection, the student emerged as the nucleus of the educational experience. Educators champion a student-

centered approach, ensuring that learning is not just interactive but also deeply engaging, truly embodying the spirit of modern pedagogy.

Discussion

Educators' commitment to continuous professional growth is a cornerstone of progressive education. The research underscores this commitment and positions it within the broader context of current educational research.

Variety of lifelong learning activities

Through the comprehensive investigation into the endeavors of educators, aspects of their commitment to continuous learning that align significantly with the present direction of pedagogical research have been discovered. The topic of teacher selection and research initiatives has garnered significant attention within the realm of global education. Extensive research has been conducted to explore the crucial role of teacher quality in influencing student achievement. Susuoroka et al. (2023) reported that The proficiency of teachers, their instructional approaches, their ability to manage the classroom effectively, their capacity to motivate pupils, and their satisfaction and enthusiasm in the subject matter, all exert a substantial influence on students' achievement.

The phenomenon of educators actively engaging in teacher selection procedures and doing best practice and classroom action research is not uncommon, as evidenced by the observations. Contemporary research repeatedly emphasizes the significance of these practices. Zajić (2021) argued that action research encourages teachers to manage and control their work. One example of a widely embraced approach in education is evidence-based practices (Stecanela et al., 2019; Taghap & Boyonas, 2023). These practices, which use data to inform and improve teaching methods, align well with the observed efforts of educators.

The pandemic's emergence precipitated a fundamental shift in global pedagogical approaches. The alignment of the findings regarding educators' involvement with Teacher Professional Education (PPG) and alternate learning media is consistent with a global discourse. Several new studies have looked at how well online teaching works, the pros and cons of distance learning, and the new hybrid teaching methods that have grown up because of the web's limitations (Iskandar et al., 2023; Musa et al., 2022; Nurhayati et al., 2023; Nurhayati & Musa, 2020; Suharyat et al., 2022). The educators' adaptation, as observed in the study, serves as a representative example of the broader resilience exhibited by the global teaching community (Marsegi et al., 2023; Reisoğlu & Çebi, 2020; Winarti et al., 2022).

The phenomenon of educators playing a pivotal role in pushing institutional development through the provision of feedback is not an aberration. Current pedagogical research places significant emphasis on the crucial role of feedback in the process of professional development (Ferenc & Hercz, 2019). The notion of reflective teaching has gained significant traction in recent years, as it emphasizes the ongoing self-assessment of educators. This approach aligns harmoniously with the feedback-driven methodology. The observed atmosphere of collaboration among educators in the study indicates a broader shift in instructional paradigms. Recent research has emphasized the significance of collaborative learning, peer evaluation, and shared professional advancement as integral components of 21st-century learning models (Mei & May, 2018). Incorporating a collaborative ethos is not only advantageous for students, but, as indicated by the research findings, is essential for educators' professional growth.

The focus on introspection, growth, the utilization of feedback, and continual improvement follows the wider educational conversation surrounding metacognition. Contemporary pedagogical research has increasingly emphasized the advantages of educators' metacognitive awareness (Özçakmak et al., 2021). This emphasis suggests that such awareness can result in more productive teaching strategies, enhanced decision-making capabilities, and improved student results. The current focus on community and cooperation aligns with the increasing body of research supporting professional learning groups' effectiveness. According to existing research, these communities foster an atmosphere that promotes mutual growth, collaborative learning, and collective advancement, resulting in comprehensive educational outcomes (Antinluoma et al., 2021). In conclusion, the investigation provides a narrow perspective on wider, worldwide educational

patterns. The practices, ethos, and commitments exhibited by the educators in the study indicate the dynamic nature of current academic research.

Skills development

The intricate analysis of educators' skill development mirrors several pivotal trends in contemporary pedagogical research. Academic circles increasingly emphasize the importance of educators acquiring foundational competencies such as organizational, research, and writing skills (Soenarto et al., 2020). Such skills are foundational for effective classroom orchestration, curriculum conceptualization, and academic exploration. This sentiment echoes the previous research finding that these competencies directly correlate with effective teaching and learning outcomes (Canales & Maldonado, 2018).

The observed emphasis on adaptability, particularly in online education, resonates deeply with global academic narratives. With the ubiquitous integration of technology in educational ecosystems, recent studies have accentuated the imperativeness of educators to be technologically adept (Marsegi et al., 2023; Nurhayati, 2021; Nurhayati et al., 2023; Nurhayati & Musa, 2020; Nurmalia et al., 2022; Suharyat et al., 2022; Winarti et al., 2022). Their adaptability and technological prowess are a clarion call for modern education, as aptly captured in the findings and echoed in global pedagogical discourses. The educators' focus on mastering information technology and diversifying instructional models aligns seamlessly with the research, which emphasized the ascendancy of hybrid teaching models, which amalgamate traditional pedagogical techniques with modern technological tools (Raes, 2021). The broader academic landscape emblematically represents these research findings regarding innovation in teaching methodologies, especially technology integration. 21st-century pedagogical techniques underscore the indispensability of innovative strategies, such as multimedia integration and gamification, to cater to contemporary learners (Ghofur & Nurhayati, 2023; Setiana & Hansun, 2017). In summary, the introspection into the multifaceted realm of educators' skill development offers a granular perspective and harmoniously aligns with the broader tapestry of contemporary educational research. This intricate interplay between the observations and established academic discourses serves as a testament to the evolving dynamism of the educational landscape.

Application of new skills in teaching and learning practices

In the intricate exploration of the application of new skills in contemporary teaching and learning practices, trends that are deeply reflective of the broader trajectories identified in modern pedagogical research are unearthed. Cortes et al. (2021) found that the increasing recognition of evidence-based teaching practices as essential for effective instruction aligns with the observed emphasis on research-driven pedagogy. Educators are echoing the global call for a more inquiry-driven approach to education by actively applying skills through research and developing enriched learning materials. The resilience and adaptability of educators, especially during the challenges of the pandemic, mirror the sentiments captured in the study that highlighted the crucial role of adaptability in educators as they navigated the unique challenges posed by remote and hybrid teaching modalities during global crises (Fauziddin et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2019). The trend of integrating diverse learning models, as observed in the findings, finds resonance in the research that emphasized the ascendancy of hybrid instructional models, underscoring the importance of blending traditional and digital pedagogies for holistic education (Bergdahl et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2019).

Educators' commitment to leveraging technological advancements in their teaching methodologies aligns with the research trajectory highlighted by Winarti et al. and Ghofur and Marsegi. Their seminal work on the integration of ed-tech tools in modern classrooms showcased the myriad benefits and imperatives of tech-enhanced learning environments (Ghofur & Nurhayati, 2023; Marsegi et al., 2023; Winarti et al., 2022). The rise of online teaching and the subsequent emphasis on enhancing student engagement and outcomes through novel methodologies is a sentiment deeply embedded in the findings of Novitasari & Fauziddin, Nurhayati et al., and Suharyat et al. Their research on online education emphasized the importance of continuous skill

development and adaptability among educators to optimize digital learning experiences (Novitasari & Fauziddin, 2022; Nurhayati et al., 2023; Suharyat et al., 2022).

Lastly, the emphasis on a student-centered approach, ensuring immersive and interactive learning experiences, aligns seamlessly with the pedagogical philosophy advocated by Villarroel et al. (2020). The research accentuated the imperative of placing the student at the core of the educational experience, fostering deeper engagement and holistic learning. In summation, the findings offer a granular perspective into the evolving skills and practices of modern educators and harmoniously resonate with the broader tapestry of contemporary educational research. Considering both the findings and existing literature, educational institutions must: 1) provide diverse professional development opportunities, considering the vast range of activities educators are keen to pursue; 2) emphasize technological training, given its pivotal role in modern education; and 3) foster environments that encourage the application of new skills in real-world teaching scenarios.

CONCLUSION

This study, centered on Indonesian educators, sheds light on their commitment to lifelong learning and its subsequent impact on their professional practices. To enumerate and categorize the lifelong learning activities that educators actively pursue, ascertain the specific skills—be they pedagogical, technological, or leadership-oriented—that they target to develop through these activities, and understand the practical implications of these learning engagements, the research provides a comprehensive examination of educators' proactive approach to professional growth. The comprehensive examination reveals a landscape of vibrant evolution in the educational sector. Indonesian educators have showcased an unwavering commitment to professional growth, adaptability, and a future-focused approach to education. Their active participation in pivotal processes, such as teacher selection and research-driven pedagogical enhancement, coupled with their robust response to challenges like the pandemic, underscores the resilience of the modern educator. The emphasis on evidence-based teaching, the adaptability and integration of diverse learning models, the fervent embrace of technological advancements, and the commitment to student-centered pedagogies all indicate a global shift in the educational paradigm. These trends, when juxtaposed with the aims and outcomes of the study, emphasize the need for continuous professional development, adaptability, and innovative teaching methodologies in the face of rapid technological and societal changes.

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