

WRITING SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE: ISLAMIC HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

Writing scientific article is one of the ways to develop teacher professionalism. However, writing scientific article remains a problem for some Islamic High School Teachers. To explore about the problem, a preliminary research was conducted. Focus Group Discussion was used to gather the data. The result showed that most of the Islamic High School teachers who became the participants of the research never publish a scientific article because they get difficulties not only in exploring the ideas but also in writing the article itself. The teachers admitted that writing scientifically is not their habit. Thus, encouraging those teachers to write scientifically is highly necessary and supportive atmosphere among teachers should be developed. It takes time to develop a belief that writing and publishing scientific article would help the participant teachers developing their professionalism.

Key words: *high school teachers, professional development, scientific writing.*

INTRODUCTION

Sophisticated forms of teaching are needed to develop 21st century students' competencies such as critical thinking, complex problem solving, effective communication and collaboration, and self-directed learning. In turns, opportunities are needed for teachers to learn and refine the pedagogies required to teach these skills.

To meet these demands, teachers should improve their competences. Professional development of the teacher plays important role in improving teacher practice so that they can make new literacies explicit to students by consciously and systematically incorporating them in lessons and through skillful and flexible classroom pedagogy.

Teacher professional development basically is the development of teacher quality of competencies. Based on the Regulation of the Minister for Empowerment of State Apparatus and Bureaucratic Reform No. 16 of 2009 concerning Teacher Functional Position and His Credit Score, the main dimensions of the competencies are pedagogic, personality, social, and

professional. To promote sustainable professional development, teacher might do self-development, scientific publication, and creative innovation.

Many teachers of Madrasah (Islamic religion based-school) faced a paucity of opportunities in developing their professional competences. As some teachers in one of the *Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri* (Public Islamic Junior High School) in Kota Jambi acknowledged that they generally have little opportunity to develop themselves and to improve their professionalism through promotion. One of their main difficulties to be promoted is a lack of published scientific articles. Many of them have never been promoted because they never publish any scientific paper as a requirement of promotion.

In addition, research about teachers' problem in writing scientific article is rarely found. Therefore, this article described the problems faced by Islamic Junior High School teachers on writing scientific article in Jambi. Possible solutions based on review of literature were discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Professional Development

Darling-Hammond (2017) defines effective professional development as structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes. Marcelo (2009) stated that the concept "development" has a connotation related to evolution and continuity which goes beyond the traditional overlapping of basic and continued teacher education.

Based on Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers stated in *Pedoman Pengelolaan Pengembangan Keprofesian Berkelanjutan* (2010), teacher professional development covers three things; namely self-development, scientific publications, and innovative work (*Kementrian Pendidikan Nasional*, 2010). Self-development includes improving teacher competences through functional training and teacher-collective activities such as continuing to higher degree, involved in training, in seminars and conferences, and collaborating with experts. Scientific publications are scientific papers that have been published as a form of teacher contribution in improving the quality of the learning process in school and generally in educational world.

The educational system within which professional development occurs has implications for its effectiveness. According to Darling-Hammond (2017), conditions for teaching and learning both within schools and at the broader system level can inhibit the effectiveness of professional development. For example, inadequate resources for professional development—including needed curriculum materials—frequently exacerbate inequities and hinder school improvement efforts. Failure to align with policies toward a coherent set of practices is also a major impediment, as is a dysfunctional school culture. Implementing effective professional development well also requires responsiveness not only to the needs of educators and learners, but also to the contexts in which the teaching and learning process takes place.

Collaboration: Learning from Professional Communities Beyond School.

A positive school culture with a good atmosphere and understanding of teachers' learning, in addition to co-operation with external resource persons, may impact the professional development of teachers (Postholm, 2012). These many factors involved are easy to mention rather than to building it reality.

Teacher can develop genuine collaborative teams in which they share goals and engage in mutually beneficial professional learning. MGMP which stands for *Musyawahar Guru Mata Pelajaran* (subject teacher deliberations) is an example of teacher collaboration. However, its effectiveness is questionable. Possibilities to include in a collaboration, in seminar, and in training is minimum as teacher said that they are busy with their teaching time and responsibilities. Not every teacher has the same chance to be involved in seminar and training.

Community service from University could go to school and acted as collaborator in helping the teacher learning, but it is rarely happened especially for school located in the remote areas. The community service may discuss about the challenge the teacher face in teaching and learning process such as in planning the lesson with technology. They could share ideas about new trend in learning in the millennial era. They can also collaborate in doing research. Then, they may also conduct training on the skills the teacher should improve. The training on writing scientific article is an example.

Writing Scientific Article

Writing scientific article requires a writer to understand research, and the way how to report it. Borja (2014), an editor of some peer reviewed journals, stated that the general research structure is IMRAD. It stands for Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion. He added that there are eleven steps to organize manuscript. They are (1) prepare the figures and tables, (2) write the methods, (3) write up the results, (4) write the discussion, (5) write a clear conclusion, (6) write a compelling introduction, (7) write the abstract, (8) compose a concise and descriptive title, (9) select key words for indexing, (10) write the acknowledgement, and (11) write up the references.

Writing scientifically is based on research data. It is arguable that more teachers may become involved in research-like activities which will enable them to disseminate their insight whether in the teaching and learning process or in a published scientific writing. For classroom teachers, doing classroom action research may enrich them with data for their writing. However, some teachers are reluctant to do research. According to Hancock (1997), there are four main areas why most teachers neglect to carry out research. They are professional status, working conditions, teachers' confidence, and teachers' difficulty engaging with outsider's research methodologies.

The reluctant teachers should not be blamed for their inability to express their ideas in coherent written article. The factors are complicated. Hancock (1997) explained that teacher energy and creativity is directed towards managing and controlling the class. Teachers have little timetabled time for simply thinking about their work. Many teachers, particularly those in the early stages of their careers, live daily with the thought that they might – at some point in the lesson, the week or their careers – lose control.

Another problem with writing is the difficulties in expressing the ideas fluently because at the same time the writer does editing. Writing and editing is two separate brain function. The problem of having difficulties in expressing the ideas fluently in writing arise from doing the task simultaneously (Klauser, 1987). For teachers, the problem is getting worst because they do not read resources in the way it should be.

METHOD

Descriptive method was employed in this study because the objectives is to describe the problem faced by Islamic junior high school teachers on writing scientific article. All teachers from some *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* located in Jambi Seberang Kota were involved as participants. The study was conducted on July 2019.

Before conducting the study, an observation was conducted to the school. It was dealing with administrative matter. The next step is preparing the requirements of the focus group discussion kits, and presentation tools. Presentation about how to write scientific article and how to publish it were followed by a focus group discussion dealing with the topic. The discussion ended up with a quiz on writing an article outline.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are two main points to be discussed. The first is the process of the research and the second is the participants' problems and suggestion on writing scientific article and their professional development.

The Research processes.

Having small talk with the vice head of the school, the research team realized that the participant teachers need training on writing scientific article. No scientific article has been written by the participants. Thus, no publication was found. Based on the preliminary data, the team decided that the first session of the study is enriching the teacher with scientific writing concepts and encouraging them to write. The second session is discussion and practice followed by a challenge to write an outline.

The school vice head said that the room to be used was the ICT room at the second floor. However, because there were participants who have problems with their legs, the room for the training changed to the teacher room in the first floor. The room has a little space to walk on because there were teachers desk full of book and teaching matters on them. Although it was not in a comfort room, the participant teachers enthusiastically followed the presentation and the discussion. 47 teachers participated in the discussion.

The presentation session from the team about writing scientific article run smoothly. At the beginning, the team presented about scientific writing and its structure. The participants

said that they already know about the structure of a scientific paper, but they faced constraints to write it coherently as they lack of practice to write a paper. Understanding and identifying what to study in their classes are some of the options to deal with their difficulties. Thus, the participants were encouraged to do classroom action research to enrich their data. Daily teaching learning reality in their classroom and action research can be used as sources to get data for their writing. They were also suggested to read more relevant literatures.

At the end of the discussion, a challenge was driven for the participants. A book on education would be given to the participant teachers who were able to write an outline of a scientific article in one day. Unfortunately, until the deadline no participants involved in the challenge.

The participants problems and possible solution

There were some problems faced by the participants in writing scientific article. They involve the participants' limited understanding about the concepts of writing, the technical matters and time management.

One of the participants said that she finds difficulties in starting where to begin writing. The participants perceived that writing is difficult. It is difficult to express the ideas into a comprehensible article. Klauser (1986) called it as writing anxiety. It is a reluctance to put words on paper and a lack of confidence in those words once they have been written. She said that it is normal and that it strikes fear to the heart of even gifted authors.

Stark (2003) suggested some plausible solutions to cope with this anxiety. First, teachers elicit themselves the right questions to help start writing. Second, teachers can brainstorm and list all ideas to find an ideal topic. Then, teachers formulate the perfect thesis question. In addition, teachers prepare a preliminary and easy to follow outline. Last, teachers make thorough notes from all sources.

An infinite number of choices such as topics, approaches, claims, evidence, order, words, sentences, parts, paragraphs, tone, voice, title, beginnings, middles, endings, what to include, what to omit, and the list goes on, are involved in all writing. To simplify, this choice of making process and to make it less daunting, Fulwiler (2002) suggested to answer the following questions: (1) Why I am writing? (2) under what conditions and constrains, and (3) to whom?

An English teacher participant stated that she does not like writing except writing for the social media. In social media such as Facebook there is a writing group that she may follow, but she does not. She was encouraged to write, whatever she wants to write first, so that later it becomes a habit, like writing a diary. All teachers are writers. Everyday teacher writes lesson plan, assignments, emails, social short messages, notes, teaching materials, and much more. The participant needs to realize that writing in private or for an audience can deepen reflection and empathy for students (Marshbank, 2018). However, some teachers do not realize the importance of writing for them. Let alone writing scientific article, some teacher uses last year lesson plan and the same assignment from the same old book in their teaching learning activities.

Other participant said that they read a lot, but not serious academic book. Some participants said that they like reading social media. However, what they read do not help them in enriching their ideas for writing. Exploring deeply the available various sources in the internet might become the solution.

In today's society participation to access and use of communication technology is fundamental. However, a lacking adequate development in reading literacy entails the dangerous possibility of sailing adrift through the vast ocean of online information. Some of the participant teachers said that they have access to internet, have android mobile phone, and read information. Nevertheless, they are lack of understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written text to achieve goals, to develop knowledge and potential. The teacher said that they read online for social life, not to get ideas for writing a report or article for the development of their profession.

This leads them to the situation of get stuck with ideas. They do not have additional resources for the ideas they have. The participant teachers are also not skill full in finding the available resources: how to get the resources for their writing. It takes time. They said that they are busy with their daily duty, teaching, preparing for teaching, family matters, and their social life. This situation is in line with Hancock (1997) who stated that teachers have little timetabled time for preparing teachingresources, liaising with parents, writing up records, consulting withcolleagues or simply thinking about their work. Such essential

professional activities must be squeezed into tightly marked daytime moments or confined to evenings, weekends and holidays.

Other participant mentioned that he got problems dealing with his research evidences. Which data may and may not be used. This problem is basically dealing with the understanding of research concepts. Reading research book with understanding might help. Another solution was discussing the problem with colleague who better known about the topic.

He also talked about technical matter from National Education department. It seems that the rules of submitting an article are quite complicated for him to follow. He was not ready psychologically to accept the refusal of his writing by the National Education authority. The participant should realize that writing can not be done in one go. Proofreader is needed for his case.

Other problem mentioned by the same participant was about specification of the title of the article. A long, more than fifteen words title is not acceptable. A catchy title is preferred. Giving example how to write title, how to cope with psychological burdens of refusal, and how to manage research data were discussed together in this study.

What the participants need to do is practicing the writing. They should see that doing research may enrich their article writing and reporting, and thus in turn help them to professionally develop their way of teaching.

CONCLUSION

To create scientific papers themselves, the teachers are constrained by their lack of knowledge on how to write scientific articles and how to publish the articles in scientific journals. In general, the Islamic high school teachers as the participants experience difficulties in understanding the concept of writing scientifically. They are still having trouble in exploring ideas, getting supporting data, and in reporting the results of their research in a scientific article. In addition, they still think that scientific articles are too 'high' for them because they are not accustomed to scientific writing.

From the focus group discussion, the participant teachers get important information about how to write scientific articles that fit their professional fields and assignments and how

to publish it. However, practices on scientific writing for their professional development is needed.

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