

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The quality of education in any country determines the progress and the quality of the development in the country. Therefore, it is imperative for a country to improve its education to support its development. Currently, teacher quality is one of the national issues in Indonesia. This is due to the low quality of teachers, which since the stipulation of Law No. 14, 2005 has been one of the national important issues. One of the efforts that the Ministry of Education has made is the establishment of the four areas of competencies for teachers (PP No. 74/2008).

Teachers' competency has been a crucial issue in education as successful teaching happens if teachers are competent (Alatis, 2007; Whitehurst, 2002:). Thus, teachers' competency matters in the success of education. Hattie (2003) also argues that teachers make the second most significant contribution to students' achievement. According to Hattie, the first factor that affects students' achievement is students themselves (account for about 50%) while teachers account for about 30%. Hattie claims that of 30 sources that influence students' achievement, 21 sources are the domain of teachers.

In Indonesia, since the stipulation of Law No. 20/2003 on National System of Education and Law No. 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, teachers' quality has become an important issue. Based on the Law of Teachers and Lecturers, teachers are acknowledged as the ones who directly deal with the teaching of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to students.

Considering that teachers are the ones who play the most direct role in the process of education, the Indonesian Government has acknowledged teaching as a profession (Law No. 14 /2005). Teaching as a profession entails that the job can only be handled or be done efficiently by a person who holds academic qualification, who has competencies, and who holds a teaching license based on the prescribed requirements for a certain level of education (Explanation of Article no. 2, Law No. 14, 2005).

The issue of teachers' qualification is one of the major problems of education in Indonesia. As stipulated in Law No. 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, the academic qualification of teachers shall be a four-year college degree. This has been a serious problem as most teachers have not met this qualification (Hamied, 2011). According to Hamied, only less than 35% of English teachers comply with teaching qualification. Jalal et al., (2009) also mention that of the total number of 2,783,321 teachers in Indonesia, 62.4% of them (1,739,484) do not comply with the academic qualification.

Competencies that a teacher must possess, according to this Law, comprise professional competency, pedagogical competency, personal competency, and social competency (Government Regulation No. 19/2005, Article 28:3).

On professional competency, a teacher should be knowledgeable on the subject matter; on pedagogical competency, a professional teacher should be able to manage students' learning process; on personal competency, he or she must have good characteristics, show high moral principles and wisdom, and become a good model for his/her learners; and on social competency, s/he must be able to communicate and interact effectively and efficiently with learners, other teachers, students' parents, and surrounding communities (Explanation of Article 10, Law No. 14/2005).

Of the four categories of competency, the professional competency is believed to be the most contributing aspect to the success of learning (Suherdi, 2007). Thus, improving the professional competency must be prioritized. With regard to the importance of professional competency, an important question arising is what factors constitute professional competency. A number of studies on teachers' characteristics have been conducted (Beishuizen et al., 2001; Grierson, 2006; Moskowitz, 1976; Noble and Odgerel, 2011). Beishuizen et al. (2001) and Grierson (2006) found that good teachers were perceived as teachers who have good personalities such as being patient, humorous, calm, and honest. Noble and Odgerel (2011) found that good teachers were perceived as those who were knowledgeable, smart, caring, nurturing, responsible, hard-working, diligent, fair, honest, and self-confident, while Moskowitz (1976) found that good teachers performed outstanding verbal and non-verbal behaviors, have good personal attitudes, and have ability to present materials.

Although these studies have found a number of professional teachers' characteristics, the findings also have revealed neither specific characteristics of EFL teachers nor their classroom behaviors that may reflect the characteristics. Moreover, research findings on the characteristics of good teachers that have been identified, have not specifically described EFL situations. Therefore, the previous studies have left the following problems:

- Insufficient information on the characteristics of professional EFL teachers.
- Impractical findings on the characteristic indicators of teachers' professionalism.
- Minimum involvement of EFL teachers on the study of teachers' professionalism.

Keeping the above problems in view, the writer upholds that a study on EFL teachers' perceptions about the characteristics of professional EFL teachers need to be conducted to reveal more practical findings.

1.2. Research Questions

This research was intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' perceptions about the characteristics of professional EFL teachers?
2. Are there significant differences of perceptions between inexperienced and experienced teachers and between certified and non-certified teachers?
3. What are EFL teachers' perceptions about factors affecting the acquisition of EFL teachers' professionalism?
4. What observable classroom actions reflect teachers' perceptions ?

1.3. Research Hypotheses

Bearing on the problems and the research questions above, the hypotheses of this study were formulated as follows:

- H1 = Teachers have positive perceptions towards professional characteristics as mentioned in the instrument of this study (See Appendix 1)
- H2 = Experienced teachers' perceptions towards the characteristics of professional EFL teachers are significantly different from those of inexperienced teachers.
- H3 = Certified teachers' perceptions towards the characteristics of professional EFL teachers are significantly different from that of non-certified teachers.

1.4. The Aims of the Research

The aims of this research were:

- to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of professional EFL teachers.
- to investigate whether or not there are significant differences in perceptions between inexperienced and experienced teachers and between certified and non-certified teachers.
- to investigate EFL teachers' opinion towards factors affecting the acquisition of EFL teachers' professionalism.
- to describe observable classroom actions that reflect teachers' perceptions.

1.5. The Significance of the Research

This study provides researchers of English language education, EFL teachers, and education policy makers with the following aspects:

- For researchers, this study offers insight into teachers' beliefs on what they think of specific professional characteristics of EFL teachers. The findings of this study enhance the previous studies, which tended to be more generic, on good teachers' characteristics.
- For pedagogical implication, this study provides English teachers with practical characteristics of professional EFL teachers that can be used as guidance to develop their competency.

- For education policy makers, this study provides information on EFL teachers' perceptions towards the factors that influence teachers' professionalism. This finding can be used as the basis of teachers' quality development.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

Considering the complexity of the topic and time constraint in conducting this study, the writer acknowledges a number of limitations of this study, as follows:

- The subjects of this study has not included other parties whose perceptions may have an important role in defining standard characteristics of professional EFL teachers.
- The observations for classroom actions were conducted in a small number of subjects compared to the number of subjects participating in the survey.
- The observations for classroom actions for each of the selected teachers lasted only for one teaching unit, thus the results of the observations may not reflect the whole teaching behaviors of the observed teachers.

1.7. Operational Definitions of Terms

In this study, a number of key terms are defined for the purpose of meaning clarity and common understanding, as follows:

- **Teachers' perceptions** are the opinion of English teachers about the professional characteristics used in this study as elaborated in the instrument of this study (See Appendix 1).
- **Professional characteristics** are qualities that a professional foreign language teacher should comply with as described in the instruments used in this study which is elaborated in the instrument of this study (See Appendix 1)
- **Inexperienced teachers** are teachers having been in service between 1 -7 years of teaching. In Indonesian system of teacher ranks, a teacher with 1-7 years in service is normally in the rank of IIIa/IIIb or Guru Madya / Guru Madya Tk.1. These ranks are considered as adjunct mature teachers (Minister of State Apparatus Decree No. 84/1993 on Teacher Position Level).
- **Relatively experienced teachers** are teachers having been in service between 8 – 15 years of teaching. This group of teachers normally has achieved the position of IIIc/IIId or Guru Dewasa/Guru Deawasa Tk.1 (Mature Teachers).
- **Very experienced teachers** are teachers having been in service above 15 years of teaching. This group of teachers are normally in rank of IVa or Pembina (Senior Teacher/Counselor).
- **Certified teachers** are teachers who have passed formal certification program administered by the Indonesian Ministry of National Education.
- **Factors influencing professionalism** are aspects or events that have an important role on the acquisition of teachers' professionalism.

1.8. Research Validity and Research Justification

To gain research validity and research justification, a number of steps were employed in this study:

- The study was based on current issues on teacher professional development.
- The theories used are relatively up-to-date.
- Variables were designed based on current theories and government policy on teachers' quality improvement in Indonesia.
- Data were taken through triangulation (Survey, Interviews, Classroom Observations, and Tape-Recording).
- To gain strong foundation, the first set of data was taken through a survey using a quantitative design.
- The findings of the survey were used as the basis for interviews and classroom observations.
- The selection of respondents used proportional-random sampling for the survey and purposive sampling for the interviews and for the classroom observations.
- Data analysis used three stages (descriptive analysis, inferential analysis, and discussion).

As the study combines two designs (quantitative and qualitative) it is expected that it can result in valid findings. Therefore, the writer believes that although the findings may not represent all EFL teachers' perceptions, the results of this study may apply to a large number of EFL teachers in a similar context in Indonesia.

1.9. The Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is written in six chapters. Chapter One (Introduction) presents the background of the study, the research questions, the hypotheses of the study, the aims of the study, the significance of the study, limitations of the study, the operational definitions of terms, research validity and research justification, and the organization of the dissertation.

Chapter Two (Literature Review) explores theoretical issues. This consists of eight sections: the nature of perception, belief, and attitude; the concept of teaching as a profession; factors affecting teaching professionalism; the role of teachers' beliefs in classroom practices; research context; the concept of professional teachers in Indonesian context; the influence of language teaching theories in conceptualizing good foreign language teachers; and the synthesis.

Chapter Three (Research Methodology) describes eleven aspects consisting of the assumptions and the variables used in the study, the research hypotheses, the design of the study, the population, the sampling, instrumentation, validity test of instrument, reliability test of instrument, method of data collection, method of data analysis, and research site.

Chapter Four (The Findings) presents the findings consisting of EFL teachers' perceptions about characteristics of professional EFL teachers, differences of perceptions between (a) inexperienced and experienced teachers and between (b) certified and non-certified teachers, EFL teachers' perceptions about factors affecting professionalism, and the observed classroom actions that reflect teachers' perceptions

Chapter Five (The Discussion of the Findings) discusses the findings of the study presented in Chapter Four, while Chapter Six (Conclusions and Suggestions) highlights major findings, their implications, and the writer's recommendations .

