

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction to the study. It covers background of the study, research question, purpose of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, research methodology, and thesis organization.

1.1 Background of the Study

The publication of Government Regulation number 19, 2005 about the national standard of education has prioritized teachers' quality in educational field. In fact, according to Suherdi (2007: 2), students' failure in the national examination (*Tribun Jabar*, 17 Juni 2007 in Suherdi, 2007: 2) is able to be avoided as long as the teaching and learning process is conducted optimally. Suherdi's statement conforms to that of Rivkin et al. (2000, in Hammond, 2006: 19), i.e. that students who were assigned to effective teachers had significantly greater gains in achievement than those assigned to several ineffective teachers.

However, we cannot deny that there are many teachers who seem reluctant to develop their teaching quality. They claim they do not have enough time since they need to earn more income to support their family livelihood (see Suherdi, 2007: 6). This implies that their incomes are unsatisfactory. However, there are things other than income that needs to be taken care of. What expected is the awareness from the teachers themselves to develop their professionalism in order to prepare a better generation.

In addition, the program of teacher certification as the result of the publication of Republic Indonesia law number 14, 2005 requires teachers to make serious effort to develop their professionalism in order to be certified and professional teachers (see Supriyanti, 2007).

Actually, teachers have many possible ways to develop their professionalism. They can do it either formally or informally. The formal professional development is one which is planned in the teacher trainings or education. The informal professional development is the activity that the teachers do in their daily practice such as reading books or journal, meeting with colleagues, joining in the teachers' group activities, and even conducting a classroom action research (see Agustina, 2007).

The previous studies on teacher professional development (TPD) were carried out for different purposes but mostly focused on TPD program design and effectiveness. In her research on teacher inquiry group, Johar (2002) found that the group has empowered teachers for their professional development. Besides, Atey (2006) conducted a case study concerning professional development through collaborative research and found that participating in collaborative action research gave the teachers a framework for systematically observing, evaluating, and reflecting on their L2 teaching practices.

In Indonesia, Widodo (2004: 253) made a survey to identify the needs of individual English teachers and the preferred programs for professional development. He found that the programs mostly needed by respondents were teacher training, teacher association, teacher materials, continuing education, and

interschool visit, but teacher training was the most needed program among others. Another research was carried out by Ghozali (2007) who investigated teacher development through teacher community learning and found that the teachers made significant progress from the program.

The previous research on TPD indicated the necessity to investigate the teachers' effort in the present time to develop their professionalism. Dede et al. (2006) make recommendations for areas of TPD research in term of the impact of professional development programs on teacher teaching quality change, particularly improvement through transformation practice. This kind of research covers the advantages that teachers gain through TPD activities and the extent to which they apply those advantages into the teaching performance.

This study focuses on investigating the teacher professional development issue including the activities conducted by teachers in developing their professionalism, the characteristics of good language teachers developed through each activity and the implementation of those characteristics into the teaching performance.

1.2 Research Question

The following questions are developed in order to guide the inquiry process of the present study:

- a. What activities do the teachers carry out in order to develop their professionalism?
- b. What characteristics of good language teachers are developed through each activity conducted?

- c. How do the teachers implement these characteristics into the teaching performance?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are formulated based on the problems investigated. This study aims to:

- a. explore the activities carried out by teachers in developing their professionalism.
- b. find the characteristics of good language teachers developed through each TPD activity conducted.
- c. investigate the implementation of the characteristics into the teaching performance.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study attempts to investigate professional development of three English teachers of Junior High School in Pidie Regency, Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam. This study specifically presents and describes teachers' activities in developing their professionalism, the characteristics of a good language teachers developed through each TPD activity conducted and the implementation of the characteristics in the teaching performance.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to give contribution to the teacher professional development (TPD) issue theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the studies of TPD. Practically, it may inform teachers in terms

of possible activities they can carry out to develop their professionalism and advantages they can gain through each activity. Moreover, learning from others' experiences will motivate teachers to take lesson from them. As a result, they can make efforts to conduct those activities for themselves.

1.6 Research Methodology

The present study is qualitative in nature. It is appropriate for understanding process by which events and actions take place (see Maxwell, 1996).

In selecting the participants, purposive sampling is used, in which one selects a sample from which he/she can learn the most (Merriam, 1988: 48). The selected participants are three Junior High School English teachers in Pidie Regency, Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam who were active in attending in-service trainings and conducting other TPD activities.

The data were collected through questionnaire, interview, documents study, and observation. The first research question, i.e. the teachers' activities in developing their professionalism is answered through data from questionnaire, interview, and document analysis. The second research question, i.e. the characteristics of good language teachers developed through each TPD activity is answered using data from questionnaire and interview. Finally, the third research question, i.e. the implementation of the characteristics in the teaching performance is answered using data from observation.

Data were analyzed in several steps. First, the findings from questionnaire and interview were categorized and analyzed to answer the first and the second

research questions. Second, the findings from document analysis were analyzed to answer the first research question. Third, the findings from classroom observation were transcribed and analyzed to answer research the third research question.

1.7 Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter is introduction which highlights the basic concerns of the study. The second chapter deals with theoretical framework on which to base the present study. The third chapter discusses research methodology including research question, research design, data collection, and data analysis. The fourth chapter elaborates research findings and discussion. The fifth or the last chapter presents the conclusions of the study and offers some recommendations.

