

TURNING KNOWLEDGE INTO IMPACT : “HOW ENGLISH EDUCATION ALUMNI EXCEL IN EDUCATION?” (An Application of Qualitative Personal Narratives Method)

Dedi Irwan¹, Bima Pratama², Imel Oktaviani Felice³, Jelisca Chellsy Timol Batuah⁴

Universitas PGRI Pontianak¹²³⁴

Corresponding email: dediirwanphd@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research explores the inspiring stories of English education program alumni who have pursued careers in education. It aims to identify the factors that motivated these individuals to choose a career in education and the impact of their English education on their professional development. This study uses a qualitative research design, which involves in-depth interviews with one of the alumni of University in Pontianak English education program who is currently working in the education sector. Through their personal narratives, the research will explore their career journeys, challenges faced, and key factors that contributed to their success. The research aims to provide inspiration for students and educators, as well as providing valuable insights for the curriculum development of English education programs. The research findings show that participants were influenced by their passion for teaching and the desire to do good in students' lives. They also emphasized the importance of their English education in developing communication, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The study concluded that the inspiring stories of English education program alumni who made a career in education can serve as a valuable resource for current students and future educators. The research findings suggest that English education can play an important role in shaping career choices and professional development, especially in the field of education.

Keywords: English language education, field of education, inspiring stories, career choices, professional development

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi kisah-kisah inspiratif dari para alumni program pendidikan bahasa Inggris yang telah meniti karir di bidang pendidikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang memotivasi individu-individu tersebut untuk memilih karir di bidang pendidikan dan dampak dari pendidikan bahasa Inggris mereka terhadap pengembangan profesional mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif, yang melibatkan wawancara mendalam dengan salah satu alumni program pendidikan bahasa Inggris Universitas Pontianak yang saat ini bekerja di sektor pendidikan. Melalui narasi pribadi mereka, penelitian ini akan mengeksplorasi perjalanan karir mereka, tantangan yang dihadapi, dan faktor-faktor kunci yang berkontribusi terhadap kesuksesan mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan inspirasi bagi para siswa dan pendidik, serta memberikan wawasan yang berharga untuk pengembangan kurikulum program pendidikan bahasa Inggris. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para peserta dipengaruhi oleh hasrat mereka untuk mengajar dan keinginan untuk berbuat baik dalam kehidupan siswa. Mereka juga menekankan pentingnya pendidikan bahasa Inggris mereka dalam mengembangkan kemampuan komunikasi, berpikir kritis dan pemecahan masalah. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kisah-kisah inspiratif dari para alumni program pendidikan bahasa Inggris yang berkarir di bidang pendidikan dapat menjadi sumber daya yang berharga bagi para mahasiswa saat ini dan para calon pendidik di masa depan. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan bahasa Inggris dapat memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk pilihan karir dan pengembangan profesional, terutama di bidang pendidikan.

Kata kunci : Pendidikan bahasa Inggris, bidang pendidikan, kisah inspiratif, pilihan karir, pengembangan profesional.



INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping society, and within this context, English Education study programs have a crucial responsibility in producing qualified and dedicated educators. The ability to master English as an international language not only expands career opportunities but also enhances communication, critical thinking, and teaching skills, which are essential in today's educational landscape (Richards, 2015). In addition to language proficiency, teacher education programs prepare graduates to become leaders and agents of change in the field of education (Goodwin & Low, 2021).

Several studies highlight the multifaceted skills possessed by graduates of English Education programs. According to König et al. (2020), English Education graduates are equipped with pedagogical knowledge, adaptive teaching strategies, and the ability to handle complex educational environments. Additionally, Harmer (2015) emphasizes the significance of creativity and innovation in English teaching, ensuring that educators can cater to students' diverse learning needs. In this regard, inspirational stories from successful alumni in the field of education can serve as motivational tools, helping students and aspiring teachers navigate their professional journeys (Gu & Day, 2019).

Narrative research has demonstrated that stories of success and transformation play a psychological role in motivational learning. According to Webster & Mertova (2017), narrative inquiry allows individuals to understand and reflect on the obstacles, achievements, and growth of others, thereby inspiring personal development. Moreover, Husu et al. (2016) explain that self-reflection and guided storytelling can enhance teacher resilience and career satisfaction, particularly in challenging educational environments.

This study aims to collect and analyze inspirational stories from alumni who have established careers in education. By exploring personal experiences, challenges, and success factors, this research seeks to highlight the key elements that contribute to professional growth. According to Avalos & Flores (2021), understanding teacher identity and career development through alumni experiences can provide valuable insights for curriculum improvement and teacher training programs. This research employed narrative analysis to trace research subject's career path, professional challenges, and the role of her academic background in shaping her teaching career (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2017). By examining inspirational alumni stories, this study hopes to identify key success factors that support career development in education while providing guidance and inspiration for future educators.

Furthermore, this study aims to contribute to curriculum development within the English Education program, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for real-world teaching demands. Zhao & Watterston (2021) emphasize that educational programs must continuously adapt to the changing

landscape of teaching, integrating practical experience and pedagogical innovations. By analyzing alumni experiences, this research hopes to bridge the gap between academic preparation and professional realities, ultimately improving the quality of English teacher education.

METHOD

This research employed a personal narrative analysis method, with qualitative approach, which is effective for exploring participants' life stories and career journeys in depth (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2017). This method allows researchers to analyze experiences through participants' narratives, emphasizing the temporal, social, and spatial dimensions of their stories (Riessman, 2015). Through this approach, the study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the professional development of English Education alumni who have pursued careers in the education sector.

Data collection Technique

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and personal document analysis. Semi-structured interviews allowed the participant to share detailed experiences regarding career progression, motivations, teaching challenges, and the impact of English education on professional identity. These interviews were essential in capturing rich, firsthand narratives that illustrate the participant's journey in education. Classroom observations were conducted to analyze how the participant's teaching methods, interactions with students, and instructional strategies reflect their professional identity. Observing teaching practices in real-time provided insights into how pedagogical knowledge acquired during formal education is implemented in practice. Additionally, personal documents, such as lesson plans, teaching journals, and activity records, were analyzed to support the primary data and further understand the participant's development as an educator (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Subject

The subject of this research is an alumna of the English Education program at a private university in Pontianak, who has been serving as a teacher at a prominent private senior high school in Pontianak since 2019. The selection of this participant was based on several important considerations. First, she exemplifies a direct connection between her academic background and professional career, enabling this study to explore how English education contributes to professional competency in the teaching field. Additionally, her significant contributions to education make her an ideal subject for this research. Since 2019, she has advanced from being a teacher to the position of Vice Principal for Curriculum, a role that demands advanced pedagogical and leadership skills. According to Darling-Hammond & Hyler (2020), teachers who receive robust academic preparation and engage in continuous professional development are more likely to assume leadership roles within their institutions. Thus, she truly embodies a linear career trajectory that aligns closely with her field of

study at the university and the professional domain she currently engages in. Her career path vividly reflects the profile of a program graduate that meets the expected outcomes of the study program.

Beyond her professional achievements, the participant was also chosen due to her inspirational role for students and future educators. Alumni who successfully build careers in education serve as motivational figures for current students, demonstrating how English education can shape long-term career pathways. Research by Avalos & Flores (2021) highlights the importance of teacher professional identity, which is often shaped by real-world experiences and mentorship. By examining the participant's personal and professional journey, this study provides insights into the challenges and strategies that contribute to career success in the field of education.

Data Analysis Technique

This research employed a thematic analysis approach to identify key themes such as career motivation, teaching philosophy, professional growth, and educational challenges. The analytical framework was adapted from Nowell et al. (2017), who emphasize the importance of rigor in qualitative research. Additionally, the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) was used to explore how the participant integrates subject knowledge and teaching strategies into her professional practice. The findings of this study align with Goodson & Gill (2019), who argue that alumni narratives are valuable in understanding career development and professional identity formation.

Furthermore, the research framework aligns with Zhao & Watterston (2021), who suggest that teachers' ability to adapt to challenges and continuously refine their teaching methods plays a crucial role in their long-term career success. Gu & Day (2019) also emphasize that teacher resilience, mentorship, and institutional support are key factors in sustaining professional growth. Through this approach, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the English Education program at University in Pontianak has shaped the career of its alumni and contributed to the development of educational professionals.

Data Collection Tool

To assist the data collection process, an interview guide was developed, containing interview procedures and triggering question. The interview guide was developed based on a blueprint containing the aspect to ask during the interview. This blueprint provides a detailed framework for investigating the career trajectories of alumni from the English Education program at a university in Pontianak. It aims to explore various dimensions of their professional journeys, beginning with an understanding of how their careers have evolved since graduation. A key focus is on identifying the motivations that led alumni to pursue careers in education after completing the program. Additionally,

the blueprint seeks to uncover the significant challenges they have encountered as educators and the strategies they have employed to overcome these obstacles.

The study also highlights the inspirational experiences and memorable moments that have played a pivotal role in shaping their career paths. It delves into the approaches and methods alumni have used to navigate challenges and continue their professional development as educators. Furthermore, the blueprint examines the influence of mentors or lecturers who have had a lasting impact on their career journeys.

Another critical aspect is identifying the factors that alumni consider most instrumental to their success in the field of education. The blueprint also assesses the contribution of the English Education program at the university in Pontianak to the development of their skills and understanding as educators. It seeks to uncover special moments during their studies that helped shape their vision and aspirations as educators.

Finally, the blueprint aims to gather advice or tips from alumni for current English Education students who are preparing to enter the world of education. This comprehensive approach provides a holistic understanding of the alumni's experiences, challenges, and successes, offering valuable insights for both current students and the academic program itself.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that the respondent's career journey in the field of education has progressed steadily and successfully. A notable milestone in their professional trajectory was being appointed as the Vice Principal of Curriculum at their current school. This role signifies institutional recognition of the respondent's expertise and competence in academic management, particularly in the design and implementation of curriculum programs that are both relevant and effective. The respondent's ability to assume such a position underscores their dedication to professional growth and their capacity to contribute meaningfully to the academic development of their institution.

Kadarisman (2018) emphasizes that career development for educators often begins with individual initiative, supported by organizational opportunities that facilitate growth. In this case, the respondent's appointment as Vice Principal of Curriculum exemplifies the interplay between personal effort and institutional support. The trust placed in the respondent by their organization not only highlights their professional capabilities but also reflects the school's commitment to fostering leadership among its staff. Furthermore, this experience has provided the respondent with valuable opportunities to hone leadership skills, which are critical for future career advancements. The role has served as a platform for developing competencies in strategic planning, team management, and curriculum innovation, all of which are essential for higher-level administrative positions in education.

Overall, the respondent's career progression illustrates the importance of both individual agency and organizational support in achieving professional milestones. Their journey underscores the potential for educators to advance into leadership roles when they demonstrate initiative and are provided with opportunities to grow within their institutions. This finding aligns with broader literature on teacher career development, which highlights the significance of creating environments that encourage and recognize professional advancement.

The findings also indicate that the respondent's primary career motivation stems from a strong commitment to maintaining consistency in their chosen educational field. This aligns with the perspective of Tambunan (2020), who asserts that teachers with a high level of dedication are more likely to engage in continuous professional development and contribute positively to their educational environment. The respondent expressed a deep sense of purpose in imparting knowledge to students, viewing this as a fundamental driving force in their career trajectory. This intrinsic motivation suggests that their professional aspirations are closely tied to the fulfillment derived from educating others, reinforcing the notion that sustained dedication plays a critical role in shaping long-term career development in the education sector.

This study highlights the multifaceted experiences of educators in navigating their career challenges, professional development, and successes. One of the main challenges faced by the respondent is assisting students with limited vocabulary to understand Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions. This finding aligns with Putri and Imaniyati (2017), who emphasize the importance of training in curriculum development and the use of learning aids to enhance teacher competence in overcoming such obstacles. To address this issue, the respondent implements innovative teaching strategies aimed at improving students' comprehension, showcasing their commitment to adapting and supporting student learning.

The respondent also shared that working with joy, sincerity, and compassion is a key approach to addressing job challenges. Ulfatin (2016) highlights that such a positive attitude not only contributes to teacher professional development but also fosters stronger relationships with students, creating a supportive and harmonious learning atmosphere. This mindset reinforces the respondent's ability to maintain motivation and resilience in the face of challenges.

Further findings reveal that the respondent demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous self-improvement as an educator, focusing on addressing student learning problems and adopting effective teaching methods. This reflects Kadarisman's (2018) perspective that effective career development involves active participation in professional training and development forums. The respondent's strategic approach highlights their dedication to building expertise in student-centered teaching, ensuring meaningful and impactful learning experiences.

Mentorship also plays a crucial role in shaping the respondent's teaching approach and professional perspective. The positive influence of lecturers during their studies significantly contributed to their competence and confidence as an educator. This aligns with Hasto and Yani's (2012) assertion that mentors play a critical role in building teacher skills and perspectives. The respondent's openness to learning from their mentors' guidance reflects a collaborative and growth-oriented attitude.

The respondent attributes their career success to a combination of self-discipline and the opportunities provided by their work environment. Tambunan (2020) explains that sustainable career development requires individuals to effectively utilize opportunities and consistently deliver excellent performance. This is evident in the respondent's achievements as Vice Principal of Curriculum, where their ability to manage responsibilities demonstrates their readiness for advanced roles in education. Additionally, the English Education Study Program at the respondent's university played a pivotal role in their professional development. With the guidance of competent lecturers and well-structured learning materials, the program provided a strong foundation for their career, echoing Putri and Imaniyati's (2017) view on the significance of quality education programs tailored to industry needs.

Reflecting on special moments during their studies, the respondent highlighted their decision to pursue further education in the field of education as a defining moment that shaped their vision as an educator. This resonates with Wirawan's (2015) observation that educational choices significantly influence career orientation and professional goals. Moreover, the respondent emphasizes the importance of loving the teaching profession and working with full dedication as key factors for success. Tambunan (2020) similarly notes that passion and consistency are essential for achieving higher career levels in education. The respondent's experiences and insights underscore the importance of dedication, continuous learning, and a positive work ethic in building a successful career in teaching.

CONCLUSION

Based on the interview results, the career journey of the interviewee in the field of education demonstrates that an educator's success is greatly influenced by dedication, intrinsic motivation, and support from the work environment and educational institutions. As an educator, the interviewee successfully advanced their career to become the Vice Principal for Curriculum, a position that reflects recognition of their competence in academic management. This achievement was supported by personal motivation to stay consistent with their field of study and a strong desire to continuously share knowledge with students.

Despite facing challenges such as helping students understand HOTS-based questions and limited vocabulary, the interviewee overcame them through innovative, student-centered learning approaches. Positive attitudes such as sincerity, enthusiasm, and love for the profession have been essential

foundations for creating a harmonious and productive learning environment. Support from lecturers during their studies also played a significant role in building the interviewee's confidence and capability to grow as an educator.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that education program students enhance their commitment to the teaching profession by utilizing guidance from lecturers and actively participating in relevant training. Study programs are also expected to update their curricula to align with modern educational needs, such as technology-based learning and HOTS. Additionally, educators are advised to develop innovative teaching strategies and maintain an optimistic attitude in facing various challenges. Through collaboration among students, educators, and educational institutions, success in the field of education can be achieved, bringing significant benefits to students and society.

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