

EXPLORING ENGLISH TEACHERS' BELIEFS ON THEIR TEACHING PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explain the influence of the English teachers' beliefs toward their teaching profession in Bireuen District, Aceh Province. This is a quantitative study which involved thirty English teachers as the respondents. These teachers teach at six high schools in Bireuen. The schools were purposively selected to cover the broad area of Bireuen District. Some of the schools were in the rural area, some are in the city. Five English teachers from each high school were randomly selected. The data collection was done using questionnaires. It can be concluded from the answer that in general the teachers have positive beliefs toward their profession, they satisfied with their job, they feel confidence about their job, it can also be seen from the answers that most teachers received appraisal and feedback from other teachers and most of the teachers believe that appraisal and feedback can increase teaching passion. Beliefs about overall job-related principles, job satisfaction, self-efficacy and appraisal and feedback give big influence toward their teaching profession as English teachers. This big influence is affecting teachers in various way. Beliefs appear to have the strongest impact on teacher learning, followed by changes in teacher behavior and last on students learning.

Keywords: *influence; teachers, teachers' beliefs; teaching profession*

INTRODUCTION

Educational experts and researchers have diverse opinion about whether or not teaching is a profession (Cobbold, 2015). Some experts oppose that teaching is a profession while some others agree on it. According to Susanto (2004), to be called a profession, certain job has to have certain characteristics, and generally those characteristics shows that it has educational institution, a salary, professional

association, certification and people' recognition. Further, Susanto (2004) argues that the profession of teaching is still lack of recognition to be called a profession. Even it has recognition; it is still too far to be compared with other profession, such as lawyer, doctor, etc.

On the contrary, Richards and Lockhart (2005) agree that teaching is a profession, so people who work as teachers are called professionals. Musriadi (2016) also agrees that teaching is a profession, so teachers need to be qualified to do their job professionally. According to Soetjipto (2009) as cited in Musriadi (2016), teaching is a profession since it has characteristics of a profession.

According to the Teacher and Lecturer Law Number 14 of 2005 Chapter I Article I, point 1 (Depdiknas, 2007), teaching is regarded as a profession in Indonesia. It is directly quoted as in the following *"Guru adalah pendidik profesional dengan tugas utama mendidik, mengajar, membimbing, mengarahkan, melatih, menilai dan mengevaluasi peserta didik pada pendidikan anak usia dini jalur pendidikan formal, pendidikan dasar, dan pendidikan menengah."*[Teachers are professional educators with the primary task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing and evaluating students on early childhood formal education, basic education and secondary education].

In Chapter III, Article VII, point I of the Law, it mentions the characteristics of a profession. First, the individuals should have talent, eagerness, call and idealism. Second, they have a commitment to improve the quality of education, faith, piety and character. Third, the persons have an academic qualifications and educational background according to field duty. Fourth, they have competence required according to field duty. Next, they have the responsibility to carry out the duty. Next, they earn income in accordance to working achievement. Then, they have an opportunity to develop a sustainable professionalism with lifelong learning. After that, they have the guarantee of lawful protection in carrying out the duties of professionalism. Finally, they have a professional organization which has the authority to regulate matters related to the duties of professionalism of teachers

Therefore, teaching is indeed a profession, since it has certain features a profession must have. Given that teaching is a profession, teachers who work in this area are professionals and they need to be qualified. It was explained in Teacher

and Lecturer Law No. 14 of 2005, Chapter IV Article 10 that teachers need to be qualified to teach (Depdiknas, 2007). Teachers are considered already have the qualification to do the job once they finished from their professional education (*pendidikan profesi*) which is rewarded by a qualified university (Depdiknas, 2007), and then they should enroll in a sustainable in-service training.

However, it was reported by Al Jazeera ("Educating Indonesia," 2013) that Indonesian educational system is one of the worst in the world because only 51% of Indonesian teachers have the right qualification to teach. This is in line with the results of Teachers Competence Test (*Uji Kompetensi Guru* (UKG)) which was held from 9 to 27 November 2015. The overall result of the test was not meeting the standard. It was expected that the result would reach 55, but the national average of 29 million teachers in 34 provinces was around 53.02 (Hafil, 2015). Teachers in Aceh Province have only reached 45.12 which was the third lowest result compared to other provinces (Hafil, 2015). The test is examining two out of four teachers' competencies: pedagogic and professional competence, both were showed very low in average. It also happened in Bireuen as well as other areas in Aceh.

This phenomenon was unfortunate and the researcher identified this as a problem, and it has become concern for everyone in educational world. The government expects that teachers are supposed to be qualified once they completed their university degrees, but the result of the UKG proved otherwise. Government has also conducted seminars and workshops or promoted teachers' professional competence, but still teachers have low professional competent scores. Are teachers being not qualified to be called professional?

The problem may lie not on what teachers do, but on beliefs which underlie everything teachers do. Kagan (1992) noted that teachers' belief is teachers' assumptions and perceptions about teaching and learning. Teachers have beliefs about every aspect of teaching (Richards & Lockhart, 2005). The teachers' beliefs which lie beneath every teacher mind may be different from what they do, especially their beliefs about teaching profession. Some teachers may regard that teaching is a profession; some others may consider it merely as a job. The way teachers see their profession may or may not affect their qualification as teachers. Teachers' belief influences the way teachers see whether they need to improve their teaching or not.

It means that teachers will have the willingness to explore more and more about who their students really are, the material being taught and method and techniques they may employ in teaching in order to improve their teaching (Jackson, 2012).

Golombek (1998) affirms the notion that the change in teachers' beliefs precedes change in their teaching practice. The exploration on English teacher beliefs helps to understand teachers' professional development. Understanding what kind of teaching belief English teachers hold and the influence will shed light on how to develop teachers' professionalism (Yoshihara, 2012). The increasing professionalism will hopefully lead to significant improvement in teaching.

Based on the framework suggested by OECD (2013) there are five categories related to teacher beliefs on their profession. They are overall job related beliefs, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, appraisal and feedback, and effect of the five framework features on teachers' teaching practice. The first questionnaire was compiled into five sections based on the five first framework suggested, along with another section; teachers' background information, while the data related to the last framework suggested; the effect of the five framework features on teachers' teaching practice, were collected from the second questionnaire.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The nature of this research is a quantitative study as it is clarified by Creswell (2007) that a study which is conducted to see the influence of factor X to factor Y is seen as a cause-effect research design that sheds light on the occurring patterns to the actual phenomenon under a study. The independent variable in this study is teaching profession, and the dependent variable is the principles in of beliefs which are overall job-related belief, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and appraisals and feedbacks (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Briefly, this study was aimed at finding out the influence of English teachers' beliefs on the teachers' teaching profession.

Research Subject

The subjects of this research were thirty English teachers from six high-schools in Bireuen District, Aceh Province. The schools were purposively selected to cover the broad area of Bireuen District. Some of the schools were in the rural area, some are

in the city. Five English teachers from each high school were randomly selected since this research only involved English teachers in Bireun District.

Research Procedure

First, the teachers were guided on how to answer the questionnaires and asked to choose the most suitable answer based on their beliefs. Questionnaires are adapted from OECD (2013) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). The 1st questionnaire consists of several kinds of statements and questions. Some of them required teachers to choose whether he or she strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Some consists of choices that required teachers to choose more than one answer provided or continued by themselves. The 2nd questionnaire required teachers to choose on 1 to 4 scales on impact from certain feature of belief to their teaching, then there are also open ended question that required teachers to answer by themselves. Then, questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and they answered the questionnaires based on their beliefs theoretically and practically. Each teacher spent forty to an hour to fill in the questionnaires.

The Technique of Data Analysis

The data obtained in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. In conducting the data analysis, data from the Questionnaire were first changed into quantitative data as suggested by Brown and Rodgers (2002). The process was done using percentage formula to define the percentage in analyzing the data from the questionnaire (Sudjana, 1992). Percentage formula is to the sum of a certain category in a group of data. Below is provided the percentage formula.

$$P = \frac{f}{n} \times 100$$

Where:

P = the data percentage

f = the data in a certain section of the data group

n = the overall sum of the data

DISCUSSION

There are two major points discussed in this section. The first point is about the teachers' belief toward their job and the second point underpins influence of

beliefs toward the teachers' profession. The first point is divided into four beliefs which are overall job-related beliefs, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and appraisals and feedbacks, while the second point is about influence of these beliefs to teachers profession.

Overall job related beliefs part consist of six questions as can be seen in table 1 and 2:

Table 1: Participants reason to be teacher (overall job related beliefs)

Statement	Answer	Percentage
Initial reason for choosing to become a teacher.	Ambition	47%
	Income	33%
	Educational background	16%
	Suggestion	4%

The first question in the questionnaire is asking teachers' reason to choose teaching profession. The data shows that the highest percentage of answer is 47% of teachers chose 'ambition' as their reason. Then it is followed by 'income', 'Educational background' and 'suggestion'. Therefore it can be concluded that most of teachers chose to be teacher in the first place because of their ambition or their own willingness. It means that somehow teachers like some components of education; the students, the material being studied –in this case English- and the totality of the experience or the whole teaching profession (Jackson, 2012). He added that this –like- feeling forms an attachment and reduce the separation between the educational components.

Table 2: Statement 2-6 (Overall Job-Related Beliefs)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
To be a teacher requires a commitment to improve the quality of education.	-	-	10%	90%
To be a teacher requires talent, strong desire and idealism.	-	7%	40%	53%
Becoming a teacher requires academic qualifications and educational background.	-	-	30%	70%

What teachers do is more important than the income.	-	13%	27%	60%
Teachers in our community are noble and respected.	-	16%	37%	47%

The second statement states that to be a teacher requires a commitment to improve the quality of education. There are 90 % of teachers who strongly agreed. Then, the third statement depicts that to be a teacher requires talent, strong desire and idealism, and this statement was strongly agreed by 53 % of teachers. Next, the fourth statement about the fact that becoming a teacher requires academic qualifications and educational background in accordance with the field of duty was strongly agreed by 70 % of teachers. Next, the fifth statement stating that what teachers do is more important than the income they receive was strongly agreed by 60 % of teachers. Later, the sixth statement stating the fact that teachers in our community are noble and well respected was strongly agreed by 47 % of teachers.

It can be concluded from the answers that in general the teachers agree on the five statements states in the first part of questionnaire, means that they have positive beliefs toward several things mentioned, which is related their job. They believed that to be a teacher requires commitment, talent, strong desire, idealism, academic qualification, and educational background. They also believed that what they do as teachers are more important than the income they received. They agree that teacher and their job are noble and well respected in their community as well.

Concerning to the statement of teachers' commitment to improve education, most of teachers agree. It is as mentioned by Mart (2013) that commitment is a vital belief in teaching since a committed teacher would do a lot of effort and struggle to achieve the development of their students. Then, in the third statement which draws the fact that a teacher requires talent, strong desire and idealism was agreed by most teachers. This is in line with the proposition of Esmaelian, Rahmani, and Pordanjani (2014) stating that teachers with ideal characteristics can give more credibility, increase skills including reading and writing, pay more attention to moral and character development, and pose comprehensive and clear approach while teaching. Next, almost all teachers agreed with the belief that to be a teacher, a

person needs to bear an academic qualifications and educational background. This is considered really important because a teacher can only teach what she/he is informed about. Then, concerning to the teachers' salary, most of teachers believe that their work is more important than income. They would do the work sincerely without being burdened by the thought of salary they are paid, but it is undeniable that if teachers do not have to think about income, they would spent more time thinking about teaching. In short, salary—as well as other primary life-needs—is a critical point that become a measure whether teachers are willing to do their job well or not (Ngimbudzi, 2009; Ayele, 2014).

Regarding the next statement stating that teachers in our community are respected was agreed by most teachers. As mentioned by Hargreaves, et al., (2006) in the past, teacher profession was indeed seen as a low-level profession and teachers are ranked in the same level with news reporters and commercial travelers. However, recently, teachers are seen far better and they are put in third rank after doctors and nurses. This notion has proved that the profession of teachers is not as low as it was in the previous era. This is also the reason all participants agreed that becoming a teacher is a noble work.

Job satisfaction part consists of four questions as can be seen in table 3:

Table 3: Job Satisfaction

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Satisfied with teaching skills	-	7 %	20 %	73 %
Satisfied with method	-	7 %	13 %	80 %
Enjoy teaching at the school	-	-	40 %	60 %
Satisfied with the job	-	-	36 %	64 %

There are four statements in this framework; satisfaction on their teaching skills, the methods they use, whether they enjoy teaching at their current school, and whether they are all in all satisfied with their job. Majorly, they are all strongly agree or satisfied with these four statements. This result is supported by Ngimbudzi (2009) that teachers are satisfied when they get the job security at a place (in this school at the current school they are teaching) and the feel that their knowledge is meaningful

to their job. He added that teacher satisfaction on the behalf of their existence and knowledge will definitely make them perform the best in teaching.

Self-efficacy part consists of three questions as can be seen in table 4:

Table 4: Self efficacy

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Making a significant educational difference in the lives of their students	-	7%	90%	3%
The participants try really hard to make progress with even the most difficult and unmotivated students	-	-	66%	34%
The participants were successful with the students in their class	-	3%	85%	12%

Generally, this framework sues the teachers' confidence in their job as a teacher. All of them believe that they have made significant educational difference toward their students, have dealt with difficult and unmotivated students, and have been successful teaching their students. It is important for teachers to feel confidence about their job since the beliefs about self-efficacy is noted to influence the teaching and learning process and self-efficacy is an indicator whether the teaching and learning process will succeed or fail (Gavora, 2010).

Appraisal and feedback part consists of two questions as can be seen in table 5 and 6:

Table 5. Appraisal and feedback

Statement	Answer	Percentage
Teachers often received appraisal and feedback from.	Other teacher	39 %
	Principal	25 %
	Supervisor	17%
	Students	16 %
	Students' parents	3 %

In the table above, it can be seen that 39 % of teachers received appraisal and feedback from other teacher, 25 % from principal, 17 % from supervisor, 16 %

from students and the rest 3 % of them received appraisals and feedbacks from students' parents.

Then, below is presented the table showing whether appraisals and feedbacks can increase teachers' passion in their teaching performances.

Table 6. Appraisal and feedback

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Appraisal increase teaching passion	-	13%	56%	30%

The table above shows that 30 % of teachers were strongly agree, 56 % of them were agree, 13 % of them were disagree, while there is no teacher strongly disagreed. It can be seen from the answers that most teachers received appraisal and feedback from other teachers and most of the teachers believe that appraisal and feedback can increase teaching passion. In teaching, appraisals and feedbacks are vital keys in improving teachers' performance, because the passion can lead to improvement. It is supported by Elliott (2015), he said that teachers who obtain appraisals and feedbacks can improve their teaching performance.

The other point being discussed in this section is about the influence of the teachers' belief on their performance quality as a teacher. The discussion was draw based on the result of the second questionnaire. Concerning to the first framework on the job-related belief, its influence is shaping teacher's character, drive teacher to be good at their job and these beliefs remind them to stay sincere. It can be seen that the influence from overall job related beliefs to teaching profession is encouraging since the answers are all positive. It is a good thing since a negative view of the teaching profession, either by society as a whole or when perceived by teachers themselves, can impact the recruitment of high-quality professionals into the teaching profession. It can also affect whether teachers stay in the profession (OECD, 2009)

Regarding the job satisfaction itself, the influence is also perceptible when they perform their duties. Job satisfaction makes them go to school every day, even when they are sick, and it make them happy. It is important since according to Butt (2005) teacher who are satisfied with the aspects of their jobs that relate to their

teaching work, such as work tasks and professional growth, they tend to be satisfied with other aspects surrounding the performance of their job – for example, working conditions, interpersonal relations and salary.

Concerning the self-efficacy, the teachers believe that they are successful with their students. These beliefs influence them mostly when they were novice teacher, not only influence teacher in teaching, but also influence students. As Gavora (2010) said that the influence is positive on their future performance both toward their students and themselves as their confidence is seen as their duty as an educator. It is important since self-efficacy in a long shot affect students' achievement, as Puchner and Taylor (2012) say that exploring teachers' self-efficacy may have implications for teachers' commitment to the job, performance and, by extension, the academic achievement of students.

The influence of appraisal and feedback on the teachers' performance quality is also vital. After receiving appraisals and feedbacks, they realize their deficiency in teaching and dealing with students and they cling to the commitment that should perform better in the future. In addition, this is the type of feedbacks and reflection that leads to development (Nye, Konstantanopoulos, & Hedges, 2004). The development process is an ongoing cycle whose works need various factors in identifying, measuring and developing an individual's performance—in this case the teachers—to boost up more positive development and enhancement (Elliott, 2015).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Firstly, based on the discussion in the previous chapter, some conclusions were drawn. Based on the framework offered by OECD concerning to job-related beliefs, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, appraisal and feedback, the teachers believed that to be a teacher requires commitment, talent, strong desire, idealism, academic qualification, and educational background. They also believed that what they do as teachers are more important than the income they received. They agree that teacher and their job are noble and well respected in their community as well. In addition almost all of teachers agree that teachers' main task is teaching and that the most important job of teachers besides teaching is educating. It can be concluded from the answer that all in all teachers are satisfied with their job in general, because

most of them are satisfied with their teaching skill, satisfied with their teaching method, and enjoy teaching at their current school.

Further, it can be concluded from the answer that most teachers feel confidence about their job. They feel that they are making a significant educational difference in the lives of their students, they tried really hard to make progress with even the most difficult and unmotivated students and they feel that they were successful with the students in their class. It can also be seen from the answers that most teachers received appraisal and feedback from other teachers and most of the teachers believe that appraisal and feedback can increase teaching passion.

Secondly, participants state that the beliefs about overall job-related principles, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy and appraisal and feedback give big influence toward their teaching profession as English teachers. This big influence is affecting teachers is various way. Beliefs appear to have the strongest impact on teacher learning, followed by changes in teacher behavior and last on students learning.

The researcher expects that there are other researchers who will continue this research or simply conduct another research in more specific scopes, probably in job-related beliefs, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, appraisal and feedback, or beliefs about professional development. Since educators' beliefs and perceptions exceptionally important and make certain influence on students and the educational system as a whole.

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