Pedagogical Transformation of English Language Teachers through the Teacher Mentor Program in West Nusa Tenggara - Indonesia: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract: This research examines the pedagogical conversion of the English teachers in East Lombok Regency after taking part in the Teacher Mentor Program (TMP) a program of government sponsored professional development. The purpose of the TMP was to improve the pedagogical skills of teachers as well as acquire the skills required to cater to the needs of students in learning in the forms of differentiation instruction, technology integration, and reflective teaching. Reducing teachers' workloads in these ways is the program's aim. It would help to make the learning process more student-centered and to ensure teachers follow different approaches in teaching to adapt to students' learning styles and needs. The investigation used qualitative phenomenological methodology to gain in-depth insight into the experiences of the teachers. Data were obtained through in depth and interviews, classroom observation and document analyses which were conducted to 15 English teachers from different school background represented the East Lombok. Significant findings found improvement in teachers' development of differentiated instruction, enhancement of their integration of technology, as well as improvement in their motivation and creativity due to the TMP among the derived indicators. However, some issues including a lack of ongoing support, resistance to change at times, were identified.

Keywords: Pedagogical Transformation; Teacher Mentor Program; Differentiated Instruction; Technology Integration; Phenomenological Study

Introduction:

The twenty-first century educational context requires teachers to adapt in order to respond to the changing needs of students. The struggles for today's young people

are not the same as they were for the previous generations and we can't teach today the same way that we did in the past. As Marmoah et al.(2022) also argue that traditional instruction is not adequate to meet students' needs in the present day; personalized instruction to meet the individual needs based on students' learning profiles, interests and abilities is essential. This implies that teachers will need to know their students to a greater depth, in terms of individual differences, and modify their teaching practices accordingly. Lecture-based methods, often used in the past, may not interest learners in today's world who prefer interactive and student-centered learning. Teachers must deliver flexible instruction by catering for the variety of learning preferences (Sukasni & Efendy, 2017). This way, every student is able to learn at their own pace, making the classroom more inclusive and fruitful. However, to be that flexible teachers need the right skills and tools. Professional development initiatives have been the backbone of this process, enabling teachers to keep abreast of emerging educational trends and technologies. The Indonesian government has introduced the Teacher Mentor Program (TMP) in an effort to address this increasing need, as a professional development program designed to improve teachers' pedagogical skills (Faiz & Faridah, 2022).

The TMP is developed to fill the gap in meeting the contemporary education by training the teachers to cater to the students on change (Bailah, 2022). This work is in line with Manao et al. (2019) study of the role of TMP in enhancing the quality of teachers and the performance of students. Professional development is seen by these researchers as essential to the development of a resilient teaching profession, able to respond to new challenges (Ubit & Bartholomaeus, 2018). The TMP emphasizes differentiated instruction, reflective practice, and technology integration—core skills for educators in today's classroom. Differentiated instruction helps teachers cater to the learning styles of each individual student, so education is personalized instead of one size fits all. Reflective practice on the other hand, requires teachers to continually reflect on their practice to keep it responsive to the needs of students. Finally, incorporation of technology empowers teachers to design interactive and motivating lessons to engage students. These three elements of the TMP facilitate a teacher's ability to respond to the ever-evolving needs of education, and that each student's learning possibilities are maximized to meet their learning needs. The TMP has generally been hailed as a major move towards better education quality in Indonesia.

The main objective of TMP was to increase teacher competency which is then expected to directly improve the overall quality of education in Indonesia, particularly for underprivileged areas such as East Lombok. Teachers who are

located in rural and under-resourced settings encounter other hardships, such as a limited access to technology and continual professional support (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Such problems also prevented teachers of effectively imparting quality education especially to students who lack opportunity to contemporize educational material. The TMP is intended to close the rifts by providing the teachers with 21st century instruction techniques that could be implemented even with fewer resources. The program asks teachers to reflect critically on their teaching and reshape their behaviour to meet the specific needs of their students and the communities they serve. It also underscores the need to be lifelong learners, with teachers learning long after formal training is over. Through its teacher's tools, the TMP hopes to revolutionize the classroom, and raise children's attainment across Indonesia. Additionally, the program's intention is to create teachers that can be agent of change in their classrooms and surrounding community leading a culture of improvement and innovation.

The study aims at exploring how and to what extent the Teacher Mentor Program influences pedagogical transformation of English teachers in East Lombok, particularly their ability on implementing differentiated instruction, utilizing technology, and conducting reflective practices. The novelty of this study is to investigate how a state initiated teacher development programme influences pedagogical practices in marginalized rural resource-poor school settings. The research deficit that prompted the study has been the absence of empirical proof of the viability of TMP stimulated pedagogical change and its sustainability, among the English teachers in such a geographical set up. Although there is an extensive literature on the design and objectives of TMP at the national level, knowledge about its specific implications at local and rural level is still scarce. Differentiated teaching is particularly crucial for mixed ability classrooms, where students may have radically different levels of ability and learning styles. Technology Integration Technology integration is one more trend, technology is becoming more integrated in classrooms, as it becomes impossible to manage without digital tools. Reflection allows teachers to stay up-to-date in their practice by recognizing areas for improvement and making those adaptations. The research also highlights teacher needs in implementing new competencies in resource-poor contexts and the levels of support required to maintain pedagogical change.

At the heart of the TMP is the practice of differentiated instruction, which allows teachers to make on-the-fly changes in practice to better fit their students' varied learning styles(Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). In heterogeneous classes where we have diverse students with diverse learning styles and competences, this approach

makes it possible for each learner to access and benefit from the curriculum. Differentiation gets us beyond the all-class-the-same-and-non-differentiated-teaching and embraces all of our students as our own. TMP educators are taught how to design lessons that are flexible and consider the interests, strengths, and challenges of the individual students. In this way, teachers contribute to positive, responsive and motivating classroom contexts. The program cultivates teachers' creativity and attentiveness in designing diverse learning opportunities to meet curriculum goals and address the individual learning profiles of students.

A key practice of the TMP, reflective practice enables teachers to evaluate and enhance their teaching practices in an ongoing manner. Reflection fosters professional development by enabling teachers to assess their instructional practices and modify them to meet students' needs (Cranton & King, 2003). As they continue to think about their practice, teachers grow in their ability to be adaptable and to adjust their pedagogy to match the things they see in their classroom. This is a process that allows teachers to know what works, and perhaps more importantly, what does not work in their classroom; this allows folks to make data-informed decisions. Reflection fosters self-awareness that enables teachers to identify and question assumptions or biases that could drive their decisions about teaching. Reflective practice, over time, cultivates a teacher thinking and discovering as an active learner, not just merely a performer of scripted lessons. As Baumgartner(2019)points out, reflective practice empowers teachers for self-regulation and to take charge of their own professional development. In TMP the process of reflection is promoted through peer dialogue, diary writing and mentoring. Teachers develop the ability to critically examine student results in relationship to their methods of instruction, leading to an atmosphere of continual improvement. This improves the impact of classroom action and is a factor in lasting educational change.

Integration of technology is another emphasis of the TMP, as teachers will be expected to proficiently employ digital tools in their teaching (Pahrijal & Novitasari, 2023)In that digital world, students are accustomed to technology and they want learning experiences that match that familiarity. The program is making the virtual classroom a reality for teachers, introducing them to tools like Google Classroom, interactive apps and media resources that can take a classroom experience from passive to participatory. Technology offers a variety of access points for students as diverse learners. For instance, visual, aural, or kinaesthetic learners may benefit from use of videos, podcasts, or simulations. Digital tools enable teachers to monitor learning on a day-to-day basis, to offer immediate

feedback and to record student progress more effectively. Virtual collaboration is also celebrated, with students collaborating online on projects or activities. The TMP emphasizes that technology should not be treated as an afterthought, but is an integral part of the instruction. Technology is used effectively to improve teaching and learning and it makes the lessons interesting and easy to understand for students.

However, the advertisement of technology-supported teaching is easier said than done, especially in remote regions like East Lombok. The digital divide remains, hampering the ability of teachers to apply their new tech education to maximum effect. According to Mukti(2023), educators from those areas face limited internet connection, insufficient devices, or institutional support. This encumbers their capability on the suggestions of TMP on technology assimilation. Moreover, as Sholeh et al. (2023) contend, what may make teachers resist from using new teaching tools is their varied abilities to adjust to a new system. Resistance can also be intensified by the lack of mentoring or follow-up following the training, causing those that have been trained to become disillusioned or drop new practices (Soepriyanti et al., 2022). These difficulties highlight the critical role of supportive infrastructure and on-going mentoring to support teacher learning and implementation. Without these conditions in place, even the best professional development will not be successful in its intended goals. It is crucial that these systemic issues are addressed.

Research Methodology:
The current study was conducted in East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia because TMP Program had been implemented in this regency. The researchers deliberately chose this location to investigate teachers who had participated in the program and were putting the training they had received into practice. The teachers were provided with comprehensive information about the study, including official letters requesting their permission to participate. Letters were also sent to the schools asking for access to observe classrooms, interview people, and examine documents. The experimenters ensured that each participant was provided with the appropriate consent form and a clear understanding of the ethical procedure prior to data collection. This ensured that all participants were clear about the nature of the study and had agreed to take part voluntarily. This protocol also enabled the researchers to be transparent and ethical during the entire study.

The research design was qualitative in nature. This design made it possible for the researchers to go into depth on teachers' everyday life experiences, especially with

regard to their ideas and conduct in respect of the TMP. With this method, information was gathered through interviews, classroom observations, and documents. The aim was to discover how teachers perceive the new educational practices that have been implemented as a result of the TMP. This research approach enabled the team to explore the individuals' personal experiences rather than using figures or digits. When the researchers investigated what teachers described, in their own words, they were able to consider how they implemented the program in a more naturalistic way. The goal of the study was not only to illustrate what shifts the teachers made in their instructional practices, but also the emotions, struggles, and motivations for the change. This approach enabled us to tap into the rich tapestry behind teachers' reactions to government policy such as TMP.

In conducting the study, the researchers adopted the phenomenological design. This design enabled them to learn how teachers see and understand their teaching context. The researchers used interviews and classroom observations to collect in-depth information. They gained an understanding of how teachers were thinking and what they were doing while they were working with TMP knowledge. The sample consisted of teachers from different schools with diverse backgrounds which would contribute to the research in the sense of revealing different perspectives. This enriched the results and ameliorated the usefulness. The team selected 15 teachers from five schools in East Lombok Regency. They were intentionally selected due to their level of experience with TMP. The researchers looked at the data qualitatively, for patterns in what the teachers said and did. The analysis also examined the issues that teachers identified as problems, such as new rules and students' behavior. This allowed the researchers to gain better insight into the experience of being a teacher who has been trained in government mandates for teaching but is now expected to apply them in the messy context of actual classrooms.

The main instruments used in this study were observations, in-depth interviews and document review. Once they had formal approval to do so, the researchers started gathering data on how all of the TMP teachers were using this training in actual school activities. Classroom observations were conducted to identify the actual behavior of the teachers to implement skills from TMP. We wanted to know what changed about teaching after the training and what the teachers, once trained, then did to influence others. They asked the teachers if they could sit in on their lessons, and the teachers said yes. All TMP related teaching was documented and scored precisely. The researchers recorded everything significant that occurred in the classrooms. After observing, the researchers interviewed 20 high school teachers. The interviews were all 40 to 50 minutes in duration. To prepare the teachers, the team provided them with

questions and information in advance. The study participants were assured that the information they provided would remain confidential. Finally, the researchers examined lesson plans, student worksheets, and digital content designed by the TMP teachers.

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of findings, the researchers cross-checked the results of observations, interviews, and document analyses. This step is called triangulation. It also served to verify that the data from various sources were congruent. The data analysis was carried out using Creswell's steps (2014) in analyzing the qualitative data. The first was to organize the information by topic. They then pared the data down, eliminating anything that was off topic. That would've simplified things back and made them easier to understand, certainly. Then they tabulated the results in tables that could help explain those findings. The tables indicated relationships between what teachers said, did, and what the documents revealed. This procedure provided a full and correct image to the researchers of what occurred in the classrooms. Once the data was organized, the researchers looked for common topics or themes across all the sources.

The data was coded for themes. The terminology and phrases that repeatedly appeared throughout the interviews were labelled or coded by the researchers, who also reviewed all of the interview transcripts. These codes assisted in sorting the facts by category. The researchers then grouped similar codes together to identify broader patterns, or categories. These categories assisted the team in structuring the findings and communicating the results in a transparent manner. The information gathered from the interviews, observations and documents supported the key themes. The researchers kept reading and sorting the data until they were confident that nothing new would emerge — this is what is known as data saturation. After that, the complete set of data was organized into final themes and sub-themes. This endeavor contributed to the confidence that all key concepts were integrated and none of the essential elements still were missing.

Findings:

The finding of this study indicated several important pedagogical shifts which were experienced by the English teachers within the context of Teacher Mentor Program (TMP). There were a couple of substantial shifts we observed, even after a few weeks of attending the virtual classes, most notably in their ability to differentiate instruction, a critical pedagogical practice that allows educators to modify instruction to meet the individual needs of students. Differentiation of instruction as expressed in TMP will make the teacher more able to serve the varied abilities, learning styles and interests of

students. This is about not leaving a child behind, but changing them to rise to do better, to help each of them be successful in learning and to be ready to succeed from their entry point into new periods of schooling. Teachers reported that they felt more enabled to tailor instruction using DI as the programme had provided them with resources to be more flexible and responsive in the classroom. "This training made me aware of the way in which we can be responsive teachers to our students," one teacher said. "I feel better able to tackle a variety of classroom challenges." Similar comments were made by other members. Teachers were feeling more confident, and better prepared than ever to provide vibrant, flexible classrooms where students will succeed regardless of ability. "This has transformed my teaching," one teacher said. "To be able to differentiate for every child is absolutely huge.I see the degree of engagement and the outcomes of learning."

Second, the TMP resulted in increased technology use in the classroom. Digital tools are very essential in the educational system which is 21st century and TMP training made the teachers capable of using these tools as an integral part of teaching. Technology in the classroom has allowed teachers to deliver more interactive, engaging lessons that appeal to digital-native students today, many who have been exposed to digital tools outside of the school setting. It was reported that the teachers were trained to use technology and linked this in their lessons to help them facilitated dynamic and student- oriented learning. "Now I'm more fluent in technology, learning to use apps like Google Classroom, Canva, AI and others, to make learning more suitable and entertaining for students." These teachers utilized the technology in their teaching to deliver content in engaging ways such as multimedia presentations, quizzes, and group work. Result of observations indicated that teachers who participated in the TMP used technology to supplement high-active approach lessons, and this in turn led to more student engagement and participation. "Technology has made my students hungry to learn and given them momentum," another teacher said.

Reflection was also recognized as an area for success for the TMP teachers. The training would have emphasized that teacher reflection should be continuous, and that the teacher should periodically reflect upon his/her own behavior and seek weak links. Reflection-in-action allows teachers to step back and reflect: to look at their work and decide about the optimal pathways for student learning. Reflection prompts teachers to recognize what is and is not effective, in order to improve their effectiveness throughout the years. One teacher said that "I had time to analyze and reflect on everything and see what's working and what's not and where it can be made better." This reflection influenced teachers to alter their teaching methods to be more sensitive to their students. "My favourite part of the course is all of the group work and

discussions we do with our peers and teachers." "Many shared that the process of thinking about their teaching after they taught every lesson has helped them to realize where the gaps lie in students' knowledge, and has also helped them to fix those gaps through remediation. "That gave us the confidence to be able to implement the solutions to the challenges of students" said one teacher. Through the =use of reflective practice, teachers are given space to work on developing and perfecting their actions to correspond to the evolving nature of the classroom. Now they are able to do self-correction and have more positive beliefs about their own growth. "I feel more ready to deal with a class full of children with different needs and skills," one teacher said. It's altered the way I teach and the way my students learn."

The findings also highlight the beneficial impact of TMP on teacher motivation and creativity. Teachers' willingness to try new teaching innovations was enhanced, positively affecting classroom interaction. The TMP encouraged teachers to take risks, to be more creative beyond their comfort zones. Through exposure to new practices in the TMP, teachers felt supported to try out new instructional methods (e.g., PBLs, investigation-oriented work, group work). They both provide the means of making the classroom more interactive and interesting for students. "I'm just more high-energy and my students are feeding off that," said one teacher. It was noticed that the teachers were using more innovative teaching modalities (group tasks, interactive exercises) and the presence-enhancing effect on the students was positive. Such methods were not only used to make lessons more interesting, but also to place more of the responsibility for learning in the hands of students. The students are having a joyful experience, and actively involved in that learning process.

In addition to these encouraging findings, the study also revealed several issues and concerns related to the dissemination of teacher learning that they had developed through the TMP's work. But one of the reasons that most prevented the digital conversion in the classroom is the limited resources, including of course the technological resources; therefore, it did not allow to fully achieving the implementation of the digital strategies in the classroom. And while teachers were being trained on everything from Google Classroom to Canva, many of them found that their schools lacked the infrastructure they'd need to make them. In East Lombok, rural schoolteachers explained that they lacked the technological infrastructure — namely, internet connections or relatively new equipment — to properly execute the digital strategies they had already adopted. "The training was amazing but it's difficult to do without the resources and continued support," one teacher wrote. This, of course, is indicative of a wider malaise in education where it all too often whatever is and isn't afforded is what determines if the shiny new things will work. Teachers

groused about reasons or the things to enable them to truly apply their newly gained knowledge. Without these materials, teachers may have difficulties in implementing the innovative program that they were given during the TMP training. "Our students have missed so much school already, and we need to be teaching," one teacher said in a comment to me on Google Classroom, where many of us post assignments. "It's difficult to keep them engaged when the technology goes down, or we don't have enough devices." "The possibilities of tech are so exciting, we're so excited about that, but it sucks when you can't use any of it because it doesn't have what you want," another teacher said. "I was excited to use technology in the classroom, but the internet sometimes doesn't work here and the school doesn't have enough devices for all of the students," one teacher said.

Lack of receptiveness to change in some of the teachers was also perceived as an issue. Some said they would be open to adopting new teaching methods championed by the TMP, while others were unsure if this could even be considered alongside the established teaching methods. Resistance to new practice is a known issue in professional learning and development (PD), especially when it requires a long-held and familiar practice to no longer be used in preference to a new or different one. This resistance has the potential to slow down the pace of the change work happening in a building to a crawl, making teachers who are in need of change frustrated in the process of trying to change their practice. "Not everybody wants to culture new ideas, not everybody desires change, not everybody can accommodate the new techniques," one teacher said. "It's difficult for us to switch from what we have always done to something that's completely new when we're not even sure if it's going to work," another teacher said. Such resistance to innovation, therefore, indicates that further support and the right conditions are required for those teachers yet to adopt these novel practices. Some teachers felt overwhelmed by the new content and techniques being disseminated through the TMP and more time and support for change were needed. School leaders and administrators will need to play a role in nudging this shift along, by providing continuous mentorship and creating school environments that value a sustained focus on cutting-edge ideas. "More support from our principal to have a home to be experimental," another teacher added. "The training was amazing, but after a couple of months, I had, like, am I going back to the old me?" one teacher said. Some continued support might be nice to have."

Collaboration among the teachers was identified as another significant factor in the success of the TMP. But they added that they felt supported and in it together in terms of talking about their experiences and strategies with each other, and that that helped them professionally. The teacher partnerships were a professional learning community

in which members learned from one another as they shared best practices and solved challenges together. It was that spirit of partnership that helped teachers feel less isolated on a journey of learning, with colleagues who were grappling with similar issues. As one teacher described it, "We just share ideas and practices with other teachers more now. "It's incredibly useful for dealing with all kinds of classroom problems." The outcome of the collaboration was a healthy school culture wherein teachers felt supported and driven to continue to improve their practice. This structure of teacher collaboration meant the teachers were able to experiment knowing they had support and feedback from their peers and they were eventually becoming more effective in their own right. "One thing that has happened is we have all become better teachers because this feels like we're actually being useful to each other," one teacher wrote. But some teachers said it was hard at first to collaborate with colleagues, particularly for teachers at schools where teachers were used to working on their own. "It was quite a slow process to build trust, but it was not long before we were starting to roll with some of the things we were putting forward, and everything sort of changed," said one teacher who initially had reservations about the experience.

The findings suggest the significant role of Teacher Mentor Program (TMP) in terms of the pedagogical shifting of English teachers in East Lombok. One of the most significant differences noted was their increased ability to differentiate instruction, a key teaching strategy that adapts teaching styles to various student learning needs. As (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010)describe, differentiated instruction is an approach to teaching that allows teachers to accommodate the full range of learning needs. The approach acknowledges that students are unique in terms of their background, ability level, learning style and interest; so instruction should also reflect this diversity. As a result of the TMP, teachers felt more comfortable using learning plans that met the individual learning styles of their students. Through differentiated instruction, all students receive instruction, are escorted to advance and succeed, and are pushed or challenged on their individual levels of skills and knowledge. Teachers who participated in the programme reported feeling more confident in identifying what the students needed as well as in designing lessons that extended the pupils – whether they were underperforming or bright. This ability to personalize the teaching contributed to the students' motivation and success.

Reflection was reported as an additional area of professional development that was able to be isolated from teachers' involvement in the TMP. Reflection-in-action allows teachers to monitor their teaching to the very minute, then reflect and rectify to improve students' learning. The TMP emphasised reflection and teachers were encouraged to think constantly about how they teach and how it could be modified to

maximise its effectiveness for their students. The findings suggest that the TMP has been effective in promoting reflection among its participants for them to be more sensitive to the needs of their students. Those teachers who were in the habit of reflecting found they were more in touch with what was working in their classroom and more prepared to make changes that would be successful with their students. One teacher put it this way.

Teachers' self-initiated began to integrate technology in teaching was another good impact of TMP. Technology has been described as necessary to develop both student engagement and learning. In today's digital era, students are digital natives and they interact with technology in their everyday life, and technology has proven to be an indispensable tool for modern education. Teachers that were involved in the TMP felt more confidant infusing technology, and developing more interactive lessons that have increased student engagement. Technology was something many teachers were once terrified of, but training through TMP means they incorporate tools like Google Classroom, feedback from interactive quizzes and multimedia presentations into their lesson planning. On the other hand, the study also identified some challenges in implementing technology particularly in low-resource areas such as East Lombok. Many teachers said that they lacked the proper tools and infrastructures to train them to practice what they had been taught on digital techniques during training courses.

Resistance to change on the part of some of the teachers is one of the major issues found in the study. Some teachers accepted the novel pedagogical strategies during the TMP, but others resisted the new strategies. This is not uncommon pushback in professional development and, over time, it can be difficult for teachers to push themselves outside of the way they're used to and try something new. Opposition to change is a common issue in teacher education, when educators are requested to abandon what they are accustomed to in better of the new. The implications of the findings is that in order to enable teachers to overcome their resistance, the TMP needs to be further supported and mentored until the pedagogical shifts required by the TMP are fully embedded. Those teachers that rely on old memorized information may fear the new demands and be less sure of how to change their ways.

Conclusion
The Teacher Mentor Program influences significant differences on EFL Teacher's pedagogical practices in east Lombok especially on teaching strategy, technology integration and flexibility to the diversity of students. The emphasis of the program on differentiated instruction, reflective practice has enabled teachers to be more flexible and responsive to the inquiry-based approach, enhance the engagement of students,

and increase student learning. Educators have utilized technology in ways that bring more interaction and relevance to their lessons, and, as a result, more engagement from students. The research also identified a number of challenges, including a lack of access to technology and resistance to change, that are preventing the broader implementation of new approaches. For sustainability and viability of these changes, the study recommends professional development and mentoring should continue in the same direction as teachers working in resource poor settings, may not be able to sustain if intervention is not followed up regularly. In their schools, in which there is a school culture of sharing strategies and supports to one another, the TMP also contributed to the development of teacher collaboration. In conclusion, while the Teacher Mentor Program might have the potential to make a serious difference to education quality in Indonesia, its long-term success would rest on the provision of ongoing support, resourcing and mentoring to ensure that these innovations become embedded and scalable across the system over time.

Acknowledgements

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