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The Challenges and Strategies of Islamic School Mentor Teachers in Implementing ELT Lesson Plans

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Abstract
The availability of the lesson plans as organized guidance for teachers is critical in achieving the objectives of English Language Teaching (ELT) in policy decisions, curriculum planning, and classroom implementations. However, it is unavoidable if teachers experience difficulties generating lesson plans, necessitating specific strategies to deal with the situation. This study aims to examine the challenges faced by state Islamic secondary school English mentor teachers in implementing lesson plans and the strategies they utilized to overcome those challenges. This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing data purposively gathered from the semi-structured interviews involving five English school mentor teachers from State Islamic Secondary School No. 4 in Banda Aceh. The findings revealed that teachers' most significant challenges in implementing lesson plans were time constraints, format changes, administrative burdens, and students' lack of interest. The study also found out that attending the MGMP (Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran, or the Teachers Professional Development Forum), using a guidebook, asking for advice from colleagues, and using the internet as a learning resource are common strategies the teachers used in overcoming their challenges. It is expected that the impact of this study provides a practical and critical reflection to develop a more realistic and workable ELT lesson plan implementation for mentor teachers amidst their demanding roles and increased administrative responsibilities. This study also recommends that

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university/faculty administrators and lecturers be more attentive to courses related to lesson plan design, such as English Curriculum Design, English Course Design, and Micro Teaching.

Keywords: Challenges, Islamic school, lesson plan, mentor teacher, strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning process is recognized as the interface between teachers, students, and learning resources or study materials in education, particularly English Language Teaching (ELT). Learning, according to Wilson and Peterson (2006), is the ability to adapt and enhance resources, develop and assess courses, and acquaint teachers with the needs of students. The first stage in teaching is to create a study plan, also known as a lesson plan. In ELT, the lesson plan is essential because it allows language teachers to balance curriculum success and long-term sustainability (Daoud, 2019). Fernandez (2002) states that the origins of the lesson plan can be traced back to Japan in early 1900. At that time, teachers gathered to discuss the teaching plan in-depth and then witness it in the classroom. Hollingsworth and Oliver (2005) mention that when the lesson plan was successful in Japan, other countries followed suit, such as the United States of America in 1993.

In every education system, a syllabus is structured by a curriculum, and it guides teachers in creating a lesson plan. Without the curriculum and the syllabus, teachers cannot design a lesson plan (Musingafi et al., 2015). As Wahyuni (2016) explains, a curriculum has a variety of learning objectives and several courses and instructional tools. Some courses and curricula are more like lesson plans, with detailed information on how to implement a course. As a result, a lesson plan can be created based on the information provided in the curriculum.

The curriculum is thought to have been initially implemented in Indonesia in 1947, following the country's independence. Wahyuni (2016) observes that the Indonesian national educational curriculum was revised multiple times, in 1947, 1952, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and 2013. All of these Indonesian national curricula are based on *Pancasila's* national philosophy and the State Constitution of 1945. Teachers are more likely to encounter challenges while developing and implementing lesson plans as a result of these changes.

Several studies have attempted to explain teachers' difficulties in implementing lesson plans. Some examine the difficulties that student-teachers encounter; for instance, Akmal et al. (2019) say that time management is a common issue that student-teachers have when implementing a lesson plan. As we all know, time plays a significant role in academic success. However, the findings of the study revealed that not all student-teachers use their time effectively.

Amanati (2017) finds that one of the teachers in her study did not follow the lesson plans that were prepared in advance. The teacher explicitly wrote the time allocation in the lesson plans. However, in reality, it was challenging for her to stick with time allocation in the lesson plans. In a similar vein, Jasmi (2014) reveals that some teachers spent their time in ways that are not in accordance with the lesson plans. This is because teachers did not have enough time to construct their lesson plans under

the framework outlined in Indonesia's Curriculum 2013. It was discovered that teachers frequently use online lesson plans and then modify them to meet the needs of their students. Uppal (2011) discovers that the majority of the teachers admitted to using the internet to help design lesson plans. They use the computer and the internet to look for lesson plan samples and best practices. Some even go beyond lesson plans by considering their students' voices and perceptions to improve lesson plans and modified teaching instruments (Ubit, 2017).

Some studies have stressed the ongoing discussion on the implementation of the lesson plans in the school curriculum in the Indonesian Muslim environment. Qoyyimah (2018), for example, concentrates on the implementation of comparative aspects between public schools and Islamic private secondary schools in East Java but overlooks the Islamic state/public secondary schools curriculum in their study. On the contrary, Said and Yusof (2014) have thoroughly examined the implementation of Curriculum 2013 for English teaching in state Islamic secondary schools by using the Delphi questionnaires to collect the data and focus on the curriculum rather than the lesson plans.

In a study conducted by Syamdianita and Cahyono (2021), they discovered pre-service teachers' experiences and obstacles in designing teaching materials in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. In the study, the use of the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework and Learning by Design (LBD) was the center of their study. Their findings showed a significant positive change due to combining application and technological support. However, this study did not address the actual challenges and strategies associated with traditionally designing lesson plans, which teachers in various parts of Indonesia continue to struggle with.

Nuraeni and Heryatun (2021) attempt to describe how pre-service English teachers might improve their professional skills by using reflective practice methodologies during teaching practicum. In their study, pre-service English teachers promote reflective recollection, action-reflection, and mentoring as effective methods for developing their teaching models. The earlier studies stressed the need for a more profound study on teacher experiences, challenges, and strategies in developing instructional materials. However, the mentor-teacher perspective is lacking, which is crucial to student-teacher development.

In light of those studies and the need to understand mentor teachers' perspectives on implementing lesson plans, this study formulated two main research questions: (1) what challenges do the state Islamic secondary school English mentor teachers face in implementing lesson plans? (2) what are the strategies they utilized to overcome those challenges? Thus, the objectives of this study are to find answers to the abovementioned research questions: scrutinizing challenges faced by the Islamic secondary school English mentor teachers in implementing lesson plans and dissecting the strategies they used to overcome the challenges.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Mentoring in ELT

In ELT, a mentoring program is necessary for developing mentor teachers, student teachers (mentees), and institutions. These components (mentor teachers,

mentees, and institutions) are central to creating an effective mentoring program in ELT contexts. The goal of a mentoring program and teaching practicum in English language teaching is to promote self-reflection and autonomous learning (Smith & Lewis, 2015), to have deep teaching comprehension and ability (Islam, 2020), to facilitate professional development (Smith & Lewis, 2018), and to serve as an exploratory practice for student teachers (Dogan et al., 2016). Equally important, Aydın and Ok (2020) and Tanjung et al. (2021) point out that models for improved collaboration between mentoring components are among the most critical factors in addressing the program's challenges and deficiencies.

Mentor teachers are mostly senior teachers at schools assigned to supervise student teachers in their school practicum. They are required to deliver good role models in terms of attitudes, behaviors, and values as real teachers in and out of the classrooms during student teachers' teaching practicum (Phang et al., 2020). For mentor teachers, mentoring ELT student teachers during teaching practicum is beneficial in continuing their professional development and identity (Holland, 2018; Shanks et al., 2020). Khojah and Asif (2020) highlight the importance of mentoring for mentor teachers to focus on concrete demonstration and deconstruction of their teaching methods and practices.

In addition, student teachers (Çankaya, 2018; Uerz et al., 2018), also popularly known as novice teachers (Dvir & Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2020; Klassen et al., 2018), teacher candidates (McGee, 2019; Voss & Kunter, 2020), would be teachers (Ricohermoso et al., 2019; Yusof, 2017), or pre-service teachers (List, 2019; Scott et al., 2018), are university students who are practicing or studying to be a teacher, observe classroom instruction and closely supervised by their experienced or certified mentor teachers during teaching practicum in elementary or secondary schools as a requirement for a degree in education. ELT student teachers can profound their experiences during the mentoring and teaching practicum to deal with initial shocks and cultural differences, design better classroom management, have an improved pedagogical competence and readiness, and develop better communication in the classrooms with students (Akmal et al., 2019; Simons et al., 2020; Tambyah, 2019). The most significant impact the mentoring program may have on student teachers, as mentioned by Arslan and Ilin (2018), is that teaching practicum can provide the awareness of teaching-related issues in real contexts, where theories they learned from universities can be bridged with the practical school environment.

Institutions, particularly schools and universities, also benefit from ELT mentoring programs. In their study, Grimmett et al. (2018) identify that schools' and universities' partnership can improve their learning spaces for all components involved in the program. As Gravett and Ramsaroop (2017) suggest, schools can become an education laboratory in a way that entails a considerate take of intelligible teaching practicum and positive reflection on the existing teaching and learning process. Similarly, universities can improve their coordination mechanism with schools and student teachers and enhance their overall planning, training, and school and mentor selection (Gjedia & Gardinier, 2018). Carpenter and Blance (2007) add that teacher education faculties and universities will be able to strengthen their reputation through internships and mentoring programs for pre-service teachers.

2.2 Mentor Teachers: Responsibilities and Challenges

In practice, mentor teachers must balance their responsibilities with the difficulties and strategies they encountered during their teaching practicum. A good educator is not necessarily a good mentor (Ambrosetti, 2014). Facilitative roles and a willingness to promote inclusive teaching environments for student teachers are crucial (Maddamsetti, 2018). In a study conducted by Holland (2018), identity, support, solidarity, engagement, and interaction of mentor teachers are important for student-teacher participants. Advice and teaching techniques and comprehensive school and social awareness can be valuable assets that student teachers acquire from their mentor teachers (Mutlu & Dollar, 2018).

Andreasen et al. (2019) found that the characteristics of a good mentor teacher include school climate, personal conviction, and university collaboration. These are challenges associated with establishing quality standards for mentor teachers. In addition to a lack of professional and pedagogical knowledge, mentor teachers are currently facing a number of obstacles (Albakri et al., 2021). In addition, the planning and implementation phases of practicum, as well as its length, are widely mentioned as challenges (Aydın & Ok, 2022). Likewise, Kourieos (2019) explains that one of the most persistent issues in mentoring is the educational system's inability to provide participants with meaningful outcomes. Other research reveals the increasing tension between mentor teachers and student teachers, the conflict between mentors and supervisors, administrative responsibilities, and management issues (Graham, 1997; O'Brien et al., 2020).

2.3 Lesson Plans

A lesson plan is a collection of teaching methods that assist teachers in determining what they want to teach and how they will teach it (Villagran & Grinberg, 2019). When organizing a class, there are two key terms to remember: 'what' and 'how'. These questions can help teachers figure out what they should do before beginning to organize a lesson. As a result, a lesson plan can be valuable to teachers. Jensen and Ottesen (2022) believe that a lesson plan is beneficial and can serve as a structuring tool or mechanism because it includes a solid mix of resources, student populations, instructor reflection, texts, methodologies, and goals. A teacher should be aware that a lesson plan is more than just a note; it also contains detailed information on the activities carried out in class with specific objectives. In other words, the lesson plans reflect how lessons are delivered and the teachers' ideas of what constitutes an effective lesson plan.

Conferring to Harmer (2007), a lesson plan is a teacher's preparation that includes the teachers' ideas on teaching and learning activities based on the curriculum and syllabus. The preparation can be defined as all the plans for teaching and learning activities to attain particular objectives based on curriculum and syllabus. As a result, teachers must consider the students' needs and interests when devising a lesson plan. A lesson plan, as defined by Spratt et al. (2011), is a teacher's directive that specifies what resources to use and how to teach them to the students in the classroom. The lesson includes the materials that will be presented to the students and the methods and strategies that will be used to teach the materials. It should include the resources that

students require and the teachers' methods and strategies to ensure that the materials are given effectively to the students.

Robertson and Acklam (2000) stress that multiple factors contribute to the importance of lesson planning for teachers. First and foremost, some form of planning will demonstrate the teacher's professionalism. Professional teachers with well-organized lessons will be viewed more favorably by students (Jones, 2000). This is because the lesson plans focus on what the teachers want the pupils to learn and how they will learn it. Second, teachers can tailor their educational activities to the needs of their students. Teachers will have more opportunities to select acceptable materials to teach in their classes if they plan the lesson ahead of time. Finally, Robertson and Acklam (2000) claim that by organizing the lesson, a teacher might anticipate potential problems in the classroom and know how to address them.

2.4 Considerations in Implementing Lesson Plans

The implementation of the CBC (Competency-Based Curriculum) in 2006 necessitates time for teachers in Indonesia to adapt to the Curriculum 2013. When Curriculum 2013 was initiated in July 2013, one of the issues teachers faced was adjusting to the changes in Curriculum 2013; as asserted by Gani et al. (2017), the new Curriculum 2013 caused certain changes in the lesson plans. However, Jasmi (2014) proposes that teachers must first be familiar with the curriculum to create a successful lesson plan. Therefore, teachers may find it difficult to construct and implement lesson plans during the adjustment period.

Furthermore, according to Kibret (2016), when planning a class, a teacher must consider the particular learning needs of each student. By employing externally generated feedback data on students' performance, teachers should base instructional decisions on their performance data. This feedback data demonstrates students' accomplishments and informs teachers about how students have met learning objectives and educational standards.

According to Fernandez (2002), a group of Japanese instructors met in groups to evaluate, discuss, observe, and learn from their daily work to create a strong lesson plan and effective teaching and learning activities. However, according to Mon et al. (2016) some teachers perceived peer observation of their teaching as a challenge. Educational officials also routinely observed teachers, but they still felt uneasy when their classes were being observed.

As previously stated, some teachers experienced anxiety when their lessons were being monitored. It was caused, according to Mon et al. (2016), by a lack of teaching knowledge and teachers' confidence. The teachers who lack teaching knowledge and confidence tend to feel shy and uncomfortable while participating in the discussion of the lesson plans. In short, it affected their participation and became passive.

In her study, Jasmi (2014) revealed that teachers did not have enough time to design their own lesson plans according to the format outlined in Curriculum 2013. Teachers frequently use internet-based lessons then modify them to the need of their students. She also mentioned that some teachers did not get any training in implementing the lesson plans of Curriculum 2013. Thus, it might cause the teachers difficult to understand its implementation.

Teachers struggled to create assessments for the Curriculum 2013 because there are so many rubrics for assessment that it took them longer to grasp (Natsir et al.,

2018). Furthermore, on the assessment, teachers must analyze not only the cognitive components but also the psychomotor and affective aspects, notably in the Curriculum 2013 (Gani et al., 2017). Gani et al. (2017) and Natsir et al. (2018) find that in Banda Aceh, some teachers struggled to develop lesson plans based on the Curriculum 2013.

Teachers have a responsibility to create a lesson plan aligned with the curriculum. If the teachers run into problems while developing the lesson plan, they can seek advice from other teachers to help them solve the problem. It will be easier because the teacher will be able to ask and share information with other teachers and from anywhere in the school. Therefore, it is believed that by discussing the problems, teachers will be able to overcome the challenges in planning and implementing the lesson plan (Miloslavsky et al., 2017).

3. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative design to elicit participant insights. To facilitate a clearer comprehension of the data, we conducted semi-structured interviews with five MTsN 4 participants (State Islamic Junior High School No.4 Banda Aceh). The decision regarding which school to attend was based on the institution's relatively positive learning environment and culture. Moreover, the school was more than willing to assist external researchers, as evidenced by its prompt responses and permission to collect the data. Data were purposefully chosen to represent their role and responsibility concerning the subject of this study. They consisted of the school's principal, the school deputy for curriculum affairs, and three mentor teachers teaching the first, second, and third year students.

Some points of consideration for participants' selection were their status, roles and responsibilities, mentoring and teaching experience, and academic titles (see Table 1). The school principal was a very senior female teacher. She had been teaching for more than 20 years, mentoring student-teacher more than ten times, and had completed her master's degree in Islamic Education. The school deputy of curriculum affairs was the third most-experienced teacher. She had been teaching for more than 15 years. The first-year students' mentor teacher was the second oldest teacher, had been teaching for more than 15 years, had been involved in more than ten mentoring programs, and had gained her Bachelor's degree in Education. The second-year students' mentor teacher oversaw more than five times mentoring programs, had been teaching for more than 10 years, and gained her first degree in Education. She was the youngest and the least experienced mentor teacher among all participants. The third-year students' mentor teacher was the second youngest mentor teacher, and she had been teaching for 13 years. She gained her first degree in Islamic Education and has participated in mentoring programs more than 10 times.

To summarize, the participants share some similarities. All participants were females with a permanent teacher or civil servant status. In most schools in the region, female teachers and school principals, including assistant principals, are more prevalent than their male counterparts, who appear to be less interested in teaching-related positions. Except for the school's deputy for curriculum matters, all participants were graduates of the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training at Unviersitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh.

Table 1. Research participants' profiles.

P	Gender	Status	Roles	Mentoring experiences	Teaching experiences	Title
P1	Female	Permanent teacher	School principal	More than 10 times	20 years	M.Ag.
P2	Female	Permanent teacher	School deputy of curriculum affairs	More than 10 times	15 years	S.Ag.
P3	Female	Permanent teacher	Mentor teacher for first-year student	More than 10 times	20 years	Dra.
P4	Female	Permanent teacher	Mentor teacher for a second-year student	More than 5 times	10 years	S.Pd.
P5	Female	Permanent teacher	Mentor teacher for third-year student	More than 3 times	13 years	S.Pd.I.

The purposive sampling technique was used because we only interviewed participants who were willing to participate in this study (Hamied, 2017). Etikan et al. (2016) further explain that the purposive sampling technique is useful for providing data variety. The five participants agreed to sign the consent form, and their names were confidentially coded. We coded the school principal as Participant 1 (P1), the school deputy for curriculum affairs as Participant 2 (P2), first-year (Grade 7) mentor teacher as Participant 3 (P3), second-year (Grade 8) mentor teacher as Participant 4 (P4), and third-year (Grade 9) mentor teacher as Participant 5 (P5).

In conducting the interviews, we prepared a list of questions to ask about teachers' challenges in implementing lesson plans and the strategy they used to resolve them. We used an interview protocol for participants consisting of overall 17 questions. The questions revolve around their teaching and mentoring experiences, roles, and responsibility as mentor teachers, differences between the constantly changing curriculums and lesson plan formats, the profound reflection of challenges in the mentoring program, and strategies in dealing with those challenges that could hinder the mentoring programs.

The following interview procedure was arranged to facilitate a better data collection mechanism. First, the participants were asked about their willingness and consent to participate in the study. Once they agreed, we arranged the interview accordingly to their convenience, taking into account their already packed and tight school schedules. Second, the one-on-one interview duration took approximately between 45-60 minutes in their office with audio recording upon the interviewee's approval; otherwise, we took note of their comments and explanations. Third, the interview sessions ended with clarifications on some confidential notes, if any. In this part, participants were given time to check back on their comments, should any of the remarks were indicatively improper or were not allowed to be published. Fourth, the interview audio recordings and notes were transcribed accordingly before proceeding with data analysis and coding.

The data were then analyzed by using qualitative coding. Cope (2010) defines coding in qualitative research to have three main purposes; data reduction, organization and the creation of finding aids, and analysis. First, coding was used to reduce the amount of data. The data was condensed by grouping it into smaller packages based on the topic, the characteristics of participants, or other aspects of the research content. Therefore, by reducing the data, we could manage the data better and focused on the content. Second, coding is useful for creating an organized and searchable framework. This method, however, made it easier for us to locate certain

information. Last but not least, coding was done for analysis. Coding began with basic codes derived from the research question, background literature, and categories and that as time went on, the codes became more interpretive in nature, resulting in patterns and correlations. We transcribed the data from the interview and reviewed the transcript thoroughly to provide some overall sense of information like general thoughts expressed by the participants. We then analyzed the data to come up with numerous ideas and themes. Teachers' experiences in developing lesson plans were elaborated.

4.   RESULTS

The results of this study are reported under two main themes; mentor teacher challenges in implementing lesson plans, and strategies in resolving those challenges.

4.1   Mentor Teacher's Challenges in Designing Lesson Plans

4.1.1 Time limitation

The majority of instructors' responses suggested that they had limited time to prepare for classes. This was partly because the mentor teachers had a lot of classroom hours and were overburdened with additional administrative tasks. One of the teacher's challenges in developing this lesson plan was the time constraints. The following are some of the teachers' responses:

E1: But for me, the problem is about time. A lot of teaching hours are charged to the teachers. At the same time, the teachers also have other obligations outside the class, such as creating daily test questions and examinations, checking student assignments and examinations, etc. Therefore, in the end, the teachers only have very little time to think about the lesson plan. (P1)

Similarly, another participant (P2) shared the same opinion:

E2: All teachers also feel the thing that I feel and this is about time. We have a lot of teaching responsibility which is 24 hours per week. We do not only teach in one class but many classes. The teachers also have other non-teaching obligations, such as making examination questions and daily tests as well, and again having to check the assignments or homework of the students. The teachers do it all by themselves. So, there will be so little time to make the lesson plan, but there are many lesson plans that have to be made. Sometimes, on school holidays we do these lesson plans, even though we also need rest. (P2)

Furthermore, the teachers' excessive workload contributes to the time constraint, as shown in the following response from P3:

E3: The teachers ever told me maybe the problem for the teachers is too many teachers administration. The teaching hours are also full, but the lesson plans are obligated for the teachers at the beginning of the new school year. (P3)

Another teacher (P5), for example, admitted:

E4: Usually, what makes it difficult is the limitation of time. Because, as we know, the teachers have been obligated to teach for certain hours per week. They also have to do a lot of administrative duties, so the time to make the lesson plans becomes limited. (P5)

The majority of the teachers stated that they only had a limited amount of time to arrange the class. Due to these commitments, teachers' time was spent not just in the classroom but also on other classroom-related activities outside of the classroom, such as checking students' assignments and developing examination questions for daily and semester tests. The teachers were unable to construct their lesson plans as a result of this. Consequently, teachers attempted to cope with the problem by simply copying lesson plans.

4.1.2 Format changes

In Indonesia, numerous curricula have been introduced. Many teachers may require more time to acclimate to the constantly changing curriculum. This inevitably confused teachers because the format of the lesson plans constantly changed. According to the teachers' replies, the changes in format in the lesson plan could be a big stumbling block for them. Aside from the format differences, the learning method differs from one curriculum to the other. The teachers revealed the following:

E5: The difference initially confuses us as teachers because there are so many curriculum changes, especially if the changing of government will consequently change the curriculum later. It does have some similarities with the previous ones, but what makes it different is the terms, and also the changing format. (P4)

Furthermore, another teacher added:

E6: The changing format sometimes continues to be very confusing. I used to remember that when the curriculum changed from KTSP (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* or Educational Unit Level, well known as Curriculum 2006) to Curriculum 2013, for those of us who were older, it became dizzy, even though until now, it has been revised up to the Curriculum 2017. (P2)

Similarly, another teacher expressed the same feeling:

E7: The curriculum, from the time I first taught until now, has changed a lot. As a result, it affects the lesson plans. Lots of reading about changes and guidelines for understanding new terms in this lesson plan. So because there are too many, sometimes we as teachers do not read and understand everything. The lesson plan continues to develop and change both in terms and its form. That can be confusing. Even though we are old, we have taught for decades; sometimes it is hard to focus only on this lesson plan. (P3)

Teachers needed to adapt to the new style of the lesson plans. To create an efficient lesson plan, teachers must first become familiar with the curriculum, which took some time. According to a teacher:

E8: Yes, I keep using lesson plans while teaching, but maybe not all of it. Of course, the lesson plan is obligated for each teacher because it is one requirement. It can be said as an administrative matter only. (P1)

In addition, another teacher noted that:

E9: It can be said that the lesson plan is defined as a guideline. But I don't bring this thick RPP (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran* or Lesson Plans) into the class. I still have my own notes, so everything is written there. (P5)

Some teachers admitted that they did not carry the printed lesson plans into the classroom with them when they taught. Only their own notes regarding what they would do in class were used. As a result, people tend to believe that the lesson plans were created solely to fulfill a school requirement that was imposed on all subject teachers. Furthermore, one of the teachers stated that the lesson plans were merely a school administrative problem. The most important factor was that the teaching and learning activities went well and that the materials were delivered to the students.

4.1.3 Lack of students' enthusiasm

The lack of excitement among the students has resulted in a far from perfect implementation of the instructional plan. Motivating students is typically difficult for teachers, and the participants in this study noted how this type of meeting might have most of the pupils in the class to be quite passive, then it became even more difficult to implement the lesson plans completely. According to a teacher:

E10: But, even though we design the lesson plans well, it is doubted to be able to be implemented in the class well. For example, in the lesson plan, all the activities and the time were written, but in the application, in the class, it was not necessarily the same, the students could not understand the material so it still had to be discussed at the next meeting. So, the children's level of understanding can be an obstacle when implementing this lesson plan. Then, many children are passive. So it is difficult, then the application is not following the lesson plan (P1).

Then, another teacher added:

E11: But sometimes in designing this lesson plan, even though it has been well prepared, not all of it will be appropriate when implemented in class because not all students are active. (P3)

However, the teacher also expressed that:

E12: The lesson plan implementation here is quite difficult because of the lack of students' competences and motivation. It cannot be forced and it cannot entirely be implemented based on what has been written. The most important thing is the students know about the materials, and they can understand the teachers. But, as I said before, it is only a plan. (P5)

The findings of this study also demonstrated that the students' lack of motivation hampered the teachers' ability to construct a lesson plan. The majority of students in the target school did not participate actively in class during the teaching and learning activities. As a result, the teachers concentrated more on delivering the contents to capture the attention and understanding of the students. It is also suggested that teachers use a variety of tactics to encourage pupils to participate actively in classroom activities. In short, to anticipate this kind of encounter, when a teacher plans a lesson, they normally think about it before teaching. Otherwise, performance generally occurs in the classroom while the teacher implements the lesson plan.

4.2 Mentor Teacher's Strategies in Resolving Challenges of Lesson Plan Implementation

4.2.1 *Attending the MGMP (Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran, or the Teachers Professional Development Forum)*

Teachers agreed that the MGMP (*Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran*, or the Teachers Professional Development Forum) was beneficial in overcoming their difficulties in creating lesson plans. Teachers came together in this discussion to share their experiences in teaching various courses. It also contained a section on any difficulties they might have had in implementing the lesson plans throughout teaching and learning activities. Even though the MGMP did not always work, the instructor could confer with other teachers to help alleviate the problems. It could be simpler because the teacher could ask and share information with other teachers and from anywhere in the school. As a result, it was hoped that by consulting the obstacles, the teachers could overcome the difficulties in planning and implementing the lesson plans. Following that, the MGMP should continue to discuss and solve problems through discussions with colleague teachers in depth. Accordingly, the responses of the teachers are presented in the following excerpts:

E13: There is no special training about RPP ((*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran* or Lesson Plans). If the teachers have a problem, I think if it is not a big one, they can solve it by themselves. However, the teachers also do other activities such as the MGMP (*Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran*, or the Teachers Professional Development Forum) or teachers' discussions. If the teachers have a problem, they can discuss it there, and the problem in the lesson plan can be discussed together with other teachers.

Correspondingly, another teacher also uttered:

E14: Then, right now, there is the MGMP *(Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran)* or Teachers Professional Development Forum. If there is any problem or difficulty in the lesson plan or another one, the teachers can discuss it. This is routine activity at certain times, but it is really useful for the teachers to solve problems. (P2)

The MGMP is a forum for teacher professional development and serves as a place for teachers to network and assist one another in improving capabilities based on their areas of expertise. This teacher forum's usual tasks include discussing curriculum, material development, and test or assessment to better understand the lesson plans and classroom action research. Based on the participants' replies, they agreed that the MGMP had helped them addressed their challenges in planning and implementing the lesson plans. It was in line with the World Bank study in 2010, which stated that the implementation of teachers' professional development has played a positive role in helping Indonesian teachers' professional learning activities.

However, nowadays, teachers are required to be more professional and they need intensive guidance and support to be able to achieve that goal. Giving teachers professional development is quite important since it will benefit developing teachers' competencies and skills in practical and instructional practices. The teacher may also attend training in addition to participating in the teachers' professional development forum. It is critical to support the teaching abilities of the teachers. During the training, the teachers can have the opportunity to discuss any pedagogical issues with the expert

in a face-to-face discussion. The school principal, in collaboration with the school deputy for curriculum affairs, plays a key role in ensuring that these opportunities for teacher development are available. The principal of the current school under study claimed that the school had provided variety of professional development activities for teachers, such as having them to attend workshops, seminars, and conferences.

4.2.2 Using guide book and personal notebook

Teachers' complaints about constant curricular changes may cause confusion when planning lesson plans. The use of a guidebook, according to one participant, can assist them in solving this challenge. The teacher also drew up their notes as a reference book to create the lesson plan. The teacher argued in this case:

E15:   The curriculum that keeps changing can confuse the teachers because the teachers have taught (using the curriculum at the time), but then it was changed again. Therefore, I already have my own guidebook. So, it is up to them how it will be changed, we keep teaching based on the needs. It is quite difficult for the teachers, even if we look at the term that are different between curriculums, but they actually mean the same. (P1)

The teachers with more than 20 years of experience in the classroom were able to handle their difficulties in creating lesson plans in the face of continual changes in the curriculum structure. They made notes, including the requirements and suggestions for building the lesson plans. Teaching experience was helpful to improve teaching abilities and the selection of teaching goals and lesson plans, as well as appropriate worksheets, assessments, media, and methodologies. In addition, one of them noted that:

E16:   But for myself who has been teaching for 20 years, experiences can help. (P2)

In the same way, another response also explained that:

E17:   But the teacher was also given an example of how to make the RPP, so it can be developed independently as long as it is following the syllabus and essentially the material can reach out to the students' notion. (P5)

4.2.3 Asking for someone's help to develop the lesson plans

The teachers stated that they had requested help creating the lesson plans. This happened when the teachers only had a short time available to arrange the lesson. According to one of them:

E18:   Finally, it must also be helped by others because the school also requires it. So, finally, the results are not so optimal. (P3)

Another teacher expressed:

E19:   Even if the difficulty exists, we can overcome it ourselves. If I will ask for help from students (who often change my teaching, too), we will discuss it later until the RPP is finished. (P4)

4.2.4 Using internet

At this time, the teachers could no longer afford to exclusively teach technology; they must also use it to increase students' grasp of the desired subject. Here is what a teacher shared:

E20:   However, now everything is so easy, there is the internet. So it becomes easy. Everything can be searched there, and many websites post the lesson plan on the internet. (P3)

Likewise, another teacher shared the same opinion:

E21:   There are no major problems or difficulties that the teachers face, so there is no special assistance from the school for this lesson plan's problem. Even if the constraints that I mentioned earlier existed, I can usually ask for help with this lesson plan; usually, there is an example from the internet, which needs to be changed. After all, there are also many examples of lesson plans that can be downloaded on the internet, so everything is easy. (P1)

The difficulties English mentor teachers faced in implementing lesson plans and how they dealt with them in state Islamic secondary schools are discussed in this article. Some might believe that the teachers faced difficulties during the implementation phase of a lesson plan. However, this study demonstrated that the problem existed even before the lesson plan was implemented. Teachers reported that such incidents were caused by a lack of time due to rigorous administrative tasks, continual curriculum changes in curriculum and formats, and the full teaching hours. These issues have demonstrated that legitimate justifications from mentor teachers should not be used to influence educational policy, particularly when it comes to curricular modifications and formats, which should be implemented with care and precision. Teachers' experiences and problems must be considered while introducing a new curriculum and changing the format, as they are the only significant aspect in the process, aside from students' and more general end users' opinions.

As the world embraces limitless means of communication in globalized education, one might need to think about the strategies of a more reflective method in preparing lesson plans. This is important in improving teachers' professional interaction and foreign language teaching and training. Another way is that we must accept that innovative culture must no longer be a luxury idea for the teachers' pedagogical development. Together with self-determination and strong international motivation, it can play an important role in developing lesson plans and teaching English.

5.   DISCUSSION

The most common problem encountered by English teachers while implementing the lesson plans was the time limitation. Due to the time constraints, most participants believed that teachers had many responsibilities outside of classroom activities. This responsibility resulted in the instructors' time being used for teaching and activities outside of the classroom. The mentor teachers already had a full week of teaching ahead of them, but they also needed to organize the lessons in their spare time. Shanks et al. (2020) further found a similar problem; coping with a full teaching

schedule in mentoring new teachers is not easy. Mentor teachers need to be adaptive and creative with their schedules to allow some space for their pre-service teachers (Sparks et al., 2017). As a result, as the findings of this study revealed, some teachers resort to copying lesson plans from the internet or hiring someone to prepare lesson plans for them. This finding is agreed by Jasmi (2014) who said that the teachers lacked sufficient time to develop lesson plans. They retrieved a sample lesson plan from the Internet and modified it based on the needs of the students.

Moreover, another encounter that the teachers found was adjusting curriculum changes. This problem demonstrated that the format changes of a particular curriculum caused teachers' confusion in developing lesson plans. Arslan (2018) highlights that although lesson plans are essential for providing teachers with concrete examples of teaching practice, their new formats can delay the mentoring process. If such occurrences occur, the pre-service teachers' class enactment phase cannot proceed, leaving mentor teachers with problems in the development phase (Coenders & Verhoef, 2019). Similarly, Gani et al. (2017) who researched the implementation of the lesson plans in Curriculum 2013, explained that the teachers needed to adapt to the new format of the lesson plans. Jasmi (2014) also states that to have an efficient lesson plan, teachers must first understand the curriculum.

The result of the study also reported that pre-service teachers' enthusiasm and lack of motivation became a challenge for the mentor teachers in developing the lesson plans. As Yusuf et al. (2015) argue, mentor teacher experiences are important to combat a lack of student enthusiasm, as their various modified teaching techniques can be influenced by their own past experiences. Gray et al. (2017) are among the researchers who have similarly noticed the same challenge. They discovered that the majority of pre-service students assigned by the university to teach in the target school did not participate actively in class during teaching and learning activities, displayed unprofessional conduct, and lacked enthusiasm for mentoring. It also suggested that the mentor teachers can vary the strategies to make the students participate actively in the class. The mentor teachers also need to avoid the old student-centered method, such as one-way lecturing to address the lack of enthusiasm and motivation. To this end, mentor teachers also need to receive ongoing training and preparation before the mentoring program starts (Sowell, 2017).

Attending the MGMP, or *Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran*, also known as Teachers Professional Development Forum on Subject Matter, is believed to help the teachers solve their problems in teaching since this forum always discusses teachers' experiences in teaching, including lesson plan problems. Gani et al. (2017) notice that the MGMP is a discussion forum for teachers that can increase their knowledge about many things in education. The teachers in the MGMP usually share and discuss their teaching experiences with other English teachers about the curriculum, lesson plans, and teaching methods (Apsari, 2018). This MGMP is a routine activity for the teachers. Thus, this forum can assist teachers in overcoming their challenges in developing the lesson plans.

Furthermore, based on the data, some participants were able to use the guidebook to overcome the challenge of preparing lesson plans. In the same vein, Vikaraman et al. (2017) also discovered that teacher mentoring professional and personal guidelines are helpful for student teachers during mentoring at schools. They were provided instruction manuals on designing a lesson plan that adhered to the most recent curriculum and syllabus. Another individual, on the other hand, was able to address

the difficulty by seeking assistance from others. However, much to everyone's concern, the participant also stated that the instructions book provided was dense with information and that they did not read it all to grasp the new format of the lesson plan. As a result, they may need to enlist the assistance of others to complete their lesson plans. This reverse mentoring assistance or peer mentoring from colleagues, especially senior mentors, can be an option to handle the challenges and difficulties they encounter during the process (Kubberød et al., 2018; Zauchner-Studnicka, 2017).

Some practical implications from the results of this study can be offered. First, the study results suggest the need for more efficient support for mentor teachers in implementing lesson plans and continuous changes in the curriculum. The ongoing changes could prevent both mentor teacher professional and personal development if it is not accompanied by detailed yet straightforward guidelines to be followed. Multiple interpretations from mentor teachers have seriously hampered student teachers' understanding of this complex issue.

Therefore, the more workable and practical guideline in implementing lesson plans by taking into account mentor teachers' excessive administrative workloads and busy teaching schedules is mandatory. The analysis found that mentor teachers did their part in the mentoring program but with limited availability, less energy, and lack of enthusiasm. As a result, the impact of the mentoring program on student teachers' development has never reached its full potential.

This study is thus believed to provide modest but important empirical insights on the already multifaceted and complex aspect of mentor teacher opinions within Islamic secondary school context. It represents a rare yet practical perspective on theory development within English Language Teaching (ELT) and a critical benchmark for mentoring program best practices in similar settings.

6.   CONCLUSION

The result of the study indicates that teachers face some encounters in developing the lesson plans. The encounters faced by the teachers in developing the lesson plans are: (1) the limitation of time, (2) the confusing format changes, (3) the lesson plan merely serves as an administrative obligation, and (4) students' enthusiasm. Findings from this research admitted that time limitation is a major challenge in implementing lesson plans. Moreover, there are some strategies used by the teachers to overcome the encounters in developing the lesson plans, such as (1) attending the MGMP, (2) using a guidebook, and (3) asking for someone's help (i.e., senior tutors or friends from the MGMP), and (4) using the internet.

This study is expected to be useful for English Language Education administrators and lecturers concerning lesson plan implementation. More specifically, in theoretical and practical subjects for student teachers like English Curriculum Development, and English Course Design, including in practical subjects to implement the lesson plans in Micro Teaching course and practicum teaching before sending them to teaching practicum at schools. In this light, as proposed by Tamilarasu (2013), what defines a quality education consists of at least two factors, namely quality teachers and the policymakers of education. Constant and persistent curriculum and lesson plan format modifications are severe impediments to achieving the ultimate

goal of quality education if policymakers do not engage quality teachers who are familiar with many more issues in the field.

There may be some possible limitations in this study, as with the majority of other studies. These limitations also point towards topics to be addressed in the future. First, the involved participants were taken from one school, and there were only five available mentor teachers who agreed to be interviewed. Although the results are unique and reliable, future studies need to involve more participants with more diverse characteristics and viable perspectives of mentor teachers or school types. Second, as the focus of the study is the mentor teachers in Islamic secondary schools (junior high schools), the generalization to other contexts is not possible. We suggest that future studies may adjust their focus and emphasis, especially on the Islamic primary schools or Islamic senior high schools, comparing the state and private schools. Last, as one can see, the nature of a qualitative study like the one presented here always brings conflicts on biased views and personal issues during interviews with participants. Even though the data collection and sampling technique is valid and widely used in similar studies, this study did not employ a survey on a more extensive data set and must be interpreted with caution. For that reason, a statistical reading equipped with a robust quantitative or mixed research design for future works is recommended, as this present study did not yield a rigorous combination of research schemes with limited samples and participants.

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