

English Teachers Doing Collaborative Action Research (CAR): A Case Study of Indonesian EFL teachers

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ABSTRACT

Although CAR has been regarded beneficial for English teachers, very few research explores such issue language teaching education context. The aim of this study is to investigate four EFL senior teachers' perspective involving in CAR projects with the researcher for one semester in an Indonesian school. It investigates how the teachers' engagement in CAR impacts on their pedagogical practice, and their perception of the support from the school and the researcher. This multiple qualitative case study explores the teachers' perspectives through in-depth interview, observation, and documents. Data were analysed using inductive approach. Using cross-case analysis, themes within and across the case were compared and grouped to get the findings of the study. The results of the study show that teachers' involvement in CAR brings meaningful impact on their teaching practice and their students. Despite little support gained from the school, teachers value the external support positively from the collaborator which motivates them to participate in CAR projects. This study contributes to the insight of promoting teachers engaging in action research through a collaborative mode. It also suggests that CAR can be an impetus tool professional development for teachers which impact on their pedagogy and personal growth.

Keywords: Collaborative action research, pedagogical practice, professional development, support

INTRODUCTION

The literature of educational change has put teachers at the heart of its process (e.g., Fullan, 2007; Wedell, 2009). Wedell and Malderez (2013) argue that teachers need to change to response "what is happening in their classrooms all the time" (p. 198). They

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 01 December 2016

Accepted: 23 August 2017

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are required to develop or change to respond with the changing of new government policy, new teaching paradigm, and deal with their day-to-day practices (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Hence, it is central for them to develop continuously during their teaching career (Craft, 2000). Concerning this, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002, p. 948) suggest the foci of teacher development should be accorded with the perspective of “change as growth or learning”. They highlight learning is the core feature of teacher change.

Action Research (AR) is considered as a viable tool for teachers’ professional development (Burns, 2009) and a means of being reflective teachers (Wallace, 1998). Yet, Burns (2015) contends that AR provides a more productive avenue of professional development (PD) for teachers if it is conducted in a collaborative fashion than in isolation.

In Indonesian context, AR has been initiated as a tool for teacher change. The government acknowledges that in order to grow professionally, teachers need to participate in continuous professional development programmes. For this sake, AR has been promoted as a potential form of PD that may develop teachers. AR in Indonesia has been institutionalised as part of teachers’ work and embedded as the central element for teachers’ promotion since 2009 (Ahmad & Setyaningsih, 2012; Sari, 2014; Sukidjo, 2014). However, after some years of implementation, the output of promoting to engage in AR does not seem to yield satisfactory results. Research

suggests that there are still huge percentages of teachers who do not practice AR (Ahmad & Setyaningsih, 2012; Badrun, 2011; Sari, 2014; Sukidjo, 2014).

Although it is unclear from the above studies what constitute teachers not partaking in AR, it is likely that such an issue is connected with the degree and amount of support given to teachers by these elements in each region such as local educational leaders, institutional leaders, teacher educators, and colleagues (Wedell, 2009). In this case, those aspects are particularly evident to have affected teachers’ successful engagement in AR. The degree of Indonesian teachers’ success in implementing educational change via AR seems to be influenced by the scale of support from local education office, university teacher educators, school administrators, and colleagues (Burns & Rochsantiningih, 2006). For teacher educators or university researchers in particular, the viable support can be done through collaboration between teachers in school and them, known as collaborative action research (CAR) (Burns, 1999).

The present study is intended to explore the teachers’ perception of engaging in CAR with the outsider collaborator (the researcher himself) in a junior secondary school in Palu City, Central Sulawesi. The focal point of this study is to investigate the impact of CAR toward their pedagogical practice, as well as how they perceive the support provision both from school and the external collaborator (the writer himself).

What is CAR?

Most definitions of CAR in literature involve a partnership between teachers in school and university researcher conducting research for the sake of improving teachers' practice and school improvement (e.g., Burns, 2009; Calhoun, 2009; Hendriks, 2009). For instance, Hendriks (*ibid*) defines CAR as "a system of action research in which multiple researchers from school and university setting work together to study educational problems" (p. 9). Meanwhile, Sagor (1992) and Pine (2009) tend to focus their attention on collaboration among teachers in school, and teachers with other practitioners who have similar interest. The main characteristic of CAR lies on the collectivity or collegial inquiry among members of the research project. In CAR, teachers work together to improve their practice via systematic inquiry and promote collective learning community. By engaging in collaborative AR, teachers gain more meaningful experiences and benefits than when they work individually as in ordinary AR (Burns, 2015).

There has been an agreement among PD experts stating that a collaborative model of PD is more effective than traditional ones such one-shot workshop (e.g., Burbank & Kauchak, 2003; Burns, 2015; Michell, Reilly, Logue, 2009; Postholm, 2012). In this case, Johnston (2005) argues that collaborative PD provides more opportunities for teachers to participate actively and equally in PD, get more support, and nurture learning community. Burns (2015) and Johnston (2005) suggest that when engaging in

PD, teachers may collaborate with fellow teachers, university-based researchers, students, and other parties such as parents, and supervisor.

CAR, in particular, has been considered as an impetus collaborative PD as it enables teachers to collaborate with parties inside and outside the school. The advocates of AR have encouraged teachers involved in CAR instead of individual AR project as its collaboration tenet may promote teachers' collegial works and gain more benefits from their projects (e.g., Burns, 1999; Oja & Smulyan, 1989). Unlike individual AR, in CAR teachers and their collaborators participate equally in designing their research agenda for a common purpose (Kemmis, 1993) and potentially could deal with research constraints such as time and limited AR knowledge (Yuan & Lee, 2015). Furthermore, in contrast with other research facilitated by an outsider into schools involving teachers, in CAR, the ownership of research stems on the teachers and their collaborators (Kemmis, *ibid*). Additionally, teachers gain their autonomy to plan, execute, and evaluate their projects in a joint-team with co-researchers (e.g., teachers, university researcher, or other collaborators) (Mello, Durta, & Jorge, 2008; Wang & Zang, 2014). Wang and Zang (2014) reported that 45 English teachers in China who engaged in 18 month-CAR projects with university-researchers become more autonomy in reflecting their practice and being active in reform activities. Most importantly, from this partnership, teachers may learn both from the research projects,

as well as from collaboration (Wigglesworth & Murray, 2007).

Benefits and challenges in doing CAR

There has been a growing body of research reporting language teachers gain considerable benefits from the CAR project they engaged in. Wang and Zang (2014) revealed that forty five EFL teachers in China benefitted from collaborating in action research such as: having more attention to students and changing the view of their teaching practice. In addition, due to the collaboration, the teachers gained an increased awareness of working as a team with their colleagues, and enjoyed the benefits of working with university researchers. They also reported that the teachers improved in the area of research skill. Similarly, Yuan and Lee (2015) revealed that fifteen EFL teachers in China benefitted from engaging in the CAR partnership with University research team (two researchers and eight research assistants). They found that the teachers shifted their misconception about research due to the collaboration, and thus, in turn, increased their understanding of research.

The shift in teachers' awareness towards their practice has also been reported in other studies (such as Atay, 2006; Banegas, Pavese, Velásquez, & Vélez, 2013; Burns, 1999; Edwards & Burns, 2016; Wigglesworth & Murray, 2007). Atay (2006), for instance, found ten EFL pre-service and in-service teachers in Turkey formed a partnership in the CAR projects facilitated by her. She found that the teachers' awareness of the impetus of collaboration improved, and

gained an awareness of CAR as a form of PD for examining their teaching practice for the sake of their students' learning. Four secondary EFL teachers from Argentina also reported that having engaged in the CAR projects, they had gained growth for their PD which brought impact for their students' motivation and language development (Banegas et al., 2013). The current study by Edwards and Burns (2016) in the Australian context reported that the ESL teachers valued positively their engagement in action research practice facilitated by the researchers. They found that the teachers felt more confident with their practices, felt more connected to their students, motivated to engage with (reading research recourses) and in (doing) research, and being recognised by colleagues and managers.

With regard to teachers' hindrance of doing CAR, studies found that the lack of institutional and collegial support is the dominant challenge faced by teachers in addition to lack of time, time-consuming, partnership issue of mutual respect and expectation (Atay, 2006; Banegas et al., 2013; Burns, 2000, Tinker Sachs, 2000; Wang & Zhang, 2014; Yuan & Lee, 2015). Regarding support, Tinker Sachs (2000) viewed that the lack of institutional support and inflexible demands from school for teachers to accomplish the required school syllabus were the main challenges for teachers engaging in research. Yuan and Lee (2015) found the teachers' main constraints involving in CAR project included heavy workload and complying with rigid school

curriculum. Both Tinker Sachs and Yuan and Lee agreed that the provision of school support was central to promote teachers' reflective practice via classroom research. The following section then discusses the role of support in facilitating teachers engaging in CAR.

The role of support

There is a widespread argument calling for support for teachers engaging in research in schools (e.g., Borg, 2010; Burns, 2010, Tinker Sachs, 2000). The provision of support is central to overcome the challenges encountered by teachers engaging in research. Support is meant as any form of actions intended to facilitate teachers doing research in their classroom. Without considerable support, it is likely difficult to expect teachers to engage with research successfully (Borg, 2010). Support may emanate from internal parties such as school administrators (managers), and colleagues (Borg, 2006), and from external parties such as mentors and critical friends (*ibid*), University researchers (Burns & Rochsantiningsih, 2006), and district policy makers (Tinker Sachs, 2000). In Indonesian context, particularly, Burns and Rochsantiningsih (2006) proposed that the role of university teacher educators is indispensable to facilitate EFL teachers do or sustain their practice in classroom action research based on the fact that when engaging in such PD they encounter considerable hindrances.

Borg (2010) suggests that schools should provide teachers time and opportunity to do

research, give moral and incentive support, as well as recognition if they are expected to conduct their research projects successfully. Several studies have documented that the support provision both from the school and outside school motivates teachers to continue engaging in AR projects and is identified as the central element in supporting teachers engaging in research (Burnaford, 1996; Gilles, Wilson, & Elias, 2010; Westwell, 2006; Yuan & Lee, 2015). Regarding the external support, study suggests that when teachers gained full support from teacher educators in a research partnership of CAR, they could conduct their projects successfully. Yuan and Lee (2015), for instance, reported teachers successfully confronted with their contextual constraint (e.g., time) when engaging in CAR due to the support of external collaboration.

The studies of teachers engaging in classroom action research, particularly in CAR, are very few in Indonesian context even though the notion of teacher research has existed for years as a PD tool in educational reform. This present study, therefore, explores the Indonesian EFL teachers' perception of the CAR project they are engaged in.

METHODS

This present study uses a multiple-qualitative case study to investigate a particular phenomenon of a group of English teachers in a secondary school setting in Palu City who participated in the CAR projects (Merriam, 2009). The researcher is interested in studying a

particular phenomenon of a group of English teachers in a secondary school setting (a bounded system) in Indonesia who have participated in CAR projects. Following Merriam (2009) and Stake (2006), by using a qualitative case study methodology, he was able to understand and provide an in-depth and rich description of the phenomena of teachers doing CAR projects through the lenses of the participating teachers by exploring their experiences, views, and thoughts of doing CAR for one semester at their school in 2016. The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. What are the Indonesian ELT teachers' perceptions of their experiences engaging with CAR as a means of PD?
2. How do they perceive the support provision both from the school and external collaborator when engaging in the CAR projects?

The participants of this study consisted of four English teachers - Maria, Eni, Pia, and Ana (all pseudonyms) from a state junior secondary school in Palu City, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. They have been in teaching services for 14-20 years. Three of them had never involved in any AR project, except for Pia who had experienced doing AR once for the purpose of her M. Ed study completion. The four teachers voluntarily participated in the CAR projects with the writer in semester 2 (February-June, 2016). The teachers were asked to participate in the study by visiting them in their school. Since the researcher had never previously met them, he approached them through

a "gate keeper" who arranged a meeting to recruit them in the study. Once they had agreed to participate, he conducted a meeting to discuss about the study (by clarifying points in a participant information sheet, and a consent form). Since they had understood and agreed with those points (such as the right to withdraw from the study, confidentiality, and anonymity), the teachers signed the consent form to mark their willingness to participate in the study.

Regarding the CAR project, Maria and Eni decided to do one project, while the other two (Pia and Ana) did individually in their classes. Each project was considered as an individual case. Thus, there were three cases in this study. All the projects were fully supported by the writer as the collaborator for the AR projects. Out of three CAR projects done, two focused on developing students' learning motivation via games and fun learning activities; the other one emphasised on encouraging students to speak English using video activities.

Data of this study were collected during the CAR project that took place in school. To gain their perception of engaging in CAR, the writer used semi-structured interview, observation, and documents as tools for collecting data. In-depth interviews were conducted after the project had been completed; observation data were gathered during the meeting with the teachers (Feb-May, 2016) both inside and outside the classroom. Document data were gained from their projects such as materials, teachers' note, and students' questionnaire results. To analyse the data, a qualitative inductive

approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was employed. The interview data analysis involved transcribing (translating) and coding the data to find occurred categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By employing cross-case analysis (Stakes, 2006), themes within and across the case were then compared and grouped to find the answers to the research questions (findings of the study).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Positive view of CAR as PD

Teachers in this study agreed that participating in the CAR projects provided meaningful benefits as opposed to attending other PD programmes such as workshops. They noted that doing the CAR projects gave them more knowledge due to its practicality in which they were able to implement what they had learned into a meaningful practice in the classroom which was benefitting their students. For instance, Eni noted that “...in this activity [CAR project] we can practice in the classroom what we have learnt and discussed...while when attending workshop or teacher forum meeting, the instructor just explained the material...” (Eni, Interview, July 2016). Similarly, Pia echoed that “...In the workshop, I gained only ideas...after the workshop we get envelopes [lump sum money]...Yet, CAR is different, I can do it in the classroom...it yields result too...” (Pia, Interview, July 2016).

In addition, the provision of considerable support from outsider collaborator has been seen as a positive aspect of CAR for teachers. They revealed that when engaging

in CAR, the collaborator may provide an immediate solution for their project issues in the classroom. Maria commented that, “*If thing [CAR as a PD] like this, we can gain a lot of knowledge; if we are not sure with something we can ask to you [the collaborator]; you may give us feedback. Other activities [PD], we did not find such things; we just listened*” (Maria, interview, July 2016). Ana also valued the provision of help from the collaborator: “*This activity (CAR project) is different from others since you (the collaborator) are helpful... we gain more positive results than attending workshop...*” (Ana, interview, July 2016). In a similar vein, the teachers argued that the collaboration aspect of this PD provided a venue for them to share or solve the issue in the classroom. Pia, for instance, reflected the benefits of having a meeting with the collaborator, “*solving problems together, planning the next meeting... with the collaborator, I am able to think something that never across to my mind...*” (Pia, interview, July 2016).

The teachers’ views of CAR above are in line with the notion of effective PD, as proposed by PD experts in the area of teacher research. As opposed to the traditional PD such as one-shot workshop, CAR provides more opportunities for teachers to participate actively and equally in PD, get more support, and nurture learning community (Bleicher, 2014; Burbank & Kauchak, 2003; Burns, 2015). In this type of PD, teachers are not passive recipients or consumer of knowledge, but they also “construct meaning and knowledge and

acts upon them (Richardson, 1996, p. 266). Mitchell, Reilly and Logue, (2009) noted that the power of CAR as a PD tool lies in its nature where PD is located in teachers' working context where they deal with their real problems. In this case, teachers have the opportunities to understand what happened in their classroom, and are able to provide a practical solution to issues occurred in their classroom. Unlike traditional PD in which classroom solution is offered by outsiders who are unfamiliar with their context, through a collegial sharing in CAR, teachers may provide better-informed decisions to any puzzlements they have in their context (Burns, 1999). In addition, Pine (2009) argued that the characteristic of CAR as a PD lies in the collegial sharing among teachers, supportive environment and inquiry community which enables them to improve classroom practice. In this study, the teachers viewed these conditions constituted their positive view of CAR.

Based on the above findings, it implies that CAR, as a practical PD, has a potential PD for EFL teachers to develop professionally via examining and improving their practice.

Impacts of engaging in CAR for teachers' pedagogical practice

The teachers in this study revealed that their participation in CAR brought about meaningful changes to their pedagogical practices. For instances, they noted that their motivation to teach heightened when seeing there was a shifting of behaviour from students in learning English. A teacher

claimed: *"We are motivated to teach as there are changes on students learning behaviour...they used to be inactive... I found teaching becomes enjoyable"* (Eni, interview, July 2016). Another teacher stated a similar point, *"When seeing students are pleased with the materials used in the classroom, we become motivated to enter into the classroom"* (Pia, interview, July 2016).

The above benefits of participating in CAR may suggest that when students' learning behaviour has changed as a result of their teacher's intervention, teachers' self-efficacy and motivation of their practice also increased. Teacher efficacy is defined as "an individual's belief about proficiency in performing the actions thought to lead to student learning" (Ross, 1994, p. 381-382). Praver and Oga-Baldwin (2008) argued that the feeling of high efficacy will lead teachers to enhance intrinsic motivation. By contrast, the insufficient self-efficacy possessed by teachers will lead to inhibiting teachers' motivation to teach (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Thus, it can be said teachers' motivation engaging in CAR is mediated by their beliefs that it will increase their efficacy which ultimately affects their learners' learning. When this efficacy is heightened, their self-motivation to engage in CAR or other PD will be enhanced and sustained. A study by Henson (2001) suggested that collaborative AR positively impacted on teacher efficacy to help their students in learning, and thus affected teachers' belief in their efficacy to help their students, and thus strengthened the teachers' motivation in PD.

Furthermore, experiences of engaging in CAR projects have augmented their awareness, as can be seen from one teacher's excerpt: "...By engaging in CAR project, I realise now that when teaching low motivated students, their needs should be acknowledged first...I did not do that last time". (Ana, interview, July 2016). The other teacher became aware that the teaching delivery through lecturing was ineffective to motivate students: "As you see yesterday in "banana" class, the students enjoy such way of teaching [using videos and games]... they don't like only hearing lectures telling this and that...doing such thing will make students unmotivated" (Maria, interview, July 2016). Reflected from the observation data, it seemed that the weekly reflective meeting conducted during the project gradually shifted the teachers' sense of awareness towards their practice. During this meeting, the teachers were actively involved in reflection, which ranged from examining their practice [e.g., finding the research topic] to reflecting upon the process of the project; any issues occurred during the implementation in the classroom were modified to achieve the favourable condition planned by the teachers (Field notes, July 2016).

The teachers' accounts of their growing awareness as impacted by engaging in CAR are aligned with the other studies in language teaching context. Studies suggest teachers change their view of their practice (Atay, 2006), being aware the value of collaboration (Wang & Zang, 2014), and being more reflective (Wigglesworth &

Murray, 2007). Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) asserted that when teachers are involved in CAR project, it would lead them to be reflective teachers. As such, they can shift their attitudes and ideas due to the change of self-awareness. York-Barr et al. (2006) argued that reflective teachers are those who demonstrate awareness of themselves, others, and surrounding events. A reflective teacher is defined as the one who "examines, frames and attempt to solve the dilemmas of classroom practice" (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 6). This trajectory of being reflective teachers via engaging in CAR will lead them to grow professionally (Mertler, 2009).

The teachers also noted that the outcome of engaging in CAR projects benefited their students' learning motivation and achievement. Prior to conducting CAR projects, all the teachers complained that students' learning motivation was the crux of their pedagogical practice. For instance, employing videos and games in teaching, Maria and Eni found their project boosted students' motivation to learn English "Our students get motivated in learning... they also got excited with the given activities...they also became active and were attentive in learning activities..." (Maria, interview, July 2016). It seemed that the students' interest in learning English was increased due to the shifting of teaching delivery by the teachers. Ana found a similar story in which she changed her teaching facing unmotivated students through English "games" in her CAR project. She asserted: "The students are very

motivated and enthusiastic to learn English using “games”...I feel this project helps my students to learn English in a fun way” (Ana, interview 2, July 2016). In a similar vein, Pia suggested that her project using videos was able to reduce students’ reticence to speak English. She said: *“In terms of speaking in English, my students are not shy anymore to speak...they used to be silent and shy if ask to speak...”* (Pia, interview, July 2016). Furthermore, the writer’s observation in the teachers’ classroom also affirmed that students were enthusiastic in learning English when teachers used fun activities in the classroom. This condition, in turn, made the teachers felt passionate with their class and ignited their motivation to teach students. Moreover, the evidence from the students’ responses from the questionnaires distributed to know their perceptions of the teaching techniques used by Pia and Ana revealed that the students enjoyed them. In particular, the students from Ana and Pia’s class responded that the techniques used motivated them to learn English as they found it interesting, and helping them to learn English (Document data, 2016).

What can be learned from the above results is the reciprocal relationship between teachers’ motive to engage in CAR and the students’ learning outcome. Guskey (2002) argues teachers’ intent for pursuing PD is to be able to enhance student learning outcome. He further contends that teachers believe that by partaking in PD activities, they can expand their skill and knowledge and thus increasing their competence which contributes to the growth and develops their

practice. In a similar vein, Scribner’s study (1999) found that intrinsically teachers’ motivation to engage with PD programmes, for instances CAR, is driven by the need to address their classroom challenges. The finding above is also in concert with the assertion of Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 170) “...If a teacher is motivated to teach, there is a good chance that his or her students will be motivated to learn”. Moreover, regarding to language learning, Dörnyei (2001) contends that the success of a learner to be proficient in a learned language depends on his or her degree of motivation. Hence, it is very central for teachers to facilitate students’ motivation to learn. By engaging in CAR, the effort can be potentially achieved via a deliberate teaching innovation for the sake of students’ learning. One study by Banegas et al. (2013) demonstrated that teachers gained growth due to their involvement in CAR project that would ultimately impact on their students’ language learning achievement.

The provision of support

All the teachers in the present study agreed that they gained limited support from the school party (particularly from school managers). In this case, the school did not provide incentives for teachers, or at least in the form of moral support. A teacher pointed out that *“Although the head teacher, or school administrators allow you to do research with us, there is no support in the form of incentives or moral [encouragement] to us”* (Maria, interview, July 2016). Neither did they get any support

from the colleagues, as Pia noted, “*My colleagues [non-English teachers] never asked me what I did with you during our doing AR project in school...what they know you did research in our school*” (Pia, interview 2, July 2016). The writer also observed that the teachers doing research were likely not valued in their school. The school managers and their colleagues (non-English teachers) were not interested to find out what the four teachers were doing by having informal dialogues with them (Field notes, 2016).

Interestingly, however, they revealed that the main motive for engaging in CAR was for the sake of their students regardless of whether or not they gained support from their school. One of the teachers said “*...For us, when there is no support [from colleagues], it does not matter, what really matter is my students enjoy learning English*” (Maria, interview 2, July 2016). This fact is in line with Guskey (2002) who maintains that teachers’ motivation to take part in PD activities is triggered by the need to become effective teachers and enhance students’ learning outcome.

In terms of support, all of them agreed that school should endorse teachers’ engagement in PD, such as doing classroom action research individually or collaboratively. They further argued that the support provision would motivate them and enable teachers to sustain their practice in teaching innovation via CAR. Eni suggested that “*At least school managers acknowledge teachers in school engaging in AR projects....it would be highly important*

if teachers are given appreciations and incentives” (Eni, interview, July 2016). Pia echoed a similar matter: “*If the school provides fund, I am sure many teachers will participate in personal development such as this CAR*” (Pia, interview, July 2016). In conjunction with school support, Borg (2010) suggested that schools should provide teachers time and opportunity to do research, give moral and incentive support as well as recognition if they are expected to conduct their research projects successfully. Additionally, it is suggested by Burnaford (1996) that it is imperative for schools to create a healthy atmosphere for teachers doing research. Providing this condition will enable them to collaborate and share their research with others. He also suggested that schools should provide facilities needed by teachers and acknowledge teachers’ work when engaging in research.

The process of doing CAR for the teachers in this study was not a straightforward way for them. Teaching workload was the main challenge for them. The 24-hour teaching policy per-week made them exhausted to prepare for their research projects well. One of the teachers commented: “*I feel exhausted as in one day I have to teach three classes...If it is only two classes, it will be more comfortable to teach...*” (Pia, interview, July 2016). Therefore, teachers viewed that the role of collaborator was central for them in reducing the burden and enabling them to successfully doing their projects. “*I found the collaboration is very beneficial...we can solve problems and plan teaching scenario*

together” Pia noted (interview, July, 2016). The provision of support from collaborator ranged in the form of one to one mentoring, supplying references, being an observer in the classroom, involving in a team teaching, and sharing ideas. They also noted that this collaborative PD motivated them to continue engaging in teaching innovation. A teacher asserted that, *“Through collaboration with you, we feel comfortable, and our knowledge increased....for years we slept [no passion in teaching innovation], now we wake up again [feeling motivated]...”* (Maria, interview, July 2016).

The teachers’ comments of the central role of collaboration above accord with Pine’s (2009) statement of CAR. He contends that at the heart of CAR is the collegial sharing among teachers, supportive environment and inquiry community which enables them to improve classroom practice. In CAR, teachers are connected with their colleagues and the outsider collaborator, and it potentially diminishes the feeling of isolation (Burns, 2000). In ELT context, there have been attempts to mitigate teachers’ challenges in AR through collaborative action research (CAR) support such as partnership between teachers and university researchers (Burns, 1999; Wang & Zhang, 2014; Yuan & Lee, 2015), in-service teachers and pre-service teachers (Atay, 2006), a PhD student researcher and English teachers (Banegas et al., 2013).

In addition to CAR, other types of PD encouraging teachers to collaborate and support each other are lately promoted in the field of ELT. These activities are deemed

to promote reflection among teachers via a collegial learning. Nguyen (2017) introduced peer and group mentoring as a tool of PD to promote teachers’ reflection. Allwright and Hanks (2009) write about exploratory practice as a form of PD that encourages teachers to collaborate with their students and colleagues to understand the puzzlement in their practice. In his review about collaborative professional development, Johnston (2005) suggests a myriad of collaborative PD that language teachers can participate in such as cooperative development, narrative inquiry, dialogue journals, teacher study group, team teaching, and long-distance collaboration. He also recommends language teachers can collaborate with fellow teachers, university-based researchers, students, school stakeholders (managers, supervisor, parents), and language teachers and subject teachers.

In the present study, the role of external support reiterates the importance of collaboration in teachers’ professional development which enables them to develop professionally and brings impact on their teaching practice, particularly their students.

CAR as a Potential Effective PD for Teachers and the role of support

The findings of the present study suggests that the teachers’ engagement in collaborative professional development such as CAR impressed and benefitted them. They viewed CAR as a more practical PD as they have the opportunity to follow up what they have learnt and provide immediate solution

toward their practice – improving students' English learning achievement. This fact is aligned with the current belief that teachers' involvement in the collaborative PD is more efficient than that of attending such as a one-shot workshop (e.g., Burbank & Kauchak, 2003; Burns, 2015; Michell et al., 2009; Postholm, 2012).

The teachers in the study also revealed that they gained benefits from participating in the CAR projects. The value of it has reenergised their passion in teaching, enhanced their awareness, and impacted their students' learning output. This study then adds to the body of knowledge that exploring CAR benefitted EFL teachers, as reported by other studies (e.g., Atay, 2006; Banegas, et al., 2014; Burns, 1999; Wang & Zang, 2014; Yuan & Lee, 2015). In the context of Indonesia, the study may suggest that CAR is a viable PD tool to mitigate the teacher' challenges involving in CAR. It has been reported the low motivation and lack of research knowledge preclude teachers to engage in classroom action research (Burns & Rochsantiningasih, 2006; Mukrim, 2012, Sukijo, 2014). The appearance of external mentor or facilitator in the CAR partnership with teachers may reduce such issues and provide a great chance for teachers to engage in a collegial learning for growth (Johnston, 2005). Regarding this external support, a recent study by Çelik and Dikilitaş (2015) reported that the ongoing support provided by them (the university-based educators) toward EFL teachers in Turkey during action research projects motivate teachers to sustain their

engagement in such PD. In the context where teachers have limited access to PD, such as the teachers in this study, the form of collaboration among teachers and external mentors (such as teacher educator) is likely beneficial to facilitate teachers' development (Burns, 2015). This collaboration will promote collegial learning in school among teachers that eventually encourage them to solve their classroom issue in a collective mode. Once this partnership has become prevalent among teachers, the existence of external mentor can be then diminished.

This study also found that given the contextual challenges faced by the teachers (such as heavy workload, and lack of support), the role of support both from internal and external school is greatly beneficial. Some researchers (e.g., Burns, 2014; Yuan & Lee, 2015) revealed that institutional support is a central element to ensure teachers sustaining this practice. In this current study, the teachers gained their support only from the external collaborator and were not endorsed by their school. It may be apparent that once the external support is absent, it may be difficult for the teachers to remain engaging in classroom research as the school atmosphere is unhealthy for them, except for those who have high self-motivation. Edwards and Burns (2016) contend that in addition to self-motivation, the role of institutional support is indispensably needed to ensure teachers engaging in classroom research such as CAR. Similarly, Borg and Sanchez (2015) also put the availability of support as one of the essential elements for a condition

teacher research practice. They argue the absence of this aspect seems to inhibit teachers' engagement in research practice.

This study thus reiterates the above statements about the role of support for teachers' involvement in the collaborative PD such as CAR. By engaging in CAR, they will potentially become a reflective teacher – a teacher who continuously examines her/his practice, and takes immediate action of issues in her/his classroom for the sake of students' learning achievement.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTION

This study suggests that by participating in CAR projects, English teachers gained benefits affecting their practice, as well as impacted on their students' learning behaviour and achievement. Despite the fact that teachers did not receive support from their school, the provision of external support (the collaborator) considerably maintained the teachers' interest in completing their CAR projects. This present study may implicate to both theoretical and practical impact in the area of language teacher professional development. First, it may contribute to the body of knowledge about the insight of the powerful of CAR as a means of professional development, which can be done by language teachers with teachers, university educators, supervisor, head teachers, and also the policy makers. This study also adds to the knowledge that the support both internally (from school) and externally (from external collaborator) are crucial in promoting

teachers engaging in research for the sake of self-development and students' learning achievement. Furthermore, this study adds our understanding of limited teacher research study in the Indonesian context, particularly in the area of supporting teachers doing research. This research will enable us to understand factors constituting to effective PD in the context, where teachers adversely face uncondusive learning condition at schools, particularly in the Indonesian context. Last but not least, for practical impact, this study implicates to call the external researcher (teacher educator, master teacher, or supervisor) to help teachers' difficulties in doing research, particularly from the context, where teachers face considerable challenges engaging in research via collaboration or research partnership.

Given the fact that this current study is limited in scope and population (only four EFL teachers in a site school), more research should be conducted to explore and understand teachers' insight when engaging in CAR, or other collaborative PD in general. Future studies should also be devoted to investigate the types of support needed both from the schools and outside school parties to facilitate teachers' motivation to engage in PD, particularly in research engagement. This study is necessary to be conducted to unveil factors motivating teachers to engage in research, specifically in the context of this study, in which teachers still encounter a plethora of challenges in such PD, in order to be able to provide inputs for all stakeholders of teacher

development party in facilitating teachers' engagement in research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The present study is part of the author's doctoral research in the school of Education, University of Leeds, United Kingdom. The author, therefore, would like to thank the Directorate General of Resources for Science, Technology and Higher Education, the Minister of Research and Higher Education, for funding his PhD studies from October 2014 to present. The author would also like to thank his supervisors, Dr. Martin Lamb and Dr. Judith Hanks, for their continuous support throughout his studies.

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