

The Courage to Teach in a Global Era: Challenges and Opportunities for English Teachers at SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi

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Article History :

Penyerahan : 18-11-2024
Direvisi : 22-11-2024
Diterima : 24-12-2024
Diterbitkan

Keyword : Courage in Teaching,
English Language Education,
Teachers' Challenges and
Opportunities

Kata Kunci : Keberanian dalam
mengajar, Pendidikan Bahasa
Inggris, Tantangan dan Peluang

Abstract

In the modern era of globalization, English language educators are confronted with intricate challenges and opportunities, which demand adaptability, innovation, and courage in their pedagogical practice. This study seeks to elucidate the role of courage in enabling educators to surmount the challenges inherent to teaching English at a vocational school, with a particular focus on SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi. The research underscores the significance of examining courage as a pivotal factor in teacher resilience and professional growth, particularly within the context of a globalized educational system. A qualitative case study approach was employed to collect data through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, which provided insights into the teacher's adaptive strategies for navigating curriculum changes, integrating technology, and enhancing student engagement. The findings revealed that courage empowers teachers to pursue continuous improvement amidst challenges, ultimately fostering a supportive and dynamic classroom environment. This study contributes to ongoing discussions about the professional development needs of English teachers and underscores the importance of courage in addressing modern educational demands.

Abstrak

Di era globalisasi modern, para pendidik bahasa Inggris dihadapkan pada tantangan dan peluang yang rumit, yang menuntut kemampuan beradaptasi, inovasi, dan keberanian dalam praktik pedagogis mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengelucidasi peran keberanian dalam memungkinkan para pendidik untuk mengatasi tantangan yang melekat dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah kejuruan, dengan fokus khusus pada SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya mengeksplorasi keberanian sebagai faktor utama dalam ketahanan dan pertumbuhan profesional guru, terutama dalam konteks sistem pendidikan yang semakin global. Pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan observasi kelas, yang memberikan wawasan tentang strategi adaptif guru dalam menghadapi perubahan kurikulum, integrasi teknologi, dan peningkatan keterlibatan siswa. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa keberanian memungkinkan guru untuk mengejar peningkatan berkelanjutan di tengah tantangan, yang pada akhirnya menciptakan lingkungan kelas yang suportif dan dinamis. Studi ini berkontribusi pada diskusi berkelanjutan mengenai kebutuhan pengembangan profesional guru bahasa Inggris dan menekankan pentingnya keberanian dalam menghadapi tuntutan pendidikan modern.

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized era, English language education plays a vital role in fostering cross-cultural communication and preparing students to engage with the global community. English teachers, especially those in vocational schools like SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi, face unique challenges and responsibilities. They are not only tasked with developing students' language skills but also preparing them for future careers, demanding both adaptive and innovative approaches to teaching. However, as demands and standards in

education evolve, English teachers encounter complex issues, including frequent curriculum changes, the need for technological integration, and strategies to maintain student engagement.

Courage, as a crucial personal quality, becomes essential in helping educators navigate these challenges effectively. This concept of courage refers to an educator's ability to confront difficulties, embrace innovation, and pursue continuous improvement amidst adversity. Courage allows teachers to stay resilient and adapt to the demands of teaching English in a vocational context, contributing to both their professional growth and a supportive learning environment for students.

This study addresses a gap in existing research on how courage functions as a vital component in the professional development of English teachers at vocational schools. Specifically, it aims to explore how courage supports English educators at SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi in overcoming teaching challenges and leveraging educational opportunities provided by globalization. This qualitative study employs a case study approach, using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to gather in-depth insights into the experiences of an English teacher.

The research seeks to formulate a better understanding of the role courage plays in the professional journey of English teachers at vocational institutions and to identify effective strategies that facilitate their success. By examining these aspects, this study contributes to ongoing discourse on teacher development and provides recommendations for empowering English teachers to meet modern educational demands.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative case study design, aimed at investigating the role of courage in the teaching experiences of an English teacher at SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi, a vocational high school in Indonesia. The qualitative case study method was selected to provide an in-depth, contextualized understanding of the teacher's experiences, highlighting the personal and situational factors that influence their teaching practices within a globalized educational landscape. Through this approach, the study focuses on understanding how courage serves as a critical factor in the teacher's professional resilience and growth.

The data for this research were collected from two primary sources: semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The main participant is an experienced English teacher at SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi, whose selection was based on their familiarity with the unique demands and challenges encountered in the vocational high school context. Semi-structured interviews allowed for a flexible yet guided approach, where the participant could share detailed experiences related to teaching challenges, adaptive strategies, and instances where courage was necessary in the face of pedagogical and institutional demands. The interviews included open-ended questions that encouraged the participant to reflect deeply on their professional journey, their approach to curriculum adaptations, and the ways in which they engage students in the learning process.

Classroom observations were conducted to corroborate and enhance the insights obtained from the interviews. During these observations, the teacher's interactions with students, the application of adaptive strategies, and instances of courage-driven decision-making were documented in detail. These observations were conducted across multiple sessions to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the teacher's approaches in varied classroom contexts. The combination of interviews and observations allowed for a triangulated perspective on the ways in which courage influences and shapes the teacher's professional practices.

Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis, a method particularly suited to qualitative case studies as it allows for the identification and interpretation of patterns within qualitative data. Thematic analysis began with careful transcription and coding of the interview and observational data, followed by categorization into key themes. Major themes that emerged included the integration of technology in the curriculum, the teacher's adaptation to curriculum changes, strategies for enhancing student engagement, and the specific challenges faced in a vocational educational environment. Throughout the analysis, the role of courage in enabling the teacher to persist and adapt in response to these challenges was explored in depth, revealing its influence on resilience and professional development.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participant were strictly maintained to protect their privacy. The participant provided informed consent and was assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any point, thereby upholding ethical standards for qualitative research. The research also adhered to accepted norms for data integrity and reliability to ensure that the findings accurately represent the participant's experiences and insights.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study identified courage as a central factor enabling English teachers at SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi to adapt to the evolving demands of globalization in education. The results highlight three major areas where courage influenced teaching practices: curriculum adaptation, technological integration, and student engagement.

RESULT

Curriculum Adaptation and Innovation

The analysis reveals that courage is critical in addressing frequent curriculum updates. Faced with school and regional mandates, the teacher demonstrated resilience by revising lesson plans and aligning new material to these changes. Research indicates that teacher adaptability in curriculum design is essential for student engagement (Smith, 2020; Jones & Reed, 2019). In this case, the teacher's proactive approach contributed to more relevant and engaging lessons, aligning with Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which posits that a teacher's belief in their abilities influences their instructional effectiveness. This finding aligns with previous studies that emphasize teacher courage as a driving force for innovation in curriculum adaptation (Lee & Han, 2021).

Overcoming Technological Barriers

The integration of technology, despite limited resources, highlights the teacher's courage in promoting a dynamic learning environment. Drawing from personal devices and free online tools, the teacher developed creative solutions to introduce digital learning activities. This aligns with studies showing that innovative use of technology can enhance student engagement and language skills (Graham & Morrow, 2018). The teacher's efforts resonate with constructivist theories of education, where teachers play an active role in creating engaging, hands-on learning experiences (Piaget, 1977). These findings further reinforce the idea that courage allows teachers to embrace new teaching tools even in resource-constrained settings, a point also noted by Kim & Park (2022) in similar research on technology in low-resource classrooms.

Building Student Engagement and Confidence

Courage was also evident in the teacher's commitment to fostering student engagement, an area where confidence and risk-taking were critical. Through empathy-driven and motivational strategies, the teacher encouraged active participation, particularly in English-speaking activities. This reflects findings by Roberts & Thomason (2021), who found that

teacher-student rapport positively impacts language acquisition in ESL settings. The teacher's empathetic approach aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. By creating a supportive classroom environment, the teacher enabled students to build language confidence, a crucial factor for success in EFL contexts.

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DISCUSSION

This study illustrates the integral role of courage in equipping English teachers to face the challenges presented by a globalized education system, particularly within vocational school settings such as SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi. The findings reveal that courage enables educators not only to manage practical classroom demands but also to fulfill professional responsibilities that foster effective English language teaching.

Answering the Research Problem and Questions

The primary research question explored how courage assists teachers in adapting to the educational demands of a global era, specifically within the vocational school context. The results demonstrated that courage is essential for teachers to: (a) remain flexible in the face of curriculum changes; (b) overcome resource limitations when incorporating new technology; and (c) foster student-centered learning environments. These findings indicate that courage is a foundational trait that contributes to teacher resilience, adaptability, and effective student engagement—key elements in vocational English education.

Interpretation of Findings

The courage to adapt, innovate, and engage students goes beyond personal resilience, acting as a crucial professional competency in the vocational school environment. Vocational institutions often emphasize practical, career-focused language skills, necessitating a high level of adaptability from teachers in shaping curriculum and instruction to meet these goals (Lee & Han, 2021). This study's insights confirm that courage, manifested in teachers' willingness to adjust lesson plans and seek creative solutions, directly impacts student learning outcomes, particularly in preparing students for specific career pathways where English proficiency is increasingly valued.

Linking Findings to Existing Theories and Knowledge

These results are consistent with existing educational theories on adaptability and resilience in teaching. For instance, Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy posits that teachers who believe in their capacity to handle challenges will likely adopt innovative instructional strategies. This study demonstrates that courage reinforces self-efficacy, as teachers in resource-limited settings like SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi use their agency to introduce technology and promote active student engagement. Additionally, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory supports the finding that a teacher's courage to establish a supportive and interactive learning environment can significantly enhance language acquisition, as social interactions play a critical role in cognitive development.

New Insights and Implications

While courage has been acknowledged in the literature as a valuable trait for teachers, this study emphasizes its importance as a practical necessity in vocational settings facing rapid educational shifts. Teachers in vocational schools often encounter unique demands related to career-oriented language skills and limited resources, underscoring the need for both courage and flexibility to deliver effective instruction. The findings suggest that educational policymakers should prioritize professional development programs that cultivate

not only pedagogical skills but also resilience and adaptability, equipping teachers with the courage to meet evolving educational standards.

Recommendations for Teacher Development and Policy

Given the findings, it is recommended that teacher training programs include modules focused on resilience and problem-solving strategies, as well as opportunities to practice adaptive teaching techniques in low-resource environments. This would align with global trends emphasizing the need for flexible, context-sensitive approaches in education, particularly for EFL teachers in vocational institutions (Kim & Park, 2022). Further research could investigate the long-term impact of teacher courage on student career readiness and language proficiency, potentially contributing to the development of new frameworks for teacher effectiveness in vocational education.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the essential role that courage plays in empowering English teachers at SMK Pembangunan Bukittinggi to address the unique demands of teaching in a vocational school within a globalized context. The findings indicate that courage enables teachers to effectively adapt to curriculum changes, incorporate technological resources, and foster an engaging learning environment for students. By embracing courage as a foundational quality, teachers are not only able to navigate challenges but also demonstrate resilience and innovation in their professional practice.

Moreover, this study suggests that courage is not merely a personal trait but a vital professional competency that supports teachers in fulfilling their roles as both educators and mentors. The adaptability required in vocational settings, particularly in contexts with limited resources, underscores the need for educational policies and teacher training programs that emphasize resilience, flexibility, and adaptive teaching methods. Encouraging teacher courage can lead to meaningful improvements in English language education and better prepare students for their future careers.

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