
Research Article

Exploring An English Teacher's Agency to Overcome the Challenges in Post-Pandemic Teaching

*¹ Dwi Dyah Wahyuningtias, ¹Willy Prasetya

¹ Universitas Islam Indonesia, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: willy.prasetya@uii.ac.id

Submitted: 26/09/2023

Revised: 29/10/2023

Accepted: 12/11/2023

How to cite this article: Wahyuningtias, D. D. & Prasetya, W. (2023). Exploring an English teacher's agency to overcome the challenges in post-pandemic teaching. *IJELR: International Journal of Education, Language, and Religion*, 5(2), 122-135. doi: <https://doi.org/10.35308/ijelr.v5i2.8379>

Abstract

Teachers in Indonesia have gone through a series of challenges over the last few years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in many changes in the Indonesian education after the pandemic ended. Teachers may have to rebuild their class dynamics, redesign their teaching practices, and deal with challenges as they adapt to the new curriculum and learning conditions. The present study describes the way an English teacher practiced teacher agency in dealing with challenges in post-pandemic English language teaching. This descriptive qualitative study obtained the data from a semi-structured interview that was transcribed and analyzed thematically. The results indicated that the teacher practiced teacher agency predominantly in two aspects, namely classroom instruction and teacher professional development. The present study provides an insight into how an English teacher utilized available resources and made adjustment to her instruction as the manifestation of her teacher agency.

Keywords

Teacher agency; teacher professionalism; descriptive qualitative

Introduction

In early 2020, Indonesia was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic that required face-to-face learning activities to be temporarily discontinued and adapted to virtual classrooms. In recent years, Indonesia has experienced an educational crisis. Sumardi and Nugrahani (2020) explained that due to the temporary discontinuation of face-to-face learning, many schools are struggling to adapt to the teaching of virtual languages by leveraging information technology, including language teaching practices in many schools. However, due to poor preparation and planning, online language teaching did not go well during the COVID-19 pandemic (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Consequently, there is a need for new teaching approaches and skills that differ from face-to-face language teaching.



After a long pandemic period, teachers faced new challenges as face-to-face schools reintroduced, many of their students lost their enthusiasm for learning because they were accustomed to flexible activities as pandemics went on so that when they started to be active at school, the students became more troubled. From the transition period, it is also known that the Kurikulum 2013 has been transformed into the Merdeka Curriculum. Before discussing strategy further, it is important to understand what it is, according to Syahrudin et al (2022). The order of activities using strategies and learning resources is referred to as a learning strategy. Teachers are instructed to assess their typical learning techniques in order to incorporate limited face-to-face learning in the context of the deployment of limited face-to-face learning. In order to adopt a constrained learning strategy, teachers need establish successful learning strategies. Teachers must use active, creative, and innovative learning methods. Activities for teaching and learning during pandemics allow for changes between the period before and after the pandemic.

Teachers face a new situation in which they are required to cope with the change of learning from virtual meetings to offline classes. After in-person classes were resumed with the implementation of health protocols, students who had just returned to school had a long time to adjust to regular school activities. Similar difficulties are encountered by teachers, the slow transition to normal makes the role of a teacher becomes increasingly crucial during this phase, such as how to reactivate face-to-face learning in the classroom and ignite enthusiasm among students, and how to encourage students to go to school smoothly.

In recent years, there has been a significant amount of research on teacher agencies. As time progresses, it is increasingly evident that teacher agencies are undergoing significant development. In general, teacher agency is an agent who specifically theorize teacher bonding activities in schools. In other words, agency is not something a person have, but something they do or achieve (Biesta & Tedder, 2006). Teacher agency can also be considered a special professional agency or an active contribution to shape their work and condition. It is regarded as an indispensable element in a good and meaningful education. It shows the quality of the actor's involvement with the relational-temporal-for-action context, not the quality of the actor him or herself. In the world of education, educators such as teachers have an essential role in developing the world of education. According to Imants & Wal (2019), the interdependence is between the individual and the social environment, and the role of teachers in professional development and school reform. Within socio-cultural boundaries such as those imposed by national and school curricula, peer and management power dynamics, and dominant school culture. Teachers have an essential role in language education because they are responsible for developing a curriculum perfectly instructed with technology and making decisions remotely or boldly based on student learning outcomes (Meskil & Antony, 2015). However, the teacher's agency is limited by available resources, such as classroom equipment, instructional methods, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) devices. Nevertheless, these constraints and limitations fall under the teacher's control. Depending on how teachers interpret these contextual constraints, limitations and their agency, they impose an environment both within and outside of school. In other words, teachers must exercise agency in a context where teachers negotiate or struggle against policy and leadership constraints.

a. Teacher Agency

The definition of teachers' agency refers to their capacity to make informational classes and professional development decisions based on the needs of the class, reflection, and consideration. In other words, an agency is not something that people can own – as property, capacity, or competence – but is something that people do. Specifically, the agency demonstrates the quality of the actor's involvement with the temporal-relational-action context, not the quality of the actor him or herself. Leander and Osborne (2008) stated that existing models of educational change often underestimate and misrepresent the role of teacher agency. In this context, literacy which includes life history and also



professional history becomes a significant factor in a teacher's journey to be more professional. This model highlights that the achievements of agency are always informed by past experiences including personal and professional biographies, while being future-oriented in both the short-term and long-term perspectives. The implementation of agency occurs within the present, where the so-called cultural, material and structural resources influence its implementation. In addition to the teacher's professionalism in teaching, other important things certainly affect such as a teacher's confidence in teaching English, and how the teacher can manage her class well. In this case, the role of the teacher is very influential. Therefore, academic and daily development must be changed for the sake of interest and effectiveness to achieve the same level of comfort for teachers and students. Biesta, Priestly, and Robinson's (2015) said that teacher agent offers another viewpoint on the idea of teacher agency. This agent, who is conceptually connected to the behaviors of teachers in schools, hasn't received much explicit research or theoretical development. The notion of education is a process in which educators grow in their capacity for independent judgment, which serves as the foundation for autonomous action, has had a significant impact on current educational theory and practice. This idea, which has been understood by (Archer, 1995; Hollis, 1994) as aiming to speak on behalf of a minority, is a subjective element that runs against to the way society is structured and is used to explain an action. It is not possible to use the idea of excluding other agents from this environment and to describe how agents behave in a specific situation, such as the central issue with the implementation of teaching agents in the classroom (Biesta & Tedder 2006). The idea of teacher agency is recognized as a notion that is considered to center on issues that prioritize the teacher's abilities above the kind of agency that is granted to the instructor. As a result, the agency of teachers should be conceptualized as the growth of institutions integrated into the emergence of the external environment and other relevant elements. Through the interaction of habits, imagination, and judgment, participation is constructed in relational activity.

b. Teacher Agency in Teaching After Covid-19 Pandemic

Through a time-consuming COVID-19 pandemic, the process of face-to-face reopening begins slowly and regularly. After the COVID-19 pandemic began to proceed back to a new normal, in the last month, face-to-face meetings have been held where students participate in class learning as before. Learning done with the virtual meeting system begins to be moved back to face-to-face meetings in the classroom. All teachers according to Biesta, Priestly, & Robinson (2015) think that developing relationships with their students is crucial to creating what they commonly refer to as a framework for learning. The main goal of social presence in face-to-face interactions is to foster and develop group success that is linked to cognitive presence. In general, these are educators who genuinely care about their charges and frequently refer to maximizing students' potential. Returns to this construction at the time when discussing the beliefs of teachers related to the educational objectives, but pay attention at the moment in relation to the positive professional orientation of the teachers towards the students however, these limitations and limitations are not entirely beyond the control of the teacher (Imants & Wal, 2019). Depending on the teacher's interpretation of these contextual limitations and limitations, and depending on their agency, teachers set the environment inside and outside their school.

Syahrudin et al (2022) asserted that face-to-face learning of essential implementation requirements such as the number of students and teachers and estimated study time in schools. The establishment and structuring of new regulations were made in anticipation and as a way to prepare for the return of the new normal period. The transition period that was formed certainly made teachers have to replay the thoughts and roles that occurred during the pandemic. In health emergencies, we have seen how both are forming, and new approaches to collaboration have become at the heart of teacher and school responses. This includes how schools formulate plans to ensure continuity of learning, support community well-being, address issues of equality and access, and contribute to responsiveness to a broader emergency maintaining local and national infrastructure functioning. Then, teachers are still required to move quickly with the government's decision to open face-to-face classes after the COVID-



19 pandemic. After the pandemic, schools have slowly started running face-to-face classes where teachers must be ready to face new challenges and also pay attention to the character of students still carried away during online classes. Teachers must rack their brains on the remaining effects of online classes, including how teachers can attract students' intentions to learn in the classroom, enforcing new rules, and classroom management. The range of professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, and adaptive skills that teachers require to meet these demands continues to be constantly increasing (Brown & Flood, 2019). It has proven itself well during the pandemic. The researcher believes the skills and expertise developed will be critical in our post-pandemic context. Its strength is meeting these changing demands and realizing the learning community's values and vision for learning, achievement, and well-being. A broader analysis of the processes by which policies and practices are developed, nurtured, and evaluated and their consequences for students and society is necessary. This allows us to understand better how we achieve our laudable policy development goals while ensuring a collaborative and community response approach led by teachers and school leaders.

Method

Research Design

This study aims to determine the potential of a teacher's agency to be able to overcome problems in face-to-face classroom learning after the pandemic period ends. The goal of descriptive qualitative research is to comprehend phenomena by looking at their traits and characteristics. This kind of research is used by researchers to explore issues that have not been thoroughly studied before. According to Vickie & Clinton (2012) descriptive qualitative research frequently reflect a dedication to study something in its natural state as far as is possible within the confines of the research arena, which makes them interesting. Researchers utilize this sort of research to better comprehend the research topics they are investigating from an additional perspective. This descriptive qualitative research will describe a high school teacher's experience, how she got through her teaching period, and the issues she faced post-pandemic. The adaptability of descriptive qualitative research is one of its main advantages. The method is flexible if it is applied in a variety of contexts. It can be modified to meet the requirements of the researcher and the particular study subject under consideration. When a researcher needs to know about events, people involved, what was involved, and where things happened, this type of research is highly helpful. The research design can be classified as descriptive qualitative by researchers (Vickie & Clinton, 2012). This kind of research allows for the collection of a wide range of data about the phenomena, including its background, history, and cultural relevance because it is concentrated on the exploration of the traits and attributes of a phenomenon. This study uses descriptive qualitative as a research design because teacher's agency is one of the pieces of literature that not many people know today, which makes case study learning suitable for use. After all, its purpose is to provide in-depth data for this research.

Setting and Participants

In this study, the researcher had only one participant, Dian, who worked as an English teacher at one of the best international private schools in Bogor District, which is one of the districts in West Java. Dian's qualification to be a participant is because she has already had teaching experience since 2020, which means she has passed through the teaching phase since the beginning of the pandemic and has gone through phases that had the challenge of developing material during pandemics. Not only is this phasing a challenge, but it is also not easy for a teacher to get through the post-pandemic phase.

The researcher researched the teacher's knowledge based on the teacher's teaching experience before, during, and after the pandemic ended. She went through problems when Indonesia's education experienced a crisis during and after the pandemic and how she could pass through the difficulties in the world of education and teaching that she lacked. A teacher must have challenges and solutions to the problems that they are facing. Dian, who is still younger than her fellow teachers, must have had



many ways to plan the learning material she did during the educational crisis after the pandemic ended, with ideas and support from the school that allowed Dian to go through and solve the challenges she had gone through.

Research Instrument

This study used the construct of the role of beliefs in teacher agency by Biesta, Priestly & Robinson (2015). The following questions were:

Table 3.1 Table of Research Questions

Construct	Conceptual Definition	Component	Interview Questions
Teacher Agency Biesta, Priestley & Robinson (2015)	Teacher agency refers to the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the development of education quality.	1. Challenges	1. What is the differences between teaching during pandemic and post-pandemic? 2. What have been the classroom learning conditions since face-to-face classes have been reinstated? 3. Have any other challenges arisen since in-person classes were reenacted?
		2. Overcomes the problems	1. Is there an event to start planning, implementing, and evaluating her teaching practices after the pandemic? 2. How to improve the quality of student learning after the pandemic enters the new normal?

Data Collection

The data was collected using the semi-structured interview system through virtual meetings with Zoom Meeting with the participant's consent. The interview took 45 minutes and 51 seconds and must be conducted in a research context. The study used case studies because they were in line with the research objectives, in particular, exploring how teaching institutions could address the challenges of running face-to-face classes as well as implement, conduct, and evaluate the teaching practices of participants after the COVID-19 pandemic period ended. In addition, semi-structured interviews were used in this study because they provided in-depth data and made the participants feel comfortable.

Data Analysis

The study transcribed, themed, and analyzed the data. The researchers read the interview transcript several times until she found some topics that matched the research. The theme was how Dian became a teacher's center in her class and the relationship between Dian and the environment in her teaching. Data analysis was carried out through thematic analysis, which is used to identify, analyze, organize, describe, and report on themes in the data that has been collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher showed the results of this study and a transcript of the interview to the participants to ascertain whether the data was correct.

Results

Data analysis is done through thematic analysis, and the researcher reads the data several times until the researcher finds the themes presented in this chapter. From this data, Dian has gone through three periods of teaching: before, during, and after the pandemic. When students lose interest in learning, it



becomes difficult to address post-pandemic challenges. Students who had previously become dependent on their electronic devices felt increasingly awkward during face-to-face class activities. During class activities, they engage in less interaction with classmates and exhibit more passivity. For instance, Dian interacts with the students to make the lesson more dynamic, and she employs a number of novel strategies to grab their attention, get them involved, and bring the class back together. In addition to Dian itself, the school or its teaching institution also provides adequate facilities such as conducting training and inviting professionals to conduct training. This activity is done so that teachers prepare themselves better to create and use support applications while teaching. Thus, this section outlines the journey of Dian and her teaching agents in planning, implementing, and evaluating teaching and learning activities in face-to-face classrooms.

a. Part of Teachers' Challenges Between During and After COVID-19

First time for the condition of the class taught by Dian during the pandemic was challenging. Initially, it was relatively easy for Dian to manage the class because the school adopted the old curriculum before COVID-19, namely Kurikulum 2013. Dian learned how to implement this curriculum during her time at the university and during her internship (PPL), which made it easier for her to apply it in her classroom. However, as learning transitioned to the pandemic era, new and first-time conditions passed by Dian and her fellow teachers made them feel unfamiliar to this condition. Starting from the class condition, Dian had to struggle because she and her fellow teachers must be more creative in delivering materials, they would explain to their students with the circumstances they have to work from home (WFH). Moreover, the student's motivation gradually decreased with the start of school from home (SFH). Dian's teaching experience during the pandemic was her worst learning experience in the time of pandemics. Dian felt that when teaching in pandemic times was very insufficient for teachers because teachers could not oversee students directly in person and Dian also felt that the self-learning of her students also decreased, although it has been facilitated by advanced items such as gadgets they have or the use of more modern and engaging learning media. For Dian, it was still difficult to control her students from a distance.

"In fact, during a pandemic, they are in their own homes, right, and we can't control what they do while studying, that's a challenge. So, that's why if you can say it's a bad condition because it's not optimal as a teacher. And as a child, they are not maximal enough to know what they can capture their abilities, their cognitive abilities are lacking."

Class conditions during the pandemic also resulted in Dian's students becoming more accessible. Freedom here is interpreted as students not getting full supervision from Dian or their parents because teaching at that time was conducted online and using the Zoom meeting platform as a form of an online meeting between them. Apart from the Zoom meeting, the school used Google Classroom to make Dian and her fellow teachers easier. As a young teacher, Dian understood more about using this application than her senior fellow teachers. Her school held special training several times to help their teachers to master the class during the pandemic. One of these training explained what applications could be used during pandemic. In this training, Dian explained that teachers could use Google Classroom, Padlet, Google Documents, and several other applications.

"Applications that are used other than Zoom usually I use a Padlet, then after that I use Google Docs, because at that time I made descriptive text, if I'm not mistaken? Yes, learning how to make text like that. Then Google Docs can be used for collaborative learning. They only have one link, right? One link and you can comment there together. Google Docs, so use that."

The students might at first look enthusiastic, but over time, the students lost enthusiasm. For example, when the class started via Zoom meeting, Dian told a class she was teaching, and only a few students actively answered. Some did the trick of putting their profile photo with a video to give the impression



that they were taking part in ongoing classes. The longer the pandemic continued, the more students would lose motivation and enthusiasm for learning. This was the beginning of Dian's students having quite a large knowledge gap. This knowledge gap was the biggest problem they faced by Dian and her fellow teachers after the pandemic ended.

"So, from that lesson, many students have a large knowledge gap, where suddenly they are already in junior high school, back when they were in elementary school, they didn't really understand vocabs and then at junior high school the children had to make sentences but, in the vocals, itself is still lacking. So, after the pandemic, we must give lessons from the beginning again."

For Dian, she and her fellow teachers had difficulties with her students because she did not know whether they understood the material she was teaching or could or could not grasp their abilities. The student's cognitive abilities were decreasing. With the students' cognitive decline, Dian said that the next challenge was the knowledge gap which was increasingly evident during the pandemic. Getting through new challenges during the pandemic and having to make further plans within an indefinite period made Dian feel the situation when the pandemic was the most difficult phase she had ever gone through. Fortunately, the school provided sufficient facilities, helping teachers through the pandemic. The school gave orders to start using the Merdeka curriculum because it was already the school's policy to follow the orders of the government. However, the school still helped by easing the burden of teachers by allowing teachers to choose the essential materials they would take and be taught in their classes. According to Dian, the school's decision to provide training during the pandemic period was a positive and beneficial one. These training sessions aimed to inspire teachers and assist them in adapting their curriculum to the transitioning circumstances.

Second time since the pandemic ended, the government has decided on the start of entering the new normal stage. Activities that previously stopped and were transferred to WFH and SFH will begin to take effect again. While both workplaces are returning to their normal phase and universities and schools are re-implement face-to-face classes with the enforced protocol, the school where Dian teaches uses the same system. Dian, her fellow teacher, and the school faced many challenges after the pandemic ended. The toughest challenge that was passed for the first by Dian is how Dian and her fellow teacher were able to fill in the knowledge gaps that were already quite large gaps among students. This knowledge gap made students stutter and lack knowledge in themselves. According to Dian's experience, it happened because, during the pandemic, the students became more focused on their smartphone screens and became very addicted to them because the material used by Dian for the learning period during the pandemic mostly from YouTube content or only focused on Zoom meetings schedule. This gave Dian a challenge where she had to start over with material that students should have understood at their previous grade level. Still, with this knowledge gap, Dian and her fellow teachers had to repeat the material from their previous classes. Apart from the quite severe knowledge gap, Dian noticed that her students, who had long been accustomed to studying at home when they started school and went back to studying in class, have become shy and more unprepared to interact with their classmates, interaction in class became very passive and that made Dian must quickly find a solution so that the class they teach can return to normal like the class before the pandemic. As stated by Dian in our interview:

"Many students have a large knowledge gap, so we have to teach lessons from the beginning again after the pandemic. Then the second method, which is taught online, still needs to be optimal after the pandemic, we have to teach again from the basics. Even though the basics had to have been taught in elementary school or it had been taught in middle school before he entered the eighth grade."



On the other hand, the challenges from the curriculum made Dian inevitably have to learn again about the curriculum transition that occurred. The 2013 curriculum has been shifted to the Merdeka curriculum, and the new curriculum has just been massively implemented in all schools. The transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka curriculum allowed Dian, as a teacher, to implement the Merdeka curriculum at that time, when the curriculum was still quite new, and the teachers needed to be more familiar with Merdeka curriculum. The transition from the 2013 curriculum to an independent curriculum inevitably made Dian and her fellow teachers learn about the new tools of this curriculum and the strategies for implementing it. In this way, as a teacher, Dian had to study again and find out about the Merdeka curriculum. By implementing the new curriculum, teachers are required to be able to make the classes taught more student-centered and project-based as the majority of the contents of Merdeka curricula improve on collaborative learning and Pancasila profile projects.

"Well, we as teachers also just know what the strategy is. How is it? What is it? The tools in the Merdeka curriculum which are also different from the 2013 curriculum are also one of the challenges. Our learning conditions are not only for students with knowledge gaps, but also teachers who must have ideas to learn more about the curriculum they must implement."

Apart from challenges from students, schools, and the curriculum department, Dian also faced challenges from parents of students, where not all parents of students could understand the students' conditions while in class during learning. The big challenge occurred during the pandemic. According to Dian, only some parents could accompany their children to school, so some parents needed help understanding their children's difficulties, how their children were when class started, and so on. Most parents of students also require their children to be able to explore their subjects. After the pandemic ended, some parents hoped for an instant way for their children to deepen their subjects. One example was English, the subject taught by Dian. Dian said that many of her students still had difficulty learning tenses and their lack of English vocabulary, where they should have to use basic vocabulary for their daily conversation. This encounter made Dian should at least repeat the material. As simple as distinguishing the use of is, am, and are, some students still need clarification. This was said directly by Dian,

"From the parents' point of view, parents want instant food, right? I want their children's grades to be good. Yes, like it or not. Even though in his elementary school he felt lacking because of his academy. Yes, in junior high school they want their children to be able to explore or to understand one of those materials."

In this case, Dian had to repeat the material that would be taught to her students. Parents of students wanted something instant like how their child could speak English well even though they needed help understanding the material they were studying. For example, Dian said that she had to teach the basic vocabulary and repeat the tenses that her students had to use, as simple as how they introduced themselves, for which the students had to understand the introduction material.

b. Overcoming Post-Pandemic Challenges

By 2022, schools will have begun functioning as they once did, and in-person instruction will have resumed. However, new obstacles will always exist, but each has its remedies. The significant knowledge gaps among students, the deployment of new curriculum in classroom instruction, and the way the school supports its instructors in terms of facilities and resources are some of the obstacles that have been surmounted. Students who lost motivation in learning became quieter and more passive in class, and the lack of interaction made Dian think about what solutions she could take. In this case, Dian admitted that it was quite difficult at the beginning because the background of her students, who were accustomed to addiction in front of each smartphone screen, became an obstacle for her. Dian first created class rules as an agreement against using electronic tools in the classroom. Electronic



items such as laptops used by students can only be opened or used at certain times with permission from Dian, a teacher teaching in the class.

“At that time, I did the first one, really didn't get used to the laptop in learning, he only used the laptop for the most important things, because for example going offline using the laptop again would hinder them from concentrating, because they had already had a lot of them before using laptops and we also agreed that in order to inhibit –prevent addictive behavior towards the use of technology it has been reduced.”

The second thing that was Dian's goal was to increase the number of worksheets for her students. Giving worksheets to these students was a way for them to become more exposed during learning activities because previously, they needed to pay more attention and got bored quickly. Until Dian chose to use the worksheet as a reference so that students could become more interested and start attending classes again, another addition was this worksheet, which Dian provided to fill in the knowledge gaps of her students, which were quite tenuous during the pandemic. Usually, the worksheets given to students start at the most basic level and then move up to advanced levels. This was done so that the worksheets were scaffolding apart from using worksheets. She also provided collaborative activities so students could work in pairs or groups, which made them interact more with their classmates. This collaborative activity was carried out as a form of building student interaction in class because most of the students who came from the pandemic were embarrassed to speak in front of the class, so this activity made students more confident and more accustomed to interacting in class.

“The second thing I did was give a lot of worksheets because they were less exposed to online learning and did not pay attention to teachers intensely. So there are many basic worksheets first, then you can start to the advanced level so the worksheet is also scaffolding”

“Increase collaborative activities, there is pair work, group works that they can discuss, talk about. Most pandemic children are embarrassed to speak in front of the class or even with their own friends.”

The last one was by giving games such as ice breaking; one example that Dian usually does is by using game boards in class. This board game would usually be used following the material that would be the learning topic to be studied. This ice-breaking game was given as an atmosphere builder in the classroom. Hence, students felt energized, as well an initial exercise that served as a trigger for learning material that would light up the atmosphere in class. In terms of curriculum, where the transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka curriculum made Dian and her fellow teachers must learn to understand more about the Merdeka curriculum itself. At that time, the school's policy was that they would be able to implement the Merdeka curriculum after the pandemic was over and the school was running as usual. As a teacher, it was certain that Dian could implement this new curriculum. She was still familiar with the Merdeka curriculum, so she had to learn more about the tools related to the Merdeka curriculum.

“We learn how the Merdeka curriculum is implemented, how can the teacher make the class more student-centered learners, then after that it's more project-based, because most of it in the Merdeka curriculum enhances collaborative learning with projects of the Pancasila profile.”

Part of the Merdeka curriculum's objective is to become students as student centers where students must be more active in class, then increase their project- based learning. In addition, Merdeka's curriculum is more towards collaborative learning and approaches to its Pancasila profile. The Merdeka curriculum made teachers easier because its flexibility allows for easier implementation, and



it introduces students to collaborative learning experiences and teamwork while emphasizing Pancasila's profile.

According to Dian, the school conducted weekly and annual evaluations related to the students and the school itself. For this evaluation, schools had done it once a week. This weekly evaluation occurs at school when there is a problem or there is also a learning evaluation. Evaluation is generally carried out, for example, if there is a report from the foster parent or homeroom teacher regarding the condition of the student. For example, students like to go missing, students do not do assignments, and so on. That's an evaluation of learning.

"To do that evaluation, we usually do it once a week. Just what we are. What happens in school when there is a problem or there is an activity done but also an evaluation of learning."

In addition to weekly evaluations, the school sometimes delivers evaluations at the end of the semester each year. In this annual assessment meeting, the discussion is more comprehensive, such as student presence data about what has been undertaken during that one semester. Dian said outside of the school field, her teacher could already be at her maximum because she understands more and is more creative.

"Usually, the assessment can also remain yearly for the racer. What happened over the past six months was also discussed there. Most of this being the material of evaluation is the child in which the child with a few likes for attendance yes. But if the teacher is Insyah Allah from the school, we are at the maximum."

With weekly and monthly evaluations, Dian could know the condition of the students in the class she taught and how the problems existed so that she could discuss them with her colleagues or her school to determine the solution during the evaluation meeting. For the curriculum at that time, Dian could only see the lesson plan at the beginning, but the lesson plan was not an issue during the lessons. The annual evaluation can be done at the meeting if it is from the school. What happened during one semester was also discussed during the annual evaluation. Most of the evaluation material was for students, and children often go missing for attendance. As well as from her fellow teachers, they had been very maximal.

In addition to the several things above, after the pandemic ended, Dian attended a seminar training as another reference for managing class conditions and adding knowledge about new media as teaching materials in class. Dian took part in training activities outside of school with the theme Google Certificate Educator in 2022, and she just attended other training activities after the pandemic period ended. Due to the pandemic time, Dian only had a little time to do additional training outside of following the training provided by the school. During the pandemic, Dian learned a lot by watching YouTube and Instagram as her new benchmark for finding inspiration.

"It used to seem like I didn't think so during the pandemic. But I only just watched from Youtube, then after that Instagram. So, after the pandemic, I also took part in the Google Certificate Educator in 2022. I mean, during the pandemic, I didn't take part in outside training."

This Google Certificate Educator training activity explained how to implement Google platforms such as Google Forms, Google Documents, Google Slides, Google Meet, Google Calendar, and other Google products to support learning in Dian's class. By following training outside of school, Dian gained new knowledge about other devices through Google, and it turned out that there were a variety of media that Dian could use in her class. For example, Dian did not need to check on each student individually; she just used Google Chat. After that, whenever Dian needed to remind her students, she



used Google Calendar and showed presentations. Dian could use Google Slides, so all platforms on Google were synergized with each other to teach like that. With this new knowledge, Dian could use Google in her classroom more easily.

Discussion

In this section, the current study provides findings supported by previous studies. It entails how Dian plans and carries out her classes with the experience and training she has had as the center of her class as well as the relationship between Dian and the school, her students, and how to implement the transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka curriculum in her school.

The journey is Dian's teaching experience, which went through three phases before, during, and after the pandemic. Dian's teaching experiences after the pandemic explains how she overcame the new challenges as a teacher. In this case, Dian had experienced transitional periods that tested her professionalism, as discussed by Priestly, Biesta, and Robinson (2013). In terms of the iterative dimension, differentiate between the influence of teachers' more general life histories and their more specific professional histories, including their education as teachers and their collected teaching experience. Several things that Dian had gone through are explained in terms of how she handled the condition of her class during the transition period. At that time, Dian talked about how difficult it was to hold classes where her students initially had high self-motivation and became low over time. She said her students became more passive, stopped paying attention when Dian started teaching in class and were more preoccupied with themselves and the world. According to Imants and Wal (2019), enactment in a work environment by teachers is followed by experiencing and understanding the work environment in and around schools in a certain way. In this case, Dian took advantage of the skills and experience she had from college and utilized them as a learning process in her class.

Through the transitional period, as Dian gained new knowledge, there were many new things she knew and how she applied her new knowledge in the classroom. The first transition period is from the pre-pandemic period to the pandemic. When this initial transition occurred, Dian and her fellow teacher were confused about how to start a new thing the first time she felt it. This course focused on the process, and the need for comparative discourse around purpose and value strongly suggested the disconnection between purpose and method (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015) with the experience that Dian had as long as she was still active at the university, in the transition period, Dian at least has a grip to implement her learning results while still in college, and she continued to be a method for her learning in her class.

As a teacher, the dynamics of social relationships that Dian had always is related to the students, the school, and the part of her curriculum. Some of these things brought many influences. Molla and Nolan (2020) stated that teachers set positions in a field of practice supported by systemic expectations, institutional conditions, and personal dispositions. That is, professional activity balances the contexts of objective and subjective actions. The factual context determines the position of agents in the field of practice, which offers agents a different space to negotiate their roles and strategies. The status of a teacher in the school is defined as one of the influential networks.

Priestly, Biesta, and Robinson (2013) ever said that teachers genuinely care about their pupils and constantly discuss topics like how they may help students reach their full potential as a teacher, building a relationship with the student have become a daily habit, and building a relationship is crucial to know the level of the student she will teach. The condition in Dian's class after the pandemic ended made Dian think about how the student in her class could return to active and socialize with his friends without shame, and then how Dian could make the students who were previously addicted to practicing reduce the level of use of electronic tools such as laptops in her class. This has been



discussed with other teachers to reach a joint agreement. Another solution that Dian could provide was a worksheet for her students from the basic level to the intermediate level based on their needs. This worksheet was delivered as a bridge to connect the knowledge gaps of its students, who were already quite far away, and as a repetition of the material to determine whether the student could follow the learning well. According to Mulyono and Saskia (2021), student participation and interaction in class can be influenced by how eager they are to communicate in the target language. In addition to worksheets, Dian occasionally assigned pair work to her students so that they could interact with one another and discuss topics that would prevent them from becoming increasingly disruptive. Dian also used board games as a quick way to get her students' attention and break up the classroom environment's monotony.

The transition from the 2013 curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum forced Dian and her fellow teachers to review what the Merdeka Curriculum is, what components are included, and how to develop such curricula to be as effective as possible in their application. Facing the new curriculum was a challenging task. Dian claimed that although she and her peers needed to comprehend the Merdeka curriculum fully, their school provided a zone where it could be used. As stated by Priestly and Drew (2016), teachers in many countries have lost a significant amount of the craftsmanship knowledge required to develop school-based curricula. As a result of this transition, the potential of the new curriculum to improve student learning is limited during the pandemic period. However, this new curriculum was re-developed after the pandemic period ended and began to maximize its implementation in the classroom.

During the pandemic, Dian's school provided many benefits for teachers, such as providing facilities for training on hybrid learning so that teachers could maximize their classes while teaching, then providing training on using teaching apps such as Google Classroom and others. Dian, one of the young teachers, felt familiar with using the teaching application because she already got it while still sitting on the class bench. Another benefit given to the school was the application of a new curriculum that was more flexible to apply in the classroom. According to Dian, it was one of the good policies of her school because she said that keeping the students focused in the classroom was so difficult during the transition period. By facilitating the application of this curriculum, she became more and more flexible in teaching.

In addition to a weekly evaluation for the students, there would be a follow-up for the development of the students themselves and the classmates understood the behavior of their class. Furthermore, there was an evaluation that was repelled once a year. In this evaluation, there was a comprehensive discussion about the school policy, the school condition, the follow-up of teachers, and others. This evaluation was done so that the school could be more aware of the circumstances and introspect on the school's shortcomings or advantages.

Conclusion

The study aims to explore an English teacher's agency in dealing with challenges in post-pandemic teaching. The challenges she faced were due to the pandemic period continuing and not ending as soon as it ended, as new challenges continued to emerge in the same way they were facing them. The participant's view of what she experienced was complex because of recent education crises. The participant encountered difficulties as a teacher at the beginning of the transition period. From that difficult time, she learned how to condition the classes taught, how to get her students to follow the students in the classroom with a considerable gap of knowledge, how to make her passive pupils more active, how to discuss with parents who want their children to keep it and must understand the materials in class, how the participants should learn about the new components of the Merdeka Curriculum and implement it as a new curriculum, and how to take advantage of the facilities provided



by the school because the school was responsible for meeting the standards and also the facilities that should be provided. On the positive side, the school supported and did not force teachers, and it facilitated training so that teachers understood and could control their learning state. On the other hand, after the transition period, the participant also followed training outside of the school to add and acquire new skills to maximize the application of her learning. This study has some limitations that should be taken into account. First, only one person participated in this study. Future studies should explore a teacher's learning practices in the classroom and how they can face coming challenges and solve those challenges. Finally, research currently only uses interview transcripts as data. Meanwhile, the investigation and case analysis depth can make the data more prosperous and complex. Thus, future studies should use these limits to explore and add knowledge of the teacher's agency within the teacher's profession.

References

- Biesta, G., & Tedder, M. (2006). How is agency possible? Towards an ecological understanding of agency-as-achievement. *Learning lives: Learning, identity, and agency in the life course*.
- Biesta, G., & Tedder, M. (2007). Agency and learning in the lifecourse: Towards an ecological perspective. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 39(2), 132- 149.
- Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2015). The role of beliefs in teacher agency. *Teachers and teaching*, 21(6), 624-640.
- Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2017). Talking about education: Exploring the significance of teachers' talk for teacher agency. *Journal of curriculum studies*, 49(1), 38-54.
- Campbell, P. (2020). Rethinking professional collaboration and agency in a post- pandemic era. *Journal of professional capital and community*.
- Imants, J., & Van der Wal, M. M. (2019). A model of teacher agency in professional development and school reform. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52(1), 1-14.
- Lambert, V. A., & Lambert, C. E. (2012). Qualitative descriptive research: An acceptable design. *Pacific Rim international journal of nursing research*, 16(4), 255-256.
- Leander, K. M., & Osborne, M. D. (2008). Complex positioning: Teachers as agents of curricular and pedagogical reform. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 40(1), 23-46.
- Liu, Y., Wang, H., & Zhao, R. (2020). Teacher agency and spaces in changes of English language education policy. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 21(5), 548-566.
- Maspul, K. A., & Amalia, F. (2021). Normalisation of schools in the process of face-to-face activities in Indonesia. *Academia Letters*, 2.
- Meskill, C., & Anthony, N. (2015). Teaching languages online. In *Teaching Languages Online. Multilingual Matters*.
- Molla, T., & Nolan, A. (2020). Teacher agency and professional practice. *Teachers and Teaching*, 26(1), 67-87.
- Mulyono, H., & Saskia, R. (2021). Affective variables contributing to Indonesian EFL students' willingness to communicate within face-to-face and digital environments. *Cogent Education*, 8(1), 1911282.
- Priestley, M., & Drew, V. (2016, August). Teachers as agents of curriculum change: closing the gap between purpose and practice. In *European Conference for Educational Research, Dublin, 23-26 September 2016*.
- Priestley, M., Biesta, G., & Robinson, S. (2013). Teachers as agents of change: Teacher agency and emerging models of curriculum. *Reinventing the Curriculum: New trends in curriculum policy and practice*, 187-206.
- Rahman, A. (2016). Teacher professional development in Indonesia: The influences of learning activities, teacher characteristics and school conditions.



- Siswanto, I. L., & Kuswando, P. (2020). Understanding teacher identity construction: Professional experiences of becoming Indonesian Montessori teachers. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 5(1), 1-16.
- Sumardi, S., & Nugrahani, D. (2021). Adaptation to emergency remote teaching: Pedagogical strategy for pre-service language teachers amid COVID-19 pandemic. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 22(2), 81-93.
- Syahrudin, H., Ramadhan, I., Adlika, N. M., Hardiansyah, M. A., Olendo, Y. O., & Arifiyanti, F. (2022). The transition of limited face-to-face learning after Covid-19 pandemic at Islamic private junior high schools Pontianak. *Jurnal Iqra': Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan*, 7(2), 168-182.
- Widayati, A., MacCallum, J., & Woods-McConney, A. (2021). Teachers' perceptions of continuing professional development: a study of vocational high school teachers in Indonesia. *Teacher Development*, 25(5), 604-621.

