

## The Impacts of Liberal Arts Education of Jesuit School Culture on English Teachers' Transformed Agencies

Aditya Agung Sutono, & Markus Budiraharjo

English Education Master's Program, Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia

adityagung914@gmail.com; markbudi@usd.ac.id

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### Abstract

Teachers as agents of change play a key role to not only assist their students with their learning, but also to professionally navigate the tension among their own beliefs, school culture, and the mandated curriculum. Drawing upon principles of Liberal Arts Education, a Jesuit Senior High School in Yogyakarta has carried out free will education (FWE) since its inception in 1948, to nurture students' capability to make their own choices and become responsible for their deeds. This study was set to 1) discover the impacts of school culture perceived by the four English teachers in their professional careers, and 2) elaborate the occurrence of perceived transformation in regards to teachers' self-agency. This research utilized Narrative Inquiry for its research method. Data gathering was accomplished by interviews, school observations, field notes, and document analysis. Four English teachers and eight students were involved in the interviews. To guide data analysis, Mezirow's (1998) Critical Self-Reflection of Assumptions (CSRA) and Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson's (2015) teacher agency were utilized. Findings suggest that transformed agencies took place in response to catalytic moments, especially due to the changing nature of students and the expectation to maintain quality teaching. The perceived transformation in regard to teachers in professional careers occurred in four areas, namely Narrative, Systemic, Therapeutic, and Epistemic. Further studies may address a larger scope of teacher agencies among teachers in public schools.

**Keywords:** Jesuit school culture; liberal arts education; transformative learning

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### INTRODUCTION

One of the main actors in the education system, a teacher plays a key role in helping their students with their learning (Bakharia et al., 2016; Budiharto, 2018; Ng & Ng, 2015). Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson (2013) state that teachers are agents of change. In between the pressure of rigidly mandated curriculum and the constraints of global testing culture (Spina, 2017), teachers are demanded to negotiate and navigate the tension between the internal school culture and the mandated curriculum (Ary et al., 2018; Bradbury, Lewis, & Embury, 2019; Dover, Henning, & Agarwal-Rangnath, 2016). This requirement could be dauntingly challenging for teachers globally, including Indonesia (Alhamuddin, 2018; Gunawan, 2017; Ilma & Pratama, 2015; Ismail & Fata, 2016; Prihantoro, 2015; Wangsalegawa, 2009).

Agency is a vital component in the framework of teachers' professionalism (Priestley, Biesta, Robinson, 2015a; Fullan, 1993, 1999). Teacher agency brings humanism to teaching professions as it considers different aspects of a teacher as a human being who possesses the capability to think and act based on their free will (Carter Andrews et al., 2016; Wehling and Charters, 1969). Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson (2013) claim that teachers' values and beliefs attained from their life and professional histories shape their agency.

A Jesuit-built Senior High School (SHS) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, is one example of a school which is known to have a well-established Jesuit school culture which emphasizes the values of leadership and character-building (Sartono, Muhadjir, & Sumarno, 2015; Whitehead, 2016; Widayanti, 2017).

As a Jesuit college, the school is run under the fundamental principles of the Ignatian Pedagogy. The school keeps the Jesuit motto *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*, which means for the greater glory of God (O'Brien, 2015). The leaders of the school summarized the principles into five practical pointers, namely competence, conscience, compassion, consistency, and commitment.

Furthermore, the all-boy school also believes in an idea which they call the *Pendidikan Bebas*; which is translated into *Free Will Education* (FWE). The idea of FWE is supposedly believed to be one practical variety of *Liberal Arts Education* due to its beliefs in the freedom of thought and expression, to think, talk and act with a sense of understanding and responsibility within the right conscience (Oei, 1976; Kartono, 1999; Kartono & Cahyadi, 1999; Prihartoyo & Dwiningrum, 2014; Widayanti, 2017).

This school has a set of unique characteristics in comparison to other schools. Both students and teachers are allowed to grow their hair long, and to wear outdoor sport sandals instead of shoes. School uniforms are only required on Mondays. The student-teacher relationship is made as egalitarian as possible, making them to maintain a friend-like familiarity with their teachers and vice versa (Kartono, 1999; Prihartoyo & Dwiningrum, 2014; Sartono, Muhadjir, & Sumarno, 2015; Widayanti, 2017). These features are unique in Yogyakarta's context, where most SHS demands their students to have clean and neat haircuts, wear proper shoes with certain dominant colors, usually black, wear different sets of uniform for a week, and speak formally when addressing their teachers in Indonesian or higher levels of Javanese.

One of the nine Jesuit Colleges in South East Asia, the school is responsible to maintain its culture while promoting the values of Ignatian Pedagogy seen through its FWE idea and implementation. The school would always have to ensure that its culture is not stalled in the state of stagnancy, that its esteemed values seen through the profiles of its teachers, students, and management would still give positive impacts for other relevant parties (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Levin, 2014; Mangali & Hamdan, 2015). In the ever-changing world with its values, the school, its culture, and especially its teachers cannot afford a stalemate condition (Patterson, 2014). This is where the role of its teachers as agents of change is needed (Jones and Charteris, 2017; Taylor, 2017; Yanmei, 2014).

Previous studies done on the Jesuit school were about the students and their learning strategies (Hadian and Wirawan, 2005; Permatasari et al., 2011), character building, and management (Prihartoyo & Dwiningrum, 2014), and leadership (Widayanti, 2017). This research focused on the school's English teachers' transformations and their agencies throughout their teaching careers in this school. In

particular, this study attempts to capture some reflection for the school upon its culture, belief, and benefactors which have been contributing to the Indonesian education system for years through the lenses of Narrative Inquiry (NI) and Critical Self-Reflection on Assumptions (CSRA) (Mezirow, 1978, 1996; Mezirow et al, 2000). On the one hand, Clandinin's (2016) NI is set to gather, analyze, and retell humans' stories through academically-systematic steps. On the other hand, Mezirow's (1978, 1996) CSRA, further elaborated by Kitchenham and Chasteauneuf (2009), was intended to monitor adult-learners' meaning-making perspectives on how these people may interpret their life experiences. Also, teacher agency (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2013) which is situated within school culture are established as benchmark theories utilized in this study.

The data owned by the school show that between 2018 and 2019, twenty-eight studies had been conducted in the school. Fifteen of them were undergraduate theses, 12 of graduate theses, and 1 of a professional field (Nuh, 2013). Of these 28 studies, four major areas of students are curriculum (36%), spirituality (18%), language/literacy (18%), and learning methods (18%). The remaining 11% addresses student-parent relationships and student depression. No research on both these teachers' agency and/or transformative learning has been conducted. The researchers expected that the school's teachers and their agency would have contributed to the school's progress.

Agentic teachers are believed to contribute to constructing student identity (Biesta et al., 2015; Huda et al., 2017; Neto, 2015). Whereas schools with fervent student identity which stand the test of time would eventually have a positive school culture (Budiraharjo, 2016). As Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) explain, school culture in general is the personality of a school, which is constructed by collective programming of the mind (p. 8) and differentiates the affiliates of one organization's members from another. Teachers are the people "behind the change" that help mold how effective a school culture could be (pp. 9-10). Deal and Peterson (2016) emphasize that school culture represents the school's "unwritten rules and traditions, customs, and expectations (p. 24)", which the members of the school have sensed but often find it difficult to elaborate. It is unique, strong, and influential that drives, defines, and promotes the school. Within school culture, there are guiding values that are believed, practiced, and passed on for generations as the soul of the school itself (Ivanova and Sokolov, 2015; Van der Wende, 2017).

Given the long tradition of the Jesuit SHS (established in 1948) and its reputation, it is of paramount importance to reveal: 1) What impacts of school culture did the four English teachers perceive to have taken place in their professional careers? 2)

How did the perceived transformation with regards to teachers' self-agency occur?

This study is built upon related theories on education, which provide major tenets to draw. Liberal arts serves as a foundation for education in this SHS, as elaborated in the following excerpt:

"The education in this college accentuates the individual's liberty to think, to make decisions, and to act upon the choice, in which it is the concrete manifestation of the value of freedom owned by the children of God. (Romans 8:21)

... they would be able to take the responsibility of their own choices and actions, treating others with the highest respect, empathizing for the poor and the helpless, and being benignant to their living environment." (Kartono, 1999)

In contrast with newer concepts like competency-based education, liberal arts education prioritizes human potentials. Its major tenets include beliefs that (a) humans can decide what is good and what is bad, and (b) humans are held accountable for what they choose. The Golden Rule suggests that exercising one's freedom cannot transgress other's freedom (Carpenter, 2015; Christie, et al., 2015). Data gathered in the study demonstrates that there is a tapestry of praxis, i.e. a combination of approaches and techniques, from technical (such as disciplinarian ones) to symbolic activities such as a spiritual retreat, ecological awareness, social activities, like living with garbage pickers).

## METHOD

Given the retrospective nature of data to assess personal transformations of teachers, the research utilized Narrative Inquiry (NI) as its approach (Bamberg, 2016; Clandinin, 2016; Hickson, 2016; Kim, 2015). Following the NI, researchers listened to and investigated research respondents' stories with the purpose of co-constructing narratives with each of them, maintaining "an equal voice" in deciding the significance of the shared experiences. The equal voice was reached through maintaining an egalitarian stance during the data gathering process, where ideas and thoughts were freely exchanged and appreciated. NI was seen to become a powerful tool to investigate the reflection of teachers' career journey into teaching (Hickson, 2016). An alumnus of the school, the first researcher had insider knowledge of the school and therefore enhanced a high degree of self-reflexivity to the research (Pezalla et al., 2012).

The data gathering techniques involved two activities, i.e. interviews with four male English teachers (aged between 30 to 60 years of age) and with students, as well as school/class observations. These four teachers were all the male full-time English teachers working at the school, with at least 15 years of teaching experience in the school. Out of four teachers, three of them were currently holding administrative positions. All

graduated from the same Bachelors's in the English education program at the same university in town. One of them earned his masters' degree overseas, and one of them was currently taking his in town. Each teacher was interviewed four times, each lasted for at least 60 minutes up to 90 minutes.

The interviews, which were done in Bahasa Indonesia, were conducted at the school during school hours. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a prepared interview protocol, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Member checking was done to maintain the data validity of the data gathered. A total of eight students from all four classes were interviewed during the class breaks. Picked semi-randomly, the interviewees were set to provide a balanced view of the teachers' statements. The school observations were recorded in field notes on how the four participants taught in their classrooms. To avoid bias and maintain the objectivity of the note-taking, bracketing was used to split the researchers' opinion with the actual observed data in the field (Moustakas, 1994; Gearing, 2004).

Data analysis followed four major steps as follows. First, the interview transcripts were read multiple times to get an overall picture as set up in the research thesis, i.e. transformed agencies of English teachers. Second, meaningful units (thematic ones) were identified, with the focus of clarifying the major thesis that guided the research. Third, self-reflexivity was applied by identifying salient points, which were facilitated by bracketing. Finally, the narratives of each respondent were written.

The participants' responses were categorized into four groups, namely narrative, systemic, therapeutic, and epistemic critical self-reflection (Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2009). Narrative critical self-reflection refers to teachers' reflection upon something that has been signaled to them about themselves. Systemic critical self-reflection refers to their understanding of their interactions with the context they are living and working in. Therapeutic critical self-reflection means the teachers were expected to reflect upon their conflicting feelings about a particular issue. While Epistemic critical self-reflection refers to teachers' reflection upon a personal assumption in a broader context possibly including its "causes", "consequences," and "nature."

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research has two main objectives. The first is to describe the kind of school culture that is perceived by the English teachers, specifically when they have been living out their professional life as English teachers for their entire professional career. The impacts of the school culture are captured from the narratives and elaborated stories told by these teachers, according to what is defined by Mezirow (1996) and developed again by Kitchenham and Chasteauneuf (2009).

The second objective is to describe how these four English teachers experienced transformed agencies. Drawing from literature of teaching from non-systemic perspectives, Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson (2015b) positioned teaching as a profession as a meaning-making process. The concept of professionalism is not interpreted from the sociological point of view (e.g. Abbot, 2016), but more about sense-making enterprise (e.g. Palmer, 1998).

Therefore, the result of the research can be categorized into two major groups, namely: 1) how the four areas of subjective reframing are seen in each individual's narrative, and 2) the emergence of a sense of shared commonality guiding these four teachers to engage in their agencies to be transformed.

### Subjective reframing

In a broad stroke, it can be summarized that the four teachers of this research underwent transformed agencies at varying degrees, which reflect the uniqueness of their own identities, challenges, personal backgrounds, dreams, meaning-making processes, and temporality. Their transformed agencies were materialized in four subjective reframing, namely narrative, systemic, therapeutic, and epistemic. Qualitative data, these four reframing are by nature all intertwined and redundant.

Generally, from the thematic units gathered from the interviews, it was discovered that the transformation on the systemic level [Sy] was the highest (37%), followed by epistemic [Ep] (19%), and then therapeutic [Tp] (19%) and last but not least, narrative [Nt] (15%). The numbers resulted from the value of the x counted from the total thematic units found within the participants' narration, as presented in Table 1:

Table 1  
Distributions of CSRA

Teachers	Nt	Sy	Tp	Ep
Waskito (P1)	2 pts (13%)	9 pts (56%)	1 pt (6%)	4 pts (25%)
Kuncoro (P2)	3 pts (17%)	5 pts (28%)	2 pts (10%)	8 pts (45%)
Janadi (P3)	2 pts (12%)	3 pts (19%)	8 pts (50%)	3 pts (19%)
Lesmono (P4)	3 pts (17%)	8 pts (44%)	2 pts (11%)	5 pts (28%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 pts (15%)</b>	<b>25 pts (37%)</b>	<b>13 pts (19%)</b>	<b>20 pts (29%)</b>

### Waskito (P1)

A two-term school administrator, Waskito appears to address more on the Systemic and Epistemic levels. On the Systemic level, it is evident that Waskito focused more on outcome-based education as a new system that was imposed in the school. He maintains that the conceptual framework of Liberal Arts Education remains relevant for the last 70 years and for years to come. The state-mandated curriculum is seen to impoverish the dearly-held framework. The school must go beyond the highly-prescriptive requirement set by the government. Instead, the school needs to constantly develop strategies to communicate the school's values to the parents, to nurture the familiar-bond between colleagues, and how the school as a Jesuit institution contributed towards the greater range of national education which was targeted to construct a robust system that was also well coordinated.

Waskito emphasized his belief in choices versus the rule. As a rule keeper, he was surprisingly mentioning how rules are against choices. He promoted the school policy on how "students must be given the full liberty to make choices". "Therefore, fewer rules are needed so that they (the students) can think – I mean ... how can you choose if you have so many rules constraining you?"

*"We must live in the values, and let the values show our quality in life. Without our experience, there is no way that the impartation process can be done to the students. I must look deeper into myself, and make changes before I can do it (make changes for the students) (int)."*

On the narrative level, it was discovered that in Waskito's past context, specifically, the people around him helped him construct the concept of what it means to be a teacher. His father, his aunt, and uncles were teachers, and even his wife came from a family of teachers too. About this he mentioned:

*"I guess, these facts (being surrounded by teacher figures along with his lifetime career) have influenced me greatly, and what a funny coincidence that when I was in junior high, I wanted to be a teacher. I thought being a teacher is a fine job indeed,... (and my) motivation was eventually purified (int)."*

As time went by, Waskito also did mention his incapability in fulfilling the expectation of others, in his case, especially related to using literary work for English learning. Revealing one of his vulnerable points, he mentioned:

*"I did not master English Letters as a subject specifically. What I had was simply not enough. Many of my colleagues... including the headmaster have also (asked) for me specifically teaching English literature to my students (int)."*

The researchers' classroom observation and field note also did confirm that Waskito, really was teaching in the way that he said he would. He built connections

through life stories. It is a way in which he tried to reach out and communicate with this “less-talking more gadget” millennial students.

The transformation can be seen in how he positioned himself in the classroom. He assumed the role of a sharing-friend. Always hoping that when he opened himself to his students, they would also open themselves up. However, he admitted that he didn't get the gist of how to best communicate with his students. His perception of the teacher's professional work and image did change. On the therapeutic level, it was exposed that there was a value clarification. In the beginning, he accepted teaching as a profession more of a reactive response to external circumstances like the availability of job vacancy in certain schools. Years afterwards, as he got deeper into this profession. He got even more reflective. He asked questions, and always tried to figure out solutions to his challenges and problems. Instead of treating teaching as an arduous duty, he treated it as a puzzle to be solved.

#### **Kuncoro (P2)**

The interview and observation data suggest that Kuncoro held a more traditional teaching role compared to Waskito. *First*, the way he arranged the lessons did not allow students to enjoy much freedom. He even admitted to feeling insecure when his students outperform him. *Second*, he sets up certain boundaries and spaces for students to explore under his scrutiny. Playing a role as a pacesetter, he maintained his classes as a race, in which he could compete and demonstrate his showmanship to his students. *Third*, a sense of insecurity has inevitably put him into a well-prepared teacher. He faithfully maintains the spirit “I am the source of knowledge”, but still, “I have to transform myself regarding the changes that occur beside me”. Accordingly, he keeps himself updated all the time through his studies. On a narrative level, Kuncoro reflected on direct and indirect feedback of the people around him during the early years of his career. Coming from a religious Catholic family background has given him a concept of self-discipline. When financial trials came to his family, he was “forced to figure out how to survive while continuing his study (*int*).” The difficult process for him in achieving a bachelor's degree in a deep financial struggle has taught him the meaning of hard-working. He believed in himself. He built up his confidence in his loud and clear voice, and also his way of delivering materials through authentic audio sources.

On the epistemic level, Kuncoro described teaching in three words: proud, challenging, and convenient. He found teaching to be something that he should and is proud of because he believed that De Britto is a well-known school in Indonesia. Challenging because in his view, teaching is a competition with his students as he finds that very often, his students'

English are very good. Convenient because he sees teaching as a platform where he feels comfortable to work in, to improve himself, to go abroad and meet native speakers of English. And when asked about the reason for being a teacher, he mentioned:

*“it went back to the idea of better understanding myself. I understand myself as someone who has a loud voice, I feel that I have good clarity when I speak, and that I like explaining things, I like meeting a lot of people, and I think that's why I teach (*int*).”*

From economic reasons, he finds becoming English teacher is a very exciting stage of his life that he did not take any other job than teaching because he eventually finds himself enjoying it even more.

On the therapeutic level, he mentioned how the Liberal Arts Education changed his perception of teaching and how teaching should be done. He found that teaching can give him more than just the happiness and satisfaction of meeting his excitement in learning English together with his students. He reflected a lot on how his learning experiences can be shared with his students. His love for learning the English language came from direct experiences with authentic sources, which he very much enjoyed. From the classroom observations, it could be seen that he emphasized introducing the students to what he called “interesting authentic materials” like videos and movies for his students to learn from. He believes that learning “heals”. Thus from economic reasons, he treated his teaching as a lived-experience that can be experienced also by his students.

On the systemic level he showed a certain degree of understanding on the school's view on Liberal Arts by mentioning:

*“For me, being liberal does not simply mean doing whatever we want to do. Whether students like it or not, this school is a place where education must be maintained and discipline must be upheld in a good way. Learning is fun but you must also be disciplined. A good education is a matter of free-way of expressing their dreams, their willingness to open up their minds, to propose their ideas to other people, to their friends, and their teachers (*int*).”*

On the concept of teacher role he mentioned:

*“I guess that we (teachers), of course, have a significant role in promoting the values. It is the most challenging side of our job here, we must be good models for the students. What we expect them to do, must be presented first in the correct way... Then we let them (the students) improvise (*int*).”*

A year later, Kuncoro held an administrative position. But yet his view on how learning should be nurtured is unchanged. He said how

*“the school facilities must facilitate my students to grow in the values. Our decisions must not*

*limit them from exploring the possibilities of their creativity. I still believe in the actual life-learning process, and not a boring one (int)."*

Kuncoro's explanation of how English has changed his life and has given him the happiness and passion to be a teacher was reflected in how he released his policies as one of the culture keepers. The students also mentioned that even though sometimes it could be "monotonous", Kuncoro's approaches are "interesting" for them.

### **Janadi (P3)**

Janadi emphasized religious approaches to dealing with his students. He exercised *cura personalis*. The catalytic changes on him appeared to occur upon his reflection on his past as a struggling student. His personal struggles led him to be more compassionate. He argues that students cannot be generalized. In contrast to Kuncoro's view on disciplining students, he appears to listen to his students more.

The "youngest" among the four English teachers, Janadi demonstrates the highest level of therapeutic turns. His narrative is filled with biblical verses. His activity at schools also reflects on his commitment to embracing the Ignatian Pedagogy. He even dubbed himself "father (int)" to his homeroom students. He opined how every student is unique and is his individual; "to understand them means understanding their personality as a complete individual. You cannot judge or see them by the actions and words of others. They must be seen as the complete individual they are (int)."

On the narrative level, Janadi's experience of achieving his bachelor in a longer time than expected has given him the understanding that every individual, like he did, has his own needs and urgency. His unique background leads him to bring forward wise phrases, like "always be original" and "do what you must". He admitted to owe his lecturers who faithfully maintain a high expectation on him despite many challenges. Being raised by parents who are teachers inspired him heavily too. He saw how his parents, being teachers, were able to have so much quality time to give for him and his brother. On this issue he mentioned:

*"Yes, I did want to be a teacher. I witnessed how happy and pleasant my parents were, being teachers. This has inspired me. My mom was an English teacher too ... I used to learn English together with my mom's students... It is like I was raised to be a teacher as from the 6th grade I was already asked to assist my parents, mentoring our course students. I enjoyed my time at the English Language Education Study Program ... it was a life-changing and inspirational chapter of my life (int)."*

On the epistemic level, Janadi realized how he has successfully carried on the legacy of his parents, who taught him to maintain a parent-child relationship

with his students. When asked about whether or not his current state of being a teacher is like what he had imagined back then, he mentioned "Yes, it is. As I have imagined, I am glad how I have decided to teach." Secondly, Janadi also comprehended that this would not be possible without the liberty given by the school's principle of Liberal Arts Education. Concerning this matter, he mentioned :

*"The freedom that we have gives us the creativity that we need to learn more than we can expect. Outside (in schools other than the Jesuit school), everything can be very rigid. Here, it is different, when you want to proceed, to develop you are given the liberty to do so. Being independent requires liberty; the liberty to make choices to decide what is good (int)."*

On the systemic level, Janadi comprehends the school as a place where character building is nurtured, and the teachers are initiators of students' comprehension of the school's values. The process reaches out to three areas 1) personality, 2) thoughts, and 3) logic. Teachers are to direct and help the student in developing these three areas, number one being the most important one. Concerning the curriculum, Janadi deplored how the "overwhelmingly many materials are to be delivered with a very limited time allocation", thus he regretted how he could only give so much for his students. Amidst the business and the tight schedule of the curriculum, Janadi showed his "fatherly figure" side from this statement, for example:

*"For me, these kids still need to be accompanied and guided in the right way. If you say that it is better to let them be on their own, I cannot let them do so. On the other hand, I will constrain them in some ways. These kids ... living in their boarding houses ... only just graduated from junior high school, and they have not yet figured out how to live here in Yogyakarta. Just like their protective parents, I would act like so. When I see that a kid can be fully trusted to handle things on his own, I will let them be. But still, I will watch over them ... I would say 60% freedom, and 40% constrain (int)."*

### **Lesmono (P4)**

Lesmono emphasized lived-experience and reflection. Problem-solving and the completion of developmental tasks seem to be his area of concern. Whether it is teaching, or accepting his students' perception, he always liked to ask why, or the rationale behind every choice. He also mentioned how he believed in callings. That everyone has his/her calling which must be fulfilled attentively. In the meaning-making process, Lesmono experienced transformation more on both the systemic and epistemic levels. His experience as a former administrator has allowed him to observe the school, its people, and its policy from two points of view.

Similar to Waskito, as an administrator, Lesmono deeply comprehends the system, how it was designed, how it is elaborated, and how it can be applied in the actual process. Lesmono always believes in the strength of reasoning. Understanding the cause and reasons of actions solidifies his belief that his actions were justifiable, and his decisions were based on the school values, and that his policies carry the school visions into the students' level. Lesmono was also a critical teacher in which he questions decisions, policies, and even results. One can say that Lesmono is also a proactive learner, as he likes to learn and becomes very humble when it comes to learning.

Like his colleague, Waskito, Lesmono enjoys challenges. He sees that challenges upgrade himself to be a better person. His effort to understand new things and being critical of the circumstances has brought him to a spot where changes and transformation may occur. On this matter of teachers' responsibility he mentioned:

*"My responsibility, teaching is not only developing students' knowledge, but also the other aspects.... Being a good teacher relies on experience ... It also relies on our comprehension of the values we want to deliver. I believe that every experience that we get every day must be given values (int)."*

This is in harmony with Mezirow's (1998) view on transformative learning in adult learners that talks about meaning construction upon lived experiences. Adult learning is deeply connected to how they can bestow meaning and label their experiences to become lessons and lived-experience to enhance themselves for future experiences.

On the systemic level, Lesmono believes that the teachers are in charge of operating the curriculum. The process of implementation relies heavily on the teachers and that they must be given both the freedom and the opportunity to do so. Luckily, he said, the Jesuit school has that. However as it relies heavily on teachers' autonomy, the curriculum may either be better or worse, "it's like a gamble" he mentioned. Lesmono stands on the side of the curriculum as he admitted how the school's values and the curriculum have the same focus, which is the whole development of the students. He commented, however, mentioned how the problem lies in "how well we (teachers) measure the students. A lot of aspects are not easy to be measured - what we teach, and grade should be measurable! (int)"

On the epistemic level, Lesmono explained his view on his role in "helping my students to find their freedom in learning", which is based on two things, namely 1) freedom as acting out of pure liberty without any reasonable constraints, 2) freedom as understanding your own choices and the realization upon their decision. His task is to help the students to make the right choice, based on the situation, with the

liberty to choose, and clear conscience to understand the choices. Apart from these two points, Lesmono also believed in the concept of what he calls "Development-Stage Duty" - that is,

*"when you are a student, you are responsible to finish your study, and when you are a teacher, like me, you are responsible to your family at home, and at school - one must fulfill the role ... this requires maturity (int)."*

### **Catalytic moments as a shared commonality**

Critical incidents experienced by the teachers as a turning-point create catalytic moments (Mezirow, 1998). Merriam, et al (1998) describe cataclysmic moments in adult transformative learning take place when a point of no return occurs. In reality, however, a transformation may occur non-abruptly, but more as a progression of layers of awareness. The data analysis shows that paradigmatic shifts that occurred among these four teachers took place in a non-abrupt fashion. They were formed through various activities and encounters, through the school programs and activities, a phenomenon found in Budiraharjo's (2013) transformative learning among 10 Indonesian teachers.

Overall, two findings can be discussed from the data. First, liberal arts education has created a strong school culture, which in turn created transformed agencies of teachers, especially from the Systemic and Epistemic levels. On the one hand, policies, rules, and regulations were issued to systematize preferred values into regularized activities. The school has uniquely set up the school culture as it is now. On the other hand, the teachers were very conversant to explain the rationale behind the habits of mind held by the community. These four teachers were very capable of delineating epistemological roots of all habits in the school.

The second finding is about the contrast on how the Narrative and the Therapeutic level of assumptions were not appearing that much. The researchers deduced that they were two possibilities. The first possibility is that this is because these teachers are veteran teachers with these characteristics:

- 1) That they have passed so many formative years professionally as a teacher. Which means that they do comprehend the subject matter in a well-rounded state, they understand the school's visions and missions deeply, comprehend the usual challenges and difficulties that may be experienced by their students, and that they have a good decision making skill to facilitate those needs. In other words, these teachers have had an established identity.
- 2) With long-established formative years, a problem occurred, that is a growing sense of

complacency. Working in a school with a well-established culture, working pace, and with the minimum number of drastic incidents daily, has made these teachers work in a state of stability. The researchers deduced that this sense of complacency, sense of no meaningful challenge, sense of security, in a way, have truncated their agency after a long period of working time.

- 3) Because the Narrative and Therapeutic level are very private, and that they are to be protected closely. These are their vulnerable spots. Therefore the easiest way to avoid discussion on these points is to move the locus of control outside. They did not appear because it is their self-defense mechanism, boosted by their trust, and their assumption on the society's trust towards the well-established school system.

From one of the interviews, it is the case on how the headmaster mentioned how "I would like him (English teacher) to innovate and to make a meaningful breakthrough with the scope of the study. Not merely a textbook, and curriculum-based, but since language is art, I had hopes that they would facilitate the students to explore more through the use of literary works (int)." The idea, however, was responded by one of the teachers mentioning how he was not equipped with such skill and that what he had to offer was sufficient, and how it was more important to listen to the students' stories and learn from them, rather than reading unfamiliar discourses. This is one evidence of how the well-established culture of the system did give these teachers a room to explore and expand their professional works, but at the same time also created these boundaries; stability equals boundaries. In terms of format, there is a skeletal form in the school that suppresses the aggressivity aspect of the entrance testing (as the school's response to its previous subversive state). Some would say this is the pragmatic reason why the school had changed its direction from vocally-progressive and outspoken into this well-maintained, calm downstate. Even when the principle of *cura personalis* (personal and caring), and the basic structures of the teachers' identity are still nurtured, these teachers are complacent that the potential for their agency to grow even further is utterly threatened.

## CONCLUSION

First, there was a close relationship on how the *Pendidikan Bebas* inside the Liberal Arts affected

the participants' agency. With their agency, the participants were able to utilize the most of their potentials to navigate through the challenges while developing the curriculum, as well as adjusting it to the school, its visions, and its culture. Second, the transformation regarding their agency occurs at different catalytic moments. The research has its limitations: 1) the time for the data gathering was limited because of the teacher and students' dynamic schedules, 2) the researchers were not working at the school, otherwise, a phenomenology could have been conducted to provide an even deeper understanding on the participants' stories, 3) the COVID-19 outbreak at the end of the research's data gathering moment had prevented the researchers from further conducting classroom observations, hence the number of the student interviewed was smaller than what was expected, 4) as the agency of a teacher is very dynamic and can change over time, further research is needed to document the teachers' progress and transformation.

It is recommended for future researches in teacher agency of different subjects. This research may also serve as a basis for a comprehensive phenomenology for the English teachers. It would also be interesting to research how their agency transformed upon experiencing the COVID-19 outbreak, virtual learning, and the *New Normal*.

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