

BUILDING THE RELEVANCE OF ELEMENTARY TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THE ACQUISITION OF COMPETENCIES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS.

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Abstract— This study aims to build the relevance of elementary teacher education program in the acquisition of competencies that teachers must have in three teacher education institutions in West Java, Indonesia. Indonesian government has stipulated that teachers must possess four standard competencies, i.e. pedagogic, personal, social, and professional competencies. These competencies are evaluated based on the existing curriculum design, the implementation of such curriculum in the field, lecturers performances, and teachers performances. This study employs mixed method analysis on respondents who are selected through purposive sampling, which consists of (1) vice rectors for academic and student affairs, (2) heads of quality control units, (3) heads of curriculum development teams, (4) deans and first vice deans of Education Faculties, (5) directors and first deputy directors of regional campuses (Purwakarta and Serang Campuses), (6) heads of elementary teacher education programs, (7) lecturers of elementary teacher education programs, (8) supervisors for on-the-job trainings, (9) graduates who have been working as elementary school teachers, and (10) headmasters that employ those graduates. The findings of this study indicate that to produce professional future teachers, the four standard competencies have been well-distributed in various courses from the first to the eight semesters and have been perfected through professional placement programs. Other aspects that should be developed to ensure the graduates become professional teachers are problem solving and communication skills. To answer the challenges of constant changes in the demand for educational quality, curriculum changes are not necessary. Instead, teachers' competencies should be continuously developed by visionary and highly adaptable leaders.

Keywords—*teacher competencies, curriculum, lecturers and teachers performances, relevance*

INTRODUCTION

The world understands that elementary education is a critical foundation for the sustainability of further levels of education. This means that educators in elementary education are pivotal focus for improving the quality of human development. Excellence of teachers' professionalism plays great role in creating high quality

education services. Understanding the relevance of educational qualification and competencies is an important aspect in preparing professional and innovative educators. Statistical data about elementary schools in Indonesia in 2019/2020 shows that there are 149,435 public and private elementary school in the nation, facilitating 25,203,371 students. These students are distributed in 1,121,739 learning groups (grades) and 1,112,993 classrooms. The schools are managed and operated by 556,969 headmasters and teachers, assisted by 91,120 educational staff. Considering the huge number of human resources involved in elementary schools, a comprehensive and professional management is required to produce high quality graduates and develop more professional educational services.

The quality of educational services will affect how prepared the graduates are to be future professional teachers. The global trend of the fourth industrial revolution demands every nation to move fast to compete. The solution for this challenge is to require educational institutions to improve their graduates' competitive advantage so that teachers will possess teaching knowledge to professionally deliver their services with brilliant competence. This of course is inseparable from the relevance of the educational services quality in teacher education and training programs, in which professional and brilliant educators work to teach future teachers to improve the quality of education in schools. Therefore, it is important to analyze the relevance of teachers training and education program in the acquisition of elementary school teachers competencies with empirical evidence that can be accounted for by the institution.

Several studies have examined the topic of building the relevance of elementary school teachers education program in elementary school teachers' competencies

acquisition. To develop a good curriculum for teacher education program, comprehensive cooperation among the leaders in the macro, mezzo, and micro levels are required. A study revealed that leaders in mezzo levels perceived that the relevance of professional development administration consisted of the curriculum, curriculum components, curriculum stakeholders, and types of learning result (Albashiry, Voogt, & Pieters, 2015). The success of curriculum development is indicated by students' feedback with evidence-based pedagogy, in which the pedagogy includes (1) content restructuring based on learning objectives, (2) the use of applied topics, and (3) the use of teamwork evaluated by peer tutors and educators (Dohaney, Brogt, & Kennedy, 2012). A study conducted in Ethiopia stated that curriculum development in Ethiopia was done through analysis of Joseph Schwab's deliberative curriculum theory, which consisted of 6 signs of crises in curriculum. The six signs were (1) from the field, referring to problem translocation and curriculum solution, (2) bottom-up, i.e. communication in the field pertaining to the implementation of principles, methods, objectives, and model construction from theory to meta theory and from meta theory to meta theory, (3) top-down, which is practitioners' attempt to return to the root of the problem by analyzing all principles to come up with a new and pure principle that look at curriculum as subjects, (4) sideline, i.e. the investigation of curriculum specialists (experts, commentators, historian, and critics) that focus on practitioners' contribution in the field, (5) curriculum formulation by combining the perspectives of all interested parties with little adjustment and modification, (6) heated debates, referring to the increase in eristic frequency and intensity, which becomes a method to combine thinking and action to focus on problem solving (Melese, Tadege, & Agosto, 2019).

Priestley, Minty, & Eager (2014) studied the school-based curriculum development implemented in Scotland. It focused on continuous teachers professional learning programs to develop formative evaluation and dialogous pedagogy. It emphasized teachers' understanding of appropriate methodological approaches to achieve learning objectives framed in learning, instruction, and evaluation policies. In this regard, tips for teachers inherent in teacher development programs were focused on pedagogic and formative evaluation techniques (such as asking questions and feedback) and not on its relation to the wider goals of education. The next development was a coordinated model and a series of basic principles, which included participation, dialogue, involvement, and learning, as displayed in the following figure.

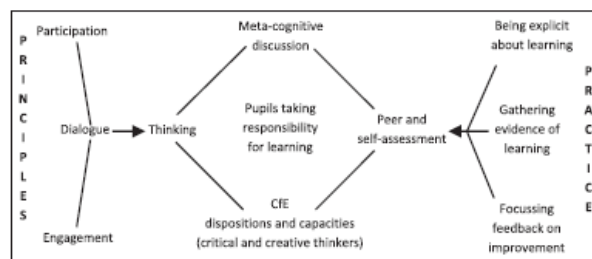


Figure 1. The local authority's model for Learning, Teaching and Assessment.

Based on the previous studies outlined above, it can be concluded that curriculum development in those studies was not done by acquisition of competencies that elementary school teachers must possess, which is the focus of this study. As has been discussed before, elementary school teacher education program must be built based on its relevance to competency requirements of elementary school teachers. This means that the present study is completely different from existing studies on the same topic. The present study is necessary for developing the current elementary school teacher education program, as well as in the future, in Indonesia.

Most experts agree that all aspects that will affect the quality of future teachers' performance should be managed comprehensively and professionally. Since it has to do with activities being performed, the success of education program management will depend greatly on the leader's execution of every stage in achieving the program's goals, from planning, implementation, supervision, to assessment. The success of education program management depends on leader's knowledge creation in formulating a management plan by blending all aspects that will affect teaching-and-learning process into an outstanding plan so that the objectives of the program can be achieved in an effective, efficient, and productive way, in which the program gives the utmost benefit with the least risk. Some argue that the aspects to be considered in this education program management are (1) the support for students' learning, (2) didactic competence of the subjects, (3) evaluation, and (4) documentation and assessment instruments (Alvunger & Wahlström, 2018).

There are many models that have been used to showcase the effectiveness of teacher education program, including expansive learning theory, in which teacher education program focuses on learning how to redesign the framework through broad learning cycle that involves four practices, i.e. multivoicedness, knotworking, branding, and retextualization (Anagnostopoulos, Levine, Roselle, & Lombardi, 2018). An interesting model was implemented in Ghana University, in which the students were exposed to stress triggers such as academic load, financial difficulties, uncertainty of the future, social opportunities, system mobility, and others. In this model,

students who had to pass these stressors to become successful and excellent individuals faced either a fun or an intimidating possibility. This forced them to implement more adaptive coping strategies and avoidance coping strategies (Amponsah, Adasi, Mohammed, Ampadu, & Okrah, 2020). These various models of teacher education program were implemented to improve the quality of teacher education management by considering numerous aspects that were critical to the success of the program in achieving its objectives.

I. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted at a public education institution that is responsible for providing elementary school teacher education program (PGSD), namely Indonesia University of Education (UPI). The institution is popular and has great reputation in Indonesia, with six campuses in six different cities. The present study was conducted in only three of the six campuses, i.e. in West Java Province. To be more specific, the research site for this study was the campuses at Bandung City, Purwakarta Regency, and Serang Regency. This study employed mixed-method approach, using qualitative and quantitative approaches to answer the research questions. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling method. The respondents in this study were (1) vice rectors for academic and student affairs, (2) heads of quality control units, (3) heads of curriculum development teams, (4) deans and first vice deans of Education Faculties, (5) directors and first deputy directors of regional campuses (Purwakarta and Serang Campuses), (6) heads of elementary teacher education programs, (7) lecturers of elementary teacher education programs, (8) supervisors for on-the-job trainings, (9) graduates who have been working as elementary school teachers, and (10) headmasters that employ those graduates.

Table 1 : Research Sample

Category	PGSD UPI Kampus Bumi Siliwangi	PGSD UPI Kampus Purwakarta	PGSD UPI Kampus Serang
Leader of UPI: Rector and Vice Rector	Vice Rector 1		
Leader of PGSD program: director and head of PGSD program	2	2	2
Curriculum Development	1		

Team, University level			
Quality Control Team of the University	1		
Professional Placement Unit at LPPM (community service board)	1	1	1
International Cooperation Board	1	1	1
Lecturers of PGSD program from each campus	8	8	8
Lecturer of In-field Training program	6	4	4
Academic Supervisors	2	2	2
PGSD Graduates	12	12	12
Headmasters of the school where the graduates work	2	2	2

Research instruments developed in this study included (1) guideline document, (2) performance evaluation (3) guideline for field observation, (4) questionnaire. The process to analyze qualitative and quantitative data involves (1) data verification, (2) reduction of irrelevant data, (3) data validation, (4) descriptive statistics for quantitative data, (5) description of findings, (6) interpretation of findings, (7) discussion, and (8) drawing conclusion and giving recommendations.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. Teacher Competence

Indonesian government explains that (1) pedagogic competence is teacher competence in managing students' learning, which includes understanding of students, planning and implementation of learning, learning result evaluation, and developing students to actualize their potentials; (2) personal competence is personal characteristics that teachers must possess as a stable, mature, wise, charismatic, and exemplary individuals with noble characters; (3) professional competence is teachers'

ability to master the materials in a broad and in-depth way which will allow them to guide students in mastering the materials; (4) social competence is teachers' ability to communicate and build relationships effectively, to interact with students, other teachers, staff, parents, and the general public.

(1) Pedagogic competence has to do with teacher's mastery of (a) students' characteristics which include physical, moral, social, cultural, emotional, and intellectual aspects; (b) learning theories and teaching principles; (c) development of curriculum for his/her subject; (d) implementation of development activities; (e) information and communication technology; (f) assessment and evaluation of learning process and results; and (g) reflective actions to improve the quality of learning. This competence is reflected and integrated in the ability to (a) comprehend the basics of education, (b) understand the students, (c) develop curriculum and syllabus, (d) plan the lesson, (e) administer teaching and learning process, (f) utilize learning facilities and technology, (g) evaluate learning results, and (h) develop the students.

(2) Social competence includes (a) being objective (not discriminative towards students regarding their sex, religion, race, physical condition, socioeconomic condition, and status; (b) communicating effectively, emphatically, and politely in every interaction; (c) being adaptable to every condition and situation. (3) Intellectual competence has to do with critical, systematic, logical, objective, strategic, academic, and concrete thinking abilities. Meanwhile, (4) professional competence means (a) knowledge, skills, and attitude mastery; (b) sustainable professional development; and (c) information technology utilization and skills.

Management of these competencies is distributed in all compulsory subjects for students (future teachers). It requires great management skills to distribute the load appropriately in every semester that students take.

Curriculum Design of Elementary School Teacher Education Program (PGSD)

Indonesian government stipulates that all elementary school teacher education programs (PGSD) in Indonesia, provided by both public and private institutions, must utilize the national curriculum. The curriculum structure for PGSD is grouped into general subjects, educational subjects, and faculty-specific and program-specific subjects; as well as optional subjects as enrichment for students' competencies (which varies based on each PGSD).

The quality of curriculum implementation highly depends on the management of lecturers' performances,

which are evaluated based on (1) availability of syllabus and lesson plan, (2) utilization of references, (3) formulation of lesson objectives, (4) mastery of theories and basic concepts and their application, (5) utilization of teaching methodology, (6) utilization of learning technology, (7) utilization verbal and non-verbal languages, (8) ability to explain the materials, (9) analysis and problem solving skills, (10) ability to motivate students to be more involved and engaged in learning, (11) ability to inspire and manage dialogues among students and between students and lecturer, (12) ability to inspire, (13) ability to create conducive and dynamic learning environment, (14) ability to understand students' learning needs, (15) ability to manage teaching-learning process, (16) ability to evaluate learning process and results, and (17) values, ethics, and moral: honesty, objectivity, fairness, politeness, discipline, openness, and caring.

In preparing professional future teachers, microteaching is also utilized in addition to the curriculum and syllabus. Microteaching is perfected by making it compulsory for students to enroll in In-Field Introduction to Education Program. In this program, students are given real-life experience of teaching in real classrooms so that they can learn about (1) school and its environment, (2) school culture, (3) teacher responsibilities, (4) their own learning culture, (5) skills in administering teaching-learning process, (6) interaction with other teachers and with students, (7) teacher's professionalism, (8) competencies improvement, (9) teaching knowledge application, (10) lesson evaluation, (11) teaching strategies, (12) school administration, (13) lesson plan development, and (14) classroom management. During In-Field Introduction program (sometime is also known as professional placement program), they will be guided by a supervisor in (1) formulating lesson plans based on the curriculum, (2) choosing teaching method, (3) administering teaching-learning process, and (4) evaluating the lessons comprehensively through assessment of students' characters and discipline.

The competitive advantages of the graduates, based on headmasters' opinions, are their innovativeness in (1) using learning model and methods, (2) creating and utilizing learning media, (3) home visit, (4) inclusive program, (5) extracurricular activities, and (6) e-learning. However, these graduates share some weaknesses in terms of teaching experience. The lack of teaching experience should be considered by PGSD because it affects graduates' ability to communicate lesson materials and affects other skills that are required by the schools (for instance, religion-related skills for religion-based schools).

Curriculum design that contains all competencies

Curriculum design is comprised of four basic elements, namely content knowledge, pedagogic content, general education content, and professional disposition. These basic elements are believed to be the main competencies that teachers must possess. Edwards (2013) wrote an interesting article which stated that any changes in curriculum design of teacher education program should comply with all standards and regulations of the institution and the government. It means that political changes will greatly affect curriculum change. The ability to integrate institutional policies, interests, and vision into curriculum design will determine the success of teaching learning process.

Integrative coherence of curriculum will reflect the consistency of teaching learning process that is in line with its focus, objectives, contents, and comprehensive assessment (Sullanmaa, Pyhältö, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2019). Teachers' role in implementing curriculum in the classrooms depends on their knowledge and teaching skills, delivered through their communication skills (Essex, Alexiadou, & Zwozdiak-Myers, 2019). In short, curriculum design is considered effective based on the results of learning process and students' ability to finish their tasks and solve the problems they face. Blending all competencies that teacher possesses will be apparent in the way teachers communicate lesson materials to ensure that the lesson is delivered accurately, appropriately, and in an understandable way (Toom et al., 2019). Learning process occurs anywhere as an experience that has to be managed innovatively to ensure that (1) knowledge, (2) skills, (3) values, (4) attitudes, and (5) experiences are instilled in students (future teachers) in such a way that conforms to institutional and governmental policies.

Curriculum implementation in the form of teaching learning process

Teaching learning process evaluated based on the 17 components in Figure 1 as curriculum implementation shows a high score. The components of content mastery, teaching methodology selection, media utilization, and assessment technique have the highest scores compared to other components. This indicates that the developed curriculum has delivered the competencies that teachers must possess. The components with the lowest scores in this evaluation are problem solving and communication skills. This is a problem because these components are crucial aspects in ensuring the materials are well-delivered and understood in teaching learning process. As Laffey & Valentine (1984) stated, effective communication is the key to successful teaching learning process. More interestingly, a study conducted by Tshuma & Shumba (2014), using 2-5-2 system in which the students learned education theories for 32 weeks, followed by 80 weeks of

in-field teaching training, and another 32-week of revision and national examination, concluded that the probability of success depended on how many resources the institution had to support the process.

Similarly, problem-solving is a competence that 21st century teachers must possess. Häkkinen et al. (2017) proposed a pedagogic framework which combined theoretical explanation, strategic teaching skills, and problem solving, focusing on metacognitive and complex social learning that involved adaptif thinking, motivation, emotion, and behaviors. It cannot be denied that every classroom has different and dynamic problems. These problems can be grouped into repetitive problems and incidental problems. Incidental problems arises due to certain condition and situation such as students' motivation or interest in the material, which is indicative of students' critical thinking that the teacher has successfully developed.

Teacher performance of PGSD graduates

Teacher performance of graduates of elementary school teacher education program scores between 3.99 and 4.10, with the highest scores in the aspects of (1) availability of syllabus, (2) availability of lesson plans, (3) formulation of objectives, (4) mastery of theories and concepts and their applications, (5) building ethics, values, and attitude such as honesty, fairness, objectivity, and discipline, and (6) ability to set good examples. The aspect with the lowest score is ability to explain materials, which has to do with mastery of materials and effective communication skills.

Van der Pers & Helms-Lorenz (2019) gave an interesting conclusion in their study, that teachers' ability to explain lesson materials in the classrooms depended greatly on how many years of experience they had. This conclusion is reasonable considering that each teaching experience will provide a chance for the teacher to reflect on his/her performance. In other words, teachers' mastery of materials and delivery strategy will develop and improve as they gain more experiences. Each teaching process will reveal new problems to tackle, which will help the teacher to find his/her own ways to effectively teach the material. Teaching experience will be an enrichment that, in turn, will become teaching knowledge. Since each teaching experience is different, teaching knowledge that each teacher has will be unique and personal.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the relevance of curriculum design in the

acquisition of competencies that future professional teachers must possess can be evaluated through the performance of graduates. The result of such evaluation should become points of consideration for the institution to maintain all good aspects and improve all weak aspects. Sustainable and continuous quality improvement requires good management that can integrate all competencies future professional teachers require so that teacher education program can be beneficial for everyone. To be more specific, the conclusions of this study are as follow:

1. Curriculum design of elementary school teacher education program should be relevant with the policies pertaining to teacher competencies, i.e. pedagogic, personal, social, and professional competencies, distributed well in various subjects that have been planned and will be delivered to students with the objective of preparing future teachers who satisfy the national standards. The success of curriculum implementation will depend on lecturers' performance, according to the standards set by the institution and the government, and on personal ability of each student (future teacher) to communicate and solve problems in the classroom. All four competencies are built and developed through teaching learning process administered in the classroom and in the field. The more teaching experience a teacher has, the better his/her ability to choose means of communication to explain the materials.
2. Curriculum implementation evaluated is very good, as evident in the management of the study program, teaching job description of the lecturers, evaluation of lecturers performance, and high GPA of the students. In addition, in-field introduction program provides invaluable experiences for future professional teachers.
3. Lecturers' performances, evaluated based on 17 aspects, show high average score. Similarly, teacher performance of PGSD graduates from the three campuses scores high. These indicates that professional management of education will improve the quality of education services and will satisfy the expectation of students, lecturers, institution, elementary school students the graduates teach, parents, the government, and society in general because the elementary school teacher education programs are able to prepare future teachers with competitive advantages to work in local, national, and international levels.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation, it is recommended that (1) the competencies that future teachers must have should be determined based on, and relevant with, the required skills demanded by the current and future needs, which means that continuous and sustainable improvements are necessary; (2) curriculum consistency should be maintained; any adjustment or modification should only involve what skills that teachers need, not the entire curriculum because changing the curriculum is ineffective and inefficient and will only reduce quality and productivity; and (3) improvement must be made on building visionary leaders with high adaptability to lead education institutions.

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