

## Teacher Certification Program in Indonesia: Problems and Recommendation for the Betterment of the Program

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**Abstract:** *This article is aimed at highlighting some facts to see whether the Indonesian teacher certification program is a solution or another problem for Indonesian national education. Since 2006 Indonesian government has established a huge educational reform of upgrading teacher quality by administering teacher certification program. The program has been evaluated by many researches and educators, largely in terms of its system and its impact to students learning. Some weaknesses of how the program is implemented are revealed. Some researches, also found that the program have not yet significantly contributed to students achievement. At the end of the paper, to improve teacher's quality, the author suggests the government to provide teachers with appropriate teacher training facilities and infrastructure, learning material, and more importantly evaluation for the sustainable quality. The government needs to work together with teacher education colleges to think about what make teacher professional. Also, government needs to establish a regular evaluation mechanism to monitor the sustainability of certified teachers' quality.*

Keyword: *teacher certification, implementation, teacher quality*

### Introduction

It has been widely believed that teacher's quality has a strong impact on students achievement (Coleman, et.al, 1966; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond (2000); and OECD (2001) and Cunningham, 2007) revealed that teachers have important role in students' academic achievement. Research on teacher's quality has been done for so many years. One of most prominent is Coleman's study (1966) that aimed at examining the question of whether specific school resources affect achievement score. This study involved 60,000 teachers in 3,000 schools. The study found that student achievement is associated with teacher's verbal ability and teacher's level of education. Another research by Schereens and Bosker (1977) reported that one fifth variances in student achievement is caused by the difference in individual teacher, and other remaining variances are associated with individual children and the characteristics of the schools they attend.

As the quality of teacher has a strong impact toward student achievement, it is crucial to improve teacher's quality. In Indonesia, the government has actually attempted to improve the

quality of teachers and the overall quality of education sector for quite several times. Fahmi, Maulana and Yusuf, (2011) mentioned about Indonesian government efforts to improve teacher's quality. For instance, in 1960 the teacher training school was transformed into *Sekolah Pendidikan Guru* (SPG) or School of Teacher Education. Then under the law of 1989, the teacher basic level was increased from secondary education to higher education. Some years later, in 2005, the government issued the teacher Law no 14 of 2005, which requires teachers to have the minimum qualification of 4 year degree of university.

Indonesian government has issued education policy reformation through teacher Law no 14 of 2005 which directed at increasing teacher quality. Through teacher education the government tries to improve the Indonesian education by upgrading teacher's qualification and skills (Koning, 2012).

In relation to improving teacher quality such as their qualification and skills, Indonesian government designs a teacher certification program (Koning, 2012). In addition, teacher certification is also aimed at improving welfare, status and reward systems for teachers (Fahmi, Maulana and Yusuf, 2011). The government believes that this program is the most comprehensive strategy for teacher quality improvement.

Indonesian teacher certification program requires teachers to have the minimum qualification of 4 year degree of university (Jalal, et al, 2009). This is actually the major challenges. With the implementation of teacher Law no 14 of 2005, the issue on unqualified teachers became much serious. There are nearly one million teachers needed to be upgraded to at least a four-year degree. Other challenges are Indonesian diverse educational system, uneven teacher distribution, and over-supply contract teachers. With these educational challenges, it is relevant to see whether teacher certification is a solution or another problem. Therefore, it is necessary to highlight some areas on Indonesian educational challenges, teacher certification in Indonesia and beyond (USA) issues, studies on Indonesia teacher certification program as well as the impact of teacher certification in Indonesia.

### **Indonesian Educational Challenges**

Before we discuss the issues of teacher certification in Indonesian context and beyond (USA), the studies on Indonesian teacher certification program and the impact of teacher certification, it is essential to discuss Indonesian educational challenges which cause carrying out teacher certification program is not easily managed.

#### *High number of unqualified teachers*

Indonesia has many teachers whose qualification below the one required by the ministry of education. Statistic from the Ministry of National Education (MONE, 2008 in Jalal, et.al 2009) indicates that teachers in Indonesia have relatively lower level of academic qualification

than those neighboring nations. More than 60 percent of the total 2.78 million teachers have not reach the level of academic qualification of four year bachelor degree (D4/S1). This statement is strongly emphasized by Baedhowi (2008) that only 41, 7 percent out of 1.143.000 teachers have reached the bachelor's degree (S1).

Unfortunately, many of these teachers work in remote area which has multi-graders schools, which usually consist of many students in one big class with a few teachers. Consequently, teachers should be at school teaching the students and not be able to leave the classroom to participate in any professional development programs

#### *Diverse educational system*

Indonesian managed a workforce of approximately about 3.6 million teachers and 50 million students in 250.000 schools (Koning, 2012). Indonesia manages one of the largest and most diverse educational systems in the world. Consequently, this leads to many challenges. Students from low-income family, remote and poor area are more likely to drop out of school at secondary or even primary level than students from wealthier area. And these students will potentially live without completed basic education and work to any field that accept their condition.

#### *Uneven teacher distribution*

Indonesia has hundreds of schools spread out from Sabang to Merauke which make it difficult to manage a good teacher distribution. There are only fewer teachers remain teaching at schools in the remote area where they are firstly assigned. Many of them find ways to be able to get transferred to other more promising area (Koning, 2012). This resulted in an uneven distribution. The schools in remote area tend to have shortage of teachers for years and the schools in wealthier area tend to have over-supply teachers. Uneven teacher distribution can be caused by the unequal facilities in every school. Every teacher wants to have at least decent school facilities that help them teaching. How many teachers would like to devote themselves to a school where even for copying materials one needs to walk miles a way to the city?

#### *Over-supply contract teachers*

Facing the shortage of teacher in remote area, the government then hires contract teachers. Many contract teachers are hired directly by school, to replace retired teachers. Contract teachers are paid less than civil servant teacher, it's about a tenth of a civil-servant teacher's salary (Koning, 2012). However, still many contract teachers want to take this position, because they hope that someday they may be converted to civil servants teachers. Many are working for more than ten years as contract teachers and have not been converted yet.

### **Indonesian Teacher Certification**

As it has been previously stated, teachers are always seen the one who are responsible for the success or the failure of student performance. Therefore, Indonesian government has strived to upgrade Indonesian teacher's qualification and skills through teacher certification program. This program was mandated by the law no 14 of 2005. The objective of the law is to create good quality of national teachers as they should have good competencies in pedagogy, teaching professionalism, personal character and social issue.

Indonesian teacher certification program has been started since 2006. Fahmi, Maulana and Yusuf (2011) believe that this program could be the biggest teacher certification program in developing world, if not in the world. This program has a target of certifying 2.3 million elementary and secondary teacher in 2015. With this magnitude program, all teachers in Indonesia will eventually be certified by 2015. The budgetary cost of this program is estimated to be about US\$ 460 million.

Jalal, et al (2009) states there are two steps for an in-service teacher to become certified: (1) the completion of a competency examination which is done by the accredited LPTK, (2) the completion of performance test. This is completed during the school visit done by the trained school supervisor, senior teacher or principals. The later is still practically questioned since studies find no classroom evaluation is thoroughly done.

A more step by step procedure of teacher certification in Indonesia is provided by Fahmi, Maulana and Yusuf (2011). First, teachers, either civil servant or non civil servant and either those of public schools or private schools, need to write a portfolio which later will be reviewed by the evaluators in LPTK (teacher training institution). If the evaluators agree that the minimum standard has been met, then the LPTK grants the teacher the certificate. On the other hand, if they think the teacher has met the minimum standard then LPTK offers two options either (1) he can enroll in Portfolio and Education training for Educational profession (PLPG) or (2) he has to revise their portfolio to be submitted later for next evaluation. After submitting the revised version, if the evaluators from LPTK still think the teacher's achievement is below the standard then the teacher has to enroll in the PLPG program.

After completing PLPG program, teachers will be evaluated through the result of a competence test. If they pass the test then they will be certified. If they fail, then they are allowed to re-take competence test. Once they pass, they will get certified. However, if they do not pass the test, they will be transferred to the local education technical office for further training.

Teachers, who pass, either directly through portfolio assessment or after undertaking a remedial training course (PLPG), receive a certificate, teacher registration number, and a professional allowance to the value of one month's wage. The education and culture ministry announced that by 2015, only certified teachers would be allowed to teach.

## **Studies on the Implementation of Indonesian Teacher Certification Program**

In relation to the implementation of teacher certification, there are many studies were conducted to see the weaknesses of the implementation in terms of its system, evaluation, and its effect toward teachers quality and students achievement.

Teacher certification system In Indonesia has been far from perfect. Hastuti, et al, (2009) found that the implementation of teacher certification has several weaknesses. There are problems in horizontal coordination between institutions, the socialization of the program, and the informational discrepancies. In addition, Hastuti, et al (2009) also found that in a limited number of cases there are indications of deception in the determination of participants and in the compilation of portfolios. Moreover, there were participants who passed have not received the registration numbers and teaching certificates and some reports of the held up payment of the professional allowance.

Furthermore, Koning (2012) believes that the Indonesian government only focuses his attention on upgrading teacher workforce. Little attention is given to the good school infrastructure, appropriate professional development material, and sufficient teacher training facilities. To improve national education quality, there are surely other factors that need to be considered to support the improvement of education quality.

In relation to the effectiveness of the program, some evidences reveal that the program has not been successful in reaching its objective as to improve national education quality. Abbas (2013) in his article in the Jakarta Post of April 27, states that teacher certification program contributes little to the improvement of national education quality. The world bank, as reported by Abbas (2013), conducted extensive data collection from 2009 onward to observe the impact of teacher certification program on student learning at 240 public elementary schools and 120 junior high school, including the testing of students and teachers in the Indonesian language and mathematics. The study compared students' test scores on math, science, Indonesian and English between those who were taught by certified teachers and those by uncertified ones. The result demonstrated neither a significant difference between the groups nor the influence of certified teachers on student achievement.

In addition Fahmi, Maulana and Yusuf (2011) investigate the difference in student's performance (in this case national exam score) attributed to the certification. Their findings suggest that teacher certification has no impact on student's achievement. Teachers who are certified are indeed having a better standard of living, but their certification as teachers does not really affect students' achievement. This finding is also in line with the result of study done by Evans, Tate, Navarro and Nicolls (2009) which found that the impact of teacher certification is only in increasing teacher's living standard but not in either increasing students' achievement or teacher's quality.

Similarly, Kusumawardhani (2013) found that teachers who are certified do not increase students learning outcome as measured by standardized test; and there is no evidence that these teacher performs better in teacher's test, have no side job or have lower probability of being absent. Fahmi, Maulana and Yusuf (2011) also mention that despite the provided peer-teaching course in PLPG program, PLPG still fails to see teacher quality in the classroom. It seems there is little effort done by the government to assess teacher classroom teaching quality. This lack of evaluation on classroom teaching quality can be compared to the practice of teacher certification in the USA. Site (2009) states that the candidates who apply to be certified in the USA are required to submit a 20-30 minute video-recorded sample of his or her teaching performance in a classroom of students. This way the real classroom evidence is brought to be evaluated.

The obvious failure of the Indonesian teacher certification stems from its lack of management (Abbas, 2013). The bureaucracy within the education sector keeps its old habits intact, as what happen in the passing rate of national exam, the passing rate of teacher certification also has reached 100 percent every year. In his article, Abbas (2013) concludes that "teacher certification program is no more than a formality" By this 100% passing rate every year, we should question the quality of professional competence assessment which is applied in our teacher certification program.

To support Abbas (2013) opinion above, the study of Evans, Tate, Navarro and Nicolls (2009) suggests that Indonesian teacher certification fail to reach its objective because there is a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the training on teacher quality. The bitterest finding is well-intentioned efforts to improve teacher quality are not sustainable; when donor money runs out, the efforts will stop. The implication of their study is that improvement must be made in terms of sustainability of the program and ongoing evaluation toward the program.

In relation to the program sustainability, Jalal, et.al (2009) admit that to continue teacher improvement on sustainable basis, policy and procedure should be developed requiring teachers to remain effective and efficient. Jalal, et.al (2009) also suggest school principals to have management procedure of annual assessment to ensure their staff efficiency.

### **The Problems of Teacher Certification in Indonesia**

Based on the above discussion, many researches' find unsatisfactorily implementation of teacher certification in Indonesia. The followings are the summary of the impact of teacher certification toward our current educational condition.

*Increasing Passing Rate.* The passing rate of teachers who pass the examination is increasing year by year. This is not to show that teachers are better of doing it every year but rather the quality of the selection system is decreasing in terms of identifying good quality

teachers from the participants. Thus, almost all participants, eventually pass the selection process. Borrowing Abbas'(2013) term teacher certification in Indonesia is merely a "formality" which means it is not done appropriately for improving teachers quality.

*The short and exhausting PLPG system.* PLPG is a 10 days training program organized by teacher training university which should be attended by the participants to be trained before taking the examination of teacher certification. PLPG involves a rigorous schedule in terms of curriculum, lesson planning, peer teaching and subject field enrichment. Teachers are determined to write lesson plan, to do peer teaching, and to listen to lectures each for 10 hours straight. With this short stressfully training, teachers gain less than it is expected. Many are getting sick and hospitalized during the program, not to mention those elderly teachers who are passed away because of the burden of PLPG. Those who pass the examination return to school with the same old habit. There is no improvement because there is not quality assurance system, for instance field or on site evaluation to see how teachers do their teaching task in the classroom.

*Unprofessional Allowance.* Certified teachers are paid extra incentive which is the incentive of professional allowance. The idea of professional allowance is to make it possible for teachers to afford more professional activities, such as attending seminars or workshops, participating in teacher's forum, or upgrading their qualification. However, in practice this allowance does not necessarily influence the professional development participation; many teachers seem spend it for other living expenses instead of spending it to afford professional development activities such as attending seminar, publishing books, writing articles in newspaper, or attending graduate study program or training program

*Spending more for unimproved quality.* As it has been mentioned before, two-thirds of the additional resources went for teacher salaries and certification, yet as we shall see, studies have shown that improving teacher salaries does not correlate with improved educational results.

*Pseudo-upgrading quality.* The law of teacher no 14 of 2005, requires a teacher to have a minimum four-year degree qualification, and by this many teachers enroll to universities to upgrade their qualification but research reveals it does not guarantee significant improvement in terms of their quality in the classroom. There is no sufficient evaluation to ensure the sustainability of teacher quality. Thus, teachers stay the same, even though they have enrolled the four year university degree or attending many seminars.

*Unfair education atmosphere.* With the requirement of 24 hour per week employment contract, contract teachers are automatically excluded from the program. While in fact, contract teacher is also the one who needs to be certified to do their profession. The unfair atmosphere at schools is inevitable, certified teachers may have doubled salary and contract teachers only received a tenth of regular teacher's salary.

*Exhausting 24 hour contract employment.* The requirement of 24 hours contract employment motivates teachers to have more classes in a week; they go to another school to have extra teaching classes to fulfill the requirement. This condition is far from getting qualified teachers who can show good quality in doing their job. Teachers are determined to do 24 hour teaching contract and not even a single evaluation determine them to show good quality in teaching. What remains are the exhausted and less innovative teachers whose aim is fulfilling the employment teaching contract hour.

*Decent Learning facilities.* The teacher training universities as given mandate to train teachers are not optimally provided with good learning facilities. In PLPG program, for example, since there are thousands of teachers are sent to each LPTK (teacher training university) to be trained, the shortage of classrooms and teaching supported devices such as LCD, laptop and speakers and also poor internet connection become the problem. Many classes are lack of these devices which somehow create traditional lectures condition. With a very tight schedule during PLPG, and the poor learning resources access instructors can not train teachers optimally.

### **Recommendations for the Future Indonesian Teacher Certification Program**

The above discussion show that teacher certification program in Indonesia has obvious problems. The goal of teacher certification program is to improve teachers quality in particular and improve national education in general. However, research show the condition or the quality of national education remain the same even though teacher certification program have been implemented for some years. Therefore, it is necessary to think about solution to improve the effectiveness of the program in reaching its goal.

In this article I have several recommendations that can be considered for the betterment of the program. First, the program needs an effective selection system. The system should be able to select good teachers, and should be able distinguish them from averaged or low quality teachers. The system should be designed only to let good teachers pass it. Some criteria can be made. It may include submission of extensive self-analysis with supported documents showing their professional competence such as video of their teaching, and commentaries from their colleagues, headmaster, students and parents of students about their professional performance. Also, it may include submission of best practice report that describes their effort in the class to improve students achievement or participation. Many teachers in Indonesia have been “illiterate”; they do not take scientific writing activities as their main concern. Meanwhile scientific writing activity is very important for teachers because it encourages them to read more and to learn from experienced teachers around the world. Unfortunately, writing is not a habit for most Indonesian teachers; once they pass their initial S1 qualification, they seem to think that they have no business with reading and writing anymore. Thus, it is about time the government enhance writing as a habit by involving it as the requirement to be certified. The selection system may also include the process of peer-reviewed teaching. Therefore the examiner may see their

real performance from the submission of the classroom teaching video and also from the peer-reviewed teaching sessions.

Second, it is necessary to have on-going evaluation for the sustainable teachers quality. Unfortunately, the supervision on teacher development in Indonesia have frequently been reduced to administrative aspects only. Thus, it is difficult to check the effectiveness of the program (Kusumawardhani, 2013). Once teachers have their certification it should not last forever as what happens currently in Indonesia, but it should have an expired year. When the certificate reaches its final year, it is necessary to be renewed; teachers are retested and ones who fail need to re-endorse the certification program again. By implementing the on-going evaluation teacher quality can be sustained. Whatever the form of the program to improve teacher's quality or education, the follow-up evaluation which maintains the sustainability of the program is necessary. Otherwise, without good system of evaluation, teacher quality may remain where it was before.

Third, government should work with the teacher training institution to run programs that enhance teacher quality. What happens currently in Indonesia is always based on top-bottom system; the government makes the plan of a program and the institution run the program. Frequently, the government has a little knowledge of what teachers need; thus, the programs planned or offered by the government do not provide material expected by teachers. Therefore, it is necessary for the government to allow LPTKs work together and discuss what kind of trainings is needed by Indonesian teachers. For example, Evan, et al (2009) found that one of the gap in the training needed by teachers and training offered by the government is in terms of ICT training. Many teachers are found ICT illiterate, and they need some helps to cope with ICT related- task; however, government takes this need lightly. There are not many ICT training offer for all teachers.

Fourth, government should also give attention on providing teachers with learning facilities such as library, ICT media, open-access learning resources, and good infrastructure. Without supported learning facilities, LPTK or teacher training university can not do their job in training teachers optimally. Just to give illustration, during the session on lesson planning making, teachers should literally write pages of lesson plan, because there are not enough computers available, or if all teachers have their own laptop there is not enough electricity resources for all the computers. It is obvious that institution like LPTKs need to be provided with all supported learning device and infrastructure.

## **Conclusion**

The idea of certifying teacher is undoubtedly important because it is one of the ways to ensures that all teachers are professional teachers. The problem lies on how the program is carried out. If the objective is to improve the quality of education, then government should think

about ways that may support the improvement of education. I agree that quality of teachers should be ensured, and it is a good thing to raise the basic education for teachers. However, to improve teacher quality, the government should consider providing them with appropriate teacher training facilities and infrastructure, learning material, and more importantly evaluation for the sustainable quality. The government needs to work together with teacher education colleges to think about what make teacher professional, to develop appropriate learning material that is developed based on need analysis study and to design an assessment of professional teacher competence. Besides, government also needs to establish a regular evaluation mechanism to monitor the sustainability of certified teachers' quality. This way, teacher will always be motivated to maintain their professionalism during their career. Otherwise, this program is only succeed in upgrading teacher' living standard instead of upgrading teacher's quality. To sum up, without a good management, Indonesian teacher certification is more a problem rather than a solution.

I believe, once a well-managed system is established, it will be possible to reach the objective of the program, which is to improve teacher quality in particular and to improve national education quality in general. With a well-managed system, professional allowance is a fair reward for professional teachers. This way, teachers will give more respect and have more favorable attitude toward the implementation of teacher certification program. Hopefully, we will come to the day where professional allowance is not an end, since teachers realized the importance of empower themselves before they can empower the students.

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