



Change Initiative: Does Teacher Certification Matters?

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Abstract: *This paper attempts to discuss the change issue which is the implementation of teacher certification policy that has been implemented in Indonesia. Teacher certification in Indonesia has been implemented for almost a decade and there is not much significant evidence yet about the effect of teacher certification program on students' outcomes. This essay tries to look at the aspects that make the program successful and what are the challenges that might be faced by teachers. In exploring the issue this paper will use the following approach. Firstly, the notion of change will be discussed and then followed by the discussion of teacher certification. Then, framed against this inquiry will be the introduction of a case study based on the implementation of the teacher certification program in Indonesia. Along with the case study, the difficulties of implementing this program will be presented. Finally, several thoughts and considerations of the best solution for teachers and policymakers to respond to the situation will be drawn accordingly.*

Keywords : *change, initiative, teacher certification, teacher performance.*

Abstrak: Artikel ini mencoba membahas masalah perubahan yang merupakan implementasi dari kebijakan sertifikasi guru yang telah diterapkan di Indonesia. Sertifikasi guru di Indonesia telah diterapkan selama hampir satu dekade dan belum ada banyak bukti signifikan tentang pengaruh program sertifikasi guru pada hasil siswa. Esai ini mencoba melihat aspek-aspek yang membuat program berhasil dan apa saja tantangan yang mungkin dihadapi oleh guru. Dalam mengeksplorasi masalah ini makalah ini akan menggunakan pendekatan berikut. Pertama, gagasan perubahan akan dibahas dan kemudian diikuti oleh diskusi tentang sertifikasi guru. Kemudian, yang dibingkai berdasarkan pertanyaan ini akan menjadi pengantar studi kasus berdasarkan implementasi program sertifikasi guru di Indonesia. Bersamaan dengan studi kasus, kesulitan dalam mengimplementasikan program ini akan disajikan. Pada bagian terakhir, beberapa pemikiran dan pertimbangan serta solusi terbaik bagi para guru dan pembuat kebijakan untuk menanggapi situasi ini akan diberikan.

Kata kunci : *perubahan, inisiatif, sertifikasi guru, kompetensi.*

Teachers are one of the very strategic components in the education system and play many important roles in the broad educational process especially in school education. The teacher or educator is a very central subject for the implementation of better education quality. Thus, professional teachers are the main determinant of educational success. To

improve teachers' professionalism, a very demanding decision has been made by the government which is done through the teacher certification program. Certification is the process of giving certificates to teachers who have met the professional standards of teachers. The certification aims to improve professionalism and improve

teacher welfare. In practical, teachers' certification is carried out in the form of a portfolio assessment. The assessment includes not only pedagogical but also personality, social, and professional competency tests.

As mentioned above that certification is the process of getting the certificate for active teachers who have met the professional standards of teachers. Having those certificates is claimed to be a professional and labeled as a qualified teacher. Qualified teacher means that teachers get fully licensed or certified, demonstrates subject matter knowledge, teaching skills, and at least obtain a bachelor's degree (Solmon et. al, 2003). But, having this qualification does not mean that a teacher is considered as a quality teacher. A quality teacher is someone who enables the students to learn (Solomon et. al, 2003) and someone who able to change their competency to help the students get the better achievement (Solmon et. al, 2003).

Since having qualified teachers is important to improve students' achievement, subsequently, some policies were introduced for teachers to improve their performance. One of the initiatives is the implementation of the teacher certification program (Hanushek, 2003). Teacher certification aims to enable and enhance teachers' professionalism before they enter the classroom and prove themselves to meet the standard requirements to enter the classroom (Solmon et.al 2003).

LITERATURE REVIEW

To have better outcomes on the students' performance, the departments of education and schools often change the policy which hopefully

can find the best solution to solve a particular problem in education. This is what Cuban (1988) means by first change order whereby the change is initiated from the top level which aimed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is done without changing the organizational arrangement (p.71). Recruiting better teachers and administrators is one form of the first change order (Cuban, 1988). Further, Scott (1999) states that the change in education can be in the form of learning the program and the way or condition in which the learning programs are developed. These two major change forms then he breaks down into some specific details. Staff or teachers' support and selection are under the second form which one of the ways is to have qualified and better teachers (Scott, 1999).

According to Johnson et.al (2005) in the United States, this policy of teacher certification becomes very popular and shown to be effective to increase teacher professionalism. Certification means authentic facts that granted whether individuals are qualified to teach (Wise, 2003). This certification can be given both for beginners and professional teachers to the teachers who are professionals in other fields to have a certificate or license to teach by fulfilling some of the requirements (Johnson et. al, 2005). Referring to South California Department of Education (2006) "Highly qualified teachers are those teachers that have earned at least a bachelor's degree, demonstrate the content of knowledge in each core content area he/she teaches and do not have any waivers of the requirement for full state certification." So, teachers should complete the entire requirements to get a certificate.

To get certified, teachers have to compile a portfolio as the requirement for the teacher certification program. The portfolio contains teaching activities recoding, lesson plans, and a sample of the students' work. Further, the portfolio will be assessed by the expert and then teachers also have to follow the test as an additional requirement. As Boyd et.al (2007) states that within teacher certification often requires exam both general knowledge and teaching and also teaching the practice. However, these requirements may vary from country to country.

In Indonesia for example where the certification program has been recently conducted to enhance teachers' competency and encourage teachers to upgrade their qualification, the portfolio consisting of 10 aspects: academic qualification, teacher must hold a baccalaureate degree : Stratum 1 that is equivalent to undergraduate degree (S1) or Diploma IV (four-year Diploma), list of training that had been participated, teaching experience, lesson plan, the evaluation of teaching skill and content knowledge from supervisors, academic achievement, teacher professional development, seminar or conference participation, organization's experience in education and social and awards which are relevant to education (Ministry of Education Decree, 2007). Each of the aspects has different scores that will be accumulated. The minimum standard score is 850 and the maximum standard score is 1500 (The education ministry regulation No 14 2007). However, as an additional requirement, the teachers who did not pass the portfolio requirements have to sit in the teacher certification test (Ministry of education Decree, 2007). Based on this fact, this paper then will look

at the implementation of the teacher certification program in Indonesia.

The case study: teacher certification in Indonesia

The teacher certification program is implemented in Indonesia in 2006 to enhance teacher's quality which later hopefully will improve students' outcomes. This program is expected to be finished in 2015 to certified 2.7 million teachers (both experienced and novice teachers) who teach in public schools in thirty-three provinces in Indonesia. Every year a certain number of teachers will be certified gradually which is the first prioritize for those who have experience in teaching at least for twenty years with the assumption that these teachers will retire quickly compared to the new teachers. However, after more than a decade of teacher certification initiative, many debates and facts on the success of this initiative still arguable.

The failure faced by many teachers caused by many factors. According to Maulia (2008) from 200.450 teachers from all of the provinces in Indonesia who engage in teacher certification in 2007 only 70% of them got certified. She argues that many teachers were failed because those teachers especially teachers in rural areas did not have enough information on how to do and complete the portfolio. Additionally, Maulia (2008) says that the other cause of the failure was that these teachers were given only two days to prepare the portfolio before the notification that they entitled to follow the certification.

Besides, after a decade of the initiative has been taken, some research findings show inconsistent results towards how teacher certification contributes to the student's success. The

research from Koswara (2009) shows that the certification program can improve the professionalism and quality of teacher teaching. In the same way, Purba's research in 2010 indicates that teachers were able to perform well after passing the certification test. Thus, Nuari's research (2012) also shows certification can improve teacher performance which has a positive impact on the students' achievement. On the other hand, research findings that do not support the certification program are the results of Ridwan's research (2010) shows that the certification has low impact on teacher performance. The comparative analysis of teacher performance before and after graduation shows that post-certification teacher performance decreased compared to teachers before granted the certification. Similarly, the research findings from Nurcholis (2011) show that direct certification do not have a significant impact on improving teacher performance.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

To have a successful implementation of change, the reformers should provide pressure and support. The combination of both pressure and support is important since the pressure is needed to focus on the center point whilst support is given to enable the implementation. Within the context of the teacher certification program in Indonesia, these two elements are significantly important whereby the government and teachers as the targeted groups should coordinate what things to be done to get the program to succeed.

From the case study, it can be identified that lack of communication is one of the major problems since teachers failed getting certified because they

did not know how to compile the portfolio. McDonald (2008) said that introducing new ideas can be challenging when people do not communicate well. At this point, the additional support from the government is important for helping teachers passing the requirements of the teacher certification program which is compiling the portfolio. Support, in this case, can be done through a socialization program of how to compile a better standard of the portfolio. Circulating the portfolio handout to the school principal is one of the ways. Later the principal can do collaborative work and learn together with his/her teachers to prepare the portfolio. In this way, the teachers will have sufficient support and the chance to pass the certification test is greater. However, the other factor of failure also should be considered.

Furthermore, from the case study also can be seen that the failure faced by some teachers was that they could not provide evidence whether they have the degree or not in teaching either diploma (DIV) or university degree (S1). Frankly, the percentage of the failure will greater since the first target for teacher certification in Indonesia is prioritized for teachers who have been teaching for about 20 years or more. These experienced teachers are not having the degree as required because in early years the minimum degree that allowing teachers to teach was Diploma II (Suparno, 2005). Subsequently, the governments' teacher certification requirements are not suitable for some of the experienced teachers. In contrast, the requirements are more applicable for beginner teachers since now the standard degree in teaching is the university degree. So the question then, what is going to happen for teachers who

failed getting certified?

To enable them with the real condition in teaching, nearly after graduated, they must do *Praktek Kerja Lapangan (PPL) – Field Work Practice* in school for about four months to put theory into practice. They have to deal with students in that school and do teaching practice as the preparation to enter the classroom. This is what Boyd et.al (2007) called traditional preparation which required the teacher candidates to learn foundational courses (learning and development), pedagogical courses (teaching method) and content subject matter as well as teaching practice. Having this preparation course hopefully enables teachers to be more qualified and they will be ready to be certified.

Within this policy, the government is trying to lift teacher dignity, as having this certificate; teachers will be legitimized for their professionalism in the profession. Besides that, a certified teacher will be provided 100 % rising on their basic salaries and provide any other benefits including allowance and the legitimizing of their professionalism in occupation (Ministry of Education Decree, 2007). Hopefully, incentives for qualified teachers will motivate other teachers to participate in the certification program. Additionally, by giving incentives many people will be interested in becoming a teacher which later contribute to the better education (Boyd et. al). According to Goldhaber et.al (2007) "The goal of these incentive programs—to make teaching more attractive relative to alternative occupations—is straightforward." So in the future, it hopes that many people with high intelligence and professional will be a teacher. This policy is hoped to actuate all

teachers to be more qualified and professional in the future and at the same time, this approach hopefully will improve the quality of the nation's teachers, as teachers' quality is the central determinant of student achievement. However, teacher certification also has a drawback. According to Solmon et.al (2003), the potential negative impact on the teacher certification program is that this initiative will eradicate some teachers who well-motivated and good at their profession. Therefore, to hinder this bad effect, the state government needs to consider some aspects that can enable all teachers to participate in the teacher certification program.

Things to consider

According to Wise (2007) to meet the expected outcomes of the teacher certification program the government could revise the requirements. The suggested revision of the requirements would be: (a) General knowledge test which assesses the outcomes of 'liberal arts' and general studies such as literacy and numeracy skills and also the assessment of teachers writing and speaking skills; (b) Subject matter test which focus on the teachers' discipline area. This test will enable teachers to their professional competency. (c) Teaching knowledge test which allows teachers to understand and make critiques of the educational research and teaching and learning practice, and the last (d) is the assessment of performance which intended to asses teacher's teaching performance which also includes the impact of a teacher on students' achievement. Hopefully, these new sets of requirements can be used as the measurement for the teachers' quality control as it is not put difficulties on teachers to conceive.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The teacher certification program is hoped to convey a new development in Indonesia's education system, which has been degraded especially the quality of the teacher, which leads to the low quality of national education. Teachers are required to be highly qualified and professional in the future not only as a medium of transferring knowledge to students. This certification program is really important as the first step to improve the quality of teachers at length with the improvement of teacher's wellbeing as well as the improvement of teaching-learning and education quality in Indonesia. Since there were some obstacles in the implementing teacher certification program, the policymakers, in this case, should be able to determine the aspects that make the program succeed otherwise the drawbacks will slowing down the success.

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