

## Commentary on the Professional Status of Teacher: Case in Indonesia

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“Invest in the future, Invest in Teachers”. The theme of the 2014 World Teacher’s Day pointed out the importance of teachers who play a significant role in shaping the future we want and aspire for. Teachers serve as a key success factor in the quality of education and quality of students. Many countries invest in teachers because they believe that quality teachers mold quality students and quality students are the basis for quality human resource for their countries.

Indonesia is one of the countries that continuously improve on policies and practices in teacher profession in pursue of quality education. In view of Indonesia’s geography (18,000 islands spread out over three time zones), the large number of basic education schools, and the large basic education teaching force (3+ million), getting all teachers qualified and providing quality education for all are major challenges. The approach of Indonesia to teacher profession is very unique to Indonesia. Keeping in mind the Southeast Asian context as the overarching view, this commentary will provide an analysis of Indonesia’s teacher professional status through the lens of inclusion and equity in policy and practice, innovation of teaching and teacher education, and the professional status of the teachers.

### For inclusion and equity in policy and practice

1. **Inter-Ministerial management and cooperation.** The government of Indonesia manages teacher profession through inter-ministerial cooperation. There are five ministries involve namely 1) the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) for basic and technical vocational education, 2) the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) for teachers in religious schools, 3) the Ministry of Research & Technology for higher education, 4) Ministry of Finance (MoF) for salary & pay rate, and 5) the Ministry of State Personnel and Bureaucracy Reform (MenPAN) for hiring.

Their advantage of having more than one Ministry decreases the load in management and responsibility to cover all the schools, universities, and other teacher-related issues. This management approach can be viewed as an attempt of the government to inclusion and equity for teacher profession, so that issues concerning teacher profession are addressed. Otherwise one Ministry might not be able to oversee all the needs due to the large number of schools and teacher population. On the other hand, the disadvantage would be that each ministry might issue policies that are contradict or working on objectives that are not aligned. As a result, issues concerning teacher profession will be delay.

Thus, the need for a good coordinative mechanism between and among the different ministries needs to be formed in order to avoid gaps in the implementation process which will cause delay and ineffectiveness of the policy and practice for teacher profession.

**2. Reaching out to teachers in the rural areas.** The Government of Indonesia is reaching out to teachers in remote areas through six strategies. 1) improve school quality in rural areas 2) improve facilities in rural areas, 3) formulate policy to oblige new teachers to teach in rural areas 4) ease certification for rural area teachers, 5) give incentive for rural areas teacher by the central government, and 6) raise the additional salary for rural areas teacher by the district government. These strategies intend to improve the poor living conditions and low salary of teachers particularly those in rural schools in order to make the teacher profession more attractive. This, in turn, will help solve the teacher distribution problem in the remote islands.

The six strategies address only equity in a geographical context while not addressing, other equity issues such as ethnicity, minority groups, age, gender, disability, and local language and culture. This could be a challenge for Indonesia because quite a large percentage of teachers in remote, ethnically-different areas are under-qualified to be teachers.

Some examples of innovative policies to address inclusion and equity issues are the provision of scholarships for students from minority groups, for women (especially for pre-school teachers), and for persons with disability who aspire to become teachers. In good practice cases in several countries, the intention of such scholarships is for these would-be teachers to return back to their communities to teach.

#### For Innovation in teaching and teacher education

**3. Building capacity for Teachers Education Institution (TEI).** Capacity-building for teachers covers two areas: Pre-service and In-service. The Indonesia case mentions capacity-building for in-service teachers but not in depth for pre-service teacher training.

Teacher Education Institutions (TEI) serves as the primary stage of training for the teaching profession. They play an important role in training quality teachers. Thus, there is a need to build the capacities of TEIs through professional development of TEI faculty and adjusting the teacher education curriculum to be relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century context for new generation learners. An example of relevant policy for professional development of teacher educator is a policy of the Government of Thailand called *Kuru Thayat* (Teacher's Children). The policy provided scholarships for work to all faculty of education nation-wide in order to select smart people to come TEI faculty. Some TEI only hire Ph.D. level personnel to be TEI faculty.

If TEI are to prepare the new generation of teachers to teach a new generation of learners, the curriculum for teacher education should consider the new learning styles of learners including soft skills (value and ethics) and infuse these with both a regional and global view (e.g. ASEAN integration in the case of Indonesia). Student teachers must be familiar with and understand the relevancy and context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century so that they can pass this on to their student-learners effectively with appropriate pedagogy. The ten countries of Southeast Asia (with Timor Leste waiting in the wings as an observer-state) are moving towards becoming an

ASEAN Community by 2015. TEIs (and teachers in Indonesia) have to be proficient in discussing the ASEAN identity, ASEAN integration and global partnership, and to do this, the teacher education curriculum needs to be adjusted if it is to stay relevant.

In view of globalization, equipping student teachers with creative pedagogy for teaching and learning using advanced and up-to date technology such as mobile phones and social media. With regional integration and global partnership, teachers need to have the skills and knowledge sufficient enough be able to adapt to the new forms of society which are inter-connected and competitive due to advanced technology.

**4. Technology enables capacity building.** One of the challenges of teacher training with three million teachers is access to training. Due to the number of islands and number of teachers, Indonesia must make use of technology to deliver the training through distance education – online learning and training. Face-to-face, classroom teacher training would be a logistical and financial impossibility.

SEAMEO SEAMOLEC, a SEAMEO Regional Centre whose expertise is in online and distance education located in Jakarta Indonesia has been working with the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), Indonesia in providing training to teachers online. In 2005-2007, SEAMEO SEAMOLEC supported and facilitated an Online Distance Learning (ODL) system and workshop to develop self-learning materials. This program called “HYLITE” (Hybrid Learning for Indonesian Teachers) was designed to help bachelor's degree students (S1 in Indonesia for teacher's qualification).

Since 2008, SEAMOLEC has been providing and facilitating distance learning programs (ODL systems, ICT enhancements, and scholarships) for the first year of college (D1 in Indonesia), the third year of college (D3 in Indonesia), fourth year of college (D4/S1 in Indonesia), and master degree (S2 in Indonesia ) in several Indonesian polytechnics and universities such as the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Gadjah Mada University (UGM), Institute Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (ITS), and State Polytechnic of Jakarta (PNJ). Moreover, for the master degree (S2 program), SEAMOLEC provides scholarships for teachers to enter master degree program in ITB and ITS, majoring in IT/Digital Media and Game Technology.

Through online & distance learning, MoEC should be able to reach out to more teachers and upgrade them to be more qualified and competent teachers. However, a new challenge arise is how to scale up on-line teacher training.

For professional status of teachers

**5. Upgrading Teachers with Teacher certification program.** The Teacher Law of 2005 is designed to promote teacher competencies, pedagogy, character, and professionalism. It is

considered a very good policy to upgrade basic education teachers and improve their quality of teaching. Since the passage of the law, a large number of teachers have been certified. Several studies have been conducted to measure the achievement of this policy. According to a study conducted by the World Bank in 2012 and presented by Dr. Sheldon Schaeffer at the 17<sup>th</sup> UNESCO APEID Conference 2014 revealed that granting certification has increased the satisfaction level of teachers with reference to their higher pay salaries and decreased the pursuit of second jobs by teachers. The positive side is that it has attracted more qualified candidates for the teaching profession; the not so positive side is that it has not had significant impact on teacher competency and professionalism or teacher absenteeism.

Improving quality of in-service teachers involves good design of teacher competency standards. The competency framework should covers instructional leadership, personal leadership, content knowledge, soft skills of value and ethic, and skills for regional integration & collaboration.

SEAMEO INNOTECH, a SEAMEO Regional Centre on Innovation and Technology located in Manila, Philippines has developed training programs for teaching competency and a competency standard for teachers in Southeast Asia. SEAMEO INNOTECH has also conducted research on teaching competency standards in the eleven countries in Southeast Asia. The research shows that there are four common teaching competency skills in Southeast Asian countries; pedagogical skills, learner's assessment skills, classroom management skills, and professional development skills. Other competencies are personal competency (ethics and morals); and social and interpersonal skills.

Each country developed their own competency standard based on their national legislation and policy as managed by national ministries of Education- There is no one size fit all for competency standard for teachers. However, there should be a broad framework of competency for teachers given the mobility of teachers across borders can be enhance as regional integration toward becoming ASEAN Community and global partnership are approaching.

**6. Alternative Teacher Career Path.** Opportunity should be given to teachers for career growth. Many good teachers view their career growth as becoming school principals. This is a good status growth; however, not all teachers are good administrators. They are good in teaching but it does not guarantee that they can be good managers as well. Thus, often time we see excellent teachers turn into a poor school principal and we lost good teachers in the classroom.

In order to solve this issue, alternative pathways for teachers should be introduced. That is, to create a two-track system of professional growth in a basic education system: (a) Track 1 – From Teacher to Master Teacher who are still in the classroom and to Expert Teacher who are teacher trainer, and (b) Track 2 – From Teacher to Administrator or School Principal.

A master teacher should have growth opportunities that allow them to stay in the classroom. A Master teacher can then become an expert teacher who then would be an in-service trainer of teachers.

Excellent teachers should have choices of career growth with salary equal to or even possibly more than school principals. Teachers can choose to stay in the classroom where their passion and expertise is. Policy and support should be set up to provide the alternative pathway for teacher career growth.

### Other Comments

**7. Collaboration with SEAMEO** The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) is an inter-governmental organization established in 1965 among governments of Southeast Asian countries to promote cooperation in education, science, and culture in the region. SEAMEO has 20 Regional Centres that provide capacity building for teachers, school administrators and school personnel as well as conducting research in education, science and culture. The regional centres are located in 8 countries in Southeast Asia. Joint activities and programmes with the Ministries of Education and relevant stakeholders of teacher profession can be set up to prepare for quality teacher for Post 2015.

**8. Creating a platform for dialogue** A platform such as the Ministerial Meeting, specifically for Ministers or High Level Officials should be set up to discuss on teacher profession and provide information on teachers status, curriculum, capacity building in order to inform and propose to policy makers on issues pertaining teachers profession. Experiences, practices and case studies are share to allow countries to learn from each other and use the information & lessons learn to help them in formulating the policy in their country.

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