

Teacher Education Preparation and the Teaching Profession in Indonesia and the US*

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It is undeniable that teaching is a noble profession which provides very significant contribution to human capital, people's lives and development. The profession deals not only with the transmission of knowledge and new understanding towards new subject matters, but also the instilling of norms and values which will probably lead people to better lives. In order to perform appropriate and maximum teaching activities, teachers at any schools of education or communities need to be prepared and trained well to meet the proposed goal. Thus, a series of organized values and principles need to be developed and executed to produce quality teachers in serving the public education.

This paper is a response paper which deals with the teacher education preparation and the teaching profession in Indonesia and the United States (US). In this paper, I present some ideas that deal with the teacher education preparation programs and the teaching profession for public education. Some book references, videos, and class discussions are subjects in the accomplishment of this paper.

It is always valuable to obtain more understanding on how teachers or student teachers are prepared and trained to serve in the world of education. As teachers play

vital roles in education, their existence becomes the main concern that needs to be given careful attention and improvement. Teachers in common are products of education colleges or universities, thus, outputting quality teachers will have something to do with how those institutions work and design programs for teacher education.

The idea of developing good teacher education should be on the bases of clear and effective framework so that the goal of education itself may be achieved. Zeicher and Conklin (2008) proposes conceptual framework of substantive features of teacher education which is drawn on the basis of research and literature. Those features are along with social and institutional context, view of teaching, learning and schooling, admission process, curriculum in the coursework, field experience, instructional strategies, internal organizational features and use of data. Thus, to be able to produce the desired outcomes, teacher education needs to concern not only to the understanding of institutional vision and mission as well as the curriculum, but also all things dealing with the features as proposed. This is very important as each dimension likewise is related one to another, and if applied harmoniously will lead to better and effective teaching preparation.

The fundamentals of good education are to be found in the classroom, the home, the communities and the culture (Ravitch, 2010). This implies that education occurs anywhere likewise by formal education in schools, informal education in families and communities as well as by cultures. Related to the teacher education nowadays, it is then necessary to explore more on how student teachers engage with communities and cultures in their lives. This means that teacher education should refer to communities and cultural values to respond the exact demand from public. In this context, home visit

in teacher education is an alternative which significantly contributes to produce good teachers who care with social and cultural lives. It plays significant role in giving teachers deeper understanding of their students and families.

Home visits in school setting can take different formats and purposes: initial contact with families, information and orientation about school programs, relationship building, referral for special needs, assessment of home conditions, interventions and teacher-parents conferences (Dantas, 2010). Thus, by arranging and executing home visit, school teachers will be able to bridge their communication and partnership with students and parents. What teachers may not know about their students' lives such as home condition, location and environment, perhaps will be uncovered by direct visit to their place. However, though home visit is considered important, it is believed that home visits cannot be implemented without clear framework and careful consideration of the purposes, difficulties, tensions and potential consequences (Dantas, 2011). Parents may feel disturbed or worried by teachers' presence on their homes if the visit is not well prepared and communicated with parents. Home visit which had been developed in the US in 1880's is a strategic method that teacher education should implement to complete student teachers with those various advantages and values. Likewise in Indonesia, it is also becoming a part of many teachers to get connected with parents and students particularly on things that cannot be dealt in school life.

In addition to provide better teacher education by direct engagement to community, the professional development schools (PDSs) in the US by its principles state that teachers should master content, become students of teaching, collaborate with peers on inquiry, gain expertise in constructed learning, and use valid forms of

assessment to determine what students learned (Boyle-Baise, M and McIntyre, 2008). This implies that teacher education should concern on equipping students with enormous concepts of materials and development of skills on inquiry and collaboration as well as assessment to sharpen their professional duty. It means that academic qualifications are also important aspect that teacher education should consider. It is undeniable that these demands will challenge students to update what they have and learn individual weaknesses and strengths to meet public expectation. Howey and Zimpher (1989) in Zeichner and Conklin (2008) also argue that one of the key attributes of effective teacher education programs is that they are characterized by high levels of rigor and academic challenge. Hence, teacher education program must enable teachers to address the tension inherent in teaching practice, providing them with intellectual tools needed to negotiate disconnects between theory and practice. This is in line with what

Teachers, besides having ability to balance the disconnection of theories and practices should also understand how family education which mostly occurs in homes significantly contributes to children development as students. This is dealing with the terms cultural understanding that should be well taken into account by teacher education. As children spend more time in homes, they have wider chances of learning new things from parents who sometimes come from various backgrounds. Yunita (2006) highlights that parents, older generation and/or close relatives play important roles in planting the seeds for cultural transmission and perpetuation. This means that children learn really a lot at home to gain their understanding towards the culture in which they live. Exposing the values of culture to children will be very beneficial for

parents to grow and maintain the diverse values they have which contribute to the character's shaping of children. And good teacher education should provide this insight to its students as cultures influence much on what students will and will not do.

Further consideration that teacher education has to deal with is the learning services in schools or public or community. In the US, student teachers are already assigned to do observation in early, middle field and student teaching experience that range in various times. Similarly, Indonesia has also done the same to expose its students to the world of teaching during their study. In this case, teaching experience that students have to pass will assist the development of skills particularly the pedagogic and cultural aspects. Thus, besides understanding the materials to be transmitted, students will also need to know how the transmission may occur after seeing and getting in touch with the real class situation. This is in line with what Shulman (1987) states that teaching necessarily begins with a teacher's understanding of what is to be learned and how it is to be taught. So as to grow and develop the students' teaching expertise, qualified instructors or mentors are needed so that the expected outcome can be reached. Humphrey et al (2005) in Zeichner and Conklin (2008) found that the most effective mentors for prospective teachers were those who knew how to work with adults and were trained in and knowledgeable about mentoring specific strategies. This means that teacher education should facilitate student teachers with well trained and experience senior or older teachers to promote the development. It will be impossible that students are sent to schools but no guidance or observation is given.

In conjunction with teacher education, Morrel (2010) gives new insight on how teachers perform powerful teaching to students. This is great thing which should be

adopted by teachers and teacher education anywhere. He proposes the four core principles of powerful teaching which involves voice, affirmation, achievement and purpose. Voice deals with how teachers help students say what they want to say and build students' confidence, whereas affirmation deals with how teachers should understand the students' cultures, families and communities. All these relate to the achievements that students will make so that the goal of education itself may be reached. And to succeed, all these aspects will definitely come to a harmony if the teaching is delivered in love with professional manner. Thus, love is very crucial in the success of powerful teaching. Morrell (2010) also emphasizes on how to arise students' motivation which results from confidence and relevance. This means that teachers should be able to grow and enhance students' confidence and relate the subjects to discuss with what students may have had before. This is important as relevance in teaching will be the crucial support of students' motivation. Scaffolding talk during the teaching, I think, will best match with the students' understanding before further actions implemented.

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