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**Curriculum of Elementary Teacher Education: A Study at Kochi University and Sriwijaya University**

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**Abstract:** This study aims at comparing elementary teacher education curriculum at Kochi University and Sriwijaya University. To achieve this aim, this study chooses interview, observation, and document analysis as methods of gathering data. Respondents involved in this research are Dean of both faculty, heads of study program, lectures, principals of affiliated schools. The study finds some similarities and differences system between both universities in preparing prospective teachers in term of formal curriculum. Such system is developed as response faced each country where both universities are operated.

**Keywords**: elementary school, teacher education, formal curriculum

**INTRODUCTION**

Elementary school is positioned as basic education around the world. Children who are successful academically, personally and socially in elementary school tend to bear the similar success to the next level or even their satisfactions in the adulthood live.

Concerning high academic performance in some countries and vise versa in other countries there are a number of facts to be noted. In a number of student assessments, Japanese students’ achievement on mathematics, reading, and science as indicated in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012 (OECD, 2013) is the highest among 65 countries in the world.

The success of Japan in educating children cannot be separated from its effort to prepare prospective teachers. More clearly, the preparation of teacher candidates in Japan has positive effect on establishing effective school in which its characteristics are identified by Sammons, Hillman, and Mortimore (1995). This in turn gives significant impact to students’ achievement. A big question addressed in preparing prospective teachers is why Japan’s universities are successful and other countries are not.

Teacher education is important business for many countries. To support this importance, many countries improve their prospective teacher education at higher level. It is in college or faculty of education. For example, responding to a report of International Education News (February 2015) showing low performance of Norwegian students on PISA, Norway acknowledges that weak system of teacher education is considered to be one of the key problems. Closed to Norway’s teacher preparation, Finland was not succeeding educationally in the 1970s. To catch up its unsuccessful Finland calls for change to teacher education, both in terms of curriculum and pedagogy (Shalberg, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2015). In addition, Sahni (2015) has reported that although primary school enrollment increases significantly in India, the dropout rates continue to be high and the quality of learning children are not achieving class-appropriate learning levels. To solve the problem India call for change to teacher education, both in terms of curriculum and pedagogy.

Every country develops a system of teacher preparation that is suitable to its own needs. At higher education level, some countries appoint to a two-years or three-years diploma’s degree. Others required to teacher candidates to have bachelor’s degree. According to Feiman-Nemser (2011) recently most teachers enter teaching by means of a four-year, undergraduate program, with its curriculum focuses on educational and professional subjects (Ingersoll, 2007) or general education and professional education in Cruickshank’s terminology (1985).

In context of educating prospective teachers, one of national universities that have contributed to such successful in Japan is Kochi University. Located in Kochi Prefecture and established 1949, Kochi University has well reputation in higher education among national universities in Japan. Its faculty of education (Kyouiku Gakubu) has obligation to prepare prospective teachers in all school levels. As national university it has developed teacher preparation system that fulfills Japan education standard. Tied by the Japan educational system regulation, this faculty has developed elementary education teacher preparation system where its graduates are accepted in labor market locally and nationally.

In line with its current position quality and an eager to increase its service quality and reputation in international level and to answer the above big question, Sriwijaya University, a national university that also offers elementary school teacher education, needs to study the successful story of elementary school teacher education of other countries. This initiative is not to degrade its image but merely to learn from the best practice of their teacher education counterparts. Kochi University is chosen since its offer better education for prospective teachers and its graduates has well reputation in teaching children.

Studies in Japanese teacher education pertaining its system have been done by researchers. Some of them, too few to mention, are English education (Mizuno, 2004), teacher education (Aakre, 2013), and in-service teaching training (Bayracki, 2009). In term of system perspective, Sriwijaya University can consider many aspects of elementary teacher education in Kochi University to compare. The study may be focused on comparing raw input (children), instrumental inputs (e.g. teacher, parent, curriculum, management), or environmental input (safety, weather). The current study is focus on describing formal curriculum of elementary teacher education of both universities in assumption that it is important part of education system that determine process and output of teacher preparation.

**METHODS**

To achieve the objective, the study adopts qualitative research where the researchers interview the participants of both faculties. The participants of the research are the Deans and Vise Deans who lead each faculty, the head of study program, and principals of affiliated elementary school at both universities.

Researchers use in depth interview to gather data from the respondent both at Kochi University and Sriwijaya University. The questions in the interview focused on the formal curriculum. The researchers also use document analysis as method of collecting data. In addition, the researchers observe the facilities and affiliated schools.

Data analysis of this study are organized by following steps: (a) determining suitable type of analysis, (b) categorizing data according to the results of interview, observation, and available documents, (c) making connection between different data, and writing the results based on theme and research questions.

**RESULTS**

Japanese education currently is regulated according to Basic Act on Education (Act No. 120 of December 22, 2006). Chapter 1 of the Act stipulated aims and principles of education in Japan. Article 1 states that “Education shall aim for the full development of personality and strive to nurture the citizens, sound in mind and body, who are imbued with the qualities necessary for those who form a peaceful and democratic state and society.” Meanwhile, in Indonesia, education is regulated by Act of The Republic of Indonesia Number 20, Year 2003  on  National Education System. Article 3 clearly stipulates the aims of education. “The National Education functions to develop the capability, character, and civilization of the nation for enhancing its intellectual capacity, and is aimed at developing learners’ potentials so that they become persons imbued with human values who are faithful and pious to one and only God; who possess morals and noble character; who are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent; and as citizens, are democratic and responsible.”

The authorization of education in Japan is under a ministry. The ministry does not only manage education from kindergarten, primary school, middle and high school, and higher education, but also encompasses culture, science, and sport. So that it is named Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport (MEXT). Indonesia is a little bit different compared to Japan. Under the 2015 regulation it has two ministries of education: Ministry of Education and Culture and Ministry of Research and Technology and Higher Education. The former manages education in kindergarten, elementary school, secondary level, non-formal education, and culture matter. Meanwhile the latter specifically coordinates higher education and research and technology.

Overall both countries have formal education where basic school is one of the streams beside secondary education and higher education. Japan names the first parts of basic school as “Shogakko” (elementary school and Indonesia has “Sekolah Dasar” and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Article 17). Elementary school together with junior high school in both countries is compulsory education.

To support education at elementary education level, either Japan or Indonesia prepares their prospective teachers at higher education level (Japan: Daigaku; Indonesia: Universitas, Institut, or Sekolah Tinggi). Education Act of each country permits community to participate in preparing prospective teacher through private university. In Japan such institution is named Faculty of Education as part of a university. In Indonesia most universities have Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FTTE) or Faculty of Education Science (FES). Another institution that has teacher education is Higher School of Teacher Training and Education (STKIP). This institution may have a study program of elementary school teacher education.

Kochi University and Sriwijaya University have developed teacher preparation education system that although both are categorized as national university, they still have their own uniqueness. So that it is important to describe more deeply teacher preparation in general at each university before analyzing further elementary school teacher education.

**Faculty Aims**

Faculty of Education at Kochi University---based on liberal and creative education and research policies through collaboration with the local community---aims to produce outstanding teachers who can nurture the infinite potentials of human beings. It also aims to send forth graduates equipped with high degrees of specialized knowledge of their subjects and teaching skills based on extensive knowledge of their specialized fields.

At Sriwijaya University, the aims of FTTE are to produce (a) qualified and professional graduates; (b) research in education science, technology, art, and information applied to increase education quality and used as information sources in education field; (c) improving education quality that is suitable to society needs through community services; (d) good governance directed to promote professionalism in supporting three pillars of tertiary education activities, (e) and collaboration with other institution that supports its vision attainment.

If each aims are compared it seem that both faculties have similar goals in common. Kochi University and Sriwijaya University intend to have graduates who have outstanding competencies in teaching students. They also define research and collaboration with community as integral part of its effort to prepare prospective teachers. The differences are the former defines its aims directly and clearly meanwhile the former define its aims in more general terms.

**Course works**

Curriculum of elementary school teacher education (ESTE) at Kochi University is developed based on regulation stipulated by MEXT. Every student enrolled in Faculty of Education has to take course 149 credit hours in order to graduate and have bachelor’s degree in ESTE. A student must study for at least 4 years. Its curriculum consists of general (common) education subjects and education (professional) subjects. The subjects follow "Education officials license Law" and "Child Welfare Law”. Specifically, students who are enrolled in education science course (former regulation) should take 12 credit hours of first-year courses, 18 credit hours of liberal arts, 34 common specialized courses, and 85 specialized subjects. Total of taken courses by students is 149 credit hours.

All students who want to enroll in elementary school teacher education at Kochi University must take the first year courses. These Courses have transformation of learning and career formation characters. In general the aim of the first year courses is to introduce students to university learning and task-based practical seminar. The purposes of the first are (a) to transform approaches in learning from teacher-orientated to student-orientated instruction, (b) to help students envisage their employability for their future careers and what abilities they need to acquire by the time they graduate, (c) to help student to raise their understanding of the significance of universities and academe especially with regard to Kochi University.

First year subjects are addressed to freshman and sophomore students. There are two kinds of subject in the area of basic skills. The former is First-year English focusing English Conversation and the second Information Processing. The first is intended to (a) help students to learn practical English skills at level appropriate for university students; motivate them to acquire throughout their academic career the capacity to learn independently; stimulate their interest in language and culture, and help them to gain and develop the basic know-how; and develop awareness necessary for cross-cultural understanding and international coexistence. For this purpose the students are streamed into classes with students of similar ability based on the results of a placement test and provide English language classes taught by native speaker (i.e. English conversation classes). Meanwhile, Information Processing is intended to help students gain necessary abilities to handle information, i.e. to acquire information literacy. The next is motivation for university research: content of the subject is introduction to university research. This subject intended to (a) provide instruction to help students prepare for specialized education, (b) motivate students for acquiring and developing a prospective view of specialized education, (c) to help students to develop a particular identity appropriate for each faculty and department, (d) to help students to develop proficiency in Japanese language skills through oral presentation and class summary reports.

Meanwhile the latter subjects are intended to (a) promote and develop students’ initiative and self-motivated learning, (b) to help students understand differences of opinion and viewpoints, to know themselves, and find their own space for improvement, and (c) to help them understand the significance and method of learning through communication in small group.

Courses categorized to liberal arts are subjects considered essential for students to know in order to take an active part in civic life. Students who are enrolled at Faculty of Education should take liberal arts courses consisted of 18 credit hours. Liberal arts and science subjects comprises of Humanities, Social sciences, Life and medical science, Natural science and Foreign languages.

Common specialized subjects are subjects of general education. It consists of foundation courses and career support courses. Examples of courses are teaching introduction, curriculum theory, moral teaching. Meanwhile at specialized courses students who are enrolled in ESTE have to take 85 units of the specialized subjects opened by the Faculty of Education. Examples of courses are elementary social studies, elementary science or elementary mathematics.

At Sriwijaya University, every student enrolled in ESTE Study Program has to take course 144 credit hours in order to graduate and have bachelor’s degree (S1=Sarjana). Curriculum 2015 of ESTE has graduate profile that pictures what competencies graduates have after they complete course works. They are expected to be educators, researchers, as well as educational practicians and consultants at elementary school level. Based on this profile, ESTE develops course works that help students to master them.

Courses are grouped according to their characters and related to competencies have to be mastered. They are:

* 1. Personality developing courses (10 credit hours): the subjects aim at developing citizenry who believe and have faith in one God and noble, have good personality, independent, and responsible to society and the nation.
  2. Educational knowledge and skills courses (13 Credit hours): the subjects aim at preparing students to master the basics of certain knowledge and skills.
  3. Working skills courses (76 credit hours): the subjects aim at facilitating students to have outstanding skills needed to work according to chosen knowledge and skills.
  4. Working behavior courses (21 credit hours): the subjects aim at building attitudes and behavior needed to work according to certain knowledge and skills.
  5. Community-oriented courses (12 credit hours): the subjects are intended to facilitate students to understand principles of community living according to their chosen competency.
  6. Optional skill courses (12): the subjects aims at facilitating students to mastery specific knowledge or skills

**Students’ teaching practicum experiences**

Kochi University gives its students an opportunity for practicing teaching at affiliated schools. Belonging to Kochi Prefecture, Affiliated school is located at Ozu Campus, Kochi. These schools consist of Affiliated Elementary School, Affiliated Special Education School (elementary and junior), and Affiliated Kindergarten. Particularly Affiliated Elementary School has 708 children capacities but currently it has 680 children as of May 1, 2015. The school has 21 classes encompassing 1st grade to 6th grade. Under the regulation of MEXT, children of 1st – 3rd grade are named lower grade students and children of 4th – 6th grade are named upper grade students. Since the number of students of ESTE at Kochi University is not many, all of students’ teaching experiences are only conducted at this school.

Every student having practicum experience has to attend at Affiliated Elementary School according to schedule provided by classroom teachers. Since the school is tied by Kochi University strictly, staff faculty are not involved directly in student practicing teaching in the classroom. Teachers have authority to guide students to have teaching experience in their classroom. Agenda of practicum experience are following the schedule of subject matters at this school. The subjects that are taught at Affiliated Elementary School consist of Japanese Language, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Living, Music, Draft, Household, and physical education

In addition to these subjects, Affiliated Elementary School also teach specific subject that consists of Ethics, Special Activities, Integrated Activities, and Foreign Language. However, English is only in 5th and 6th grade and will not be practiced by the students. In average number of hours yearly from 1st grade to 3th grade 850 hours, 910 hours, 945 hours, and 980 hours for 4th, 5th, and 6th grade.

Sriwijaya University on the other hand has many affiliated elementary schools for practicing student teaching skills. However, the relationship between Sriwijaya University and those schools is not very intensive, limited to supporting teaching practice. According to recent data of 2014/2015, Sriwijaya University has eight affiliated elementary schools in Palembang Campus and Indralaya Campus. They are public and private elementary schools.

Different from Kochi University and its affiliated elementary school where the relationship is tied designedly and institutionally, collaboration between Sriwijaya University and the schools is not always permanent. It depends on a consideration to the quality of the schools in serving the students at certain time or school’s willingness to joint such program. For example, when their services and following agreement are satisfied, Sriwijaya University will continue the collaboration or vise versa.

Teaching experience recently at Sriwijaya University is named Instructional Design and Development (Pengembangan dan Pengemasan Perangkat Pembelajaran). Student practicing teaching are integrated activities that consist of (a) basic teaching skill practice, (b) orientation to schools, (c) guided teaching and non-teaching practice, (d) independent teaching and non-teaching practice, and (e) teaching examination.

Sriwijaya University has developed teaching practicum that consists of two kinds of teaching activities in campus and out of campus. The first is teaching practicum experience conducted in campus. It has two teaching experiences named microteaching and peer teaching. The former, microteaching is a teaching experience that gives students an opportunity to practice eight teaching skills. Microteaching activity is arranged in 6th semester for four weeks. It requires participation of elementary school children. They are invited to ESTE Campus. The latter teaching experience in campus is peer teaching. The practicing teaching is also conducted in 6th semester on campus. A student has to have teaching practice 8 times on campus by involving other students, at least 5-10 students.

The second teaching experience is teaching practicum at elementary school. It is conducted in 7th semester for eight weeks. There are four activities in assigned school. A student has to do teach elementary school children in class under supervision of classroom teacher. A student has to observe and help teacher to do non-academic activities such as classroom management. A student assists teacher to provide extra-curricula activities to children, such as sport, music, dance.

The successful of teaching practicum experience at Kochi University and Sriwijaya University are assessed accordingly, however there is slight different. At Kochi University students’ teaching practice performance are evaluated by classroom teachers. In this respect the classroom teachers have full responsibility to assess students performance. Meanwhile at Sriwijaya University classroom teachers and students’ advisors share responsibility in assessing students performance. The similarity of both university is they apply the similar measurement to evaluate student achievement: A= excellent, B= Good, C=Fair, and D=Fail. Student who is fail has opportunity to have teaching practice in next semester according schedule arranged by Affiliated Elementary School.

**DISCUSSION**

Comparing education system particularly in elementary school teacher preparation between two or more countries is not an easy task since each country has different educational system. Each country has to develop strategies to prepare elementary school teachers. In line with this respect, the objective of this research is to describe similarities or dismilarities elementary school teacher preparation at Kochi University and Sriwijaya University in terms of curriculum and teaching practice. Research activities have been done and its results indicate that the objectives of study have been achieved as shown by some findings. To the findings it is important to discuss them accordingly.

In term formal curriculum, there are light dissimilarities between Kochi University and Sriwijaya University in preparing prospective elementary school teacher. Students at first university have to take at least 149 credit hours of courses to pursue bachelor’s degree. It is not quiet different from Sriwijaya University where students are required to finish 144 credit hours. It means that students of elementary school teacher education at Kochi University have more learning than its counterpart.

As continuing discussion of graduate requirements, both elementary school teacher education students at Kochi University and Sriwijaya University have course works that must be done in classroom or out classroom. At Kochi University course works or subjects are divided into four classes: the first year courses, liberal arts courses, common specialized courses, and specialized courses. In the mean time, at Sriwijaya University, curriculum of elementary school teacher education have six categories of courses, they are personality developing courses, educational knowledge and skills courses, working skills courses, working behavior courses, community-oriented courses, and other optional courses. In closer look, both universities have developed similar courses, common to course at other countries. The first year courses at Kochi University are intended to introduce students to university learning. They are different from Sriwijaya University where the first year courses labeled as personality developing courses are intended to build solid citizenry of the students. It is understandable since as a whole education system Japan promotes strongly civic and moral education, so that at higher education level such issues are not so important as in Indonesia.

Some parts of liberal arts courses at Kochi University are related to first category of courses at Sriwijaya University. The subjects classified as humanities field, social sector, life and health field, nature areas, and foreign language field are parallel to the first year subjects at Sriwijaya University. Overall, the scope of liberal arts at Kochi University are wider that its counterpart.

Next, at Kochi University, all students enrolled at Teacher Training Division have to take common specialized courses. These courses contain foundation of education in general. Since they are belong to this division, students who choose courses related to elementary school education have to take common specialized courses, too. These courses are rather similar to the working course category at Sriwijaya University. For example, the teaching introduction subject at the first university is also attached at the second university labeled as introduction to education. When contents of the courses are analyzed further at both universities, such as common specialized courses and specialized courses at Kochi University and working skills courses and working behavior courses at its counterpart, the differences are merely in categorizing matter.

However, to answer the question factors influencing Japanese teacher education in term of its strengths it is beneficial to understand them from other perspectives. Cochran-Smith (2004) has identified problems to conceptualize and define teacher education where her identification seems related to teacher preparation in many countries and has impact in teacher education research. Two of them are training problem and learning problem.

The first is conceptualizing teacher education as a formal educational process intended to ensure that the behaviors of prospective teachers matched those of “effective” teachers. The second is teacher education as learning problem works based on assumption that excellent teachers are professionals who are knowledgeable about subject matter and pedagogy and who make decisions, construct responsive curriculum, and know how to continue learning throughout the professional lifespan.

From Cochran-Smith’s perspective in conceptualizing and defining training problem and learning problem, it seems that either Kochi University or Sriwijaya University has tried to solve both problems by developing a suitable curriculum. Each formal curriculum has lead students to have competencies mastered by the end they are graduation. In this sense they are ready to be effective teachers. The collected data indicate that there are slight differences between curriculums of elementary school teacher preparation at both universities. In addition to explaining the curriculum of both universities, in other countries, such as South Korea, teacher preparation at elementary school level involves four years of coursework, with a curriculum that is made up of both subject-area content and pedagogical theory (Center on International Education Benchmarking, 2015). This coursework is quite similar to Kochi University or Sriwijaya Univeristy.

Overall the discussion of data shows that in term of formal curriculum there are many similarities between curriculum of teacher preparation at Kochi University and Sriwijaya University. Without admiring Japanese’s teacher education system excessively, it seems that the strength of its educating prospective teachers beside its curriculum are influenced by its culture, academic atmosphere, competitiveness, awareness of students to teaching profession, and availability of labor market to teacher candidates.

In such, this study has been focused on aspects of elementary school teacher education that is necessary to compare. However, due some obstacles or barriers, this comparative study has limitations either both methodically or substantially. Methodically the study is lack of comprehensiveness especially due to language barriers as well as respondents at Kochi University. Since education in Japan at all level solely uses Japanese as national and education language, the communication between researchers to respondents need interpreters. In qualitative sense this barriers have lessened the meaning of portrayed data.

Meanwhile, substantial limitation is addressed to the study program at Kochi University and Sriwijaya University that have not been stable yet. The new regulation at Kochi University is take one academic years. So, at this time, the research would not fully get the comprehensive data of how the system is successful. Similar to Sriwijaya University, the new regulation of educating prospective elementary school teachers post bachelor’s degree has not been running. Another substantial limitation of this study is only focusing formal curriculum and has not been addressed to instructional, operational, and experiential curriculum in Klein’s perspective (1983).

Considering some limitations of this research, it is suggested that the future research will focus more deeply on teaching in the classroom both in university classroom as well as affiliated elementary school (instructional, operational, and experiential curriculum) in order to have more understanding. The argumentation of this focus is based on some survey that Japanese education are excellent in facilitate student learning as proved by students outstanding achievement although its teachers still implement traditional methods in teaching.

**CONCLUSION**

This study focuses on how Kochi University and Sriwijaya University prepare their prospective elementary school teachers at higher education level. Overall the finding show that there are similarities as well as differences between each designed system.

Each university has study program that prepare the students to be prospective teachers in elementary school. Both have developed curriculum that although literally different but in closer look the formal curriculum essentially similar which contains academic domain and professional domain. Both universities honor similar degree to after completing 4 academic years to the students that mean the graduates attain competencies required to teach elementary school after some additional training. Both Kochi University and Sriwijaya University have gives the students opportunity for practicing teaching at affiliated schools. This practicing, although will not be the end of becoming prospective teaching requirement since according to the system there are additional professional training, at least give impression to students that become a professional teacher is not one short effort. In wider context of curriculum meaning, differences that color the quality of graduates would be academic atmosphere, national culture, as well as awareness of students to teaching profession at both universities.

Concerning the limitation this research it is advisable that the next research will focus on instructional, operational, as well as experiential curriculum.

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