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# IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION DELIVERY IN INDONESIA

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## Background

The Government of Indonesia has established a number of policies to provide teachers with professional teaching competence. Since 2018, anyone with a bachelor's degree is eligible to apply to pre-service Teacher Professional Education (*Pendidikan Profesi Guru/PPG*) held by selected teacher colleges (*lembaga pendidikan tenaga kependidikan/LPTK*). Teacher candidates who have completed the pre-service PPG will receive a teaching certificate—and thus be regarded as professional—as well as a certification allowance equal to their basic salary, thereby earning twice the income of uncertified teachers. But the number of seats for the pre-service PPG is minimal. Many teachers eventually started their teaching careers without certification and later obtained them after teaching for more than five years.

The fact that PPG serves as the flagship programme to improve teacher quality contradicts to RISE Programme in Indonesia's research findings:

1. Teacher colleges did not produce teachers competent in facilitating effective numeracy and literacy learning. In fact, the additional one year of the pre-service PPG for teacher candidates after completing four years of a bachelor of education degree did not significantly improve their effectiveness in teaching.
2. Factors contributing to the low quality of teacher college graduates were related to the quality of prospective students in the bachelor of education degree programme, teacher education curriculum, and pre-service teacher certification system.
  - a) In relation to the teacher education curriculum, students were more equipped to develop learning administration tools following curriculum guidelines and syllabi, which often had to be uniform. Teachers were not reflective or critical of the quality of their teaching in the classroom.
  - b) The clinical supervision approach in teacher candidates' internships was not well implemented. Student teachers needed mentoring, guidance, and constructive feedback during teaching exercises.

- c) The pre-service PPG teacher certification did not provide significant added value to teacher quality. Teachers who graduated from the primary school teacher education (PSTE) of the pre-service PPG had the same effectiveness as teachers who earned a bachelor of education for PSTE from the same university.

This policy brief outlines three strategies that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (MoECRT) can implement to ensure teacher colleges, as teacher education providers, improve the quality of their graduates.

## Recommendations

### 1. Improve the quality of prospective students entering the undergraduate teacher education programme

The quality of prospective students applying for the undergraduate teacher education programme, as we studied in the PSTE programme, in general is low. Many of them only take the course because they failed to get into other university programmes.

There is a disparity in the quality of prospective students in the undergraduate teacher education programme at state and private universities. Prospective students who got into state universities have passed the selection entrance with competitive cognitive test components or other selections. In teacher colleges under private universities, the entrance selection is often relaxed due to the target number of new students admitted.

*Although the selection of prospective students for the undergraduate teacher education programme at state universities has included cognitive test components, it should also incorporate non-cognitive test components. Today, the interview component or skills test is found in several teacher education study programmes, such as arts and culture and physical education. However, there is no test component (for example, through an interview) that assesses the interest and passion of prospective applicants in pursuing the teaching profession. The MoECRT can encourage administrators of selection to state universities to include non-cognitive test components in screening prospective students for the undergraduate teacher education programme.*

*In private universities, the MoECRT can determine the quota for prospective students to be admitted into specific study programmes. The MoECRT has implemented this mechanism in the pre-service PPG programme, but not for the undergraduate teacher education degree. The MoECRT can also encourage a more standardised selection by incorporating an interview component that assesses the interest and passion of prospective applicants for pursuing the teaching profession.*

To attract more prospective students with high academic abilities to enrol in the teacher education programme, it is necessary to align other policies that can improve the status of the teaching profession, including a recruitment system whose mechanism can ensure the quality of teaching, a remuneration system that motivates performance, and a teacher management system that promotes continuous professional development.

## 2. Improve teacher education curriculum and teacher professional standards

The current curriculum that teacher colleges use is oriented towards mastering theoretical knowledge or is fragmented between educational theories, mastery of subject matter, and classroom teaching practices. For example, in the PSTE programme, more sections of the curriculum equip students with the mastery of subject matter taught in primary school than the sections that provide students with the skills to teach the subject matter effectively.

Due to the low quality of prospective student input, teacher colleges must ensure that PTSE students, for example, can at least master the primary school teaching materials properly. In fact, students should have mastered the primary and secondary level foundational skills before entering a teacher education programme, so that its curriculum can focus on pedagogical content knowledge to develop teacher skills in facilitating effective learning.

Besides, the current teacher education curriculum approach has yet to orient towards graduates who are passionate about teaching, able to reflect, able to think critically about their teaching practices, and able to adapt to change as well as the overall education of each student.

*The MoECRT can encourage teacher colleges to develop teacher education curricula with the aim of moulding teachers with the above characteristics. Assessment of whether or not students pass a course needs to be as reflective as possible. It also must exhibit the teacher's ability to assess student abilities' development throughout the study period, including areas of potential change and possible attempts. Regarding internship, the MoECRT can develop an assessment mechanism oriented towards effective teacher performance.*

Student portfolios showcasing the development of their teaching abilities during teacher education from every semester or every year can be a graduation requirement for prospective teachers. Assignment of classroom research or internship report, which is a formality in the form of final report, without assessing teacher's reflective ability, should be re-evaluated.

Teacher professional standards also need improvement. The current reference standards, the 4 Teacher Competencies (Pedagogical, Professional, Personality, and Social), do not connect the individual quality of teachers to their efforts in developing the quality of student learning or education.

*To encourage teacher colleges to align their curricula with the expected teacher qualifications, the MoECRT can establish professional standards describing the knowledge, attitude, and behaviour teachers should attain or develop to facilitate student learning and education. The professional standards of teachers need to distinguish the qualities expected of novice teachers, intermediate teachers, and senior teachers who are more experienced and have greater responsibilities, for example, providing mentoring for novice teachers.*

*The existing 4 Teacher Competencies are generic for teachers at all levels. If the teacher professional standards have distinguished the teacher quality achievements based on their career paths, teacher colleges that mould novice teacher candidates can focus on producing graduates with characteristics referring to the description made by the MoECRT. Novice teachers need to be prepared to have solid basic knowledge and skills and become educators who are adaptive, reflective, learner, and oriented toward student learning and education. Teacher professional standards must also be an independent measuring tool that teachers can use to assess their abilities and performance. In addition, the Standards must be a reference for every teacher's need for individual professional development.*

### 3. Integrate pre-service teacher certification system and teacher education

The selection system for teacher certification by means of the pre-service PPG, which is expected to improve teacher quality, has a huge hole. The current teacher certification is detached from the education of prospective teachers at teacher colleges. Obtaining teacher certification by undergoing pre-service PPG is only for prospective teachers who have completed an additional year of professional education. Teachers who have taught in schools but are not yet certified can get certified five years later, without any selection, through the in-service PPG track. Also, if a teacher fails the pre-service PPG final exam, they can retake it up to three times. In the end, PPG activities are only a formality toward certification.

The purpose of establishing pre-service PPG to address the disparity in teacher quality produced by teacher colleges nationally has yet to transpire, as evident from various RISE research findings. The results of these studies can be interpreted as follows.

**Firstly**, PSTE graduates from universities that also host PPG, which are the chosen universities, have the same quality after one to five years of teaching, with or without attending PPG. If the MoECRT is concerned about teachers who graduated from low-quality teacher colleges, then these are the ones who need to undergo additional training. But since the selection for pre-service PPG is very competitive, these teachers could not pass the screening and were, therefore, unable to attend the programme. Unfortunately, these teachers are numerous; they are uncertified yet can still teach in schools. The existing screening system for teachers who end up teaching in schools is like a leaky filter.

**Secondly**, the curricula for the undergraduate teacher education programme and pre-service PPG overlaps and is repetitive. The absence of mapping of the competency improvement expected from PPG graduate teachers compared to the competencies mastered by teachers when they graduated from the undergraduate teacher education programme confuses teacher colleges. Teacher colleges must prepare graduates, with or without PPG, to be able to compete in the working world. Besides fulfilling the teacher qualification obligations mandated by Law, the PPG's target is unclear.

**Thirdly**, the assessment in certification does not guarantee that graduates of both pre-service PPG and teacher education have competencies that can facilitate effective learning. Today, PPG exit assessments are in the form of knowledge tests and teaching performance tests that emphasise the administrative aspect. The examination and assessment systems employed by teacher colleges and recommended by the MoECRT need to be re-evaluated to ensure that the measuring tools can at least guarantee the quality of teachers who have graduated from a teacher education programme. The quality of teachers who have graduated from teacher education, and are certified, should be reliable.

*The MoECRT can integrate the teacher certification system into the teacher education system. But more importantly, the MoECRT needs to ensure that teachers who have graduated from the teacher education system and are eligible to teach in schools have the minimum competencies to teach effectively. Curricula for the undergraduate teacher education programme and pre-service PPG needs to be re-evaluated to avoid overlapping. The component of intensive internship is necessary for all prospective teachers, not only the few who have passed the PPG selection.*

*Teachers who have undergone a comprehensive teacher education programme no longer need another one-year education. But prospective teachers who did not graduate from an undergraduate teacher education programme need to take an additional training that provides them with pedagogical abilities.*

*The MoECRT also needs to construct a better mechanism for the accreditation system for the delivery of higher education so that more teacher colleges provide quality education. Establishing a policy that specifies a small number of teacher education graduates to take additional training in which materials/activities tend to repeat what the prospective teachers have learned during college, while most of the other teachers can still teach without taking the training, is not an ideal solution.*

In fact, even after being certified, novice teacher still needs to develop their teaching skills. Being certified does not necessarily turn a teacher into an effective teacher. Probation and curation periods in several semesters or years of teaching integrated with the teacher recruitment system can serve as a validation period that the teacher actually has sufficient competence and commitment to become an effective teacher. But developing such teaching abilities is hard to achieve without the minimum competencies provided by quality teacher education.

*This policy brief is drawn from the findings of two RISE Programme in Indonesia studies on pre-service PPG and one on novice teachers. Download the working paper [here](#) or scan this QR Code for the RISE publication link.*

