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The Effectiveness of Teacher Training in Indonesia: A practice by Sampoerna Foundation Teacher Institute (SFTI)

Contents

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1. Abstract:

The quality of education depends on the quality of the teachers. This axiom is very well known among educators, including in Indonesia. A lot of teacher professional development has been delivered all across the Indonesian archipelago. Hence, the delivery of the program is more into 'hit and run', where teachers' professional development is conducted but not followed by proper monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, the training delivered was usually not preceded by appropriate professional development needs analysis. Consequently, this approach raised issues of how well the trainings answered the teachers' needs, and how effective those trainings to the teachers in doing their day to day activities .The conditions described earlier, brought the Sampoerna Foundation Teacher Institute (SFTI), a professional philanthropic organization that specializes in providing teachers and school leaders in Indonesia with pedagogical and school management professional development programs, into awareness of the importance of the well planned monitoring and evaluation programs to measure the effect of teacher training. This paper describes the condition of the teachers' professional development through training programs in Indonesia and the practice by the SFTI.

2. Introduction

2.1. Brief Introduction on Indonesia

The archipelago is located in the South East Asia region spread over two million square kilometers with 17.508 islands (consisting of 5 major islands and around 6.000 inhabitant islands). It is the fourth most populated country in the world with around 237.5 million people comprising of around 300 distinct native ethnicities, encompasses more than 742 different languages and dialects (Gordon, 2005). Nevertheless, the country has one national language, Indonesian, which is used across the country.

The country proclaimed its independence on August 17, 1945 after being under the Dutch colonialism for three and a half decades. Indonesia now consists of 33 provinces, and effective since 2001 has implemented the decentralization policies under the Law No. 22, 1999 on "Local Government" has devolved central government powers and responsibilities to local governments in all government administrative sectors except for security and defense, foreign policy, monetary and fiscal matters, justice, and religious affairs (Usman, 2001).

2.2. The effect of decentralization policy to educational sectors

Consequently, the decentralization policy affected the educational reformation in Indonesia, in which each province has its independence, to implement the national educational policies according to the province's priorities, resources and financial capability. Furthermore, each regent within the province has the autonomy to implement its local policies in various sectors. For example, in terms of teacher professional development activities, the program depends on the local regency Department of Education (DoE) along with the provincial level DoE and the 'LPMP' (educational quality assurance body). In addition, in each regent there are some teachers' professional groups and principals' professional groups for the educators to

share their skills and knowledge, including conducting professional development activities. However, in reality, not all teachers' and principals' professional groups are active. Based on the SFTI experiences working in various locations across Indonesia, many of the teachers and principals' professional groups are dormant and have not had any significant activities for the last couple of years. Nevertheless, in other parts of Indonesia, the teachers' and principals' working groups are relatively active. Yet, the main activities in the teachers' and principals' working groups are predominantly focusing on the administrative aspects of education or socialization of the new curriculum or government's policies, and rarely put professional development activities as the focal point.

2.3. Teacher certification program

The issue of professional development programs becomes more relevant, since 2005, when the central government launched the Teacher and Lecturer Act, one of the ground-breaking legislations and government regulations in the education sector deliberated during the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (current president) administration. With this new legislation, the government tried to enhance the teachers' quality through the teacher certification program. Since 2007, millions of in-service school teachers in Indonesian public and private schools have participated in the national teacher certification program. This is part of a nation-wide educator certification system that aims to improve teachers' and lecturers' professionalism and welfare. To qualify for the program, a school teacher must first of all have a four-year diploma or an undergraduate degree from a recognized tertiary institution. Junior teachers with achievements are encouraged to take part in a teacher certification program through teacher training that lasts two semesters; senior teachers are required to take part in teacher certification through portfolio assessment. These two types of teacher certification are conducted in more than 35 in-service teacher certification centers throughout Indonesia. The majority of these centers are located in state and private universities that were once teachers' colleges and are still running teacher training programs. Successful participants receive an "Educator Certificate" entitling the holders to, among other things, financial incentives and improved chances for career promotion (Anonymous, 2009).

Nevertheless, the process to become certified teachers is not that simple because of several factors. First, at present Indonesia has more than 2,6 million teachers. Among which, 1.4 million or 54% of teachers are still under qualified (do not have an undergraduate degree). As a comparison, the proportion of underqualified secondary teacher back in year 1997 was 25% (Thair & Treagust, 1997), after twelve years, the proportion has decreased by only 7% to the level of 18% underqualified secondary teacher (Ministry of National Education, 2008).

Additionally, among the other 1.2 million teachers who have undergraduate degree, less than four hundred thousand teachers (approximately 15% of the total teachers in Indonesia) are certified based on the teachers' portfolio (Ministry of National Education, 2008). Secondly, the teacher certification program is not in operation yet. The central government's DoE is still constructing the program and it is expected to be launched in September of 2009. In this framework, the teachers' professional development programs are highly valued by teachers to enrich their portfolios and taken into account with high credit points for the teacher's certification process, which in the end will bring financial reward for teachers, who are already certified, in the form of receiving two times of basic salary.

2.4. Issues concerning the teachers professional development program

Ironically, this phenomenon created another issue, in which teachers try to attend as many 'training sessions', 'seminars', and any other professional development activities as possible, even though for those who live in remote areas, the opportunity is very scarce. On the other hand, many training providers, either government or private, try to provide various professional development activities through seminars, trainings and workshops without really focusing on the quality of the programs delivered. For example, the majority of the programs are 'one shot' programs without any monitoring or evaluation process. As a consequence, no valid data or any measurement of the effectiveness of the professional development (PD) programs are exhibited. In other words, many teachers only concern relate to the quantity aspect (number of hours) of the PD programs attended, because it will be counted for the teachers' certification process, and not necessarily the quality of the programs, not to mention the impact of the programs for the students in the classroom setting.

On the other hand, many training providers also focus on the quantity aspect of the PD programs or number of workshops/training delivered, rather than the quality of the programs. For example, it is not uncommon to find that the workshop's programs are 'squeezed' and cut from three days to only two days.

3. Practice by the Sampoerna Foundation Teacher Institute (SFTI)

3.1. Introduction of SFTI

The SFTI is part of the Sampoerna Foundation: a professional philanthropic organization and a service provider with a focus in education. SF has awarded more than 32,000 scholarships to students of good academic standing with demonstrated financial needs at elementary through to graduate school level.

The Sampoerna Foundation Teacher Institute is one of the key pillars of the Sampoerna Foundation. Central of the vision of the Sampoerna Foundation is through quality education we are able to produce competent leaders with good moral fiber.

The teacher is the key resource to identify within the classrooms of Indonesia the potential leaders of the future. The Sampoerna Foundation Teacher Institute provides the teachers of Indonesia with quality professional development programmes to increase their knowledge, skills and abilities in order to enable them to best meet the needs of youths in Indonesia.

3.2. Professional development program delivered by the SFTI

There are two main goals of the PD programs delivered by the SFTI. First, is to have real changes happen in teachers and school leaders as reflected in their daily practices that give positive impact upon students' learning behavior and results. In order to achieve this, and by considering the complexity and the diversity of the stakeholders involved, a well planned course of action on what and how to best answers the teachers' needs, has to be prepared carefully and systematically. In addition, SFTI also believes that the PD program is not something that is separate from the daily life of the teachers, but must be part of the daily work of the teachers. This view is in line with the research findings that stated that over 75% of teachers shared the same belief (Bliss and Bliss, 2003).

Secondly, the sustainability of the program is another core issue. Having limited resources combine with challenging geographical areas and the vast number of teachers in Indonesia, the SFTI attempts to build teachers' capacity through PD program sustained, by utilizing and revitalizing the teachers' and principals' professional groups. Consequently, strong commitments from the participants and the local DoE are required. Therefore, lucid roles and expectations from different stakeholders are clearly defined at the initial stage of the program, and according to Kusek and Rist (2004), this is one of the critical components for a program's sustainability.

In addition, SFTI believes there are several factors also influencing the effectiveness of the professional development for teachers and school leaders. For example, the intense and open communication with various stakeholders involved in the planning of the needs analysis process in the region, the program's development and implementation and so on. Therefore, the SFTI always follows a systematic approach in delivering the PD for teachers and school leaders. This approach consists of a procedure of conducting the needs analysis, followed by designing the program with the logical framework, then the programs' implementation with the monitoring of the program along the line, and ended with the evaluation of the programs.

3.2.1. Needs analysis

As a consequent of the basic beliefs mentioned earlier, a comprehensive needs analysis is always conducted before a PD program is delivered. A team of three to five staff, depending on the size of the targeted area, is sent to the location. Then, a variety of data are gathered from different stakeholders by using various techniques, such as interview (school leaders, teachers and sometimes students), focus group discussion, classroom observation and reviewing the school's documents. To action this process support from the local head of DoE and the regent is critical. Thus, the needs analysis process is always preceded by communicating and coordinating with the local authorities.

The needs analysis is considered the first and essential step before any further plan is developed. This is because Indonesia is so diverse in terms of cultures and customs which are reflected in the daily teaching practices. Moreover, the needs analysis result is also very crucial in determining the length, content and the mode of delivery of the program to best meet the needs of the teachers and other stakeholders in that particular vicinity, and for that reason, careful data analysis and interpretation are demanded. (Silberman and Auerbach, 1990).

3.2.2. Designing the program

This step is taken after the full needs analysis report and suggested program are produced and presented to the main stakeholders, in this case, the sponsors and the local DoE. This particular stage is fundamental to assure that the PD program is part of a larger coherent plan for building change in educational sector of that particular region (Kelly and McDiarmid, 2002). Then, if all parties agreed with the suggested program, the MoU between the local regent and the SFTI is signed, followed by signing the cooperation agreement which is legally binding.

As a next step, a logical framework matrix that consists of the activity descriptions, rationale, assumptions and indicators is developed (AusAid, 2005). This step is usually prepared by a small team of three to four staff with one PIC for the program. Moreover, in developing the logical framework, the staff from the research and

development unit is usually involved to give input, particularly on the indicators and how to measure them.

3.2.3. Implementation of the program

The implementation of the program is sometimes not easy to manage. This is particularly because it involves various stakeholders, namely the sponsor of the program, the local regent, local DoE, and the participants (teachers or school leaders). One of the most common obstacles in the implementation stage is the coordination and the communication between the local DoE and the PD participants. For example, it is a widespread practice in Indonesia, that the participants will only attend the PD activity if they received a formal invitation letter from the head of local DoE. In other words, they have to be 'assigned' by their superior to participate in the program; otherwise, they will not attend the program, even though they feel that they need the program and enjoy the learning process, just because it is not 'officially assigned'.

Furthermore, this issue seems to be common across Indonesia, since SFTI has encountered the situation repeatedly, in which participants did not come because they did not receive any invitation from the local DoE or the invitation came one day or even on the same day of the program implementation. Also, the participants sometimes have to attend other events held by the local DoE, even though they have been informed and had a mutual signed agreement to not have different event on the same day. In that case, the SFTI usually re-coordinate with the local DoE, referring to the MoU and the coordination agreement that have been signed by both parties and asked for their commitment to make the implementation of the program runs efficiently. The implementation of the PD program is always set in staggered, with the intention of giving the participants the opportunity to implement the new knowledge and skills in their own classrooms' or schools' setting. Also, to give the participants time to reflect on what they have put into practice. This reflection is then discussed in the following session, before the program continues. In fact, this ongoing practical based professional development, allowing the participants to receive feedback and support, is regarded as a good teachers' professional development practice (Kelly and McDiarmid, 2002). Yet, this is not a common practice in Indonesia, where a PD program is usually delivered in one instance. For example, one PD program consists of seven days straight of workshop's sessions is quite common.

3.2.4. Program monitoring and evaluation

The issue of program monitoring and evaluation is crucial yet a challenging one. It is crucial because through monitoring of the program, one can ascertain if the program is running as planned, and if the participants develop their skills, knowledge and are trying to implement new practice in their classroom or school. Through the program's evaluation, one can know if the objectives have been accomplished. This is challenging in developing countries like Indonesia, because there is lack of strong evaluation culture and lack of performance orientation in the public sector (Schacter, 2000). Nevertheless, the Indonesian government has started to build the evaluation culture by seeing "evaluation as a tool to correct policy and public expenditure programs through more direct linkages to the National Development Plan and the resource allocation process" (Guerrero, 1999).

Furthermore, it is also challenging because the PD participants themselves are not used to the 'different' practice in which they have to implement, reflect and giving

feedback on the changes they try to put into practice at their schools, while at the same time being monitored and evaluated. This is particularly relevant because of the educators' long history of traditional training or 'workshop' formats of professional development, they may
have difficulty conceiving of professional development opportunities in alternative formats. This difficulty is referred to as a cognitive constraint. These interpretations become routine over time and institutionalized as part of the identity of the organizations. In other words, they develop an inherent and self-perpetuating nature, as they become characterized as 'the way things are' or 'the way we do things here' (Johnson, 1984, pp. 85, 110).

Despite all the challenges described earlier, SFTI tries to deal with the situation by stating the expectations clearly well ahead before the program begins, so that all participants are all well aware of what are expected from them. On the other hand, enough guidance, support and consultancy are provided to develop the teachers' self confidence in making real changes in their classroom practices, which in the end will give positive impact towards students' achievement. In order to accomplish this objective, there should be a link between the development strategies and modifications in curriculum or teaching practices (Reynolds, et al., 1996).

In terms of evaluating the program, so far the SFTI has already conducted three levels of evaluation out of five or six levels of evaluation (Guskey, 2000; Owen and Rogers, 1999; Phillips and Stone, 2002). The first level of evaluation, which is to evaluate the participants' reaction and satisfaction, is done by giving the evaluation sheet at the end of every session to know the participants' opinion about the activities conducted and feedback for the facilitator. This data is then tabulated and processed further to know the overall response from the participants.

Moreover, the learning results or the transfer of skills and knowledge, which is the second level of the evaluation, is evaluated by reviewing the personal journals, projects or assignments in between the PD sessions. This stage is very important to make sure that the participants really try to apply the new skills and knowledge in daily practice or on a small scale. Discussion and feedback are usually provided in the following session before the program continues.

Finally, the third level of evaluation, which is the application of the skills and knowledge gained from the PD program into the classroom practices or school wide policy. This stage is conducted by visiting the participants' schools, and conduct classroom and school observations, interviews, FGD sessions and reviewing the school's policies. However, if there are many schools participated in the program, numbers of schools are selected randomly as samples. Moreover, the schools' visit is performed to reduce the level of subjectivity through the participants' self reports and reviews (Glover and Law, 1996).

In fact, the fourth level of the evaluation, which is the impact of the PD program for the school as an institution, should be put in place in a measurable way. This stage needs a more careful and comprehensive preparation. At this stage, the SFTI is trying to go to this fourth level of evaluating the PD program.

4. Conclusion

Indonesia is in the process of implementing the education reformation. One of the main objectives is to increase the number of qualified teachers and enhance the teachers' quality through professional development programs. This initiative from the government is aligned with the vision and mission of the Sampoerna Foundation Teacher Institute (SFTI).

In the attempt to augment the teachers' quality through professional development programs, the SFTI tries to conduct the PD programs in a structured and measurable ways. However, there are some challenges and obstacles in implementing a well structured and assessable program, due to the common practices that have been put in place for longer period. Thus, a strong commitment and cooperation between stakeholders involved, is essential to make the program a success and sustainable one.

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