

# UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR LESS DEVELOPED AREAS OF INDONESIA: AN EFFORT TO PROMOTE EQUAL DEVELOPMENT ACROSS REGIONS

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*Abstract: Education provides great contributions to national development. Through education, there is improvement in the quality of a nation's human resources, which in turn contributes to development. However, in Indonesia, education faces several problems, including socio-cultural and geographical problems, due to its vast and heterogeneous nature. This leads to an unequal provision of education in the country. To solve this problem of equalization, the Indonesian government developed the SM-3T (Sarjana Mendidik di Daerah Terdepan, Tertinggal, Terluar) program, a program of graduates who aim to educate in the leading, undeveloped, and isolated areas of Indonesia. Based on such a background, this study attempts to describe the effectiveness of the SM-3T program in the 3T (i.e., Most Leading, Most Undeveloped, and Most Isolated) areas. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analysis method. The site of the study was the Department of Geography Education in the Faculty of Social Sciences Education at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. The targets of the study were the former participants of the SM-3T PPG (Teachers' Professional Education). The study revealed that the SM-3T program is a good program because it is effective in contributing to the equalization of education and the development of human resources.*

**Keywords:** SM-3T, Education Equalization, 3T Areas

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation for national development. Development is a dream of every country in the world, including Indonesia. Each development requires education because it shapes and develops the future generations of any given country; however, this happens only with quality education.

Education in Indonesia faces many challenges. Such challenges include: 1) the lack of educational structures and infrastructure, 2) the relatively high cost of education, and 3) the low level of equal opportunity to attain education.

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Concerning educational problems in Indonesia, Baswedan, the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture, reported the following in a 2014 meeting, "Indonesia's Educational Emergency", with the Regional Education Office in Jakarta: a) 75% of schools in Indonesia did not satisfy the minimum standard of educational service (based on the 2012 Ministry of Education and Culture mapping of 40,000 schools); b) the average score on the teachers' competence test was 44.5, far below the expected standard score of 70 (based on the results of a teachers' competence test of 46,000 teachers in 2012); c) Indonesia held the 40<sup>th</sup> rank out of 40 countries in the Learning Curve-Pearson mapping (the result of educational access and quality mapping in 2013 and 2014); d) according to UNESCO, the average reading interest of Indonesian people in 2012 was 0.001, which meant that only 1 in 1,000 Indonesians had a serious interest in reading; and e) there were many cases of violence in educational environments, including the physical violence by/towards students outside the schools and sexual violence in the schools (the current study revealed that the media reported more than 230 cases of violence involving students in the period from October 2014 to November 2014).

Educational development was one of the solutions put forward to solve these educational problems. Considering that Indonesia is geographically and socio-culturally vast and heterogeneous, educational development in Indonesia requires appropriate efforts to solve all educational problems. Among these problems were the educational problems in the most leading, most undeveloped, and most isolated areas (3T areas). Education implementation in 3T areas faced problems with educators, among others, including an insufficient number of educators, unequal distribution of educators, substandard qualifications of teachers, teacher incompetence, and discrepancies between teachers' educational qualification and the field that they teach (the 2013 SM-3T program manual).

To solve these educational problems in isolated areas the government implemented the Graduates Educating in the Most Leading, Most Undeveloped, and Most Isolated Areas (SM-3T) program. The program was one of the efforts made to equalize education in Indonesia. In the SM-3T program, those who held a Bachelor of Education degree participated for one year in accelerating the educational development of 3T areas. The program was immediately followed by the Teachers' Professional Education (PPG) program. The implementation of the SM-3T and PPG programs had both positive and negative aspects. Hence, this study attempts to reveal to what extent the SM-3T program was effective for equalizing education in 3T areas as a part of the national educational development efforts.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study implemented a qualitative approach. It was based on two considerations. First, the problem investigated in this study was the realization of the SM-3T program to equalize the education in 3T areas. Such investigation required actual and contextual

field data. Second, the study investigated the problem using primary data from the subjects of the research. The primary data were inseparable from its natural context and setting.

The method used in this study was the descriptive-analysis method. In this method, the study relied on problem solving based on the contemporary facts and realities in the field, and it focused on the actual problems found at the time of the study. The location of the study was the Department of Geography Education, the Faculty of Social Science of the Indonesia University of Education. The target (subject) of the study was the group of participants of the post-SM-3T PPG program.

### **3. LITERARY REVIEW**

#### **3.1. Review of SM-3T**

In the SM-3T program, those who held a Bachelor of Education degree participated for one year in accelerating the education in 3T areas by preparing professional educators. The program was followed by the Teachers' Professional Education program (SM-3T implementation manual, 2013, pp. 2-3). The government's implementation of the SM-3T program aimed to help solve the problems of having an insufficient amount of teachers, as well as to prepare professional educators who were strong, independent, caring, and willing to educate younger generation so that Indonesians could develop together to realize the noble dreams of their forefathers.

Based on the SM-3T implementation manual (2013, p. 3), the SM-3T program had the following objectives: 1) to help 3T areas solve educational problems, particularly the lack of educators; 2) to provide Bachelor of Education graduates with education experience so that they could develop their professionalism, patriotism, nationalism, caring, and emphatic attitudes, as well as their skills in solving educational problems, their responsibility for the development of the country, and their perseverance in developing education in 3T areas; 3) to prepare future educators who would be willing to serve as professional educators in 3T areas; and 4) to equip future professional educators before they joined the Teacher's Professional Education program.

##### ***3.1.1. Review of Education Equalization***

Concerning education, the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia regulates that the government was responsible for satisfying its citizens' right of access to education to improve the quality of life in the country. The government was responsible for educating the country and realizing social welfare. Therefore, education equalization was a necessity for Indonesia with its multicultural nature and geographical condition.

Indonesia Law No 20 (2003) concerning the National Educational System described the definition of education as follows.

Education was a deliberate and systematic effort to develop a learning environment and learning process so that the students actively developed their

potential to have religious-spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble characters, and skills that they, their society, and their country required.

While Danim (2005, p. 247) states that the equalization of educational opportunities involved the dimensions of accessibility and equity or the fairness of the education itself. However, the factors of culture, gender bias, economic ability of the family, geographical environment, and others dictated that public access to educational services would always be different, despite equal rights and opportunities.

Schiefelbein and Farrel (as cited in Marpaung, 2011, pp. 25-26) suggested the elements of education equalization concept. They argue that education equalization is not limited to whether or not students have the same opportunity to attend schools, but rather that students need to receive similar treatment from the moment they enroll, when they are studying and until the moment they graduate and obtain the benefits of their education in social life.

### *3.1.2. Review on Human Resources Development*

Human resources development can be conducted through formal and informal sectors. The government needs to develop human resources by prioritizing the education sector more than other sectors. To improve the quality of human resources, Kartadinata (1997, p. 6) states that:

The development of high quality human resources is a contextual process, which means that the development of human resources through education is not limited only to equip human resources with knowledge and skills necessary for the current workplace; it also needs to produce human resources who are able, willing, and prepared to learn all their lives (lifelong learning).

The human resources development in Indonesia aimed to comprehensively develop the quality of human resources, including the aspects of personality and mental attitude, science and technology mastery, and professionalism and competence, all of which were framed within religious values. In other words, human resource development in Indonesia involved the development of mental intelligence (IQ), social intelligence (EQ), and spiritual intelligence (SQ).

The human capital theory states that education is an investment of human resources with various benefits, including better working conditions, production efficiency, and improvement of one's welfare and income if he is able to complete a higher level of education than those with a lower level of education (Author, Year).

Concerning educational relevance, Djoyonegara (1995, p. 5) argued that in reality, education had suited the needs of developing society. Education today is considered the main element in human resource development. Human resources are more valuable if they have the attitude, behaviour, insight, skill, competence, and capabilities needed in various fields and sectors. Education is one of the tools that produces change in

human resources. Therefore, it is clear how important the role of education is in improving the quality of human resources to be equal with others, regionally (regional autonomy), nationally, or internationally (globally).

*Review on Undeveloped Area; the Decree of Indonesia Ministry of Undeveloped Areas Development No: 001/KEP/M-PDT/I/2005 Concerning National Strategy for Undeveloped Area Development*

The Regency areas were relatively underdeveloped compared with other areas and were populated by relatively underdeveloped people. To determine if an area is undeveloped or underdeveloped, the government used an approach based on the calculation of six basic criteria: the economy of the people, human resources, infrastructures, local financial ability, accessibility and characteristic of the area, and regencies located in national boundaries and small islands, as well as in disaster-prone and conflict-prone areas. The six criteria were calculated using the 2003 Village Potential (PODES), the 2002 National Socio-Economic Survey (SUSENAS), and the 2004 Regency Financial data from the Department of Finance. Based on these data, the government determined that 199 regencies were undeveloped areas.

*Review on Teachers' Professional Education (PPG) program according to the PPG Manual from the Higher Education Directorate General, Indonesia Ministry of Education*

The amended clause 31 article (3) of the 1945 Constitution states that the government organized and implemented a national education system that improved religiousness and faith as well as noble characteristics to educate people as described in national regulations. In the attempt to improve the quality of education, the teacher's role was critical. Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning National Education System, Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, Government Regulation No. 74 of 2008 concerning Teachers, as well as Education Ministry Regulation No. 8 of 2009 concerning Teachers Pre-service Professional Education Program all asserted the strategic role of teachers and lectures in improving the quality of education. Being a teacher was a professional position that demanded teachers possess academic qualification, competence, an educational certificate, physical and emotional health, and the capability to realize the goals of national education.

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning National Education, professional education was a higher education following a graduate program that prepared and equipped university students to possess occupational and special skills. Therefore, the PPG program was an educational program implemented for the graduates of Education programs (S-1/Bachelor) and of Non-education programs (S-1/D-IV) who possessed interest and talent to become teachers, so that they could become professional teachers as required by the national education standard and so that they could obtain the educator certificates. The general objective of PPG program was to produce future teachers who possessed the ability to realize national education objectives.

The specific objective of the PPG program, as set in Clause 2 of Education Ministry Regulation No. 8 of 2009, was to produce future teachers who possessed competence in planning, implementing and evaluating learning, following-up on the evaluation results, coaching and training students, and conducting research. Teachers should also be continuously develop their professionalism.

#### 4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1. The Effectiveness of the SM-3T Program on the Realization of Education Equalization in 3T Areas

Based on the description of the findings, the SM-3T program generally produced two categories of results: influential and non-influential. It was influential because: 1) the people felt that SM-3T helped them because the program enriched and empowered POSDAYA, in which the existing activities in 3T areas became more varied and interesting; and 2) it improved the quality of human resources, as indicated by the improvement in students' interest in learning, particularly their reading ability and their nationalism. On the other hand, the SM-3T program was not influential because: 1) the duration of the service was short (1 year) and therefore was unable to significantly change the quality of human resources; and 2) there were many high-quality teachers in some of the 3T areas.

Based on the result of FGD (focus Group discussion, one of the data collecting instruments in this study), the SM-3T program contributed towards the development of human resources in 3T areas. The result of FGD confirmed that the SM-3T program played an important role in education equalization in Indonesia.

From the two findings of the study previously described, it was clear that the SM-3T program was effective for education equalization as could be observed from the indicator of education equalization, i.e., the quality improvement of human resources. The improvement in reading interest, learning interest, and the nationalism of the students in 3T areas after the participants taught there was a great achievement of the SM-3T program.

The basic assumption of the human capital theory is that one can improve one's income through education development. Every added year of schooling means, on one hand, the improvement of working competence and income level. On the other hand, it means a one-year delay in receiving said income. Based on this theory, it was clear that the SM-3T program was designed to develop the quality of human resources. In human capital theory, investing in the education sector is an investment in a brighter future of a country because, with education, human resources can be directed to positive and beneficial things for the good of the public. Education expands human insight and thinking by satisfying one's needs as well as the needs of the country.

Investment in education has many functions aside from the economic-technical function, including the socio-humaniora function, political function, cultural function,

and educational function. In the economic-technical function, education is related to economic growth (the human capital theory). People with a higher level of education, measured by their length of study, have better jobs and better salaries compared with people with a lower level of education. If salary indicated productivity, the more people who possess higher education, the higher national productivity and economic growth will be (Elwin Tobing in Atmanti, 2005, p. 36).

One of the aims of the SM-3T program was to prepare future educators with willingness to serve as professional educators in 3T areas. The interview with SM-3T alumni revealed that the alumni were prepared and willing to teach in 3T areas if they were located in those areas.

Based on the discussion of the findings, the researchers formulated a temporary conclusion that the SM-3T program was effective in realizing educational equalization of 3T areas through SM-3T programs, i.e., the education program aimed to develop the quality of human resources in 3T areas as an investment in a brighter future for the country. The success of the SM-3T program was clearly evident in the responses of the people in 3T areas who gladly welcomed the participants of the program, thus it was easier for the participants to implement the SM-3T program. The success of the program was also apparent in the improved reading and learning interests of the students in 3T areas. Another indicator of the program's success was the willingness of its alumni to be placed in 3T areas again after they finished the PPG scholarship program.

#### **4.2. The Effectiveness of PPG as the Compulsory Follow-up Program for SM-3T Participants**

The following were the descriptions of the findings on PPG implementation: 1) *satisfying needs (as necessary)*. The researcher believed that the implementation of PPG, so far, was as expected. In the program, the participants were equipped with skills and competences to be professional teachers, involving the development of pedagogic competence, personal competence, professional competence, and social competence. 2) *not satisfying needs* due to a) the activities were not varied for the first few weeks, b) the re-registration of PPG should be online and should be done immediately, c) it needed to refine the existing schedule and methods used, d) the activities and schedule were too demanding, e) the lack of facilities and infrastructure of the PPG program, such as internet connection, drinking water in workshop rooms, printer, etc.

Based on the findings, PPG activities satisfied the professional needs of future educators. However, the technicalities of its implementation were not optimal. Therefore, it needed a comprehensive evaluation, including an evaluation on the registration process and PPG implementation (schedule, materials, structure, and infrastructure). The result of the FGD also indicated that the PPG program satisfied the professional needs of teachers. The post-SM-3T PPG program should be implemented so that it can realize the availability of teachers with high professionalism.

The PPG program aimed to produce professional educators. Being a professional educator required a lengthy process. It began with preparing and equipping future teachers, recruitment, assigning teachers to a location, assigning jobs, and professional and career development. It ended with becoming a real professional teacher. A professional teacher is basically a teacher who, in performing his main job and function, is independent, comprehensively competent, and highly intellectual.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of the findings, the researchers formulated a temporary conclusion that the SM-3T program was effective in realizing educational equalization in 3T areas through the SM-3T programs, i.e., the education program aimed to develop the quality of human resources in 3T areas as an investment for a brighter future for the country. The success of the SM-3T program was clearly evident in the responses of the people in 3T areas who gladly welcomed the participants of the program. Such a warm welcome facilitated the participants in implementing the SM-3T program. The success of the program was also apparent in the improved reading and learning interests of the students in 3T areas. Another indicator of the program's success was the willingness of its alumni to be placed in 3T areas again after they finished the PPG scholarship program.

This study on the participants of the PPG program or alumni of the SM-3T program resulted in a temporary conclusion that the post-SM-3T PPG program was effective in developing teachers' professionalism and professional competence. However, this effectiveness had to be supported by the improvement of PPG implementation, including the availability of structure and infrastructure, varied learning materials, mentoring from lecturers, and financial transportation.

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