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## THE CONSTRUCTION OF ACADEMIC STAFF IDENTITY FOLLOWING THE CONVERSION FROM IKIP TO UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract:** This paper discussed the construction of academic staff identity following the conversion in 1999, from IKIP Ujung Pandang to Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM), South Sulawesi, Indonesia. It examined how the idea of becoming a university was perceived by university members and how it shaped the undergraduate program for teacher education at the university. Interviews were conducted to academic staff who had been working at the university before and after the conversion. The findings revealed that the meaning of becoming a university had shaped the changing characteristics of IKIP as a teacher education institute. The importance of disciplinary knowledge that characterised university, had strongly driven the scheme of the teacher education program. It also shaped the role of academic staff, as well as their professional careers. In order to be recognised as a university, the academic staff had been driven and constructed to fit the university features established by the government of Indonesia. For UNM, the strategy to strengthen academic staff qualifications in the field of disciplinary knowledge has turned these ‘teacher educators’ into “university lecturers”. This qualification becomes the certificate of recognition for them as university lecturers, not as teacher educators only. It was argued that it had created identity issues for teacher educators, especially in the aspect of their academic expertise.

**Keywords:** *teacher education, teacher education, identity, Indonesia*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

One of the critical moments in Indonesia’s development of teacher education occurred in the late 1990s. At that time, 11 teacher-training institutes (IKIP) converted into universities, including IKIP Ujung Pandang. Similar to other IKIP, IKIP Ujung Pandang was known as an institute that focused solely on teacher preparation. It is located in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Following the conversion, IKIP Ujung Pandang changed its name to Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM).

The conversion of IKIP into university has become a topic of debate among Indonesia’s educational practitioners. This is due to IKIP’s additional responsibility for administering various academic programs other than teacher education as a result of becoming a university. Most practitioners argue that the conversion will diminish the quality of teacher education due to the shifting focus of both the university and teacher educators.

Wilonoyudho (2012) argues that the status change generates problems for teacher educators undertaking research in the field of education. According to him, the shifting focus creates teacher educator absences in research teaching and teacher

education. This occurs when large numbers of the academic staff pursued disciplinary knowledge other than education as part of the university graduate requirement. The shifting focus distracts them from deepening their knowledge regarding teaching, education, and teacher education.

In an interview with the *Kompas* newspaper (as cited in Universitas Atmajaya, 2004), two former IKIP rectors argue that the conversion of IKIP has caused ambiguity. Djohar, the former rector of IKIP Yogyakarta, states that the change is supposed to be taken as an opportunity for IKIP to develop and cultivate a variety of courses relevant to education as a field. He believes that shifting the focus by strengthening disciplinary knowledge has created a tendency to ignore the values of professionalism in teacher education. The former rector of IKIP Jakarta, Winarno Surakhmad, believes that, as former teacher education institutions, these universities should strengthen their positions by focusing on enhancing the program in the education field. He suggests that the changing orientation, which ignores the core values of IKIP as a teacher education institute, will cause competitiveness issues with established universities. The latter universities are much better prepared and more difficult to compete with.

## 2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The critical issue in this study is the changing character of Indonesia's teacher education institute following transition into a university. IKIP was one of the leading teacher education institutes that focused on teacher education only. Following the conversion, IKIP changed significantly that it no longer focuses on teacher education. This study is conducted at two faculties of the UNM – Faculty of Education (FIP) and Faculty of Mathematics and Science (FMIPA), the first two faculties that have been affected by the shifting status. It is notable that, following the conversion, almost all faculties at UNM have administered two programs, teacher education programs and non-education programs, including these two faculties, which became one of the critical reasons for doing this research.

## 3 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

### 3.1 Research Participants

The research participants are purposively selected in. Since the aim of this study is to understand and gain insight into the impact of conversion on the teacher education program, this study must select a sample that can provide the richest information regarding the case being studied (Merriam, 1998). The criteria of participant selections include those who experience the conversion and who have been working at UNM since it was originally IKIP. The identification of potential participants was done by asking some university members about people involved in the conversion process, who witnessed the conversion process, and who was likely to have a view on the issues being studied.

### 3.2 Data Collection Technique.

The interview is the main data collection technique used in this study. According to Byrne (2000), a qualitative interview offers the possibility of exploring the participant's understanding in a meaningful way. Moreover, it allows the researcher to explore voices and experiences that may have been ignored. Merriam (1998) also argues that an interview is necessary when a study is interested in past events.

In general, the interview focused on how the conversion had affected the teacher education program and participants' practices as teacher educators. The historical questions were asked in order to offer "an insight into respondents' memories and explanations of why things have come to be what they are, as well as descriptions of current problems and aspirations" (Stark & Torrance, 2005, p.35).

## 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

As part of the preparation and consequences of becoming a university, the academic staff are encouraged to pursue their masters and doctoral programs in the area of pure discipline. By having undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in education and specific disciplines respectively, they are expected to teach in both teacher education and disciplinary programs. Most teacher educators believe that this strategy has given them an additional workload and has created a *bias* in their professional career development.

One academic staff member who teaches at FMIPA, believes that this scheme has diminished the quality of the academic staff. He says:

*It has strongly impacted on our work as the academic staff.... There were many academic staff who have good qualities in the field of education, even our colleagues who come from education. They pursue their postgraduate qualifications in the area of pure discipline ... but they lost their quality, both in doing research and in their ability to deepen their knowledge in education, because they are already divided between education and non-education. The impact is we are half in education, and also half in non-education.*

According to him, there is ambiguity in research conducted by the academic staff. Most of the FMIPA academic staff teach and research in two areas, teacher education and science. It is difficult to identify the expertise of these academic staff.

*If we ask the academic staff: "Which one is your home base? Are you in the teacher education program or in disciplinary program?" They will say: "I am in a disciplinary program". But when we look at their research and publication, most of it is about education... so research is not about knowledge production, it is about "just" doing the research as part of their task as academic staff.*

The strengthening of disciplinary knowledge has been considered to limit the academic staff's opportunities to deepen their knowledge in the field of education and teacher education.

Other academic staff who pursued a master's degree in disciplinary knowledge and held an undergraduate qualification in Bachelor of Education (Science) says:

*To be honest, I have always been in favour of education. My passion is in education, not in science. If only I had that opportunity to choose, I would want to do education. But by that time, we may not study education.*

According to him, the shifting focus has also influenced the type of research conducted by academic staff.

*My research is divided between education and science, depends... Later, I am not sure whether I want to focus on teacher education or science as my expertise. I have been forced to be a scientist, because in the official data I am listed as a science lecturer. But my passion is education... I do research in both fields ... I am not the only one... there are many others are like me.*

An academic staff member who teaches at FIP, says:

*I did my master degree in non-education ... now, if I want to pursue my doctoral degree, which area do I have to take, education or non-education? It has become more confusing since recent policy requires academic staff to teach in areas based on their educational background... If I take education, it is not connected with my masters qualification. But if I take disciplinary knowledge, I have to move to another faculty that focuses on disciplinary knowledge.*

The research data shows how conversion into university has transformed the academic subjectivity of the UNM staff (see Foucault, 1982). The conversion has led to the construction of new teacher educator identities in order to fit with the university characteristics. The conversion manifests as a mode of classifications/divisions (Rabinow, 1984), where university lecturers are different from teacher educators. This identity needs to be constructed, since IKIP as a teacher training institute is different from a university. Different types of higher education mean different forms of identity. Therefore, the identity of teacher educators needs to be constructed to conform to the new identity which characterises university lecturers. Accordingly, this identity is characterised by

educational qualifications in the field of disciplinary knowledge.

One retired participant who taught at the Faculty of Education, provides critical comments on the current situation of academic staff qualifications:

*The conversion has made the management of the institute become more complex. Many of the academic staff, in their head, they are teachers, not scientists. If we look at the qualifications of our academic staff, it's so mixed. The expertise is not clear. How to manage this? The academic staff in the faculties of disciplinary knowledge, their knowledge of a particular discipline is half, their knowledge of education is also half. That's what happened.*

This research argues that the importance of disciplinary knowledge overshadows the future development of teacher education, the root of IKIP as a teacher education institute. In fact, it has not led to an improvement of the teacher education program, instead gradually diminishing its quality. After the conversion, most of the academic staff should teach in two programs: teacher education and the disciplinary program. At the same time, the types of research conducted by academic staff also vary. In terms of their roles as university-based teacher educators, these complex roles create issues not only for the teaching and learning process at the classroom level, but also for their professional identity and future careers as university scholars. Perhaps, the concern raised by Hayhoe (2002) is that, following conversion into university, the quality of teacher education is linked to the position and the degree of autonomy held by a teacher education program (see also Maton, 2005).

Furthermore, Hayhoe (2002) suggests that, without a high degree of autonomy, teacher education will be in danger of weakening its excellence in preparing teachers, which is strongly oriented towards professional practice and integrated learning with links to schools and actual teaching work. She argues that the lack of autonomy of teacher education could easily move resources from education to other fields. In addition, the shifting orientation, where the university develops programs in both pure discipline and teacher education, is likely to have a strong academic orientation and drive the research into major disciplines other than education (Hayhoe, 2002, p. 17).

Studies of teacher educators after the transition to a university are mainly concerned with the conceptualisation of their academic work as teacher educators and researchers (see, for example, Chetty & Lubben, 2010; Ellis et al., 2012; Robinson & McMillan, 2006). In terms of knowledge, teacher educators are characterised as having practical knowledge, since their job is to prepare teachers; they instruct student teachers how to teach. In terms of scholarly knowledge, the researcher's role is considered to be distinct from the work of teacher educators.

In the case of UNM, becoming a researcher is, apparently, not a distinguishing feature of the academic staff. Conducting research has been part of their work as teacher educators; it is the type of discipline that shapes this identity. As a result, the field of expertise of UNM academic staff becomes ambiguous, which could diminish not only the quality of the teacher education program, but also the quality of research in the field of teacher education. The participants have implicitly broached this tendency; in turn, it may downsize the teacher education program at UNM.

Some would argue that the increasing number of academic staff with masters and doctoral degrees in particular disciplines would improve the quality of teacher education at UNM in terms of subject matter knowledge. Yet, preparing teachers is not only about strengthening the subject knowledge. It also involves complex issues that require a response by institutions that prepare teachers.

Unfortunately, the various types of teachers' knowledge can be left undiscussed if teacher educators have limited opportunity to explore the field of teacher education itself. In addition, the changing character of academic staff may weaken their position as academic scholars. This ambiguity creates disjunction and limits opportunity for the academic staff to strengthen their expertise and decide which area they want to explore. In fact, the changing discipline, the additional teaching load, has created an identity crisis for many of the academic staff, whether they are teacher educators or not.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The findings show how the conversion has formed the identity of teacher educators. In order to be recognised as a university, teacher educators are driven and constructed to fit the university features developed by the government of Indonesia. For UNM, the strategy to strengthen academic staff qualifications in the field of disciplinary knowledge has turned these 'teacher educators' into university lecturers. This qualification becomes the certificate

of recognition for them as university lecturers, not as teacher educators only. On the individual level, however, it creates identity issues for teacher educators, especially in terms of their academic expertise.

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