Public perception on education partnership programs between Indonesia and Australia in East Nusa Tenggara Province

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Abstracts. A research about partnership program in education between the government of Indonesia and Australia in East Nusa Tenggara Province (ENTP) has been conducted. The aim is to list the programs between the countries on the region in the last twenty years, together with their implementations to the community based on all the stakeholders’ perspectives. The samples taken by purposive sampling which targeted those who had direct involvement to the programs in the Districts of Sikka, Ende and Ngada. A literature review, questioners and a depth interview were employed in the data collection. The results show that the main partnership projects were NTT-PEP (Nusa Tenggara Timur-Primary Education Partnership), AIBEP (Australia Indonesia Building Education Project) and ProDEP (Professional Development for Education Personal). While the first and the third programs were targeting on human resources development, the second project was more focusing on the infrastructures. The analysis shows that in general, the majority of people think that the program implementation was good. Similar results were also reflected in the group of superintendent and the community. However, totally different feature was found in the group of government officials where all of them perceived that the program was good and need to be continued and sustained.

1. Introduction
Geographically, the East Nusa Tenggara (ENT) province is situated right on the gate of Asia Pacific region. This southeast part of Indonesia is bordered by Flores Sea on the North, Indonesian Ocean on the South, Timor Leste on the East and West Nusa Tenggara province on the West. As it has a strategic position, the province has the potential to gain many economical as well as political benefits. On the contrary, data collected from the ENT Statistic Bureau shows that 29% of the population was poor or even very poor. The number comprises about 1.15 million out of 4 million people [1].

The implication of poverty is massive. In ENT, this economy limitation affects education and health [2]. Data in ENT-SB also shows that around 15.1% of the people 15-16 years old were illiterate. The portion was even higher for 45-46 years old which constituted about 35. The data of
UNICEF shows an ugly fact where the percentage of dropped out school children and people who were unable to enjoy senior high school and tertiary education were relatively high [3] [4]. Almost 800 in about 10 thousand children of junior high school age group were not attending schools [5]. The main reason those children were not being in either primary or secondary education was that they had to work for their families financial support [6].

Apart from the lack of human resources in terms of their qualification, this region has also limited education facilities such as good libraries, good laboratories and ICT. There were only 350 primary schools out of 4000 that have good libraries and 15 out of 795 Junior high schools that have ICT facilities. Senior high schools have better situation where among 235 schools available 160 of them provide good libraries and 120 have good ICT facilities [1].

Realizing the importance of education and its impacts on many aspects of life, the government of Indonesia in the provincial level has developed many partnership programs in education with the government of Australia such as BRIDGE (Building Relation through International Dialogue and Growing Engagement) program which were participated by many high schools in both countries [7], Partnership Sister Schools program [8] and many others. The programs were focusing on both human resources development and schools’ facilities procurement. Continuous development on human resources such as professional development for teachers, principals and superintendents is very essential to provide good education services. Good school facilities are as important as the human resources development in order to obtain good quality of the education services for student. Therefore these two aspects were the two primary objectives in any education partnership program.

The implementation of the partnership programs in any kind needs strong commitment of all parties. It also needs clear measurement in order to assess and evaluate the impact of the partnership programs. This can be carried out through examining all parties perception include local communities, government officials and all those direct project beneficiaries. Therefore a research to identify all education partnership programs between Indonesia and Australia, to analyze their implementations and impacts are undertaken.

2. Methods
To analyse the implementation and the benefits of the partnership programs, individual perceptions were collected through questionnaires and an in depth interview. The interviewees were targeted those who involved in the program whether as teachers, head of department of education and culture, superintendents and the school committees. The regions selected for the projects are the districts of Ngada, Ende and Sikka. The selection of the three districts were based on the consideration that the regions were the targeted districts for the program. The interviewees were classified in three categories which was purposively done. They were officials in the Department of Education and Culture, teachers and superintendents and the school committees or public. The tools employed in the research were literature review, questionnaires and an in depth interview.

Primary data was collected through questionnaires and depth interview to the direct recipients of the programs in the three areas. Questionnaires contained a number of questions related to the education partnership program between Indonesia and Australia together with their perception towards the implementation and impact of the programs. Descriptive data analysis was employed in the research [9-11].

The instrument applied in the research was the Likert Scales (1 to 5) to examine the interviewees’ responses. The options were Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Neutral (B), Disagree (TS) and Strongly Disagree (STS) with the scoring system 5 to 1 respectively for favorable question items and vice versa for unfavorable ones. For this purpose, carefully-checks was applied in identifying the favorable and unfavorable question items [12,13].
3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Education Partnership Programs Description

The study shows that the intensive partnership program between the government of Indonesia and Australia in East Nusa Tenggara started about 15 years ago [14]. There were three main education partnership programs developed during the period. The first program was NTT-PEP (Nusa Tenggara Timur-Primary Education Partnership). This G to G project was mainly undertaken in three districts (Sikka, Ende and Ngada) in the year 2000 to 2008. The reason for the selection of these three districts might have been their unattainable geophysical conditions and the different characteristic of the schools. The involvement of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Religion and the National Planning Board was an essential point. The associated departments in the provincial level also actively participated in the program. NTT-PEP program was aiming at changing the mind set of the whole stakeholders in the education world such as the head of kabupaten (bupati), the member of parliaments, the Region’s Planning Board, Education and Culture Department, Catholic and other educational foundations, schools’ principals, teachers, public figures, religious figures and women figures. They ran the education system on the basis of schools which was known as School Based Management. In this principle everything was collaboratively planned, conducted, managed and assessed for improving the quality of primary education in the region as the common goal. As a result, school committees were formed in most schools in the three districts and Education Board in the District level. Some other main activities conducted during the project were the support and aid for the schools’ committees and education board, training and assistance for teachers, school principals, department revision and education technical executive unit structures, recruitment and assistance for new school principals, recruitment and assistance for superintendents, comparative study and study visits in Australia for teachers, superintendents, the head of department of education and culture, bupati and the education foundations, assistance and support for the potential ADS (Australian Development Scholarship) awardees, the forming of school health (Usaha Kesehatan Sekolah) and clean and healthy life behaviour (Perilaku hidup bersih dan sehat) programs.

The second program was called Australia – Indonesia Building Education Program (AIBEP). It was conducted in the year 2006 until present. The program was also a G to G program between Indonesia and Australia to build new schools particularly National Junior High Schools and or One Roof National Junior Schools (SMP Negeri Satu Atap). The main objective of the program was to extend the access for education especially for those who live in the remote areas. Years before this partnership program, the local government often found some difficulties in building new schools or other facilities due to financial problem. The positive outcome of the program was that the local community together with government officials were willing to provide pieces of land for constructing new schools and even provided teachers for them. As a result, the program improves the number of students who continue their studies to the higher level of education as education services were near to the local communities. All new schools have good and complete facilities such as, classrooms, teachers room, libraries, labs, sanitation facilities and many others. Another important benefit of this project was that the local university graduates in education were well employed in the new built schools. For all the benefits that can be encountered, one problem that still persists was that the number of state teachers which was still very limited for those schools at that time. This should be the commitment of the local government to provide those state teachers for the schools.

The third program was called ProDEP (Professional Development for Education Personal) which was conducted in year 2014. In this project, some potential school principals were recruited and prepared to be new principals of the schools. From those who joined the program, more than ninety percent of them (thirteen out of fourteen) were appointed to be principals in primary schools of the region and they were well-trained in conducting school based management system.
3.2. Obstacles and Constraints of the Programs

Some problems and obstacles that have been encountered during the execution of those programs were the wide range and scope of the project particularly for the NTT-PEP in these three districts since it covered all primary schools; states and privates; the cost sharing from the local government was relatively small, the transfer of knowledge among teachers, school principals and superintendents were not smoothly done and was ineffective. Apart from that, the project mindset was also contributing to the inefficiency of the program. In the ProDEP project, the obstacle was lying on the insustainability of the program particularly on the appointment of the school principals. This process is now back to the old fashioned way where it is more political than personal competence.

In AIBEP project on the other hand, the problems were more obvious. This included the land released for the project that was potential to be sued after few years later, as it was given away by the local community to the local government. The other problem was the lack of commitments of the local government in terms of the placement of the state teachers in the new schools which mostly located in rural areas and were isolated. As a result, the numbers of teachers in those schools were always limited.

3.3. Impacts of the Partnership Programs

In general the NTT-PEP project played important roles in building good foundation for the primary education system. NTT-PEP spread the ideas of focusing on literacy and numeracy for students in year one to year three. With this good foundation and the change in the management system of schools then education system management improved. The project was also improving the superintendents appointment, the placement process of teachers and the school based management system. The other positive impact was the significant improvement of the numeracy and literacy skills of students year one to three.

The program AIBEP played important role in the expansion of the education access particularly in the level of Junior High Schools. As a result the number of students who continue their studies from primary education to the next level increases, less students drop out from schools and stay at the same level in the primary school.

The school principals recruitment that was embedded in the ProDEP program have resulted in good impacts for the schools. The children were more disciplin, finance management was more transparent, information management was also more evident and the school programs were more self assessment based.

3.4. Public Perception

In this section, the discussion will be emphasized on the the public perception on the implementation and impact of both human resources development program and school facilities construction and procurement program. First we will discuss the perception of the people in general towards the two aspects that were examined and then followed by the perception of each group category; government officials, teachers and superintendents and school committees. The majority of people believe that both implementation and impact of the programs were generally good. This was indicated by the Likert Scale analysis that produced 3.595395 and 4.00877193 for implication and impact of the programs respectively. The perception level as good if the Likert Scale ranges between 3.4 to 4.2 [15]. More detail results can be observed in Figure 1. The evaluation of SEAMOLEC program implementation in Yogyakarta (DIY) discovered that the perception of the community towards the partnership program between vocational schools in DIY and southern Thailand was in an excellent category [16].

Referred to the result displayed in Figure 1, even though the perception of the public towards the implementation and the impact of the program was on the same range, slightly better perception was found on the impact of the program to the school committees. This is clearly seen in the figure where it was about 76% of the committees perceive the program was good compared to only 68% for the implementation aspect. The results were understandable as the programs proposals and the
implementation process would normally be conducted and known by high rank government officials or public figures. It is different with the impact of the program where everyone can see and feel whether project activities are useful and beneficial to them.

Figure 1. Public Perception on the implementation and impact of the partnership program.

3.4.1 Public perception on the implementation of the program. The examination on the preception of each group category towards the implementation of the partnership program, different features are found. Table 1 and Figure 2 display that the government officials entirely agree that the programs were implemented accordingly, followed by only 65% of the teachers and 62% of the school committees.

Table 1. Distribution of Sample Popultion on the Basis of Category and Preception of Program Implementation in ENT.

| Group                | The Number of Sample Population |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
|                      | 5 (Strongly Agree) | 4 (Agree) | 3 (Neutral) | 2 (Disagree) | 1 (Strongly Disagree) |
| Public               | 0                  | 26        | 12          | 0             | 0                     |
| Officials            | 0                  | 5         | 0           | 0             | 0                     |
| Teachers             | 0                  | 13        | 7           | 0             | 0                     |
| School Committees    | 0                  | 5         | 8           | 0             | 0                     |

Figure 2. Public perception on the implementation of the partnership program.
3.4.2 Public perception on the impact of the program. One of the most significant activities experienced by teachers in the targeted project was the Teacher Training program in both Australia and Indonesia (Java). It needs to emphasize here that most of the teachers that were interviewed acknowledge the benefit of the program particularly on the professional development training where they became more discipline and professional, had different mind set in terms of teaching and helping school children and many other benefits. The Teacher Exchange Program which they joined in Australia have improved their perspective on teaching, competition capacity, experiences, more discipline and professional as well as work ethic [17].

In this study, we also found that teachers who joined the training were delighted to experience new approach in dealing with students in primary education especially for those who were in first three years of school. The method was more students’ centered and friendly. Some of the principles they applied in their teaching were helping students to read, developing children’s listening and speaking skills, providing good learning environment for small children and encouraging communication between teachers and parents. Apart from this newly method or approach, the teachers were trained to know ways of helping children to be succeeded in schools. Among them were conducting School Based Management, socializing balanced diet to students and their parents, becoming role models to students in term of healthy life habits, providing healthy, clean and safe school environment. Table 2 and Figure 3 present the perception of the public by each category towards the impact of the education partnership program.

| Group                  | The Number of Sample Population |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                        | 5 (Strongly Agree) | 4 (Agree) | 3 (Neutral) | 2 (Disagree) | 1 (Strongly Disagree) |
| Public                 | 4 | 29 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Officials              | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Teachers               | 3 | 14 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| School Committees      | 0 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

On the examination of the public perception towards the impact of the program it is obvious from the personal in depth interview that the school committees, teachers and superintendents were the parties that enjoying the most of the benefit of the project. This is clearly seen by the fact that 100% of the communities agree that the program was producing good impacts followed by only 65% of the teachers and 60% of the officials.

![Figure 3. Public Perception on the impact of the partnership program.](image)
4. Conclusion
The study shows that the primary education partnership projects between the government of Indonesia and Australia in the ENT province were NTT-PEP, ProDEP and AIBEP. The first two programs were responsible for developing human resources whereas the third project was concentrating on building new schools and education facilities and infrastructures. Public perception on the implementation and the impact of the projects is generally good with the Likert Scale 3.595395 and 4.00877193 respectively. The analysis also reveals that the entire government officials agree that the project implementation was conducted in accordance procedures whereas the school committees were more concerned on the positive impact of the program. This was shown by the results where the whole community agree that projects have been beneficial to them.

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