

# Comparative Study of Competency and Certification of Special Education Teachers in Indonesia and Other Various Countries

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**Abstract** The teacher is a professional teaching profession with the main responsibility of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and understanding students. Teachers are the main pillars in ensuring the quality of education in each country. Therefore, teachers are required to be professional by fulfilling certain competencies and getting recognition as educators through teacher certification. Educator certificates given to teachers who have fulfill professional teacher standards, referred to through teacher certification, can be understood teacher eligibility in relation to learning agents who can realize the goals of national education. Knowing the importance of creating a professional teacher, so the writer will explain about the competencies and certification systems of special education teachers that developed in Indonesia, Germany, Norway, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. Through this consideration, it can be seen differences of opinion and differences in systems that can be used to be considered in improving the quality of national education. The research method used is descriptive qualitative method by describing the conditions relating to the competence and certification systems of special education teachers in several countries. Data collection techniques using document review.

**Keywords:** *special education, competency, certification.*

## 1. Research Background

Teachers are those who dedicate their whole life to educating students and people around them so that they can become nation-builders in accordance with the ideals of the State (Rizali, 2009). The teacher is a profession of educator, which can be said as an agent of change. The Indonesian Law (UU) number 14/2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers states that teachers are professional educators with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students in early childhood education through formal, basic, and secondary education. The shift of paradigm regarding

various components in education, for example, the curriculum, makes teachers have to further develop their quality as professional teachers. Professional teachers will also guarantee the quality of education in a country. Governments in each country have a high commitment to improving the quality of education. One of the ways to achieve it is by helping generate highly integrated teachers, both in terms of science and social competence. In Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, it is stated that educators must have minimum qualifications and certifications following the level of teaching authority, physically and mentally healthy, and have the ability to realize national education goals. In the effort of national education development, it is very much required teachers (educators) in the guaranteed quality standards of competence and professionalism (Disas, 2017).

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Based on the Indonesian Law number 14/2005, teacher certification is the process of granting educator certificates to teachers. Whereas the definition of teacher certification in general based on the National Commission on Educational Service (NCES), certification is a credential and evidence that a person has a license to teach (Susanto, 2016). Educator's certificates are given to teachers who have met the teacher's professional standards, in which the teacher's eligibility can be seen through teacher certification in playing a role as a learning agent that can achieve national education goals. By receiving the educator's certificate, the teacher already has a teaching qualification. The objective of issuing teacher certification according to Sujanto (2009) is to determine eligibility as a learning agent, improve the process and quality of education, improve teacher dignity, and improve professionalism. In addition to having certain goals, teacher certification also has several benefits, including keeping the teaching profession from incompetent practices, which can damage the image of the teaching profession; protecting the public from unqualified and unprofessional educational practices; as a means for quality guarantee for the Educational Institution for Educational Personnel (LPTK), as well as quality control and the number of teachers for users of education services; keeping educational institutions from internal interests and external pressures that deviate from the applicable provisions; and earning professional allowances for teachers who pass the certification examination (Syamsuri & Nurdin, 2016).

Recognizing the importance of increasing teacher professionalism to improve the quality of education, each country has a different system. Based on the background explained above, the author is interested to examine the competency and system of teacher certification in Indonesia by comparing it with the competency and system of teacher certification developed in Germany, Norway, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. This comparison aims to see the similarities and differences in the competency and system of certification developed in the six countries.

## Teacher

Teacher is responsible take full responsibility in preparing the young generation to be ready to become successor to the nation's struggle. The teacher must prepare the younger generation become individuals who master science, technology, and skills and have a good personality so that they can responsible to themselves, family, community, and the nation (Suraji, 2012). To be able to carry out these responsibilities, the teacher must meet certain competencies with several conditions that must be met because of the process education and learning are not just educating by transferring science, technology, and skills (transfer of knowledge), but also develop attitudes, personality, and behavior (character building) of their students. In the process of learning and teaching effectively, teacher must have reliable professionalism.

The ability of professionalism that is reliable is not brought from birth by teacher candidates, but must be built, formed, nurtured and developed through an appropriate process, strategy, policy and program (Novitasari and Setiaji, 2018). Teacher professionalism is intended to improve the dignity and role of teachers as learning agents that function to improve the quality of national education (Sukanti *et al.*, 2008). An educator who already has a certificate, then directly people will conclude that he is a professional educator. The indication, because he has passed the competency test (Latiana, 2016).

## Teacher Competency

Competence is a combination of abilities, knowledge, skills, attitudes, the nature, understanding, appreciation and hope that underlies characteristics for demonstrate work in carrying out the task or work in order to achieve quality standards in real job (Sagala, 2013). The UU No. 14 of 2005 article 8 states that teachers are required to have academic qualifications, competencies, educator certificates, physically and mentally healthy, and have the ability to realize national education goals. Each country has different special education teacher competency standards. In most areas in Australia, the path to pursuing a career as a special education teacher does not starting from bachelor degree

qualifications, but postgraduate (Aziza, 2016). In order to provide services professional teaching, all teachers in Australia is bound by the Professional Standards. Teachers supported by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL 2015).

## 2. Methodology

The research method uses descriptive qualitative methods that describe in detail the competency and system of certification in several countries, namely Indonesia, Germany, Norway, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. Data collection was done by reviewing several primary documents and several sources on the official website of related governmental department of each country.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. Teacher Competency and Certification in Indonesia

The Indonesian government has signaled to implement teacher certification as stipulated in Law (UU) Number 25 of 2000 concerning a national development program which explains the establishment of an accreditation and teaching certification institution in the regions. The law was issued to improve the quality of educational personnel nationally (Saleh, 2016). The improvement of the professionalism of teachers and educators in Indonesia is the government's concern with the issuance of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, and Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 19 of 2005 concerning National Education Standards as a legal protection that teachers are professional educators (Suyanto & Jihad, 2013). Moreover, there is also a Regulation of Minister of National Education Number 18/2007 (Sujanto, 2009). Based on the Regulation of Minister of National Education, the implementation of teacher certification in positions is conducted in the form of portfolios, while the certification for pre-service teachers is carried out through professional education in accredited LPTK

(Educational Institution for Educational Personnel), and determined by government, completed by competency tests (Wardan, 2019). In the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, Article 8, it is stated that teachers must have academic qualifications, competencies, educator's certificates, be physically and mentally healthy, and have the ability to realize national education goals and Article 9 that the academic qualifications as intended in Article 8 is obtained through a higher education of a bachelor's program or diploma four program.

In addition to having an educator's certificate, teachers and prospective teachers must have certain competencies. Based on the Decree of the Minister of National Education Number 045/U/2002, competence is defined as a set of smart and responsible actions possessed by a person as a condition to be considered capable by the community in carrying out tasks in accordance with certain jobs. Referring to the definition, it can be drawn the definition of teacher competence as a wholeness of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are manifested in the form of smart and responsible action owned by a teacher to occupy the position of teacher as a profession (Susanto, 2016). The competencies that must be acquired by teachers and prospective teachers are the pedagogical competency, personality competency, professional competency, and social competency. Those four components must be mutually balanced.

### 3.2. Teacher Competency and Certification in Other Countries

#### *Germany*

Standards for Teacher Training: Education adopted by the Standing Conference in 2004 arranged the requirements that must be met by teaching staff and refers to the educational and training goals set in the Länder Education Act. Competencies that must be mastered by special education teachers are divided into four areas:

- a. Teaching
- b. Education
- c. Assessment
- d. Innovation

In June 2014, the Standards for Teacher Training: Education were amended and updated in line with inclusive teaching requirements. Based on the content requirements for subject-related studies and subject-related didactics in teacher training that apply to all Länder, which were adopted by the Standing Conference in 2008 (last amended in 2015), in completing their course, teacher training for students must have:

- a. Knowledge related to compatible subjects
- b. Work and cognitive methods related to subjects
- c. Teaching methods related to compatible subjects

Courses for teaching careers in special education at universities and institutions of higher education must be arranged in such a way that they meet the educational requirements of the special needs of students in all types of schools and foster the ability to act professionally in both specialists and educational terms.

Qualifications as special education teachers can be obtained either by passing the State Examination (the Second Level) after receiving the relevant higher education qualifications, or passing the First State Examination, and also through additional study programs after qualifications for different types of teaching. In some Länder, both forms of training exist side by side or as alternatives. Study courses include:

- a. Education and practical training in schools, including in the fields of study related to special education. For this purpose, it is essential to attach to basic educational and didactic qualifications in fields dealing with heterogeneity and inclusion, and basic diagnostic support.
- b. Studies related to subjects and didactics in at least one teaching or learning field.
- c. Special education studies; this must have a total of about 120 ECTS credits. A paper that shows the ability for independent scientific work.

The Study courses are completed with an appropriate higher education qualification or Erste Staatsprüfung (First State Examination).

Special education studies combine discipline-specific and cross-disciplinary components by considering aspects of education with students, either with or without Sonderpädagogischer Förderbedarf (special educational needs). The special discipline components include the following special education focus:

- a. Education for blind people
- b. Education for deaf people
- c. Education for mental illness people,
- d. Education for physically disabled people
- e. Education for children with learning difficulties
- f. Education for people with speech disorders
- g. Emotional and social development

In-service training aims to maintain and expand teacher professional competence. This helps teachers to fulfill their current teaching career requirements and to fulfill their school's educational mission. The in-service training courses intend to deepen and broaden knowledge and skills in the fields of educational, psychological, didactic theories and subject-related studies, which are required by teachers as part of their work. The in-service training for teachers in special education institutions is very important, especially regarding the integration or inclusion of children with disabilities in public schools.

### **Norway**

National universities organize special teacher training. The special teacher training was developed slowly from short courses in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to a 2-year study program offered by universities, which was the special teacher training from 1961. The special education profession was developed to meet the needs of professional knowledge in special schools and care institutions. These institutions were closed in the early 1990s and the special education profession then changed into a profession as a teacher in regular schools to adapt to the new practical environment, which is needed to be part of the reformulation of the regular school system to meet the increasing diversity of students. Consequently, there are no professional titles called special teachers in Norwegian schools. In Norway, prospective special teachers can study special pedagogy and use the title of a special educator.

Norwegian studies in special pedagogy mainly focus on the situation at school and how to support students with learning difficulties. After completing courses in special pedagogy, they can work with special education in schools, or as experts in competency centers or hospitals. The special pedagogical education in Norway consists of courses provided at the master's level. However, the special pedagogical education in Norway is less homogeneous. Almost every master's degree study focuses on several learning problems, but none of them covers the entire area. Aspects of disability studies, such as social disability and inclusion models are also dominant in these courses. Some master studies also concentrate on a child-centered perspective regarding education to close the gap between the goals of inclusive schools and the problem of concrete learning. Therefore, the special teacher is assigned to deal with inclusion, social-emotional and behavioral problems, different learning problems; and conducting student-centered education, counseling, policy practice, teaching practice.

#### *Teacher education for deaf students*

The objective of teacher education for deaf students is to obtain quality education for deaf children and adolescents in kindergartens and schools. Some subjects and settings of teacher education are adapted for deaf students and provide didactic competencies in deaf student education. The teacher education for deaf students has two classifications, consisting of general teacher education for deaf students and pre-school (kindergarten) teacher education for deaf students.

#### **(1) General Teacher Education for Deaf Students**

They should meet special requirements for the appointment as a deaf and hearing impairment teacher for children and adolescents. General teacher education for deaf students adapts to students who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, mastering Norwegian Sign Language. Some courses obtained by prospective general teachers for deaf students are adjusted to the needs of the teacher to be able to provide learning based on the needs of deaf children or children with hearing impairments who use sign language.

#### **(2) Pre-School Teacher Education for Deaf Students**

They should meet special requirements to work with deaf children and children with hearing impairments in kindergarten and the first years of elementary school. Pre-school teacher education for deaf students adapts to students who are deaf or students who have a hearing impairment. The teachers must have attended education to become a new pre-school teacher so that they may attend pre-school teacher education for deaf students. The teachers must master two courses, consisting of Norwegian Sign Language and Norwegian Language for the deaf.

#### ***Singapore***

Nowadays, special education arrangements do not require formal training in special education for teachers before they take the job. Most special education teachers managed by the association are employed directly by the association. Before 1984, special education teachers were trained by teachers from regular education schools, or trained abroad, or untrained people were recruited by the association and then provided training in the workplace. In 1984, the Institute of Education (currently known as the National Institute of Education and the only teacher training institute in Singapore) launched its first special teacher education training program (Quah, 1990). This pioneering program, which is known as the Special Education Certificate (CISE), is designed as a basic course for teachers who have taught at school. Entry requirements for this course consist of three General Certificates of Education (GCE) & "O & A" level (secondary school certificates).

Nowadays, in addition to CISE, there is a new teacher training program with higher entry requirements (level 2 A) (2-years pre-diversity after GCE). This teacher training program is also designed as a basic course for in-service teachers, but with a higher level of education, and leads to the Diploma in Special Education (DISE). The program began in 1991. Both of these programs are currently the only special teacher training programs for special education available in Singapore. Both programs take 2 years to complete. The character of this program is that it only

recognizes a person who works in special settings and who meets the minimum academic entry requirements. In both programs, teachers develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills to work more effectively in special education settings. Modules covered in these programs include understanding various disabilities, principles of effective teaching and learning, assessment methods, intervention strategies, curriculum content, and information of technology applications; two teaching periods need a practicum. Teachers and other special education-related personnel, such as school principals and vice-principals who have bachelor's degrees, can pursue their master's degrees in education or psychology.

The National Institute of Education also operates a Learning Support Coordinator Program, which is designed to provide further training for experienced teachers to work with students with learning difficulties in elementary schools. Teachers who complete this program receive diploma training for learning support coordinators. The module content of this program is explained by Quah and Jones (1996).

### ***The United Kingdom***

Teachers of special educational needs (SEN) work closely with children and adolescents who due to disabilities or mild learning difficulties require extra support for their education. Most current job applications for SEN teachers offer flexible working hours, and reasonable wage rates, as a compensation for their ability to build close relationships with students and their families, as well as the ability to teach many different subjects. Teachers for children with special needs are categorized into SEN teaching assistants, SEN teachers, and SEN learning support workers.

Students of SEN teachers can be children who have physical disabilities such as hearing impairments, vision disorders, or speech disorders, or they may have behavioral or learning difficulties such as autism, dyslexia, or ADHD. SEN teachers also work with very talented and talented students who are challenged by the standard learning environment. Working with individuals based on individualism is an important part of the role, and it is the responsibility of the SEN teachers to ensure learning they carry out, as

well as making sure that the place of learning is in a safe and supportive environment. They are also required to find effective methods to stimulate the learning process and development of their students according to their individual needs.

SEN teachers teach national curriculum subjects, mark and discuss office work, prepare lessons and teaching materials, work together with other professionals such as teachers and other medical staff, work together with parents and help develop students' confidence and abilities. SEN teachers are highly qualified teachers with teaching experience in public classrooms. A teacher must achieve Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) before being able to continue their training as a SEN teacher. There are several ways to obtain QTS:

- a. Have a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) after obtaining an academic degree. PGCE is an additional academic qualification that covers QTS.
- b. By receiving a Bachelor of Education or BA / BSc with QTS.
- c. Through Early Teacher Training Centered at Schools, Direct Schools or First Teaching. This is a different school-based qualification, which allows a person to gain experience in school while working towards QTS.

In addition to QTS, SEN teachers must meet SEN qualifications with no more than three years and also require special qualifications according to children with certain disabilities such as vision disorders or hearing impairments.

Patience and understanding are essential qualities, which are always needed by SEN teachers to develop in their work. A SEN teacher should be a great communicator, an organized and creative team player to fulfill work responsibilities.

Some children may have difficulty communicating their emotions, so that the SEN teacher must also feel the underlying problem and deal with it. Hence, it is very important for a SEN teacher to maintain a very sensitive and responsive approach in finding out the best way to support students' learning and development. In addition to general teaching skills such as communication, patience,

teamwork, leadership, and organization, SEN teachers also need to have a calming character. SEN students often feel pressured and to teach them properly, teachers need to be able to make them calm. Experience working with vulnerable people or those who need extra care to reach their full potential is always very beneficial for learning progress.

Most opportunities for SEN teachers appear in mainstream public schools and depend on the size of the school. After gaining relevant experience, SEN teachers can finally apply as school principals or vice-principals from special needs schools. The role of SEN teachers is also always available in private schools and educational reference units, hospitals, and detention centers.

### ***The Netherlands***

In the Netherlands, teacher training is part of higher education. Higher vocational education consists of a full-time, part-time, and double training system for:

- a. Elementary school teachers
  - 1) Middle school teacher, second-level qualification;
  - 2) Middle school teacher, first-level qualification;
  - 3) Special education teachers (secondary training);
- b. University education includes a full-time, part-time, and double training system for middle school teacher, first-level qualification.

This training is offered by higher institutions ('hogescholen') and universities, which also offer other technical or economic training.

In this sector, people with higher professional education or master's degrees, along with those who have a secondary vocational education and three years of teaching experience, can teach. This is conditional, within the period agreed with the recipient school, to obtain evidence of satisfactory didactic qualifications. Some teacher training institutions will provide courses that lead to this verification. Full-time and part-time training for elementary school teachers carries a learning credit of 168 credits (1 credit equals a 40-hour study credit; four years, full-time study is 42 weeks 40 hours each). Candidates with at least general high

school education or a vocational high school education certificate meet the qualifications for this training. Primary school teachers are eligible to teach all basic education subjects (intended for students aged between 4 and 12) and special education. There is also part-time secondary training for special education teachers (42 credits). This program can be taken after teacher training for primary or secondary education, or following pedagogical studies.

Full-time or part-time training for secondary school teachers with second-grade qualifications also carries a study credit of 168 credits. Candidates who meet the requirements must have at least a general high school education or a high school vocational education certificate. Entry to several teacher training courses for second-grade qualifications is only possible with special exam subjects. This training leads to qualifications in one subject for secondary education. Secondary school teachers with second-grade qualifications are eligible to teach the first three years of pre-university school and general secondary education, along with all school years from junior secondary general education, pre-vocational and secondary vocational education.

Teacher training for secondary education, first grade, is provided by higher professional teacher training institutions and university teacher training. There are two categories of higher professional teacher training. First, there is teacher training for secondary education, first grade, to attend second-grade training. This carries a study credit of 63 credits. Candidates who take part in this (post-initial) training must have a level two qualification or have taken their master's examinations in the same subject. Second, there is 'non-level' teacher training for physical education and arts education training, which carries lessons of 168 credits. This program is not equivalent to the second grade. Finally, there is level one training in drawing, crafts, or textile. It also carries lessons of 168 credits. They do not attend, but run parallel training with second grade in these subjects.

Teacher training in secondary education, first grade, is also given at the university level. The training study credit is 42 credits

(equivalent to one-year full-time study or two-year part-time study). A person can take university teacher training after completing a university doctoral program in the same subject. Students who have completed their studies are allowed to teach; in which they meet the requirements to be appointed to the school. Before being fully appointed, they must also have statements about their behavior. Then, it depends on the recipient school to appoint or not appoint the teachers. The law that regulates higher education and universities (pre-tertiary education) also includes teacher training.

#### 4. Conclusion

Each country has a certain system in determining teacher certification, especially special education teachers, as well as competency demands that must be acquired by prospective teachers. This of course has been adapted to the national goals of education in each country. Through this comparison, it can be seen the similarities and differences in the system that can be used to be considered in improving the quality of national education. There are countries that require prospective teachers to first take education in higher education followed by special training such as in Indonesia, Germany, Norway and the United Kingdom. There is also requirement in which an educator is someone who has teaching experience for a certain period of time, such as in the Netherlands. There are also those who provide training in positions such as Indonesia and Singapore.

Not all countries have certain competency criteria, such as in Norway, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. In this case, it means that only Indonesia and Germany have teacher competencies that must be acquired by a teacher and prospective teacher.

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**Table 1. Comparison of Competencies and Certifications of Special Education Teachers in Indonesia with Other Countries**

Indonesia	Germany	Norway
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Academic qualifications: Bachelor/Diploma IV</li> <li>2. Having teacher competency: pedagogical, personality, professional, and social competency</li> <li>3. Having educator certificates: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Pre-service certification: Professional Education in LPTK</li> <li>b. In-service certification: Portfolios</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meet the related higher education qualifications</li> <li>2. Taking the National Examination</li> <li>3. Taking the State Examination</li> <li>4. Following training courses in service</li> <li>5. Having teacher competencies in 4 aspect: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Teaching</li> <li>b. Education</li> <li>c. Assessment</li> <li>d. Innovation</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>National university held teacher training in special pedagogical education</p>

Singapore	The United Kingdom	The Netherlands
<p>There are two special education teacher training programs for regular teacher's in-service:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Special Education Certificate (CISE)</li> <li>b. Diploma in Special Education (DISE)</li> <li>c. Having competency in knowledge, attitudes, and skills.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are 3 types of teachers for children with special needs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. SEN Teacher</li> <li>b. Assistant teaching, SEN teacher,</li> <li>c. supporting workers SEN learning</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Teacher must achieve Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) before being able to continue training as a SEN teacher</li> <li>3. There are several ways to get QTS: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Have a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) after obtaining an academic degree. PGCE is an additional academic qualification that includes QTS.</li> <li>b. By earning a Bachelor of Education or BA / BSc with QTS.</li> <li>c. Through Early Teacher Training Centered at Schools, Direct Schools or First Teaching.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Besides having QTS, SEN teachers must meet SEN qualifications that are not more than three years old and also require special qualifications according to children with certain disabilities</li> </ol>	<p>A person is considered entitled to become an educator in a special education school when:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has been an elementary school teacher for 4 years adding one year of education to special education</li> <li>2. Have a higher professional education or master's degree</li> <li>3. Receive 168 credit special education (4 years)</li> <li>4. Already have teaching experience for 3 years with the requirement have passed high school / vocational school</li> </ol>