

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57125/FED.2025.12.02>

How to cite: Wardana, A., & Dwi Jayanti, F. (2025). Assessing programs and finance of social studies teacher education in Indonesia. *Futurity Education*, 5(4), 21–36. <https://doi.org/10.57125/FED.2025.12.02>

Assessing Programs and Finance of Social Studies Teacher Education in Indonesia

Amika Wardana

*Lecturer in the Faculty of Social and Political Science, University Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7774-3457>*

Feri Dwi Jayanti*

*Lecturer in the Faculty of Education, University Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia,
<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4709-5985>*

***Corresponding Author:** feridwijayanti@unj.ac.id

Received: July 5, 2025 | **Accepted:** October 13, 2025 | **Available online:** November 19, 2025

Abstract: The lack of both scientific and pedagogical capacity of teachers has been a significant challenge in the efforts to improve the quality of primary and secondary education in Indonesia. It raises an urgent need to examine the educational quality and sustainability of teacher education programs run by either state-owned or private academies/universities across the country. Based on official data available online, we collected and analysed the educational programs and finances of teacher education programs (Bachelor of Education) in Social Studies education from 25 universities (9 state, 12 Islamic, and 5 private) located in major and minor cities across the country. As a result, the majority of programs obtained top-level status from government-affiliated and/or national accreditation agencies for teacher education, with 36% receiving A-level accreditation, 56% B-level, and 8% holding international accreditation. Yet, the educational objectives of those programs are largely domestic and nationally focused, with limited international exposure and competitiveness. Additionally, given the relatively affordable tuition fees, which range from USD 2,469 to USD 14,465, the programs may offer greater opportunities for students from upper-, middle-, or lower-socioeconomic backgrounds. Yet, it is also hindered from receiving adequate financial support for the development and improvement of its educational quality, particularly at the international level.

Keywords: social studies education, teacher education, education programs, education finance.

Introduction

The current quality of both primary and secondary education in Indonesia cannot be said to be entirely satisfactory. Based on data from the Global Education Report, the country ranks 67th in the world, far behind several other ASEAN countries, including Singapore (22nd), Brunei (47th), and Vietnam (53rd). The 2018 OECD PISA survey (Program for International Student Assessment) showed that the average score of the lower secondary students (age 15 years old) in reading, mathematics and scientific ability scored a relatively low point with only 375, 379 and 396, respectively, from the average 500 points achieved by fellow students in OECD countries. Aside from various other school-related and/or non-school factors, the current struggle faced by almost all (primary and) secondary educational institutions to achieve the internationally standardised educational quality lies with the largely non-performing teachers in schools across the country. According to the 2018 national teacher competency test (known as *Ujian Kompetensi Guru*), the average scores of both pedagogical and scientific-knowledge competences were only 54,02 out of 100 points; which was below the 55 points required to score as the national minimum teacher competency standard (known as SKMG or *Standar Kompetensi Minimum Guru*) (Isnawati et al., 2020). Given this fact, quality it indicates that the teacher of teachers in terms of their pedagogical and scientific competences in the country has still been below the achievement standards expected by the Indonesian government. To improve the quality of education, it should start by improving the quality of teachers through developing a systematic and quality-assured pre- (and in-) service teacher education and/or teacher-training programs run by educational higher institutions in the country (Kawuryan et al., 2021; Kosim & Muqoddam, 2021; Loeneto et al., 2020; Sabrin, 2018).

Based on the current official data of *Pangkalan Data Pendidikan Tinggi* (the national database of higher education programs and institutions) or PDDIKTI provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, there are 6.127 teacher education programs – for primary, lower-upper secondary and vocational teachers – run by state-owned and private higher education institutions across the country (PDDIKTI, 2020). Yet, the relatively large number of programs is not proportional to their quality. According to data released by *Lembaga Akreditasi Mandiri Pendidikan* or Lamdik (the independent accreditation agency for teacher education), there are only about 10% of the whole programs that achieved the level A or *Akreditasi Unggul* (the excellence accreditation); more than 60% have the level B and C; and the rest are not accredited (LAMDIK, 2018). The data echoes several other current scientific studies stating the fact that the quality of teacher education in the country has an urgent need for further development and improvement in terms of students' input enrolling into the programs, the quality and qualification of teacher educators up to the curriculum and educational supports in training and educating new teachers for all educational levels and subjects (Mukminin et al., 2017; Novita, 2019; Suryani, 2021).

The present study aims to examine the quality and sustainability of teacher education in Indonesia, with a particular focus on pre-service teacher education programs – specifically the *Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.)* in Social Studies Education – offered by both state-owned and private universities across the country. The Social Studies Education program was chosen due to its long-standing establishment, dating back to the 1980s, which coincided with the introduction of social studies as a core component of the national school curriculum (White, 1997). Despite its historical significance, the program has remained less attractive to prospective students and provides limited professional development opportunities compared to other fields such as science or vocational teacher education (Faisal & Martin, 2019; Novita, 2019).

Nationally, Indonesia faces a persistent systemic challenge in the quality of teacher education. Although the country hosts an extensive network of 6,127 teacher education programs, only around

10% have achieved the highest accreditation level, revealing a substantial gap in academic standards and quality assurance across institutions. This disparity highlights the need to assess the impact of accreditation, curriculum design, and financing mechanisms on the overall quality and competitiveness of teacher education, particularly in the social studies domain.

Accordingly, this study concentrates on three interrelated dimensions that collectively shape the quality and sustainability of social studies teacher education in Indonesia. The first concerns the educational mission and objectives of each program, encompassing the curriculum structure, graduate competencies, and institutional orientation that define how teacher education aligns with national and pedagogical goals. The second dimension focuses on program accreditation and internationalisation, examining how institutions comply with both national standards set by BAN-PT and LAMDIK and as well as international benchmarks for teacher education quality. The third dimension addresses educational financing, particularly the affordability of tuition and living expenses, which serve as indicators of both institutional capacity and accessibility for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Based on these dimensions, this study aims to present a descriptive profile of Social Studies Education programs in Indonesia, focusing on their academic orientation, financial structure, and international engagement. It addresses three key questions: (1) To what extent do these programs comply with international standards of quality? (2) How does financial affordability influence their quality and sustainability? and (3) What structural reforms are needed to enhance their competitiveness and international recognition? Through these questions, the study seeks to provide an integrated picture of how academic quality, affordability, and global orientation shape Indonesia's teacher education landscape.

Literature Review

The good quality of teacher education, particularly the pre-service teaching training programs themselves, has been widely studied in the last 40 years. It focuses largely on the academic and professional purposes, pedagogical and content knowledge required to learn, the general teacher training curriculum, the qualification of teacher educators and the sustainability of the programs followed by teachers throughout their professional careers (Kleinsasser, 2014; Korthagen, 2010; Loughran, 2016; Pearson, 2016). Apart from the above topic, more focus has been addressed to the general quality of the teacher education program and its sustainability, particularly in third-world countries where the professional development of teachers has not yet been well-established (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2013; Lewis et al., 2023). On the one hand, compared to the more advanced societies in OECD countries, there are relatively limited developments and innovations in the design and practice of teacher education, both pre- and in-service programs, in developing countries (Nielsen, 1998a; Wang et al., 2011; Westbrook et al., 2013). On the other hand, there is also a classic challenge to finance teacher education, where more resources are largely allocated to other professional developments of professions deemed valuable or highly recognised by society, such as medical doctors, accountants, and others (Bawane, 2019; Kaiser & Menkhoff, 2020).

Research Method and Materials

This study employed a qualitative research design to examine the structure, quality, and sustainability of social studies teacher education programs in Indonesia. Qualitative research was deemed suitable as it allows for in-depth exploration of institutional variations and policy contexts underlying teacher education (Bianco & Carr-Chellman, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Salmons, 2016). The research focused on analysing official and publicly available institutional data sourced from accredited online repositories and university websites. These data included program descriptions, accreditation reports, curriculum outlines, admission systems, graduate profiles, and tuition structures. The design aimed to capture not only descriptive features

but also interpretive insights into the national landscape of social studies teacher preparation and its alignment with Indonesia's educational quality agenda.

A total of 25 undergraduate programs in Social Studies Education (Bachelor of Education) were purposively selected to ensure diversity in institutional type, regional representation, and accreditation status. The sample comprised nine programs from state universities (formerly institutes of teacher education), 12 programs from Islamic universities (UIN/IAIN), and 5 programs from private universities. Stratified purposive sampling was used to include institutions located in both mainland Java and the outer islands, as well as in major metropolitan cities (e.g., Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya) and smaller provincial towns (e.g., Palu, Kudus, Parepare). This approach ensured the representativeness of different institutional governance systems, geographic contexts, and accreditation levels (Excellence, A, B, and C).

An analysis matrix was developed as the principal research instrument. The matrix included twelve parameters covering core dimensions of program quality: (1) accreditation level, (2) educational mission and objectives, (3) graduate learning outcomes, (4) curriculum structure, (5) pedagogical innovation, (6) faculty qualification, (7) research and community engagement, (8) student admission and support, (9) international orientation, (10) institutional governance, (11) financial accessibility, and (12) sustainability strategy. This matrix allowed for systematic comparison and interpretation of patterns across the selected programs.

Data were analysed using thematic content analysis, emphasising both descriptive and interpretive dimensions. A coding framework was applied across three major categories – accreditation, funding, and international orientation – to identify recurring patterns, contrasts, and interrelations among the sampled programs. The analytical process involved iterative reading, coding, and theme refinement to extract broader insights into program quality and sustainability. This approach enabled the study to generate an interpretive synthesis linking institutional characteristics to national goals of improving teacher education quality and competitiveness.

Results

The study presents two major findings concerning the academic characteristics and financial structures of social studies teacher education programs offered by both state and private universities across Indonesia, particularly those situated on the main island of Java. The first finding pertains to the academic quality and accreditation status of these programs. Overall, the majority of institutions have successfully attained a relatively high level of compliance with the national standards for teacher education, as assessed by the government-affiliated *Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi* (BAN-PT) and the *Lembaga Akreditasi Mandiri Pendidikan* (LAMDIK), the independent accreditation agency for teacher education. These results indicate that the programs have generally fulfilled the core requirements of curricular design, faculty qualification, and graduate competency as stipulated by national regulatory frameworks.

However, despite their commendable national performance, the programs exhibit limited international orientation and recognition. Few have engaged with global quality assurance mechanisms such as international accreditation or benchmarking against internationally recognised standards for teacher education. Similarly, only a small number of programs explicitly articulate internationally oriented educational objectives, graduate attributes, or transnational competencies within their curricular frameworks. This gap suggests that, while these programs demonstrate considerable alignment with domestic expectations of educational quality, their global competitiveness and external visibility remain relatively underdeveloped.

Table 1*Program information on social studies education in Indonesia*

No	Universities/ Since	Accreditation	Program Educational Objectives	Graduate Toefl Scores
1	Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (2009)	A	To develop professional teachers in the field of social studies education equipped with national-cultural values and capacities to participate in solving social problems of society.	400
2	Universitas Negeri Jakarta (2009)	A	To train social studies teachers characterized with (i) the professional manner, broad-minded, innovative, and adaptive to the scientific-technological development; and (ii) the academic awareness of the transdisciplinary in social studies teachings and research.	450
3	Universitas Negeri Semarang (2014)	Excellence	To train social studies teachers with strong internalization of Indonesian national socio-cultural values, independence, intelligence, communication, and care with the socio-ecological environment.	400
4	Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (2007)	Excellence	To develop skills and knowledge of social studies teachers with strong professionalism, pedagogical competencies, creative innovative and independent attitudes based on academic ethics and social-religious values of the Indonesian society.	425
5	Universitas Negeri Surabaya (2016)	B	To train social studies teachers excellent in pedagogical and content knowledge of the field, commitment for the continuous teacher professional development and updated with the current scientific development of social studies education.	425
6	Universitas Negeri Malang (2012)	A	To train social studies teachers with certain attributes of inspirational, reflective and adaptive in managing teaching-learning activities and materials and in applying information-based technology in social studies education.	425
7	Universitas Negeri Makassar (2009)	A	To Produce graduates of Social Sciences Education who are professionals who can be accepted as members of society who have noble and adaptive character.	n/a
8	Universitas Lambung Mangkurat (2014)	B	To Produce social studies educators who can apply ethnopedagogical-based Social Science Education studies as a basis for developing social studies learning strategies.	400
9	Universitas Tanjungpura (2014)	B	To produce graduates who have faith, are pious, have noble character, think critically, are creative, independent, are skilled and have Pancasila character and are competent in social studies education.	425
10	UIN Syarif Hidayatullah (2001)	A	To prepare social studies teachers with pedagogical, personal, professional and social competences with nationalistic, islamid and humanistic values.	450 (ETIC)
11	UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim (2009)	A	To train social studies teachers with pedagogic, professional, personal, social and leadership competences to work in madrasah/schools, boarding schools and community-based learning centers.	450
12	UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah (2021)	B	To train social studies teachers with the mastery on pedagogic, personal, social and professional competences integrated with Islamic and nationalistic values.	425 (TOEP)
13	UIN KH Achmad Siddiq (2021)	B	To train social studies teachers with pedagogical and content knowledge on the basis on Islamic values and local wisdom.	425

14	UIN Sumatera Utara Medan (2015)	B	The formation of graduates who are faithful, pious and have good morals by mastering Islamic education based on Transdisciplinary Wahdatul Ulum	400
15	UIN Datokarama Palu (2021)	B	To produce religious professional educators who have the attitude, knowledge and skills necessary to become Social Sciences (IPS) teachers in madrasas and schools	n/a
16	IAIN Syekh Nurjati (2012)	A	To train professional social studies teachers based on Islamic socio-religious values as well as local wisdom and with pedagogical and knowledge competences to respond to social dynamics at the local-national and global arena. levels.	425
17	IAIN Kudus (2018)	B	To train social studies teachers with academic excellence to compete in the global era.	450
18	IAIN Ponorogo (2016)	B	To train social studies teachers with pedagogical and knowledge competences based on the integrated social sciences and Islamic values.	425
19	IAIN Metro (2017)	B	To prepare graduates who are professional and competent in managing social studies learning at the MTs/equivalent level.	400
20	IAIN Madura (2015)	B	To produce graduates who have social science education competencies that are integrated with technology and Islam.	350
21	IAIN Parepare (2017)	B	to produce graduates who are competent and responsive to socio-cultural issues through social studies learning with character in Eastern Indonesia.	375
22	Universitas Islam Raden Rachmad (2014)	C	To prepare and train social studies teachers with mastery of 4 competencies (pedagogic, personality, social, and professional).	425
23	Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat (2021)	B	To make the IPS education study program that has good governance, is healthy, and has high competitiveness so that it can develop a network of cooperation to take part in the formation of intelligent and independent Indonesians.	375
24	Institut Pendidikan Indonesia (2017)	B	To produce prospective Social Sciences Education teachers who are professional and devoted to God Almighty.	n/a
25	Universitas Pasir Pangaraian (2016)	C	To produce graduates who master the concepts of educational science that are required for the management and professional development of social studies teachers.	n/a

As shown in Table 1, the study presents a comprehensive overview of twenty-five undergraduate programs in Social Studies Education across Indonesia, representing a diverse range of institutional types and governance systems. The accreditation data reveal that the majority of programs have achieved satisfactory national quality standards, with two programs obtaining “Excellence” status, several rated “A,” (about 36%) and the remainder predominantly holding “B” accreditation (about 58%); only two relatively new programs are still accredited at level “C (about 8%)” of the whole samples. The stated educational objectives demonstrate a consistent orientation toward cultivating professional competence, pedagogical expertise, and ethical values, often integrating national, religious, and local cultural dimensions. While these aims align closely with Indonesia’s educational philosophy, the limited emphasis on internationalisation and global pedagogical standards suggests that most programs remain nationally rather than globally oriented. The graduates’ average English proficiency levels, indicated by TOEFL-equivalent scores of 350–450, further corroborate this limited international orientation and reveal a need for enhanced global academic preparation.

The second finding pertains to the financial dimensions of social studies teacher education programs, specifically in relation to tuition fees and students’ living expenses. Overall, the cost of pursuing a degree in

social studies education is relatively affordable compared to other fields, such as medicine, engineering, or business. This affordability reflects the government's long-standing commitment to ensuring broad access and equity in teacher education, particularly through tuition policies that take into account students' socioeconomic backgrounds. Nevertheless, the low tuition levels also present a structural limitation: they constrain the financial capacity of institutions to invest in sustained program development, academic innovation, and internationalisation efforts. In other words, while the affordability of these programs facilitates educational inclusion, it simultaneously restricts the institutional resources required to strengthen academic quality.

Table 2

Students' tuition fees and living expenses in social studies education programs

No	Universi- ties	City/ Province	Tuition Fee per Semester	Tuition Fee 8 Semester/ 4 year	Living Expense per Month	Living Expense 48 month/ 4 year	Total Education All Cost (Tuition Fees & Living Expense)
1	Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia	Bandung/ West Java	500.000- 5.650.000	4.000.000- 45.200.000	2.236.367	107.345.616	111.345.616- 152.545.616
2	Universitas Negeri Jakarta	Jakarta	500.000- 6.200.000	4.000.000- 49.600.000	3.540.951	169.965.648	173.965.684- 219.565.648
3	Universitas Negeri Semarang	Semarang/ Central Java	500.000- 6200.000	4.000.000- 30.600.000	2.136.552	102.554.496	106.554.496- 133.154.496
4	Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta	Special Region of Yogyakarta	500.000- 5.650.000	4.000.000- 45.200.000	1.934.342	92.848.416	96.848.416- 138.048.416
5	Universitas Negeri Surabaya	Surabaya/ East Java	3.840.000 - 6.000.000	30.720.000- 48.000.000	3.150.412	151.219.776	181.939.776- 199.219.776
6	Universitas Negeri Malang	Malang/ East Java	1.000.000 - 5.000.000	8.000.000- 40.000.000	2.286.911	109.771.728	117.771.728- 149.771.728
7	Universitas Negeri Makassar	Makassar/ South Sulawesi	3.000.000	24.000.000	2.230.784	107.077.632	131.077.632
8	Universitas Lambung Mangkura	Banjarmasi n/ South Kalimantan	500.000- 5.954.000	4.000.000- 47.632.000	2.022.461	97.078.128	101.078.128- 144.710.128
9	Universitas Tanjungpur a	Pontianak/ West Kalimantan	500.000- 6.250.000	4.000.000- 50.000.000	1.794.777	86.149.296	90.149.296- 136.149.296
10	UIN Syarif Hidayatulla h	Jakarta2	400.000- 4.600.000	3.200.000- 36.800.000	3.540.951	169.965.648	173.165.648- 206.765.648
11	UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim	Malang/ East Java	400.000- 7.115.000	3.200.000- 56.920.000	2.286.911	109.771.728	112.971.728- 166.691.728
12	UIN	Tulungagung/ g/	400.000- 3.600.000	3.200.000- 28.800.000	1.032.860	49.577.280	52.777.280- 78.377.280

	Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah	East Java					
13	UIN KH Achmad Siddiq	Jember/ East Java	400.000-4.000.000	3.200.000-32.000.000	1.536.011	73.728.528	76.928.528-105.728.528
14	UIN Sumatera Utara Medan	Medan, Sumatera Utara	400.000-5.472.000	3.200.000-43.776.000	1.886.284	90.541.632	93.741.632-134.317.632
15	UIN Datokarama Palu	Palu, Central Sulawesi	400.000-2.041.000	3.200.000-16.328.000	1.751.391	84.066.768	87.266.768-100.394.768
16	IAIN Syekh Nurjati	Cirebon/ West Java	400.000-3.000.000	3.200.000-24.000.000	1.695.027	81.361.296	84.561.296-105.361.296
17	IAIN Kudus	Kudus/ Central Java	400.000-4.100.000	3.200.000-32.800.000	1.339.763	64.308.624	67.508.624-97.108.624
18	IAIN Ponorogo	Ponorogo/ East Java	400.000-1.870.000	3.200.000-14.960.000	1.018.283	48.877.584	52.077.584-63.837.584
19	IAIN Metro	Metro City, Lampung	400.000-2.900.000	3.200.000-16.720.000	1.515.017	72.725.136	75.925.136-89.445.136
20	IAIN Madura	Pamekasan, East Java	400.000-2.000.000	3.200.000-16.000.000	714.598	34.300.704	37.500.704-50.300.704
21	IAIN Parepare	Parepare, Sulawesi Selatan	400.000-2.500.000	3.200.000-20.000.000	1.702.429	81.716.592	84.916.592-101.716.592
22	Universitas Islam Raden Rachmad	Malang/ East Java	2.750.000 (Class A)	22.000.000	2.286.911	109.771.728	131.771.728
23	Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat	Padang, Sumatera Barat	2.850.000	22.800.000	1.865.282	89.533.536	111.533.536
24	Institut Pendidikan Indonesia	Garut, West Java	4.375.000 (Regular Class)	35.000.000	1.540.228	73.930.944	108.930.944
25	Universitas Pasir Pangaraian	Rokan Hulu, Riau	2.250.000 (Class A)	18.000.000	1.235.915	59.323.920	77.323.920

In Table 2, the study provides a detailed financial profile of twenty-five Social Studies Education programs across Indonesia, encompassing tuition fees, living expenses, and total estimated costs over a four-year study period. Overall, the data demonstrate a significant variation in cost structures between universities located in major urban centres on Java and those situated in smaller towns or on outer islands.

Since the academic year 2012–2013, the tuition fee system of Indonesian universities has been standardised through the introduction of a unified payment scheme known as *Uang Kuliah Tunggal* (UKT), which consolidates various educational expenses into a single tuition fee paid per semester. However, in state-owned universities, this system remains somewhat complex, as tuition is divided into five to seven tiers to accommodate the varying income levels of students' families. As indicated in Table 2, tuition fees in these state institutions range from IDR 400,000 (USD 26) to IDR 7,115,000 (USD 475) per semester, equivalent to IDR 4,000,000 (USD 266) to IDR 56,920,000 (USD 3,795) for the entire four-year (eight-

semester) program. In comparison, private universities typically apply flat-rate tuition structures that are slightly lower, ranging from IDR 2,250,000 (USD 148) to IDR 4,375,000 (USD 288) per semester, or IDR 22,800,000 (USD 1,502) to IDR 35,000,000 (USD 2,305) for four years. Some institutions additionally require a *Sumbangan Pengembangan Institusi* (SPI), or institutional development fee, amounting to IDR 4,000,000–5,000,000 (USD 266–333) in private universities and, in certain cases, IDR 5,000,000–30,000,000 (USD 333–2,000) in former state teacher-training institutes for students admitted through internal selection.

When combined with four years of living expenses, calculated using regional per capita expenditure data published by *Badan Pusat Statistik* (BPS), the Indonesian National Statistical Office, total student spending across these programs ranges from approximately IDR 37,500,704 (USD 2,469) to IDR 219,565,648 (USD 14,465). Programs situated in major metropolitan universities – such as *Universitas Negeri Jakarta*, *Universitas Negeri Surabaya*, and *Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (Bandung)* – show the highest total educational expenditures, between IDR 150 million and 219 million (USD 9,000–14,400), reflecting higher urban living costs that often exceed IDR 3 million (USD 200–230) per month. In contrast, regional universities such as *IAIN Madura*, *IAIN Parepare*, and *Universitas Pasir Pangaraian* exhibit lower overall costs, ranging from IDR 37 million to IDR 100 million (approximately USD 2,400–6,600).

When viewed alongside Table 1, a discernible pattern emerges between financial affordability and academic orientation. Institutions in major cities — particularly those with higher tuition levels and greater resource availability — tend to achieve higher accreditation statuses (“Excellence” or “A”) and articulate broader educational objectives, emphasising innovation, professionalism, and limited global engagement. For instance, *Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta* and *Universitas Negeri Jakarta* combine strong accreditation outcomes with moderately internationalised curricula and higher TOEFL thresholds (425–450). Conversely, programs in regional or peripheral locations often emphasise local cultural values, religious integration, and social ethics, reflecting community-based missions rather than international competitiveness; their TOEFL equivalents (350–400) indicate restricted English proficiency expectations.

Discussion

Nationally standardised, but needs international competitiveness

The majority of the social studies teacher education programs examined in the study have met the national standards indicated by their accreditation levels, with nine programs receiving an A or Excellence, 14 programs receiving a B, and only two receiving a C. To note, at the moment, there is a transitional period in the higher education program accreditation system from *BAN-PT* (*Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi* of National Accreditation Agency of Higher Education) – a government-affiliated accreditation body – to the independent accreditation body, where in the field of education and teacher education run by *LAMDIK* (*Lembaga Akreditasi Mandiri Pendidikan* or independent accreditation agency for teacher education programs). In the *BAN-PT* system, accreditation levels are stated as A, B, C, and not-accredited, while in *Lamdik*, they are stated as Excellence, Very Good, Good, and not-accredited. According to their accreditation results, almost all social studies teacher education programs run by state-owned and private universities across the main island of Java have shared a rather equally good quality of their educational programs, with only two being accredited at the C level. The two programs with the lowest accreditation level were recently established in 2014 and 2016, respectively. Understandably, they need more time to build an academic reputation in the country.

Yet, these social studies teacher education programs have limited both international academic exposure and recognition. There are only 2 of 15 programs in the study accredited by the international accreditation agency. Those are the social studies education programs of *Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia* in Bandung, West Java, and *Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta* in Yogyakarta, both accredited by the UK-based

Accreditation Service for International Schools, Colleges, and Universities (ASIC) since 2017 and 2019, respectively. The fact is a bit contrast to the recent trend shown many higher education programs around the country either in the field of education or non-education by acquiring accreditation or certification from the international accreditation agencies as parts of the external quality assurance to assess and then improve their educational quality and meet the international standards (Sibawaihi & Fernandes, 2023; Sunarto, 2017; Tadjudin, 2009). Those international accreditation agencies include AACSB (the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), ABET (the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology), ASIIN (the Accreditation Agency for Study Programs in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics), FIBAA (the Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation), AQAS (the Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programs) and AUN-QA (the Asean University Network - Quality Assurance). Given that only two social studies teacher education programs are accredited by a non-academic-focused international agency, and the rest are largely not accredited at all, this indicates their current educational quality, which needs significant improvement and development.

The limited international exposure of these social studies teacher education programs is also evident in their primary focus on local-national academic and/or teacher-related professional development issues. Their educational objectives and the structure of the curriculum seemed to be more concerned with topic on local wisdom, nationalism and culture but not yet to be updated to follow the current academic debates on pedagogical and content knowledge of social studies education like democratic education and citizenship, education for social justice, globalization and cosmopolitanism and so forth (Crowe & Cuenca, 2016; Jay, 2022; Kennedy, 2021; Plá & Ross, 2022). In terms of graduate competency, particularly the English fluency requirement, which is typically set at around 350-450 TOEFL-like scores, with some programs having no requirement at all, the limited international exposure of these social studies teacher education programs has become quite understandable. The graduates' TOEFL-like scores are far below the general requirement of the LPDP Scholarship Award (*Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan*, a government-affiliated body responsible for managing the endowment fund for education), the national and currently most popular scholarship for young Indonesians. According to the CEFR standard, the TOEFL score of 310-459 corresponds to level A2, also referred to as the waystage/elementary (basic user) level (Anggrengrum et al., 2020). In fact, when referring to the LPDP scholarship prerequisites for continuing to a Master's degree abroad, it requires a minimum TOEFL score of 550 or an IELTS band of 6.5, equivalent to the B2 (Vantage/upper intermediate) level at the CEFR standard (referenced in the LPDP).

The lack of an international benchmark for the quality of teacher education programs in Indonesia, as illustrated by the case of social studies programs examined in the study, is not atypical globally, particularly in developing countries. As designed to serve the needs of a country's educational systems, educational objectives, curricula, and other academic profiles and attributes of their graduates are addressed to local-national requirements set up by the given government, with limited orientation to international standards (Buchanan, 2020; Ramchand, 2020). This global phenomenon has been recently examined and attributed to the ongoing gap in teacher quality between developing and developed countries, which contributes to the prolongation of educational inequality worldwide (Cochran-Smith, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2020). There is an urgent need to reconstruct teacher education programs offered in numerous higher education institutions worldwide by establishing international standards for graduate profiles/attributes, expected learning outcomes, core competencies, curricula, and other supporting academic/non-academic activities (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, the relatively inferior quality of teacher education vis-à-vis the international standards has become a classic (Kelabora, 1975; Nielsen, 1998b), which is now gained wider academic attention and the demand for further reformation and re-development (Ariawan, 2022; Kosim & Muqoddam, 2021; Kusanagi, 2022).

Affordable programs with limited support for development

The amount of money paid by students to obtain a degree and professional qualification in social studies education programs is comparable to that of other teacher education programs, such as science, vocational, technical, and language education, or other programs in social, liberal arts, and humanities, particularly those run by state-owned universities. The 5-7 levels of UKT tuition fees are designed to ensure education equality based on affordability in Indonesian higher education, thereby opening up wider opportunities for students from upper, middle, and lower socio-economic backgrounds (Brewis, 2019; Fadhil & Sabic-El-Rayess, 2021; Pelawi, 2021). Yet, compared to other more popular and attractive programs, such as finance, business management, accounting, engineering, law, and medical education, the educational costs of these social studies teacher education programs are considerably lower. Take, for example, in the fields of medical education, architecture, and psychology, the tuition fees started from IDR 388,000,000 (USD 25,866), IDR 125,000,000 (USD 8,300), and IDR 110,000,000 (USD 7,300), respectively (Rosalina et al., 2022). On the one hand, the likely lower tuition fees of social studies teacher education programs have something to do with the fact that their non-laboratory teaching-learning activities. The programs do not need to invest in building laboratories, purchasing materials for teaching-learning-based experiments, or spending on indoor and outdoor activities.

On the other hand, this is also likely due to the lower attractiveness of teaching as a career in terms of economic and financial rewards compared to other professional jobs, such as engineering, accounting, law, and/or medicine. According to BPS data, the average take-home pay of teachers in Indonesia is approximately IDR 2,500,000 (USD 166) per month (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), 2022), or approximately IDR 30,000,000 (USD 2,000) per annum. Compared to other professional careers, teachers' income is far below that of other professionals, such as those in the mining sector, who earn a monthly salary of around IDR 4,800,000 (USD 329) or IDR 57,600,000 (USD 3,946) annually. Other professionals in the financial sector earn around IDR 5,000,000 (approximately USD 342) or IDR 60,000,000 (approximately USD 4,111) annually (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), 2022).

However, the less expensive tuition fees could be seen as a hindrance to the further development and improvement of the quality and competitiveness of these social studies teacher education programs. The smaller amount of funds received by the programs from students' fees also means they have limited financial support for operationalisation, innovation, and quality development in teaching-learning activities, as well as for academic and support staff, and research. The issue of the limited financial support has been widely debated as the current challenge faced by higher education institutions in Indonesia (Rosser, 2019; Suryadarma & Jones, 2013; Wicaksono & Friawan, 2011). According to the 2015 report released by the OECD/Asian Development Bank, the overall public spending on higher education in the country is only about 1.2% of GDP, compared to 1.3% in Thailand, 2.1% in Malaysia, and 2.7% in India (OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015). This low public spending on higher education has a significant impact on the lack of both quality and competitiveness among Indonesian universities, both at the regional level in Southeast Asia and at the international level (Digdowiseiso, 2020; Rosser, 2019). Particularly for teacher education programs, such as social studies, the negative impact could be more pronounced, as it also affects the quality of primary and secondary education across the country, where their graduates teach and pursue professional careers (Kawuryan et al., 2021; Suryani, 2021).

Conclusions

Throughout the article, we argue that improving the educational quality of social studies teacher education programs is urgently required in efforts to enhance the quality of primary and secondary education in the country. Although the majority of the programs have achieved commendable accreditation results – receiving ratings of “excellence,” “A” or “B” from the government-affiliated Badan Akreditasi

Nasional Perguruan Tinggi (BAN-PT) and national independent agency of Lembaga Akreditasi Mandiri Pendidikan (LAMDIK) – their academic orientation remains largely domestic and nationally focused. The absence of strong international linkage, accreditation partnerships, and globally benchmarked learning outcomes constrains these programs' ability to prepare graduates who can effectively engage with transnational educational and pedagogical challenges.

The study also reveals that while tuition fees and overall educational expenses are relatively affordable compared to those of other disciplines – such as business, engineering, or medicine - this financial accessibility comes at a cost. Limited tuition revenues restrict institutional capacity to invest in program development, research infrastructure, and international collaboration. This perpetuates disparities in academic quality and global exposure. All of this illustrates a structural tension within the Indonesian higher education system: the pursuit of affordable and equitable access must be balanced with the imperative of ensuring sustainable quality improvement and international relevance in teacher education.

Despite its contribution, we acknowledge several limitations of the study. The analysis relied primarily on secondary and official institutional data accessible through public sources. Although reliable, it may not fully capture the internal governance dynamics, pedagogical practices, or qualitative experiences of students in the program. The cross-sectional design of this study provides a sufficient understanding of the issue. Still, it limits its ability to assess the longitudinal developments of social studies education programs in Indonesian universities, including their educational orientations, qualities, and finances. The size of the sample – addressing programs in 25 universities, with the majority located on the main island of Java – may not comprehensively reflect the national disparities within Indonesian higher education.

Based on these limitations, future research should seek to extend and deepen the study on the quality of social studies teacher education in Indonesian universities through several innovative approaches. First, longitudinal studies tracking graduates' professional trajectories and classroom effectiveness would provide a valuable understanding of the long-term impact of teacher education quality on school performance and the general quality of education in the country. Second, a comprehensive study of the scientific and pedagogical courses taught in the programs, as well as a quantitative study to measure the scientific and pedagogical competences of students and graduates based on the general competence framework issued by the US-based National Council for Social Studies, would add a very important explanation of the quality of the program. Finally, comparative cross-national research with other ASEAN or Asian countries could identify structural similarities and differences in teacher education programs, funding mechanisms and internationalisation strategies. All of those could provide valuable insights to advance a more equitable, internationally competitive and pedagogically innovative social studies teacher education program in Indonesia.

Acknowledgements

None

Conflict of Interest

None

Funding

The Authors received no funding for this research

References

- Ariawan, S. (2022). The Analysis of Teacher Policy in Indonesia. *Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research*, 3(2), 107. <https://doi.org/10.30659/jamr.3.2.107-114>

- Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS). (2022). *Rata-Rata Upah/Gaji (Rupiah) 2021-2022*. <https://www.bps.go.id/indicator/19/1521/1/rata-rata-upah-gaji.html>
- Bawane, J. (2019). Paradoxes in Teacher Education: Voices from the Indian Context. In *Teaching and Teacher Education* (pp. 49–70). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-26879-4_3
- Bianco, M. B., & Carr-Chellman, A. A. (2007). *Exploring qualitative methodologies in online learning environments*. Online learning communities.
- Brewis, E. (2019). Fair access to higher education and discourses of development: a policy analysis from Indonesia. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 49(3), 453–470. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1425132>
- Buchanan, M. T. (2020). Teacher education: What Australian Christian schools need and what higher education delivers. *International Journal of Christianity & Education*, 24(1), 96–107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056997119892642>
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2020). Teacher Education for Justice and Equity: 40 Years of Advocacy. *Action in Teacher Education*, 42(1), 49–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2019.1702120>
- Cochran-Smith, M., Grudnoff, L., Orland-Barak, L., & Smith, K. (2020). Educating Teacher Educators: International Perspectives. *The New Educator*, 16(1), 5–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1547688X.2019.1670309>
- Crowe, A. R., & Cuenca, A. (2016). *Rethinking Social Studies Teacher Education in the Twenty-First Century*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22939-3>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2020). Accountability in Teacher Education. *Action in Teacher Education*, 42(1), 60–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2019.1704464>
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Lieberman, A. (Eds.). (2013). *Teacher Education Around the World: Changing policies and practices* (L. Darling-Hammond & A. LIEBERMAN, Eds.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203817551>
- Digdowniseiso, K. (2020). The Development Of Higher Education In Indonesia. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 9, 1381–1385.
- Fadhil, I., & Sabic-El-Rayess, A. (2021). Providing Equity of Access to Higher Education in Indonesia: A Policy Evaluation. *Indonesian Journal on Learning and Advanced Education (IJOLAE)*, 3(1), 57–75. <https://doi.org/10.23917/ijolae.v3i1.10376>
- Faisal, & Martin, S. N. (2019). Science education in Indonesia: past, present, and future. *Asia-Pacific Science Education*, 5(1), 4. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41029-019-0032-0>
- Isnawati, I., Jalinus, N., & Risfendra, R. (2020). Analisis Kemampuan Pedagogi Guru SMK yang sedang Mengambil Pendidikan Profesi Guru dengan Metode Deskriptif Kuantitatif dan Metode Kualitatif. *INVOTEK: Jurnal Inovasi Vokasional Dan Teknologi*, 20(1), 37–44. <https://doi.org/10.24036/invotek.v20i1.652>
- Jay, L. (2022). The disciplinary and critical divide in social studies teacher education research: A review of the literature from 2009–2019. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 50(3), 339–374. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2022.2077156>

- Kaiser, T., & Menkhoff, L. (2020). Financial education in schools: A meta-analysis of experimental studies. *Economics of Education Review*, 78, 101930. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2019.101930>
- Kawuryan, S. P., Sayuti, S. A., Aman, A., & Dwiningrum, S. I. A. (2021). Teachers Quality and Educational Equality Achievements in Indonesia. *International Journal of Instruction*, 14(2), 811–830. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.14245a>
- Kelabora, L. (1975). The Evolution of Teacher Education in Indonesia. *South Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 3(1), 33–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0311213750030105>
- Kennedy, K. J. (2021). *Social Studies Education in South and South East Asian Contexts*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003057598>
- Kleinsasser, R. C. (2014). Teacher efficacy in Teaching and Teacher Education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 44, 168–179. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.07.007>
- Korthagen, F. A. J. (2010). How Teacher CEducation can Make a Difference. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 36(4), 407–423. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2010.513854>
- Kosim, M., & Muqoddam, F. (2021). Teacher Education System In Indonesia: A Comparative Study. *İlköğretim Online*, 20(1). <https://doi.org/10.17051/ilkonline.2021.01.63>
- Kusanagi, K. N. (2022). *Teacher Professional Development in Indonesia: Issues and Challenges* (pp. 67–80). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-5928-8_4
- LAMDIK. (2018). *Profil Prodi Kependidikan Menurut Pringkat Akreditasi S1 (the accreditation profiles of teacher education program)*. <https://lamdik.or.id/galeri/>
- Lewis, C. W., McLaren, P., & Hill-Jackson, V. (2023). *Transforming Teacher Education: What Went Wrong With Teacher Training, and How We Can Fix It*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003448365>
- Loeneto, B. A., Ernalida, E., Eryansyah, E., Alwi, Z., & Oktarina, S. (2020). In-Service Teacher Training and Education in Indonesia. *Creative Education*, 11(03), 328–342. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2020.113026>
- Loughran, J. (2016). *International handbook of teacher education* (J. Loughran & M. L. Hamilton, Eds.; Vol. 2). Springer Science and Business Media.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mukminin, A., Rohayati, T., Putra, H. A., Habibi, A., & Aina, M. (2017). The Long Walk to Quality Teacher Education in Indonesia: Student Teachers' Motives to become a Teacher and Policy Implications. *İlköğretim Online*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.17051/io.2017.16366>
- Nielsen, H. D. (1998a). Reforms to Teacher Education in Indonesia: Does More Mean Better? *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 18(2), 9–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0218879980180203>
- Nielsen, H. D. (1998b). Reforms to Teacher Education in Indonesia: Does More Mean Better? *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 18(2), 9–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0218879980180203>
- Novita, P. (2019). What Happened to Initial Teacher Education in Indonesia? A Review of the Literature. *European Journal of Social Science Education and Research*, 6(3), 88. <https://doi.org/10.26417/ejsr.v6i3.p88-103>

- OECD/ASian Development Bank. (2015). *Education in Indonesia*. OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264230750-en>
- PDDikti. (2020). *Grafik Jumlah Program Studi*.
- Pearson, A. T. (2016). *The Teacher: Theory and Practice in Teacher Education*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315531373>
- Pelawi, M. A. 5. (2021). *Funding higher education for human capital and social justice in Indonesia* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Glasgow.
- Plá, S., & Ross, E. W. (2022). *Social Studies Education in Latin America*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003241911>
- Ramchand, M. (2020). *Learning to Teach: Initial Teacher Education in South Asia* (pp. 1–36). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3309-5_30-1
- Rosalina, M. P., Krisna, A., & Wisanggeni, S. P. (2022, July 29). Pengembalian Biaya Kuliah Keguruan Tercepat, Kedokteran Terlama. *Kompas.Id*. <https://www.kompas.id/baca/investigasi/2022/07/28/pengembalian-biaya-kuliah-keguruan-tercepat-kedokteran-terlama>
- Rosser, A. (2019). *Big Ambitions, Mediocre Results: Politics, Power and the Quest for World-Class Universities in Indonesia* (pp. 81–99). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-9294-8_4
- Sabrin, M. (2018). Comparing the Costs and Benefits of Attending the Top Three U.S. Elementary Teacher Education Programs. *Higher Education Studies*, 8(2), 70. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v8n2p70>
- Salmons, J. (2016). *Doing Qualitative Research Online*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473921955>
- Sibawaihi, S., & Fernandes, V. (2023). Globalizing higher education through internationalization and multiculturalism: The case of Indonesia. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 77(2), 232–245. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12391>
- Sunarto, K. (2017). The Rise of Quality Assurance in Indonesian Higher Education. In *The Rise of Quality Assurance in Asian Higher Education* (pp. 67–86). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-100553-8.00008-2>
- Suryadarma, D., & Jones, G. W. (2013). *Education in Indonesia*. ISEAS Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814459877>
- Suryani, A. (2021). “I chose teacher education because...”: a look into Indonesian future teachers. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 41(1), 70–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2020.1783202>
- Tadjudin, M. K. (2009). Quality Assurance in Indonesian Higher Education. In *Higher Education in Asia/Pacific* (pp. 149–164). Palgrave Macmillan US. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230100466_11
- Wang, J., Lin, E., Spalding, E., Odell, S. J., & Klecka, C. L. (2011). Understanding Teacher Education in an Era of Globalization. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62(2), 115–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487110394334>

- Westbrook, J., Durrani, N., Brown, R., Orr, D., Pryor, J., Boddy, J., & Salvi, F. (2013). *Pedagogy, curriculum, teaching practices and teacher education in developing countries*. Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.
- White, C. (1997). Indonesian Social Studies Education: A Critical Analysis. *The Social Studies*, 88(2), 87–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00377999709603753>
- Wicaksono, T. Y., & Friawan, D. (2011). Recent Developments in Higher Education in Indonesia: Issues and challenges. In *Financing Higher Education and Economic Development in East Asia*. ANU Press. <https://doi.org/10.22459/FHEEDEA.11.2011.08>