

Gender Differences in Graduate Employability: Why They Matter for Math Teacher Education

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Abstract: Gender inequality in teaching profession remains as unsettling concern in education system. Gender composition of teachers is reported imbalanced, in which female teachers take up 71% of the total number of teachers in Indonesia and only 29% are the male teachers. Higher education institutions must consider gender perspectives in preparing their graduate employability, specifically in teacher education discipline, in order to improve the education quality. This study aims to determine gender differences in graduate employability of math teacher education students in public and private universities. A total of 237 final year math teacher education students in Indonesia participated, comprised of 133 from public universities and 104 from private universities. Data was obtained using Career EDGE Employability Development Profile developed by Pool and Sewell (2015). No significant difference was found in graduate employability between male math teacher education students in public universities and private universities ($p > .05$). In contrast, there was a significant difference in graduate employability between female math teacher education students in public universities and private universities ($p < .05$). The result implies that future female math teacher education students are better to continue their undergraduate program in public universities in order to acquire higher graduate employability. This study also suggests to carry out an intervention particularly for male math teachers in order to increase men's participation in mathematic teaching profession.

Keywords: Employability, Gender, Private University, Public University, Mathematic's Teacher Education

1. Introduction

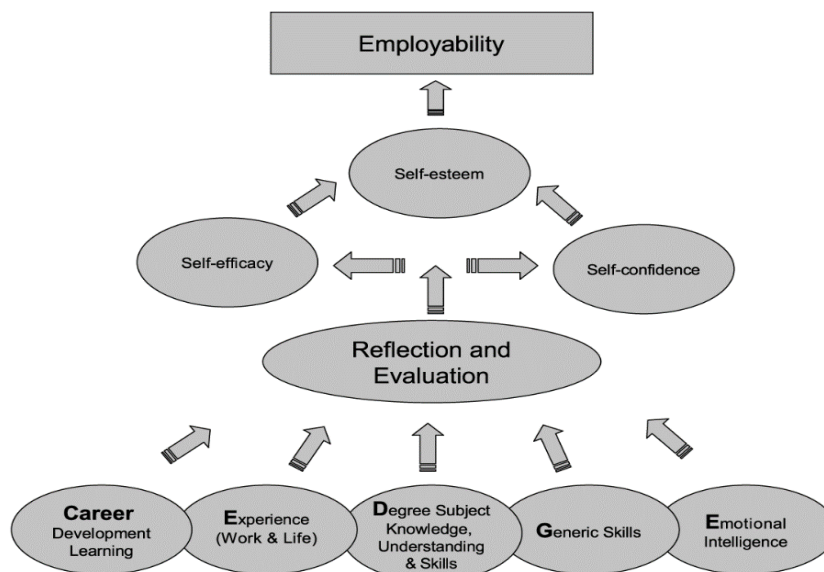
Gender inequality remains to characterize contemporary labor markets. The gender stereotypes are still ingrained across country, emphasizing that women are the main caregivers and men are the main breadwinners. International Labor Organization reported that participation rate of female labor force stood at 47% in 2019, which was lower than that of male at 74% (ILO, 2020). Workplace is a socially constructed place of embodied knowledge that are gendered (Gracia, 2009), and gender is, in fact, one factor that influences graduate employability. Job seekers may be unable to find a job in certain workplaces due to their gender. If employers practice discrimination specifically based on gender, then in spite of knowledge and skills possessed, job seekers will not get employment if they belong to the discriminated group (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005).

One profession that remains gendered is teacher. Most teachers in the 1930s were male because teacher profession was seen as a hard job. It was believed that females were by nature particularly well suited for caring and nurturing activities. Therefore, females should stay at home because that was their natural place. Due to the belief, there was very few female teachers, and even then they received lower salary (Wilson & Riach, 2005). However, teaching profession has now been dominated by women over time. The number of female teachers has increased up to 68% in 2014 (OECD, 2017). There has now been a concern in some economically developed countries about the low number of men choosing teaching as a career (Drudy, Martin, O'Flynn, & Woods, 2005).

There is no denying that teacher is a substantial part of education. Over the past years, teacher quality is the most significant factor in educational improvement (Meiers, 2007) and student performance (Rice, 2003). As future workforce, students will perform well if the teachers possess required knowledge and skills. Moreover, education is an aspect of country's human development evaluated in Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2020). Indonesia's HDI value in 2020 was 71.94 (BPS, 2020a), meaning that basic human development achieved by Indonesia was not yet optimal. Furthermore, the unemployment rate in Indonesia has now surged to its highest level since 2011. It rose to 7.07% in August 2020, totaling 9.77 million of people unemployed (BPS, 2021), and the graduate unemployment rate requires special attention as it reached 5.73% in February 2020 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). Men had a lower chance of being employed in Indonesia since 2018. According to data from Central Bureau of Statistics, unemployed men reached 5.21% (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). One solution to solve unemployment problem is improving the education quality, as it exhibits negative impact on unemployment (Ramzan, Abbas, Aslam, & Farooq, 2018). Education is a key factor in human development of the society and has become a fundamental sector for a country that contributes greatly to the country development through increasing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and productivity of its population (Ghavifekr, Jani, & Kenayathulla, 2016). Having increased knowledge and skills indicates that the people are ready to face labor market, which is called as employability.

Pool and Sewell (2007) defined employability as having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding, and personal attributes that makes a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful (Pool & Sewell, 2007). Five dimensions that form employability (Figure 1) are as follows:

Figure.1. showing the graduate employability framework by Pool and Sewell (2007)



1. Career Development Learning
The activities carried out to search for available job opportunities, to present themselves effectively to employers, and to make decisions about their careers.
2. Experience
Both life and work experiences which are relevant to their desired careers.
3. Degree Subject Knowledge, Understanding, and Skills
The level of knowledge, skills, and understanding obtained in college that will help them perform their jobs at their desired company.
4. Generic Skills
Skills including creativity, adaptability, willingness to learn, teamwork, ability to work under pressure and work independently, communication, and ability to use technology.
5. Emotional Intelligence
Capacity to recognize not only their feelings, but also others', and the ability to manage emotions well.

As future teachers, students majoring in teacher education are expected to have high employability. Students with high employability will more likely to have the knowledge and skills required by the company. Hence, employability has become the responsibility of higher education. Enhancing graduate employability should take place since the students are in college. Higher education institutions are expected to further prepare their graduates to be ready to enter the labor market in order that they will be immediately employable as highly skilled employees. Higher education institutions, both public and private, are therefore expected to include elements that will ensure that graduates are not only equipped with academic knowledge, but also tacit experiential knowledge, high-level attitudes and skills required by the labor market (Kruss, 2004). Thus, both public and private higher education institutions play an important role in helping produce highly qualified graduates (Ghavifekr et al., 2016).

2. Significance Of The Study

Gender inequality in the teaching profession has been a concern in education system. However, there is very little research on gender differences in graduate employability of teacher education students based on university status. Previous employability studies primarily included gender only as a control variable (González-Romá, Gamboa, & Peiró, 2018). The significance of this study is to enlighten all school stakeholders, specifically the government, that taking gender into account in establishing education system is especially important in order to improve the quality of education.

3. Review Of Related Studies

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) (2017) conducted a survey to calculate the number of students majoring teacher education. The survey found out that teacher education discipline is currently dominated by women both in public and private universities. **Wahsheh & Alhawamdeh (2015)** conducted a study on quality of teachers based on gender. The study showed that female teachers are perceived to be energetic and always smiling, more enthusiastic to make students cooperate in various class activities, and more successful in improving and developing teaching methods according to the student needs. **Shalsabila & Kadiyono (2019)** conducted a comparative study on employability in teacher education students between public universities and private universities. The study revealed that there is differences in graduate employability between teacher education students in public and private universities. Teacher education graduates from public universities are found to have higher graduate employability than private universities. **Davie (2016)** conducted a study on graduate employability and found that private university graduates found it harder to get hired.

4. Objectives Of The Study

This study aims to examine further about the gender differences in graduate employability of mathematics teacher education students in view of the public and private universities.

5. Hypotheses Of The Study

- There is significant difference in graduate employability between male and female mathematics teacher education students based on the university status.
- Female teacher education students have higher employability than male teacher education students.

6. Population And Sample

This study used a non-experimental approach with quantitative research design. This study was a comparative research which compared graduate employability by gender between public and private universities. In total, one public university and one private university with the largest number of teacher education graduates in Bandung city, West Java province, Indonesia, were selected for data collection. The questionnaire was distributed online. The sample was randomly selected final year students in department of mathematics teacher education of the two universities. A total of 237 teacher education students participated, comprised of 133 final year students in public universities and 104 final year students in private universities.

6.1. Statistical Techniques Used in the Present Study

Graduate employability was measured using a questionnaire adapted from Career EDGE Employability Development Profile (Pool and Sewell, 2015). The instrument was translated into Indonesian language, taking into consideration criteria of clarity, common language, and culture. The questionnaire consisted of 36 items, including a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very inappropriate) to 5 (very appropriate) (e.g. “I know what I want to do when I finish my Bachelor’s degree”, “I can work well in a team”). Reliability of the instrument was 0,921. Statistical analysis in this study used the 20.0 version of IBM SPSS Statistics and the data obtained was analyzed using Mann Whitney U Test.

6.2. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic data were processed using descriptive analysis, including gender, semester, and discipline (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Data of the Participants

Data	University			
	Public		Private	
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Male	31	23%	29	28%
Female	102	77%	75	72%
Semester				
7	86	64%	43	41%
9	41	31%	61	59%
11	2	2%		
13	3	2%		

15	1	1%		
Discipline				
Mathematics and Science Education	38	28%		
Science Education	54	41%		
Language and Literature Education	25	19%		
Sports and Health Education	16	12%		
Mathematics Education			22	21%
Biology Education			55	53%
Indonesian and Regional Language and Literature Education			27	26%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation of table-1.

It is inferred from the above table that the majority of students both in public and private universities were female (77% and 72% respectively). The students in public universities were mainly in their seventh semester (64%) and ninth semester in private universities (59%). In terms of discipline, 41% of the students were from Science Education discipline in public universities. Meanwhile, in private universities, a total of 53% were from Biology Education discipline.

The result of statistical analysis is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Graduate Employability by Gender in Public and Private Universities

Gender	University	Mean	SD	p-value
Male	Public	135.68	16.20	.089
	Private	128.90	13.98	
Female	Public	130.75	14.32	.004
	Private	124.15	15.86	

The study set level of significance at .05

Interpretation of table-2.

It is inferred from the above table that male teacher education students in public universities had higher mean score than those in private universities (M = 135.68, SD = 16.20 and M = 128.90, SD = 13.98 respectively). However, there is no significant difference in graduate employability between male teacher education students in public universities and private universities (p > .05). Meanwhile, female teacher education students in public universities had a significantly higher mean score than those in private universities (M = 130.75, SD = 14.32 and M = 124.15, SD = 15.86 respectively). This indicates that there is a significant difference in graduate employability between female mathematics teacher education students in public universities and private universities (p < .05).

7. Discussion

This study, examining graduate employability based on gender perspective, provides an overview regarding the future condition of teachers in Indonesia which will eventually improve the quality of Indonesian education. Final year students in this study referred to mathematics teacher education students in semester 7 - 15. Students in final year begin to focus on preparing themselves for their future careers. Our findings highlight that gender plays a role in shaping graduate employability of mathematics teacher education students in public and private universities.

7.1 Male Students' Employability

There is no significant difference in graduate employability between male teacher education students in public universities and private universities. This indicates that male high school students who aspire to be teachers will have the same employability if they continue to study in either public or private universities. Regardless of the university, male teacher education students have the same level of skills, knowledge, understanding, and personal attributes that makes them more likely to choose and secure teaching profession.

The result supports previous research that found that teachers both in public and private universities have no significant difference in their work engagement and job performance (Sittar, 2020). Male students in teacher education discipline either in public or private universities have the same chances to get employed considering once they have become teachers, they will equally be engaged to their work, meaning they feel passionate about their work, put discretionary effort into their work, and are committed to the schools regardless of the universities.

Male teachers graduated both from public and private universities also were found to perform their duties equally to reach their goals within their job, utilizing their level of knowledge, skills, and understanding obtained in college and experiences gained.

According to data from Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of teachers in Indonesia nearly reached 600 thousands in 2020. However, nearly 400 thousands of them was female teachers (71%) and only approximately 200 thousands were men (29%) (BPS, 2020b). A study suggested that male students have initial doubts if the discipline they have chosen is the right one, considering teacher education discipline is dominated by female students. They have fear called as 'woman peril' that there will be too many female teachers in their desired school once they are employed. Moreover, teacher education discipline is currently dominated by women (Drudy et al., 2005; OECD, 2017), both in public and private universities. Society has also placed many stereotypes on the role of a male teacher which results in the declining number of male teachers over the years. Male teachers are often perceived as less nurturing and less respected than female teachers (Patrick, 2009). This is proven by statistics data that reported in terms of university status, there were 305.268 female teachers (70%) and only 131.404 male teachers (30%) in public universities. The result is not any different in private universities in which there were 88.022 female teachers (73%) and only 32.275 (27%) male teachers (BPS, 2020b). Composition of participants in this study also supports the report, which was the majority of students both in public and private universities were female (77% and 72% respectively).

The environment of the teacher education discipline is assumed to have created unconsciously a feminine climate in which men cannot prosper both in public and private universities (Drudy et al., 2005). In addition, choosing to major in teacher education discipline, either in public or private universities, indicates that male students prefer to teach as their profession compared to other professions despite the high opportunity cost for men. This suggests that wage structure in the labor market correlates with job choices, meaning that men and women face different trade-offs and opportunity costs when choosing a career (Tani, 2019).

On the other hand, however, in spite of the greater number of female teacher education students, male students were found to have growing confidence over time about their employment chances than female (Cifre, Vera, Sánchez-Cardona, & de Cuyper, 2018) despite the 'woman peril' fear. The increasing confidence is because teacher education discipline in both public and private universities implement programs to run their core business process, that is teacher education. They both have Student Study Service in their curricula, which is a program linking academic study with practical experience of community service. The program can enhance graduate employability because it implements science and technology in a team work and interdisciplinary manner to come up with ideas in order to solve problems faced by the community (ITS, 2021). Hence, students can take advantage of their past experiences as well as knowledge and understanding obtained in their disciplines to contribute to the ideation. In addition, students also improve their skills during Student Study Service, such as teamwork, use of technology, communication, and adaptability, which are skills that can support graduate employability. The ability to recognize emotions and manage them during the teamwork is also necessary for the effectiveness and efficiency of Student Study Service.

In addition to Student Study Service, the increasing confidence in male teacher education students is due to another program supporting graduate employability included in curricula of public and private universities. Field Experiences which is a program to provide authentic structured teaching practice and observational experiences in schools. This program is very important to implement because it helps the students develop professional proficiencies such as acquisition of work experience, development of pedagogical and social skills, and improvement in content knowledge (Yaw, Acquah, & Partey, 2014).

This study also took into consideration the subjects held in both public and private universities. Some of the subjects provided by the two universities are similar and support the preparation of the professionalism of teacher education graduates. Curriculum Development is one similar subject provided by the two universities. Learning objective of Curriculum Development is to select and organize learning experiences appropriately, in which it helps in the selection of appropriate study matter and activities to achieve goals of teaching. Learning Media is another similar subject provided teacher education discipline in public and private universities. The subject enhances teaching and learning by engaging the students and motivating their interests in the subject matter using media used by the teachers, which in turn will aid student retention of knowledge (Mateer, Ghent, Porter, & Purdom, 2020).

Learning objectives of the two subjects support the increase in graduate employability. Provision of Student Study Service and Field Experiences programs, as well as Curriculum Development and Media Learning subjects, in both public universities and private universities increases the confidence of male teacher education students.

Thus, male teacher education graduates from public and private universities have no difference in their employability due to the similarity in programs and subjects as described.

In future career opportunity as teachers, more male teachers will especially needed in education system. The importance of male teachers in teaching includes four levels. At the child level, male teachers may broaden the students' knowledge about gender which will be particularly important for some students. At the classroom level, the presence of not only female teachers but also male will facilitate a sense of belonging by providing opportunities to build relationships with teachers. At the organizational level, male teachers may shape policy outputs, student outcomes, and teacher professional experiences, which will foster an inclusive workforce that reflects wider community. At the community level, the representation of male teachers plays a role in developing alternative and equitable masculinities (McGrath et al., 2019). Therefore, due to the significant roles of male teachers in education, increasing the number of male teachers is an essential urgency for the better human development in the future.

7.2 Female Students' Employability

Teaching, for women, might be the best example of the profession that remains inherently gendered among all paid work performed by women. Women's qualification to teach usually depends on their beliefs in what they are thought to know and be able to do naturally. In other words, teaching is a job that suits with the qualifications and nature of women. The qualifications are that women learn to read earlier, get higher grades, and are more likely to cooperate (Drudy et al., 2005). Women who graduate from teacher education discipline also achieve a higher proportion of honors than men (Drudy et al., 2005). An empirical analysis of a study shows that a woman's traits can also help increase her employability. Female students have higher confidence about their employment chances even when they are unemployed (Cifre et al., 2018). In addition to high self-confidence, in the context of teaching, it was found that there were positive effects of female teachers on student performance and behavior. Female teachers who listen actively and appreciate their students' ideas tend to be able to make the students more confident about getting good grades, especially in math and science. Furthermore, this study provides suggestive evidence that the students are more likely to enroll in advanced classes in the subjects. In addition to improving student performance, it is also known that female teachers can increase their students' long term retention (Sansone, 2018).

In future career opportunity as teachers, female teachers will remain needed in education because they are also characterized by being energetic and always smiling, which is well perceived by their students. Female teachers are more willing to identify the level of difficulty in teaching the curriculum to their students, and are more likely to encourage students to do daily lesson preparation. They are considered more enthusiastic to make their students cooperate in various class activities. Finally, female teachers will remain needed because they are considered more successful in improving and developing teaching methods according to the student needs (Wahsheh & Alhawamdeh, 2015). This suggests that the ingrained qualifications and traits of women support them to keep making teaching a profession in the future.

Another finding in this study revealed that there is a significant difference in graduate employability between female teacher education students in public universities and private universities. Female high school students who aspire to be teachers will have higher employability if they choose public universities over private universities to continue to undergraduate program. The result is in accordance with previous study that found teacher education graduates from public universities have higher employability than private universities (Shalsabila & Kadiyono, 2019). This is because curriculum developed in public universities is more comprehensive in supporting the graduate employability of their teacher education students. The teaching profession, as previously explained, is the best profession for a woman due to its suitability for the ingrained qualifications and traits of women. This is also in line with the curriculum oriented to teacher skills for teacher education students in public universities, in which the curriculum is more comprehensive than private universities.

One course in the curriculum that is only provided by public universities in order to enhance graduate employability to become teachers is called Regular Academics. The course includes subjects such as Primary School Teacher Education and Education Study Programs. The two subjects have students prepared not only to teach basic subjects in elementary school such as mathematics, science, and languages, but also to teach advanced subjects such as Chemistry, Biology, Physics, German, Japanese, Sports, and so on. Regular Academics will result in the broader knowledge, deeper understanding, and skills acquired in college to be applied once they have graduated. In regards to women, given their qualifications and characteristics that are more likely to become teachers, the provision of Regular Academics supports female teacher education students in public universities to have higher employability and higher confidence about their employment chance. This is because they have been equipped with knowledge, abilities, and skills related not only to basic subjects but also advanced subjects.

In addition to Regular Academics, Non-Regular Program is also provided in public universities, which is called Matriculation of Undergraduate Qualifications for Elementary, Middle School, and High School Teachers. The matriculation consists of Primary School Teacher Education in collaboration with several parties such as the City Government, the Middle School Teacher Education, and High School Teacher Education. Purpose of the matriculation is to equalize the competencies of students from different schools, especially students from rural areas, in order that each student including female student will acquire the same level of competence required to become a highly skilled teacher. Matriculation will provide services to assist teacher education students, including female, in achieving their educational goals. Female students, particularly who come from rural areas, will then have the opportunity to learn technology needed to become teachers. In addition, female students who specifically aspire to be primary school teachers also have the opportunity to acquire the competencies required to become middle and high school teachers, and vice versa. This is what causes female teacher education students from public universities are more eligible to be teachers. In other words, they have higher employability.

Public universities have made systemic efforts to adjust the system and model for the delivery of subject matters, which are expected to meet the professional standards of teacher education discipline. The higher employability of female teacher students from public universities is also explained by a study that suggested a great number of private university graduates are lagging behind graduates from public universities in the job market. In fact, not only more difficult to find a job, but private university graduates also earn much lower salary on average (Davie, 2016). This strengthened the results of this study. The fact that private university graduates are lagging behind will potentially cause the increase in unemployment rate in West Java province, Indonesia. This should be a concern since 8.04% of the total population in West Java, which was nearly 50 million in 2019, was unemployed. That had West Java be the second province with the highest unemployment rate in Indonesia. Moreover, male population in West Java was approximately 25 million in 2019, which took up more than a half of the total population (BPS, 2020c). Thus, enhancing graduate employability of the teacher education students in Bandung city, as the capital city in West Java province, is an important first step to take because it will make great contribution to the improvement of education quality in Indonesia.

Higher employability in female teacher education students means that the female graduates will have better chances to be employed. Hence, further employability improvement for the male students is especially important given the fact that their employability is lower than female students. The improvement aims to make the male teacher education students able to identify and make decisions about their careers. It is also especially important in order to have more related experiences and required level of knowledge, skills, and understanding, not to mention to increase their capacity in managing emotions. Thus, male teacher education students need to be oriented further in order to produce more eligible teachers. Once the male teacher education students have become teachers, they will be highly qualified to teach, direct, educate, and coach their students, which in turn will increase the students' performance and will support the development of the students' academics and non-academics.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, no significant difference is found in employability between male mathematics teacher education students in public universities and private universities. The result is due to the provision of similar programs provided in both public universities and private universities that results in higher confidence in male teacher education students either from public or private universities. This study also suggests there is a significant difference in employability between female teacher education students in public universities and private universities. It is found that the ingrained qualifications and traits of women support the curriculum developed in public universities, which is more comprehensive than private universities in enhancing graduate employability.

The higher employability of female students than male leads to a necessary intervention to carry out. The implication of this study is to increase men's participation in teaching profession which will require an intervention from the education system established by the government. Bringing about changes in the gender-based teaching, the intervention would require support and commitment from school stakeholders. The intervention may be in the form of incentives and pre-set job interview which are essential to increase the representation of male teachers in order to promote alternative versions of masculinity, caring, and gender equality.

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