
Defining Appropriate Curriculum for English Diploma Program in Universitas Diponegoro

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ABSTRACT

This study is aiming at looking at the appropriate curriculum for Diploma Program in English by focusing on the competence and the unique feature of the program. As a vocational school, English diploma program is facing problems in defining its own characteristics. The so far called diploma program is actually the term of the undergraduate English program with the absence of literary and linguistic related courses, and focused merely on the English skill learning. Although some practical skills other than English have been embedded in the curriculum, such as the additional courses in tourism and public relations, still the program missed the answer for its basic question; what the competence and the unique feature of the program are. This research is done in trying to find the answer by doing both library research trying to take a look at the ideal features of English Diploma programs, and an interview trying to see the nature and the specific goal stated by the management in handling the programs as well as the difficulties to match the present condition with the ideal one. The study reveals that some of English diploma programs may face the same issue of not being clear in achieving the competence as the vocational program, although some have found what is being idealized.

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1. Introduction

English diploma program is one of the study programs majoring in vocational education which so far has admitted a lot of students due to the large number of the future students. Within the past five years in Universitas Diponegoro alone, the number of vocational students enrolled in vocational programs are less than half of all of the number of students taking the placement test. This case also holds true for the students in English Diploma Program. More than half of the students taking the placement test are not admitted to enroll in the program ([Document of BAN PT Accreditation of D3 English Program, 2017](#)). This shows that the society considers that there are great opportunities for a better career for the holders of English Diploma degree.

Likewise, the students' eagerness to study in English Diploma program in Universitas Diponegoro (or UNDIP for short) may be also triggered by the fact that there are so many alumni who are able to build a good career by having English diploma degree. This fact is also confirmed by the result of the tracer study held regularly to observe the professional experiences of the alumni. The tracer study result collected by English Diploma program showed that the alumni had less than 3 months in starting their first jobs with the most common figures of having their first jobs a month after graduation. Many others even started doing their part time job even before graduating, including the work of private teaching.

Moreover, the tracer study result also revealed the fact that the alumni had many different kinds of jobs, such as English teaching, marketing, administrative work. Besides, the fact shows that English diploma alumni are able to use their knowledge and skill learnt in the program to adapt themselves in

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the job environment. Based on the apprenticeship report, English diploma students were mostly wanted for the jobs due to their ability in using English both orally and written, and that the main skills such as public relations, or communication can be learnt sooner than learning English ([English Diploma Students' Apprenticeship Logbook, 2017](#)).

Despite having such advantages, English Diploma program in UNDIP has actually undergone many changes which reflect the fact that somehow there has been somewhat uncertainty in establishing the target competence, or the core knowledge of the program. The vocational program itself has changed in its principle ways. Let's take an example of how English Diploma program in UNDIP has developed. Starting in the 1980s UNDIP established vocational programs under the schools of Polytechnic UNDIP which was managed separately from the academic/undergraduate program. In 1997, Polytechnic UNDIP then was changed into "*Politehnik Negeri Semarang*" or *Polines* with the Minister Decree No 175/O/ 1997 dated on 6 August 1997 ([Polines' website, 2018](#)). This change did not only separate the vocational program with the academic program but it also changed the institution as well, as these vocational programs were not in UNDIP any longer. This resulted in the establishment of many diploma programs along with the academic programs in many schools in UNDIP, including the establishment of English Diploma Program in Faculty of Letters, even though some says that prior to the establishment of *Polines*, there had been many diploma programs established in many schools in UNDIP, and that probably triggered the establishment of *Polines*. After being in the same schools with the academic programs for several years, the diploma programs then were managed separately again from the academic programs under the vocational schools, including English diploma program which has been managed by vocational school since 2017.

Needless to say, the changes are not only affecting the management of the students, but what is more important is also on the basic principle in the competence targeted. In fact, this is the main issue in establishing the appropriate curriculum for the students of English Diploma Program. This has triggered the main question for this study, that is in finding an appropriate curriculum for English Diploma Program at UNDIP. This issue becomes central at this point because there has been difficult to pinpoint the competence targeted for English department offered in undergraduate program with bachelor degree or in English diploma program, especially now that many English Diploma Programs, including in UNDIP, have advanced their curriculum and established the undergraduate program with bachelor degree for vocational affiliation.

The concept of curriculum design can be started from the perspective of the learners, with the thought that learners do have particular need and interest towards what they learn ([Picardo, 2013](#)). [Hunzicker, McConaughay, & Burge, \(2016\)](#); [Wulandari, \(2015\)](#) use a survey to a large number of students to get through to the bottom what is needed by the students in learning the language. These need analyses then are used as the scaffold for deciding what needs to be included in the curriculum. [Picardo, \(2013\)](#); [Chia-Hui \(2008\)](#) proposes a deeper concept of understanding what students need by using their own records of learning progress. Though the need analysis may exactly picture what the students need to learn, it is also important to think of other influential factors, especially because for learning to take place there are many other factors involved such as the institution goals, the standard competence targeted.

Some other studies highlight the notion that curriculum design must be connected with what the graduates are expected to master. [Spronken-Smith, et al., \(2011\)](#); [Paxton & Frith, \(2014\)](#) stated the ideas of redesigning the curriculum by first considering the type of graduate they want to produce so that they can develop such attributes. The former study also highlights the external drives from the Academic Audit as the major factor in redesigning the curriculum, as the demand for matching the course design and the profile of the graduates is derived from there. In contrast, [Mozgalina & Ryshina-Pankova \(2015\)](#) state that it is the internal drives that motivate the change of curriculum at German Department of Georgetown University. Though all studies mentioned above have considered the profiles of competence for the graduates, the profiles are generated mostly from their institutions' perspective, and have not addressed the global competence under the titles of the graduates.

In addressing the need for standard competence in language learning in general, [Picardo \(2013\)](#) stresses the need to consider the role of the languages to minimize the language barrier. This is explained further by [Paxton and Frith \(2014\)](#) by mentioning that the courses provided in language institutions should be able to provide links between theory and the real-world application. In vocational education, this real-world application of the theory becomes the basic target competence in a way that more

interdisciplinary, collaborative, and applied courses should be offered (Doyle, 2019) as these are more suitable with the needs and desires of industry and stakeholders (Frazier, 2018).

However, it is also important to bear in our mind the notion of disciplinary identity in that even if the courses offered can be more diverse, interdisciplinary and collaborative, there should be a standard of global competence to keep the disciplinary identity (Heard, 2014). Patton and Prince (2018) suggest the national standard as the reference for the global competence targeted, while Lester (2014) uses professional standards as the frameworks to capture the competence targeted in learning.

Thus, this paper is generated to seek the global competence marked the disciplinary identity of the curriculum in English Diploma Program in UNDIP. Though the curriculum is based on the profile of the graduates which is generated from both internal and external drives, it has not been able to see the global competence targeted within the perspective of national and professional standards.

2. Methods

This study is done within an interpretative paradigm, in which the data was interpreted in answering the purpose of the study (Spronken-Smith, et.al., 2011). Most of the arguments are built from the library study for comparing the many curricula offered by English diploma programs from different universities. Aside from the library study, interview was also conducted to the Head of English Diploma Program of Polinema (State Vocational Institute of Malang), and of UNDIP for the comparison. The interview was also conducted to the head of Professional Certificate Institution (LSP) of Gunadharma, an institution providing tour guide professional certificate. The purpose of interviewing the head of English diploma program of UNDIP was conducted to figure out the basic core of the competence targeted, and reasons behind the establishment of its present curriculum, while the interview with the head of English diploma program of Polinema was due to the fact that Polinema has set its curriculum focusing on English for specific purposes, and highlighting the notion of translation and business as the core of its curriculum. The head of LSP Gunadharma was interviewed to specifically gather information on how the present curriculum of English Diploma program at UNDIP can be matched with the targeted competence in tour guide certification.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Notions in Establishing the Appropriate Curriculum for English Diploma Program in UNDIP

3.1.1. *The present management of English Diploma Program in UNDIP*

In UNDIP, English Diploma Program was established first in 1995 under the English Department of Faculty of Humanities, and has been admitting a large number of students ever since at least until 2011 when the department decided to decrease the quota for the new students. One of the main reasons for the decrease was the fact that the extension programs which had been the canal for the diploma graduates to continue achieving bachelor degrees was terminated by the Ministry of Education.

So, within those years, the English diploma program was managed in particular somehow as a miniature of the undergraduate program, by adding some 'vocational' minors for the optional courses such as tourism, public relation, office management, and advertisement. At this point the idea that put the diploma program different from the academic program was the vocational minors offered in addition to the major of English. This way, the targeted competence for the diploma program could be the vocation, i.e. the vocation of Public Relation, tourism, or office administration. While in the academic program the target competence is on Literature, Linguistics, and American Cultural Studies aside with developing English skills.

Although it was originally shaped as a vocational program, the graduates of English diploma programs later on could continue their education in the level of undergraduate program, and therefore they pursue their academic program through the extension program. What was more surprising was that the alumni of English Diploma Program could continue finishing their academic degree in different programs such as Communication, or Business Administration, and later on held bachelor degrees in the latest program they took. With such conditions, it was difficult later on to differentiate the competence of students graduating from a pure academic program and from the academic program of

the extension of the diploma program. In other words, the goal of keeping the students with vocational skills in English Diploma Program was not realized.

In 2017, the management of English Diploma Program was taken by Vocational School aiming at separating the vocational education from the academic one. However, as the taking over was mostly targeted on the different management system, little attention was paid on the core competence and curriculum of the program.

3.1.2. The core knowledge of English Diploma Program

English department or English major in most universities in USA and Europe where English is native language or second language is concentrated in literature; that is in English Literature, including studying its canonical work such as Shakespeare and modern literature work. In other countries, where English is considered as foreign language, like in Indonesia, English has a large amount of English skills as part of its curriculum and optional courses in Literature, Linguistics, and or in American Cultural Studies.

In vocational education, English then is considered as the teaching of the English skills owing to the fact that (1) English in Indonesia is a foreign language; and therefore it should incorporate the teaching and learning English skills; (2) English in vocational schools should rely heavily on the practice of using English skills, and thus the core competence targeted should be on the proficiency in English.

However, in almost every study program English is targeted as the supporting competence; hence besides adding English course in the curriculum, the students are also encouraged to take extra lessons on English so that they will meet the TOEFL score targeted by the study program. With this condition, the ability only on English skills is considered inadequate to compete with the others. That is why, many English programs incorporate other skills as part of their curriculum. Surabaya University (Udaya) for example, labels its curriculum with Business English by adding many business courses in the curriculum ([Udaya website, 2018](#)). Airlangga University (Unair) also adds business communication and language teaching offered as optional minors in the curriculum ([Unair website, 2017](#)). Gadjah Mada University even adds four additional optional minors in their curriculum; those are Business Administration, Tourism, Language Teaching, Public Relations, and Media and Broadcasting ([UGM Website, 2017](#)).

In UNDIP, the previous curriculum applied until 2016 were also offering four minors; those are Public Relation, Office Management, Tourism, and Advertising. Realizing that there are so many minors required many experts in aforementioned subjects to teach the students, then in 2017 the curriculum was shaped by only adding tourism as the supporting competence. Hence the students will learn English skills to a particular level; i.e the advanced level, and take many tourism related courses such as introduction to tourism, hotel management, tour guiding, and so on. Even with only one supporting minor, English diploma programs still need the help from those who are experts in tourism to teach the subject. Sometimes as those teachers do not have basic knowledge in English, the explanation will be purely on tourism which then makes the English classes seem unrelated with the tourism related classes. As the focus of final project and apprenticeship is also on tourism, the English core competence is once again becoming less obvious, and is taken over by the competence in tourism although when we compare this with the core competence of Tourism program, there has been so much inadequacy of tourism competence in such English program.

In many universities of applied science across the world, rarely has the university offered English diploma as a distinct subject. Some universities offering social science have International Business, or Business Study (Haque University, Hamburg University, or Hz University), or Tourism Management (Hz University), and not English with supporting competence on business or tourism. Diak University in Finland specifically has a study program called Interpreting which offers courses mostly in language skills as the core competence, and some courses on public speaking and communication as the supporting competence. Likewise, Sebelas Maret University (UNS) also offers English diploma program by focusing on courses in translation and English for Specific Purposes. It does have courses on tourism, business administration, journalism, but it all are wrapped up in the name of English for tourism, English for journalism, English for business ([UNS website, 2016](#)). Hence, the idea that English is the core competence and that it can be used as a tool in working more on journalism, or tourism can

be applied more clearly.

3.1.3. *The alumni profile of English Diploma Program in UNDIP*

The alumni profile is the basic information needed in establishing a curriculum for particular study program; it is not merely stating where the alumni finally are working, but more on philosophical ideas of the role and the function that can be played by the alumni in the society (Direktorat Jenderal Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan, 2016). Therefore, the alumni profile may have a wider range of the possibility that the alumni can do, not only on getting a job but also to create a job. This is actually the further goals of vocational education, by emphasizing on being the interface between the engineers and the operators, and by acknowledging the nearby potential for further industrial capacity, as often time, for many industrial areas there have been some mismatch of what is needed by the industry and what is learnt by the students (Burnett & Thrift, 2013).

By studying the alumni roles and functions in the workplace, then it will be possible to generate what skills are mostly needed for that field, and therefore minimize the gap between industry and education. The alumni profiles generated from tracer study mostly reveal that the alumni are pursuing the work in the area that they have been learning so far. What was intriguing from the tracer study was that there was a wide range of jobs done by the alumni, which ranges from working in tourism sectors such as hotel, restaurant, travel agents; doing teaching jobs both for private and for institution; working for business administration including public relation related work; to doing the marketing work (D3 Inggris Tracer Study Report, 2018).

There are particularly reasonable causes for such a phenomenon to happen. One of the major reasons is that English diploma program from the past 23 years has offered courses in English added by minors in many other fields. Such fields include tourism, office management, advertising, and public relations. Therefore, the students are learning English as the major skills and learning several courses related to such fields. The final project is also related highly to one of the fields chosen by the students. Therefore, it should not be surprising that the alumni are having competence in those many fields, and in such a way it is difficult to pinpoint what the competence targeted by the English Diploma Program. Hence it is not clear enough to see whether the alumni roles and function rely heavily on their main competence; i.e. English or in the supporting competence.

In fact, most of the alumni's current jobs show highly relation toward the other fields mentioned above, rather than to relate it with English competence. The tracer study also resulted in the fact that some of the employers who hire English diploma alumni prefer to hire the English diploma alumni rather than hiring the alumni from specifically the Public Relation department (D3 Inggris Tracer Study Report, 2018). One of the basic reasons for that was because, the alumni of English Diploma program do have the English needed for doing the public relation works, and if they need to shape more skills in public relation they can just be given three to six months of training on public relation related courses, and they will be set as the good public relation officers. This is a better strategy, rather than hiring alumni of the public relation department but having minimum skills in English. Even though they are excellent in public relation skills they do need to have a good command of English, and giving them three to six months of training in English will never be sufficient, as English cannot be learned in such a way. With this thought, adding the minor skills to support the English curriculum is truly beneficial for the alumni to enter the workforce. The down side, however, if we may say it as the downside is that it becomes unclear of the competence picturing the alumni of the English Diploma program.

3.2. The Appropriate Curriculum for English Diploma Program in UNDIP and the Challenge of its Implementation

3.2.1. *The appropriate curriculum for English Diploma Program in UNDIP*

Considering the core knowledge of English diploma program and its alumni profile, two notions are worth noted in thinking of the appropriate curriculum for the program. First, it should be borne in mind that it is important to keep the core knowledge of the program, in a way that it will not be interspersed with the other program. Furthermore, the importance of maintaining the core knowledge of the program will also strengthen the alumni competence especially due to the fact that students in

vocational schools need to have not necessarily too wide knowledge of an issue but to have a deep understanding of a particular point in that issue. Putting it this way, students with core knowledge of English should be able to master the skills in using English both orally and written. With such notion, when it is necessary to link the curriculum with the jobs available, we will come up to the idea that the possible inline job available will be on translation/interpreting and language teaching because both jobs are really dwelling on the ability to comprehend important points in the competence, and are able to either use it or explain it. In UNDIP, however, the resources for adding language teaching courses can be very limited as it lacks the professional to teach the courses and the materials needed to shape the students' knowledge.

Translation can be the best options for the global competence targeted for English diploma in UNDIP, because with the many courses in English skills and translation, the graduates should be able to do translation works ([excerpt of interview with the head of English Diploma Program in Polinema, 2019](#)). He further said that “for the students to be considered as having global competence in English is marked by their ability to translate, as the world of the work may require employees to do so.”

Second, the fact that the alumni are able to function in many different roles should not be neglected as the only cause of the inconsistency in maintaining the core competence of the program. In fact, it should be seen as a driving factor in creating a curriculum which may facilitate such needs without separating it from the core competence, even it should give more outcome for the core competence. Dependent on the availability of the teaching staff in the program, it will be fruitful to add courses of English for specific purposes (ESP) along with the courses on English skills. Hence, just as the curriculum in UNS suggests the need for adding ESP in tourism, or ESP in journalism, it is indeed important to insert such courses in the curriculum.

However, adding an ESP course is not simply putting the English course with the content as mentioned in the ESP ([Weyreter, & Viebrock, \(2014\)](#)). There are many factors related. The program should make sure that it does have the instructors who have the basic knowledge in English and are certified in the ESP field that he is going to teach. Moreover, it is also important to make sure that the students are specialized in one field ([Spronken-Smith, et.al., 2011](#)), rather than knowing a lot of fields but mastering none.

In addressing the ESP in tourism, the program should also consider the fact that tourism has set its own competence and courses to take to meet that competence ([excerpt with the Head of LSP Gunadharma, 2019](#)). She mentioned

... to be certified as a tour guide, students need to learn not only one or few courses on ESP on tour guiding but also a whole pack courses in tourism. Hence to meet the professional standard in tourism cannot be achieved only through ESP courses. If it must be integrated in English program, however, the ESP courses should be arranged in a wider level, with wider scope, and the student must have ample time in doing the apprenticeship in that field so that they can have a deep understanding and qualified skills in applying the understanding.

With this second option, although students are learning other courses seemingly unrelated with English as the core competence, the courses should be tailored in a way that it will be focusing more on how English can be applicable in enriching the courses. For example, the course in tourism. It should not be targeted for tourism courses solely, but it should also cater the fact that English is the core competence, and therefore the course should rely heavily on how English can be used for tourism, as the name of the course suggests, English for Tourism. This will imply many other facts. First, the teachers of such courses may not be taken solely from the persons with tourism education background, but it should be those from English background with additional competence on tourism. Second, the students need to have a wider range of opportunities to use English during the apprenticeship, and so the target apprenticeship field should be international tourism sites.

3.2.1. *The challenge of its implementation*

There could be many challenges in implementing the appropriate curriculum for English Diploma program. The most obvious challenge will be on the apprenticeship. Ideally, apprenticeship in

vocational education should take the format of 3 – 2 – 1 suggested by the government, in which the three years of diploma program should comprise of 2 year of theoretical learning in campus and one year away for doing the apprenticeship in industry (Direktorat Jenderal Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan, 2016). Brawijaya University, as one of the universities which has done this scheme, admits that the students are really learning the most important aspect needed in the industry, and therefore this has made the gap between industry and university smaller, or even gone. For such purposes it is really important to make sure that the students are doing apprenticeship in the accordance institutions/industry; hence they can learn how to apply what they have learnt theoretically, and learn how to apply it better with the supervision from the industry.

Finding an appropriate industry for English diploma program focusing on translation will be challenging, as not many industries are focusing on translation. To make it worse, in most cases, when the translation is needed, such industry/institution does not have personals who are expert in translation, and thus ask the students doing the apprenticeship to translate. Such practice will not benefit the students because they will not be able to learn from the expert in that field. In that way, the goal for students to learn the actual work application guided by the expert in that field is not met.

Likewise, the other field will also create problems. Apprenticeship in the field of ESP on Tourism can also be problematic when the students have small opportunity in using their English because in many cases students are doing apprenticeship in the areas where they are not able to use their English at most time, as the requirement to do so was not needed. One solution for that is probably by asking students to create products in accordance with their ESP field supervised by the expert in that field. For example, students doing apprenticeship for the tour guide should make a handbook on how to guide the tour at tourism sites, or those who are working for a travel agent will create a tour plan written in English as parts of tourism promotion.

4. Conclusions

The appropriate curriculum for English Diploma program in UNDIP should be on English major with translation. Additional courses on ESP in tourism can be added so that the students can have added value to compete with others once they graduate. The field chosen for ESP should rely on the availability of the teaching staff and the result of tracer study. In the long run, what is most important is to maintain the core competence of the knowledge and to let the students learn other skills related with that core competence; that is English.

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