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A Comparison of the Elementary Education Programs at University of Macau and
Indiana University Southeast

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to compare and contrast the elementary education programs at University of Macau and Indiana University Southeast. A comparison of the program structures looked at the program standards, credit hours, degree offered, completion requirements, and academic departments offering the courses. A comparison of the program curricula looked at general education courses, methods courses, professional education courses, elective courses and practicum. After identifying the strengths and weaknesses of both programs, recommendations for future development were made.

A Comparison of the Elementary Education Programs at University of Macau and
Indiana University Southeast

The purpose of this article is to compare and contrast the elementary education programs at University of Macau and Indiana University Southeast. After examining the similarities and differences in structures and curricula of both programs, the present article analyzed their strengths and weaknesses and make recommendation to future directions.

Background of the Universities

University of Macau (2009) was founded in 1981 as a private university in Macau. It became a public institution in 1991 and serves the Macau society. The 13-acre campus employs about 800 full-time staff and faculty members who serve about 6500 students. There are doctoral's, master's, bachelor's and higher diploma degree programs offered by six academic units: Faculty of Business Administration, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Faculty of Science and Technology, and Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences.

Indian University Southeast (2009) was founded in 1941 as an extension of Indiana University. It became one of the eight regional campuses of Indiana University in 1968 and serves Southern Indiana and the Greater Louisville metropolitan area. The 177-acre campus employs about 700 full-time staff and faculty

members who serve about 6200 students. There are master's bachelor's and higher diploma degree programs offered by six academic units: School of Arts and Letters, School of Business, School of Education, School of Natural Sciences, School of Nursing, and School of Social Sciences.

Structures of the Elementary Education Programs

Table 1 presents a comparison of the structures of the elementary education programs at University of Macau (2008) and Indiana University Southeast (2007).

The elementary education program at UM meets the aims and objectives of the Faculty of Education. The elementary education program standards at IUS incorporate the principles of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) and the generalist standards of Indiana Division of Professional Standards.

The UM (144 credits) requires more credit hours than IUS (130 credits) for the elementary education majors. The degree conferred by UM is Bachelor of Education in Primary Education which prepares graduates to teach from first to sixth grade, while the degree conferred by IUS is Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education which prepares graduates to teach from kindergarten to fifth grade. The completion requirements at UM are passing all courses and student teaching while at IUS are passing all courses, field experiences and student teaching, and preparing a portfolio.

The Faculty of Education at UM offers most of the general education courses,

methods courses and professional education courses. The School of Education at IUS offers methods courses and professional education courses while the other academic units offer general education courses.

Curricula of the Elementary Education Programs

Table 2 presents a comparison of the curricula of the elementary education programs at University of Macau and Indiana University Southeast. The 30 credit-hour general education courses at UM include language arts (14 credit hours), mathematics (6 credit hours), science (5 credit hours) and social studies (5 credit hours). The 53 credit-hour general education courses at IUS include language arts (12 credit hours), mathematics (9 credit hours), science (11 credit hours), social studies (15 credit hours) and arts (6 credit hours).

The 24 credit-hour methods courses at UM includes methods of teaching language arts (12 credit hours), mathematics (9 credit hours) and social studies (3 credit hours). The 38 credit-hour methods courses at IUS include methods of teaching language arts (6 credit hours), reading (6 credit hours), mathematics (3 credit hours), science (3 credit hours), social studies (3 credit hours), arts (8 credit hours); general teaching methods (3 credit hours); computer-based teaching methods (3 credit hours), kindergarten teaching methods (3 credit hours).

The 35 credit-hour professional education courses at UM include educational

psychology (3 credit hours), child development (3 credit hours), educational issues (2 credit hours), introduction to education (3 credit hours), learning technology (4 credit hours), educational philosophy (3 credit hours), educational sociology (3 credit hours), educational evaluation (3 credit hours), educational research (4 credit hours), curriculum development (3 credit hours), art of thinking (2 credit hours), interpersonal relationship & communication skill (2 credit hours). The 15 credit-hour professional education courses at IUS include examining self as a teacher (3 credit hours), introduction to exceptional children (3 credit hours), educational psychology (2 credit hours), child development (2 credit hours), multicultural education (3 credit hours), seminar on class management (1 credit hour) and seminar on teaching issues (1 credit hour).

There are 48 credit-hour required electives at UM. These electives include courses on language arts (10 credit hours), social studies (6 credit hours), arts (25 credit hours), professional education courses (4 credit hours) and foreign language (3 credit hours). There are 6 credit-hour free electives at IUS and these electives include any general education courses offered in the other academic units.

The practicum at UM includes micro-teaching (3 credit hours) and student teaching (4 credit hours). The practicum at IUS includes field experiences (8 credit hours) and student teaching (10 credit hours). Student teaching at UM requires one

whole year while that at IUS requires one semester.

Comparison and Contrast of the Structures of the Elementary Education Programs

The structure of the elementary education program at UM is objectives-driven and that at IUS is standards-driven. The UM elementary education program was first written by the Faculty of Education to meet its aims and objectives before submitting to the governing body of University of Macau. Once the program was approved, the University of Macau submitted the program to the Tertiary Education Services Office of the Macau Government for final approval. Even though the Macau Tertiary Education Services Office is the government accrediting body of all tertiary education programs, there is no particular requirement for elementary education program.

The IUS elementary education program is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Indian Office of Educator Licensing and Development. To meet the accreditation requirement of performance-based system for certification, the IUS program adopted its own program standards by incorporating the principles of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) and the generalist standards of Indiana Division of Professional Standards.

The completion requirements at UM are courses-directed and those at IUS are courses- and portfolio-directed. To complete the elementary education program,

students at UM and IUS have to pass all courses and practicum. Students at IUS also have to complete a portfolio to document their attainment of each component of the program standards. The purpose of the portfolio is to demonstrate achievement of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that have been identified by the profession as necessary to becoming a competent teacher.

Elementary education courses provided at UM are school-wide and those at IUS are university-wide. Students at UM take most of the general education courses, methods courses, professional education courses, electives and practicum from faculty members at the Faculty of Education. Students at IUS take general education courses from the other academic units, and methods courses and professional education courses from faculty members at the School of Education.

Since most courses are offered by faculty members at the Faculty of Education, communications among faculty members and coordination of various courses at UM are easily facilitated. However, without particular accreditation requirements for the elementary education program, the UM program is held less accountable for its performance. On the other hand, with state and national accreditation requirements for the elementary education program, the IUS program is held more accountable for its performance. However, with general courses offered by the other academic units, communications among faculty members and coordination of various courses at IUS

are less easily facilitated.

Comparison and Contrast of the Curricula of the Elementary Education Programs

Both the curricula of the elementary education programs at UM and IUS include general education courses, methods courses, professional education courses, electives and practicum. However, the focus of both programs is different. First, the UM program is specialist-oriented and the IUS program is generalist-oriented. The homeroom teachers at the elementary schools in Macau teach specialized subjects to different classes of students, whereas those in the United States teach most of the subjects to the same class of students. The UM program prepares students as specialists so that they are better prepared to teach specialized subjects. The IUS program prepares students as generalists so that they are better prepared to teach most of the subjects.

The 30 credit-hour general education courses at UM provide students with general content courses on language arts, mathematics, science and social studies, whereas the 48 credit-hour required electives further provide students with more advanced content courses on language arts, social studies and arts. The 53 credit-hour general education courses at IUS provide students with general content courses on language arts, mathematics, science, social studies and arts. Students at UM are expected to be able to specialize at particular content areas, but students at IUS are

expected to be able to teach most of the content areas.

Second, the UM program is foundation-based and the IUS program is field-based. The professional education courses at UM (35 credit hours) are much more than those at IUS (15 credit hours). In addition to those professional education courses at IUS, students at UM also take introduction to education, learning technology, educational philosophy, educational sociology, educational evaluation, educational research and curriculum development.

The practicum at IUS includes 240 clock hours of field experiences throughout two whole academic years, and one semester of student teaching. The practicum at UM includes one three-credit hour microteaching at the sophomore year, and one whole academic year of student teaching. The various field experiences include attending educational activities, visiting multicultural places, observing classroom activities, assisting classroom teachers, teaching small groups, tutoring students, preparing integrated lessons, teaching single lessons, etc. The student teaching includes observing classroom activities, teaching single lessons, and then teaching all subjects.

It's beneficial for UM students to take not only general content courses but also more advanced content courses. UM students seem to be well-prepared for teaching content areas. However, the lack of field experiences before student teaching deprives

UM students of the readiness to take over the classroom at student teaching. On the other hand, the abundant field experiences before student teaching prepare IUS students well enough to take over the classroom at student teaching. However, the lack of advanced content courses does not equip IUS students with strong content knowledge to excel in teaching all subjects.

Conclusions

Even though there are no particular accreditation requirements for the elementary education program, the UM program should demonstrate the attainments of its aims and objectives. Evidence of achievements should be documented to provide information for program review. In addition, the UM program should provide students with various field experiences before student teaching. The kinds of field experiences may include observing classroom activities, assisting classroom teachers, teaching small groups, etc.

Even though elementary teachers in the United States are supposed to be generalists, the IUS program should provide more advanced content courses to strengthen students' content knowledge. To facilitate a better coordination of content courses, such specialized advanced content courses for elementary education could be developed and offered by the faculty members of the School of Education.

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Table 1

A comparison of the structures of the elementary education programs at University of Macau and Indiana University Southeast

	University of Macau (UM)	Indiana University Southeast (IUS)
Program standards	Aims & objectives of the Faculty of Education at UM.	Based on the principles of Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) & generalist standards of Indiana Division of Professional Standards.
Credit hours	144 semester hours of course work.	130 semester hours of course work.
Degree	B. Ed. In Primary Education (First grade to sixth grade).	B.S. in Elementary Education (Kindergarten to fifth grade).
Completion requirements	Passing all courses and student teaching.	Passing all courses, field experiences & student teaching. Preparing a portfolio.
Academic departments offering the courses	Most courses are taken within the School of Education.	General education courses are taken from the other academic departments while methods courses and professional education courses are taken from the School of Education.

Table 2

A comparison of the curricula of the elementary education programs at University of Macau and Indiana University Southeast

	University of Macau (UM)	Indiana University Southeast (IUS)
General education courses	Language arts, mathematics, science & social studies. (30 credit hours)	Language arts, mathematics, science, social studies & arts. (53 credit hours)
Methods courses	Methods of teaching language arts, reading, mathematics, science, social studies & arts. (24 credit hours)	Methods of teaching language arts, reading, mathematics, science, social studies, arts; general teaching methods; computer-based teaching methods, kindergarten teaching methods. (38 credit hours)
Professional education courses	Educational psychology, child development, educational issues, introduction to education, learning technology, educational philosophy, educational sociology, educational evaluation, educational research, curriculum development, art of thinking, interpersonal relationship & communication skill. (35 credit hours)	Examining self as a teacher, introduction to exceptional children, educational psychology, child development, multicultural education, seminar on class management & seminar on teaching issues. (15 credit hours)
Electives	Required electives. (48 credit hours)	Free electives. (6 credit hours)
Practicum	Micro-teaching, student teaching. (7 credit hours)	Field experience, student teaching. (18 credit hours)