

An Explorative Inquiry on Educational Decentralisation in Bantul District, Jogjakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

For a prolonged period of time, Indonesia implemented a centralised education system which was characterised by the dominant role of the Ministry of National Education in making education policy. In 1999, Indonesia introduced two decentralisation laws: (a) Law No.22/1999 on regional government; and (b) Law No.25/1999 on fiscal balance between the central government and the local governments. These laws devolves central government authority and responsibilities to local governments in all fields except foreign policy, defense and security, justice, monetary, debt, fiscal matters, and religious affairs, including in education sector. This study provides an analysis of the implementation of educational decentralization based on in-depth interviews with a sample of 27 purposively selected participants. This study presents three themes in which educational decentralisation are conducted: education management, curriculum development, and stakeholders' participation. Interviews results suggest that local government now has more authority and responsibility over education which enables the determination and implementation of education policies relevant to local need. It is however, the Central Government through the Ministry of Education (MONE) still retains a large portion of authority and responsibility for educational curriculum. Evaluation on participation of educational stakeholders indicates that the education stakeholders had played a significant role in education following decentralisation.

Key words: Educational policy; Educational administration; Local government.

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INTRODUCTION

Decentralisation in Indonesia began in 1999 when the government enacted two laws on decentralisation: Law No. 22/1999 on Local Government and Law No.25/1999 in Fiscal Balance. Both laws devolved profound functions and tasks to local governments, granting them a high degree of autonomy including the provision of education. To implement educational decentralisation, central government enacted Law No. 20/2003 on the national education system which is perceived as the legal basis of educational decentralisation. The main purposes of the law are to empower society to participate in the provision of education by transferring principal responsibilities, authorities, and resources on education to local governments and schools, and to improve the quality of education (World Bank, 2004). According to this law, the principal responsibilities, authority, and resources for the delivery of education are transferred to lower levels of government, while some decision-making power is transferred to schools themselves (World Bank, 2004, pp.4-5). The law has largely changed educational management, curriculum standards, certification and teacher professional development, schools that meet international quality standards, and national examinations within the education system in Indonesia (Firman & Tola, 2008, p.82). In practice, the central government, provincial governments, and city/district governments share the responsibility for education in Indonesia. At the national level, two ministries are responsible for supervising education provision: the Ministry of National Education (MONE) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs

(MORA). While MONE is responsible for planning and executing education for public and private general schools, MORA controls the planning and execution of Islamic education. Most functions of MONE have been transferred to provincial, district/city and schools level, but MORA remains centralised.

1. THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS FOR EDUCATIONAL DECENTRALISATION

Decentralisation implies transfers of authority, responsibility, and resources from a central government to lower levels of government involving planning, decision-making and administrative authority (Rondinelli, 1983; Rondinelli, Nellis, & Cheema, 1983, p.18). As a result, the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of lower levels of management should increase (McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Winkler & Cohen, 2005). In practice, the process of educational decentralisation differs from one country to another depending on the way and the level on which educational decision-making responsibilities are assigned (Fiske, 1996; Daun, 2007). Most arguments on educational decentralisation are based on achieving an improved quality of education, increased efficiency and increases in education financing (Prawda, 1992; Winkler, 1993). Shifting management and responsibilities to the local level will create efficiency of the use of such resources because local governments are held accountable for the educational outcome (Winkler, 1993; Winkler & Gershberg, 2003). Increasing accountability by decentralising education can lead to an enhanced quality of education if decision-making on education is taken by schools and the local level (Winkler, 1993; Winkler & Gershberg, 2003) because schools are able to be more responsive to parents and to the local community. The accountability however, will depend on the capacity of parents and the local community to question and challenge school and local government representatives. The efficiency argument refers to how the educational resources are used (Prawda, 1992, p.5). The advocates of educational decentralisation argue that shifting authority to the local level enhances effectiveness and efficiency in allocating resources (Bjork, 2004). The underpinning argument on efficiency in educational decentralisation is that centralised education management is bureaucratic and expensive.

Therefore, decentralisation is seen as a promising action to increase efficiency by reducing the cost of educational management. Next, the financial argument addresses the issue of how education is financed and from where resources are raised (Prawda, 1992, p.5). This is particularly important due to growing educational expenditure. If the local government is self-financing, shifting decision-making from national level to lower levels lays the financial burden on the local government. Decentralising responsibilities and power to local

governments provides more opportunities to raise revenue (for example, taxes and levies) locally, and to reduce costs by encouraging greater participation in the education sector from the local community and private sector (UNESCO, 2007). While these three arguments are technical, the fourth is part of the political agenda, which to some people is the primary objective of decentralisation (Lauglo, 1995). According to Naidoo (2002, p.3), the political agenda of educational decentralisation is to increase democratic participation, equity and stability. Democratization is achieved by limiting the over-concentration of power, authority, and resources at the centre (Naidoo, 2002, p.6). This requires a redistribution of power which enables power sharing among education stakeholders and decision making regarding resource allocation (Prawda, 1992, p.8; Hinsz, Patel, Meyers & Dammert, 2006, p.4; Naidoo, 2002).

2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The purpose of this study is review the nature of educational decentralization at a local level in Indonesia following the decentralisation policy that introduced in 1999. The main focuses are on education management, curriculum development and stakeholders' participation. Qualitative modes of inquiry were used to explore school principals' and other relevant stakeholders' opinions about the implementation of educational decentralization in their region. In-depth interviews were used in this study as they offer greater flexibility to gather ideas, thoughts, views, opinions, beliefs or other issues being investigated. The underlying reasons to use in-depth interviews were adaptability (Bryman, 2008), by which the author can follow up on interviewees' ideas, respond to them, and to some extent the researcher also can control the process of interview. Twenty five research participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The research participants were intentionally selected based on their positions and roles that were relevant to the education sector. Research participants included 18 school principals, two chiefs of education offices of Bantul, one member of local parliament, the Regent of Bantul and two government officials at the central level (MONE). In addition, a small-group discussion which was attended by three parents was conducted to extract parent's views and perspectives regarding educational output after the implementation of decentralisation in Bantul. During the group discussion, the author encouraged parents to exchange ideas and perspectives on the list of relevant questions being raised.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the interview results were grouped into three themes: education management, curriculum

development, and stakeholders' participation. These themes demonstrate the important feature of educational decentralisation in Indonesia.

3.1 Decentralisation of Education Management

Prior to the decentralisation era, MONE placed some responsibilities and administrative tasks in education with its regional branches in provinces called *kantor wilayah*, and *kantor departemen* at the district or city level. *Kantor wilayah* was a representative of MONE at the provincial level, whose main function was to conduct education functions and administrative tasks of MONE, while *kantor departemen* undertook administrative tasks on education in the districts/cities. These offices were abolished upon the implementation of decentralisation in education. This implies the shifting of some authority and responsibility in education from the central government to local governments and schools. In theory, the only authority left in the central government is that related to the setting of national policies for standards of competencies, the national curriculum, the education calendar and evaluation (UNESCO, 2006, p.14). Despite such efforts, however, MONE still holds a strong position to intervene in the provision of education at the provincial and district level in Indonesia.

As explicitly found in Law No.32/2004, which states that the primary role over education was given to district/city governments, while the hierarchical relationship between provincial governments and district governments was abolished. Provincial governments, however, retain the administration roles as representatives of the central government in directing district/city governments in the provision of education. This implies that MONE shares and coordinate its roles with education offices at the provincial and district level, while it has direction and guidance roles over education office at the local level (Suhardi, 2010). School-based management (SBM) applied since 1999, represents educational decentralisation at the schools' level. The implementation of SBM has reduced the dominant authority of the central government over almost every aspect of schooling (Raihani, 2007). SBM aims to increase participation of people from local communities in planning, monitoring, and improving school quality by serving on school committees (Law 20/2003, Article 56). This is further explained in Law No. 20/2003, stating that the management of formal education in elementary and secondary schools is to occur through the principles of school-based management as the realisation of educational decentralisation. Further, the law explains that the Board of Education is an independent body, whose functions include to participate in the quality improvement of education by providing advice, direction and support for personnel, facilities and equipment, and monitoring at the national, provincial, and district/city levels, without a hierarchical relationship. School committees are to provide advice, direction and support

for personnel, facilities and equipment, and monitoring of a unit of education (Law No.20/2003, Article 56, Point 2 &3).

Substantial changes have occurred in the political, administrative, and intergovernmental relationship in Indonesia since decentralisation in 2001. Most authorities and responsibilities for the provision of public services have been transferred to local governments. Some authority and responsibility for education has also been devolved to local governments. In spite of significant transfers of the provision of public services, including education, from the national government to local governments, no clear institutional and administrative arrangements have been developed. Most regulations on decentralisation have only explained general arrangements of the division of responsibilities on the provision of public services. Consequently, local government might interpret and develop administrative arrangements based on their understanding of the decentralisation laws passed at the national level.

Prior to decentralisation, there was only one education office as the principal management body in Bantul. Since decentralisation, education management in Bantul is held by two education offices: (a) the Primary Education Office, and (b) the Secondary and Non-Formal Education Office. This is in contrast to education management in most regions across Indonesia where management bodies for primary and secondary education are not separated. This suggests that local government can arrange its organisation structure based on its needs, as has been done in Bantul. The separation of the education offices aims to limit the scope of responsibilities to each education type. However, an interview with teachers in Bantul revealed that separation of the education office has not contributed significantly to the effective management of education in Bantul.

One teacher reported:

The separation of the education office into two offices aims to avoid overlapping of power between the Primary Education Office and the Secondary Education Office. Despite these goals, I have not perceived and experienced specific upshots from the separation (Mr. ZA. Interviewed on 23 December 2009).

The Primary Education Office was established by Perda No.41/2007 on the organisational structure of the Education Office and Perda No.16/2007 on the establishment and organisation of the Primary Education Office in Bantul in 2007. The main functions of this office include implementing local government affairs and performing *medebewind* tasks (*tugas pembantuan*) on education. More specifically, the functions of the Primary Education Office are: (a) formulating technical policy in primary education; (b) performing government affairs and *medebewind* tasks in primary education; (c) developing and performing tasks in the primary education sector; (d) establishment of a secretariat; and (e) executing other

tasks given by the Regent in accordance with the duties and functions of an education office. The Secondary and Non-Formal Education Office was established based on Act No.6/2007 concerning the organisation of the regional and local regulations of Bantul, and Act No. 16/2007 on the establishment of the Office of Secondary and Non-Formal Education in Bantul. As for the Primary Education Office, the main tasks of the Secondary and Non-Formal Education Office are to implement local government affairs and perform medebewind tasks (tugas pembantuan) in education with five functions: (a) formulating policies for technical secondary education, early childhood education, non-formal and informal education; (b) performing government affairs and public service in secondary education, early childhood education, non-formal and informal education; (c) developing and implementing of task-oriented problems in secondary, early childhood, non-formal and informal education; (d) establishment of a secretariat; and (e) executing other tasks given by the Regent in accordance with the duties and functions on secondary, early childhood, non-formal and informal education. Each education office discussed above is headed by a Head of Office (Kepala Dinas) who is directly appointed by, and responsible to, the Regent. Although MONE no longer has an education office in Bantul, it can issue direct orders to education offices in Bantul. Such an arrangement is possible due to a stipulation in Law No. 20/2003 which states that education policies at the local level should be developed in accordance with the national education law. It indicates that lower educational offices are not fully independent from MONE, and MONE remains in control of education authorities at the local level (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996). Nevertheless, there is an indication that local governments are now reluctant to provide regular information on education to MONE because local governments have become autonomous, leaving local governments with no incentive to transmit information to the higher governmental level (World Bank, 2004, p11).

3.2 Curriculum Development

Curriculum is defined as a set of plans and regulations about the aims, content and material of lessons and the method employed as the guidelines for the implementation of learning activities to achieve given education objectives (Article 1, Law No.20/2003). For the pursuit of national education goals, curriculum must be developed based on the national education standards which consist of the standard of the content, process, graduate outcome, education personnel, facilities and equipment, management, funding and education assessment (Article 35-36, Law No.20/2003). The curriculum is organised in accordance with the level of education within the framework of the national unity of the Republic of Indonesia and takes the following into account: (a) the enhancement of faith and piety; (b) the enhancement of

noble character; (c) the enhancement of learners' potential, intellect, and interests; (d) the diversity of the region's potential and environment; (e) demand for regional and national development; (f) requirements of labour markets; (g) development in science, technology, and arts; (h) religion; (i) the dynamic of global development; and (j) the national unity and the nation's values (Article 36, Law No. 20/2003).

The curriculum of both public and private sectors is principally planned and designed by the central government. School curriculum for primary and secondary education consists of the national content (80%) which is developed by the national government (MONE) and local content (20%) which is set at local level (provinces, district/city government and schools level) (Cohen, 2004). Local content comprises curricular activities in order to develop students' competency which is adjusted to unique local characteristics and potential, including local advantages (Dharma, 2008, p.5). Even though Law No.20/2003 offers opportunities to local governments and schools to develop curriculum, they are required to refer to the standards of education which were established nationally by the Board of National Standards of Education (BNSE) as the premier agency in Indonesia responsible for national education standards under Permendiknas No.19/2005 regarding the National Education Standards. Pursuant to Article 8, Permendiknas No.19/2005, point 3, it is stipulated that the basis of curriculum is developed by BNSE and regulated by MONE's regulations. This implies that local governments and schools have to comply with guidelines prepared by the BNSE. As seen in Article 2 of the regulation, there are eight national education standards: standard of content, standard of graduate competency, standard of educational assessment, standard of processes, standards of teachers and educational personnel, standard of management, standard of funding and standards of equipment and infrastructure.

This indicates that curriculum development at local government and school levels still has strings attached to the decision-making on curriculum at the national government. If so, one can argue that MONE continues to play a dominant role in curriculum development in Indonesia, while the school level has played only a small component of the curriculum-making role for many years (Dharma, 2008, p.2). The dominant role of the national government in curriculum development can be seen from the development of objectives, content, learning methods, and techniques of learning assessment which are fully designed by MONE. The impact of this continued centeredness is that schools have failed to creatively manage education, and this includes curriculum development (Firman & Tola, 2008, p.73). To improve the quality of curriculum, the national government introduced a new curriculum called Kurikulum Tingkat

Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP), literally translated as Curriculum at Education Unit, in 2006. KTSP is regulated by Permendiknas No.24/2006 on the standard of content for primary and secondary education. KTSP for primary and secondary schools are developed by schools and school committees based on the standard competency and content standards and curriculum guides set by National Education Standards Agency.

Interview results show different ideas about curriculum development after decentralisation. Some participants considered curriculum should largely be determined at national level. Others argued curriculum development should be undertaken at local and school level to cater to local needs. Recognising the resource cost of curriculum development, one parents' representative pointed out:

Due to a lack of resources at the school level, I would argue that all schools [general] and Madrasahs [Islamic schools] should still adopt the curriculum designed by the Department of National Education (Interviewed with Mrs. LS).

However 14 of the 18 school principals interviewed appreciated the opportunities to determine appropriate local content. One of them elaborated:

As part of school autonomy in the context of SBM, schools are given rights to determine curriculum. We determine curriculum by considering academic and non-academic potential. Local content in our schools are the Javanese Language and *Pendidikan Ketrampilan Keluarga (PKK)*. In the near future, we will introduce new local content; among others is Javanese *Karawitan* as we have already obtained a private sponsor to do so. It aims to strengthen national culture by consistently conserving our local culture and to filter out foreign culture that might not be proper to our situation (Interviewed with Mrs. RUS).

KTSP comprises compulsory components, local content, and integrated self-development activities. It is designed by involving several education stakeholders, among others, School Board (*Dewan Sekolah*) and Education Board (*Dewan Pendidikan*). Interviews with the secretary of the Bantul Education Board suggest that education stakeholders, especially parents, are very enthusiastic in being involved in education matters which can be reflected by their participation in educational activities.

A representative of the Executive Board of the Bantul Board of Education explained:

Parents' participation in education policy-making can be either direct or indirect. Direct participation includes their contribution and opinion during school budget planning each year. Contribution to curriculum development can be seen during public consultations (Interviewed with Mr. ES).

Once teachers, school principals and school boards have developed the school curriculum, they refer it to education offices for public consultation. Public consultation is conducted at the provincial and district levels. The consultation aims to obtain feedback on curriculum content as well as checking if the curriculum has complied with both central and provincial government

rules and the school's particular circumstances. Besides the compulsory national and provincial curriculum, schools have authority to determine local content and consider the availability of natural and human resources, and culture and local history when developing local curriculum. MONE explains local content as extra-curricular activities which are adjusted to local characteristics, potentials, and advantages. Local content is determined by local governments, province and district, and also schools. All schools have to adopt local content set by local governments, while the latter may vary among schools within provinces or districts. Interviews with school principals in Bantul show that local content determined by provincial government is the Javanese Language (Bahasa Jawa), while those determined by schools range from gamelan, traditional dance such as reog, choirs, bands, traditional kids games (*dolanan anak*), automotive, dressmaking, computers, English conversation, and service skills. In January 2010, the Regent of Bantul enacted batik as a curricular requirement for schools at all levels from kindergarten to senior high. This enactment was known as *Batik Muatan Lokal Wajib*. The implementation of KTSP has presented several challenges; the main one being the readiness of schools. This varies from one to another due to factors including: curriculum properties, facilities, finance, environment, principal's leadership, teachers and staffs' readiness, and parents and pupils' readiness (Yusuf, 2007). Sumiyati (n.d.) identified three additional major challenges in implementing KTSP: misinformation; misinterpretation; and miscommunication. Misinformation occurs as KTSP development involves various written materials or documents while the length of time between the introduction and implementation of KTSP is too short, leading to incomplete information being applied in schools. Misinterpretation is a school-centered phenomenon caused by the perception of teachers and school principals who miscomprehend KTSP orientation materials as new information. Miscommunication is regional in its impact and happens when KTSP orientation materials are adopted and implemented differently across the various localities in Indonesia.

Both MONE and school interviewees agreed that the role of teachers was critical in implementing KTSP as shown below:

Critical challenges in developing KTSP would be on teachers' capabilities and participation. A long-centralistic education in Indonesia [i.e., the longstanding way that education was centralised at the national level] had inherited negative impact on teachers in which teachers had become habituated as merely the implementers of curriculum. This is in contrast with decentralisation ideas, where teachers are expected [to act] not only as implementers, but also as initiators and developers of the curriculum (Interviewed with Mr. MR).

An interview with a school principal in Bantul concedes challenges to KTSP, as the principal said:

Nowadays, [the] school has replaced its curriculum from Competency-based Curriculum to KTSP. Schools in Bantul have been developing and implementing KTSP. However, guidance and training on how to develop and practice such curriculum has been limited. (Interviewed with Mr. AM).

In Bantul, the lack of resources at the school level was also identified as one of the major constraints hampering curriculum development. It was clear that even though there is now the opportunity to develop curriculum at the schools level, it has yet to be optimally and adequately developed as a school-level initiative. Article 4 of Permendiknas No.19/2007 says that the national standards on education are aimed at ensuring the quality of education. This implies schools develop curriculum based on the national education standards guided by their own interpretations of those standards. As indicated from the interviews, there was a wide variation in schools' potential for developing curriculum due to different levels of resources. If this is the case, the quality of curriculum would be varied and create wider gaps in education development across regions. This, in turn, will aggravate the education sector since the implementation of educational decentralisation effectively only transfers problems from the national level to regional levels (Tillar, 2004, p.87).

By complying with the national standards, schools are required to develop their own KTSP. This is confirmed by the opinion:

In terms of curriculum, schools have authority, but they must follow the standards specified in Permendiknas (Interviewed with Mr. MR).

The following views offered by a vocational school principal reflect this decentralisation issue with regard to curriculum development:

The development of the curriculum is mostly determined at the national level. Schools are allowed to set curriculum, particularly the latest one [i.e., Law No. 20/2003] by including Javanese Language into school curriculums. But generally, the curriculum has not changed much (Interviewed with Mr.WI).

It is true that schools have power; nevertheless, they are required to follow the education standards set by MONE. Although education decentralisation sought to transfer more power to local governments and also to empower schools, there was no clear and straightforward arrangement on curriculum development devolving to local government and schools. As a policy-maker, one interviewee spoke on the matter of government policies on curriculum:

Regional autonomy is implemented by transferring authority to educational units. In Sisdiknas, this refers to school-based autonomy [management], [and] one of its forms is KTSP. KTSP is school curriculum designed by the school with reference to certain national education standards. [They are] a set of standards at national level aiming to encourage schools to attain their own standards (Interviewed with Mr. MR).

Another participant commented on the challenges in curriculum development:

School autonomy on the curriculum development is still restricted. For example, when developing KTSP, schools have to rely on the national education standard. This should not have been the case under educational decentralisation (Interviewed with Mr. SY).

Insufficient resources to manage newly decentralised functions in curriculum development at the local government and schools level can be pointed to as one of the weaknesses under decentralised education. Only if schools have adequate resources can quality curriculum be developed. Elaborating on such matters, one school principal detailed:

The lack of resource hinders curriculum development at our school. For instance, most teachers are quite old in this school [and] they did not make the most of the opportunities to develop KTSP. Teachers found it difficult to hit upon attractive learning activities in classrooms (Interviewed with Mr. SU).

The responses of most interviewees from local governments and schools, when responding to questions about curriculum development, were somewhat pessimistic. Based on interviews on curriculum development, it is found that that a centralised approach is still in place where the content of curriculum development is largely determined by MONE, leaving local governments and schools with only a limited role. MONE determines the national education standards which local governments and schools are required to follow in developing curriculum. In addition, responses indicated that most schools do not have either the capacity or resources to undertake curriculum development and also that there is no clear stipulation in the government regulation that explains the functions of curriculum development that are to be transferred to local governments and schools as part of educational decentralisation. Furthermore, if a wide variation in schools' potential and resources are found, wider gaps in education development across regions in Indonesia can occur.

3.3 Stakeholders' Participation

Various education stakeholders were identified: the Regent (Bupati), the local parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, DPRD), education offices, and communities, including community leaders, parents' representatives, and local business. Considering the essential role of community participation, Bantul's government issued Perda No. 13/2002 regarding the education governance system in Bantul. Most participants agreed that education stakeholders and communities have significantly endeavored to develop education in Bantul. Findings from interviews show a range of modes of community participation in Bantul; however, in general, there are four regular modes of community participation in Bantul. The first and the most common participation is

financial involvement, either in the form of compulsory contributions or voluntary ones. Second, the community can directly participate in the decision-making process by joining the School Board. Third, the community can participate in learning through participation in curriculum development. As elaborated earlier, education stakeholders and communities are invited to public consultations on schools' curriculum during which community members are able to provide input or raise questions on school curriculum. The last is direct participation in school activities such as providing assistance for particular events. This kind of participation is very common in Bantul, primarily involving parents who are social-participants in school activities.

Findings from interviews reveal that, apart from financial contributions, the community had played a significant role at schools through their school board appointments. School boards participate in education decision-making through dialogue and discussion. Most often, a board meets every two months; however, school board members could meet anytime as needed, especially if they need to discuss important matters related to school policy.

Highlighting the importance of community participation, one research participant observed:

Not only have community (members) been involved in education policies and issues, but they have also had a role in the monitoring of the education program in Bantul when they were appointed to the School Board (Interview with Mr. HS).

Community participation in education encourages accountability in school management. Hence, the school board can monitor school financing, particularly when teachers and school principals set the annual budget, or Rencana Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Sekolah (RAPBS). Funds cannot be disbursed if the school board has not endorsed the budget. In addition, the school board can seek financial reports from schools, called School Performance Accountability Reports (Laporan Akuntabilitas Kinerja Sekolah, LAKIS).

On matters related to school accountability, one school principal acknowledged that:

The idea of decentralisation has been fully implemented in Bantul, for example we had school-based management (SBM) in curriculum preparation, funding, and our school is supervised by the School Board. In Bantul, there is LAKIS as a school performance accountability report. This is one way by which the public monitors a school. Of course, it aims to provide public transparency and accessibility to school (Interview with Mr. ES).

Parental participation in the education sector in Bantul is considered significant which shows, by the willingness to contribute either on a regular basis or, occasionally, in school development programs. To illustrate, one school was in need of bicycle parking for pupils. Parents donated funds to build the park, and were also involved during the construction. This view was gathered during an interview with a local parliament education commissioner.

He reported that:

Parents in this region are good enough, parents as well. I saw when one school needed a place for a BicyclePark; parents voluntarily donated money and their time to develop the park (Interview with Mr. JU).

An interview with a representative of the Board of Education indicated that the board was satisfied with the level of participation. He commented on community participation when invited to public consultations:

Contribution to curriculum development can be seen during the public consultation on school curriculum where parents' representatives attend. One example of indirect participation is the willingness of a parent to persuade other parents to involve themselves in every school activity (Interview with Mr. ES. Interviewed).

During a discussion, one parent reinforced the existence of parents' participation in public hearings on education by saying this:

Parents' participation is more valuable when they can get a common understanding with teachers, the school principal and School Board on how to improve schools and student performance. We were involved in public hearings on school curriculum (Interview with Mr. SUP)

The Education Board confirmed all modes of community participation above by elaborating:

Parents have a direct participation in policy-making at the school level. Such participation is divided into two: (a) participation during curriculum development, and (b) participation during the planning of the school annual budget [Rencana Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Sekolah]. Parents are expected to contribute by giving their opinion during these processes (Interview with Mr. ES).

Despite significant involvement from the community, a number of challenges in increasing public participation in education, particularly parent involvement, still exist. Among these are a lack of issue-related information and a lack of education-related knowledge on the part of parents, and these problems get in the way of encouraging them to take more active roles.

This apparent lack of parental information and knowledge in education was expressed by a parents' representative and explained thus:

Not all parents can contribute and be optimally involved with the school's activities. Some parents may contribute to school's policy, but other parents experienced difficulties as they weren't well-educated and did not have sufficient knowledge. So far, we still need other parties that can support us, they ensure independence; these parties should be other than government officials, for instance, NGOs or other independent organisations (Interview with Mr. AS).

The interviews show divergent views about stakeholders' participation in education in Bantul. In general, parents act as the major representative of community and participate formally and informally in school activities through four modes including financial contributions, appointment to school boards, curriculum

development and direct participation in school activities. Parents considered that their main significant support for school activities is given through the 'mandatory' financial contribution to schools as noted by Dunne, Akyeampong and Humphreys (2007), whilst appointment of a parents' representative on the school board is seen to encourage accountability in school management because parents are able to monitor school policies, as argued by Naidoo (2002). Despite the favorable community participation in education, especially of parents, in school activities, it is found that lack of issue-related information and lack of education-related knowledge of parents was an impediment to parent participation.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

This study aimed at reviewing the implementation of educational decentralization in order to provide insight on the educational decentralization practice at a local level in Indonesia. The main themes analysed are education management, curriculum development and stakeholders' participation. The study finds that the content and extent of the local level authority and responsibility enables the determination and implementation of education policies relevant to local needs, and this is believed to have contributed to an improvement in education development. However, even where authority and responsibility for education is transferred to a local level, MONE still retains authority and responsibility for educational content and quality, for example, through authority in the curriculum development. This indicates that the implementation of educational decentralisation in Bantul can be considered only at the operational level of policy implementation. The transfer does not include the policy making authority, but rather the implementation of policies set by MONE indicating the extent of educational decentralisation in Bantul is considered to be educational deconcentration. As deconcentration—rather than devolving full authority, the national level merely delegates responsibilities to education offices in Bantul. In such conditions, the educational authorities have been transferred to the local government or schools, yet administratively are still under the control of central government (Grasa & Camps, 2009). Educational decentralisation in Bantul has, on the one hand, increased the autonomy of the education offices, but on the other hand, MONE still retains legal control over the education offices. To illustrate, in spite of the considerable changes that have been made on curriculum development, findings from interviews showed that curriculum development remains predominantly centralised where MONE determines the education standard and competencies to be applied by local governments and school administrators. Interview results also show that the lack of capacity in human resources, both at school levels and in the education

offices in Bantul, hampered curriculum development. At the school level, human resource issues such as teacher capacity hindered the development of local curricula. This lack of institutional capacity and human resources in most regions is seen as a result of a high dependency on the national policy after the long period of centralisation in political and administrative systems (Indrawati, 2002). Results of this study is based on semi-structured interviews as the mean of collecting data, thus disadvantages of the strategy may include subjectivity on various questions being answered by interviewees. Although there is a potential for replication of this study in other settings and contexts, findings from the study cannot be generalised to other districts or cities across Indonesia.

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