

Impact of Zoning System: Challenges and Opportunities for Favorite Schools and the Community

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the zoning system in education has had a significant impact on favorite schools and the community. This study aims to analyze the challenges and opportunities faced by favorite schools and the community in facing the zoning system. The results of the study indicate that the zoning system has had positive impacts, such as increasing equality of access to education and reducing discrimination. However, the zoning system also brings challenges such as changes in school dynamics, increased operational costs, and concerns about the quality of education. This study also found that the opportunities faced by favorite schools and the community are improving the quality of education, increasing community participation, and developing cooperation between schools. Therefore, this study recommends that favorite schools and the community need to prepare themselves to face the zoning system by improving the quality of education, developing cooperation, and increasing community participation.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the fundamental aspects of a nation's development. The Indonesian government continuously strives to improve the equity of access and quality of education to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to receive proper educational services. One of the policies implemented to achieve this goal is the zoning system for new student admissions (PPDB). This system aims to eliminate the gap between so-called "favorite" schools and others, and to ensure that students can attend schools close to where they live. Although the zoning system is expected to promote educational equity, the policy comes with challenges for various stakeholders, particularly for popular schools and the wider community. For these favorite schools, the policy shifts the student admission process from one based on academic performance to one based on geographical area, resulting in a more heterogeneous student body. This compels schools to adapt and implement effective teaching strategies in order to maintain educational quality. On the other hand, the community is also affected, especially regarding the limited school choices available to their children. Parents who previously aimed to enroll their children in top-performing schools must now accept that their children will attend schools within their designated zones.

However, behind these challenges, the zoning system also presents opportunities for the education sector. Schools that were previously less popular now have the chance to grow and improve their quality. Additionally, the system can strengthen social interaction in local communities, as students attend school with peers who live nearby. If well-implemented and accompanied by improvements in the quality of education across all schools, this policy could be a step forward in creating a fairer and more equitable education system in Indonesia.

Therefore, it is important to further analyze the impact of the zoning system on top-performing schools and communities, and to explore solutions to the emerging challenges. This study is expected to provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of the zoning policy in achieving educational equity and offer actionable steps to maximize its benefits for all parties involved.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The zoning system is a method of selecting new students (PPDB) based on the distance between a student's residence and the nearest school. This policy was first introduced in Indonesia in 2017 through Ministerial Regulation No. 17 of 2017 and was updated in 2018. Its primary goal is to accelerate equitable access to education so that all students have the same opportunity to receive quality educational services. This system has also been adopted from other countries, particularly in Europe since the 1940s, as an effort to address educational inequality caused by market-based competition.

Besides Europe, the zoning system has been implemented in the United States and Asia as it is considered effective in promoting educational equity. In Indonesia, the policy is expected to reduce disparities in access to and the quality of education across regions. However, implementing the zoning system cannot stand alone; countries that have applied it also enhance teacher capacity, provide adequate educational facilities, and encourage innovation in schools. Finland, for example, allows schools to experiment with teaching methods without rigid standardization of test scores.

The implementation of zoning also aims to involve schools and parents in educational planning, maintain teaching stability, and optimize the use of national resources. Furthermore, the system helps prevent school closures due to staffing issues. Educational reform associated with zoning policies is generally accompanied by changes in vision and the reorganization of education systems. However, public acceptance of this system takes time, especially in countries that have traditionally emphasized school choice freedom.

METHODOLOGY

Literature review is a research method used to identify, evaluate, and interpret all relevant research findings related to a specific research question, topic, or area of concern. The literature review method is used to gather data or a synthesis from sources relevant to the research topic from various media such as journals, books, documentation, the internet, and libraries. It involves a series of activities including collecting reference materials, reading, noting, and managing written sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Principles of the Zoning System in Education

Education policy is a mandate issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture to be implemented nationally, aimed at improving the quality of education in Indonesia. Every year, the ministry continues to formulate new policies in the education system to keep pace with the development of science and technology. According to Safarah and Wibowo (2018), the issue of equity in education focuses on providing equal access and opportunity for all communities. Strategic priorities in education are determined within the broader context of national planning, where education ranks second only to public sector reform. To achieve equity in both quality and quantity across all educational institutions, the government enforces the zoning policy in student admissions. The zoning principle in education aims to ensure equal access to education for all students. Through zoning, every student has a fairer chance to attend educational institutions close to where they live. This is expected to reduce disparities in educational quality between regions and ensure that each school enrolls students from a range of social and economic backgrounds.

Beyond access equity, the zoning principle supports overall quality improvement in education. The system enables the government to more easily distribute qualified teachers across regions so that each school maintains a relatively equal standard. Zoning also promotes the enhancement of school infrastructure across regions, as every school is responsible for providing high-quality education services to its students.

Zoning also plays a role in building social integration in schools. Through this system, students from diverse backgrounds can study together, minimizing dominance of certain schools by specific social groups. It fosters a more inclusive and harmonious learning environment, helping to reduce social gaps and enhancing a sense of unity among students.

In addition, zoning reduces students' economic burdens and mobility needs. With schools closer to home, students need not spend excessively on transportation or relocate to other cities for quality education. Indirectly, this also helps reduce urban traffic congestion, as student commuting becomes more manageable and better distributed.

Finally, the successful implementation of zoning requires support from all stakeholders, including the government, schools, and communities. The government must continue to improve the zoning system to make it more effective and adaptable to local conditions. Schools must improve the quality of their educational services to ensure all students receive an optimal learning experience. Meanwhile, the community must understand and support this policy to achieve equity and improve the quality of education in Indonesia.

Impact of Zoning on Top-Performing Schools

The zoning system is applied to equalize access to education across Indonesia. This policy aims to create equality among schools in terms of their roles and responsibilities, thereby eliminating distinctions between favorite schools and others. With equal distribution, each region can benefit from balanced educational services. Additionally, the government can more easily distribute educational facilities and resources evenly. This policy also encourages the government to provide facilities fairly to all schools to enhance education quality. Moreover, educators are expected to be more professional in responding to these changes, which ultimately contributes to the improvement of educational institutions.

Certainly, the zoning policy brings significant changes to top-performing schools, which were previously known for their high academic standards. Under this system, student admissions are no longer based on academic performance, but rather on residence. As a result, schools that once attracted high-achieving students now enroll students with more diverse academic backgrounds. This change requires schools to adjust their teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students more inclusively.

Furthermore, zoning affects the image of top-performing schools. Previously seen as exclusive and the top choice for high achievers, these schools now depend less on the academic caliber of incoming students and more on the effectiveness of teaching methods and staff support. This encourages schools to improve their teaching quality, facilities, and student development programs to remain high-quality institutions despite a more heterogeneous student body. In terms of competition, schools that were once top destinations for high-performing students now face a new reality where all schools have equal chances to grow. Less popular schools now have the opportunity to improve their quality, gradually narrowing the gap between elite and regular schools. Thus, the zoning system also supports educational equity and reduces disparities among schools in different regions.

However, this policy also presents challenges, especially for top-performing schools that must adapt to more diverse learning environments. They need to enhance both academic and non-academic support systems so that all students can thrive according to their potential. Teachers must also be more creative and innovative in designing effective learning strategies. If these challenges are successfully addressed, top-performing schools can not only maintain their quality but also contribute to a more just and inclusive education system for all students.

Impact of Zoning on the Community

The zoning policy in the education system has a broad impact on the community, particularly in determining school choices for their children. Prior to the implementation of zoning, many parents competed to enroll their children in top-performing schools, even if those schools were far from home. This led to an imbalance in student distribution, with favorite schools becoming overcrowded while schools in other areas experienced a shortage of students. With the zoning system in place, families must accept that their children will attend schools located within their residential area, significantly altering school selection patterns.

Additionally, the zoning system reduces unhealthy practices that were previously common, such as falsifying residential addresses to gain access to elite schools. Before zoning, many parents were willing to alter their official addresses or even rent temporary housing to ensure their child's admission into a prestigious school. With the new regulations, such tactics are no longer viable, making the student admission process more transparent and fair. Moreover, zoning eases the financial burden on parents, as they no longer need to spend extra money on transportation to distant schools or relocate to gain access to a specific institution.

However, the zoning policy also poses challenges for the community, especially for families living in areas where schools are still lacking in quality.

Parents who once hoped to send their children to top schools must now face the reality that their options are limited to schools within their designated zone. This raises concerns about the quality of education their children will receive, particularly if the local schools lack adequate facilities or qualified teachers. Therefore, communities have a strong expectation that educational quality will be distributed more evenly across all regions so that the zoning policy does not disadvantage their children.

Another impact of zoning is the increase in social interaction within neighborhoods. With this system, children attend school with peers from the same area, helping to strengthen social ties and foster a sense of community. Furthermore, the presence of students in previously less-desirable schools can drive improvements in facilities and the overall quality of education in those schools. Nevertheless, to achieve the ideal goal of educational equity, the government must continue to improve the quality of schools across all regions, ensuring that every child, without exception, receives proper and high-quality education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The zoning policy in Indonesia's student admission system (PPDB) aims to create educational equity by eliminating the gap between favorite schools and others. Through this system, every student has a fairer chance to attend educational institutions located near their home. The impact is felt not only by top-performing schools that must adapt to a more diverse student composition, but also by the community, which experiences a shift in how schools are chosen for their children.

Although it presents challenges—such as the need to adjust teaching methods in top schools and the limited school choices available to families—the zoning policy also offers opportunities to improve school quality across different regions. Schools that were previously overlooked now have the chance to grow, while the community benefits from a more transparent and equitable education system. However, for this system to succeed, serious efforts must be made to enhance teacher quality, provide adequate facilities, and secure support from all stakeholders to ensure that every school can deliver optimal educational services.

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