

POTRAIT OF ZONING POLICY: EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY IN THE NEW STUDENT ADMISSION SYSTEM

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Abstract. So far in educational practice there is a perception of inequality between superior or favorite schools, and schools that are perceived as not favorite. Schools are filled with students whose learning achievements are classified as good/high and generally come from a family background with good economic and social status. This study uses a qualitative approach. The type of research used in this study is field research. In data collection, researchers used in-depth interviews, observation and documentation. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the zoning policy implemented by the government in equalizing the quality of Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia. The implementation of the zoning system must continue to be enforced because of the needs of the times, as well as efforts to realize justice in the field of education, accompanied by progressive and visionary policy renewal and improvement, as an evaluation process, in providing the best policy.

Keywords: *effectiveness, zoning, quality, Islamic religious education*

Introduction

The government has implemented a zoning policy to equalize the quality of education used by educational institutions in implementing New Student Admissions based on specific areas or zones. The main objective of this zoning policy is to achieve equal quality. Allocation of students in the zoning policy system is achieved by dividing areas or zones into specific areas. Students who live in a zone will be prioritized and accepted at schools in that zone. This policy aims to prevent disparities between schools in urban and rural areas and eliminate the labels of favorite and non-favorite schools (Safarah and Wibowo, 2018). With the location of students, of course, it will result in an equal distribution of the capacity of schools in certain zones. So far, in educational practice, there is a perception of inequality between superior or favorite schools and schools perceived as not favorite. Schools are filled with students whose learning achievements are classified as good/high and generally come from families with sound economic and social status. Meanwhile, there are also schools at the other extreme, schools that have students with learning achievements that are classified as less good/low and generally come from underprivileged families (Habibullah, 2019). In addition, there is also the phenomenon of students who cannot enjoy education near their homes due to academic achievement factors.

In some cases, zoning policies can reduce competition between schools. When students are automatically placed in their zone schools, schools lose the incentive to innovate and improve the quality of education in response to intense competition. This is because by implementing competition, the quality of education in each zoning area will be weakened. By implementing the zoning policy, it is an effort made by the

government in equalizing quality in educational institutions. This policy aims to equalize the quality of education in every school in the same zone. The zoning policy also plays a role in ensuring fairer educational accessibility for all students. By bringing schools closer to where students live, this policy can certainly reduce some of the obstacles to learning difficulties (Mokhtar et al., 2025). Good accessibility ensures that all students, regardless of their social, economic, geographic, or physical backgrounds, have the same opportunity to obtain an education. The zoning policy issued by the Minister of Education and Culture has at least two objectives, namely mapping access and equalizing the quality of education in Indonesia. From this policy, the Minister of Education and Culture wants all schools to become favorite schools. The zoning policy is a system that enforces regulations for all students to choose a school that is closest to their place of residence (Sinaga, 2020). The implementation of the zoning policy is expected to result in a more even distribution of students among schools in the same area (Lodan, 2023). At least with this policy, it can avoid negative impacts in improving the quality of education. In its implementation, the zoning policy limits the space for movement in choosing a school for the community (Thoha and Pd, 2021). Meanwhile, for the school itself, with this policy, it cannot choose the students it wants. Because the zoning policy prioritizes the area of the applicant's zone compared to the values of prospective students. Based on the background above, it is necessary to know more about the effectiveness of the zoning policy in improving the quality of education in Indonesia. With the hope, that it can be a contribution of thought in the sustainability of the zoning policy in Indonesia.

Several previous studies related to the zoning system policy have produced several findings that will be presented as follows. The results of the study indicate that the success of the zoning system in various countries is highly dependent on alignment with other national education policies, such as improving infrastructure and developing human resources for teachers. The purpose of implementing the zoning system is not only to equalize the quality of education, but also to encourage the active involvement of schools and parents in education planning. However, the main challenge in implementing the zoning policy is the lack of readiness of the stakeholders involved. In Indonesia, the implementation of the zoning system also requires improvement, especially in its implementation at the local level (Syakarofath et al., 2020). Other studies have shown that the zoning system policy causes schools that are considered not favorites to have a shortage of students; in addition, the difference between favorite and non-favorite schools creates an intolerant attitude among students that is not in accordance with the values of Pancasila. Zoning itself is the acceptance of new students by looking at the closest distance from school to home with a minimum quota of 90% of the total prospective students accepted. The impact of this zoning varies, both positive and negative, both on the quality of schools and the students themselves (Syakarofath et al., 2020). Research conducted indicates resulted in the zoning system being one form of educational equalization effort and aims to eliminate the image of superior schools that have been widely developed in society. With this zoning system, it is hoped that all schools will have the same quality, and there will be no more preference for certain schools. However, this new policy is not free from the potential for problems to arise, both from the school management side and from the community, especially parents of students as consumers of education. While this study discusses more about educational inequality, the zoning policy has raised several polemics, one of which is that several state schools do not get new students. In addition, based on Article 24 paragraph (4.5) of

the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation, this policy does not apply to private educational institutions and boarding schools.

Materials and Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is a research method based on the philosophy of postpositivism, used to research the natural conditions of objects (Ramdhan, 2021). This is because the relationship between the parts being studied will be much clearer if observed in the process. A qualitative approach is an approach to conducting research that is oriented towards natural phenomena. Qualitative research is fundamental and naturalistic and cannot be done directly in the field. Qualitative research is a method of research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior (Elvera and Yesita Astarina, 2021). The type of research used in this study is field research. Field research is conducted in a place or location chosen to research or investigate something that happens in that place. In data collection, researchers use in-depth interviews, observation and documentation. The type of interview used by the researcher is an unstructured interview or in-depth interview. In this study, observation uses non-participant observation. In this case, it means that the researcher is not directly involved in the activities of the person being observed. The researcher only observes, records, analyzes and then makes conclusions from what he has seen. The documentation method is used to dig up data on the history, vision, mission and objectives of the research location as well as other general data that supports this study.

Results and Discussion

The zoning policy was established on December 31, 2018, the Minister of Education and Culture (Mendikbud) Muhadjir Effendy has signed Permendikbud Number 51 of 2018 concerning the Admission of New Students at Kindergarten, Junior High School, Senior High School, and Vocational High School. The text of the Permendikbud is as follows (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2019): (1) Article 14 paragraph (4) of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation reads as follows:

"The provisions referred to are carried out before the announcement of the results of the PPDB selection process"

If based on the results of the PPDB selection, the School has a number of prospective students that exceeds the capacity, and then the School is obliged to report the excess prospective students to the education office in accordance with its authority. Furthermore, the Education Office in accordance with its authority is required to channel the excess prospective students as referred to in other Schools in the same zoning. In the event that the capacity in the same zoning as referred to is not available, according to this Permendikbud, students are channeled to other Schools in the nearest zoning. (2) Article 16 paragraphs (5) of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation reads as follows:

"Prospective students can only choose 1 (one) path from the 3 (three) PPDB registration paths as referred to in one zoning."

According to this Permendikbud, PPDB registration is carried out through the following channels: a. zoning; b. achievement; and c. transfer of parents/guardians. The zoning path as referred to, according to this Permendikbud, is at least 90% (ninety percent) of the School's capacity. While the achievement path as referred to is at most 5% (five percent) of the School's capacity, and the parent/guardian transfer path as referred to is at most 5% (five percent) of the School's capacity. (3) Article 18 paragraph (4) of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation reads as follows:

"Schools prioritize students who have a family card or domicile certificate in the same district/city as their school of origin"

In addition to registering for PPDB through the zoning path according to the domicile in the established zoning, according to this Permendikbud, prospective students can register for PPDB through the achievement path outside the student's domicile zoning. Meanwhile, in the case of the transfer path of parents/guardians as referred to is not fulfilled, according to this Permendikbud, the remaining quota is transferred to the zoning path or achievement path. It is emphasized in this Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture, in implementing PPDB through the zoning route with a quota of at least 90% (ninety percent) as referred to, Schools organized by the Regional Government are required to accept prospective students who are domiciled according to the zone determined by the Regional Government. The domicile of prospective students as referred to, according to this Permendikbud, is based on the address on the family card issued at least 1 (one) year before the implementation of PPDB, and can be replaced with a domicile certificate from the neighborhood association or residents' association legalized by the local village head/head stating that the student in question has been domiciled for at least 1 (one) year since the issuance of the domicile certificate. (4) 4. Article 24 paragraphs (4.5) of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation reads as follows:

"Schools are required to accept students aged 7 (seven) years with a domicile within the designated zoning. If the age of prospective students as referred to is the same, then the determination of students is based on the distance of the prospective student's residence closest to the School, and no reading, writing, and arithmetic tests are conducted."

Regarding the determination of zoning, according to this Permendikbud, it is carried out at each level by the Regional Government in accordance with its authority, with the principle of bringing the domicile of students closer to the School, and must be announced no later than 1 (one) month before the open announcement of PPDB registration. According to this Permendikbud, the provisions regarding the PPDB registration path through zoning, achievement, and transfer of parents/guardians as referred to are excluded for: (a) Schools organized by the community; (b) Vocational schools organized by the Regional Government; (c) Cooperation Schools; (d) Indonesian schools abroad; (e) Schools that provide special education; (f) Schools that provide special service education; (g) Boarding schools; (h) Schools in disadvantaged, outermost, and remote areas; and (i) Schools in areas where the number of school-age residents cannot meet the provisions for the number of students in 1 (one) Study Group

(Reviandi et al., 2024). This Permendikbud also states that the selection of prospective new students in grade 1 (one) of elementary school only uses the zoning route and the transfer route of parents/guardians. The selection of prospective new students in grade 1 (one) of elementary school considers the following priority criteria: a. age as referred to; and b. distance of the nearest residence to the School in the zoning determined by the Regency/City Regional Government. In the implementation of PPDB through zoning policies, the implementation characteristics must be included, including: (1) Objective, Acceptance of new students must meet the general provisions stipulated in Permendikbud Number 20 of 2019. (2) Accountable, Acceptance of new students must be accounted for all elements of society, both procedures and the results. (3) Transparent, Acceptance of new students must be open and transparent. Known by the whole community including parents and new students to avoid deviations that (4) without discrimination, every citizen can participate in educational programs. Furthermore, it is also without distinguishing between ethnicity, region of origin, religion, class and status (Jariah, 2019).

There are several significant impacts in the implementation of zoning policies in Education. The visible impacts are equal access, equal quality, reduced student density, and more equitable provision of resources. One of the main impacts of implementing zoning policies is equal access to Education. By allocating students based on certain areas or zones, this policy can ensure that each area or zone has equal access to schools in the area. This certainly reduces the gap in access to Education between schools in urban and rural areas, as well as reducing transportation barriers and travel distances for students (Megasari et al., 2023). The contribution felt from the zoning policy is the equalization of the quality of education. Dividing students according to the number of schools in the same zone evenly can make the quality of education even. It is expected that one school with another school in one area can synergize together in improving the quality of education. So, that the gap in the quality of education in schools in one zone is not too obvious. In other words, there will be no school that is significantly superior or lower in quality compared to other schools in the same area. In improving the quality of education, of course, balanced resources are needed, both in terms of educators and school facilities. Zoning policies can contribute to the equal distribution of resource provision. With an even allocation of students in each school, the government or educational institutions will find it easier to distribute resources. Such as equal distribution of educators, assistance for facilities and infrastructure and learning materials will be more easily distributed fairly among schools with the same zone.

Problems of zoning policy

Various problems arose in the implementation of the zoning PPDB pathway in the period 2017-2023. The problems are as follows: (1) Loss of right to compete. The existence of zoning policies actually reduces the competitiveness of students, because educational institutions prioritize distance rather than student competence. In accordance with the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Article 16 paragraph 5, 90% of the quota is the zoning path while 5% is the achievement path and 5% is the parent's work transfer path. The achievement path that only accommodates 5% makes students' motivation to compete decrease (Ula and Lestari, 2019). (2) Domicile migration. Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Regulation Number 1 of 2021 concerning PPDB Article 17 paragraph 2, concerning the change of KK Address which is legally permitted a maximum of 1 year before PPDB registration.

Based on this regulation, parents have prepared their children to still be able to register their children at favorite schools outside their zone. Efforts made by parents by entering or entrusting the names of prospective students to the KK of residents around the favorite school zone they are aiming for. This practice of KK domicile migration can result in inequality in the distribution of students between schools, as well as give rise to injustice in access to education. Therefore, handling the problem of KK domicile migration is important in efforts to improve the implementation of the zoning system PPDB so that the goal of equalizing the quality of education can be achieved better.

(3) School has no prospective students. PPDB with zoning policy creates new problems, namely several schools lack students or there are no prospective students who register. The causal factor is that there are several state schools located close together, as well as schools that are located far from the prospective students' homes. For example, 5 elementary schools in Ponorogo Regency did not get new prospective students in the 2023/2024 Academic Year, namely SDN Jalen (Balong), SDN 2 Munggu (Bungkal), SDN 3 Babadan (Banadan), SDN 1 Duri (Slahung) and SDN 2 Tegalombo (Kauman). Several of these schools did not get prospective students, because the public's assumption regarding favorite and non-favorite schools still dominates, as well as the location of the schools being close together. This makes parents register their children in their favorite schools in one zone. (4) Chair buying and selling practice. In fact, the practice of buying and selling seats existed before the zoning policy was implemented, but this phenomenon is increasingly rampant, carried out by teachers in a transactional manner. This fraud actually damages the pure purpose of the PPDB zoning system, namely to improve the quality of education by distributing students equally. The first alleged fraud in the 2023 PPDB in Indonesia was the practice of buying and selling seats in Karawang. A resident of East Karawang District revealed that there were transactional activities during the zoning PPDB for junior high schools. He admitted that he had to spend around IDR 3 million so that his child could be accepted at a public junior high school in West Karawang. "The costs or rates are quite high, the term is buying a seat," said one of the parents of students who did not want to be named. In addition to Karawang, indications of buying and selling seats are also suspected of occurring in Bengkulu during the 2023 PPDB process.

(5) Existence of extortion practices and students being deposited by officials. Another problem that arises in the implementation of the PPDB zoning procurement is the practice of extortion and students being entrusted by officials or figures in one region (Mulyana and Amalia, 2024). P2G gave examples of such cases occurring in Bali, Bengkulu, Tangerang, Bandung and Depok. The mode is to entrust students in the name of certain officials to schools. The school PPDB committee, namely the principal and teachers, do not have the power to refuse, so this practice continues to occur secretly, said Ferdiansyah. He said that in order to overcome this problem, the Regional Inspectorate, Education Office, and Ombudsman should be aggressive in monitoring, supervising, and evaluating the implementation of PPDB and indications of fraud. In addition, teachers, principals, or members of the public who are proven to have committed extortion must also be given strict sanctions. (6) Children of poor families not accommodated in public schools. Ferdiansyah said, in fact the PPDB system is in favor of poor children and allows children in one zone to go to school at a lower cost. However, as long as there are still cases of children whose parents are poor and close to the school who cannot be accommodated in public schools, the PPDB system has failed

to achieve its main goal. For P2G, the PPDB system by the government must prioritize poor children and one zone to be accepted in public schools.

(7) Lack of quality educators. It is well-known that the government's goal in equalizing education in the PPDB zoning pathway will certainly have an impact on the quality of educators. Equalizing education by eliminating the dualism of education quality, namely favorite and non-favorite schools, of course, apart from students, also from educators. This has received less attention from the government. The need to equalize educators who have five teacher competencies is one of the important points in equalizing education. In practice, the PPDB zoning pathway system has not penetrated the equalization of professional educators, only focusing on students. So, that the label of favorite schools is still attached, due to the lack of improvement in the quality of educators in schools. Finally, it has an impact on schools that have no applicants in one adjacent zone.

Optimization of zoning policy implementation

Due to various problems that arose in the implementation of the zoning PPDB pathway in previous years, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology issued the latest PPDB Implementation Guidelines. The guidelines are based on the Implementation Guidelines for Permendikbudristek No. 1 of 2021 concerning the latest PPDB for Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle, High, and Vocational High Schools through the Decree of the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number 47/M/2023 of 2023. Through these guidelines, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology updates the zoning pathway rules, zoning pathway requirements, and zoning pathway selection rules. The changes are (Tan et al., 2024). (1) Zoning route rules-Capacity of zoning lines: (a) Elementary school=at least 70% of school capacity, (b) Junior high school=at least 50% of the school's capacity, (c) High school=at least 50% of school capacity. The local government can set a larger capacity quota after calculating the capacity and projections of prospective students.

(2) Zoning path requirements. (a) The domicile of prospective students is based on the address listed on the Family Card (KK) issued at least 1 year before PPDB registration, (b) Changes to the Family Card (KK) less than 1 year but do not change domicile, the Family Card can still be used as a basis for zoning path selection, (c) If there is a difference in the names of the prospective student's parents/guardians on the Family Card, the last Family Card can be used if the parent/guardian dies/divorces before the date of issuance of the last Family Card, and is proven by a death certificate or divorce certificate from the authorized agency, (d) The Education Office coordinates with the Dukcapil Office according to its authority to verify the accuracy of the data in the KK. (3) Zoning path selection rules. (a) Verification of completeness of PPDB documents is Family Card and Domicile Certificate, (b) If any suspected document forgery is found, the perpetrator will be subject to sanctions in accordance with statutory regulations, (c) The elementary school zoning pathway in its selection takes into account the following criteria: (i) First=Age (6-7 years based on coordination with the local Dukcapil office), (ii) Second=The distance from the nearest residence to the school in the zoning area determined by the district/city government, (d) The zoning pathway for junior high and high school levels in its selection prioritizes the distance from the nearest residence to the school, (e) If the distance between the residence and the school is the same, then the prospective students concerned will be selected based

on the age of the older prospective student based on the birth certificate or birth certificate, (f) The Education Office ensures that the achievement pathway selection will be carried out if there is a remaining quota from the selection on the affirmative pathway, zoning pathway, and parent/guardian transfer pathway.

Through changes in the rules in the implementation of PPDB zoning pathways, it is hoped that the implementation of zoning policies can run well. The evaluation carried out in the implementation of PPDB through the zonasu pathway certainly provides changes. The close distance between home and school makes many students go on foot or by bicycle. This also improves social relationships or concern and increases emotions between students. In addition, school certification can be eliminated, so there are no favorite schools in zones in one region. In the education equalization program, what needs to be prepared is the professionalism of educators. In this case, the government makes a policy by launching an educator certification program. Considering the direction of the policy implemented as mentioned above, Article 42 of Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 explains the requirements for educators who must have minimum qualifications and certification in accordance with teaching authority, be physically and mentally healthy, and have the ability to realize national education goals. Through the educator certification program, it is hoped that it will be able to improve the quality of educators in carrying out the teaching and learning process. So that when the PPDB zoning system is implemented, the distribution of professional educators is evenly distributed. Thus, the purpose of the PPDB zoning system, namely equalizing the quality of education and eliminating the dualism of favorite and non-favorite schools, will gradually disappear.

Equalization of education as the goal of zoning policy

Equalization of school quality can be done through two things, namely every school gets the opportunity to get students who excel and schools can improve the quality of accepting students who vary. In the context of equalizing the quality of education, the label of the most favorite school which is the reason for the caste system in the world of education will be displaced by itself (Djatmiko et al., 2022). It can be said that zoning is not only for equalizing quality but also changing the public's view of education. Through the zoning policy, it is hoped that in addition to equalizing the quality of education, it will also be a mental revolution. However, the perception of the presence of favorite schools has been embedded in the minds of parents and has become an alternative choice in sending their children to school (Henig, 1995). It should be realized that one of the obstacles in the zoning policy is the uneven distribution of facilities and infrastructure. in a school. In fact, the facilities and infrastructure themselves are a support in educational process. Not only supporting the learning process, facilities and infrastructure also has a correlation with a teacher's teaching motivation (Ani et al., 2024). Equalization of education always hampered by quality disparities school, which has an impact on the difficulty of Indonesia becoming a country progress, because it is hampered by resources human resources that are not yet able compete and not yet superior. Of course, the zoning system is a policy that must be implemented accompanied by policy improvements every year, as an evaluation and renewal process in providing the best and fairest policies. In fact, Nadiem Makarim through the Ministry of Education and Culture policy issued an update in implementing the zoning system, namely increasing the achievement path quota to 30%, by reducing the zoning path quota to a minimum of 70%.

Opportunities for private schools and boarding schools in the zoning policy

With the existence of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture regarding the zoning policy as stated in Article 24 paragraph (4.5), it is explained that the zoning policy is exempted for schools organized by the community, schools that organize special education and boarding schools. This is a great opportunity for private schools and boarding schools. The opportunities for Islamic Boarding Schools, private formal schools established by Foundations and schools that have special programs such as Tahfidzul Qur'an have increased with the zoning policy. The institutions above can accept students from all regions without having to consider the zoning of prospective students. Based on databooks from the report of the Directorate of Early Childhood Education and Islamic Boarding Schools of the Ministry of Religion, it was noted that there were 4.37 million students spread throughout Indonesia in the 2020/2021 academic year. The students were spread across 30,494 Islamic boarding schools. This significant increase proves that Islamic Boarding Schools are in demand by the community. The increasing number of Islamic Boarding Schools and the increasing quality of private schools have become an option for parents in providing education for their children without considering the area zone.

Conclusion

The equalization of education is always hampered by the inequality of school quality, as well as by the reprehensible behavior of individuals who do not represent the values of Pancasila in the implementation of education policies. The implementation of the zoning system must continue to be enforced because of the needs of the times, as well as efforts to realize justice in the field of education, accompanied by progressive and visionary policy renewal and improvement, as an evaluation process, in providing the best policies. Obstacles in the implementation of the zoning system in Indonesia are uneven facilities and infrastructure due to disparities between favorite and non-favorite schools, unclear information in circulation, the continued presence of individuals who engage in corruption, collusion and nepotism, and the discrepancy between the number of residents and the existence of schools in certain areas. To improve the equality of education quality, zoning policies are applied in state formal schools and private formal schools. Good coordination between schools in the same zone is needed to improve the region's education quality. Formal state schools are beginning to realize that the influence of zoning policies can weaken the community's interest. Thus, several schools are starting to create superior programs as school identities. Governments, as mandatory people, must have capable policy formulation that realizes prosperity and justice in society. Making idealism happen in education is essential because it seeks to improve the quality of resources for Indonesian people. If Indonesia wants to be a developed country, of course, the accuracy and effectiveness of a policy are effective strategies for realizing this desire.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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