



State-led funding and support for education innovation programmes: Create a participatory policy to create inclusive and equitable education in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background: This research aims to analyse the problems of education by emphasising the lack of civil society participation in the process of policy formulation and implementation, bureaucratic inefficiency due to the tendency to develop in quantity and inertia that hinders educational innovation. **Methods:** This research uses a research method with data collection on secondary sources such as books, journals, and articles that are analysed inductively (specific to general) and written analytically. The state-funded Education Innovation Programme is a programme that can fundamentally address education issues in the bureaucracy and democratisation of education, which is linked to the lack of educational innovation, let alone participatory innovation. **Findings:** The research found that the solution to the education problem is the method of the solution, which needs to actively involve the community itself as the target of the policy. The participatory programmes in this research also found that the bureaucratic red-tape caused by bureaucratic parkinsonisation in education can be streamlined indirectly with participatory policies. The Education Innovation Programme has several technical stages from planning to evaluation that will be passed by groups of innovators, review teams as well as observers and government agents in a collaborative, professional and non-interventionist manner. **Conclusion:** It is hoped that with this Education Innovation programme, there will be many innovative ideas from the community that will be directly encouraged by the state in funding and mentoring, thus reducing the burden on the bureaucracy, and solving education problems with less rigidity from the perspective of the central government. In particular, the Education Innovation Programme aims to alleviate the problems of access to education for the poor and marginalised groups, hence the need for programmes based on local solutions and civil community empowerment. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This study uniquely highlights the role of participatory policies in overcoming bureaucratic inefficiencies and fostering educational innovation, emphasizing community-driven solutions through the Education Innovation Programme.

KEYWORDS: education; innovation; participation.

1. Introduction

According to Article 31 Paragraph (4) of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, education should receive at least 20 percent of the national and local budgets to ensure the quality of national education. However, the improvement in the quality of education is not in line with the expectations imposed by the constitution, as Indonesia's student

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achievement based on international standards is still low compared to Southeast Asian countries (Rosser, 2018). An experimental study by De Ree et al. (2018) from 2009 to 2012 found that unconditional increases in teacher salaries, however important to the education workforce, have not been matched by increases in productivity and quality of education in the education sector. The quantity of primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary schools has increased significantly since 1985, but this has not been matched by improvements in the quality of education as measured by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and other standards (Rosser, 2018).

Further compounding the issue, the Human Capital Index (HCI) for Indonesia was only 0.54 in 2020, indicating a significant gap compared to neighbouring countries such as Singapore (0.88), Vietnam (0.69), and Malaysia (0.61) (Sari & Tiwari, 2024). The disparity in educational outcomes is further highlighted by the World Bank's findings that indicate regional imbalances in educational funding, with provinces like West Java receiving Rp29 trillion or IDR 4.4 million per student, while West Papua received only IDR 3 trillion or IDR 19 million per student. Additionally, the results of the 2019 Teacher Competency Test/*Uji Kompetensi Guru* (UKG) revealed that the average score for civil servant teachers was merely in the 50s out of 100, with only 4 percent achieving scores above 70, raising serious concerns about teacher quality. Furthermore, low student achievement is exacerbated by a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation systems, as well as insufficient accountability measures, leading to a cycle of inadequate educational quality. Collectively, these factors underscore the urgent need for a reevaluation of Indonesia's education funding and policy effectiveness to bridge the gap between budget allocations and tangible improvements in educational outcomes (Patton, 2020).

As explained earlier, a large budget allocation for the education sector does not necessarily translate directly into quality education. There are other factors that contribute to improving the quality of education. Improving the quality of education in Indonesia still has structural barriers, one of which is the issue of bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy is actually an unavoidable thing in government affairs. In fact, bureaucracy is a big part or primary foundation of the government itself (Febrianti et al., 2022). The education sector, which is the direct responsibility of the government, inevitably falls within a bureaucracy, more specifically the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud). Kemdikbud implements a set of bureaucratic regulations that govern the way the state education system, both public and private, operates. These bureaucratic 'rules of the game' cover a wide range of issues, from teachers, students, school staff, principals, lecturers, functional officials, administrative staff, budgeting, etc.

On the one hand, the bureaucratisation of education is necessary given its massive scale that must cover the entire vast territory of Indonesia (Transparency International Indonesia, 2023). In this aspect, the bureaucracy provides standardisation that can be followed by all education providers in the regions so that they do not experience confusion in its implementation. In addition, centrally determined and rigid regulations can provide legal certainty and clarity so as to prevent misinterpretation (Amruddin et al., 2022). However, on the other hand, these characteristics can lead to a shackling 'Iron Cage' phenomenon (Yüksel, 2014). The prioritisation of rationality embodied in regulations can turn bureaucracy into an 'iron cage'. The rigidity of regulations keeps bureaucrats, including teachers and lecturers, trapped in the tedious routine of normal daily administrative matters. This can stem the creativity of teachers because they are too preoccupied with administrative matters and can even burden working hours, thus affecting the quality of education (Ikramatoun et al., 2021). The dominating and generalised nature of the education bureaucracy and executive also means that it does not pay attention to the specific needs and characteristics of each region (Baviera, & Maramis, 2017). Its generalising nature ignores the specific needs of the regions, which often do not match those set by the centre. This has led to the ineffectiveness of education provision in the regions.

2. Methods

This research uses a qualitative-descriptive method. Data collection was done by secunder sources such as literature study of books, internet sources, and scientific journals. The analysis method used a qualitative-inductive method. This research identifies problems based on empirical facts and conclusions from previous literature. By analysing the problems and solution-gaps through previous literature, a solution is inductively generated in the form of policy options for Indonesia's education problems. Qualifying literature is drawn from accredited journal institutions, as well as internet sources from established media companies, and above all, relevance to the topic at hand (Heath et al., 2021). Recommendations are given based on the root causes of problems that occur in the education bureaucracy in Indonesia in general.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 *Inertia in bureaucracy as an educational bureaucratic problem*

Education in Indonesia is currently facing serious challenges, including inertia and innovation stagnation. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) 2022, there are 2.4 million school-age children who do not receive formal education, indicating that there are still many underdeveloped areas that are not accessible to adequate education services (Bima et al., 2022). In addition, the Program for International Assessment of Students (PISA) survey showed that in 2018, the average scores of Indonesian students in reading, mathematics, and science were still far below the OECD average of 371, 379, and 396, respectively. This indicates that there are significant disparities in the quality of education in different regions, especially between urban and rural areas, which exacerbates inequalities in access to education.

Inertia in the Indonesian education system also exacerbates this situation. The process of curriculum change designed to improve education quality is often hampered by the lack of readiness of teachers and schools to adapt new teaching methods (Damayanti et al., 2023). According to a Ministry of Education and Culture survey in 2021, only 40% of teachers felt ready to implement the new curriculum, while the rest felt they did not have sufficient skills. In addition, the stagnation of innovation in teaching methods leads to a lack of creativity in the teaching and learning process (Kenned, 2006). For example, the use of project-based learning methods and technology is still minimal in many schools, which negatively impacts students' interest in learning and their ability to compete in the global era.

Furthermore, the non-involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the education process exacerbates the problem. Data from the Indonesian Education Coalition shows that only about 15% of NGOs actively collaborate with schools in education programs (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). NGOs should act as strategic partners in creating innovative programs that can improve the quality of education in disadvantaged areas. Without synergy between the government, schools and NGOs, many initiatives are not integrated and not sustainable, making it difficult to achieve better education goals. Therefore, stronger collaborative efforts are needed to overcome these challenges and create an inclusive and quality education system across Indonesia.

3.2 *Parkinsonization in bureaucratic systems*

The ever-growing need to facilitate and accommodate the executive government affairs has led to the expansion of the ministerial bureaucracy, especially the non-ministerial institution (NMI). Currently there are around 160 NMI including non-structural institutions, according to The Secretary of the President's Cabinet (2021). The staggering number of bureaucratic institutions is a perfect epitome for a particular kind of bureaucratic pathology called "Parkinsonization", derived from the Parkinson Law of C Northkote Parkinson.

Parkinson Law states that administrators or bureaucrats tend to multiply despite the productive output showing signs of a decline (Rainey, 2009; Breton & Wintrobe., 1979). Oftenly, the additional bureaucrats were a part of politically-motivated rather than strategic action. For instance, on numerous occasions the appointment of vice minister were done without stating any clear motives. The president as the appointer did this typically out of political “agreement” or some sort of payback to the coalition party.

We can observe the same phenomenon happened to ministerial and non-ministerial institutions. Recently President Joko Widodo formed “*Badan Gizi Nasional*” (BGZ), an NMI established to assist the newly elected president Prabowo Subianto free lunch program who was previously endorsed by the incumbent Jokowi. The formation of Badan Gizi Nasional could be understood as a symptom of parkinsonization not only because it is politically motivated, but the main objective of BGZ is already a part of the ministry of health concern. Hence, the multiplication of bureaucrats and bureaucratic institutions is still a main challenge in Indonesia despite the “Reformasi Birokrasi” (bureaucratic reform) agenda of the Reformasi 26 years ago.

3.3 The need for democratisation and decentralisation of education policy

One of the fundamental problems in Indonesia's education system is the lack of community participation in education management and education policy-making, even though they are the parties most directly affected by education policy (Karim, 2021). The government cannot rely solely on ‘narrow alliances’ within the internal bureaucracy and limited reach to solve Indonesia's vast and complex education problems. So far, education policy is the product of a centralised government that has not really involved elements outside the ministries and bureaucracy, such as civil society. In fact, as one example, according to the Education and Culture Data Centre in 2017, 30% of school buildings were built and maintained by the private sector (Usman, 2018).

Before the New Order, civil society, such as parents, played an important role in the management of public schools, such as working together to build educational facilities in their respective areas. However, since the New Order period, the bureaucracy and political elite have taken full control of the education sector, including education policies that place the community as the ‘recipient’ of policy benefits (Rosser, 2018; Usman, 2018). When the 1998 reforms undermined the elite and bureaucratic dominance of education, an important role in education was reinserted by NGOs and parent groups to prevent market orientation in education and promote rights and equality in education (Rosser, 2018).

However, public participation and demand for education quality was less pronounced at the beginning of the Reformasi as 86 per cent of the public was satisfied with the existing local and basic education outputs, as shown by the 2006 public survey in Lewis & Pattinasarany. (2009). Although the survey also needs to take into account the politeness bias of the respondents, still, catalysing public participation is essential for a democratic education policy. An education policy that seeks to be inclusive should certainly involve all groups to participate (*gotong-royong*) in the implementation process, instead of being top-down from Jakarta and then not in accordance with local needs.

Butet Manurung, anthropologist and founder of the Sokola Foundation, which works in the field of education, especially in rural areas and winner of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy 2024, assessed that education policy in Indonesia for formal schools is still Jakarta-centric, which can alienate students in indigenous rural areas from their own cultural roots due to an education system that does not pay attention to the plurality of needs and characters in rural areas. The democratisation (public participation) and decentralisation (non Jakarta-centric perspective) of education in an effort to improve the quality of education and deliberation on the formulation of innovations and policy reforms in the Ministry and Parliament require at least state-led programs, one of which is through budgeting or incentives and assistance for innovation programs (OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015). The government and the community (education activists, education observer organisations, parent groups, and anyone else) together think of solutions and innovation

programs that are best for both, becoming the intersection between the effectiveness of implementation needed by the government and the accuracy of the results needed by the community in their respective regions.

Learning from the Participatory Budgeting (PB) programme in Porto Alegre, a Brazilian city that mobilised citizens to discuss the allocation and distribution of public policies together (Abers et al., 2018), a budgeting programme for educational innovations to catalyse innovation from the community also makes sense. Under a Workers' party mayor, in 1990 Porto Alegre passed a PB to address socio-political-economic exclusion and encourage bottom-up input in decision-making and public policy in the city. This policy succeeded in making the urban poor, women, and marginalised groups participate in public policy-making (on budget shares, public projects, etc.) in a deliberative manner, thereby reducing patron-client and "behind-the-scenes" method in public policy and demonstrating good governance and transparency (Abers et al., 2018). We can take the participatory point from the above programme, that the Innovation Programme means encouraging the community as participants to propose their innovation, then if it passes the due diligence selection, it will be funded by the education budget and assisted by the education bureaucracy until completion.

3.4 Recommendation: education innovation programme

The recommendation put forward in this essay is the "Education Innovation Programme", which is a state-programme (from the Ministry of Education) to organise a national selection for any member of the public who has innovations to advance the quality and address the problems of education in Indonesia. This Innovation Programme is held with the aim of sparking creative solutions; empowering the community in overcoming problems and producing educational innovations but with the support of the state; shifting budgets and addressing government blind spots, addressing bureaucratic inertia and proliferation, and addressing problems and providing education policy innovation. The Education Innovation Programme also aims to cut and prevent the bureaucratic red tape.

This Innovation Program accentuates the theme of solutions to problems of access to education due to poverty, geographical inaccessibility, or marginalisation, but does not rule out problems of education quality that can be updated according to pressing educational problems. The scale of the proposed innovation is preferably localised and limited, as a national scale would require enormous support. The timeframe of government-powered innovations can be renewed when the achievements of the innovation have been successfully completed.

Selection of innovations in the form of an Education Plan. Participants who register as potential education developers are community groups, not individuals, either small or large groups. Each participant develops their innovation plan in the form of an Education Plan according to the theme and template provided by the government (Joseph & Said, 2020). Then, the government through the assessment team objectively assesses and tests the feasibility of which innovation plans are worthy of further exploration. The feasibility mainly pays attention to the solution content and efficiency offered in the innovation. Eligible participants will present their Education Plan in person and have the concept and implementation of the innovation tested by the assessment team (Gotwals & Cisterna, 2022; Harris & Brown, 2013).

Education Plan Trial Period. After the presentation, participants will be facilitated to conduct a live trial (experiment) of the innovation, either tested on a small group or if possible directly in the community (depending on the reach of the innovation). During the trial period, various notes and observations are made by the assessment team to assess the process of the innovation and the parts that need to be rethought. Selection of Viable and Qualified Innovations. The determination of the selected Education Innovation Plan is very flexible, because this is not a kind of competition, of course what will qualify will adjust to the availability of the budget or the number of quality innovations. The assessment team itself consists of practitioners and researchers who have long worked in the field of

education, of course, while still involving a major role from the government and its bureaucracy.

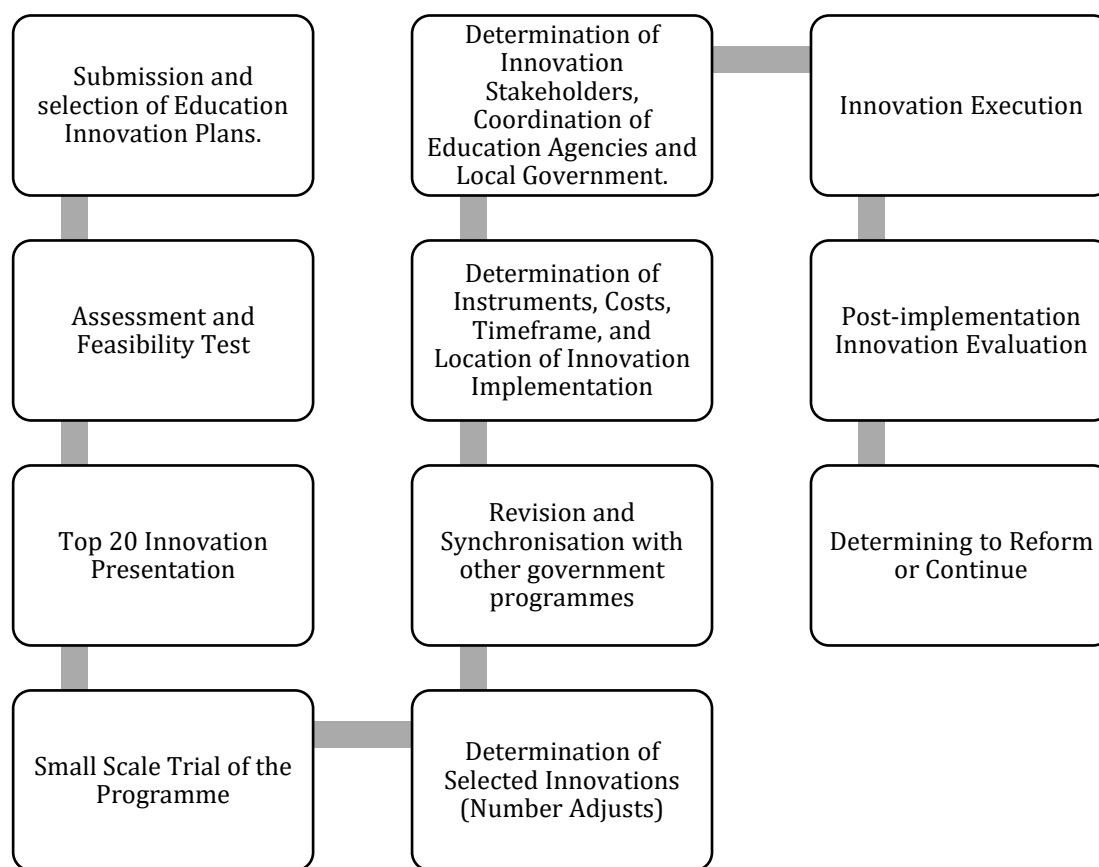


Fig. 1. Education innovation programme process.

Selection and Synchronisation of Education Plan with government education policy. The Innovation Plan should not be centrifugal to national education policy, government programmes, or the theme of the Education Innovation Programme. Although in the initial assessment, the above substances are the main considerations in the initial selection, at this synchronisation stage the Innovation Plan will be adjusted conceptually and technically. The deliberation process will be conducted at this stage, when innovators or participants revise the programme to adjust to the government's national interests and policies (Brand & Blok., 2019). However, this adjustment process does not provide excessive or unnecessary intervention to innovations that could potentially degrade the uniqueness and originality of the Innovation Plan itself.

Technical preparation for the design and implementation of Participants' educational innovations. Together, the participants and the government (mainly the review team) develop a strategy to determine the instruments, costs, timing and location of the participants' Education Innovation Plan (Meyer, & Norman, 2020). Efficiency and effectiveness considerations are tightened at this point as with any programme implementation, primarily to minimise implementation failure or unproductivity of the innovation as state funding must be exercised prudently. Proactive meeting after meeting is required between participants and government agents so that the burden of implementation and achievement can be shared. It is impossible for the government to be hands-off with how their funds are utilised for an educational innovation plan. At the same time, stakeholders or on-the-ground participants from government agencies, including education practitioners, and education professional groups should be established only to assist, not intervene and dictate, the implementation of the participant's innovation. Likewise, coordination with regional and local governments, including small government units (RT, RW and kelurahan) for licensing and coordination of these innovation activities.

Post-Implementation of Innovation Activities. Execution of the innovation will go according to plan, with very few field adjustments required. An activity report should be produced to provide a record and documentation of this minimum-scale activity. During implementation, the government agency and the innovator group work together constructively and as equals as will determine the credit for each party. After the event, all stakeholders will evaluate each other and present the results of the activity in the form of a report that will be discussed together. The review team that observed the activity will participate in the evaluation meeting and make judgements on whether the activity went according to plan and was successful, or whether it requires major evaluation (Schildkamp et al., 2020). Just like funding for research, funding for Innovation Activities is an effort by the government to address education problems with participatory implementation. Furthermore, the review team, as observers, will also consider whether the innovation activity should be continued, discontinued or continued with some reforms.

The involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the implementation of education in Indonesia can be an effective solution to overcome bureaucratic inertia and innovation stagnation that hamper the quality of education. According to Article 31 Paragraph (4) of the Indonesian Constitution, education should receive a budget allocation of at least 20 percent of the national and regional budgets. However, data shows that although education budget allocations have increased, Indonesia's student achievement results are still low in international standards compared to Southeast Asian countries (Rosser, 2018). For example, the 2018 PISA survey results show that the average scores of Indonesian students in reading, maths, and science are far below the OECD average of 371, 379, and 396, respectively. With more active NGO participation, innovations in teaching and education programs that are more relevant to the needs of local communities can be implemented, thus overcoming the mismatch between centralised education policies and realities on the ground.

The rigid bureaucracy that is often slow in making decisions is one of the main reasons why the quality of education in Indonesia is hampered. The education bureaucracy governed by the Ministry of Education and Culture tends to produce general regulations that do not take into account the specific needs of each region. According to an analysis by Amruddin et al. (2022), the generalist characteristics of the bureaucracy often ignore local uniqueness and needs, making it ineffective in providing education in remote areas. The involvement of NGOs can bring important local perspectives and provide more suitable solutions, especially in underserved areas. By facilitating collaboration between NGOs, government and communities, the potential for creating innovative and locally adaptive education programs will increase, reducing the negative impact of rigid bureaucracy. NGO-initiated education innovation programs can also serve as a platform to encourage community participation in education-related decision-making (Gottschalk & Borhan, 2023). By utilising democratic and decentralised approaches, such as the Participatory Budgeting program in Porto Alegre, Brazil, communities can contribute to formulating more relevant and inclusive education policies and programs (Abers et al., 2018). In the Indonesian context, such a program could help break the Jakarta-centric dominance of education policy, creating an education environment that is more responsive to local needs. With support from the government in the form of funding and guidance, as well as active involvement from NGOs, it is hoped that education delivery in Indonesia can be maximised, improving the overall quality of education and reducing disparities between regions.

4. Conclusions

The Education Innovation Programme is a programme design that can be initiated by the government, especially the Minister of Education, to provide opportunities for civil society (NGOs) to contribute (collaborative self-help) in developing and solving education problems in Indonesia. The tendency of bureaucracy to run in a saturated manner allows for education policies with minimal innovation and civil participation; and a Jakarta-centric and top-down perspective of education solutions. In terms of objectives, the Programme can

spark the emergence of creative solutions, especially locally-based solutions that can solve the problem of access to education for marginalised, poor, or rural communities that need solutions from their own perspectives and ways. Therefore, the Education Innovation Programme is expected to open and accommodate as much as possible fresh ideas coming from the community itself, the role of the state is only to encourage it with funding, which of course in its implementation will also be assisted by the bureaucracy technically.

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Author Contribution

Conceptualization, D.F.S. and A.A.R.; Methodology, D.F.S. and R.R.P.; Investigation, D.F.S., A.A.R., and R.R.P.; Data curation, R.R.P.; Writing – original draft preparation, D.F.S.; Writing – review and editing, A.A.R. and R.R.P.

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