

Successful Schools in Indonesia: The Impact of the Policy of School Categorisation on Leadership, Teaching, and Learning

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Abstract

The main purpose of schooling is learning. However, very often 'learning' is narrowly defined as an activity that emphasises more on accomplishing academic goals rather than both academic and social/civic goals. In the past decade the national standardised test results have been used as the main instrument in judging the quality of student learning outcomes in Indonesia and the quality of their schools. The test results have become one of the driving forces, among the other educational standards, behind the classification of schools into four categories.

The current policy of school categorisation in Indonesia was introduced to classify schools according to their levels of success in attaining the National Education Standards including student average scores on *Ujian Nasional* (the standardised national exit examination), possession of facilities, teacher qualification, quality of the teaching and learning processes, school management, and class sizes. This study aimed to explore the impact of this policy on leadership, teaching, and learning. Three broad research questions were raised to guide the study: (1) What are the opinions of school stakeholders about the purposes of schooling in Indonesia?; (2) What are the opinions of school stakeholders about a successful school in Indonesia?; and (3) What are the opinions of school stakeholders about the current policy of school categorisation in Indonesia? The study explored the impact based on its participants' collective views through the employment of case study methodology involving three Indonesian urban junior secondary schools categorised as "Potential", "National Standard", and "Pilot International Standard" Schools.

Data collection methods employed in this study were semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews were conducted with the principal, the superintendent, one school committee member, and six teachers, whereas the focus group discussions were conducted with one or two groups of selected students in each school. The data analysis procedure involved within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. The within-case analysis focused on

examining each of the three cases, whereas the cross-case analysis was aimed at comparing the findings obtained from the within-case analyses of the three cases to examine their commonalities and differences. By conducting the cross-case analysis more convincing conclusions of the study could be drawn.

This study found that the common impact of the introduction of the school categorisation policy on the principals' leadership practices mentioned by the participants in the three schools were the principals' focus on the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning processes and the provision of more school facilities. The impact of the introduction of the policy on teachers' instructional practices was concerned with improved commitment to quality teaching. Two impacts of the introduction of the policy on student learning identified by the participants in the three schools were concerned with their priorities in learning. One group of the participants, including the principals of the three schools, believed that the students learned all subjects conscientiously. The other group noted that many of the students who tended to focus their learning on the subjects tested on *Ujian Nasional*.

Keywords: Indonesia; policy of school categorisation; purposes of schooling; successful schools; standardised testing

Declaration of Originality

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed:

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Date:/...../.....

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List of Acronyms

BAN – S/M	<i>Badan Akreditasi Nasional – Sekolah/Madrasah</i>
BOS	<i>Bantuan Operasional Sekolah</i>
EBTANAS	<i>Evaluasi Belajar Tahap Akhir Nasional</i>
KKM	<i>Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum</i>
KTSP	<i>Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan</i>
MK	<i>Mahkamah Konstitusi</i>
MoEC	<i>Ministry of Education and Culture</i>
MoNE	<i>Ministry of National Education</i>
MoRA	<i>Ministry of Religious Affairs</i>
NEM	<i>Nilai Ebtanas Murni</i>
NGO	<i>Non-Governmental Organisation</i>
OECD	<i>Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development</i>
Permendiknas	<i>Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional</i>
Perpres	<i>Peraturan Presiden</i>
PIRLS	<i>Progress in International Reading Literacy Study</i>
PISA	<i>Program of International Student Assessment</i>
PP	<i>Peraturan Pemerintah</i>
RSBI	<i>Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional</i>
SBI	<i>Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional</i>
SLB	<i>Sekolah Luar Biasa</i>
SNP	<i>Standar Nasional Pendidikan</i>
SPM	<i>Standar Pelayanan Minimal</i>
SSN	<i>Sekolah Standar Nasional</i>
TIMSS	<i>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study</i>
UAN	<i>Ujian Akhir Nasional</i>
UN	<i>Ujian Nasional</i>
UNDP	<i>United Nations Development Programme</i>
UUSPN	<i>Undang-undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional</i>