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Revitalization of Zoning Policy in Indonesia to Ensure School Availability for Students Based on the School Zoning System in Japan

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Abstract: Education occupies a crucial position in the life of a nation and influences the quality of its future generations. Therefore, every country in the world strives to establish the best education system. One global issue in education is the equal distribution of educational opportunities, and some countries, such as Japan, have successfully implemented the School Zoning System for 30 years, achieving significant educational equity. In Indonesia, zoning policies were implemented in 2017 with the aim of improving access and the quality of education. However, several studies indicate that this policy has not been entirely successful and has even made it difficult for students to secure a place in schools within their designated zones. Through a Systematic Literature Review, this research identifies the challenges in implementing zoning policies in Indonesia, including imbalances in school capacities, lack of flexibility, insufficient coordination, and a lack of transparency. The resulting impacts of these challenges include educational access inequality, psychological effects, and the potential decline in overall education quality. The study also recommends solutions based on the implementation of the School Zoning System in Japan, including increasing school capacities, enhancing zoning system flexibility, improving coordination, and increasing transparency in the student admission process. These solutions can aid Indonesia in implementing zoning policies that ensure school availability for all students in the country.

Keywords: Zoning policy, Zoning system, School zoning system, School availability, Education

Introduction

Education is one of the crucial aspects of life, as the quality of education determines the quality of the future generations of a nation. Therefore, every country in the world competes to provide the best education system based on the needs of students and the conditions of the country. One widespread issue in the field of education faced by almost every country is the equal distribution of education. As a solution to this problem, some countries implement zoning systems in education. A well-known country that has successfully implemented this policy and proven to provide education with equivalent quality for its citizens is Japan. Japan's success in implementing and managing this policy inspired Mr. Muhadjir Effendy, the Minister of Education and Culture in 2018, to initiate the implementation of a similar policy in Indonesia (Ainscow, 2020; Eshetu, 2014; Yoshida, 2023).

The implementation of the zoning policy in Japanese education, known as the School Zoning System, has been in place for 30 years and has successfully achieved educational equality in the country. This is evident in literature that states that when someone visits Japan, they will undoubtedly encounter some areas that may be

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economically disadvantaged. However, when assessed based on the quality of education, there are no schools in Japan with inferior educational standards compared to others. In Japan, it is not only students from well-off families who receive quality education but also students from economically challenging backgrounds. All students in Japan receive education of the same high quality (Butler & Iino, 2005; Munifah et al., 2019; Nakayasu, 2016).

The zoning policy in Indonesian education was initially implemented in 2017 and later legitimized in 2018 through Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 14 of 2018. This regulation governs the admission of new students in kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, vocational high school, or equivalent forms of education. The policy essentially divides schools in Indonesia into several zones to achieve two main objectives: to enhance equity and fairness in accessing education and to improve the equitable distribution of the quality of educational services. This new policy actually has the same aim with the previous educational policies in Indonesia, that is educational improvement (Imron, 2012; Mustiningsih, 2014; Mustiningsih & Kusumaningrum, 2018). The regulation was later revised and refined through Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 51 of 2018. In its implementation, the zoning policy adheres to five principles: non-discriminatory, objective, transparent, accountable, and fair (Hartanto, 2022; Indartak et al., 2021; Pradita, 2020; Putri, 2022; Raharjo et al., 2021).

However, some research findings indicate that the zoning policy has not been able to ensure school availability for students, even if they reside near a school located in a specific zoning area. This fact was also detected by the Policy Research Center of the Ministry of Education and Culture through the evaluation of the zoning policy in 2020. The report states that students living near a school in each zone are not guaranteed access to enroll in that particular school. Some reports also highlight instances of students in various regions of Indonesia facing difficulties in finding schools in the new academic year. Therefore, the researcher conducted a Systematic Literature Review to examine the challenges faced by the zoning policy in ensuring school availability for students and to analyze its impact. This study is also based on the successful implementation of the School Zoning System in Japan, distinguishing it from previous articles. It is hoped that through this research, the researcher can present facts and recommendations that will assist the government and relevant stakeholders in implementing zoning policies. This is crucial to ensure the sustainability of a zoning system that not only equalizes the quality of education but also provides equal access to education for all students in Indonesia (Martin, 2020; Muhammad Aras Alfarizi, Kaharuddin, 2023; Said et al., 2023; Wandra et al., 2021; Winansih et al., 2020).

Method

In this study, the researcher employed the Systematic Literature Review method. The selection of this method is due to its relatively high academic value compared to other methods, as it combines findings from experts on similar topics. The utilization of this method begins with collecting literature containing field research results, which are then summarized and analyzed to address the researcher's questions. In this study, there are three questions that the researcher aims to answer: (1) what challenges are faced in implementing zoning policies that ensure school availability for students; (2) what are the impacts of these challenges; and (3) what are the appropriate solutions based on the School Zoning System implemented in Japan. The Systematic Literature Review method applied in this research follows the Preferred Reporting Issues for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Burke et al., 2023; Fan et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2023).

The electronic database used to trace relevant literature is openknowledgemaps (BASE: All Disciplines). Several keywords and phrases were employed in the search, including "Zoning Policy", "Zoning in Indonesia", "Implementation of Zoning Policy in Indonesia", "Challenges of Zoning Policy", "Impacts of Zoning Policy", and "Educational Accessibility in Zoning Policy". The analysis process was then confined to literature produced between 2019 and 2023, resulting in a total of 277 journal articles. Subsequently, these articles were filtered based on duplication criteria and non-journal literature. Additionally, the articles were selected based on several criteria: (1) the research was conducted in Indonesia; (2) the research was carried out directly in the field with a qualitative or quantitative approach; and (3) the article discussed the implementation of zoning policy in Indonesia to ensure educational accessibility for students, primarily focusing on the challenges and impacts produced. (Alase, 2017; Ilma et al., 2022; Sun & Lim, 2023). Figure 1 will illustrate how the journal selection process is conducted by the researcher.

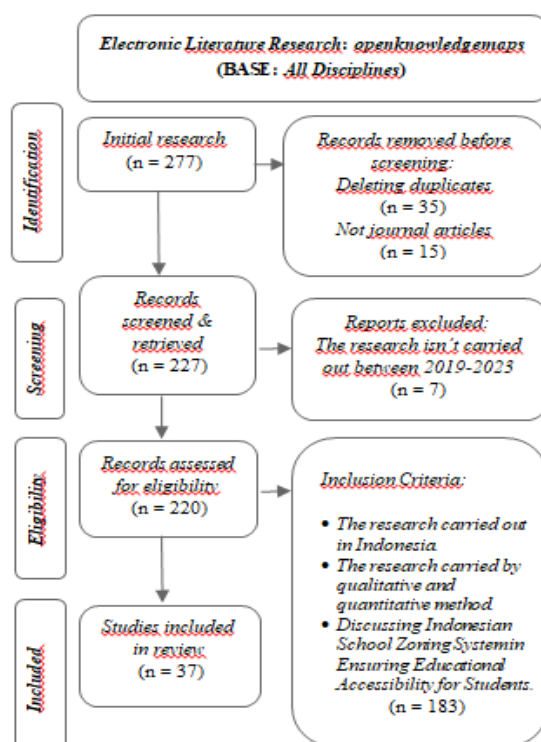


Figure 1. The selection process of journals

Results

The implementation of zoning policies in Indonesian education faces several challenges, primarily in ensuring school availability for students. These challenges stem not only from external factors such as societal conditions and policy changes but also from internal factors. In 2019, the government made amendments to the regulations regarding zoning through Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 44 of 2019, altering the percentage of students accepted through zoning from the initial 80% to 50%. This decision aimed to address concerns in schools regarding heterogeneous student input during the Student Admission System (PPDB) and complaints from parents who wanted their children to attend schools that were previously dubbed as favorites (Imron, 2016; Kusumaningrum et al., 2019). Hence, the government increased the chances of student acceptance through other channels. This is one of the conditions posing challenges for the government in implementing zoning policies that reflect the principles of fairness. The following will further discuss the challenges currently faced by the government, preventing the effective implementation of zoning policies to ensure equitable school availability for students (Anggraeni et al., 2022; Asmendri & Hendris, 2022; Hubaib & Biantary, 2022; Ishak et al., 2022; Tan & Hadiyanto, 2021; Yasmin, 2023).

The first challenge is the imbalance between the number of available schools in a zone and the number of students needing schools. This results in the predetermined capacity of each school being unable to accommodate all students residing in that zone. This issue frequently occurs in urban areas where the educational infrastructure struggles to adapt to the rapidly changing demographic trends. Another challenge is the inflexibility of the zoning system in responding to social dynamics and educational needs within the local community. Insufficient public awareness of the zoning policy mechanisms among the community and parents has led some parents to resort to any means necessary for their children to become students at schools labeled as "favorite schools." As a consequence, various forms of cheating can occur at any time, posing a threat to the rights of students living close to the school, including through the falsification of Family Cards (KK). This situation makes it difficult for students who should have priority access to education in a specific zone to receive suitable education according to their place of residence (Aini & Wicaksono, 2020; Nurlaili & Fauzi, 2020; Pusvitaningrum, 2020; Rohmatillah et al., 2021; Sari & Arisanti, 2020; Setiawati & Rahaju, 2021).

The third challenge arises from a lack of coordination among relevant parties, such as local governments, schools, and the community. In Indonesia, zoning policies are complex and significantly alter the fundamental mechanisms of the New Student Admission System (PPDB) that existed previously. Consequently, complex

bureaucracy, ambiguous policies, and ineffective communication result in information disparities among the involved parties. Even though the government has conducted numerous awareness campaigns, it is crucial to reevaluate whether the dissemination of this information applies communication patterns easily understood by non-governmental stakeholders. Persistent information disparities can lead to ambiguity in the student admission process, making it difficult for students who should have priority access to education in specific zones. The final challenge is the lack of transparency in the PPDB process through the zoning system. Unclear and inaccessible information creates uncertainty and misunderstanding, especially for parents who want to ensure that their children can attend schools in their residential zones (Arif, 2020; Haryanti et al., 2020; Megawati, 2021; Rizky Hanifah, 2019; Susiwati et al., 2021).

The challenges mentioned in the previous paragraphs have significant impacts on the availability of schools for students. One major impact of the zoning policy's inability to ensure school availability for students is educational access inequality. Students residing in zones with limited school capacities often become victims of this policy. Consequently, there is uncertainty for students and families in securing a place at a school located in the same zone as their residence. Furthermore, there are psychological impacts on students who struggle to obtain a school in line with their residential zone. The complex selection process and uncertainty in student placement can create stress and anxiety for students and parents. If left unaddressed over an extended period, this can negatively impact students' motivation and mental well-being, leading to a decline in academic performance and achievements (Anisa et al., 2021; Dewi, 2021; Eres, 2022; Fadhly & Muhammad, 2021; Safari, 2020; Setiawan & Usman, 2022; Sihombing & Hadita, 2021).

Potential subsequent impacts arising from zoning policies that fail to ensure school availability for students include an overall decline in the quality of education. Forcing limited-capacity schools to accommodate all students residing in a particular zone will increase the number of students per class. A high number of students in one class implies a lack of interaction between teachers and students, leading to a decline in teaching quality (Bafadal et al., 2019, 2020; Nurabadi et al., 2020). If these negative impacts persist in the long term, they can affect students' academic achievements and the overall quality of education received. In addition to the direct impacts on students, the inability of zoning policies to ensure school availability can also harm society. Disparities in educational access create social and economic inequalities, where certain groups find it more challenging to access quality education (Sumarsono et al., 2019; Ulfatin et al., 2022). This reinforces long-term cycles of poverty and inequality. The inability of zoning policies to ensure school availability for students brings about impacts that are not only individual but also systemic, affecting community development on a massive and comprehensive scale. Therefore, holistic and sustainable solutions are needed to address these challenges. Here are some recommendations from the researcher based on the zoning system implemented in Japanese education (Alfian, 2019; Hidayati et al., 2021; Kristanti & Febrianto, 2021; Ningrum et al., 2022; Prestoroika et al., 2022; Rahmi & Zulham, 2022; Sirojudin et al., 2020).

Discussion

The School Zoning System in Japan implements a careful and structured mechanism to ensure an even distribution of students across all schools. This system begins with demographic analysis by local governments, considering population growth, migration, and changes in social structure in each region. Based on the results of this analysis, school zones are determined with the aim of meeting the needs of students in each area. This process is not solely the responsibility of local governments but also involves active participation from schools, parents, and the local community. Regular meetings are held to discuss demographic changes, evaluate the performance of zoning policies, and provide opportunities for all stakeholders to engage in dialogue and exchange ideas. Transparency in the student admission process is a crucial focus of the School Zoning System in Japan. Selection criteria and student admission procedures are openly announced, and each school is authorized to provide clear information about the implementation of zoning policies and how decisions are made. This aims to prevent uncertainty and build public trust in the fair and honest implementation of zoning policies (Butler, 2007; Gavari-Starkie et al., 2021; Ishii, 1995; Reimers, 2020). Furthermore, the School Zoning System in Japan is also flexible and dynamic. Local governments periodically evaluate the implementation of zoning policies, taking into account demographic changes and educational needs.

If necessary, the government revises school zones to ensure that the policies remain relevant and effective in addressing evolving challenges. Ongoing dialogue among local governments, schools, and the community helps ensure that the School Zoning System reflects the aspirations and needs of the local population. This system is complemented by effective monitoring and performance evaluation, including community satisfaction levels and the equitable distribution of students. Through these mechanisms, the School Zoning System in Japan

serves as inspiration for other countries, including Indonesia, to develop zoning systems that are responsive, inclusive, and aligned with the needs of communities in each region (Carpenter, 2020; Mustary, 2018; Ohtani, 2011; Takeshita & Imai, 2020).

The first solution adopted from the School Zoning System in Japan and applicable to Indonesia is the improvement of school capacity and flexibility in the zoning system. As discussed in the previous paragraphs, the zoning system in Japan focuses on developing infrastructure capable of accommodating population growth to ensure that school capacity meets the needs of students in each zone. This approach can address the imbalance between the number of students and school capacity and create a more inclusive educational environment. Flexibility in the School Zoning System in Japan allows for dynamic adjustments to demographic changes or local needs. This system considers population growth, migration, and changes in social structure to adapt school zones. If the zoning system in Indonesia also emphasizes flexibility, it can create a more responsive and adaptive mechanism, minimizing challenges in student placement and reducing disparities between school capacity and the number of students (Arai, 2019; Kagawa et al., 2017; Saito, 2020; Semuels, 2017).

The next solution is the need for effective coordination among local governments, schools, and the community in implementing the zoning system in education. Good communication and close coordination help ensure that all parties involved in the zoning policy mechanism have a common and aligned understanding. If implemented correctly, this solution can encourage all stakeholders to work cooperatively in providing equitable and quality educational access for all students. Finally, another solution that can be adopted from the School Zoning System in Japan is the improvement of transparency in the student admission process. The community must have clear information about the selection criteria and student admission procedures. This can prevent misunderstandings and uncertainties, reassuring parents and students that the selection process is fair and transparent. Through the continuous application of the principles of the Japanese School Zoning System, Indonesia can gradually overcome the challenges present in the implementation of zoning policies in the education sector (Ishii, 2022; OECD, 2018; Yamamoto et al., 2016; Zinck, 2017).

Conclusion

The implementation of zoning policies in Indonesian education faces several complex challenges, particularly in ensuring school availability for students. These challenges involve internal and external factors, including policy changes and the imbalance between the number of schools and students in a zone. Despite government efforts to improve zoning policies through rule revisions in 2019, such as altering the percentage of students accepted through zoning, some challenges persist. One primary challenge is the imbalance between school capacity and the number of students in a zone, especially in urban areas. Educational infrastructure in some regions cannot adapt to rapid demographic growth, causing difficulties for some students in securing a school in their residential zone. Additionally, the lack of flexibility in the zoning system and insufficient coordination among relevant parties, such as local governments, schools, and the community, hinder the effective implementation of zoning policies. The complex selection process and inadequate socialization of zoning policy mechanisms lead some parents to seek ways to ensure their children's acceptance into preferred schools, even through dishonest means. Finally, the lack of transparency in the New Student Admission (PPDB) process through the zoning system creates uncertainty and misunderstanding among the public.

These challenges have already resulted in several negative impacts, such as unequal access to education, psychological effects on students struggling to find schools within their zones, and an overall decline in education quality. These consequences necessitate collaborative efforts from the government, schools, and the community. If left unaddressed in the long term, these negative effects may lead to social and economic disparities that reinforce cycles of poverty and inequality. Drawing insights from the successful implementation of the School Zoning System in Japan, several solutions can be adopted to address these challenges. These include improving school capacity, flexibility in the zoning system, effective coordination among stakeholders, and enhancing transparency in the student admission process. Through benchmarking against the mechanisms of the School Zoning System in Japan, Indonesia can create a more adaptive, participatory, and transparent implementation of the zoning system.

Recommendations

In light of the complex challenges facing the implementation of zoning policies in Indonesian education, it is crucial for stakeholders to collaborate and implement strategic solutions to mitigate negative impacts and

improve overall education quality. Firstly, there is a need to address the imbalance between school capacity and student numbers, especially in urban areas, by investing in educational infrastructure and facilities to accommodate growing populations. Flexibility in the zoning system, such as allowing for cross-zone school placements based on availability and student needs, can also alleviate the pressure on limited school spaces. Moreover, enhancing coordination among local governments, schools, and the community is essential to ensure a cohesive and efficient implementation of zoning policies. This includes regular communication, joint planning, and shared responsibility in addressing challenges and finding sustainable solutions. Additionally, increasing transparency in the New Student Admission (PPDB) process through comprehensive socialization and clear guidelines can foster trust and understanding among the public, reducing the likelihood of dishonest practices. By learning from successful models like the School Zoning System in Japan and implementing tailored strategies, Indonesia can enhance the effectiveness and fairness of its zoning policies, ultimately improving access to quality education for all students and fostering social equity and development.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

* The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the authors.

* This article adheres to the principles of scientific integrity, transparency, and responsible conduct of research. All research methodologies, data collection processes, and analytical procedures have been conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines and standards. The authors affirm that the research has been conducted honestly, without fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism. Informed consent has been obtained from participants, and their confidentiality and privacy have been protected. Any potential conflicts of interest have been disclosed. The authors are committed to upholding the highest standards of ethics in scientific research and reporting, ensuring the validity, reliability, and ethicality of the findings presented in this article.

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