



FAN-IITTS PUBLICATION
Alor, Flores, Lembata, Rote, Sabu, Sumba, Timor

**Journal of
NTT
Studies**

Journal of NTT Studies
1 (1) (2009) 16-27
ISSN: 20856504

Open Access

The Implementation of School-Based Management in Indonesia: Creating conflicts in regional levels

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Received accepted, Final version accepted 20 December 2008

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Permanent link of this article: <http://ntt-academia.org/nttstudies/Bandur-2009.pdf>

The Interdisciplinary Journal of NTT Development Studies - An International Bilingual Journal

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Abstract

School-Based Management (SBM) has become the most prominent feature of public school management systems in most countries around the world. In Indonesia, the Central Government established a Commission of National Education (*Komisi Nasional Pendidikan*) in February 2001 on the basis of Law 22/1999 by which education was decentralized. The Commission recommended the formation of school councils at the school level to improve quality of national education. The Government then embarked on the formation of school councils in Western Sumatera, Eastern Java, and Bali. On the basis of these trials, the councils were considered strategic in promoting democratic principles in schools, creating higher levels of parental participation in school governance, and improving the quality of national education. For these reasons, in 2002 and 2004, the Government provided a set of guidelines to establish mandatory corporate governing body type school councils in accordance with the Law 22/1999, the Commission and Education Act 20/2003. With the turn of the 21st Century, all Indonesian public schools have implemented SBM. This paper reports how the implementation of SBM in Indonesia has created conflicts in regional levels, particularly between the regional governments and school stakeholders.

Key words – School-based management, school councils, Flores

1. Introduction

Attempts to strike a right balance between centralization and decentralization of educational provisions has become one of the most significant policy issues in current education reforms (Gamage, 2008, 2006a, 1996a, 1993a; Ranson, 2008; Bangay, 2005; Gamage & Zajda, 2005b; Hawkins, 2000; Caldwell, 1998d, 1990). In particular, Gamage (1996a) asserts that any comprehensive examination of SBM is incomplete unless the underlying tensions associated with decentralization and centralization which has occurred roughly at the same time is considered together. This can lead to the perception that ultimate aim of decentralization in educational policy issues was to develop an effective teaching and learning environment.

This paper aims primarily at describing how the implementation of SBM policies and programs in Indonesia has created conflicts and misunderstanding, not just between the regional governments and school stakeholders, but also within the school stakeholders themselves. This paper, then first of all, provides the theoretical concepts of School-Based Management on the basis of research findings from many countries across the globe, including Australia, New Zealand, England and Wales, and the USA. Then, it provides the developments of School-Based Management (SBM) in Indonesia since the turn of the 21st Century. Furthermore, the paper presents the research findings on how the implementation of SBM has created conflicts, followed by conclusions and recommendations.

Indonesian SBM Reforms since the turn of the 21st Century

Why did Indonesia implement SBM?

The implementation of SBM was triggered by the fact that Indonesian educational stakeholders have been struggling with the quality of national education over the last two decades leading to the financial crisis in 1997, which created severe economic and social problems (Nurkolis, 2005; Mulyasa, 2004; Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2001). For these reasons, the Indonesian Ministry of National Education appointed a *Komisi Nasional Pendidikan (KNP)* or Commission of National Education in February 2001. The KNP worked until December 2001 with responsibilities to: (1) formulate policy recommendations to have a better quality education; (2) provide inputs to government about educational decentralization. It was expected that the work of this Commission would become a basis from which to comprehensively reform the Indonesian education. One of the recommendations of the KNP was to develop educational councils at the district level and school councils at the school level.

Developments in Mandatory School Councils

Developing educational and school councils was one of the educational decentralization policies, aimed at devolving power and authority from central government to district governments and schools, resulting in improvements of democratic principles, community participation, equity, as well as accommodation of diverse local interests and needs (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2001: 26). It was believed that local communities are the ones who understand their own problems and needs better and decide to provide them with greater roles and responsibilities in terms of operational decision making on national education policies. For this purpose, the central government embarked on the formation of educational and school councils in each district of Western Sumatera, Eastern Java, and Bali. On the basis of these trials, the councils were considered strategic in coping with improving the quality of Indonesian national education.

Then, the Government issued a set of guidelines in relation to the implementation of SBM in 2002 for the purpose of establishing mandatory corporate governing body type school councils as described below:

This concrete one-sidedness requires to be channelled politically to become collective action placed by Educational Council located in the district/city and School Council at the level of educational unit” (Guideline of Indonesian Ministry of National Education, 2002: 1).

Further, the Education Act 20/2003 on National Education System strengthened the formation of school councils. In accordance with the involvement of local communities in achieving better quality education, Article 56 of the Act provides that the community members are required to participate in improving the quality of education. In this case, the educational council and school council represent the community, as stated:

Community shall take part in the quality improvement of educational services, which include planning, monitoring, and evaluation of educational programs through the Educational Council and School Council (Education Act 20/2003, article, 56).

On the basis of the Act, Government regulated the power and authority vested in the school councils, as well as characteristics and formation, membership and structure of a school council.

Power and Authority Vested in School Councils

The Education Act 20/2003 defines a school council as an independent body established to provide advice, directions and support for personnel, facilities and equipment, and monitoring of a school (Article 56). The power and authority of a school council relate to the four major roles of a school council, which are: to be an advisory agency in determining and/or approving educational policies at the school level; to be a supporting agency in supporting the school both in financial and non-financial matters; to be a controlling agency for the purpose of transparency and accountability at school level; and to be a mediator between school, government, and community (Ministry of National Education, 2002).

Accordingly, in line with the guidelines of the Ministry of National Education issued in 2002 and 2004 and Education Act No.20/2003, each Indonesian school council is empowered to:

- formulate and approve the school policies; formulate and approve the school’s mission and vision;
- formulate and approve annual school programs including annual school budget;
- design strategic planning for school development;
- determine learning standards in the school;
- decide on the provision of incentives to the principal, teachers, and administrative staff;
- develop school potential factors for increasing student achievements both academic (school examinations) and non-academic (religious life, sports, arts, skills which are appropriate to school environment such as agricultural skills, weaving skills, and simple technology);
- raise school funds for the purpose of financing the school;
- mobilize school resources both financial and non-financial (human power for school building and facilities, ideas and recommendations);
- encourage more participation of school stakeholders in formulating, implementing, and monitoring school policies;
- create a transparent, accountable, and democratic atmosphere in the school for the purposes of quality education in the school;

- respond to the national and local curriculum requirements;
- coordinate networks and partnerships between school and external organizations for improving educational processes and outcomes;
- identify and solve school problems; and
- evaluate school policies and programs including the control of using school buildings and facilities as well as school grants.

Characteristics and Formation of a School Council

The main characteristic of the Indonesian school councils is independent and they do not have hierarchical relationships with the governments, while the principles of forming school councils should be transparent, accountable, and democratic (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2004, 2002).

Many approaches are taken by schools in forming their governing bodies. However, central government proposed a mechanism for this process. First, a school needs to form a committee. This committee should comprise of a minimum of five members comprising of educational practitioners, i.e. the principal, representatives of teachers, parents, educational foundations, and community representatives (NGOs, local authority, a public figure, and religious leaders, businessmen). Then, this committee should prepare and facilitate the election of school council membership. At this stage, the committee should take the following steps:

- Informing community members about the need to form a school council;
- Determining the criterion for the election of school council members and identifying candidates based on the inspiration of the community;
- Selecting candidates based on the community's aspirations;
- Announcing the names of candidates to the community;
- Arranging names of the selected school council members;
- Facilitating election of council executives, standing committees, and members;
- Reporting the membership of the elected school council to the principal.

Membership and Structure of School Councils

When SBM was adopted, the central government decided on the structure and composition of the councils. However, each school itself was given the authority to decide the size of the council based on their school size. On the basis of the Guidelines issued by the Ministry of National Education (2004), each school has to elect a school council with a minimum of nine members depending on the size of the school. The membership of a school council should comprise of representatives of community, principal, teachers, school foundations, and local governments. The community representatives should consist of: (1) parents; (2) public figures, (3) educational experts; (4) industries or businesses; (5) professional organisation of teachers; (6) representatives of alumni; and (7) representatives of students. Apart from electing and/or nominating a maximum of three representatives only from teachers, school foundations, and Advisory Body for the Village Governance (*Badan Pertimbangan Desa*), there is no limitation of the total number elected from the representatives of the community members.

Each school council has the authority to elect school council executive and standing committees. The council executive of each school council consists of at least the Council President, Secretary, and Treasurer. It is ruled out that a school principal can not be elected as the Council President, while the executive members and standing committees are elected from and by school council members. Depending on the need of the schools, the standing committees of the school councils can be elected for: 1) Finance, 2) School Quality Control, 3) Partnership Networks and Information System, and 4) Buildings and School Facilities.

Research on School-Based Management (SBM) in Indonesia is very limited. However, Caldwell (2005: 9) reports that the implementation of SBM in Indonesia has led to improvements in student achievements. He clarifies that dramatic improvements in student achievements were evident within twelve months after the implementation of SBM policies, including the provision of a small budget to each of the 79 schools to conduct professional development programs for teachers, and to engage in community development to encourage parents supporting their schools.

Yuwono (2005) also conducted a research on how did SBM policies and programs impact in the teaching of English aiming at linking the SBM and the schools' English language programs. On the basis of perceptions of principals and English language teachers from six secondary schools within Salatiga municipality, she found that SBM was one of the reforms to improve teaching-learning English in Indonesia. However, some problems were confronted by private schools whose school resources were poor, including lack of funding and support from school stakeholders.

More recently, Bengoteku and Hayward (2007) have argued that SBM is working well in Indonesia. They affirm that the Indonesian government's cooperation with the USAID, UNICEF, the World Bank and other bilateral/multilateral organizations and projects demonstrates that SBM approach does improve the quality of education and makes schools better places for children.

2. Methodology and Research Design

The research methodology in the study included both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of research, comprising an extensive empirical survey followed by semi-structured and focused group interviews and examination of relevant documents. In particular, the data gathered from the empirical survey were analysed using SPSS, while interviews and other documents were analysed using NVivo.

Sampling Design and Sample Size

For the purpose of both quantitative and qualitative data analyses, this study used probability (systematic random) sampling and non-probability (purposive) sampling. These sampling techniques were employed based on the requirements of a good sampling design: (1) goal orientation, (2) measurability, (3) practicality, and (4) economy (Kish, 1965, cited in Wiersma & Jurs, 2005: 302). The first criterion, goal orientation, means that the sampling design should be based on the study's goals and objectives. The second criterion means that the sampling design provides the data for the necessary analysis. The third criterion, practicality, means that the actual activities of applying the sampling design have been identified and are feasible in the real situation. The criterion of economy that the sampling design is met with available resources: time, financial, personnel, and any other necessary resources.

For the purposes identified above, the researcher obtained the list of primary schools in Ngada District Department of Education. The school list was categorized by the government officials according to the school names, locations, addresses, and status of each school. The school status refers to the two categories of the school, namely, *sekolah inti* (or core schools) and *sekolah imbas* (satellite schools). A sample of 42 schools was then randomly selected from 287 schools located both in urban towns and rural

areas. With respect to sample size for quantitative analysis, 675 questionnaires were delivered to 42 schools. Seventy-five percent of the questionnaires were returned (N = 504). In addition to the empirical survey, 42 interviews were conducted with different categories of school stakeholders.

Instruments

The questionnaire developed by Gamage (1996a) was adapted with appropriate modification to determine the perceptions of the participants on the current developments of school councils, power and authority vested in school councils for decision-making processes, impacts of SBM programs in creating higher participation of school stakeholders and school culture changes, as well as opinions on improvements of teaching learning environment and student achievements. The questions were mostly of the multiple-choice items and Likert-type scales with open-ended questions in relevant areas.

The instrument was then refined further with a pre-test after approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Newcastle. For this purpose, the questionnaires were distributed to 30 educators, representing school council member categories, including: primary school principals, primary and secondary school teachers and lecturers, and representatives of District Education Department. They were given opportunities to provide general comments and/or inputs on the clarity, ambiguities and difficulties on understanding the items. The results of the pre-testing indicate that the questionnaire items provide clear information about issues and problems related to SBM programs and convey a clear meaning. However, most of them suggested that some words need to be simplified, for example, the word *bujet* which was translated from English word, *budget*. The other word needed to be clarified was *stakeholder sekolah*, translated from English phrase *school stakeholders*.

The questionnaire was again further refined and finalized after a pilot study. The pilot study not just provided the opportunity to identify confusing and ambiguous language, but also to obtain information about possible patterns of results (Wiersma and Jurs, 2000; Mertens, 2005). The pilot study was conducted in seven primary schools comprising of urban and rural schools in two districts (Western Manggarai and Manggarai) of Flores. A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed to the schools that agreed to take part in completing the questionnaire and 155 questionnaires were completed and returned.

Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

Considering that the items used were adapted from questionnaires previously validated in early research (Gamage & Sooksomchitra, 2004; Gamage, 1996a), no attempt was made to measure the reliability and validity of the items. It was assumed that the questionnaire items used constitute a valid tool for measuring the variables. However, other items related to processes of school council formation, current composition of school councils, and overall functioning of school councils were measured using the factor analysis and coefficient alpha (also known as Cronbach's Alpha). In this study, the values of coefficient alpha ranged from .75 to .84, indicating an acceptable and good reliability (Gregory, 2000 cited in Manning & Munro, 2006).

The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is a type of Factor Analysis which is used to explore the possibility of a factor structure underlying the variables (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2006). Manning and Munro (2006: 159) explain the usefulness of PCA to measure the validity of variables. In the context of quantitative research, validity is simply defined as "the degree to which it measures what it claims to measure" (Manning & Munro, 2006; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005; Pallant, 2005; Best & Kahn, 1998).

On the basis of the Principal Component Analysis (PCA), the results of pilot study demonstrate that the factor loadings ranged from .732 to .787. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .640 with the Barlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at less than .05, indicating an acceptable factorability. However, after the revision of item variables, the results of factorability in the main study were higher. The results of data analysis demonstrate that the factor loadings ranged from .779 to .883. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of Sampling Adequacy was .682 with Barlett's Test of Sphericity $p = .000$, indicating a good factorability (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2006: 318).

Reliability and validity in Qualitative Research

In terms of validity and reliability in qualitative approach, Best and Kahn (1998: 322) affirm that validity is greater when the interview is based on a carefully designed structure, thus ensuring that the significant information is elicited (content validity). They also point out that reliability or the consistency of responses may be evaluated by restating a question in a slightly different form at a later time in the interview. Repeating the interview at another time may provide another estimate of consistency of response. With regard to sustaining validity in this study, a semi-structured interview schedule was designed in order to guide and/or direct the researcher in conducting interviews for eliciting relevant information on the basis of the objectives of the study. In terms of keeping consistent responses of the study, the researcher raised some open-ended questions which covered general contents investigated in the study.

However, the validity in qualitative research is then always confronted by validity threats as particular events or processes that can lead to invalid conclusions such as inaccuracy or incompleteness in the way of describing what was seen and heard (Maxwell, 1996: 89). He assumes that if the description of what the researcher was observing or of the interview conducted is invalid, then any interpretations and conclusions drawn from these descriptions are questionable. Researcher bias and reactivity are two other specific validity threats in qualitative research. Maxwell (1996: 90) points out that a researcher needs to consider the selection of data that fit the researcher's existing theory or preconceptions and the selection of data that stand out to the researcher. The reactivity refers to the influence of the researcher on the setting or individual studied.

In order to prevent such threats in this study, the researcher selectively applied appropriate instruments as suggested by Maxwell (1996: 91). He has underlined that appropriate choice of using instruments should be considered in order that such threats are prevented. For this purpose, he clarifies that recording tools of interviews and transcription stages of these recordings are important to support valid research. Other strategies are triangulation, feedback, member checks, and comparison (Maxwell, 1996: 93). Triangulation refers to the collection of information from a diverse range of individuals and settings using a variety of methods in order to reduce risk of systematic biases due to specific method.

In the context of this study, a small brand-new audio-tape recording tool was used not just to record the interview properly, but also to easily carry the instrument conveniently. Audiovisual recording was also used to record live events and activities which were relevant to the study, for example, events which showed a higher level of community participation in a school building, selection of school council members, and even school culture changes in schools. Other relevant documents, including guidelines in the implementation of SBM designed by SBM advisors of the Nusa Tenggara Timur Primary Education Partnership (NTT-PEP) and final examination results from 2000 until 2006 were collected.

3. Research Findings

Research findings in terms of the conflicts faced by the school stakeholders were gathered from the qualitative data findings of the study. A female principal reported about the conflict of interests between the District Education Department and her school in terms of decision-making authority relating to textbook selection. The decision-making authority for selecting school textbooks was given to the school by the central government to select textbooks from any publisher who has the approval of the Education Minister. However, two principals referred to instances where the District Education Department interfered:

School council has provided input and control of textbooks to the school and actively participated in decision-making in annual planning for new school buildings, school building renovations, and textbooks. But the District Education Department has approached us, asking to sign the form they have made in order to approve a particular publisher dropping books to the school. Then we refused that and approached the school council to hold a meeting and we decided to determine ourselves a publisher to provide quality books for us (Principal, W15).

Two principals in this study found that there had been a lack of coordination in decision-making between the president of the school council and the principal. In this case, the school council president made decisions with regard to grant proposals for external funding without coordinating it with the school principal. Two principals stated:

I don't find any major difficulties, but there are always problems in terms of difficulties of coordination and clarity of roles. A couple of times our head of the school council made grant proposals without consulting me. This is certainly not a good practice as no single authority figure can take decisions in school matters (Principal, W10).

Moreover, six teacher representatives complained about the intervention of District Education Department in terms of decision-making in selecting school text books. In connection with this case, a teacher representative commented:

In practice, local government officials have taken over decision-making authority which is supposed to be made by the school. I refer particularly to how the school text books are dropped by the local education department, whereas the block grant for books has been allocated directly to the school bank account from the central government. I think this is still a problem (Teacher representative, W05).

We finally received math textbooks from the District Education Department after a long argument because the decision for distributing the books was without the approval from the school council. When the teachers counted the books, the total books were double than what was needed by 26 students. We did not need such books and the books were supposed to be distributed or given to other schools (Teacher representative, W08).

Six teachers also reported that there had been a problem relating to the lack of clarity of power and authority between school and district government. In relation to this case, a teacher representative stated:

Again, the government may think that they have absolute power and authority. I think they are the people who need more training on SBM, not just provide training for school principals. Other challenge is that how to create strong collaborative work-practices to create better quality schools (Teacher representative, W06).

The qualitative data above indicate that even though all respondents agreed that the new Indonesian SBM policy is what Flores primary schools needed to change school environments and improve student achievements, there are problems and challenges that emerged since the implementation of SBM. One of the major problems is due to the conflict of interest between schools, district and provincial governments. For instance, as indicated at the interviews, 36 out of 42 respondents (85.7%) claimed that District Education Department officials have tried to hold up particular decisions, particularly in the areas of textbook selection. Moreover, eight (8) out of 14 school principals (57.14%) reported that Provincial Education Department officials also insisted the school principals to share the grants allocated by the central government.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, reforms in public education with the successful implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) have brought about significant improvements in schools. In Indonesia, the implementation of SBM since the turn of the 21st Century has been a strategic reform adopted as a vehicle for school improvements. However, despite somewhat successful outcomes of the SBM initiative, the problems and challenges faced by the school leaders and school council members were unavoidable. The qualitative data analyses of the study demonstrate that the school council members such as principals and representatives of teachers confronted some problems with particular reference to decision-making authority in terms of the determination of text books and expenditure of the block grants.

This paper suggest that the implementation of SBM in Indonesia and particularly in East Nusa Tenggara requires intensive training and workshops on SBM, school leadership, managerial practices, and professional development. The training and workshops need to involve all relevant stakeholders including government officials and school stakeholders. In a more technical practice, local governments need to provide relevant materials on SBM on the basis of research and public seminars and/or workshops.

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