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Central Government Political Intervention in the Implementation of Educational Autonomy in Indonesia

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Abstract
This study critically examines the political intervention of the central government in Indonesia's educational autonomy, focusing on the frequent changes in the national curriculum. Education, seen as a fundamental asset in fostering national potential, should be developed in a decentralized manner, allowing educational institutions the freedom to adapt to modern demands. However, the Indonesian government's use of the National Education System Law as a political tool has resulted in centralized policy enforcement, particularly in curriculum design, which often disregards regional needs. This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing document analysis of legislative texts, historical records, and government policies to investigate the political influence on curriculum changes from 1947 to 2022. The findings show that the curriculum has been revised 11 times under political pressure, with both positive and negative outcomes. On the positive side, the curriculum updates ensure that students receive contemporary knowledge, but on the negative side, the frequent changes have caused confusion among teachers, negatively impacting student performance. This study highlights the complexity of political intervention in education and its implications for teaching and learning in Indonesia.

Keywords: Policy, Educational Politics, Curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human necessity, comparable to other basic needs. In response, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia has laid the foundation for national education, as mandated by the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945) and its subsequent amendments. Despite this, several significant issues have arisen in recent years, including low-quality and irrelevant education, weaknesses in management, and a decline in scientific and technological

independence and excellence among academic institutions. Moreover, there is a stark imbalance between educational processes and institutions in the regions and those governed centrally, resulting in disparities in equitable access to education (Ismoyo et al., 2022).

The centralized management of education is a key factor contributing to these challenges. Indonesia, as a vast archipelagic nation with hundreds of islands and thousands of ethnic groups, faces significant differences in geography, demographics, income levels, and educational needs. Consequently, the centralized governance of national education has undermined democracy, independence, and educational autonomy. Centralized management often leads to the implementation of uniform policies that fail to address the diverse needs and interests of schools and regional communities. This lack of adaptability hinders community participation in education, fosters a strong dependency of educational institutions on the central government, and results in rigid administrative processes as well as inefficiencies in educational fund allocation. While centralized education offers some benefits, such as ensuring national quality standards, it also has significant drawbacks (Tuti & Mufidayati, 2018; Zamjani, 2022).

Indonesian national education is built on the principles of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, integrating local, national, and international cultural, religious, and contemporary challenges. This diversity forms a cohesive educational system aimed at achieving national educational goals. Therefore, it is necessary to establish an education system based on philosophical, sociological, and psychological foundations, while also embracing advancements in science and technology (Bjork, 2004). Educational autonomy, or decentralization, is a strategic approach that allows for the formulation of new perspectives and goals at local, national, and global levels. This approach fosters unity, cohesion, and competitiveness in the workforce by considering regional circumstances. Implementing educational decentralization provides both local and central governments with opportunities to be more creative, innovative, and sustainable in managing educational institutions, aligning with local potential and needs. The objective is to cultivate an education-conscious society, enabling policies to be developed through self-management and tailored to regional contexts (Rosser, 2016).

This article critically examines several central government political policies that have the potential to hinder educational autonomy or decentralization. The study involves a comprehensive literature review of relevant sources, followed by an analysis of the political intervention in Indonesia's educational system. The scope of the study is limited to educational autonomy, political intervention in education, and government policies that undermine educational autonomy. Specific areas discussed include curriculum standardization, assessment standards, education funding, and teacher human resource management.

METHOD

This study employs the library research method, also known as literature or desk research, which involves gathering and analyzing data from existing literature on the research topic. The method comprises several key steps: first, the research problem is clearly defined to guide the direction of the study. This is crucial as it sets the scope and focus of the entire research process. A comprehensive literature search is then conducted, utilizing various academic databases such as JSTOR, PubMed, Google Scholar, as well as library catalogs and other electronic resources to find relevant books, journal articles, reports, and theses. Following the literature search, the researcher evaluates and selects the most credible and relevant sources, considering factors such as the source's reliability, relevance, and publication date to ensure up-to-date information. Detailed notes are taken during the review process, with information organized systematically by summarizing key points, important quotes, and categorizing the data into themes or subtopics.

Once the data is organized, it is analyzed to identify patterns, trends, and gaps in the existing literature, allowing for a synthesis of the information to form a coherent understanding of the topic. This step often involves comparing and contrasting different viewpoints and drawing connections between various sources. A critical evaluation of the literature is also conducted, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments and methodologies found in the sources, helping to build a robust foundation for the research. The findings are then compiled into a structured format, such as a research paper or review article, ensuring that the writing is clear, concise, and well-organized with proper citations and references to acknowledge the original sources. Finally, a comprehensive bibliography is created, listing all the sources used throughout the research process, which not only credits the original authors but also provides a resource for readers to explore further literature on the topic (Danandjaja, 2014; Zed, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Educational Autonomy

The concept of autonomy, derived from the Greek words "autos" (self) and "nomos" (law), refers to self-legislation or self-governance. Autonomy implies the ability of an entity to regulate itself independently. In the context of Indonesia, educational autonomy encompasses both the creation of laws and the capacity to manage educational systems independently, allowing institutions to adapt policies, curricula, and administrative processes to regional needs (Harahap, 2021). This decentralized approach contrasts with a centralized system, where the central government holds primary control. Educational autonomy fosters a more adaptive and contextually relevant system, encouraging local innovation while still adhering to national goals (Bjork, 2004).

Autonomy in education is synonymous with decentralization, in which the central government transfers certain powers to regional authorities. This enables regions to address their specific needs more comprehensively and equitably. Such decentralization aligns with Indonesia's fifth principle of *Pancasila*, which aims to create a just and prosperous society. Autonomy also extends to the education sector, referred to as "Educational Autonomy," which allows regions to govern their educational systems while still adhering to national standards and objectives (Rosser, 2016).

Educational autonomy operates on multiple levels, including individual and institutional decision-making regarding curriculum design, resource allocation, and administration. This decentralized approach promotes innovation at the local level while maintaining alignment with national educational standards. Additionally, technological advancements and increased competition have necessitated that educational institutions communicate effectively with the public to ensure awareness of their programs and policies (Diyanto et al., 2021).

While the concept of educational autonomy has been embraced in Indonesia, challenges remain. Central government policies continue to influence education at the regional level, reflecting both national and regional priorities. The quality of human resources and the ability to implement autonomy effectively are crucial to the success of this decentralized system (Tuti & Mufidayati, 2018). Furthermore, political intervention, both during and after the reform era, has shaped the educational landscape in Indonesia. For example, various presidents have introduced policies aimed at improving science and technology education, developing competency-based curricula, and promoting educational freedom, such as the "Merdeka Belajar" (Freedom to Learn) initiative (Zamjani, 2022).

Despite these efforts, centralized control persists, particularly in areas such as curriculum development, assessment standards, and teacher management. For instance, the curriculum has undergone numerous changes, with the central government continuing to regulate graduation requirements and educational standards. Although decentralization allows schools to develop their syllabi and assessments, central guidelines still dominate key aspects of the education system (Ismoyo et al., 2022).

Political Intervention in Education

Political intervention in education remains a significant challenge to achieving full educational autonomy. Following the implementation of regional autonomy, education has undergone substantial changes influenced by political pressures at both local and global levels. For example, post-reform policies mandated that 20% of the state budget be allocated to education, yet central government control remains evident in the standardization of curriculum and assessments (Tuti &

Mufidayati, 2018). Educational policies often focus on short-term solutions rather than addressing strategic, long-term improvements (Amirrachman et al., 2008).

One of the most prominent examples of political intervention is the standardization of curriculum. The government enforces uniform curricular policies through regulations, such as Government Regulation No. 17 of 2010 on the Management and Implementation of Education, which does not adequately account for regional diversity and needs. This uniformity leads to discrepancies in how education is delivered across different regions, particularly in schools with varying socio-cultural backgrounds (Sumpena et al., 2022).

Other areas of political intervention include assessment standards, where national examinations dictate the evaluation of student performance, often ignoring the specific conditions of individual schools. Standardization of educational processes, as mandated by Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005, also imposes significant challenges, particularly for private schools that struggle to meet national standards (Tuti & Mufidayati, 2018). Furthermore, centralized control over education funding limits schools' ability to allocate resources based on local needs.

The management of teacher resources also highlights the ongoing political control in education. Certification programs create a divide between certified and uncertified teachers, affecting their professional status and performance. Additionally, teacher management policies remain centrally controlled, limiting schools' ability to innovate in teaching methods and educational delivery (Zamjani, 2022).

Government Policies Restricting Educational Autonomy

Several government policies restrict the achievement of educational autonomy. These include curriculum standardization, centralized assessment standards, and rigid management of educational resources. The uniformity of curriculum policies often overlooks regional needs, and the national examination system imposes one-size-fits-all assessment criteria that may not reflect local conditions. Furthermore, centralized funding mechanisms hinder schools from effectively managing their resources. Teacher certification policies, which differentiate between certified and uncertified teachers, also contribute to disparities in educational quality (Amirrachman et al., 2008).

In conclusion, while Indonesia has embraced the concept of educational autonomy, significant political intervention continues to limit its full implementation. Centralized policies, particularly in curriculum development, assessment, and teacher management, restrict the ability of regional authorities and schools to innovate and tailor education to local needs. As Indonesia moves forward, greater collaboration between central and regional governments is essential to realizing the full potential of educational autonomy (Tuti & Mufidayati, 2018; Zamjani, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Educational autonomy is essential for improving the quality and standards of education to meet both local and global demands. The autonomy of educational institutions allows them to harness their potential within the diverse conditions of Indonesia. However, in practice, many strategic decisions that should fall under the purview of schools are often centralized, with the central government taking control. This centralization stems from political interventions that frequently encroach on technical aspects of educational management. As a result, schools are constrained by government policies and regulations, limiting their ability to innovate and respond to regional needs.

The political climate of a government significantly influences the education system, as education can be used as a political tool at various times. This politicization of education can disadvantage the public by restricting access to quality education. To counter this, strong, well-crafted educational policies are necessary to fulfill the goals of the nation's laws and foundational ideologies. These policies should aim to create quality, competitive, equitable, and prosperous individuals, in line with the broader aspirations of the Republic of Indonesia.

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