

Dynamics and Challenges of the Zoning-Based Student Admission: A Study on Student Opportunities Across Regions

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the dynamics of the zoning system in new student admissions (PPDB), analyzing the challenges faced and their impacts on educational opportunities for students in various regions. The PPDB zoning system aims to ensure a more equitable distribution of students based on their geographical location, as well as to reduce disparities in access to education. This study examines the challenges in implementing the zoning system, including public resistance, disparities in school quality, and logistical issues. Findings indicate that although the zoning system has the potential to improve educational accessibility, its implementation often encounters obstacles that may hinder its objectives. Additionally, this article evaluates the impact of the zoning system on students' educational opportunities. The analysis shows that the zoning system can enhance educational access for students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. However, disparities in educational quality across regions remain a significant issue, affecting the effectiveness of the system in creating equal educational opportunities. In conclusion, this article suggests the need for policy adjustments and implementation strategies to address existing challenges and maximize the positive impacts of the PPDB zoning system. This is expected to create more equitable and high-quality educational access across all regions. This study provides valuable insights for policymakers and education practitioners in developing a more effective and fair zoning system, contributing to the improvement of educational quality in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Dynamics and Challenges, Student Admission, Zoning System*



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INTRODUCTION

The New Student Admission System (PPDB) in Indonesia has undergone various changes, especially with the implementation of the zoning or cluster system. In this system, prospective students are required to register at schools located within a certain radius of their place of residence. This aims to reduce the educational gap between schools in urban and rural areas. This system aims to ensure equitable access to education by prioritizing prospective students residing near the school.

Zoning policies are seen as a solution to address two main educational issues, namely the equitable distribution of access and the quality of education. In essence, equitable education has two dimensions: justice and inclusion (Wandra, 2021). In line with that statement, the zoning system in the new student admission (PPDB) aims to create social justice in access to education. This system is designed so that every student has an equal opportunity to attend

schools located near their residences. Thus, zoning reduces educational disparities that often occur due to geographical and socio-economic differences.

The purpose of this article is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the challenges and impacts of the zoning system in the New Student Admission (PPDB). This article aims to identify the main issues arising from the implementation of zoning policies, as well as to examine their impact on student's educational opportunities in various regions. By analyzing these aspects, this article aims to provide comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of the zoning system and offer recommendations to improve equitable access and quality of education.

Thus, the PPDB using the zoning system plays a crucial role in creating a more just, inclusive, and adaptive education system to current challenges. Understanding and effective implementation of this system can bring significant positive impacts for the future of education, although many challenges and issues arise in its technical execution.

To improve the standard of living of Indonesian citizens, as stated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, the Government is obligated to uphold the rights of every citizen. However, as it stands, many children in Indonesia cannot attend school due to high tuition fees and burdensome scheduling requirements for educational programs. To achieve this, the Government continues to strive to improve the quality of the education system in Indonesia, with the creation of a new zoning policy system as the main means of enhancement to connect the school environment with the community, eliminate exclusivity and discrimination in educational institutions, especially state universities, and assist in analyzing student needs and the equitable distribution of teaching staff.

New Student Admission (PPDB) is a policy implemented by Permendikbud Number 44 of 2019 concerning New Student Admission in Kindergartens, Elementary Schools, Junior High Schools, Senior High Schools, and Vocational Schools. The zoning system policy was created to ensure that students have equal access to educational resources. (Sari and Dewi, 2023).

The zoning system is regulated by the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 14 of 2018, which emphasizes the importance of equitable education and the reduction of the stigma of elite schools. With this system, it is hoped that all children will have the same opportunity to receive quality education without having to move far from their homes. Meanwhile, the zoning system is a form of consolidation and efficiency for the community to enroll their children in schools close to their homes, as mentioned in the fourth part of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation, Article 16, paragraph (3), which states: "The radius of the nearest zone as referred to in paragraph (1) is determined by the local government according to the conditions in the area based on: a. the availability of school-age children in the area and b. the number of available capacity in the learning groups at each school, and paragraph (4) in determining the radius of the zone as referred to in paragraph (3), the local government involves the deliberation/work group of school principals." (Wandra, 2021).

In its role, the PPDB uses a zoning system to help improve the quality of education. The goal of the zoning system also includes the enhancement of facilities and infrastructure, the improvement of curriculum quality, and comprehensive organization.

According to (Wandra, 2021), another perspective besides facilitating access to educational services is that zoning is also seen as capable of equalizing the quality of schools. This is closely related to the variation in student input received by the school. The accepted students are more diverse because the school only accepts students from the school zone. So, whether they like it or not, regardless of the student's condition, as long as they come from the school zone, they can be accepted. This implies that the aim of equalizing school quality is through two things: first, every school has the opportunity to receive outstanding student input. Second, with the variation of students produced, it can eliminate the label of favorite schools that has long been a form of stratification in the world of education.

From the statements above, it can be concluded that the purpose of the PPDB using the zoning system is: 1) equal access to education; 2) improving the quality of education; 3) logistics and transportation efficiency; 4) increased parental involvement; and 5) reducing socio-economic discrimination. The benefits of the PPDB using this zoning system are: 1) equalization of Education; 2) community development; 3) efficiency in education administration; and 4) increasing parental and community involvement.

From the information obtained regarding the goals and benefits of the PPDB using the zoning system, it can be concluded that this zoning system is highly expected to bring educational equity for every child of the nation in every corner of this country to continue their education properly without regard to social and economic status.

In terms of the right to education, the importance of equal access to educational opportunities cannot be overlooked. All students, regardless of their social, economic, or geographical background, have the right to receive quality and equitable education. Only with equitable access can we create an inclusive learning environment, where every individual has the same opportunity to develop and reach their full potential. Equal access to education is also a crucial step in reducing social and economic disparities, as well as building a more just and competitive society in the future.

In their article, (Rabhani et al., 2023) state that educational equity also involves two important elements, namely opportunity, and justice in obtaining education within society. If access to education is equitable, every one of school age has the same opportunity to receive an education, while justice means that everyone in society has the right to education without exception.

However, the current reality is that education in Indonesia is still not evenly distributed. Referring to data obtained from the Central Statistics Agency, in 2022 it showed that the number of children not attending school in urban and rural areas is still quite high. At the elementary school level, it is 0.71%, at the junior high school level, it is 6.94%, while at the senior high school level, it is 22.52%, with a total of 30.17% of children not attending school in urban and rural areas. The high number of children who do not attend school is partly due to poor family conditions or economic factors, which cause children to drop out of school before completing their education. (Muhammad Sufyan Rabhani, Anissa Nurul Chotimah and Jemima Fathima Pasha, 2023)

From the above case example, it can be concluded that several factors may have caused the above case to occur. Some of these factors include: 1) socio-economic background, 2) government policy, 3) geographical location and site, 4) availability of schools and teachers, and 5) parental participation.

The indicators of success in equalizing educational opportunities include several important aspects that reflect the quality and accessibility of education for all students. First, the level of educational participation is the main indicator. Second, the availability and quality of educational facilities must be evenly distributed across all regions. Third, the distribution of competent and high-quality teachers is also an important indicator. Fourth, student learning outcomes are measured through equivalent academic achievements in various regions. Fifth, gender equality in education, by ensuring that girls and boys have equal access to education. Lastly, community support and active parental involvement mutually support each other. If all these indicators are met, it will help measure the extent to which the goal of educational equity is achieved and provide guidance for further policies.

METHODS

The approach used in this research is a literature study because, in this research, the researcher examines a phenomenon of PPDB that uses a zoning system occurring in educational institutions. A literature review is the process of collecting and evaluating various sources relevant to a specific research topic. These sources can include books, journal articles, research reports, dissertations, and other academic sources. The main purpose of a literature review is to provide a comprehensive overview of existing research, identify knowledge gaps, and place new research in a broader context.

Library study is a research method conducted to explore, evaluate, and analyze various sources related to research data. (Rabbani et al., 2023). Through literature review, researchers can examine references from previous studies that are relevant and useful as a theoretical basis for the problem being investigated. The sources used in this research include books, journals, and other related study materials that are relevant to the research problem.

The data collection technique used is documentation, which involves searching for related data such as notes, books, papers, articles, journals, and so on. To analyze the data, the researcher uses content analysis techniques that involve the selection, comparison, integration, and sorting of library sources related to the polemic of the zoning system in New Student Admission (PPDB) to achieve educational equity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Challenges in Implementing the PPDB Zoning System

In the implementation of the New Student Admission (PPDB) using a zoning system, various challenges need to be addressed to achieve the goal of equitable access to education. Although the basic concept of zoning aims to create justice and equal opportunities for all students, its implementation in the field often faces complex obstacles. These challenges not only encompass technical and administrative aspects but also involve social, economic, and cultural dynamics that affect various stakeholders in the education system. In this discussion, we will outline some of the main challenges that arise in the implementation of the zonation system for PPDB, as well as its impact on students, schools, and the community. Here are some challenges faced regarding the zonation system in the PPDB based on a compilation of various sources and data related to the zonation system:

Limitations of School Infrastructure

One of the main challenges is the disparity in infrastructure between schools, especially in remote areas. Schools located in certain zones often have inadequate facilities compared to favored schools in urban areas, thus creating disparities in the quality of education (Wulandari, 2022; Marini & Utoyo, 2019). In that statement, it is clearly depicted that the main objective of this zoning system has been flawed from the beginning. The lack of equity between regions, especially in remote areas, will create a polemic for this zonation system PPDB.

Lack of Socialization

Many people do not fully understand the zoning system rules, leading to frequent confusion during the registration process. This also impacts the negative perception of the policy (Hanif, 2021; Wahyudin, 2018). In line with that statement, the zoning system creates various confusions for the parents of prospective students. This is a result of the zonation socialization not reaching the parents, making the technical registration instructions and information difficult to understand, which leads to a lot of fraud (Muhammad Sufyan Rabbani, Anissa Nurul Chotimah and Jemima Fathima Pasha, 2023). This has become one of the most

sensitive and crucial issues that requires clear improvements in the zoning system, which must be promptly addressed by the main policymakers.

The Mismatch Between Quota and School Capacity

Some schools do not have sufficient capacity to accommodate all students in their zone, especially in areas with high population density. On the other hand, schools in remote areas may lack students (Ombudsman RI, 2021; Yusuf & Rahmawati, 2021). The issue of imbalance between the number of prospective students and the schools they aim for in their domicile. The tight competition to secure a spot in public schools means that not all prospective students can enroll in the school closest to their residence.

Community Resistance

Many parents feel disappointed because their children cannot get into their favorite schools despite having high achievements. In addition, there are complaints about children from low-income families who have to enroll in distant schools because there are no options in their zone (Maruf & Rahmawati, 2022; Purnamasari, 2020). From this poor understanding, it often leads to resistance against the zoning policy, where the community tends to reject changes that they perceive as unfavorable to them. Some parents believe that this policy prevents their children from attending the schools they desire, but they do not realize that the main goal of zoning is to provide equal access to education. (Akhyar and Kasim Riau, 2024)

Quality Teacher Gap

The implementation of the zoning system forces schools with low reputations to accept more students, but often without an accompanying improvement in the quality of teachers at those schools (Hoerudin, 2019; Hanif, 2021). In line with that statement, the zoning system is exacerbated by differences in human resources. Compared to schools in the suburbs, schools in the city center usually have better facilities and more experienced teachers. Students with high academic potential placed in underfunded schools may not receive the support and resources they need to succeed. This can hinder students' academic progress and potentially reduce the overall quality of education. (Akhyar and Kasim Riau, 2024). Therefore, the gap in teacher quality is a significant challenge that must be addressed to create equitable and high-quality education for all students. Sustained and coordinated efforts from various stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, and society, are essential to improve the competence and equitable distribution of teachers.

Implementation of Educational Decentralization

Local governments are given the authority to adjust zoning regulations based on local conditions. For example, the city of Yogyakarta has specific regulations regarding zoning routes (Hariyati & Pangaribuan, 2019). Another example is through (Ilmi and Maulidiya, 2024). In the research conducted by (Saputro & Rahaju, 2018), it is stated that the PPDB process at the first level of SMA/SMK is under the authority of the Province because there are subsequent steps regarding the policy of transferring secondary education authority in the City of Surabaya, which is implemented by the Regional Education Office of the City of Surabaya. Meanwhile, the implementation of PPDB at the TK, SD, and SMP levels falls under the authority of the city of Surabaya.

Utilization of Technology

The use of technology in the PPDB zoning system has become key in improving efficiency, transparency, and fairness in the student admission process. Information technology enables

better data management, from online registration to address verification and student placement based on zones. However, limited internet access in remote areas becomes an obstacle (Wulandari, 2022). From that statement, it can be concluded that in some areas, both offline and online systems are still used, whereas some parents who want to register their children but face difficulties in internet access or have limited knowledge of zoning requirements, can visit the intended school and receive technical assistance from the PPDB committee assigned to that school.

This also becomes a trigger for problems if the technology system built within this zoned PPDB is not addressed seriously so that the main goal of providing equal education to all students can be realized.

Strategy for Equalizing the Quality of Education

The implementation of the zoning system in PPDB must be accompanied by effective strategies to ensure the equitable distribution of education quality. This includes improving infrastructure and facilities in all schools within each zone, equitable and quality distribution of teachers, as well as technological support to enhance the learning process. Additionally, it is also important to adopt policies that support collaboration between schools within the same zone, to share resources and best practices. With this holistic approach, the zoning system can achieve its main goal: providing fair and quality educational access for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background. By implementing the right strategy, it can be ensured that the PPDB uses the zoning system, which is one of the government's appropriate efforts to implement educational equity.

The Impact of the Zoning System on Educational Opportunities

The zoning system in the New Student Admission (PPDB) aims to ensure equitable access to education and reduce disparities between favored and non-favored schools. However, its implementation has resulted in various significant impacts, both positive and negative, on students' educational opportunities in Indonesia.

Positive Impact

The zoning system helps reduce the gap between students from different socio-economic backgrounds. By limiting student admissions based on geographical location, this policy encourages students from less affluent families to access quality schools without competing fiercely with students from higher economic groups (Wahyuni et al., 2020; Madiana et al., 2022). Following that statement, the positive aspect of the zoning system is that it has increased educational equity. To reduce the education gap and ensure that all children have equal opportunities to receive quality education, this improvement is very important. (Akhyar and Kasim Riau, 2024).

Through the zoning system policy, it is hoped that not only a few schools will have the status of favorites, but all Educational Institutions should have good quality to support student learning. This system challenges the concept of "favorite schools" by providing a more equitable opportunity for other schools to accept high-achieving students. Thus, the quality of education in various schools is expected to improve evenly (Setiawan & Yuniasti, 2021; Nanggala, 2020).

With the absence of favoritism towards certain schools, all schools are expected to provide quality and equitable education, ensuring that every student has the same opportunity to learn in a good environment, without having to compete to enter specific schools. This also

helps create healthy competition among schools to continuously improve the quality of education.

Operational Efficiency

Operational efficiency in the zoning system is key to ensuring that the new student admission process (PPDB) runs smoothly and fairly. By utilizing information technology, the zoning system can automate registration and data verification, reduce administrative burdens, and expedite the student placement process. In addition, operational efficiency also includes the optimal utilization of resources, such as facilities and teaching staff, to provide equitable and quality education across all zones.

Zoning policies reduce the distance students travel to school, which not only saves time and transportation costs but also supports the formation of locally-based school communities (Purwanti et al., 2018). By improving operational efficiency, the zoning system can support the goal of equitable access to education and enhance the overall quality of education.

Negative Impact

In practice, schools located in zones with lower educational quality often still lack resources and facilities, thus not fully addressing the disparities (Helmi & Salmitha, 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2020). From that statement, it can be concluded that students with high talent, intelligence, or creativity often do not receive adequate support or facilities due to the lack of sufficient resources and facilities.

School choice restrictions based on zoning often prevent high-achieving students from selecting schools that align with their academic aspirations, leading to frustration among students and parents (Mahpudin, 2020; Raharjo et al., 2020). The distribution of public schools is uneven across districts or sub-districts. According to Widyastuti (2020:16), students who live far from schools have a very small chance of passing, even with good grades, which encourages students to look for closer schools rather than those that are of higher quality. This becomes a problem because the Government has failed to make every school equal and address the quality gap between schools. (Muhammad Sufyan Rabbani, Anissa Nurul Chotimah and Jemima Fathima Pasha, 2023).

Teachers in certain schools must face the challenge of teaching students with highly diverse academic abilities, which requires significant pedagogical adaptation (Madiana et al., 2022). The situation requires public school teachers to adapt quickly. The skills required by teachers who teach high-ability children and low-ability children are very different.

This policy also highlights the unpreparedness of several regions in providing an adequate number and quality of schools to accommodate students according to zoning (Raharjo et al., 2020; Safarah & Wibowo, 2018). The imbalance between the number of prospective students and the schools they aim for in their domicile. The intense competition to secure seats in public schools means that not all prospective students can enroll in the schools closest to their residences (Muhammad Sufyan Rabbani, Anissa Nurul Chotimah and Jemima Fathima Pasha, 2023).

Implications and Recommendations for the Zoning-Based Student Admission

In an effort to realize equitable access to quality education throughout Indonesia, the zoning system in the New Student Admission (PPDB) has been implemented as one of the main policies. Although this system has noble goals, its implementation in the field presents various implications that need to be carefully observed. From socio-economic impacts to technical and administrative challenges, the zoning system requires continuous adjustments and improvements to achieve maximum effectiveness.

To maximize the benefits of the zoning system, several steps can be taken, such as improving the quality of infrastructure and school resources in remote areas, ensuring an even distribution of quality teachers, and providing additional training for educators to handle students with diverse ability levels (Madiana et al., 2022; Nanggala, 2020). Additionally, better policy communication to the public is also necessary to minimize resistance to this system.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Improve the PPDB Zoning System

The zoning system in New Student Admission (PPDB) is designed to promote educational equity and eliminate segregation between favored and non-favored schools. However, its implementation faces several challenges, such as uneven school infrastructure, disparities in teaching quality, and resistance from the community.

The government needs to ensure that all schools have adequate facilities so that students receive an equitable learning experience. Infrastructure development and facility distribution must be adjusted to the needs of the region based on zoning data and student population (Madjid et al., 2023; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017).

The zoning system requires the equitable distribution of quality teachers. The teacher rotation program and competency-based training can improve the quality of teaching in underdeveloped schools (Wahyuni et al., 2020). The program is an effort that can support the zoned enrollment system.

The socialization of zoning policies must be conducted transparently so that the community understands the long-term benefits. Involving parents and the local community can reduce resistance to this system (Haryanti, 2020; Syakarofath et al., 2019). However, community participation is one of the supporting factors that can ensure the success of this zonation system for student admissions.

The application of information technology such as digital maps and PPDB applications can enhance the efficiency of the zoning system. Periodic monitoring is also necessary to assess the effectiveness of the policy and adjust its implementation (Puslitjak Kemendikbud, 2017). Accurate data will help create a targeted zoning system and reduce the risk of fraud.

Zoning policies must consider flexibility for areas with unique geographical conditions or educational infrastructure. Regulations such as Permendikbud No. 14 of 2018 need to be revised according to local needs (Mahpudin, 2020). Through continuous reform and a more flexible approach, the zoning system can be more responsive to social, technological, and educational needs, thereby creating a more inclusive and high-quality learning ecosystem for all students.

Allocating additional budgets for the development of non-favorite schools can increase their attractiveness. This also prevents the accumulation of students in certain schools only

(Purwanti et al., 2018). At least if there is financial support for schools in the non-favorite category, those schools can provide facilities that meet the diverse needs of students.

The synchronization between the central and regional governments in formulating education policies ensures that the implementation of zoning runs effectively and follows the local context (Marini & Utoyo, 2019). If there is a good collaboration between the central and regional governments, it can be ensured that this zoning system can be realized according to its main objectives because it is supported by two important elements involved in this system. The implementation of this strategy can not only address the challenges of the zoning system but also accelerate the achievement of educational equity goals. Thus, this system can provide equal opportunities for all students regardless of their socio-economic background.

Case Study

The results of the research conducted by Urrahmi et al. (2020) through (Sari and Dewi, 2023) indicate that the implementation of the policy in the PPDB using the zoning system in public junior high schools in Padang City can be considered quite good. However, several inhibiting factors have been identified. First, there are differences in policy interpretation among the community, which cause confusion and potential resistance. Secondly, there is a lack of support and differing understanding among the community, which affects the smooth implementation of the zoning system. In addition, the tiered socialization system implemented by the Education Office has not reached its full potential, resulting in limited awareness and understanding among stakeholders. Lastly, the delay in issuing technical instructions close to the implementation period of PPDB hinders effective socialization efforts.

Hariyati, Nunuk, and Pangaribuan (2019) in their research examined the implementation of the zoning system policy in the New Student Admission (PPDB) at the junior high school level in Gresik Regency over two years with the aim of equalizing the quality of education. The implementation has been effective, with the potential of students becoming more evenly distributed in the region. However, the challenge faced is the lack of understanding among parents regarding the zoning system due to diverse educational backgrounds. To address this issue, earlier and clearer socialization was conducted for the parents. In conclusion, the implementation of the zoning system policy in the SMP PPDB in Gresik Regency has a positive impact on the equitable distribution of education quality, but more intensive efforts are needed to explain the zoning system to parents. Evaluation and improvement are continuously carried out to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the policy. (Sari and Dewi, 2023).

Marini and Bambang (2019) through (Sari and Dewi, 2023) in the study of the Implementation of the zoning system in the New Student Admissions at State Senior High Schools in Bandar Lampung City, specifically SMAN 9 and SMAN 14, has been running well. However, there are still obstacles such as application disruptions, network limitations, the influence of quotas outside the zone, and the mindset of the community towards superior schools. Continuous evaluation and improvement are needed to enhance the effectiveness of the zoning system and change the public's mindset regarding the quality of superior schools.

CONCLUSION

The zoning system in the New Student Admission (PPDB) is designed to ensure equitable access to quality education for all students in Indonesia. Although this concept has noble goals, namely reducing educational disparities and increasing inclusivity, its implementation in the field presents various complex implications.

Positively, the zoning system has successfully improved more equitable access and reduced the concentration of students in favored schools, thereby promoting the equal distribution of educational facilities. This system also creates a more inclusive and diverse learning environment, where students from various backgrounds can interact and learn together. Additionally, the use of technology in registration and data verification has increased efficiency and reduced administrative errors.

However, several challenges are still faced in the implementation of the zoning system. There are gaps in the quality of facilities and teaching staff between schools in different zones, which affects the quality of education received by students. Some parents feel limited in choosing schools for their children, which can lead to dissatisfaction. In addition, technical issues such as data errors and the lack of IT infrastructure in some areas also pose obstacles.

To address these challenges, several strategies have been proposed. Strengthening school infrastructure and facilities, equitable distribution of teachers, and the utilization of information technology are important steps to ensure the equitable quality of education. Collaboration between schools and communities, as well as active parental involvement in school activities, can also strengthen the implementation of the zoning system. In addition, regulatory reforms and a flexible approach allow for policy adjustments based on local needs, making the zoning system more responsive to social changes and educational needs.

With the right strategy and regular evaluations, it is hoped that the zoning system in PPDB can achieve its goals of equalizing access and quality of education, as well as providing greater and more equitable benefits for all students in Indonesia. A good implementation of this system will create an inclusive, fair, and quality learning environment, supporting the better development of national education in the future.

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