Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities
Vol. 2, 2009, pp. 41–67
URL: http://jissh.journal.lipi.go.id/index.php/jissh/article/view/20
DOI: 10.14203/jissh.v2i0.20

ISSN: 1979-8431 (printed), 2656-7512 (Online)

School-Based Management Policy and Its Practices at District Level in the Post New Order Indonesia

Bambang Sumintono
University of Technology Malaysia

Abstract

The debacle of the collapse of the New Order regime in 1998 brought significant change to Indonesia's public sector. Primary and secondary education since 1 January 2001 has been based on the new law about regional autonomy, and administered at district level rather than in the previously centralised and bureaucratic manner. At the school level, ideas about school autonomy emerged and became popular. In particular, the term 'School Based Management' (SBM) was seen as a panacea, and as a result, the central government issued a regulation to implement the practice of SBM. This article analyses the dynamics of the SBM policy as it was interpreted and implemented. The study was approached in two ways: through document analysis of the Ministry of National Education decree 044/U/2002 that promulgated SBM; and by soliciting and interpreting the perspectives and practices of stakeholders at district level through interviews, site studies and document analyses. The study found that the SBM policy as stated in the decree lacked clarity. The decree had been hastily introduced and emphasised structural changes at district and school levels without clarifying its underlying rationale or implementation guidelines.

Introduction

The Asian financial crisis, which started in June 1997, had different effects in Indonesia. University students demonstrated around the country and public pressure led to the replacement of President Suharto in May 1998. Five months after Suharto stepped down, the World Bank released a report titled Education in Indonesia: From Crisis to Recovery. It noted that the state of Indonesia's education system

was very poor, reflected in such indicators as a high drop-out rates, low school participation rates, and low student achievement. One of the suggestions in the report was to improve education through a decentralisation policy. As a consequence, the National Development Planning Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (Bappenas), together with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), with funding from the World Bank, established several task forces to find ways to improve Indonesia's education (Jalal and Musthafa, 2001).

Meanwhile, during the Habibie administration, the Indonesian parliament passed two new laws relating to regional autonomy: law 22 of 1999, which involved devolution of political authority, and law 25 of 1999, which was about fiscal balance. Aspinall and Fealy (2003, p. 3) observed that these developments produced 'one of the most radical decentralisation programmes attempted anywhere in the world'. This is because within two years, significant authority was to be devolved to more than 360 district governments from the previously highly centralised control from the capital, Jakarta.[1] The introduction of new regulations regarding local government autonomy, which became effective in January 2001, also meant that policy decisions in the education sector (that is, K–12) could now largely be made by government at the district (kabupaten or kota) level.

The two developments above were the causes of the initiation of the new policies in Indonesian education system that had to be applied in the context of regional autonomy. This article explains the decentralisation issue with regard to education sector, and the history of school-based management policy and its implementation in one district in Nusa Tenggara Province.

Education Decentralisation Framework

The education decentralisation policy can be seen as a popular policy that has been implemented in many parts of the world since the 1970s. It can be identified in developed and developing countries (Bulock and Thomas,

1 That was the number in 1999, as of 2009, the number of district is more than 460.

1997; Abu-Duhou, 1999; Fullan and Watson, 2000). This policy has been initiated by democratic governments in Australia and the United States (Murphy and Beck, 1995), by autocratic military regimes in Argentina and Chile (Fiske, 1996; Schieffelbein and Schieffelbein, 2000) and even in China, a country with a rigid centralisation ideology (Hawkins, 2000).

The implementation of education decentralisation varies in term of scale. It happens at district level in Edmonton, Canada (Brown, 1990); at the state level in Victoria, Australia (Abu-Duhou, 1999); and nationally in the United Kingdom (Bulock and Thomas, 1997) and New Zealand (Wylie, 1995). Consequently, the many varieties of the policy make it difficult to generalise. However, in general terms, decentralisation is about shifting authority and responsibility from one level of government to a lower one. Nevertheless, the term decentralisation does not have an exact single meaning that is easily understood by all who practise it. So it is helpful to explain the concept by considering four dimensions of emphasis: (1) degree of transfer, (2) breadth of transfer, (3) location of transfer, and (4) functions transferred.

The degree of transfer within public institutions is in three categories: deconcentration, delegation, and devolution (Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema, 1983). According to Abu-Duhou (1999, p. 24–25) deconcentration is 'the handing over [of] some amount of administrative authority or responsibility to lower levels within central government ministries and agencies, and it is a shifting of the workloads from centrally located officials to staff or offices of the regional capital or centre'. This is the weakest form or degree of power transfer because the centre doesn't devolve power. Delegation refers to the transfer of decision-making authority and managerial responsibility for certain functions or tasks from a higher to lower level, which remain indirectly controlled by a central government. Last, as defined by Rondinelli et al. (1983, p. 24) devolution is 'the creation or strengthening—financially or legally—of sub-national units of governments, the activities of which are substantially outside the direct control of the central government'. This means, devolution is the far-reaching form of decentralisation, and the one in which most transfer of power is involved. It is intended to

be permanent and cannot be withdrawn without some legal justification (Brown, 1990).

Regarding breadth of transfer, the decentralisation that was introduced in Indonesia during Reformasi was massive, involving nearly all public sectors at the district level, except for the monetary and fiscal sectors, defence and security, foreign affairs, justice and religion, which remained in the hands of the central government in the capital (Jalal and Musthafa, 2001). Other countries experienced decentralisation in one or two sectors such as in education and health (Burki, Perry and Dillinger, 1999).

The transfer of authority in the education sector can take place at several sub-national levels. In the case of New Zealand, one goal of its decentralisation policy was to eliminate the middle management level to ensure that the central government was linked directly to the schools (Wylie, 1995). Whereas in Victoria, Australia, education remains under the jurisdiction of the state government, but some authority has been transferred to the school level (Abu-Duhou, 1999). In another situation, Davies et al. (2003) observed that in Malaŵi, the transfer of power in education is from the central government to the district level.

Related to the transfer of functions, there are a number of possibilities, including giving all functions to schools or sharing each function with separate levels of government. Such functions as personnel management, testing, procurement, curriculum, student management, financing, training, to name a few, are performed by government institutions. A study by Rideout and Ural (1993) shows the distribution of functions in ten developed and developing countries, as the functions relate to decision making. The study indicates that some significant decisions are still made by the central government. Examples included school organisational structure, minimum requirements and official languages used in teaching and some others. On the other hand, management functions, such as discipline and teacher evaluations, are undertaken at the school level.

Power and Authority

According to Daun (2002), there is a paradox when central governments decentralise particular powers. This is because decentralisation and other restructuring is always initiated from above. On the one hand, it seems logical for power to be at the top level of government but, on the other hand, it can also make sense for power to be devolved to lower levels. But it is the concepts of power and authority that are at the heart of decentralisation, if the transferring of power is to make sense. Weber, in his classic sociological analysis of power, notes that besides power there two other important concepts: authority and legitimacy.

Power, in simple terms, refers to the ability to do something or to have control over people and activities. When 'power is granted by consent' (Nieuwenhuis, 2004, p. 4) it is what we call authority. In terms of public organisations, consent is obtained through a range of means, such as constitutions, legislation, regulation or decrees that enable people who hold positions to have a justification for their authority. When this happens, it is called legitimacy

Undoubtedly, the formulation of legislation or regulation about decentralisation generally arises from a political struggle at all levels of government. Often, the stipulated regulation is outlined to stakeholders as the framework that will 'constrain and shape decisions and behaviours of [the] organisation's members' (McGinn and Welsh, 1999, p. 17). Wirt, Mitchell and Marshal (1985) further note that the political culture in a country influences the process of policy development as well as the content and quality of education policies. Consequently, the nature of a regulation that allocates power to some levels but not others reflects the social reality of power within the society. Gershberg (1999) proposes that there are two strategic choices in terms of legislating for education reform: one is a situation with high legislative involvement where a certain legal framework is processed that involves political procedures, and the other has a low legislative involvement where change in schools is not based on specific legislations.

The forms of power and authority that are formulated in terms of

decentralisation regulations often have potential for creating conflicts, confusion and misunderstandings. According to Daun (2002, p. 80) this is because '(i) the unclear definition of who decides what; and (ii) the interpretation of the new rules'. In agreement, Elmore (in Daun, 2002) in the United States and Wylie (1995) in New Zealand both noted that ambiguity is often seen regarding the responsibility and authority of various levels of governance. Consequently, Fulan and Watson (2000) suggest that to avoid confusion and tension at implementation, it is desirable that there be clarity in the formulation of rules, regulations and decision-making authority.

Method

This research used qualitative inquiry methods to identify and analyse the policy and practice of school-based management in Indonesian education. Several methods were used to collect data and analyse it. Documents relating to national and district-level school-based management policies were analysed. The analysis and discussion about regulations at national level pertained to the Ministry of National Education decree 044/U/2002. This included an analysis of the reasons for, and the preamble to, the decree. The content of the policy and its explanations in the decree's appendixes, guidelines and other publications from the central office were critically examined. To put the policy in perspective, the researcher used data from the literature review in the analysis. The decree, after ten years of the reform, is undoubtedly still the only operational regulation relating to school-based management issues, even after the promulgation of new education laws and several education standards.

Interviews were carried out at district and school levels. Respondents for interview at district level were from district education offices, were members of district parliaments, school supervisors, education council members, teachers' union officials and officials from Mataram's mayoral office. Four principals, six teachers and four school committee members also participated in interviews as representatives from school

level. The audio-recorded data from interviews were transcribed.

Findings and Discussion

The official move to SBM for Indonesian schools was not made, however, until after the release of the Minister of National Education decree (kepmendiknas) 044/U/2002, concerning school committees and education councils. The kepmendiknas was one of the most awaited decrees in the history of Indonesia's education. Officially the decree was released on 2 April 2002 and signed by A Malik Fajar, the then Minister of National Education (MoNE, 2002). The history of the decree, however, can be traced back nearly three and a half years before, when the World Bank published a report about the performance of Indonesia's education. The possibility of greater school autonomy was further explored by the government, which formed several task forces following the World Bank report. Upon publication of the task forces' progress reports in early July 2000, the public perception was positive. It appeared that the general public had welcomed and supported the idea of school-based management (Kompas, 2000). In their final report, the task forces wrote explicitly about the implementation of school-based management, 'Laws and regulations need to be prepared to support the idea of school decentralisation in the form of school-based management' (Jalal and Mustafa, 2001, p. 126).

The Kepmendiknas

The preamble to the decree states that the reason for the regulation is to facilitate society's participation in education, and the decree is needed to create a new institutional structure. So the decree was intended to set up a new kind of organisation, and formed the legal basis for doing this. The contents of the decree are very short, consisting of only four articles (see Table 1). The first article deals with the formation of a new organisation in every district and educational institution. The second article gives suggestions about how to form those organisations. The third article mentions a specific decree from the past that is no longer

valid. The last article outlines when the decree is to come into force.

Table 1. Contents of the MoNE decree 044/U/2002

Article 1

(1) In each district is formed an Education Council, as an initiative from the society and/or the district government.

(2) In each education institution or group of education institutions is formed a School Committee as an initiative from the society, educational institution and/or the district government.

Article 2

The formation of the Education Council and School Committee can be used the guide line for formation of Education Council and School Committee as attached in the Appendix I and II of this decree.

Article 3

With effect of this decree, then the decree of Ministry of Education and Culture No 0293/U/1993 of 1993 regarding the formation of Board of Education Assistance is abolished.

Article 4

This decree is effective on the date stipulated.

In paragraph (1) of Article 1, there are two aspects that are mentioned explicitly: the creation of a new organisation, an education council, at district level, and who may establish it. There is no explanation available about this new institution, nothing about its functions, tasks, role and authority, not even about who are the intended clients of the education council. The only clear aspect is the name of the organisation. Although in the next section, there is mention of the guidelines that can be used to form the organisation, the details are not stated explicitly in the body of the decree. This can be taken to mean that there is no clear legal

standing for the parties who are involved.

In the latter part of paragraph (1), the decree states that a new organisation has to be formed. However, it does not specify who is responsible for establishing the organisation. It could be either the district government or local society or possibly both. This latter situation can occur in a district that has more than one education council, and can result in a problem of legitimacy. In addition, the term 'society', as used, is also problematic, because its meaning is legally unclear. The decree does not give specific and clear meanings about who may be involved in constituting the new body. Without that, the formulation of responsibilities can lead to tensions between society and the district government. On one hand, the new organisation may want to facilitate societal participation in education but, on the other, the district government has a legal right to be involved and to steer the change process.

Regarding paragraph (2) of Article 1, there may also be a legal complication here. First, by using the term 'educational institution', the decree is imposing a uniform model of a new organisation. Regardless of their status, whether state or private schools, or schooling levels, education institutions have to establish a school committee. Later, appearing in the decree's appendix, the obligation to establish a new organisation also extends to pre-school education (kindergarten), out-of-school education, and even to institutions in the Islamic education system, public or private Islamic schools. This kind of one-size-fits-all policy is remarkable, because denying school status in the reality of diverse situations shows that the designers did not understand the complexities and may not have given enough careful thought to institutional arrangements. It seems the decree wants to ensure all kinds of societal participation at the school level are of a standard pattern. In this respect, the decree is crossing into the spheres of other ministry interventions (particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which controls and manages the Islamic school system). This is unusual because the decree is the lowest regulation that can be promulgated by the central government, yet it has been portrayed as having far-reaching implications.

In other countries, like New Zealand (Wyle, 1995), structural change in school organisations can only take place in public schools where the government supports these institutions with public funds. Private schools in Indonesia are minimally supported by the government (see, for example, Bangay, 2005), but the decree does not acknowledge this differentiation between private and public schools.

Furthermore, paragraph (2) of Article 1 of the decree is problematic in terms of who has responsibility for establishing a school committee,. For instance, three parties have a right to constitute the school committee. It could be formed by local society, the educational institution or the district government. Furthermore, establishing a committee can also be achieved through a combination of two or more of the three parties cooperating. Obviously, it opens up the possibility of a competition that can lead also to a legitimacy problem, if more than one school committee is formed in one school. The consequences can be confusing, as when, for example, a district government introduces a decree that imposes a school committee for every private school at secondary level. The private school cannot refuse the school committee regulation imposed on it because the district government has the capacity and legitimacy to implement the decree.

In Article 2 another peculiar aspect is also evident. It mentions that when a party wants to establish an education council and school committee it can refer to the decree's appendixes. The phrase 'can be used' in the Article shows that this decree is a 'hesitant regulation'. [2] This means that each party does not have any obligation to follow this decree and its appendixes, therefore they can establish the new organisation in their own ways. So while it is probable that one party might establish a school committee with clear, detailed and appropriate processes, it is also possible that a party with power can establish a committee for its own purposes.

The wording of the second Article exposes the real political will of the central government for the SBM implementation. It seems that the

2 Translated from the Indonesian *bisa digunakan*, which means voluntary, to be used if one thinks it is useful.

policy makers in the central office do not fully support the ideas of school autonomy and local education governance. The central office documents implicitly acknowledge that the decree can be bypassed if district or school stakeholders intend not to comply. The decree itself therefore states explicitly a loophole that could to be used by those with reservations about SBM.

However, the last two Articles in the decree have clearer meanings and are more straightforward. No other interpretations will follow regarding the legal base of BP3 (board of educational assistance) in each school, which, under Article 3, has to be abolished. The intention explicitly to put an end to the BP3 regulation is to ensure that only one organisation is to facilitate societal participation at the school level, and this organisation is the school committee. In this way, any unwanted competition or conflicts between the school committee and the BP3 are eliminated. This change also signalled that the rules of the game have also changed and that practices under the BP3 are no longer accepted.

In general, the first two Articles, the important parts of the decree, are ambiguous. They do not have clear meanings and their underlying rationale has not been explained, thereby creating potential confusion because of possible multiple interpretations during implementation. This lack of clarity is a serious weakness (Fulan and Watson, 2000).

The decree reflects the inability of the central government, in particular the MoNE, to position the education sector in the right place, within the context of the autonomy law (law 22 of 1999). The changes also demanded that the central office change its role from being an implementer of policy to being a regulator. In the autonomy era, the central office personnel seem do not have any experience or clear ideas regarding these changes (World Bank, 2004).

The Decree's Appendixes

In contrast to the content of the decree, which is brief, the appendixes are much more detailed regarding the education council and the school committee. As stated in the previous section, such a situation has led to

the assumption that the policy makers themselves are uncertain about the new organisations that have to be established in every district and school around the country. Other interpretations are possible; it may be that the MoNE does not want to impose a regulation that may be at odds with district authorities. At the same time, by introducing the decree, a degree of technical and legal guidance is provided to school and district governments that do not have the capacity to formulate such regulations. Again, it must be stated that according to Article 2, the provisions of the appendixes are not compulsory for education authorities.

There are two appendixes that accompany the decree. The first outlines guidelines for establishing education councils; and the second, guidelines for starting school committees. Although the appendixes relate to organisations at different levels (district and school) and for different purposes, both are remarkably similar in its structure and content.

The first section defines an education council as 'a body which provides a place for societal participation in order to improve quality, equity and efficiency of education management in a district'. The phrase 'provides a place' implies that this new organisation is to create space and opportunity for members of the public to participate particularly in education matters. Further, it is also expected that any contributions should be useful and should lead to educational excellence. It appears that the education council is expected to have a direct role in improving quality when this is a primary task for the government itself. This means there is a hidden agenda embedded in the formulation of the decree, which is to make the general public take some responsibility for tasks that belong to the education bureaucracy.

From the third section, on the aims of the education council, several things seem clear although also open to question. First, the three stated objectives seem merely to serve to provide a greater clarity of definition for the education council. The document stipulates that education quality can be reached when the council facilitates and channels societal aspirations and initiatives through policy and programmes. In relation to equity, the document states that the council can achieve this by 'increasing responsibility and active participation

from all layers of society in education implementation'. In relation to efficiency the document encourages 'creating ambience and conditions for transparency, accountability, and democracy'. On the one hand, the document seems to state objectives that encourage education councils to undertake certain tasks, but on the other hand the policy is not responsive to public needs and dynamics because agendas from elements of society are not included or are not easily facilitated.

Secondly, critical analysis of the objectives of education councils, as stated in the third section is important to ascertain the extent of potential success for the new body. However, this is difficult because the objectives in the appendixes are normatively written and difficult to put into operation and assess.

In the fourth section, roles and functions are outlined. Roles for the council include it being an advisory agency, supporting agency, controlling agency and mediator. Except for the supporting and controlling functions, the other roles are standard ones. However, in relation to the council's second role 'as a supporting agency in terms of financial, thinking and labour in educational implementation', this appears to miss the point for establishing education councils. This is because the supporting role referred to in the decree is not a role that is to be played by the council, but rather it is an executive role (that belongs to a district government). In other words, it seems that the decree has intended to swap government obligations relating to a core issue (education funding) to the education council. Further, if the council were to play a supporting role, without further legal guidelines on what this means, then it would seem that the decree is just to make education councils act as charities to fund educational activities in the district.

There seems to be a misfit between the espoused controlling agency role of an education council, 'in terms of transparency and accountability of education implementation and outcome', and the nature and location of this kind of organisation. This is because, as shown in the listed functions of the council, none particularly gives the council the right 'to control or manage' educational implementation and outcome (World Bank, 2004,

p. 9). Again, this is another ambiguous section of the decree, which can result in tensions and possibly create confusion in the field.

The appendixes stipulate that the education council conducts cooperative work with local government and parliament, and encourages parents' involvement to improve education quality. The stipulations are, however, too broad, not sufficiently focused, and none of the tasks are clearly stated. Take the first function for instance, which states that an education council's role is to increase 'society's attention and commitment for quality education implementation'. The terms 'attention' and 'commitment' are difficult as yardsticks, particularly when these relate to 'quality education implementation', which is a never-ending process. Thus, in reality, it is difficult to perform tasks such as those stipulated when the audience is society at large. It therefore seems that these functions are immeasurable, making it impossible to gauge the success or failure of a council.

A closer scrutiny of the council's list of roles and functions reveals that there is no mention of authority. Without a clear authority, it is impossible for the council to make decisions and recommendations that are binding for interrelated institutions such as the local government and parliament.

The appendixes on the forming of Education Councils seem to favour the holders of power, which is the local government. The stipulations give authority to the local government to manage the teacher selection process, and establish the decree that is to be signed by the head of district. In this way any opposition is silenced and simultaneously ensures that the council becomes subordinate to the bureaucracy.

In the seventh section regarding inter-organisation arrangements, the education council's relations with other organisations at district level are presented. These diagrams are important because they show a clear vision of what is intended. It seems that the intention in creating education councils is to create a body for governance at the district level. However, the local parliament is already in existence. It would be clear if, in the structural arrangements, the clients for the education

council are shown. As it stands now, it is unclear which institutions really are the clients of education councils. It is unclear if the client is the local parliament (legislative) or the local government (executive). Having two clients to serve is problematic and can lead to confusion for the council itself. When the council's client is the legislature, then the council has to support the work of the local parliament in a supervisory role. Such a role, as an advisory agency to the local parliament makes sense, unlike a relationship with the executive.

In the closing section of the appendixes, it stipulates that the council 'can be regulated' by legislation. Again, the word 'can' implies that this is not mandatory and may be ignored. Moreover, to subject the council to regulation through legislation is inconsistent with education management under decentralisation and school-based management issues. This is because the council is part of governance and not management with the local government having full authority.

Implementation at District Level

Starting from early 2001, each district in Indonesia had been managing the public sector authority, which was generally bigger than those managed by the central and the provincial governments. In terms of the education sector, there were three significant aspects of decentralisation of management by the district government: institutional and personnel conditions, finance, and curriculum. One instrument that can measure education policy at the district level is the district regulation (*peraturan daerah* or *perda*). The regulation can be proposed either by the executive or legislature, but it needs to be discussed extensively in the legislative forum by both parties. Unlike several districts that have released regulations based on the MoNE decree regarding the education council and school committee, the Municipal City of Mataram has not released any.[3] Official reports from the Law Division of the Mataram City

3 The Municipal City of Malang, East Java, promulgated district regulation 13 of 2001 on 20 October 2001 about System of Educational Implementation in the City of Malang; The Municipal City of Bandung, West Java, promulgated district regulation20 of 2002 on 2 May 2002 about Educational Implementation in City of Bandung; The District of Dompu, in the

Secretariat of the Mayor's Office (from 2000 to 2004) did not indicate any district education regulations. This implies that the legislative vision about district education in the autonomy era has not been readily realised. By contrast, there were 39 of 75 district regulations that were released between 2000 and 2004 that were concerned with local taxation in order to increase income for the district government. As noted by two respondents, from the mayor's office and a school supervisor, it was the executive not the legislature that proposed the regulation.

> So far, I've seen that most of the district regulations are the executive's initiatives.

> The mayor's office is the main source of district regulations; the legislature did not get involved much and mostly agreed with proposed initiatives.

Regulations relating to local taxes increased significantly after autonomy was implemented throughout Indonesia because most district governments were concerned they might not balance their budgets. This had also occurred in Mataram where, since 2001, more than half of the regulations issued were about local taxes.

Besides the legislative body, the district parliament is divided into several special commissions dedicated to a particular sector. In Mataram, the education sector in the legislature is administered by the E Commission, which comprises six district lawmakers from five political parties. Generally, members of this commission are perceived as more competent and are aware of education issues. When conducting fieldwork research to collect data for this study (three years after the autonomy; and 20 months since the MoNE decree), I noted that there were no decisions about school-based management and educational services from the commission. The most frequent activity of the E Commission

---

same province as Mataram, promulgated district regulation 19 of 2002 on 30 December 2002 about Education Councils and School Committees. All those regulations, except Malang's, are similar in structure and content to the MoNE decree 044/U/2002, which shows little effort was made when crafting the regulations. But, of course, these show real concern by the legislature about the education sector with regulation as an instrument of policy.

was hearings, which were based on an official request to them from the district education office, school supervisors or the education council. This implies that implementation steps and initiatives regarding the education sector were originating with the executive.

A number of interviews with several stakeholders were undertaken at the district level. This included ascertaining the personal views and interests of the district lawmaker. This confirmed that the legislator and indeed the E Commission seemingly had little understanding of education. The comments below came from school a supervisor and education district official respectively.

> In my opinion, the district parliament, particularly the members of the E Commission don't know about the substance of education issues. In most cases they only consider the budget aspect.

> Researcher: What has the legislature suggested to your office?

> Participant: They have concerns about social development issues including education. However, the concern is only rhetoric. Essentially, they don't understand most education issues. Most of them did not graduate from formal secondary schooling; So, how can they understand the issues?

These views were also reflected somewhat in the response by the lawmaker. Several questions directed to the legislator (such as executive responsibility to education sector, regulation and policy) were not responded to as was expected. The participant's responses were as follows.

> [Regarding the executive concern] Firstly, we try to make the education sector in the district budget reach a 20 per cent proportion. Secondly, we support acceleration of classes at general secondary school level, which should not only shorten the years of schooling from three years to two years, but also increase the number of subjects that have to be given to students. So, in those two years students learn not only 10 subjects, but 15, even 20 subjects. That's what I call acceleration.

> [Regarding regulation and policy] I see that the district government already has a good concern for education, even though in terms of action it does not. So we as the legislative body always apply political pressure. The real obstacle of course is about funding. We do not have much flexibility because of limited resources.

Such lack of understanding possibly accounted for the lack of promulgated regulations. The extent of knowledge and competency in the education sector seem to be related to the inactivity of the members of parliament. The quality of legislators is certainly one of the serious problems that the district faces particularly when parliament's response has not occurred. A confirmation from one school committee member reflects this issue.

> In this autonomy era, the parliament and the E Commission particularly are having substantial authority, no doubt about that. But, if they do not understood education, what can we say? It is a problematic situation that cannot be solved except by another general election.

In the absence of specific district regulations on education and recommendations from the education commission or the district parliament, information about implementation of educational decentralisation can be gathered from Mataram's education district office and education council.

Regarding the school-based management policy, which became the official policy based on the MoNE decree, the district education office also did not have clear directions. The only indication that explicitly appeared was the training programme for school committee members, as listed in the district budget. The training was for 200 school committee members to improve their knowledge. However, it was late in coming (two years after the introduction of school committees) and was also conducted in a manner that reminded everyone of the power issues. One respondent, a school supervisor, noted:

> What I see in this particular training is that the district education office wants to show that it has the real power. The district office wants to show that the school committees are subordinate. The office uses the training to

impress on trainers that the activity is funded and organised by the office.

Several respondents from the secondary school level commented about the district education office policy in negative terms. A school principal commented:

> What I see of the education bureaucrats is that, for the most part, they don't understand comprehensively that school-based management is about educational change. Previously all instructions came from the central office in Jakarta, then it was controlled at the local level. Nowadays, those roles should be facilitated and monitored by bureaucrats. However, I see that many district office working programmes are positioned by the bureaucrats and that schools are required to follow everything, not giving any flexibility. In terms of technical matters, we are always giving the bureaucrats academic–professional arguments in order to make them not force us, but they usually counter it with authoritative and political reasons, which of course do not always match.

A school committee member who had years of experience as a BP3 member also had similar views.

> Currently, as they said, we practise school based management ideas, but in reality this is not fully SBM because many things are still decided by them. For instance, in terms of teacher selection, it should be that the school has the right to do that, but the bureaucrats are not allowing this to happen.

A school supervisor explained this situation in terms of the structural limitation. He concluded that:

> I see some kind of a gap between school and district education officials. In terms of SBM the mode of thinking of education bureaucrats is not as fast as teachers and principals want. That is why from my point of view, I believe that the district education office should not be involved in technical matters in education. They must not be organising technical activities. They can play effectively in terms of policy and support for schools.

One issue that is more salient for district education offices is about power and authority. With the beginning of the shift to autonomy in

2001, there was tension between the Mataram education office and the provincial education office. The sources of tension were related to a number of issues: personnel, finance and materials; the appointment of principals at state schools; and permission for teachers to attend training outside the province (*Lombok Post*, 2001). The Mataram district office perceived that what the province office had 'a tendency to sustain an old paradigm' (*Lombok Post*, 2001). Eventually authority came to rest at the district level. This experience has meant officials from the province's education office often face difficulties when dealing with the Mataram district education office. A comment from a teacher explains this as follows.

> Officials from the provincial education office said that when they want to ask something from Mataram district education office, they often find it very difficult. They have to edit the language of their letters in order to make them appear not to be perceived as giving instructions. In other words, the language they use is not like a command, otherwise the district office will not reply to the letters.

The feeling of a 'new centre' emerging after the transfer of power (via the autonomy law) was undeniable. This appeared more salient in the education sector, which was the largest 'industry' in the district. It employed teachers and administrative staff that were the largest proportion of civil servants and it used a significant amount of the government budget for salary. The power shift was easily recognised by education district officials. They also were more aware that they could now do many things that previously had been inhibited by the provincial office. This attitude also affected Mataram's education council

Officially, the education council was established by Mataram mayor decree 253/VI/2002 issued on 5 June 2002. This means it was only two months after the release of the MoNE decree requiring the setting up of education councils in each district. The rapid response and smoothness of the process to create an education council at Mataram was something that indicated interference from the government. Further, as stated by a member of the education council, the council was not structured and prepared via an official preparation committee as dictated by the MoNE

decree. A comment from an education council board member explained as follows.

> First, several government officials, including the head of the district education office called Mr X to talk about the people best suited as education council members. Then, they got some names and called the candidates to ask about their willingness to join. Following that, there was a meeting where the head of the district education office explained the education council, based on the decree, and its tasks. Finally, the Mataram education council was formed with its board members. Then, based on acclamation, Mr X become the head of the education council.

This shoulder-tapping method to decide the head of the education council by the education bureaucrats was something that was expected. Moreover, this demonstrates how the education council members were handpicked jointly by the head of the board and district education officials. The composition of the council was something appreciated by the monitoring team from the central office according to one board member.

> The council consists of seventeen members, as suggested by the decree and includes a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer. Those representing the society make up more than 90 per cent, though there are four to five bureaucrats. But not many of the bureaucrats are well equipped. That's why, according to a team from the central office in Jakarta, Mataram education council is the best because its members are better suited as the decree stated.

However, the whole recruitment process invited complaints from several stakeholders. An explanation from a representative of a teachers union is typical.

> What really happened was that education bureaucrats were involved deeply in creating education councils hastily. This means that practices that are necessary to establish new processes through society-based initiatives are only given lip service. In fact, education bureaucrats positioned many of their own favourite people inside the institution.

Two members of the council gave explanations for why the institution was established relatively quickly. Previously in Mataram, there was the school council, its functions and roles were similar to the education council, based on the MoNE decree. However, the school council acted like a non-government organisation outside the district education office's influence. Accordingly, it would be considered appropriate to create a new institution with legal backing and district influence.

According to the council official report, several activities had been completed by the education council since it was formed to early 2004. These included matters to do with the education council and the school committees, hearings with legislative, surveys of schools in Mataram regarding school committees and a seminar about the new curriculum. Although the council was to be given funding from the district government, in the past two years it was not allocated any funds. Consequently limited support for the education council has lead to complaints from two council members.

> Based on the mayor's decree the district government has clearly stated that every expense should be funded by the district budget, but up to now this is not yet seen. Fortunately, the central government has provided grants in the past two years to fund all activities.

> Actually we received little support from the government. We don't have a secretariat. No staff are helping us even with little things such as office stationery. As a board member, I sometimes have to deliver letters personally to schools or district education offices. In short, we are inhibited from working effectively.

Further, comments from some respondents suggest that the relationship between the district education office and the education council were not symmetrical as suggested by the decree. One school supervisor and a member of parliament directly noted what education council members said to them.

> A board member of an education council once told me that the council is like a kite that is meant to fly high but the string is short. So, how can the

> council 'fly' when everything is limited. In fact the council is pushed to become a volunteer institution by the district office.

> There is an impression that the education council is a subordinate of the district education office. [Researcher: Why? The education council is an independent organisation]. The members explicitly told me so. That's why we suggested to the mayor that it should not be the district office that is the boss to the education council.

The above responses were not surprising to many because of the way the council was formed. A representative of the teacher unions commented:

> The bureaucracy has an interest in co-opting members into each institution at the district level in order to preserve its power. That's why the education council is needed to be part of its power structure. The council has societal representatives who can contribute and participate on educational issues.

Some respondents from district and school levels had diverse views about the education council and its activities. A school supervisor, a principal and a school committee member, for instance, noted that the education council consisted of education experts who continue to give valuable input to the executive and legislative. Another teacher commented, however, that the education council was only a sophisticated name and it had little practical function at the school. A school supervisor was critical of the seminar organised by the council.

> Last month I found an invitation from the council regarding a seminar about a new curriculum. When I read the invitation, I was disappointed. This is not a role for the council to play. I am happy if the council facilitates the empowerment of society or groups of people in terms of community participation in education. That kind of seminar is not for the council. I think that the district education office is more appropriate to organise such a seminar. Further, I am a bit worried that members of the education council do not really know the key tasks of the education council itself.

One teacher suggested that the council should be named the 'school rehabilitation council'. He argued that, 'most of the council's job focussed on school rehabilitation projects, because it was required by the central government to liquidate the fund'. This cynical view was also confirmed by a board member of the council, but he also noted that potentially the council could play an even bigger role here when dealing with the district education office. To illustrate, one council member explained:

> We also involve the district education office in several activities such as in block grants from the central government to refurbish school buildings; and scholarship grants for students who come from low-income families. The official letter to liquidate the fund is jointly signed between us as without our agreement they will not get the money. This is because the requirement from the central office is that the education council has to be a part of the committee to administer the grants.

The explanation above indicates the tension between the district education office and the education council. The council had an advantage because it was an institution with community representatives and founded on regulations stipulated by the central government. However, as discussed, this advantage in terms of power dynamics is limited and infrequently demonstrated.

Conclusion

The analyses of the school-based management regulation above demonstrate that the *Kepmendiknas* has an ambiguous conceptualisation but lacks clarity about governance and management regarding new organisational arrangements at district and school levels. As indicated by Daun (2002) this led to expansion of power of one party, in this case the district education office. This also seems to indicate that central government officials did not really believe in local capacity and commitment at district and school levels, so they released the decree to slow the pace of decentralisation (McGinn and Welsh, 1999). It appears that by being brief and unclear in the decree's content, a minimum

effect is preferred and a slower decentralisation process is desired (Wirt et al., 1985). These criticisms relate to descriptions of how the institution, the education council, will play its role and functions, and fulfil their mandates. The societal expectations of the decrees have not materialised, because of the the ill-conceived nature of the decree as well as inadequate capacities at the district level to implement the policy.

The views and perspectives at the district level about education autonomy, where key stakeholders who held authority and could make substantial changes to SBM still had not utilised their power and influence (see, for example, Rondinelli et al., 1983). Knowledge and skills needed to facilitate school autonomy were not comprehensively understood (Rideout and Ural, 1993); rather, practices of power and self-interest were dominant. Consequently, the future of SBM looks bleak. These research findings point to the need for education of the local legislators and executives about SBM as a top priority. Improving the capacity of district education officials in general will lead to much more effective ways to support education councils and schools. In fact, devolved power in education given to the district can be customised according to local needs and fit with education decentralisation framework that supports governance.

References

Books and Journals

Abu-Duhou, I (1999). *School-based Management*. Paris: UNESCO: International Institute for Educational Planning.

Aspinal, E and Fealy, G (eds) (2003). *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia, Decentralisation and Democratisation.* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Bangay, C (2005). Private Education: Relevant or Redundant? Private Education, Decentralisation and National Provision in Indonesia. *Compare* 35 (2) pp. 167–179.

Brown, DJ (1990). *Decentralization and School-Based Management*. London: Falmer Press.

Bulock, A and Thomas, H (1997). *Schools at the Centre? A Study of Decentralisation*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Burki, SJ, Perry, EG and Dillinger, WR (1999). *Beyond the Center: Decentralizing the State.* Washington DC: The World Bank.

Daun, H (2002). *Educational Restructuring in the Context of Globalization and National Policy.* New York: Routledge Falmer.

Davies, L, Harber, C and Dzimadzi, C (2003). Educational Decentralisation in Malawi: a Study of Process. *Compare* 33 (2), pp. 139–154.

Fiske, E. B. (1996). *Desentralisasi Pengajaran, politik dan konsensus (Decentralization of Education, politics and consensus)* (B. Bengoteku, Trans.). Jakarta: Grasindo.

Fullan, M and Watson, N (2000). School-Based Management: Reconceptualizing to Improve Learning Outcomes. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement.* 11 (4). pp. 453–473

Gershberg, AI (1999). Education 'Decentralization' Process in Mexico and Nicaragua: Legislative Versus Ministry-led Reform Strategies. *Comparative Education.* 35 (1). pp. 63–80.

Hawkins, JN (2000). Centralization, Decentralization, Recentralization, Educational Reform in China. *Journal of Educational Administration.* 38 (5), pp. 442–454.

Jalal, F and Musthafa, B (eds). (2001). *Education Reform in the Context of Regional Autonomy: The Case of Indonesia*. Jakarta: Ministry of National Education, National Development Planning Agency and The World Bank.

McGinn, N and Welsh, T (1999). *Decentralization of Education, Why, When, What and How?* Fundamentals of Educational Planning – 64. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: http://www.unesco.org/iiep

Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (2002). *Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia No. 044/U/2002 tentang Dewan Pendidikan dan Komite Sekolah [The Decree of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia number 044/U/2002 concerning Education Councils and School Committees]*. Jakarta.

Murphy, J and Beck, LG (1995). *School-Based Management as School Reform, Taking Stock.* Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

Nieuwenhuis, FJ (2003). Managing Change During the Process of Decentralisation: A Question of Power and Authority. Paper presented at the International Conference on Education and Development, Oxford, UK.

Rideout, WM Jr and Ural, I (1993). *Centralised and Decentralised Models of Education: Comparative Studies.* South Africa: Center for Policy Analysis, Development Bank of Southern Africa.

Rondinelli, DA, Nellis, JR and Cheema, GS (1983). *Decentralization in Developing Countries, a Review of Recent Experience*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

Schiefelbein, E and Schiefelbein, P Three Decentralisation Strategies in Two Decades: Chile 1980–2000. *Journal of Educational Administration* 38 (5), pp. 412–425.

Wirt, F, Mitchell, DE and Marshall, C (1985). Perceptions of State Political Culture by Education Policy Elites. *Peabody Journal of Education*. 62 (4) pp. 48–60.

World Bank (2004). *Education in Indonesia: Managing the Transition to Decentralisation*. volume 2. revised edition, February 2004. Washington DC:

World Bank.
Wylie, C (1995). Finessing Site-based Management with Balancing Acts. *Educational Leadership*. 53 (4) December 1995.

Websites

Kompas. (2000). Mendiknas Berharap 20 persen Dana dari APBD (The Minister hopes that education budget for education in each district reach 20%). Kompas 5 July 2000.
URL: www.kompas.com/kompas-cetak/0007/05/dikbud/mend09.htm
[online accessed 5 July 2000]*Lombok Post* (2001). P3D belum Diserahkan, Diknas Mataram protes Dikpora [Educational authority has not been transferred, Mataram education district office complaint to provincial education office]. *Lombok Post*, 21 May 2001.