I. The Quality of Education in Indonesia

Progress in learning outcomes is cause for concern.

While Indonesia has made great strides in providing universal access to basic education in recent decades, the quality of education in the country has lagged. For instance, as reflected in the scores from the 2006 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test, over half of the Indonesian students who participated were below the basic proficiency level in Math skills1. Furthermore, of a recent cohort of children who completed grade 9, only 46 percent had actually attained functional literacy2.

Teacher quality is a key determinant of learning outcomes.

The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. Research also indicates that as teacher quality improves, lower-achieving students benefit most significantly. The Indonesian government has placed a high priority on improving the quality of teaching in order to improve student achievement. This priority has been evidenced both by the establishment of the Directorate General for Quality Improvement of Teachers and Education Personnel (PMPTK) within the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in 2004 and the passage of the 2005 Teacher Law.

Improved knowledge, skills, performance and qualifications of Indonesian teachers can enhance their professional quality.

The Teacher Law passed in 2005 requires that all teachers have a four-year degree. However, data shows that 44 percent of all teachers held such a degree4. The proportion of primary school teachers that has a four-year degree is particularly low at 23 percent.

There are concerns, too, about the subject knowledge, pedagogical competency, and general academic aptitude of teachers in Indonesia. In 2004, MoNE administered an aptitude test to selected school teachers to ascertain their professional competencies. The average score of primary and secondary school teachers was 38 percent and 45 percent respectively. Physics, math, and economics scores were even lower at 36 percent5.

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1. PISA 2006: Analysis and Data (OECD, 2007)
4. PMPTK database, 2006
5. PMPTK, 2004
In addition, the motivation and effort of teachers in Indonesia are a matter of serious concern. The rate of teacher absenteeism remains high, despite a improvement in recent years. In 2008, the SMERU Research Institute noted an overall reduction in the teacher absenteeism rate from 19.6 to 14.1 percent. However, this rate remains high at 23 percent in the remote areas of Indonesia.

II. Managing Teachers in Decentralized Indonesia: A Challenging Endeavor

Teacher certification: A reform to improve teacher quality

In order to be certified and to comply with the new Teacher Law, a teacher must have a four-year college or university degree, accumulate sufficient credits from post-graduate teacher professional training, and teach a minimum of 24 hours per week. It is the Government’s intention that by 2015, Indonesia’s school system will only allow certified teachers to teach. The initial years of teacher certification have provided insight into successful measures, as well as areas for improvement. MoNE has been able to put structures in place and orchestrate various stakeholders — including universities, provincial and district education offices, schools, and teachers — even given the diverse and complex environment in Indonesia. The initial years of implementation have involved both political and operational compromise in order to get the certification process started. The process has been revisited and fine-tuned from time to time, allowing certification to evolve continuously into a better tool.

There is a need for an effective selection and training process which places an emphasis on the academic achievements of candidates, their communication skills, and their motivation for teaching.

Teacher training colleges in Indonesia do not have strict selection and screening processes. At present, more candidates are entering the system than are needed. Compared with most top-performing countries which select individuals before they begin teacher training, Indonesia leaves the selection process to the moment when prospective teachers have graduated from teacher training. Teachers are then selected for employment from this larger group. For example, in Singapore, of every 100 teacher training college candidates, only 20 are accepted. 90 percent of these selected trainees will graduate and enter the teaching workforce.

Since the ratification of the 2005 Teacher Law, approved teacher training institutes (LPTKs) have been planning and are now implementing a four-year course (Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, or PGSD) leading to an S1 degree for a limited number of primary school teachers. Additionally, the Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG) is intended to provide teachers with post-graduate professional training and qualify them for certification. These programs, however, are still in their infancy.

The teaching force needs a quality assurance framework.

In general, a quality assurance framework has the following key aspects: (1) performance standards; (2) performance assessments; (3) performance reporting; (4) impact evaluation of policies and programs; (5) operational requirements; (6) adequate and equitable resources; (7) autonomy, intervention, and support; and (8) accountability and consequences for poor performance.

Local governments should target needy schools to assist them to meet minimum service standards.

A key challenge for local governments is to provide differentiated support to schools. A large proportion of available resources will need to be spent on the lowest-performing or neediest schools, with strong district support and oversight. The disparities within districts are large in terms of learning outcomes, school facilities, and teacher quality, as well as students’ socioeconomic background. Top-down assignment of teachers by district is likely to continue in the medium term for these schools in order to ensure teacher quality as well as availability.

Schools and principals should be empowered to hold teachers accountable.

Though a majority of public schools does not have much experience in managing teachers now, they can learn much from private schools which represent a large share of basic education service provision in Indonesia. Furthermore, under the oversight of a school committee, school-based teacher management requires strong professional leadership on the part of the principal. A principal should play a role in managing teacher induction, performance assessment, and appraisal; mentoring, promoting, and sanctioning teachers; disseminating teacher performance information to the local community and local government, and, finally, being accountable for overall school performance.

Table 1: Teacher Absence as a Measure of Effort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher absence (all schools)</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel schools (39 non-remote schools)</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote schools</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status: Civil servant</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract teacher</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teacher</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: SMERU (2008).

6 SMERU Research Institute. “Teacher Absenteeism and Remote Area Allowance Baseline Survey.” SMERU, Jakarta, Indonesia. Unannounced visits across the country were undertaken by survey teams to determine an average, representative absenteeism rate.
The existing teaching force should be certified and continued performance and accountability should be ensured.

The current certification process relies mostly on a portfolio review to assess teacher quality. This process is generally recognized as insufficient to separate high- from low-quality teachers. Based on the current design, certification is a one-time process and lacks the support of an accompanying quality assurance and accountability framework. Certification can only evaluate a teacher’s attributes at a point in time, but cannot assure performance over time. Other mechanisms, such as performance appraisal, rewards, sanctions, standards enforcement, student tests to measure educational outcomes, and the distribution of transparent information to key stakeholders, must also be in place to ensure quality and accountability. With the decentralization of the education system, teacher management decisions have become increasingly school-based, but local school officers generally are not well equipped for this responsibility, including holding teachers accountable for the quality of their work. A promotion system based upon teacher profiles, complete with merit barriers and a differential salary scale, is also needed as is an effective mechanism for managing underperforming teachers. Such a promotion system is common in other countries and provides a predictable career path for teachers, based on the continuous improvement of their skills. Finally, the generic appraisal process common to the rest of the civil service is inadequate for appraising teacher performance. Currently, there is no requirement that teachers undertake an induction training program as part of their required probationary year. The end of this year should become a critical point in teacher management to further screen out candidates who are unfit for the teaching profession.

Quality pre-service training must respond to the staffing needs of schools.

A regular tracer study of the career paths of graduates of teacher training institutes (LPTKs) should be carried out to better link coursework and teaching skills with success in real classrooms. Emphasis should be placed on the role of LPTKs as training centers (or “clinics”) that provide continuous professional development for in-service teachers, thus ensuring that the quality of the teaching workforce is maintained and improved through up-to-date teaching methodologies and skills building.

Strengthening the curriculum design and delivery of primary school teacher training (the S1 or PGSD) and post-degree teacher professional training (PPG) is the key to qualified teachers in the future.

Teacher costs will increase significantly in the coming decade.

As new teachers enter the system and existing teachers go through the certification process, an increasingly larger portion of the education budget will be allocated to salaries, inclusive of the professional allowance. It is estimated that by 2015 the professional (certification) allowance alone will be equal to approximately two-thirds of total education expenditures in 2006 at central, provincial, and district levels. Without managing the significant fiscal pressure created by certification, there is a risk that certified teachers will not receive their professional allowance on time, the process will slow down and the teaching profession will cease to attract high-caliber university graduates.

A certified teacher is entitled to a professional allowance in an amount equivalent to his or her base salary.

Chart 3: Increased Costs (in real terms) of New Teacher Allowances

The hiring of teachers should be aligned with school needs.

In many ways, the trend towards increased hiring at the district and school level is positive. Increased hiring at these levels fosters greater flexibility and better addresses actual needs, since schools and local governments are more closely in touch with the end-users of educational services. However,
while local governments are responsible for hiring, they do not bear the brunt of the costs, as the central government pays the salaries of civil servants through funds that are transferred to the districts (DAU). The central government also pays all functional, certification, and other teacher allowances for both public and private school teachers. The hiring and payment of teachers must therefore be realigned so that the true costs of an additional teacher are considered at the time of hire.

**The central government should promote multi-grade teaching and revise staffing norms to improve efficiency.**

Part of the inefficiency in Indonesia comes from the fact that Indonesia has some of the lowest student-teacher ratios (STRs) in the world. At the primary level this is mainly because Indonesia has very small schools, and while 47% of all primary schools have fewer than 150 students enrolled, the staffing policy requires a minimum of 9 teachers.

Multi-grade teaching has been perceived as an emergency measure for schools that have a shortage of teachers, but international evidence shows that multi-grade teaching is, in fact, extremely effective from a quality perspective. In many cases students in a multi-grade setting have outperformed those in a traditional grade structure. A successful multi-grade school system should stress an active and participatory approach.

This approach encourages: (1) child-centered, participatory, self-paced learning; (2) a flexible calendar, promotion system, and grading; (3) a relevant curriculum based on life skills and children’s daily lives; (4) a closer relationship between a school and its community; (5) a new role for the teacher as facilitator of learning, and (6) improved student self-esteem and egalitarian and democratic attitudes.

School staffing formulas and policies related to teaching specific subjects or classes must be adjusted to fit the realities of Indonesia’s system, which has an inordinately large proportion of small schools. Specific staffing policy recommendations include: (1) schools should be staffed on the basis of the number of students, rather than the number of classes; (2) staffing formulas should take into consideration the small size of a large number of schools so that no schools have fewer than three teachers plus a principal; (3) regular primary schools should be staffed on the basis of one teacher for every approximately 30 students, plus a principal (with a minimum of four teachers in every school); (4) maximum class size at the primary level should be 40; (5) multi-grade classes should be formed when the combined enrollment of any three or more consecutive grades is 25 or less.

**Recommendations**

- Base the amount of the DAU on a district’s student population, enabling districts both to hire and pay teachers.
- Have districts cover some of costs of teacher allowances, such as the functional allowance, so that they assume part of the financial burden of hiring additional teachers and would therefore have an incentive to control hiring within the district.
- Implement an effective selection and training process to ensure that the most suited candidates enter the teaching profession.
- Develop a teacher quality assurance framework.
- Introduce multigrade teaching in small primary schools, particularly in difficult-to-staff areas.
- Deploy teachers to schools on the basis of the number of students rather than the number of classes.
- Enforce the 24-period/hour rule in order to rationalize teacher hiring and discourage schools from overstaffing.
- Revise the instruments of certification to include additional activities, such as an impartial subject matter competency tests.
- Require periodic recertification.
- Use teacher induction during the probationary year to improve the effectiveness of beginning teachers.
- Use teacher performance appraisals to provide annual confirmation of the efficiency of all school staff.
- Improve the performance of teachers through regular reporting on their efficiency.
- Improve career paths via policies that establish a ladder of progressive graded levels (i.e., profiles) and a promotion pathway.