

Does the Implementation of School Zoning Policies Equalize the Quality of Education? Case Study at the Junior High School Level

Arif Rohman¹, Himawan Putranta², Fajar Sidik¹

¹ Department of Education Policy, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia

² Department of Physics Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia

Abstract – The problem of inequality in the quality of education began to be resolved with school zoning policies. Departing from this ideal view, the aim was to evaluate the extent to which school zoning policies were able to achieve equal quality education. This quantitative evaluation research focuses on 10 favorite schools with state status in Sleman Regency's junior high school, Yogyakarta Special Region, Indonesia. The data was gathered from literature and observation. The data that has been obtained was analyzed by comparing the conditions of school quality before and after the zoning policy is implemented. This study found that schools that occupy the top ten rankings or favorite schools, both before to and following the school zoning regulation was put into effect, were still in a dominant position compared to other schools. This finding indicates that student input and output before to and following the school zoning regulation was enforced was also relatively the same. This study concluded that the quality before and after the zoning policy was implemented did not show significant changes because the conditions were relatively the same or one could say that they had not changed.

Keywords – Education quality, equity, junior high school, policy evaluation, zoning policy.

1. Introduction

In recent years, particularly since 2017, the school zoning policies set by the central government and regional governments have received the attention of many parties because of the various problems that have arisen in the field [1], [2]. On the one hand, school zoning policies have been assessed as having positive and negative impacts on the other [3], [4], [5], [6]. During the various problems that have arisen, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the school zoning policy is a method for regulating new student acceptance (PPDB) that is based on the area where students live and strives to equalize educational quality by eliminating the caste of preferred schools. From the government's point of view, the disparity that occurs between one school and another is the result of perceptions of favorite schools and non-favorite schools [7], [8]. So far, the perception of favorite and unrated schools enlarges and widens the gap in the quality of education between schools [9], [10]. The presence of zoning policies is believed to encourage equitable public services, public schools in producing services that include non-rivalry, non-excludability, and non-discrimination [11], [12].

In line with the previous statement, the Ministry of Education and Culture stated that zoning-based education management is intended to achieve equitable quality and fair education. With this spirit, the main goal of educational zoning is to improve educational equity and justice in educational service quality at all levels [13], [14]. In the implementation process, intervention in the input of new students in schools because of the zoning system's adoption in the PPDB mechanism is one of the priority targets in efforts to equalize education.

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Corresponding author: Arif Rohman,
Department of Education Policy, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta
Email: arif_rohman@uny.ac.id

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In addition, education zoning is basically to prioritize partiality for underprivileged children, eliminate discrimination and injustice in education services, equalize the quantity and quality of schools including teachers, and assist local governments in fulfilling minimum service standards (SPM) [15], [16]. Therefore, school zoning policies are used as the spearhead of central and regional governments to accelerate equal distribution of school quality, junior high schools (SMP) [17], [18]. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind education since the government's greatest issues are at this level, such as dropouts, the most prevalent number, and quality disparities across schools [19], [20].

Local governments' school zoning rules can be examined using study findings on how to analyze school zoning policies. Several studies focus on testing the efficiency of school zoning in ensuring equitable distribution of educational quality. This is what has been done by Junaedy *et al.* [21] in evaluating the implementation of zoning at SMP Negeri 1 Abiansemal, Badung Regency, Bali, and shows that the school zoning system's implementation has fallen short of expectations. This is due to the problem of lack of supporting facilities, human resources, limitations on the number of quotas, and pressure from external parties on schools. This study's findings are the outcomes of a review of the school zoning system in Denpasar City which shows that the zoning strategy has not been implemented effectively since school facilities and infrastructure are inconsistent [22]. Meanwhile, research conducted by Agustina *et al.* [23] in the city of Surabaya shows that the results of an evaluation of the implemented school zoning policy have not been effective because the local government is not ready to implement because of the limited number of schools and their uneven distribution.

In contrast to previous findings, several other studies focused on highlighting the implementation of zoning policies which were considered effective. This statement is to the findings of Riswan & Wibowo [24] who evaluated the implementation of school zoning at state middle schools in Yogyakarta. Based on these findings, the zoning policy implemented is considered optimal and effective because the distribution of the number of students is by applicable regulations. The findings of a study conducted by Hardiono *et al.* [25] in evaluating the City of Surabaya, showed that the implementation of zoning had been effective in terms of the number of enthusiasts, adequacy, and accuracy of the rules. Meanwhile, Arsanto & Budiraharjo [26] have evaluated the implementation of zoning policies from the communication dimension.

These findings reveal that communication in the implementation of PPDB in Kulonprogo Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta between schools, education offices, and parents is considered effective.

In addition, several studies focused on providing notes regarding obstacles in zoning policy implementation. Handani & Frinaldi [27] shows that zoning-based PPDB implementation in Padang City public junior high school is quite nice. However, several inhibiting factors emerged, such as differences in community interpretation of the rules, not optimal socialization, and lack of support from the community. There are several obstacles encountered in implementing zoning which include zoning policies that have not been socialized, inadequate school capacity, and quality disparities between schools [28], [29]. However, there are arguments stating that the implementation of school zoning is in accordance with existing regulations [30], [31]. However, the obstacles that arose in implementation of zoning policies included errors in ordinate points, standard operating procedures (SOPs) that sometimes changed, and inadequate implementing capacity. Furthermore, other findings show that even though they comply with applicable regulations, non-favorite schools experience problems in capturing good-quality children [32], [33]. This is caused by one of the factors, namely perceptions of favorite and least liked schools that cannot be eliminated due to unsupportive local government policies and unpreparedness in providing quality educational facilities and infrastructure in all schools [34], [35].

In contrast to previous research, this study departs from the assumptions and narratives constructed by the central government that schools that have been dominant or favored so far will shift and be even or spread out because the distribution of student input is by the zone of each area of residence. In this way, the school zoning system can fulfill its function of equalizing the quality of education and eliminating the 'caste' distinction between favorite and non-favorite schools. By assuming ideal conditions like that, this study proposes the formulation of a research question, namely how does a region's implementation of school zoning policies and fair educational quality compare before and after? Through these main research questions, this study aims to show the results of evaluating the quality of instruction amongst schools, both before and following the adoption of zoning regulations in junior high schools. The contribution of the research results obtained can be used as material in compiling and making decisions to overcome problems in policymakers and interested stakeholders implementing school zoning policies.

2. Methods

This quantitative research was conducted by comparing studies on the implementation of school zoning policies in the special region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The focus of this research is on the implementation of school zoning policies in junior high schools.

2.1. General Background

This research is a quantitative evaluation of the junior high school educational zoning policy. In this case, policy evaluation studies are used to determine how well school zoning policies can achieve their objectives [36]. Furthermore, policy evaluation is an activity of interpreting (appraisal), providing numbers (rating), and assessing (assessment) to obtain valid and reliable information regarding policy performance. Evaluation is needed to see the gap between "expectations" and "reality" so that policy evaluation is an activity to assess the level of achievement of policy objectives. Therefore, policy evaluation as research is used to gather, evaluate, and report data on school zoning policy implementation and evaluate them by comparing them before and after they are implemented.

2.2. Participants

Research on evaluating Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta Special Region, Indonesia, implemented zoning policies at the junior high school level with state status. Sleman Regency was used as a research location because, from year to year, most of the schools owned were included in the 10 best categories in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) based on the results of the regional education standardization assessment (ASPD) scores for 2022-2023 [37]. Policy evaluation studies are used to evaluate the implementation of zoning policies to ensure fair access to an excellent education in the Sleman Regency. This study focuses on assessing the quality of 10 favorite schools prior to the establishment of the zoning policy and compares them to situations after the zoning policy was adopted. The ten junior high schools whose zoning policies were analyzed were SMP Negeri 1 Godean 1, SMP Negeri 4 Pakem, SMP Negeri 4 Depok, SMP Negeri 1 Kalasan, SMP Negeri 1 Sleman, SMP Negeri 3 Godean, SMP Negeri 1 Depok, SMP Negeri 2 Berbah, SMP Negeri 1 Pakem, and SMP Negeri 1 Seyegan.

Meanwhile, the data used in this study include PPDB documents for junior high schools in Sleman Regency in 2017-2018, PPDB documents for junior high schools in Sleman Regency in 2021-2022, documents for the results of the 2015-2017 National Examination/UN at the State Junior High School level in Sleman Regency, and ASPD Value document for junior high school level in the Special Region of Yogyakarta in 2022-2023.

2.3. Instruments and Procedures

This quantitative evaluation research on junior high school zoning policies in Sleman Regency was conducted using literature and observation. The indicators used as the basis for evaluating school zoning policies are the input of students' academic scores and the output of student academic scores in each evaluated junior high school. Several studies show that there is a relationship between student input scores and school quality [38], [39], [40], [41]. Meanwhile, Allensworth & Clark [42] discovered that the association between school quality and test results varies at different locations in the distribution of test scores between schools. Xie & Zhang [43] presents a comparative approach to school quality that focuses on the effect of student report cards or input scores on school academic achievement. Furthermore, Muus *et al.* [44] show that input factors contribute mostly or around 68% to school quality, while process factors contribute around 6.5% to school quality. Furthermore, Xiao *et al.* [45] have reviewed the literature on school input-output analysis and found that both student input and school input influence school output.

2.4. Data Analysis

In this study, data was analyzed by comparing school circumstances before and after school zoning implementation, between school inputs and outputs, the quality between schools could be assessed, and how far the change in position had occurred. In the process of data analysis, descriptive quantitative methods are used to present evaluation results in the form of numbers or averages and interpret trends that arisen both before and after the zoning policy was enacted. The validity of the data can be seen from the findings in the form of numerical data presented and readers can validate between one data and another. Meanwhile, the flow of data analysis stages can be shown in Figure 1.

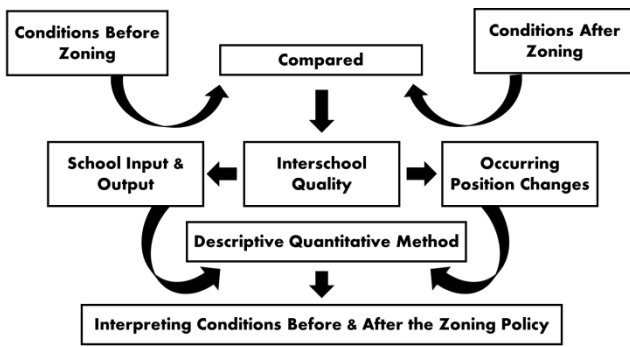


Figure 1. School zoning policy evaluation research flow

3. Results and Discussion

The central government issued Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 20 of 2019 in the implementation of PPDB school zoning. Based on the provisions of this regulation, each regional government needs to follow up on it in the form of a Governor's Regulation for the SMA level and the Regent/Mayor Regulation for the SMP level. Regional regulations made will become a reference for the education office in each region as guidelines and technical instructions or operational implementation of PPDB [46], [47]. The local governments follow zoning PPDB policy according to the Minister of Education and Culture, although these derivative regulations still vary in practice. That is, to respond to central government policies, each local government has an affirmation in making regulations in implementing zoning policies [48], [49].

3.1. Profile of Junior High Schools and Zoning Provisions in Sleman Regency

Sleman Regency has 54 public junior high schools. The school zoning provisions imposed by the Sleman district government include general zoning routes, poor family card (KK) zoning, and children with special needs (ABK) zoning which can be illustrated in Figure 2.

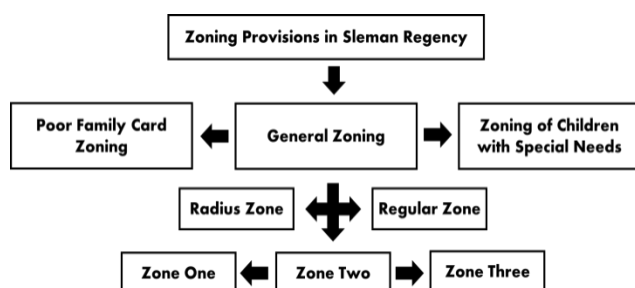


Figure 2. Illustration of school zoning in Sleman Regency

The zoning route has a quota of 90% of the school's capacity. Furthermore, specifically for residents of the Sleman Regency based on family

cards or including general zoning which consists of radius zoning and regular zoning.

Radius zoning applies to prospective students who are domiciled within a radius of 0-200 meters from state junior high schools and must be accepted. The PPDB application system uses domicile coordinates and school coordinates to determine school zoning groups. This school zoning policy does not accommodate distance calculations manually or from Maps providers on the Internet. Zoning 1 (one) is determined by the prospective student's residency on the list of communities closest to the SMP. Meanwhile, the final score in determining the selection ranking for new student admissions is obtained from the sum of 100 zoning points with national standard school exam scores (USBN) and/or academic or non-academic achievement scores.

The residence of prospective pupils in the administrative region of Sleman Regency outside Zoning 1 determines Zoning 2 (two). For prospective students who comply with the provisions of zoning two will be given zoning points worth 30. Furthermore, Zoning 3 (three) is based on prospective students' residence outside the administrative territory of Sleman Regency, especially in public junior high schools whose capacity is not fulfilled. For prospective students who comply with the provisions of zoning three are not given zoning points. Meanwhile, zoning for students from poor families has a quota of 10% of the zoning quota of 90%. This zoning policy is intended for prospective students from low-income households who are registered with the Sleman Regency Social Service and have a poor family card. Prospective students who register through this zoning will be selected based on the closest distance measured by air distance from the domicile coordinate point to the school coordinate point in the PPDB application system. This school zoning policy does not accommodate distance calculations manually or from Maps providers on the Internet.

Children with special needs (ABK) or students with disabilities have a 3% zoning quota in this school zoning system. This zoning is intended for children with special needs who can attend formal schools as evidenced by a letter of recommendation from a professional psychologist from a government agency such as a health center, government hospital, or state university. Meanwhile, the distribution of school zoning students is regulated by Regulation of the Head of the Sleman Regency Education Office number 1 of 2019 concerning regulation of school capacity in the acceptance of new pupils (PPDB) for junior high school (SMP) level. In this provision, the general distribution of the number of students can be shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sleman regency's average distribution of junior high school students in 2019

Number of Public Schools	Regular Capacity	Zoning Line (90%)			Achievements (5%)	Parental Transfer Pathway (5%)
		General	Poor Family	ABK		
54 School	7904	6189	723	198	420	374
Average	146 students per school	114	13	3	8	6

Based on the data shown in Table 1, the average school capacity is 146 students along with their distribution of percentage proportions. The general zoning pathway occupies the highest proportion of acceptance for prospective junior high school students and is followed by zoning for poor family cards and zoning for children with special needs. Meanwhile, the junior high school level in Sleman district continues to provide opportunities for prospective students who do not comply with the zoning provisions but achieve 5% more than most other prospective students. There is also an affirmation line or parental transfer line of 5%.

This percentage distribution provision is intended to equalize quality among state schools in the Sleman Regency area.

3.2. Comparison of Input Quality Conditions Before and After the School Zoning Policy

Prior to the zoning policy, acceptance of potential new students was still based on the results of the national exam (UN) or the national standard school final exam (UASBN) as one of the value components for continuing from elementary school (SD) to junior high school level. The following 10 schools are the schools with the highest average school enrollment scores of the 44 schools in 2017-2018 in Sleman Regency as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Average school input before the school zoning policy in Sleman Regency

Rank	School	Academic Year	Academic Year	Average
		2016/2017	2017/2018	
1	SMP Negeri 1 Godean	286.71	289.75	288.23
2	SMP Negeri 4 Pakem	287.78	285.22	286.50
3	SMP Negeri 4 Depok	282.82	285.06	283.94
4	SMP Negeri 1 Kalasan	280.54	283.92	282.23
5	SMP Negeri 1 Sleman	279.70	284.38	282.04
6	SMP Negeri 3 Godean	276.71	276.66	276.68
7	SMP Negeri 1 Depok	275.91	272.71	274.31
8	SMP Negeri 2 Berbah	268.92	274.79	271.85
9	SMP Negeri 1 Pakem	270.80	271.75	271.27
10	SMP Negeri 1 Seyegan	271.82	270.50	271.16

After the school zoning regulation is adopted or beginning in 2020, the acceptance of new junior high school students uses the value from the regional education standardization assessment (ASPD). ASPD is one of the measurement instruments used to see the academic ability of students at the end of the elementary school level and junior high school equivalent. ASPD is used by the Special Region of Yogyakarta Government to obtain secondary data as material for mapping the quality of education in the Special Region of Yogyakarta as well as measuring the minimum ability of individual students academically in terms of reading literacy, numeracy literacy, and scientific literacy.

The reason for the Yogyakarta Special Region government using the ASPD score is to see students' ability to solve regional standardized questions. Subjects tested in ASPD include mathematics, English, Indonesian, and science. ASPD is the choice of each student and student participation in ASPD does not affect student graduation. However, the ASPD score is one of the components in calculating the combined score with a weight of 55%, which is used as a selection tool for PPDB like elementary to junior high and junior high to high school. The ranking of the 10 schools with the highest average ASPD value input in the Sleman district for 2021-2022 can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. The average school input after the school zoning policy in Sleman Regency

Rangk	School	Academic Year 2020/2021	Academic Year 2021/2022	Average
1	SMP Negeri 4 Pakem	258.57	266.59	262.58
2	SMP Negeri 1 Godean	256.67	263.06	259.86
3	SMP Negeri 4 Depok	258.12	259.63	258.87
4	SMP Negeri 3 Godean	250.61	251.77	251.19
5	SMP Negeri 1 Kalasan	252.87	249.36	251.11
6	SMP Negeri 1 Sleman	253.06	246.05	249.55
7	SMP Negeri 1 Depok	249.96	244.04	247.00
8	SMP Negeri 1 Pakem	250.85	235.97	243.41
9	SMP Negeri 2 Berbah	247.82	237.15	242.48
10	SMP Negeri 2 Mlati	248.09	236.59	242.34

Based on the data shown in Table 3, the comparison of student input before and after the school zoning was enforced, the evaluation results showed that most of the best school positions remained unchanged or did not change. That is, this condition indicates that the dominance of school quality as symbolized by a ranking can be said to be relatively the same, in terms of the quality of student input scores, even though the zoning policy has been enforced. This indicates that zoning policies may not have had a major impact on leveling out the quality of students' academic grades in various schools [50], [51]. Other factors that are more dominant or complex can affect the ranking or ranking of school quality, the zoning policy has had little impact on the distribution of students' academic performance between schools. For example, factors such as teaching quality, educational support from family and environment, and other school policies may have

more influence on student academic outcomes than zoning policies [52], [53]. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a more in-depth and comprehensive evaluation to understand the factors that play a role in influencing the quality of schools and the overall impact of zoning policies.

3.3. Outcome Quality Conditions Before and After the School Zoning Policy

Before the enactment of the school zoning policy, one of the school quality indicators was measured using the results of the national exam (UN). This national exam tests students' academic abilities through four subjects, including mathematics, Indonesian, English, and science. Based on 54 schools, there are 10 schools with the best ranking that have the highest average scores on national exams as can be seen in Table 4 [54].

Table 4. The average results of the junior high school national exams in Sleman Regency from 2015 to 2017

Rank	School	The 2017 Year	The 2016 Year	The 2015 Year
1	SMP Negeri 4 Pakem	90.47	90.47	92.83
2	SMP Negeri 1 Godean	88.70	89.32	91.95
3	SMP Negeri 4 Depok	85.74	86.21	88.93
4	SMP Negeri 1 Depok	83.55	84.18	86.46
5	SMP Negeri 1 Sleman	82.83	83.51	86.58
6	SMP Negeri 1 Kalasan	82.06	82.90	86.78
7	SMP Negeri 3 Godean	81.55	84.51	84.69
8	SMP Negeri 2 Mlati	79.99	81.81	84.75
9	SMP Negeri 3 Depok	79.39	79.82	78.94
10	SMP Negeri 2 Depok	77.57	75.62	82.15

After the school zoning policy was implemented, based on the output value of the regional education standardization assessment of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, the list of the 10 best schools is shown in Table 4. In PPDB, student acceptance through the ASPD pathway is 55 percent, 5-semester report card scores are 40 percent, and original junior high school accreditation is as much as 5 percent.

As tested in the National Examination, the exam in ASDP also uses four subjects, namely Indonesian, mathematics, English, and natural sciences. Meanwhile, data on the ranking of the standardized regional education assessment values for the Special Region of Yogyakarta can be shown in Table 5 [37].

Table 5. Ranking of ASPD results for junior high schools in Yogyakarta's Special Region in 2022

Rang	School	Region
1	SMP Negeri 4 Pakem	Sleman Regency
2	SMP Negeri 4 Depok	Sleman Regency
3	SMP Negeri 1 Godean	Sleman Regency
4	SMP Negeri 5 Yogyakarta	Yogyakarta City
5	SMP Negeri 8 Yogyakarta	Yogyakarta City
6	SMP Negeri 1 Sleman	Sleman Regency
7	SMP Negeri 1 Depok	Sleman Regency
8	SMP Negeri 1 Kalasan	Sleman Regency
9	SMP Negeri 3 Godean	Sleman Regency
10	SMP Negeri 2 Mlati	Sleman Regency

Based on a comparison of the outcomes of academic scores before and after the school zoning was enforced, the evaluation results show that most of the best school positions remain the same or have not changed. That is, this condition indicates that the quality or ranking of schools can be said to be relatively the same, in terms of the quality of student ASPD scores, even though the zoning policy has been enforced. These findings suggest that zoning policies have had no impact on increasing the quality or ranking of schools in terms of students' academic performance [55], [56]. This may raise questions about the effectiveness of zoning policies as a solution to raise total educational quality [57], [58]. In addition, there are also other factors outside of zoning policies that are more dominant in determining school quality or ranking. Factors such as teaching quality, school management, parental support, and learning environment are likely to influence student achievement more significantly than zoning policies [59], [60].

Zoning policies that have been in effect so far need to be refined or combined with other policies to achieve the expected results. There may be a need for a cross-sector approach that involves various parties, including schools, government, and society, in improving the quality of education holistically [61], [62]. Although the results of this evaluation show a relatively small change in the position of the best school, it should be noted that this is only one indicator of the quality of education.

A more in-depth evaluation needs to be carried out to see the impact of the zoning policy on other aspects such as students' non-academic skills, attendance, and the level of student participation in school activities [63], [64].

Therefore, stakeholders in education need to carry out in-depth reflection and collaborate to re-evaluate the goals and implementation of zoning policies and develop strategies to comprehensively improve the quality of education.

4. Conclusion

The school zoning policy should ideally be a tool of the central government and regional governments to solve the problem of quality disparities between regions and between schools. In particular, the central and regional governments establish a zoning system to carry out equal distribution of quality education and minimize or eliminate school caste. With the existence of a school zoning policy, both the government and the community no longer assume or enforce between favorite and unfavorable schools. Thus, the input values of students with the highest grades are no longer focused on a particular school on one side, and the concentration of the input of students with the lowest scores is concentrated on other schools. With the presence of a school zoning policy, student input values will spread or be distributed in the area or zone where the student lives. However, based on the results of an evaluation study in Sleman Regency, the findings that can be obtained are that the condition of student input in implementing school zoning policies can be said to be relatively the same or unchanged. The state of student output prior to and after the implementation of the school zoning policy can alternatively be described as relatively the same, constant, or fixed. The proof is, 10 out of 54 schools occupy the top 10 ranking positions, before to and following the implementation of the school zoning policy, the evaluation results show that their position is still leading or dominant compared to other schools. Based on these findings, this study concludes that there are no significant changes because conditions in terms of equal distribution of school quality Sleman Regency's public junior high school level remains virtually unchanged, regardless of whether the school zoning ordinance has been implemented.

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