

Sociocultural Drivers of Local Educational Innovations: Findings from Indonesia

Risa W. Nihayah, Shintia Revina, Syaikhul Usman

Abstract

What drives educational innovation to emerge at local level? We contribute on this question by examining three highly innovative districts in Indonesia. Our specific aim is to understand how the innovations are related to the districts' socio-cultural context. Through a combination of qualitative research methods comprising of observations, interviews, and group discussions with stakeholders in each study location, we identified three aspects of the socio-cultural context – resulting from the embodiment of social norms within a districts' social networks – that significantly determined how local innovations are defined and implemented in each district: (1) the norms of trust among community members, (2) tradition, or lack thereof, of collaboration at community and elite levels, (3) people's participation. We recommend that districts establish innovation exchange connections so that they can learn from each other, and that central government to be cognizant of local differences when crafting national education policies.

Keywords: decentralization, educational innovation, socio-cultural analysis, Indonesia



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BOS	<i>Bantuan Operasional Sekolah</i>	School Operational Assistance Fund
Bappeda	<i>Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah</i>	Regional Development Planning Agency
DIY	<i>Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta</i>	Special Region of Yogyakarta
DPRD	<i>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah</i>	Regional House of Representatives
FGD		focus group discussion
CLH	<i>Jam Belajar Masyarakat</i>	Community Learning Hours
LEA	<i>Dinas Pendidikan Setempat</i>	Local Education Agency
PISA		Programme for International Student Assessment
PKK	<i>Pemberdayaan dan Kesejahteraan Keluarga</i>	Family Welfare and Empowerment
PP	<i>Paguyuban Orang Tua</i>	Parental Participation
RW	<i>rukun warga</i>	a unit of local administration consisting of several RT (neighbourhood units) within a <i>kelurahan</i>
FE	<i>Sekolah Keluarga</i>	Family Education
SAP	<i>Sistem Kelas Tuntas Berkelanjutan</i>	Student Automatic Promotion
SSG	<i>Satuan Polisi Pendidikan</i>	School Security Guard
PS	<i>Supervisi Silang</i>	Peer Supervision of Teacher Performance
WECPA	<i>Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak</i>	Women Empowerment and Child Protection Agency

Glossary

<i>Eja Tompi Na Doang</i>	An idiom in Makassar language which represents the spirit of Makassar people to being brave in taking an action, without needed to put much consideration on its potential consequences
<i>gotong royong</i>	Javanese values which represent mutual assistance in everyday life
<i>guyub rukun</i>	Social harmony
<i>handarbeni</i>	A tradition of taking care each other in Yogyakarta
<i>kampung</i>	Some neighbourhoods in urban Java where the inhabitants come from rural area
<i>karaeng</i>	Royal leader of Gowa Kingdom descendant
<i>kelurahan</i>	Village administrative area in urban districts
<i>kemenakan</i>	Niece and nephew
<i>mamak</i>	Mother's brother
<i>saayun salangkah</i>	Bukittinggi motto which promotes the same vision towards the district's advancement
<i>segoro amarto</i>	A spirit of mutual assistance to further Yogyakarta progress
<i>siri'</i>	Makassarese's value of high pride

1. Introduction

Decentralization is regarded to be a favourable strategy to improving public services, including education systems, in many countries (Bjork 2006; Caldwell 2009). As opposed to a centralized system, where the decision making process often amounts to a one-size-fits-all solution that neglects the complexity involved in local implementation, a decentralized system devolves authority to local stakeholders such as regional governments, schools, and the community in order to raise their participation in design and implementation of educational programmes (ADB 2014; Vernez et al. 2012). Decentralization, is argued, allows more rapid identification of problems and search for more appropriate responses, because local entities can incrementally develop and experiment with education programmes that suit their particular needs (Bunnel et al. 2013).

While the aims of educational improvement are universal, such as improving student's literacy and numeracy skills, different cultures may have different ideas of what educational policy or programme they need to create in response to their local priorities. The shared norms and values respected by community members shaped by a region's historical socio-cultural context determine the way people think about what form of innovation is valuable to their society (Giles and Hargreaves 2006; Bray and Tang 2006). The formulation of such educational programmes and policies is often considered to result from political democratization, whereby local entities would like to be consulted and involved in the decision-making process (McGinn and Welsh 1999; Rosser and Fahmi 2016). It is also worth noting that the local stakeholders' relationships and networks are equally crucial, as they enable strong collaboration that can source the resources necessary to implement an innovative idea (Alaerts 2020; Bebbington 2006; Putnam 1993).

Given the potential of socio-cultural context to understand the extent education policies are interpreted and defined at local level (Moolenaar 2012), unfortunately, little is known on how the socio-cultural context (in terms of nature of shared norms and networks) could influence to the type and process of the emerging local educational innovations. Through this approach, socio-cultural analysis will likely able to explain how the implementation of local innovations which were formulated based on the strength of local context could improve educational practice in a particular setting.

In this study, we examine locally driven educational innovation in a decentralized context of Indonesia. Indonesia expanded the authority and responsibility granted to local governments (514 districts in 34 provinces) for financing and managing education since 2001. At the same time, government investment in education rose from around 10% (in 1997) to nearly 20% (since 2009) of the national budget. Considering the availability of both

resources and authority at the local level, one would expect different educational innovations to emerge in Indonesia's more than 500 highly heterogeneous districts, located in a vast archipelago that stretches for 3,181 miles and comprise more than 300 ethnic groups who speak 700s local languages. However, despite having a greater authority, studies show that the majority of Indonesian districts mostly focus on formulating financing-related educational policies such as voucher for students or increased unconditional teacher allowances (Zulfa, Suryadarma, and Bima 2019; Rossey, n.d.). The evidence suggests policies that merely focus on adding resources do not make any improvement in student's learning (De Ree et al. 2017; Mbiti et al 2019). Meanwhile, the educational performance of Indonesian students in the decentralized era remains low (Channa 2015; Kaffenberger and Pritchett 2017). Beatty et al. (2018) revealed the flattening Indonesian learning profiles from 2000 to 2014, indicating no improvement. Similarly, the latest PISA test data showed that Indonesian student's performance has stagnated at a low level, with reading literacy of Indonesian students in 2018 was at the same level as in 2000.

To establish how the type and process of innovation are related to district's socio-cultural context, our qualitative research focuses on three districts: Bukittinggi in West Sumatera province, Yogyakarta district in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, and Gowa district in South Sulawesi province. These districts were selected because they are among the few exceptional Indonesian districts that are actively trying and testing new programmes to solve education problems. We argue that by understanding the factors that drives innovation in these three districts with distinct socio-cultural contexts, we may be able to draw lesson on how social norms and social networks influence the type and process of the emerging local educational innovations more broadly.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we describe how we selected districts and study participants. Second, we outline a very brief literature review to build theoretical foundation on innovation process and socio-cultural context. Then, we analyze the formation and evolution of two locally initiated innovations in each district. Third, we present the relationships between stakeholders in each district and relate them with socio-cultural context of respective district. The fourth section concludes.

2. In search of local innovation

In our search for local educational innovations, other than those that focus on providing additional funding, we contacted 64 districts that showed the highest improvements in learning outcomes, as recorded from 2010 to 2015. Out of these districts, 23 districts reported having innovations which explicitly aim to increase learning. Of these,

only few districts have sustained local education programmes for more than two years. Note that decentralization began almost two decades ago. Many districts are either still piloting the innovations or have discontinued an innovative scheme. From this result, we narrowed down our search and selected three innovative districts in different Indonesian regions to be further studied as case studies: Bukittinggi, Yogyakarta, and Gowa.

We conducted an explorative study in March and April 2019 to orient ourselves with the local contexts. From this early stage of our study, we identified several educational innovations and selected two major innovations which aimed to improve learning in each district. In Bukittinggi, we identified “Peer Supervision of Teacher Performance” (PP) and “Family Education” (FE). In Yogyakarta, we examined “Community Learning Hours” (CLH) and “Parental Participation” (PP). In Gowa, we identified “School Security Guard” (SSG) and “Student Automatic Promotion” (SAP). Following this, we conducted our main fieldwork from June to December 2019 to collect data and observe the identified innovations in action. In each innovation, we investigated the full innovation processes from idea generation, elaboration, evaluation, to its implementation phase. We then examined how socio-cultural context in terms of strength and nature of social network as well as norms of trust and shared values in each district play out in these processes. Consequently, the study aimed to answer two research questions: (1) how are educational innovations initiated and evolved at local level? (2) how do the type and process of the emerging educational innovations relate to a district’s socio-cultural context?

We employed a combination of qualitative research methods to produce rich information about the impact and process of the innovations and to be “more secure in validity of the findings” (Bernard 1994: 227). In total, we conducted 147 semi structured, in-depth, and informal interviews of the following people: heads of local education agencies (LEA), LEA officials, local parliament members, school principals, community members, and local academics. In addition, 36 group discussions were conducted to capture perspectives from teachers, parents, and students in their positions as both actors and beneficiaries of the local innovations. We also undertook 47 observations in schools including parent-teacher meetings, afterschool tutorial programmes, principal gatherings, supervisory of teacher performance, and school guard activities. This research used purposive sampling where we sought study participants from community, parents, teachers, or government officials with certain criteria. Thus, we also interviewed official from other agencies or stakeholders involved which could provide us depth information regarding particular innovation. Meanwhile, the schools were chosen based on school nominations list given by the local LEAs which considering a combination of high and low performing schools, private or public institutions, and parent’s class background. We visited schools on the list nominated by the LEA to request consent from the school principals. For private schools, we needed

additional permit from the foundation. Since we are conducting a longitudinal study, we must secure a long-term commitment from participating schools. In the urban districts of Bukittinggi and Yogyakarta, we chose one private and two public primary schools. While the majority of schools in Gowa, a largely rural district, are public, we selected four public primary schools in low-land and high-land areas. Likewise, we also sampled and observed communities in affluent and low-income settlements to closely follow whether the relationships between actors and their participation in the programme implementation differ.

3. The Process of Local Innovation

According to Perry-Smith & Mannucci (2015), the innovation process is carried out in four phases: idea generation, elaboration, evaluation and implementation. These four stages framed our methodology and analysis. In our study of local innovations, idea generation refers to the way a certain innovation arose. We were also interested in knowing what current programmes or policies that local actors were reacting to, and what factors drive innovation. Here, the process is more than simply generating new ideas. This process may include the identification of a problem with the current system and the development of a possible solution or improved practice to overcome the identified problem, within the local context.

In the elaboration stage, ideally, a solution offered to overcome a problem will be tested prior to implementation. During this phase, the idea's potential should be clarified, refined, and improved. According to Schumpeter (in Moore 2019), the process of innovation should include the development of improved practice, testing for value, and re-distributing resources from ineffective to effective practices. Therefore, evidence from pilot studies, if available, can also help to clarify the idea and provide a more concrete example on how to apply the novel idea in a real context. Once an idea has been elaborated, an evaluation phase is required to determine whether the idea can be pushed forward for wider implementation, or not. This stage is crucial as it has consequences for providing supporting policies, resources, and environments important to a policy's implementation.

At the final stage of the innovation process, an idea may be scaled-up and diffused for wider implementation. One could argue that the acts of thinking, elaborating, or evaluating already define innovation. Many innovations will fail at the evaluation stage, but that does not mean they did not have an impact. Focusing exclusively on initiatives that are judged a success may lead us to underestimate the innovativeness of a particular district. In this study, however, we examined the impact of all major innovations that were widely implemented in each district. We believe that the manner in which innovations are

implemented has a strong impact on efforts to increase productivity. For this reason, we focused on the implementation phase of the innovation process.

4. Socio-cultural Context of Innovation

While innovation and local innovativeness can be studied and interpreted from different points of view, many scholars emphasize that innovation takes place in and is affected by the socio-cultural context (Adam and Westlund 2013; Murphy et al. 2015). They reveal that the social environment and the relationship between stakeholders is an important determinant of innovation success. Among the key assumptions that characterized individuals' productive action is the embeddedness of individuals in the local social structure (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998; Granovetter 1985). From this view, innovation cannot easily rest with individual education actors, as they are not isolated from the world around them. Here, the norms and networks in which they are embedded shape the ways people think about and behave with regard to their work as well as tendency, if any, for innovation to be taken for granted (Adam and Westlund 2013). Individuals may utilize the potential that is available in the network in which they are embedded to achieve their goals throughout the innovation process.

In the present study, we argue that innovation in education is shaped by the following socio-cultural factors: i) the nature and strength of local social networks, and ii) the nature of local social norms. Putnam (1993: 89) argues that “the norms and values of the civic community are embodied in, and reinforced by, distinctive social structure” (p.89). Discussion on social networks and social norms may explain how social structure may support, or hamper, an innovative climate in different Indonesian districts. Social networks – measured by the centrality and density of the network– can influence whether and how districts innovate in education in the following ways. In a district with a highly centralized network, innovations seemingly arise through leadership channels. Whereas, in a less centralized network, individuals – despite their peripheral position in the network – are able to stir innovation by inserting new ideas or knowledge. Besides, the nature and strength of reciprocal social relations in various communities may vary among Indonesian districts. This variation in reciprocal exchange is due to different ways on how power and structural inequalities are reproduced in the societies (Bourdieu 1986) and due to differences in the density of the network. A dense network is highly associated with reciprocal social relations which could facilitate collaborative action in a particular district (Putnam 1993). While in a sparse network, on the other hand, a district would likely have low levels of community participation.

In attempts to improve practice, the shared norms, values, and expectations of community members shape the way people think about what form of innovation is considered valuable to their organization, community, or society (Giles and Hargreaves 2006). Therefore, while the aim of educational improvement is universal, in Indonesia's heterogeneous cultures, different districts may have different ideas about what educational policy or programme they need to create in response to their local priorities. Moreover, norms of trust may encourage educators, parents, and education officials to modify education practices. On the other hand, a lack of trust can lead to community member disengagement and low participation. In systems with little trust, education change is likely to be slow and superficial (UNESCO 2017). Thus, building trust requires many stakeholders in the creation of shared aims, and recognizing actors' interdependence through mutual accountability.

Combined, our findings showed that social network and social norms yield two broad types of district and innovation outcomes. In the first type, districts can be characterized by having a network with low centralization and a high-trust environment which may generate a more bottom-up innovation, such as community-based programmes, school-based initiatives or parental participation activities. In the second type, districts are characterized by highly centralized networks and a low-trust environments. This type may generate government-led policies or programmes initiated by authoritative individuals which required high implementation costs. In the following sections, we illustrate how social structure shapes the innovation using case study in the three districts. We will first describe the process of each identified innovation. Then, we discuss how the findings can be explained by socio-cultural differences in each district. When a historical perspective is seen appropriate to explain these findings, a socio-historical explanation is offered.

5. Educational Innovation in the Three Districts

5.1 Bukittinggi, West Sumatera

"Peer Supervision of Teacher Performance" (PS)¹ and "Family Education" (FE)²

In Bukittinggi, a small urban district of 25 km², education has been one of sectors that has gained priority from the local government and society at large. This is because it was one of the cities where the Dutch introduced and built several formal schools during the 19th century. And the existence of Dutch schools influenced the education development in this city and its neighbouring districts. In Bukittinggi, the dominant ethnic group is Minangkabau,

¹ Called, *Supervisi Silang*

² The programme is known as *Sekolah Keluarga*

or Minang in short, of Kurai clan which values fair competition, individual achievement, and commerce³.

In this district, we investigated two major innovations, “Peer Supervision” (PS) and “Family Education” (FE). In PS, the principals and the school supervisor of each sub-district gather every week and visit one of schools in the sub-district. The principals and school supervisor observe a two-hour lesson in every classroom in the school visited. After these observations, the principals and the school supervisors provide both feedback to the teachers and the host principal. Peer supervision, like other education programmes which focus on improving teacher performance, is expected to result in better learning quality of the students. The second program, “Family Education” (FE), a voluntary, is a community-based programme that consists of sixteen weeks of in-class sessions. The programme focuses on educating parents about the basic functions of a family, including children’s education. Among the programme’s objectives is to improve parents’ capacity in educating their children so, in turn, parent’s participation will improve too, which have been proved to positively impact the quality of education (Gunnarsson in Channa 2015).

The PS programme was initiated by some principals and a school supervisor in a sub-district in Bukittinggi in early 2000 in response to the national practice of supervising teacher performance. In Bukittinggi’s highly competitive education context, most teachers value feedback for improvement. The initiators of this programme believed having principals observe their own teachers may be one-sided and cause some important aspects of the teaching performance to be overlooked. On the other hand, observations by external principals can provide more realistic feedback for teachers. Not long after the PS programme was introduced in the early 2000s, principals and school supervisors in Bukittinggi’s four other sub-districts adopted the practice. The diffusion of PS took place organically without any intervention from the local government. Nonetheless, all schools in Bukittinggi, public and private, have opted to participate in the programme.

Our findings from multiple interviews with principals in two sub-districts showed that the interviewees believe the scheme has positive benefits for teachers and the schools in general, particularly in low performing schools, for two reasons⁴. First, teachers in these schools can get feedback from principals from high performing schools. Second, low performing school principals can learn from high performing schools’ teaching practices and share it to the teachers in their schools. The principals and school supervisors we interviewed showed enthusiasm for the program even though they were not rewarded for

³ Minangnese value intelligence as a critical element in the pursuit of economic success. With greater material wealth, too comes greater social honour for the individual and the clan (Navis, 1986)

⁴ Multiple interviews with school principals in Bukittinggi in October 2019

their participation, because they considered it an important part of maintaining Bukittinggi's competitive education quality.

Meanwhile, the idea for the FE programme came from the wife of the Mayor of Bukittinggi in 2017.⁵ The programme was motivated by her concerns about children's social and behavioural problems facing children and youth. Increasing parents' knowledge about the importance of assisting their children's education was seen as the solution to the identified problems. Initially, this programme operated without any budget. The facilitators and speakers were invited from different local government offices and were working pro-bono. The sessions usually take place at the *kelurahan* office⁶. The participants vary in terms of socio-economic background, but they are mostly mothers with post-secondary education background, and several hold university degrees. Participants attend the classes voluntarily, without receiving any salary or allowance.⁷

An official recognition of the effectiveness of Family Education by the central government in late 2018 convinced the local apparatus that this innovation should be scaled up, so they decided to allocate a small budget from government funds for its second year. The budget was mainly allocated to provide light refreshments at the FE events.⁸ No funding was used to pay the facilitators fee or participants for their attendance. In 2020, the local government scaled up this programme again to all *kelurahan* in Bukittinggi.

Social Structure and the Nature of Innovation in Bukittinggi

The formulation and evolution of these two educational innovations in Bukittinggi highlight the critical role that support from kinship networks play. In the Minang tradition, kinship networks influence social relationships among community members, as everyone is considered part of the family. The social relationship in Minang, called *mamak* (uncles from mother side) and *kemenakan* (niece and nephew), represents the role of *Mamak*; someone who should protect and help their junior peers to succeed. Thus, the networks form reciprocal social relationships in the district, including professional networks in educational and local government settings, could facilitate trust and collaborative works. Our research supports Putnam's (1993) assertion that "kinship ties have a special role ... in sustaining

⁵ In Indonesia, the wife of local leaders will automatically become the head of Family Resilience program (PKK) under Women Empowerment and Children Protection Agency. FE is formally managed by this agency.

⁶ *Kelurahan* is a village-level administrative area located in an urban center. The heads of the *kelurahan* manage the operation of the FE programme in their areas, from recruitment of participant (with the help from the head of neighbouring area), preparation of each meeting, and routine coordination of activities to the agency.

⁷ The participants during group discussions also shared the same view as the wife of the major, that increasing parents' parenting knowledge is foundational to understand youth behavioral problems which can bring children's education success. And this should incorporate Islamic and local values.

⁸ Interview with an officer of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency of Bukittinggi in April 2019

community cohesion and collective action” (p.175). Eventually, this kinship network has become the driver for community participation during the formulation and implementation of innovations. More broadly, our informants often mentioned that some collaborations in the Minang community stem from the Islamic value of *adat basandi syara’, syara’ basandi kitabullah* (customary laws are built upon Islamic Laws, while Islamic Laws are based on the Quran)⁹. As a result, these values are greatly respected and incorporated in local educational initiatives.

In multiple interviews, local government officials in Bukittinggi described social relationships in Minang using the terms *mamak – kemenakan*. An embedded position of initiators in formal position and the informal kinship ties enable them to work closely with other stakeholders to put ideas into practice and diffuse the innovations. This supports Uzzi’s argument in Granovetter (2005) that the combination of embeddedness and informal ties lead to improve productivity in the market economy. In addition, the formal positions of Kurai, the indigenous people of Bukittinggi in local parliament, have helped the kinship network to implement local innovations. Kurai acquired more central positions during the decentralization era. As a member of local parliament house (DPRD) observed, “It rarely happened before. The current leadership period is special as both mayor and the vice mayor, as well as 11 out of 25 seats in DPRD are Kurai”¹⁰. These strong kinship ties allow professional network and trust to take place in formulation and evolution of local innovations.

Such strong kinship networks amongst local education stakeholders make them willing to work beyond their official duties in creating and implementing those innovations in order to improve the quality of education in Bukittinggi. Hence, the dense relationships of local stakeholders create a high trust environment (Granovetter, 2015). This is reflected from our findings where two groups of principals in two different sub-districts stated that they trust their colleagues and believe that they will only provide objective and constructive feedback to teachers during the peer supervision process. Our observations¹¹ showed that “the external evaluators were providing blunt assessments to the teachers, whether it was good or not, and they also delivered the same results to the evaluator’s meeting with the host principal afterwards”. Furthermore, two public school principals we interviewed also mentioned that they trust their teachers. The principals had no doubt that their teachers had made the optimal preparations in order to save face in front of external evaluators, “Our teachers always prepare for the high-quality lesson they could deliver. With the presence of

⁹ Three FGD activities were conducted with government officials, community members and school community in Bukittinggi on 3 and 4 December 2019

¹⁰ Interview with a local parliament member in April 2019

¹¹ Fieldnotes on 11 September 2019

external observers, our teachers will do their best to maintain a positive reputation of our school". During FGD, a group of teachers confirmed these findings that they always well-prepare and enthusiastic to be observed by external evaluators. Our findings revealed this high trust environment also stimulated collaboration between the government apparatus and local stakeholders¹².

As indicated by the participating stakeholders above, some collaborations in Bukittinggi stem from Islamic values. During FGDs, government officials and parents often indicated that Minang values were adopted from customary and Islamic laws. For example in the diffusion of FE, *Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak* (WECPA) as the programme management incorporated well-respected Islamic values. Furthermore, WECPA was aided by a local Muslim-focused community service organisation that already had experience running parenting programmes. These collaborations were possible because the organisation is considered to be aligned with the religious communities in Bukittinggi.

During the initial steps of our study, we thought the strong cultural identity of Minangnese fair competition would be the most influential factor driving innovation as our informants indicated this prominent role in Bukittinggi. On the surface, we assumed, the competitive culture has led to community and inter-school competition, leading to better financial and educational results. However, as we dove deeper, we came to conclude that the practice of educational innovations in Bukittinggi mirrors the decentralization of Northern industrial districts in Italy which "is a seemingly contradictory combination of competition and cooperation" (Putnam 1993: 160). During FGDs¹³, participants explained that Bukittinggi's motto reinforces the importance of understanding the same vision by all community members (*saayun salangkah*). From this perspective, everyone can move forward as long as they are all facing the same direction. This vision may not require people to be together, as we will see in Yogyakarta, and some sort of competition might be an integral and important part of achieving the goal of the advancement of Bukittinggi.

5.2 Yogyakarta, Special Region of Yogyakarta

"Community Learning Hours" (CLH)¹⁴ and "Parental Participation" (PP)¹⁵ Programme

¹² Local stakeholders as facilitators in FE embodied LEA, *Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak* (WECPA), Customary Organization, regional Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), local University, Police

¹³ FGDs conducted on 3-4 Decembers with a group of government officers, a group of teachers, and parents.

¹⁴ Known as *Jam Belajar Masyarakat* (JBM).

¹⁵ Called *Paguyuban Orang Tua*.

As home to the national movement during Dutch rule called *Taman Siswa*¹⁶, Yogyakarta has long been known as Indonesia's city of education. Nowadays, Yogyakarta's strong education performance is the result of its well-educated citizens and the existence of many reputable education institutions supported by the Sultan.¹⁷ In contrast to the generally low community participation in Indonesia (Bjork 2004; Pradhan et al. 2011; Vernez et al. 2012), community participation in education in Yogyakarta is very high. The two major innovations that we examined are bottom-up programmes called CLH and PP. Originally, CLH was designed to invite community members to turn off their electronic devices for two hours each evening, CLH aims to facilitate a safe and focused environment for children to study and complete homework at home. The objective was to raise parents' awareness of education, so that they would help their children study at home. In some communities, CLH even extends to community members visiting homes to ask children about their evening study activities. Meanwhile, under PP parents establish classroom-level associations to help oversee and manage the learning environment. The intention is to create participatory and collaborative networks among schools, teachers, and parents, and to improve students' educational performance by managing outdoor learning activities, exchanging study materials, arranging additional tutoring class, providing books in each classroom corner, etc. Faguet (in Channa, 2015: 24) argues that "community oversight is particularly important for decentralization schemes to be effective."

The idea of CLH came from a former school principal in Yogyakarta who was also a community leader (*ketua Rukun Kampung*), during the emergence of electronic devices in mid-1970s. Drawing from his own experiences providing conducive a learning environment from 6 to 9 pm. and accompanied his children while studying, he demonstrated how the initiative worked in practice (Fathoni 2007). After sharing these experiences with his community, CLH was piloted at the community level in 1980. In 1983, CLH was covered by media and it got attention from the Regional Planning Agency of Yogyakarta province (*Bappeda DIY*) which scaled up CLH piloting to the district level in 1993 (Fathoni 2007). According to a former LEA officer, it was first adopted in a riverbank *kampung*, home for poor families in urban Java. This movement was supported by the Sultanate of Yogyakarta beginning in 1999 through a decree number 93/1999, which led to its spread to other districts in Yogyakarta province.

¹⁶ "a system of schools following the philosophies of Rabindranath Tagore and Maria Montessori" (Fitzpatrick, 2008: 282).

¹⁷ Yogyakarta is the single recognised monarchy in Indonesia which still officially rules a region in Indonesia called Yogyakarta province. This district is the capital of Yogyakarta province.

CLH is widely implemented in Yogyakarta. However, CLH facilitators explained that during the emergence of social media in 2006 and the construction of a number of shopping malls in Yogyakarta which open until 10 p.m. had led many people to forget about CLH¹⁸. As a result, the local government reinforced CLH through the issuance of Mayor regulation No. 53/2014 (Yulianingsih 2014). This policy refinement allowed local government agencies (the LEA, Planning Agency, Regional Library and Archive Agency) to support various educational programmes initiated by community members. Recently, the programme does not only focus on the academic activities of school-age children; it also creates learning spaces that all community members can use to support literacy. Since 2017, CLH has been scaled-up to all 614 neighbourhoods (RWs), and each RW receives a small amount of funding annually from the regional budget. Government officers argue that the funding represents the local government's commitment to invite people's participation¹⁹.

The second innovation we examined in Yogyakarta is the formation of PP. A LEA official²⁰ who was a former school principal said that PP was motivated by the establishment of the School Operational Assistance (BOS) programme in response to the National Education System Act (2003): "BOS was established to further support the autonomy of schools by providing them with resources in the form of a block grant that they can flexibly use according to school priorities" (ADB 2014: 3). It prohibited schools from charging tuition fees or requiring any form of parental financial contribution, as the central government took responsibility for ensuring that schools would have sufficient operating funds. From a parent's perspective²¹, this free education policy may disadvantage their children's learning. With the abolition of school fees under the BOS, that accountability mechanism was no longer available (Moore 2019). According to this line of thought, some parents initiated PP to maintain their influence at school by creating classroom-level parents' association that allow parents to watch educational activities practicing in the classrooms.²² While the diffusion of PP in Yogyakarta schools has not been well-documented, all of the schools we visited had established PP since the early 2000s. Despite different school settings, parents in these schools are actively involved and engaged, both in academic and non-academic school activities.

¹⁸ Interview with some JBM facilitators in July 2019.

¹⁹ Interview with Regional Planning Agency on 30 July 2019 and LEA officers in 1 August 2019.

²⁰ Interview with LEA official on 18 September 2019.

²¹ Multiple parent group discussions were conducted in three schools in Yogyakarta in March 2019.

²² It is unknown which school initiated PP in Yogyakarta for the very first time. All parents and teachers, however, refer to the year of early 2000s as the period where this initiative began. This information is consistent with the period when *Dana BOS* was regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2005.

Social Structure and the Nature of Innovation in Yogyakarta

We argue that the implementation of these two major innovations in Yogyakarta greatly reflect the Javanese values of *guyub rukun*, *gotong royong*, *handarbeni*, and respect for leaders. These values promote social harmony, mutual assistance, and a tradition of taking care of each other in everyday life, which has resulted in a close-knit community. These values have been reinforced by the local government since 2010 through the city slogan called *segoro amarto* (mutual cooperation to further Yogyakarta's progress)²³. In the spirit of *segoro amarto*, trust and collaboration in the nature of Javanese hierarchical relationship nature – between local government and the public – are nurtured. In action, these values influence how people interact, including how the government and its citizen support each other, indicating the reciprocal social relations among stakeholders in Yogyakarta.

In CLH formulation, the embedded roles of the initiator, both as a community leader and a teacher, convinced the people to implement CLH in the village (Fathoni 2007). As a community leader, he used his power to raise people awareness about parental participation in CLH while as a teacher, he was regarded as a knowledgeable figure and thus seen as an authoritative source of idea connected to learning. Weber (in Granovetter 2005: 42-43) notes “the importance of systems where citizens consider orders from civil administrators to be ‘legitimate’—they comply with an order or a law not only because it is aligned with their incentives, but also because they consider it appropriate to do so”. Based on our observation in JBM facilitator's meeting at district level, many CLH leaders and managers' work as teachers. A school supervisor in Yogyakarta argues, “up until now, teachers still entrusted many roles in the community as neighbourhood leader and so on.” Teacher is an honorary position in Yogyakarta as it was classified as aristocrat in the Javanese social class hierarchy (Werdiningsih 2013). Thus, when they hold position in the community, they are considered to have legitimacy. Interestingly, CLH was not formulated by individuals with strategic position in government agencies, and CLH participation is voluntary instead of mandatory. All these indicate a less centralized network in the district as everyone could raise their voices and get buy-in from the wider community or the local government.

Moreover, the traditional values of social harmony and mutual assistance are reflected in the synergy among stakeholders in the implementation of CLH and PP. These

²³ When we conducted our fieldwork, we found the slogan a very common sight. Government officials and teachers wore a *segoro amarto* pin on their work outfits, it was also displayed in the lobbies of government offices, in *kelurahan* offices, on the main roads, on the footers of government letters, and on the lamp posts of visited *kampung*.

values have become effective means to develop urban *kampung* in Central and Eastern Java (Rahmi, Wibisono, and Setiawan 2001). During FGD, we asked why parents in Yogyakarta are so involved in education, and why they support PP. Parents explained that they have a tradition of taking care of each other, so they think that they have the obligation to take care of students studying at the same school with their children. All students in the school should receive high quality education, and PP aims to enforce quality delivery in schools. Reflecting on our observations, we realized that we witnessed multiple examples of parents taking care other kids in their neighbourhoods in several PP groups we followed, arranging additional tutoring class both in affluent and low-income settlements—even when their kids do not attend the same school. Furthermore, parents with children who went to the same school, in the same cohort, or live in the same neighbourhood, share information when somebody cannot attend school or a PP meeting or pick up the children. At CLH sessions, we also saw older people reminding their school-age neighbours to study.

Moreover, these spur support from local government and stakeholders to continuously improve CLH through policy refinement, evaluation process, and its implementation by providing the budget required to scale up. Government officials expressed that, “the parliament members in Yogyakarta is quite cooperative, unlike the image of legislators in other regions or at the national level. They have never rejected our [LEA] programme proposal. If there is an excess of budget, we even get an abundance fund”²⁴. We might think of lacking oversight would cause corruption but, in Yogyakarta, the executive and legislative work together with transparency and accountability to improve education by providing generous financial support for the education sector in Yogyakarta. Ombudsman and two CSOs which concern on education conveyed that they never get complaints or find any misuse of the regional budget²⁵. Another story from a CLH manager confirmed the legislative support towards government policy: A socialization meeting held in a neighbourhood, “was attended by two legislators who represent opposing parties with the local leader. They sat next to each other and seems engaged in CLH conversations”²⁶. This suggests that despite of political affiliations or agendas, the elites largely share the same vision, and so they collaborate when it comes to making decision on what is good for Yogyakarta education. The collective action taken by public, government officials and all

²⁴ Interview with LEA officers on 1 August 2019.

²⁵ The budget is publicly published in each *kelurahan* office which make people easy to know and oversight it. Something which rarely happened in other districts in Indonesia.

²⁶ Interview with CLH programme managers in August 2019.

relevant stakeholders has led to the success of the city in maintaining its high quality of education.

5.3 Gowa, South Sulawesi

“*School Security Guard*” (SSG)²⁷ Programme and “*Student Automatic Promotion*” (SAP)²⁸

Neighbouring the district of South Sulawesi’s capital Makassar, Gowa is a large district which comprises 18 sub-districts covering 1880 km². The majority of the Gowan people are ethnic Makassarese. In contrast to the previous two districts, in Gowa local leaders show exceptional leadership and the capacity to formulate various educational innovations (Abdullah et al. 2015). From 2005 to 2010, the Regent of Gowa launched several education programmes and policies, including the Adult Literacy Programme, School Security Guard (SSG), and Student Automatic Promotion (SAP). These programs were introduced during his pre-election political campaign in 2005 where the Regent used the issue of poor education access and quality in Gowa to win the citizens’ votes.

In an interview, our informant said that the innovations introduced by the Regent are the right tools to help Gowa overcome its historical lack of focus on education and to equal or even surpass, other nationally prominent districts such as Yogyakarta.²⁹ Throughout Gowa history, educational institutions were the lowest priority of the Kingdom of Gowa, the same was the case for the colonial ruler of South Sulawesi, which included Gowa (Pawiloy et al. 1981; Ricklefs 2008).³⁰ During the Dutch era, indigenous elite parents in cities like Yogyakarta and Bukittinggi eagerly enrolled their children into Dutch schools. But, parents in Gowa and other districts in South Sulawesi believed that enrolling their children in Dutch schools was harmful, as the children would potentially be supportive (rather than opposed) of the Dutch agenda (Harvey 1974; Pawiloy et al. 1981). As a result, education attainment in Gowa during Dutch occupation lagged even when compared to other cities on the same island, such as Manado in North Sulawesi.

For the purpose of the present study, we examined two major innovations, namely the SSG Programme and SAP. The two innovations were implemented in 2009. It took a few years for Gowan Local Education Agency (LEA) to realize the Regent’s innovative ideas. The SSG programme is primarily aimed at addressing low teacher attendance in Gowan public schools. As in many developing countries - such as Bangladesh, Ecuador, and

²⁷ The programme is better known as *Satuan Polisi (Satpol) Pendidikan*.

²⁸ It is called SKTB or *Satuan Kelas Tuntas Berkelanjutan*.

²⁹ Interview with LEA officer in October 2019.

³⁰ The authors explained that all of the kings in this province focused on expanding their territories to hold hegemony.

Zambia (Rogers and Vegas 2009) - teacher absenteeism remains a challenge in improving education services in Indonesian districts, particularly in Gowa.³¹ In the past, poor infrastructure and minimal transportation options in Gowa had limited people's mobility, including teachers who live far away from their schools. Under SSG, the security personnel, hired by the Gowa local government, submitted attendance records to the local education agency on a monthly basis as a mechanism of accountability. The security personnel were deployed in all of Gowa's 500 primary and junior secondary schools and were equipped with motorcycles to pick up teachers who often come late to schools or were frequently absent.

The second innovation, SAP, was initially designed in response to the low school completion rate in Gowa, with only 57% of the population completing primary school (Limpo 2015). In addition, secondary schools in Gowa suffered from a low success rate on the national exam³². Since 2003, when central government used national exam score as one of the graduation requirements of study completion at school, many Gowa students failed to meet the minimum score of 4.01 (out of 10) in the tested subjects. In 2008, more than 30% of Gowa secondary school students failed to meet the minimum standard of graduation requirement³³. One strategy for addressing this problem, despite its potential to undermine school autonomy, is SAP. With the implementation of SAP, all students in primary and secondary schools would be promoted to the next grade, or graduated at the end of school year, regardless of their low performance.

During the initial stage of this innovation, the Regent formed an ad-hoc committee known as *Gowa Kabupaten Pendidikan*, which consisted of local educators and nine professors from prominent national universities (Gowakab.go.id 2020). The committee argued that SAP would lower drop-out rates in Gowan schools, and reduce pressure on children, so therefore could foster students' healthy social-emotional development, and in turn brought academic success³⁴. The recommendation from these advisors have been used by the local government to get support from Gowa legislators and defend the SAP ideas from critiques³⁵.

³¹ In 2003, two surveys on this issue conducted by The World Bank and The SMERU Research Institute showed the same result that 19% teachers (weighted average) in Indonesia were absence during surprise visits (Nina et al 2012.; Usman, Akhmadi, and Suryadarma, 2004). A decade later, the number declined to 9.8% nationally but this was reported higher in rural and remote areas like Gowa (McKenzie et al., 2014) – as one of sampled districts– which indicated the urgent need to overcome this shortcoming through an innovation that allow mutual accountability like SSG.

³² Interview with the head of Gowa LEA in December 2019.

³³ *Kompas*, 20 June 2008.

³⁴ This information is based on an article in a local newspaper *TribunGowa* dated 7 May 2018. This statement is confirmed by our findings from two interviews: one with a LEA officer and another with a legislator in Gowa house of representative. Both interviews were conducted in October 2019.

³⁵ Interview with a legislator in Gowa house of representative in October 2019.

As noted above, with SAP students are promoted even when they have not demonstrated sufficient learning. In response, primary schools in Gowa implement various remedial policies. A school principal and a group of parents revealed additional tutoring class as a coping strategy to improve students' performance. Inconsistent practices among teachers and schools have also been a major problem in SAP³⁶. Some parents supported this initiative and agreed that it is good for their children's development. Other parents think that SAP is a negative influence on children's learning. The automatically promoted students may face difficulty meeting the standards in the next grade level, which may also decrease their interest and motivation to learning. Similarly, some teachers expressed the burden of teaching students who did not master lessons in the previous grade.

During our fieldwork, we could not find evidence that there was ever an evaluation phase in the innovation's development, this indicates that the innovation process not completed. Despite this truncation and incongruence of practice, parents, schools, and teachers in Gowa tend to comply to SAP and follow the mandate from the local government. Moreover, with support from the legislators, these innovations are reinforced through local government regulations, giving the go-ahead for the innovation to be scaled-up. As a result, both SAP and SSG received generous funding as reflected in Gowa which has the highest regional budget for education in the province (*NPD Gowa 2018; Hassanuddin 2019*). More than 1 billion Rupiah was spent for the socialization and preparation of SAP implementation in all primary and secondary schools in Gowa 18 sub-districts. As part of SAP, several learning modules were also developed to assist teachers and students. As for SSG, government officers uttered that each security personnel deployed in around 500 schools is equipped with motorcycles that can be brought home, although some security personnel we interviewed stated that they only work for about five hours a day. Besides, They received similar military trainings and preparation comparable to others, non-school deployed, civil police troops.

Social Structure and the Nature of Innovation in Gowa

While the Kingdom of Gowa had long been known as one of the great kingdoms in South Sulawesi, the old civilisation of the kingdom was located in the city Makassar, not in the current district of Gowa. Half of the sub-districts in modern Gowa are located on newly opened lands, which are located at high altitudes and have low population densities. Whereas the Sungguminasa sub-district - the current capital of Gowa - and other low-land areas are known to be resided by not only indigenous Gowan people, but also people from

³⁶ Multiple group discussions with parents and teachers in three schools in October 2019.

different parts of South Sulawesi who have cultural characteristics distinct from the Makassarese. The weak ties in the community result from Gowa's history and geographical condition, which account for people's low participation in government-initiated programmes (Fatmawati et al. 2019). Informants told us that the low trust issue between the Gowan citizen and the government has also reduced community participation in educational reforms. Despite seemingly strong popular support for the *Karaeng* of Gowan Royal Family or his descendants, the current Regent's family, with strong military background, has retained the district's political power since 1994. Moreover, Makassarese people believed in *Siri'* culture, which value dignity highly (Abdullah 1985). Matthes (in Pawiloy 1981) observed that *Siri'* culture values a sense of dignity that is owned by all levels of society in South Sulawesi.

In Gowa, the Regent, with his authority and central power, takes the lead and uses linkages with local government institutions and political leaders in the parliament to implement his innovative ideas. Daly and Vinnigan (2012) showed that such leadership in the network is an effective means to build and sustain change, particularly in an underperforming education system as it has various resources which facilitate new linkages. This connection allows strong collaboration at elite's level which produce necessary resources to push the implementation of innovation, including generous funding and the adoption of local government regulations enforcing the programmes and policies.

Despite evidence of some disagreement with the Regent's leadership or his agenda, as in the case of SAP, people generally remain silent and compliant. In multiple interviews, our informants mentioned that people may think it is best to show submission to government programmes, as they do not want to get themselves in trouble. A school principal in a low-land area expressed her perspective with a frightened face, "it is better to follow the leader directive so that we can live together with our family, otherwise we will be relocated to remote high-land". Furthermore, all schools and teachers in Gowa tend to comply with SAP and follow mandates from the local government. Our informants mentioned that there have been few cases where principals and teachers, or other government civil servants in Gowa had the courage to critique the government, those who opposed the government were demoted and relocated to remote mountainous areas³⁷. However, during fieldwork we did not find evidence to such prejudgment, but this rumour has spread all over the district and this type of punishment had been relied on to force schools comply with local government directives. Such enforcement strategies are considered by Putnam (1993) as "a second best-solution ... without pursuing the impossible dream of cooperation" (p.178) which might

³⁷ Multiple interviews with community members and civil servant officers in Gowa in October 2019.

be hard to gain in Gowa context. In such a low-trust environment, it is understandable if the local government created SSG to address the issue of high teacher absenteeism. The Gowa Education Agency decided to use force, deploying security guards in each school. In a low-trust environment, this programme increase teacher's presence at schools during the required hours and is seen as a mechanism to maintain mutual accountability.

While it appears to be political, the way innovations in Gowa were initiated is to some extent influenced by social norms in Makassarese (*Siri'*) culture. In *Siri'* culture, people value dignity highly (Abdullah, 1985). Matthes in Pawiloy (1981) observed that *Siri'* culture values a sense of dignity that is owned by all levels of society in South Sulawesi. In the case of the low success rate of Gowan students on the national exam, government officials believed that it would be a shame if Gowa is recognized for its failure to achieve the national standard—and, SAP is seen as a solution to this problem. Local government may also see SAP as a mechanism to maintain social stability from infuriated parents of failing students. Despite some other problems caused by SAP (e.g. students' difficulties to follow subjects in later years), and the truncated innovation process, according to *Siri'* culture, our informants claimed that creating innovations such as the SSG Programme or SAP is more important than the downside which might be resulted from their implementation (*Eja Tompi Na Doang*³⁸).

6. Conclusion

Our findings suggest that local innovations were initiated in response to the implementation of national education policies, or lack thereof, which were regarded to be insensitive to the district's local needs, and the socio-cultural context remains crucial to understanding how the focus of innovation has been defined in each district. In Bukittinggi, the Minang ethnicity's aspiration to achieve individual success for oneself as well as a collective identity (Navis 1986) drive the education community to practice the PS so schools can learn from each other and improve their quality of education delivery. In Yogyakarta, the shared values among well-educated community members led to collaborative action (Rahmi, Wibisono, and Setiawan 2001) aiming to create conducive learning environment for children through CLH. In Gowa, the Makassarese *Siri'* culture with emphasizes respect for human dignity (Abdullah 1985; Matthes in Pawiloy 1981) is believed to have resulted in the implementation of SAP to address the low success rate of Gowan students under the

³⁸ *Eja Tompi Na Doang* is an idiom in Makassarese language. *Eja* means red; *Tompi* means later/after; *Doang* means shrimp. Literally, it means that one can tell a shrimp is shrimp, only when it turns red when boiled or grilled. In wider society, these idioms represent the spirit of Makassar people who believed that the action taken is much more important than consequences that might be caused by the action itself. Meaning, it is not important to think about the consequences of an action; what significant is the action itself. If something needed to be revisited, then it is for future consideration.

national exam scheme. More broadly, SAP may be seen as a mechanism to maintain the district social stability as many parents of failing students become infuriated. In the low trust environment in Gowan schools, the SSG programme was a solution to the high teacher absenteeism problem.

With reference to the process of innovation, the policies and programmes were generated through different channels and affected by the historical socio-cultural context of each district. Thus, the relative success of each innovation can be explained as arising from the fit between the culture that is needed in order for the innovation to be successful and the actual culture the district has (Kalt and Singer 2004). In the three cases we presented, there are three aspects of the socio-cultural environment – resulting from the embodiment of social norms within a districts' social networks – that significantly determined how local innovations are defined and implemented in each district: (1) the norms of trust among community members, (2) tradition, or lack thereof, of collaboration at community and elite levels, (3) people's participation.

In Bukittinggi, the existing networks in Minangkabau clan are historically rooted in the *Nagari* Kurai structure, which stimulated collaboration between the government apparatus and the citizens, and supported FE implementation. This fluid, yet dense, kinship network of relationships between local stakeholders made them willing to work beyond the call of duty to implement innovations in order to achieve mutual benefit. In Yogyakarta, the innovations were generated bottom-up by community members and then reinforced by the local government. The high levels of community participation in CLH and PP has been greatly influenced by a tradition of taking care of each other (*handarbeni*) and the values of mutual assistance and maintaining social harmony (*gotong royong and guyub rukun*) that exist in Javanese culture. Furthermore, it has allowed CLH to be sustainably implemented for nearly forty years. The strong societal values shared by society in Yogyakarta and Bukittinggi also enable collective action of executive, legislative and local citizen in enforcing and supporting the education programmes in their respective contexts.

In Gowa, cognizant of authority being instituted at the district level as stipulated in decentralization law, the Regent uses the power of local-level leadership to create numerous education policies and programmes. This leadership channel displayed some advantages. The political connections between the Regent and legislators in Gowa allows strong collaboration at the elite level, which enables the provision of resources necessary to implementing an innovation. The strong leadership in Gowa, which has a militaristic nuance, has resulted in public support towards educational reform programmes such as SSG and SAP. This result emulates Putnam's work (1993), which suggests that enforcement is the

“second best ‘default’ solution”. This is especially the case considering the patron-client nature of Makassar society – which makes it difficult to achieve community collaboration.

The three cases we presented not only contribute to an understanding on how social structure is crucial in the generation and implementation of local educational innovation, but also to explain why there are very few local innovations in Indonesian districts. Our findings indicate that local innovations were initiated either by community members or by district leaders. As demonstrated in Bukittinggi and Yogyakarta, the community-led initiatives are largely affected by the existence of a middle-class that is predominantly educated which resulted in a shared understanding and demand on the importance of children’s quality of education (Rosser and Sulistiyono 2013). While in general, the average years of schooling in Indonesian is only 8.34 years (BPS 2020). Citizens with a low level of education may find government-led programmes as bewildering and incomprehensible, let alone initiate a community-based programme. Moreover, local education stakeholders used to follow national directives because during authoritarian regime, they “had previously rewarded obedience rather than initiative” (Bjork 2004: 257). Therefore, unlike in Gowa, many district leaders do not take the opportunity and incentives offered by decentralization to develop their own programmes to solve local educational problems. Instead, the political leaders choose to implement financing-related education programmes as an idea that helps them maintain or expand their “social legitimacy” (Moir in Moore 2019), and with that secure some degree of respect and supports from the society at large.

Another explanation to the lack of local initiatives in Indonesian districts is the weak ties at both community and elite levels. In our three cases, the strong network at community level allow its members to openly discuss the problems with the current system and develop a possible solution or improved practice to overcome the identified problem within their context. The collaboration at elite level enables a programme to receive supports and resources necessary to a policy’s implementation. As shown in Gowa, sparse population within a large district has resulted in weak ties among community members, and so shaped how people interact and communicate. With most regions of Indonesia are districts covering large land areas, very similar to that in Gowa, local initiatives are unlikely to be set up through community social network. At the elite levels, the general image of Indonesian politics often demonstrated conflicting interest between local leader, legislators, and other opposing groups such as middle class, businessmen, and teachers (Rosser and Sulistiyono 2013) which potentially invalidate a proposed educational program before it could have ever been pushed for implementation.

Our result correspondingly echoes the global debates on the danger of the one-size-fits-all public policy in a significantly heterogeneous locations like Indonesia. As we have

shown, each district boasts a distinctive innovation as a by-product of its own unique socio-cultural features. This indicates that the innovations that emerge are highly context-dependent, and that any effort to scale up an innovation needs to recognize that an innovation that works well in one district is not necessarily applicable to another, especially in the case of districts with different social structures. Our findings suggest that even though Bukittinggi and Yogyakarta may have similar levels of trust in their respective communities they differ in where that trust comes from. The close ties in Yogyakarta lay in their social harmony and mutual assistance, while in Bukittinggi the community values individual success and competition. Consequently, innovations from other contexts may not fit, because for example Yogyakarta people could never criticize one another, as we found people did in Bukittinggi's Peer Supervision. This finding corresponds with that of Kusanagi (2013), who observed the failure of the Lesson Study programme in a Yogyakarta school, where teachers maintained social harmony, and so the practice of providing feedback through public criticism of others was considered to be very uncomfortable. This implies that adopting or diffusing an innovation to a new district may be far more successful if done to one with a similar socio-cultural context to the originating culture. In this light, we recommend that districts establish innovation exchange connections so that they can learn from each other and choose which innovation is appropriate for their context. We also recommend that central government officials should be cognizant of regional and local differences when crafting and implementing national education policies. Central government should not be overly prescriptive but allow for local adaptation. National level policies should be supportive and encouraging of the local innovative climate in each area, as opposed to being a brake on the important innovation process in the emerging districts.

Finally, the distinctive characteristics of the programmes developed in each district described above mirrors the broader debate about education reform in many developing countries. Why has there not been more improvement despite massive education reforms taking place in these countries? The three cases we presented contribute to our understanding on why educational innovation or reform may or may not correspond with educational improvement. Most often, education programmes and policies are mainly formulated by central government officials. With little or no elaboration process – piloted in small scale in few districts – the innovations are often enforced to be diffused across a nation in relatively short timeframe. This unproductive way of one-size-fits-all policymaking often disregard the socio-cultural complexity of diffusing and executing the programmes at local level. More stakeholders need to accept this fact and attempt to incorporate socio-cultural context in education innovations, before large investments in education could have a substantial and sustainable impact on improving learning outcomes.

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Appendix

1. Fieldwork practice

At the early stage in March and April 2019, we visited each district for two weeks to gain initial information about the local innovations. We consulted the school and neighbourhood sampling with Local Education Agency (LEA). This helped us to build rapport with the school and the community as the LEA informed them before our first visit. In this study, we also collected data from other government agencies which supported the implementation of the innovations. All participants were selected based on their involvement in the studied education programmes and consideration of their characteristics which might differ in participation results.

During the research, we undertook semi structured interviews with government officials from various agencies and community elites due to their short available times. Community participation was observed by participating in multiple events and meetings related to the studied programmes, which were often followed up with informal interviews with participants.

2. Data Triangulation

In the fifth month when we had already established a pattern, we triangulated the data in each district by undertaking live-in a household with primary school children for two weeks. This objective was to closely observe the studied innovations in practice and to check the consistency of our findings. At this stage, the information was similar to the ones we collected which it signalled that saturation had been achieved. Near the end of our fieldwork, we triangulated the whole data collected again through focus groups discussions –consisting of the local education stakeholders, government officials, selected parents, and a group of teachers at the end of data collection period. This was done “...to gain feedback on research findings obtained” (Cronin 2015:232). Firstly, we presented the preliminary findings which relevant to each group. Then, we asked them to clarify and discuss if our data and interpretations were correct.

3. Limitation

The main Fieldwork in Yogyakarta and Bukittinggi was conducted from June to December 2019. Yogyakarta and Bukittinggi have been part of RISE learning labs since 2018, with which RISE Programme in Indonesia has formal agreements. In both districts, we have local researchers who have assisted us in previous studies. Meanwhile, in Gowa, we had to apply for a new research permit and hire local researchers before actually doing the fieldwork. These initial processes caused delay in our fieldwork.

The difference in the duration of data collection affected the richness of data that we gathered in Gowa compared to the data that we obtained in the two other districts. Neuman (2007) argued “major limitations include time, ... access to resources, approval by authorities ...” (p.87), will likely affect the research. To address this limitation and supplement our fieldwork data in Gowa, we interviewed more local researchers concerned about local educational innovations to get a better understanding of the district's educational context. We also reviewed additional literature as well as online and printed resources on the history and contemporary issues surrounding Gowa education and Makassarese culture.

4. Ethics

Regarding ethical research practice, we submitted the research design and guidelines of in-depth interview and observation guidelines to the Institute of Research and Community Service, in Atma Jaya university in Jakarta in December 2018. We started the fieldwork only after we had received ethics approval. During the fieldwork, we completed written informed consent with the participants before beginning in-depth interview or group discussions. We also informed participants beforehand that we will maintain their anonymity and confidentiality throughout the fieldwork, presentation, and publication of our findings and analysis. Participants were also informed they could stop or interrupt the research exercise at any time to no detriment to themselves. The formal interviews were audio recorded if the participants consented. Some informal conversations were only recorded using notes, which we wrote down immediately.

5. Positionality and Reflexivity

During observations, we situated ourselves as an outsider in school meetings and during activities by placing ourselves in the corner of a classroom or somewhere which did not disturb the activities taking place. LEAs equipped us with a formal letter which made it easy to extend the permit and gain the participant's trust. Besides, we also introduced ourselves and explained the project to participants during early observation in order to make them feel comfortable with the researcher's presence (Neuman 2007). These steps worked well – because they were fully informed that we obtained permit from school principals beforehand – so that we were welcomed to observe the meetings.

While in community settings, government officials informally contacted the local figures, so we decided to embed ourselves in the local community to gain greater rapport and participate in regular events. The project benefited from this approach as officials and community leaders often invited us to participate in community or educational events and we exchanged updates through text messaging. However, such close relations had consequences which led to the field researchers doing “small favours” to gain access and trust (Berger 2015; Neuman 2007). In initial stage, we had to attend the invitations even though some did not relevant to this study, but we decided to blend ourselves with their activities first. In some occasions, we helped them assisting the children to study and doing community services. As the time went by, when they already fully recognized our presence to seek particular information, they were getting more willing to share stories about the innovations they involved in.

Another part of reflexivity, the field researchers submitted the field notes to co-researchers at the office to gain feedback through an online platform and the co-researchers visited the field sites bi-monthly to discuss the accuracy of the researchers' findings and analysis (Berger 2015).

6. Data storage

Interviews, observations, and group discussions were transcribed and coded to find patterns as well as variations for generating analytic themes. Now, they have been stored on the researchers' personal computer provided by the RISE programme.