

Community-Responsive Education Policies and the Question of Optimality: Decentralisation and District-Level Variation in Policy Adoption and Implementation in Indonesia

Masooda Bano and Daniel Dyonisius

Abstract

Decentralisation, or devolving authority to the third tier of government to prioritise specific policy reforms and manage their implementation, is argued to lead to pro-poor development for a number of reasons: local bureaucrats can better gauge the local needs, be responsive to community demands, and, due to physical proximity, can be more easily held accountable by community members. In the education sector, devolving authority to district government has thus been seen as critical to introducing reforms aimed at increasing access and improving learning outcomes. Based on fieldwork with district-level education bureaucracies, schools, and communities in two districts in the state of West Java in Indonesia, this article shows that decentralisation has indeed led to community-responsive policy-development in Indonesia. The district-level education bureaucracies in both districts did appear to prioritise community preferences when choosing to prioritise specific educational reforms from among many introduced by the national government. However, the optimality of these preferences could be questioned. The prioritised policies are reflective of cultural and religious values or immediate employment considerations of the communities in the two districts, rather than being explicitly focused on improving learning outcomes: the urban district prioritised degree completion, while the rural district prioritised moral education. These preferences might appear sub-optimal if the preference is for education bureaucracies to focus directly on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes. Yet, taking into account the socio-economic context of each district, it becomes easy to see the logic dictating these preferences: the communities and the district government officials are consciously prioritising those education policies for which they foresee direct payoffs. Since improving learning outcomes requires long-term commitment, it appears rational to focus on policies promising more immediate gains, especially when they aim, indirectly and implicitly, to improve actual learning outcomes. Thus, more effective community mobilisation campaigns can be developed if the donor agencies funding them recognise that it is not necessarily the lack of information but the nature of the local incentive structures that shapes communities' expectations of education. Overall, decentralisation is leading to more context-specific educational policy prioritisation in Indonesia, resulting in the possibility of significant district-level variation in outcomes. Further, looking at the school-level variation in each district, the paper shows that public schools ranked as high performing had students from more privileged socio-economic backgrounds and were catering for communities that had more financial resources to support activities in the school, compared with schools ranked as low performing. Thus, there is a gap to bridge within public schools and not just between public and private schools.

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Introduction

The advocates of decentralisation contend that it is the best form of government for community- responsive agenda setting and efficient service delivery. Indonesia, where decentralisation was introduced from the early years of the current century, has devolved significant autonomy to district governments in prioritising specific educational reforms, out of an array of policies issued by the national government, and manage their implementation. In this paper, we examine the processes of local policy prioritisation and implementation in two districts in Indonesia: an urban district (Karawang) and a rural district (Purwakarta). Despite their shared history (the two districts were one until the 1950s), we see much diversion in the prioritisation of specific national education policies by education authorities in the two districts. Catering for a community keen to see its children secure low-skilled jobs in industries located within the district, the district education authorities in Karawang have prioritised introducing teacher-based incentives to improve student performance in national exams. However, they have avoided investing in computerised testing, a national policy resulting from concerns about widespread cheating in Indonesian schools, which can reduce students' pass rates and final scores, consequently reducing their chances of being employed. On the other hand, in the rural district, which is devoid of immediate industry-related job opportunities and has a stronger Sundanese culture with emphasis on social cohesion and moral training, bureaucrats have prioritised implementation of national policy about moral education, along with investment in computer-based testing, despite having a smaller budget than the urban district. As suggested by the evidence presented in this paper, this prioritisation of computer-based testing owed less to concern about improving learning outcomes and more to concern about moral values: computerised testing is viewed to be aimed at checking a moral ill (namely cheating), thereby making its pursuit complementary to the implementation of the moral education agenda. Improved learning, if it happens in either district, is thus an indirect outcome; the education policies prioritised are driven by more immediate needs and are those that promise the most tangible gains. Although apparently sub-optimal, if the preference is for the district government bureaucracy to prioritise direct investment in improving literacy and numeracy skills, these policy preferences appear logical when situated within the context of local incentive structures. Thus, it is not necessarily lack of knowledge, as is often assumed by donor-supported community-mobilisation campaigns, but the nature of the local incentive structures that shapes communities' expectations of education.

The paper has the following structure. Section 1 covers the literature on decentralisation and good governance, especially in guaranteeing provision of better social services to the poor. Section 1 situates Indonesia's experience with decentralisation within the broader literature and maps the extent to which autonomy and authority has been devolved to the district government in the area of primary and junior secondary education in recent years. Section 2 introduces the research method for this paper. Section 3 introduces the two districts and the details of the different national educational policies prioritised and implemented by the educational bureaucracies in the two districts. Section 4 demonstrates how different district-level socio-cultural and economic preferences shape the prioritisation of specific national-level education policies and their implementation. Section 5 captures within-district variations in public schools and shows that, despite efforts by district bureaucracies to implement the prioritised interventions across all schools in the district, a school's performance remains closely tied to the socio-economic profile of the students and the financial capacity of the community to fund school activities. The concluding section situates the findings from this paper within wider research on decentralisation and education reforms in Indonesia.

Section 1: Decentralisation and Development: the Indonesian Experience

Since the early 2000s, decentralisation has received much attention within international development policy planning and research, owing to its perceived benefits of improving provision of basic social services for the poor by bringing governance closer to the people (Ahmad et al. 2005). In most developing countries with weak indirect routes of accountability, building the capacity of the community to hold the lowest rung of government accountable is seen as a first and most feasible step towards improving good governance: a more accountable district-level government could in turn transfer demands for accountability up to the next level and influence working at the provincial and national levels (Parker 1995; Westhorp et al. 2014; Hickey and Hossain 2019). At the same time, decentralisation is meant to lead to more responsive policy. Thus, greater autonomy at the district-government level is argued to improve service delivery, due not only to higher accountability to the community but due also to the perceived benefits of developing the reform agenda in consultation with the community (Ahmad et al. 2005; Westhorp et al. 2014). International development agencies, which have supported decentralisation processes in many developing countries since the 1990s, have thus also invested heavily in developing community-based planning and implementation models, which argue for involving communities at each step of the planning and implementation process (Ahmad et al. 2005).

Within the education sector, decentralisation has thus been seen as critical to improving the learning crisis in state schools that is experienced by education bureaucracies in most developing countries (Westhorp et al. 2014; Hickey and Hossain 2019). A number of interventions have been associated with decentralised forms of education planning, such as the establishment of school-based management committees, and the introduction of school score cards, which are argued to enhance a community's ability to hold to account the teachers and principals in state schools, and ideally to some degree even the district government education officials (Pandey, Goyal and Sundararaman 2009; Westhorp et al. 2014). Depending on the degree of planning, implementation, and financial autonomy given to the district government, decentralisation can take different forms: Parker (1995), in line with general consensus in the literature, identifies three distinct forms: de-concentration, or *administrative decentralisation*; *fiscal decentralisation*; and devolution, or *democratic decentralisation*. Democratic decentralisation, which involves the devolving of political authority, is viewed to be more effective in improving governance and service delivery, as it makes political elites as well as bureaucratic elites accountable to the community (Parker 1995; Westhorp et al. 2014; Hickey and Hossain 2019). The extensive degree of devolution of authority to district governments in Indonesia makes it an important case study of the perceived benefits of devolution and community participation in initiating pro-poor reforms. With a focus on education, it enables us to explore how decentralisation in the education sector has led to improving district governments' commitment and ability to improve learning outcomes in state schools.

Indonesia's attempts to introduce regional autonomy can be traced back to Act No.1/1945, introduced soon after its independence in the 1950s in a bid to counter rebellion by local governments in some regions in favour of an independent status (Simatupang 2009). The New Order government under President Suharto made districts and cities, rather than provinces, the focus of local autonomy (Simatupang 2009), even though the main political power remained very centralised (Simatupang 2009). Within the education sector, local governments from the beginning had certain roles and responsibilities. In 1994, the authority to design Local Content Curriculum (LCC) was, for example, delegated to provinces, districts, and schools (Bjork 2003:184). Other education-reform initiatives made districts responsible for conducting training for junior-secondary and senior-secondary school teachers, for distributing science

equipment to schools, and for other similar activities aimed at improving educational quality (Yeom, Acedo, and Utomo 2002:56). Yet, in reality, the district governments' ability to pursue these goals remained seriously restricted, due to limited financial devolution (Simatupang 2009:5-6).

The 1997 Asian financial crisis and the subsequent resignation of President Suharto renewed the demands for political and fiscal decentralisation (Yeom, Acedo, and Utomo 2002). This also affected the education sector. Especially since 2001, managerial and financial responsibilities for all levels of state education were decentralised from central to local government (Kristiansen and Pratikno 2006); this period came to represent Indonesia's 'Big Bang' attempt at decentralisation (Simatupang 2009:7). Specifically, Act No. 22/1999 on Regional Governance abolished the previously hierarchical relationship between the central government, provinces, and districts and delegated much financial autonomy at the district level (Winardi 2017). Within the education sector, Act No. 20/2003 on National Education System set the framework for the existing division of responsibilities across different tiers of the government. While policy planning is organised by the central government, implementation and monitoring are now the responsibilities of provincial and district governments, enabling district governments to formulate their own education policies and programmes (Strauss et al. 2004:366). In terms of funding, the act requires that a minimum of 20 per cent of national and local government budgets is allocated to education spending.

Prior to decentralisation, district education agencies, such as the Department of Education, Youth, and Sports (Disdikpora) operating in various Indonesian districts, had authority only to manage primary schools and exercised limited influence on personnel matters (Strauss et al. 2004:367); now they have a mandatory role to manage educational services from primary schools to junior secondary schools (Ministry of State Secretariat 2014). The expanded role of education agencies (e.g. Disdikpora) includes the right to decide on personnel matters, salary levels, school programmes, and other aspects of schools' operational activities, thereby allowing for much district-level variation (Strauss et al. 2004). In some districts, the local education authorities play a major role in budget allocation, procurement, and development plans for schools (Kristiansen and Pratikno 2006:522). Further, the decentralised framework gives schools the right to take a lead in implementing policies related to teaching, teacher management, structure and planning, and funding sources (Subijanto 2010:532). According to Act No. 20/2003, education management must be based on the principles of regional autonomy, accountability, quality assurance, and transparent school evaluation (Ministry of State Secretariat 2003). Education Boards and School Committees are required to be established to improve parental and community participation and hold the district bureaucracy and school principals accountable (Jalal 2001).

Taken together, these changes have allowed for high degrees of financial and administrative autonomy at the district government level, with freedom to decide which national education policies to prioritise, how to implement them, and what level of financial resources to commit to them. Consequently, the national-level education reforms have resulted in a wide variation of unique programmes and practices implemented at district-government level (Winardi 2017; Sari, 2019; Nihayah, Revina, and Usman 2020). While most studies assessing the implementation of educational programmes at district-government level have looked at the actual mechanisms of implementation and the extent of community participation (Westhorp et al. 2014; Hickey and Hossain 2019; Winardi 2017), this paper, on the other hand, explores whether community-responsive policy prioritisation necessarily leads to optimal education planning.

Section 2: Method

This study draws on qualitative data, drawing on interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, in two districts in Indonesia. The fieldwork involved conducting interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with education bureaucrats at the district education authorities (Disdikpora, Bappeda, and DPRD), Education Boards and School Committees, teachers and principals in junior secondary schools¹, and parents, NGOs, and community members across the two districts. Access to district government authorities and state schools was secured by seeking formal approval from the relevant provincial and district authorities such as the West Java National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol) and the DPRD offices in both districts. In the initial stage, interviews were conducted primarily with staff in the district educational authorities to understand how the decentralised system of education works in Indonesia, and more specifically to identify the specific reforms that have been implemented at the district level in the past five years. Gradually interviews were also begun with representatives of NGOs working in the area of education and with principals and teachers in state schools, in order to understand how district government authorities communicate those policy priorities to the school level. Interviews with the principals and the teachers thus focused on understanding the reforms they have witnessed in the school during the past five years. During school visits, interviews were also conducted with parents and communities to understand their perception of the quality of education provided in state schools, and their level of participation in school-governance processes through school-based management committees or other informal mechanisms. Time spent in the schools and within the community also allowed for observing the local dynamics and interactions among actors. In selecting schools to visit, an effort was made to cover both high-performing and low-performing schools as ranked by the district education authorities, based on student exam results. Interviewing principals and teachers from schools with different levels of performance was expected to help identify the role of any school-level variation in leading to successful implementation of a national-level educational reform.

The initial consideration for selecting the two districts was a difference in educational performance, as perceived by the members of the RISE Indonesia country team. The initial research plan was premised on the assumption that, since educational policy is formed at the national level, the key variation to study at the district level is that concerning implementation. Thus, selecting two districts with varying levels of educational performance could enable us to study possible explanations for the variation in success in implementation of the same policy interventions; covering regional variation is a popular research theme in studies on decentralisation and educational reforms (Tendler 1998; Mangla 2015). With these considerations, Kabupaten Karawang and Kabupaten Purwakarta appeared to be good candidates, as Karawang, which is the focus of Indonesia's industrialisation policy, was perceived by many as achieving higher educational performance than its rural counterpart, Purwakarta. The selection seemed particularly promising, as until 1950 they were both part of the same district, thus increasing the possibility that any variation in the level of success in implementing education reforms had more to do with different levels of performance by the district government bureaucrats than with socio-cultural variation. However, as this paper will

¹ The fieldwork focused on junior secondary schools as the district governments are directly responsible for designing policies for elementary and junior secondary schools while the responsibility for senior secondary education still rests with the provinces.

show, once formal indicators were identified to compare variation in performance across the two districts, it was difficult to establish that Karawang showed systematically higher educational performance than Purwakarta. More importantly, the initial interviews across the two districts also made clear that the two districts had prioritised very different national-level education policies for implementation. The key question in the context of educational decentralisation in Indonesia thus turned out to be not the variation in implementation of the same policy; instead the questions needing answers were (1) how and why did district educational authorities choose to prioritise specific national policies for implementation?; (2) to what extent were the community preferences reflected in those decisions?; and (3) were the preferences reflective of an explicit commitment to improving learning outcomes? Interviews and observations in the field thus came to focus on these questions.

Section 3: The Two Districts: Comparing Educational Performance

Karawang and Purwakarta demonstrate the usual differences expected between rural and urban districts. Karawang is an urban district with a population of almost 2.5 million, and the Indonesian government is keen to position it as one of the largest cities in East Asia. The district development plans, supported by central and regional government, have in recent years seen the construction of a high-speed rail service connecting Jakarta, the national capital, and Bandung, routed through Karawang, and an international airport in Karawang. Indeed, entering Karawang from West Karawang via the Jakarta–Cikampek Toll Road one can clearly see the industrial focus of the district. Land which was historically used for farming is now reserved for infrastructure development, with a focus on developing properties, housing schemes, and real estates to transform the area into a Central Business District (CBD). Restaurants and shopping plazas are key features of the city centre. The most noticeable shopping centres are Karawang Central Plaza and Resinda Park Mall, which is strategically connected within the Resinda housing complex, one of the elite residential clusters in the district. Meanwhile, schools, smaller shops, and smaller government offices are located in East Karawang. The Karawang Regent Office, DPRD, Disdikpora, and National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol) Karawang are all located in East Karawang. Recently, a Teacher Learning Centre (TLC) was established in Disdikpora through a public–private partnership with Sampoerna Foundation (a social business institution). These government offices resemble typical offices found in other districts in Indonesia. As we will see, this is not the case in Purwakarta. Aside from government offices, there are some notable shopping malls in East Karawang.

Unlike Karawang, Purwakarta was never intended to be an industrial city. With a population of just below 100,000, Purwakarta includes many villages in the sub-districts outside the city centre which are located in the highlands and still dominated by farm land. As a rural district, it lacks the modern industrial and housing development that Karawang has. The traffic is less congested, and larger shopping centres are absent. What is striking in terms of ethnographic observations is that unlike Karawang, where the city centre is dominated by shopping malls and offices, the city centre in Purwakarta is neatly decorated with facilities that symbolise its heritage and culture. Upon entering the city centre, one is greeted with a decorated gateway (*gapura*) that reads ‘*Gapura Indung Rahayu*’, which highlights the forgiveness of a mother, implying the important role of parents in one’s life (Maulud 2017). The other side of the gateway reads ‘*Bral Geura Miang Anaking*’, a Sundanese farewell expression which translates as ‘Let’s Go, My Child’. This reflects a message of hope and a mother’s aspirations for her child, including in the area of education. There is also a deep philosophy behind the gateway’s physical design, which symbolises *Tri Tangtu Jaya Dibwana* (three rules of life), highlighting the respective roles of academics, religious figures, and politicians (Maulud 2017). The city

centre is also decorated with many statues. The former regent of Purwakarta, interviewed for this study, explained that the establishment of such statues serves to promote art and history in the district (Winarno 2017). The statues mostly depict shadow puppet (wayang) characters that inspired the spread of Islam in Sundanese lands and the country more broadly. Hence, their installation is also meant to cultivate the public's love and appreciation for national heroes, instead of fictional superheroes 'imported' from abroad. Similarly, parks in Purwakarta are given names that are strongly associated with the Sundanese culture. The Islamic sentiment in the district is also noticeable in the actions of some Muslim groups who chose to vandalise many of these statues, even those representing historical Muslim figures, on the grounds that statues represent a form of idolatry (*syirik*) in Islam (Sutisna 2016). In response, the district government diversified the statues to include other characters from the historical Sunda Kingdom and prominent national figures from Indonesia's independence and reformation era.

As outlined in the methodology section, at the outset the assumption was that Karawang, an urban district which is positioned by the Indonesia state to be one of the biggest cities in East Asia, was showing higher educational performance than Purwakarta, a rural district with a community emphasis on preservation of traditional culture. However, closer scrutiny of the national-level indicators used by the Indonesian government to compare educational outcomes at the national level revealed a more complex story. Karawang had indeed in recent years shown improvement in national exam results at junior secondary level, compared with Purwakarta; but on other education-quality indicators used by the Indonesia government, such as the Exam Integrity Index (measured as the percentage of schools that have adopted computer-based exams), teacher–student ratios, and school infrastructure, Purwakarta actually out-performed Karawang (see results in Annex 1). Thus, comparing data across the different indicators (Annex 1), it could not be argued that Karawang performed better than Purwakarta in educational outcomes. This was particularly the case, given that the period in which Karawang had shown comparatively better performance (2016–2019) in junior-secondary school results was also the period in which Purwakarta had rigorously adopted the national policy of computer-based testing, aimed at curtailing cheating in national exams, while Karawang had retained traditional pencil and paper testing, thereby making the comparison of exam scores invalid. As a recent RISE study, has shown, the introduction of computer-based testing to check cheating in exams did lead to dramatic declines in national exam scores in junior secondary schools in Indonesia (Berkhout et al. 2020). Thus the important question was not why Karawang had shown improvement in exam scores compared with Purwakarta in recent years; rather it was why the two districts had placed different emphases on implementing the national policy of introducing computer-based testing.

Further, interviews with district-level bureaucrats and review of district government education documents showed that the differing educational priorities of the two districts were reflected not just in the different levels of emphasis they had placed on moving towards computer-based testing but also in what they viewed to be the core reform agenda for their district to improve education quality: Karawang, the urban and industrial district, had a heavy emphasis on improving student exam results, with a focus on introducing better teacher incentives; Purwakarta, the rural and more traditional district, on the other hand had primarily focused on implementing a national policy of moral education, instead of narrowly focusing on exam results. What made district governments choose these respective interventions, and were these priorities reflective of community preferences? Was improving learning outcomes an explicit concern? The next section addresses these issues.

Section 4. Agenda Setting: Improved Exam Scores Versus Moral Training

Interviews and observations at the level of educational authorities, schools, and community across the two districts show that the priorities in the two districts were shaped in consultation with school principals, communities, and parents, as during the fieldwork there was evidence of a general ownership of the adopted policies at the ground level. Yet the fieldwork also suggests that, while being concerned with improving educational quality, parents or even the school principals and teachers did not have an explicit focus on improving the actual literacy and numeracy skills. Thus, in Karawang, given the opportunities for low-skilled jobs in industries, securing a degree to enter the employment market became a natural priority for the district government as well as for the community. In Purwakarta, on the other hand, the school's role in inculcating moral values and respect for religion and tradition among children became the primary concern, instead of having an explicit focus on improving the actual literacy and numeracy skills. This is not to suggest that the goals prioritised by the two districts were wrong; securing employment and the inculcation of moral character are both worthy goals in their own right.

However, such a prioritisation does suggest that decentralisation and increased community participation does not automatically result in educational bureaucracies prioritising improvement in actual learning outcomes.

4.1. Karawang: Prioritising Teacher Incentives over Computer-Based Teaching

During interviews with bureaucrats in the district education authorities in Karawang there was a constant reference to the need to improve student exam results. The district officials were very concerned by the lack of sufficient teaching staff and were focused on introducing incentives to better motivate the teachers. The Secretary explained, 'The current need for civil servant teachers (PNS) is very high, due to the high rate of retirement. The ratio between honorary and PNS teachers is 60:40. It should have been the other way around.' Meanwhile, available honorary teachers have been struggling, owing to the lack of incentives, as they are not paid from the regional budget (APBD). Instead, the support for honorary teachers comes only from the School Operational Assistance (BOS) budget, which is provided by the central and regional governments depending on the number of students in each school. Fifty percent of the BOS budget can now be used for paying honorary teachers, a substantial increase from the 15 per cent level in previous years. However, many schools have not satisfied the minimum requirements for claiming it².

The concern about the shortage of PNS teachers was shared by principals and teachers in all four Karawang schools—two of them ranked as high performing and two as low performing by the district educational authorities—in which fieldwork was conducted for this study. For example, the school principal of SMPN 1 Karawang Barat noted, 'Our main challenge is we lack civil servant teachers, such that many of our teachers teach at multiple schools. As such, we hire freelance teachers.' Another teacher at SMPN 1 Klari said, 'Here, we have a teacher who has been teaching for decades and yet has not been appointed as a PNS teacher.'

As a result, the district has come up with its own initiatives to raise incentives for teachers, including honorary teachers. A school supervisor from Disdikpora explained:

² Two key requirements for this are: 1) registration with Basic Education Data system (Dapodik) as of December 2019; 2) Unique Identification Numbers for Teachers and Education Personnel (NUPTK) (Mulyawan, 2020). In particular, the second prerequisite remains problematic as many do not yet have an NUPTK

We had a School Managerial Quality Improvement Programme (PMMS). Under the new Mayor Regulation, it is now called Additional Employee Income (TPP). School principals will get a TPP of IDR 1 million/month, while teachers will get IDR 500,000. We also have a Teacher Learning Centre (TLC), where teachers can come for consultation on the learning process.

In addition, the new policy provides IDR 4–6 million for school supervisors (Farhan 2019). Honorary teachers will receive IDR 250,000, while those who have not benefited from previous PMMS policy will now receive IDR 500,000 (i.e. those who started working in 2018). Honorary teachers who have been teaching for 10–20 years will receive IDR 1 million. This policy was well received by teaching staff across four schools in the study, although some still noted the disparity in rates of additional income across these different categories.

During the fieldwork, this policy priority appeared to be very much consistent with the demands of parents and teachers, who during the interviews and focus-group discussions emphasised the need to properly incentivise teachers in order to improve students' exam results. Parents appeared keen to increase the employment prospects of the students in local industries – for which secondary-school completion was an essential requirement – as did district government officials and school principals and teachers. Noting how exam results are the key measure of school quality, the principal in one of the schools noted: 'Education quality is determined by society's own awareness, but it cannot be separated from the guidance of the Secretary of Disdikpora. He gathers us school principals. Any bad mark will be announced, so we would be ashamed if we have one. It becomes a *competition*.'

However, despite this shared emphasis on improving exam results, there was little talk of adopting the national policy of computer-based testing at the district, school, or community level. Computer-based testing was adopted as a national policy in Indonesia in 2015, due to concerns about widespread cheating during national exams at junior secondary and secondary level. For a district concerned with improving exam results, if the real concern was improving students' learning outcomes, it would make natural sense to prioritise adoption of this policy. However, the Karawang district government has completely failed to prioritise computer-based testing. In 2015, the Indonesian government introduced an additional measure called the National Examination Integrity Index (IIUN), which was developed along with the Computer Based Test (UNBK) policy to capture the level of academic honesty of national exam participants (BPS-Statistics Indonesia 2017). Schools that implement UNBK automatically receive a perfect score (100), as it is seen to ensure a low likelihood of cheating and hence a high level of integrity compared with the traditional, Paper Based Test (UNKP). As Figure 2 in Annex 1 shows, between 2016 and 2019, only 6 per cent of schools in Karawang had adopted computer-based testing, compared with 91 per cent of schools in Purwakarta (MoEC 2019c & MoEC 2019d). This lack of emphasis on introducing computer-based testing becomes all the more surprising, given that Karawang has a huge IT industry.

As the school principal at SMPN 1 Karawang Barat noted, 'Perhaps people wondered why Karawang had a huge IT industry and yet ranked second lowest in terms of proportion of schools with UNBK in 2019.' He went on to explain: 'Until last year, the central government never enforced the implementation of UNBK across all schools. This all depends on instruction from *Disdikpora*. In contrast, with an instruction to apply UNBK for all schools in 2020, schools will automatically have to comply and adapt.' This shows that the district government educational authorities did not prioritise computer-based testing as long as the decision on this had been left to be taken at the district level. Similarly, the deputy school principal from SMPN

1 Telagasari, who was responsible for organising the school infrastructure and facilities, commented:

Why did schools in other districts switch to UNBK earlier than we did, although we have factories for computers? This is probably because of the coordination and communication between Disdikpora and the district government. Perhaps Disdikpora did not submit a proposal for UNBK to the district government.

One potential explanation for the lack of prioritisation of computer-based testing and the related focus on checking cheating in exams by a district focused on increasing exam scores and improved employment is that exposing lower scores reflected in UNBK would impede students' entry into high-secondary academic and vocational institutions, and thus reduce their employment opportunities. Nevertheless, during the fieldwork it was also clear that there was a lack of public pressure on the district government to apply the UNBK policy. Throughout the interviews in Karawang, there was heavy emphasis on ensuring the employability of the graduates. This idea was highlighted by the Secretary of Disdikpora:

The Karawang society still evaluates the success of education from school graduates' ability to enter the workforce after completing their study. Similarly, the society tends to assess whether high school graduates can enter into prestigious universities. This is true despite the fact that parents also pay some attention to students' character, which results in the branding of some schools as 'good' and 'bad'.

The Head of Education Board Karawang, while explaining how education in Karawang has developed since the implementation of the decentralisation policy in the early 2000s, placed similar emphasis on employability:

Development over the years has been significant. The expansion of education access and quality has relevance to the needs of our society. As one of the largest industrial zones in Southeast Asia, Karawang is oriented towards life skill education. I advised that school curriculum and extracurricular activities must be geared towards companies' interests. School graduates enter Education and Training (Diklat) at the Ministry of Manpower, Transmigration, and Cooperatives. About 50–60 per cent of them will later be hired by the companies. This is to counter the public perception that school graduates still experience unemployment anyway.

He was of the view that the community wanted education based on life skills that leads to immediate employability and means of income generation. The increased urbanised and commercial nature of Karawang, especially compared with Purwakarta, was also clearly visible during the fieldwork. As the deputy school principal of one school noted: 'Karawang cannot implement Purwakarta's policy. People are more gentle in Purwakarta, while Karawang people have a more abrasive personality.' Similarly, a study of Karawang's city branding found that the public perception of the district has changed from an agricultural to an industrial city (Yuniatami 2018:61). Many, during the fieldwork, described Karawang as a 'migrant/settler' city and commented on how this development has significantly influenced public attitudes. Due to rapid urbanisation in recent years, settlers have become a visible proportion of the population: the native: settler population ratio in Karawang is around 60:40 (Awaluddin 2018). Reportedly, between 10,000 and 30,000 settlers come to work in Karawang each year. Studies note that urbanisation has contributed to the fading of traditional values (Ratnasari 2016:1). Changes are particularly reflected in people's attitudes, which demonstrate lower religious

awareness and sense of mutual co-operation (*gotong royong*); these are also reflected in modes of interactions seen as disrespectful by traditional Javanese standards, in the adoption of modern clothing/fashion, and a greater sense of urgency to get things done in an instant. With all these changing attitudes and the push towards urban and modern living, the community is keen to see improved education provision; but its assessment of good-quality education is closely tied to exam scores and degree completion which can lead to employment, even if those scores are obtained through an educational system known to suffer from extensive cheating in exams. The actual learning outcomes are still not a priority. Thus, this ‘education as certificates for jobs’ approach is compatible with a ‘cheating equilibrium’ if neither parents nor educators are actually committed to a vision of education that looks beyond securing degree certificates as a means to obtain a ‘modern’ job.

The changing attitudes towards education and life in general were also visible in the remote parts of the Karawang district. For instance, the deputy school principal in one of the remote areas of Karawang noted:

Our community retains the Sundanese culture and most people work as farmers. However, there is a shift away from farming and toward the industry. As such, we have also adopted IT rather than textbooks as a way of learning. Students grew up in farming environment, but millennials have increasingly opted to work at factories.

As we will see in the next section, it is then not surprising that in Purwakarta, where the community still remains quite traditional, district educational authorities have prioritised implementation of the national policy of moral education. Further, some suggest that introduction of moral, cultural, and character-improvement education programmes have strengthened students’ religious awareness and their honesty, fairness, responsibility, independence, and care for the environment (Affandy 2018:1).

4.2. Purwakarta: Prioritising Moral Education and Computer-Based Testing

Unlike Karawang, fieldwork in Purwakarta showed that the district education authorities had prioritised implementation of the national policy of introducing moral and character education. During the interviews with bureaucrats at the district educational authorities, school principals and teachers, and parents and community members, there was much emphasis placed on introduction of character education. At the centre of the character education was the introduction of the Seven Days of Special Education (*7 Poé Atikan*) programme under the *Regency Regulation No. 69/2015 on Character Education*. The Head of Elementary Education division at *Disdikpora* explained the programme’s content:

Ajeg Nusantara every Monday develops students’ love for their land of birth and their personal history. *Mapag Buana* on Tuesdays focuses on introducing students and teachers to Industry and IT literacy. *Maneuh di Sunda* on Wednesdays ensures that students preserve Sundanese language, tradition, traditional clothing, and dance and music, while *Nyanding Wawangi* on Thursdays seeks to improve students’ aesthetic ability, such as through knitting, embroidery, and cooking. There is also a Student Assets programme, in which students are advised to accumulate savings of any kind, which can include money, livestock, or plants. Every Thursday, there is Compassion Rice (*Beras Kaheman*) programme, in which each student is required to leave a bowl of rice for their poor classmates and elderly people. On Fridays, *Nyucikeun Diri* programme develops students’ religiosity through *salat* (prayers) for Muslim students

and religious education/guidance for non-Muslims. Tolerance is important. *Betah di Imah* from Saturday–Sunday means that students engage in vocational education, in which they acquire life skills by helping their parents at home. This is to improve their relation with their parents. We no longer give homework to students, so evaluation is based entirely on the ability and potential of each individual. Indeed, a teacher from INSPIRASI (an NGO) told me that Purwakarta students are different in that they are polite and obedient.

As a part of this character education programme, students and teachers also wear different uniform each day from Monday to Friday: scout uniform on Monday, junior high school uniform on Tuesday, *kampret* (traditional clothing) on Wednesday, batik or any other style as an artistic expression on Thursday, and sarung on Friday. There are other additional regulations initiated by the district, such as *Ngabaso* (*Ngabring Ka Sakola*), in which parents can only accompany or drop their children within 100 metres of the school gate, so that students collectively walk to schools every morning. Unlike schools in other regencies, students and teachers must arrive at 6 am. Accompanied by school teachers, students must greet each other every morning. Students and teachers must also bring home-cooked meals, and canteens are not allowed in schools. No school is any longer allowed to provide bottled water, since students and teachers have to bring their own tumblers, and study tours can be organised only within Purwakarta.

Ethnographic observations in four schools in Purwakarta— two high-ranking and two low-ranking schools as per district government scales—showed a clear difference in the cultural environment of the schools in the two districts. The interactions of the principals and teachers in the public schools in Karawang reflected a sense of urgency, an unwillingness to pay focused attention during the interviews, expressed by pursuing other tasks at the same time, and a desire to rush the interviews – all of which contradict traditional Sundanese cultural values. A few teachers even advised not to take name-calling by school students seriously. In Purwakarta the fieldwork interactions were very different, with principals and teachers setting aside dedicated time to respond to the interviewers and serve them traditional cakes. Furthermore, while school principals and teachers in Karawang wore regular teaching-staff uniform, those in Purwakarta wore different uniform depending on the day, which broadly corresponded to the uniform assigned for students on that day according to the district’s character education programme. Thus, the school environment in Purwakarta showed an emphasis on the traditional sense of hospitality, while that in Karawang reflected a sense of urgency and a general sense of disregard for traditional customs and values.

The different level of emphasis placed on preservation of traditional values in the two districts was also evident in the design of schools and government offices. In contrast to the schools and offices in Karawang, those in Purwakarta are characterised by traditional elements of Sundanese design, such as *Julang Ngapak* roof and *Gapura Malati* (jasmine gapura) (Mahardika 2017; Ilham and Sofyan SB 2012:6). This also applies to Disdikpora Purwakarta, which has a design that makes it appear more like a cultural centre than an education agency. There is a large signpost on the building that reads ‘7 *Poé Atikan Istimewa*’, which is the district’s main programme of character education. Interestingly, many facilities inside the building, such as automatic doors and keyless door locks, also reflect the Disdikpora’s commitment to technology, which is consistent with its focus on introducing computer-based testing. These features are not present in Karawang’s government offices.

In the four schools in Purwakarta in which the fieldwork was carried out, there was a shared emphasis on implementing moral education, although there were some noticeable differences in the urban and rural districts in terms of the extent to which the character education programme could be fully implemented. As the principal in one of the urban schools noted:

Our school stresses the importance of developing students' non-academic potential, in line with the regency's principle. This includes sending students with stronger potential in sports to professional clubs to undergo training while still providing online education in addition to that. We also provide non-formal Islamic education such as *Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah* (MDT), in addition to Islamic Spiritual (*Rohis*) lessons for female students and Friday prayer for male students every Friday. Politeness, discipline, and religiosity, not just academic quality, in fact become the factors that draw parents' attention.

Schools located in more remote areas still implement the policies, but interviewees noted certain challenges. The principal of one of the rural schools visited noted:

Despite decentralisation, there is still a gap between the capacities of urban and rural schools to adopt policies mandated by the district. Students in urban areas attend schools in the morning, while those in rural schools tend to arrive later. This has negatively affected the mentality of students in rural schools. Some students in rural areas like Maniis also live in remote locations, which are also far from schools, and transportation access is more limited. Due to these reasons, we have to make exceptions to the existing regulations. For instance, we cannot force students to arrive promptly at 6 am and strictly regulate students to wear the proper school uniform or prohibit them from riding motorcycles to school.

At the same time, the second national policy that the Purwakarta education authorities have clearly prioritised is introduction of computer-based testing. The Head of the Elementary Education division at *Disdikpora* highlighted the district government's commitment to this policy:

There is still a culture in which teachers will not take any action unless it is a government policy. Last year, 89 per cent of schools in Purwakarta implemented UNBK, although we did not have the budget and the necessary equipment. We did this because *Disdikpora* supported it. This year the rate is going to be 100 per cent.

Similarly, regardless of their historical learning outcomes and infrastructure readiness, schools in Purwakarta have consistently adopted UNBK early on, as mandated by the district. A teacher at SMPN 4 Purwakarta stated, 'We cannot spend on everything, so we focus on the essentials, such as UNBK.' The insistence on implementing UNBK as soon as the policy was announced by the central government has resulted in some adjustments made by schools across the district.

For instance, the school principal of SMPN 2 Maniis noted, 'We only received 22 computers. We rely on parents' contribution for the rest. I have just proposed to the *Disdikpora* to provide a signal amplifier because the first day of UNBK simulation failed due to poor network connection.' Similarly, a teacher at SMPN 1 Wanayasa explained, 'We have implemented UNBK since 2018, when we conducted it at our neighbouring high school (SMAN 1 Wanayasa). In 2019, we hired a private provider to support additional laptops.'

This shows that despite the absence of central government's enforcement, the district took an early initiative to implement UNBK in light of its vision to check cheating in exams. Adopting computerised testing was a way to signal the district's commitment to promoting technology, but it was also a natural complement to its character education policy, as checking cheating in national exams helps to tackle a moral ill. In some ways, Purwakarta's equal emphasis on adopting computer-based testing and (due to that) computer literacy and moral education shows that an emphasis on moral outcomes can indirectly also help to improve actual learning outcomes, instead of simply prioritising high exam scores whether they are secured through fair or foul means. However, as in the case of Karawang, the education-policy prioritisation process in Purwakarta shows that improving learning outcomes on its own is not necessarily the primary focus; any improvement in learning outcomes through the prioritised policies is an indirect gain, instead of being the goal. Policies prioritised in the two districts were clearly responsive to the community's perceived needs and preferences and offered more tangible results, which the community could easily monitor: degrees in the case of the urban district, and respect for culture and tradition in the rural district, where formal employment opportunities are still limited, and retaining the traditional way of life is important for communal harmony.

Section 5: School-Level Variation in Each District

Overall, in line with findings from other recent studies (Nihayah, Revina, and Usman 2020), fieldwork in the two districts does suggest that decentralisation has instilled much energy at the district government level. During school visits in the two districts there was a sense that the district educational authorities were making concentrated efforts to pursue their stated goals. When developing a list of public schools to visit for this study in consultation with the district education authorities, effort was made to include both high-performing and low-performing schools, in order to observe any school-level variation in implementation of the district-level prioritised interventions. The fieldwork showed that across the different categories of school, the prioritised interventions had been clearly communicated. Interviews with school principals in Karawang in general showed a clear awareness of a district-level push for improving exam results through offering better teacher incentives. Interviews with school principals in Purwakarta, on the other hand, showed a clear understanding of the district-government preference for introduction of moral education and computer-based testing. These schools visits, however, also demonstrated how, across the two districts, schools catering for students from low socio-economic profiles faced higher challenges in terms of educational performance. This association between student socio-economic profile and school performance became particularly clear in the case of Karawang, which had recently introduced a new zoning policy for school admission, thereby forcing some of the good schools, which formerly recruited students from across the city, to recruit from within the immediate community. Similarly, a community's ability to support a school financially proved to be important for improving school performance in both the districts. Thus, across the two districts, we find evidence of school-level variation and strong links between good public schools and student socio-economic profile and parental or community ability to finance activities within the school, whether via school-based management committees or other platforms. Thus, as can be expected, the biggest challenge for the district government authorities as well as the national government remains that of improving public schools catering for the students from the most marginalised socio-economic backgrounds, and communities with limited cash to spare and invest in school improvement. Community responsive education policies will not automatically translate into improved learning outcomes when performance of state schools varies widely in response to the students' socio-economic profile and community resource endowment.

5.1. Good Schools and Students' Socio-Economic Profile

Across the two districts, the schools ranked as high performing catered for students from relatively privileged socio-economic backgrounds, in contrast to the schools ranked as low performing. This correlation was repeatedly noted by teachers and principals in the schools visited and was also visible during the field visits. The school principal in the high-performing school explained, 'Here, student quality is good. Parents are supportive and this has impact on improving teachers' motivation. We have a cross-subsidisation to avoid placing too much burden on socioeconomically disadvantaged families.' This perception was also shared by parents and community members. A parent of a student at the high-performing school, who himself gives talks in a low-performing school, similarly noted: 'At my son's school students behave better because of their socioeconomic background. In contrast, parents of students in the school in which I teach struggle to make ends meet, resulting in a lack of attention given to their children.' Further, the data on the number of students in each school receiving Smart Indonesia programme (PIP) cards, provided to children from low-income households, also supports this correlation. In 2015, for example, only 50 students received Smart Indonesia Programme (PIP) cards in the high-performing school visited in Karawang; in contrast, as many as 513 students received the PIP cards from the government in the low-performing school (MoEC 2018).

That socio-economic profile of the students is important in influencing school performance was also visible in the kinds of challenge noted by teachers in high-performing schools, resulting from adoption of the 'zoning policy'. The Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No.14/2018 regulates admissions of new students in public kindergarten, primary school, junior secondary school, high secondary school, and vocational school (Minister of Education and Culture 2018). Under this regulation a new zoning policy has been adopted, which links school admissions to the areas where they live. The main purpose of this is to eliminate the distinction between 'favourite' and 'non-favourite' (i.e. good or bad) schools, and therefore make education quality more evenly spread across the districts. As a result of this policy, principals in the high-performing schools in Karawang noted negative shifts in school performance. As the principal of one of the high-performing schools noted: 'I have noted a slight decline in student input and parents' economic background after the zoning policy. As a result, students' compliance level is also in decline.' He elaborated further:

Student input has become more heterogeneous in the last three years; student input and parents' attention varies based on economic status. We had never found children carrying weapons to school because they all used to live in Resinda and Bumi Telukjambe housing complexes, where their parents tend to have fixed income. In contrast, these days, children bring sharp weapons to school. SMPN 1 Karawang Barat is surrounded by government offices rather than residences, so students who enter here come from more rural areas where the offices are located. Now, some students find it difficult to buy books because of their reduced socioeconomic ability.

5.2. Good Schools and Community Resource Endowment

In addition to students' socio-economic profile, the community's financial status also seemed to have a bearing on the quality of the public school. During the fieldwork, principals and teachers repeatedly highlighted how the community's ability to mobilise funds could greatly affect numerous aspects of school life, ranging from appointment of extra teachers to holding extra-curriculum activities. Emphasising that the financial capacity of the parents and community has direct influence on school quality, the principal of the high-performing school

in Karawang shared an example: ‘There was an angklung (a traditional West Java musical instrument) event organised by the MoEC. The budget was made clear to parents and they responded.’ Elaborating further, he added:

Non-government-initiated programmes, such as extracurricular events, are not covered by BOS. So, the school committee makes proposals to invite parents to help fund these activities. Those who cannot afford it can participate free of charge. In fact, parents asked us to initiate tutoring sessions and they did not mind that the school committee gets to decide on the required budget. We also won an International Judo competition and for this financial support came entirely from parents.

However, during the fieldwork it was also clear that raising funds from the communities for school-improvement plans was a sensitive issue that received negative media attention and was not actively encouraged by district government. As a principal in a school in Purwakarta explained:

The School Committees are a part of schools; they are responsible for organising funds to finance events. However, with the central government’s prohibition of imposing a levy on parents, we are facing difficulties. The socialisation of free schooling has been booming, especially in Purwakarta. We receive voluntary donations from parents, but asking donation from parents is a very sensitive matter.

A teacher at the same school added, ‘Our School Committee is very cautious. We cannot hope for much contribution from parents because this can potentially become a media spotlight.’ Similarly, teachers at the second school in Purwakarta noted how basic facilities such as tables and chairs in classrooms need replacement. However, they noted that while the district government was unable to fund it, there were also strict government prohibitions on ‘illegal levies’ imposed on parents by School Committees.

Thus, despite being recognised as a sensitive issue, raising funds from the community to support school-improvement programmes remains the primary choice for many schools across the two districts when district governments are unable to finance some of the basic school needs.

Conclusion

The findings from this paper thus suggest that decentralisation has indeed made the district educational authorities active players in public-sector education delivery. They have much freedom to prioritise implementation of specific national policies over others. Further, bureaucrats in district educational authorities seem to be active in the field, as their prioritised policies seem to be reflective of community preferences and are actively implemented by the school principals and teachers. Yet, looking at the specific national policies prioritised by the district education authorities in the two districts under study, it is also clear that community-responsive policy adoption does not automatically translate into prioritisation of improving learning outcomes. As we see even in other country contexts—for example, Pratham’s attempt in India to shift the focus of government educational reforms from curriculum completion to improving learning outcomes (Banerji 2015)—inculcating appreciation for improving learning outcomes is a challenging process. Governments, parents, and communities are often more concerned with more visible and immediate results. Thus, for government officials the core priority is investment in easily visible school infrastructure, and for parents and community it is degree completion and employment, instead of an objective focus on seeing actual

improvement in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. This does pose a difficult question, namely: is a focus on improving learning outcomes too elusive or sophisticated a concept for most parents from low socio-economic backgrounds, who in developing countries are usually the ones sending their children to public schools? This paper has shown that this might not be the case. Even though communities in neither of the two districts under study directly prioritised policies aimed at improving learning outcomes, the prioritised policies do indirectly have the potential to contribute towards that goal. In the urban district, the focus on degree completion was associated with investment in improving teacher incentives, which also has the potential to improve the quality of teaching. In the rural district, the emphasis on moral education was partly reflective of the parental belief that a child with strong moral character would be studious, disciplined, and hard-working and would thus also become better at knowledge acquisition. This suggests that donor-supported community-mobilisation campaigns, which in most cases assume that poor communities do not value education or don't know what to expect from state schools, could develop more effective messages if they first understand the local incentive structures shaping the community's expectations of education.

Overall, in line with evidence shared in other recent studies on educational decentralisation in Indonesia (Winardi 2017; Sari, 2019; Nihayah, Revina, and Usman 2020), the paper has shown much activity taking place at the district government level. The fieldwork in the two districts showed that the district government officials were in touch with the schools and the communities. School principals and teachers and parents, as well as communities, expressed a need for improvement in many areas, but it was also clear that they had a sense that reforms were ongoing and that the district government officials are active and making an effort. While this increased activity at district-government level is promising, the results from this study do suggest that such activity can result in significant district-level variations in policy prioritisation and potential educational outcomes. Another RISE study supports similar conclusions: looking at the adoption of innovation in education across three districts in Indonesia, Nihayah, Revina, and Usman (2020) have similarly identified the local socio-cultural context as being a critical variable in determining why a district adopted specific innovation; they thus argue that the central government needs to be aware of these differences when drafting national-level policies. At the same time, there is significant school-level variation in each district. In both districts, serious challenges remain to the provision of good-quality education provision in public schools catering for children from low socio-economic backgrounds in communities with limited resources to invest in school improvement. The literature on ensuring equity in quality of education provision in developing countries is normally concerned with difference in education quality in government and private schools; the fieldwork in the two districts studied here shows that equalising quality of education provision across state schools, catering for communities with different resource endowments, is in itself a major challenge.

Annex 1: Comparison of Educational Performance: Karawang and Purwakarta

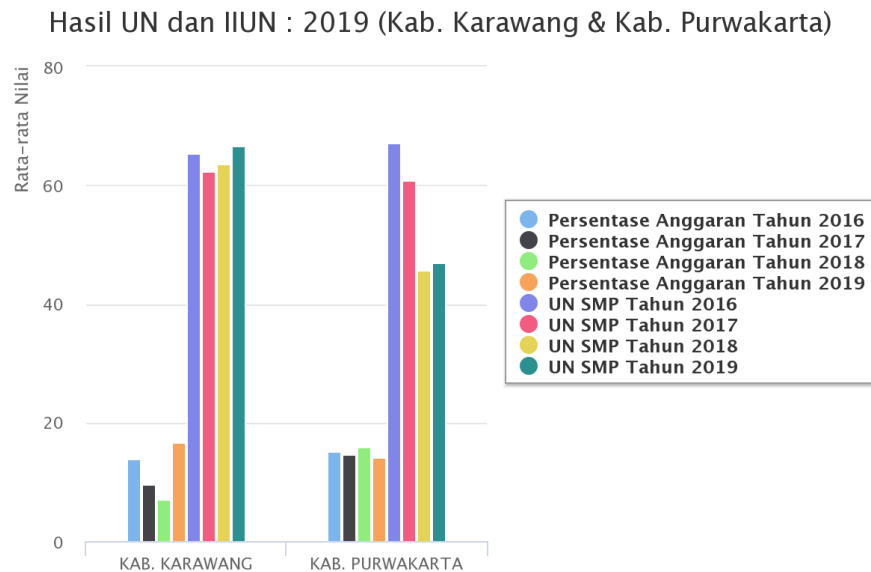


Figure 1. National Exam Results: 2016-2019 (Karawang & Purwakarta)

The key measure of students' competency in Indonesia is National Examination Results. As shown in **Figure 1**, the junior secondary schools national examination result in Karawang in 2016 was lower than the result in Purwakarta (Kemendikbud, 2019a). The result in Karawang declined in 2017, but continued to improve in the subsequent years, while Purwakarta's national exam result continued to decline, with only a slight improvement in 2019. Apparently, this result supports the perception that Karawang is showing higher performance in education. However, there appears to be need for caution in interpreting these results. As we see in the next indicator, Karawang has been very slow compared to Purwakarta in adopting computer based testing, which by removing opportunity for cheating could explain Karawang's comparative improvement in national exams.

Hasil UN dan IIUN : 2019 (Kab. Karawang & Kab. Purwakarta)

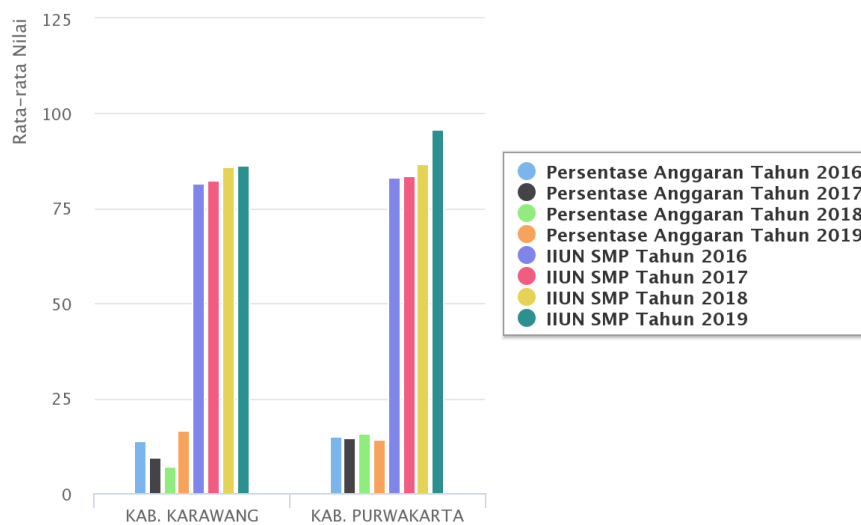


Figure 2. National Examination Integrity Index (IIUN) Results: 2016-2019 (Karawang & Purwakarta)

In 2015, the Indonesian government introduced an additional measure called National Examination Integrity Index (IIUN), which was developed along with the Computer Based Test (UNBK) to capture the level of academic honesty of national exam participants (BPS, 2017). Schools that implement UNBK automatically receive a perfect score (100), as it is seen to ensure low likelihood for cheating and hence a high level of integrity compared to the traditional, Paper Based Test (UNKP). **Figure 2** indicates that Purwakarta has performed better in IIUN between 2016 and 2019 (Kemendikbud, 2019a). This is because while most (91 per cent) junior high schools in Purwakarta have employed UNBK, only a very small proportion (6 per cent), have done so in Karawang (Kemendikbud, 2019b).

Kualifikasi Guru Tahun : 2019 (Kab. Karawang & Kab. Purwakarta)

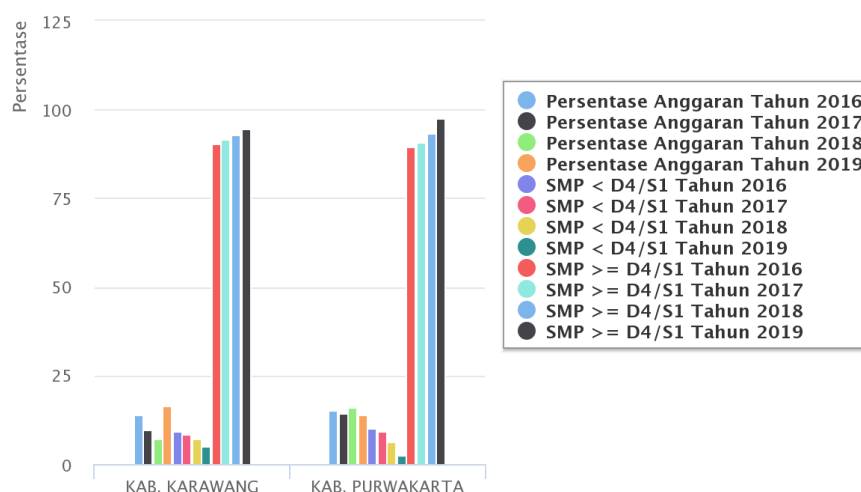


Figure 3. Junior Secondary Teacher Qualification: 2016-2019 (Karawang & Purwakarta)

The quality of academic staff can also be important in comparing the two districts. First, it can be measured through teacher qualification. Act No.14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers requires all teachers at the early-senior secondary level to hold an academic or vocational bachelor's

degree (D4/S1) and successfully complete a certification process (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2005). As noted in **Figure 3**, teachers in the two districts show a comparable level of competency, with almost all of them holding at least a bachelor's (D4/S1) degree (Kemendikbud, 2019c). Nonetheless, Purwakarta shows a generally better performance in this regard between 2016-2019, with a higher reduction in the number of teachers with less than D4/S1 qualification and an improvement in the number of teachers with such a qualification.

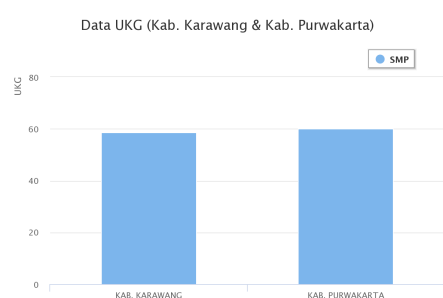


Figure 4. Junior Secondary Teacher Competency Test (UKG): 2019 (Karawang & Purwakarta)

Another indicative measure of teaching staff quality is the Teacher Competency Test (UKG). Although the results from the two districts were very similar in 2019, Purwakarta junior secondary teachers in fact performed slightly better compared to those in Karawang (Kemendikbud, 2019d).

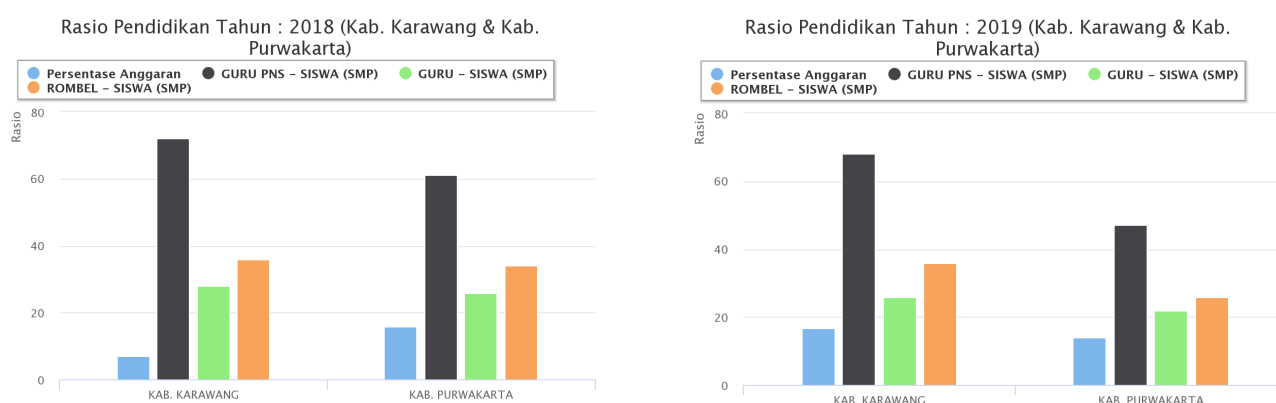


Figure 5. Junior Secondary Education Ratios: 2018-2019 (Karawang & Purwakarta)

Similarly, as noted in **Figure 5**, Karawang had higher student-teacher ratios in 2018-2019, which can potentially contribute to a lower teaching quality and individual teacher's capability to handle students (Kemendikbud, 2019e). Purwakarta also had a lower ratio of students per study group, while Karawang had a higher ratio, which exceeds the maximum of 36 students per study group, as stipulated in Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 22/2016 (Minister of Education and Culture, 2016).

Akreditasi Sekolah Tahun : 2019 (Kab. Karawang & Kab. Purwakarta)

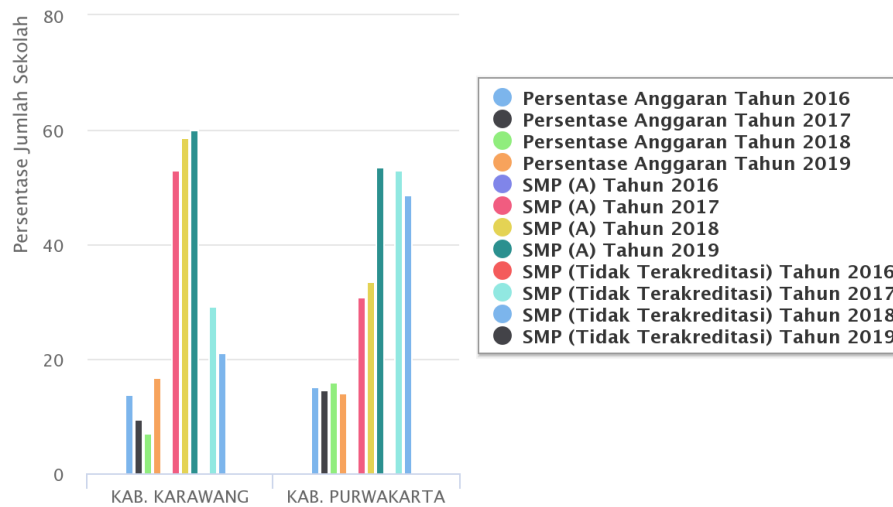


Figure 6. Junior Secondary Accreditation: 2017-2019 (Karawang & Purwakarta)

Finally, school features and classroom conditions can serve as a useful indicator for education quality. Accreditation is usually understood as a measure of school quality, covering aspects such as teaching staff, school facility and infrastructure, management, and funding (National School/Madrasa Accreditation Body (BAN-S/M), 2020). As shown in **Figure 6**, there is no available data for school accreditation in 2016 (Kemendikbud, 2019f). From 2017-2019, however, Karawang generally performed better in terms of accreditation, with more schools receiving 'A' accreditation and a smaller number of schools without accreditation.

Kondisi Ruang Kelas Tahun : 2019 (Kab. Karawang & Kab. Purwakarta)

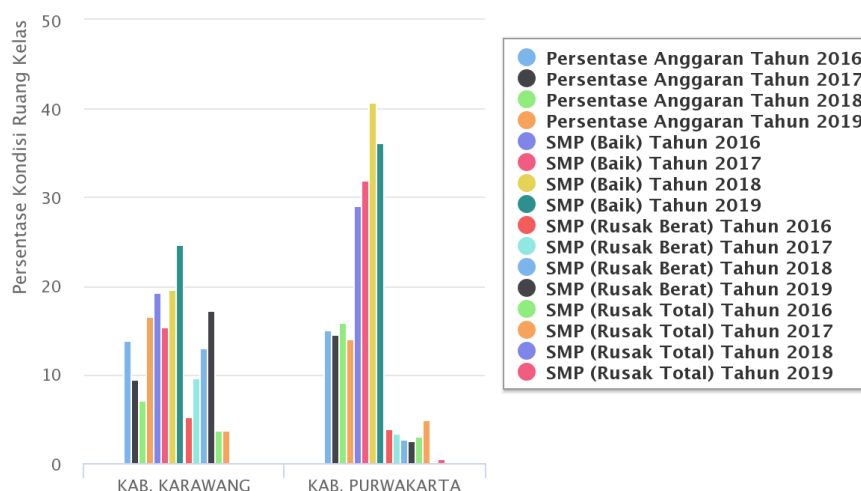


Figure 7. Junior Secondary Classroom Condition: 2016-2019 (Karawang & Purwakarta)

Purwakarta, however, performed much better in terms of classroom condition between 2016-2019, with a higher number of classrooms with good condition and a much lower number of heavily damaged classrooms each year (Kemendikbud, 2019g).

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