

Implementation Of The Regulation Of The Minister Of Education And Culture Of The Republic Of Indonesia Number 1 Of 2021 At Smp Negeri 16 Bengkulu City

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine the implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 of 2021 concerning the New Student Admission System (PPDB) at SMP Negeri 16 Bengkulu City. The policy regulates the zoning system for new student admission which prioritizes students based on geographic proximity. This qualitative descriptive study involved interviews with school officials and parents, observation, and documentation. The study found that the implementation of the regulation at SMP Negeri 16 was conducted in an objective, transparent, and accountable manner. The zoning system was applied through an online application supported by the Education Office. Requirements and selection criteria were clearly communicated, primarily based on domicile verified by the family card. This system ensures educational equity by prioritizing local students and limiting favoritism toward certain schools. Informants confirmed the compliance of SMP Negeri 16 with the regulation and the clarity of its application procedures. Despite some challenges in public understanding, the school made efforts in disseminating information through social media and banners. The study concludes that SMP Negeri 16 has implemented the Ministerial Regulation effectively according to the zonation principles and has maintained public trust in the admission process.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the fundamental rights of every citizen, as enshrined in Article 31 paragraph 1 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that every citizen has the right to education. The National Education System Law (Law No. 20 of 2003) further emphasizes that national education aims to develop students' potential so that they become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and democratic, and are responsible citizens. This clearly positions education not only as a basic human right but also as a strategic vehicle for national development.

Human rights, or *hak asasi manusia* (HAM), are inherent and universal, belonging to every individual from birth. The right to education is part of these inalienable rights. As stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), every individual has the right to education. Therefore, governments are not only morally but also legally obligated to ensure equitable access to quality education for all, regardless of social or geographic background. Indonesia, as a developing country, places high hopes on education as a driving force for social transformation and national progress. However, achieving equitable access to quality education remains a formidable challenge. Disparities between urban and rural areas, between eastern and western regions, and even among schools within the same city continue to persist. These inequalities manifest in the form of unequal distribution of qualified teachers, school facilities, and academic outcomes, thus contradicting the spirit of national education goals.

To address these disparities, the Indonesian government introduced the zoning system (*sistem zonasi*) for new student admissions through a series of ministerial regulations. Most notably, Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 1 of 2021 sets forth provisions on the admission of new

students (*Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru*, PPDB) at primary and secondary levels. The policy mandates that public schools must prioritize student admission based on residential proximity to ensure fair access for all children, especially those living near schools.

The zoning system is grounded in three core principles: objectivity, transparency, and accountability. These principles are intended to eliminate discrimination, reduce the practice of “school favoritism,” and create a more inclusive and evenly distributed student population. By limiting admission opportunities for out-of-zone students, the policy seeks to strengthen neighborhood schools and promote a sense of community involvement in education.

At its core, the zoning policy represents a paradigm shift from a merit-based admission system—often determined by academic scores or prestige—toward a more egalitarian system that emphasizes geographic equity. While the policy has been applauded for its intent to democratize access to education, it has also sparked controversy and implementation challenges in various regions. Critics argue that the zoning system disregards academic excellence and has led to dissatisfaction among parents whose children are unable to enroll in reputed schools despite high academic performance.

In the city of Bengkulu, the implementation of this policy carries significant implications, particularly at SMP Negeri 16, a public junior high school located in Kelurahan Betungan, Kecamatan Selebar. This school, like many others in Indonesia, has been required to adapt to the provisions of Permendikbud No. 1 of 2021, especially regarding the allocation of quotas for zonasi (50%), afirmasi (15%), perpindahan tugas orang tua (5%), and prestasi (up to 30% depending on leftover quotas). The policy has reshaped not only the school’s administrative practices but also its relationship with the surrounding community. Given these circumstances, this research seeks to examine how SMP Negeri 16 Bengkulu City has implemented the zoning-based PPDB policy. Has the school adhered to the legal mandates and fulfilled the principles of objectivity, transparency, and accountability? What are the perceptions of stakeholders—including school staff, students’ parents, and local authorities—regarding the effectiveness and fairness of the policy?

To answer these questions, this study employs a qualitative descriptive method, utilizing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. The study focuses on three primary indicators of implementation: (1) the objectivity of admission criteria, (2) the transparency of admission procedures and communication, and (3) the accountability mechanisms established to ensure public trust and institutional responsibility.

Preliminary data from SMP Negeri 16 Bengkulu indicate that the school has received hundreds of applications annually through various admission tracks. In 2023 and 2024, the majority of students were admitted through the zonasi track, aligning with the mandated 50% quota. However, administrative challenges such as verification of domicile through family cards, clarity of online registration platforms, and handling of complaints have continued to surface, thus warranting further academic exploration. Furthermore, the implementation of the zoning system has a broader implication for education equity in Bengkulu City. It represents not only a technical administrative reform but also a sociopolitical commitment to rectify structural injustices in the education system. As such, evaluating its implementation offers a critical opportunity to assess how national policy is interpreted and operationalized at the local level.

This study is also important because it provides empirical evidence that can inform future policy refinements. The perspectives of key informants—such as the school principal, administrative staff, classroom teachers, and parents—offer valuable insights into the actual practices and perceptions that accompany the regulation. Understanding these lived experiences is essential for assessing whether the policy achieves its intended outcomes or merely shifts the burden of educational inequality in different forms. In conclusion, the implementation of Permendikbud No. 1 of 2021 at SMP Negeri 16 Bengkulu City serves as a microcosm of national educational reform efforts. Through this study, it is hoped that a more nuanced understanding of policy application at the grassroots level can be achieved. Moreover, the study aims to provide constructive recommendations for improving the fairness, clarity, and effectiveness of future PPDB policies, thereby strengthening Indonesia’s commitment to inclusive and high-quality education for all.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Implementation Theory

Implementation is often defined as the process by which policies are translated into practice through administrative actions and institutional arrangements. According to Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), implementation is the action phase in which public policies are executed by designated institutions. The success of policy implementation depends on the clarity of policy objectives, the availability of resources, communication among stakeholders, and the disposition of implementers. In the

context of education, implementation involves schools, local governments, and the wider community working in tandem to realize policy goals.

Education Policy and Governance

Education policy encompasses decisions made at the governmental level to regulate and improve the delivery of education. As noted by Haddad and Demsky (1995), educational policy involves setting goals, establishing procedures, allocating resources, and ensuring accountability mechanisms. In Indonesia, education policy is primarily governed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Policies such as the zoning system aim to promote equity by regulating school admissions and ensuring that access is not disproportionately influenced by socioeconomic status or favoritism.

Zoning System in Education

The zoning system (*sistem zonasi*) refers to an admission policy that prioritizes student enrollment based on geographic proximity to schools. As described by Abidin and Asrori (2018), the primary objective of zoning is to reduce educational disparities and eliminate the concept of “elite” or “favorite” schools. By enforcing proximity-based admissions, the policy aims to strengthen neighborhood schools and encourage parents to invest in local education institutions. However, effective implementation requires accurate data, clear regulations, and strong public awareness.

Transparency in Public Policy

Transparency is a fundamental principle in public administration and policy implementation. It involves open access to information, clarity of procedures, and the ability for the public to monitor government actions. According to Bovens (2007), transparency builds public trust and enhances accountability. In the context of PPDB (new student admission), transparency includes the timely dissemination of information, public access to admission criteria, and clear announcements of results. Without transparency, public skepticism and misinformation may undermine the goals of equitable education.

Accountability in Education

Accountability refers to the obligation of institutions to report, explain, and justify their actions to stakeholders. In the education sector, this includes schools being answerable to students, parents, and education authorities. As explained by Bruns, Filmer, and Patrinos (2011), effective accountability mechanisms in education require clear performance indicators, documentation of decisions, and responsive grievance systems. The zoning policy demands that schools document the selection process, provide justification for admissions, and handle public complaints appropriately.

Equity and Access in Education

Equity in education means providing fair opportunities for all students to succeed, regardless of their background. UNESCO (2015) emphasizes that equitable access to education is a cornerstone of inclusive development. The zoning policy is an instrument to achieve equity by preventing concentration of high-performing students in a few elite schools and ensuring that all schools improve together. However, equity must be balanced with quality to avoid unintended consequences such as overburdening nearby schools or neglecting student performance.

The Role of Local Government and School Autonomy

Local governments in Indonesia play a vital role in implementing national education policies. They are responsible for defining school zones, monitoring implementation, and resolving conflicts. Meanwhile, school principals and administrators have autonomy in executing daily operations within the framework of national regulations. According to Decentralization Theory (Rondinelli, 1981), successful local implementation depends on the coordination between central policies and the capacity of local actors. Therefore, understanding the dynamics between local education offices and school administrators is essential to assess the effectiveness of zoning.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design using a descriptive case study approach. The purpose of the research was to explore and understand the implementation of the Ministerial Regulation No. 1 of 2021 concerning the New Student Admission (PPDB) policy at SMP Negeri 16 Bengkulu City. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth examination of social phenomena and provides a comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors influencing policy implementation.

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research focuses on exploring the meaning of individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem, and it is well-suited for studies involving complex interactions and stakeholder perspectives.

Data collection was conducted through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation review. Interviews were conducted with seven informants, consisting of key stakeholders such as the school principal, administrative staff, teachers, and parents. These informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement and knowledge of the PPDB process. The interviews aimed to gather information on how the policy was understood, implemented, and perceived by those involved.

Observation was carried out at the school site to directly examine the physical environment, administrative procedures, and interaction patterns among staff and applicants during the admission period. This method enabled the researcher to validate interview data and capture non-verbal cues and contextual dynamics. Additionally, documentation such as admission guidelines, official announcements, student data, and online registration records was analyzed to complement and cross-verify the findings.

The data analysis followed the model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction stage, relevant information from interviews, observations, and documents was selected and categorized according to themes related to the research focus—namely, objectivity, transparency, and accountability. In the data display stage, the information was organized into descriptive narratives and matrices to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns and relationships within the data, and then verified through triangulation across multiple sources and informants to ensure the reliability and credibility of the findings.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and confidentiality of responses was strictly maintained. The researcher also ensured neutrality by avoiding personal bias and presenting the findings as they emerged from the field. In summary, this study adopted a qualitative case study method to examine the real-world application of a national policy at the school level. Through triangulated data collection and interpretive analysis, the research aimed to provide meaningful insights into the practical challenges and successes of implementing the zoning-based admission policy at SMP Negeri 16 Bengkulu City.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

The implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 of 2021 at SMP Negeri 16 Bengkulu City has generally followed the principles stipulated in the regulation, namely objectivity, transparency, and accountability. The findings from field data collection, which include interviews, observations, and document analysis, show how the school administration has adapted to the zoning-based student admission policy (PPDB) and the practical impact it has had on the school community.

One of the most notable aspects of the implementation is the school's strict adherence to the zoning system as mandated by the regulation. The majority of new student admissions in the 2023–2024 academic year were conducted via the zonasi pathway, which prioritizes applicants based on their residential address as stated in the family card (*Kartu Keluarga*). The school applied this rule rigorously, only admitting students whose address fell within the defined zoning radius, unless they applied through other pathways such as afirmasi (affirmative action), perpindahan tugas orang tua (parental transfer), or prestasi (achievement). Based on interviews with the school principal and the admission committee, the system was executed using an online platform developed by the Education Office of Bengkulu City. This online platform helped in standardizing the admission process across all public junior high schools in the area. Applicants were required to upload documents such as their family card and birth certificate, which were then verified manually by the school admission team. According to the admission officer, one of the challenges faced during implementation was the mismatch between the address on the family card and the actual place of residence, which sometimes led to rejection of applications.

Transparency was ensured by publishing all relevant information on the school's official website and through social media platforms. The school also displayed PPDB banners in front of the school gate and coordinated with local village heads to disseminate the information. Parents and guardians were provided with a helpline to seek clarification during the registration period. In addition, the school conducted an online Q&A session via Zoom, attended by more than 150 parents. These efforts reflect a proactive approach to making the admission process as clear and accessible as possible. From observational data, it was noted that the admission committee set up a helpdesk inside the school hall,

where parents who struggled with online registration could come and receive assistance. Staff were on standby to help applicants upload documents, navigate the online form, and check the registration status. This assistance service was particularly useful for families with limited access to digital tools or internet services, thus minimizing digital exclusion and supporting educational equity.

The accountability aspect of the implementation was addressed through the establishment of a complaint and feedback mechanism. A suggestion box was placed near the registration desk, and a WhatsApp number was provided for receiving complaints and feedback. According to the vice principal, during the registration period, around 20 complaints were received—most related to technical issues on the online platform or questions about address validation. Each complaint was recorded in a logbook and responded to within two working days. The transparency in handling complaints increased trust among the parents and minimized negative rumors surrounding the selection process. In terms of quota distribution, the school followed the regulation by allocating 50% of seats for zonasi, 15% for afirmasi, 5% for parental transfer, and the remaining for achievement-based admissions. The selection for achievement was based on verified academic records and certificates from recognized competitions. The school formed a verification team consisting of teachers from various departments to ensure objectivity in evaluating achievement documents. This team also cross-checked data with the Education Office when necessary to prevent fraud or manipulation.

One significant success indicator of the policy implementation at SMP Negeri 16 was the absence of major conflicts or protests from parents—an issue that had emerged in previous years when the system was first introduced. According to the school principal, this improvement is the result of better socialization efforts and the public's growing understanding of the zonasi policy. The principal also emphasized that over the past two years, the number of complaints had significantly decreased, and the registration process became more efficient and orderly. In-depth interviews with parents revealed mixed feelings about the policy. While some parents appreciated the fairness of the system and how it allowed their children to attend schools closer to home, others expressed concern about the limitation of choices, especially when a nearby school did not match their expectations in terms of academic performance or facilities. Despite these concerns, the majority acknowledged that the system made the admission process more predictable and reduced the burden of long-distance commuting for students.

Furthermore, data from the Education Office showed that SMP Negeri 16 had fully met its student capacity in the zonasi quota and even had a waiting list. This indicates that the policy did not result in a shortage of applicants and that the school remained attractive to local residents. The principal noted that since the implementation of the zoning system, the school had experienced a positive shift in community engagement. Parents became more involved in school activities, and the school received greater support from the local government and community leaders.

From a documentation standpoint, the school maintained a detailed record of all admitted students, their registration documents, admission pathway, and verification status. This record was audited by the Education Office after the admission process and found to be complete and compliant with the regulation. The audit report also highlighted the school's initiative in providing offline assistance and its effectiveness in managing the admission committee. However, the research also uncovered some weaknesses. One issue was the potential manipulation of family card data, where some families allegedly changed their address temporarily to fall within the school zone. Although the school had a verification protocol, it was difficult to detect such cases without deeper investigation. Another issue was the limited human resources during peak registration days, which caused delays in document verification and increased workload for administrative staff.

In conclusion, the implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 1 of 2021 at SMP Negeri 16 Bengkulu City has been carried out with a high level of commitment to policy compliance and service to the public. The school has successfully upheld the principles of objectivity, transparency, and accountability, while also adapting to challenges with practical solutions. Although some areas still need improvement—particularly in digital literacy and document verification—the overall results indicate that the school has effectively integrated the zoning-based PPDB policy into its admission procedures. The findings of this research provide a valuable case for understanding the practical dynamics of educational policy implementation at the school level. The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the zoning-based admission policy at SMP Negeri 16 Bengkulu City has aligned well with the core principles mandated by Regulation No. 1 of 2021: objectivity, transparency, and accountability. This section discusses how these principles were translated into practice and interprets the findings in relation to relevant theories and previous studies.

Objectivity and Equity in Policy Execution

The concept of objectivity in public service, as outlined by Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), refers to the consistent application of rules without bias or favoritism. At SMP Negeri 16, objectivity was realized

through strict adherence to zoning criteria based on geographic proximity, as verified via the family card (Kartu Keluarga). Students residing closest to the school were prioritized, regardless of socioeconomic status or academic record. This practice reinforces the equity-based rationale behind the zoning policy, which seeks to democratize access to quality education.

However, the field data also revealed a paradox of equity: while the policy aims to equalize access, it can inadvertently limit opportunities for high-achieving students who reside outside the designated zone. This tension between geographic equity and academic merit has been echoed in studies by Abidin & Asrori (2018) and Wulandari (2019), which note that zoning may level access but at the cost of meritocratic mobility. Still, in the context of SMP Negeri 16, the balance appeared well-managed by preserving other admission pathways—such as the achievement and parental transfer tracks.

Transparency and Public Trust

Transparency in education governance is a critical element in fostering institutional trust and reducing public skepticism (Bovens, 2007). The findings showed that SMP Negeri 16 actively promoted transparency by disseminating PPDB information through banners, social media, and direct communication with local stakeholders. Public access to selection criteria, schedules, and results via multiple platforms ensured that no group was left uninformed.

Moreover, the school's effort to set up a helpdesk and conduct Q&A sessions via Zoom reflected an understanding of community needs, especially for those with limited digital literacy. This aligns with principles of participatory governance, where stakeholders are involved and empowered during policy implementation. The decreased number of complaints compared to previous years indicates that the school's approach to transparency was effective in mitigating confusion and resistance.

Accountability and Administrative Rigor

Accountability, as defined by Bruns et al. (2011), implies that institutions must be answerable to stakeholders and capable of providing justifications for their actions. At SMP Negeri 16, accountability mechanisms were embedded in the form of complaint handling systems, detailed documentation, and regular audits by the Education Office. These measures not only ensured legal compliance but also served as internal feedback loops for continuous improvement.

The establishment of a formal complaint channel (via WhatsApp and physical suggestion boxes) allowed grievances to be addressed promptly, reducing the likelihood of informal conflict. The school's commitment to following up on complaints within two working days indicates a strong sense of procedural accountability.

However, a persistent challenge lies in detecting address manipulation—parents who temporarily alter their residency to fall within the school zone. While verification systems exist, the findings suggest they are not foolproof. This issue reveals a gap between regulation and enforcement capacity, highlighting the need for policy refinement or inter-agency cooperation (e.g., between education offices and civil registry offices).

Interpreting Stakeholder Perceptions

Stakeholder perception plays a pivotal role in the long-term sustainability of policy initiatives. Interviews with parents and teachers revealed a growing acceptance of the zoning system, especially compared to earlier years of its introduction. This shift in perception suggests that sustained public education and consistent application of policy have a positive effect on stakeholder trust.

Nonetheless, not all perceptions were positive. Some parents expressed concern over being “locked out” of preferred schools due to zoning restrictions, reflecting a lingering belief in “elite” institutions. This indicates that the zoning policy still has cultural resistance to overcome. A study by Supriharyono (2000) noted that zoning must be complemented by efforts to equalize school quality across regions—otherwise, the public will continue to gravitate toward reputation-based preferences, undermining the policy's intent.

The Role of Local Capacity

Another key discussion point is the capacity of local implementers. The effective execution of PPDB at SMP Negeri 16 was largely attributed to competent leadership, digital adaptation, and community engagement. This supports Rondinelli's (1981) decentralization theory, which posits that policy success in decentralized systems depends on local institutional strength and administrative competence.

However, the study also revealed human resource limitations during peak registration periods. A shortage of trained personnel resulted in slower document verification and increased workload. This

limitation suggests the need for additional training, recruitment, or temporary staffing mechanisms during critical periods of policy execution.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The experience of SMP Negeri 16 provides several insights for broader policy development. First, the success of zoning policies is heavily reliant on community outreach and stakeholder education. Second, digital platforms for PPDB can enhance efficiency but require strong support mechanisms for less digitally literate users. Third, routine audits and documentation practices should be standardized across schools to maintain accountability.

To address the potential for address manipulation, a recommendation would be to integrate school admissions systems with the civil registration database for automatic validation. Additionally, enhancing the quality of schools across all zones would help reduce the perception gap between “favored” and “non-favored” schools.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 of 2021 at SMP Negeri 16 Bengkulu City demonstrates a strong alignment with the core principles of objectivity, transparency, and accountability as outlined in the regulation. Through a structured and well-organized admission process, the school has managed to adhere to zoning-based student placement while also accommodating students through other regulated pathways such as affirmation, achievement, and parental transfer.

The findings indicate that the school administration has effectively utilized digital tools, conducted public outreach, and enforced policy compliance. Public information was made readily accessible through multiple channels, and support was provided to applicants with limited digital literacy. Furthermore, a formal complaint and monitoring mechanism was in place, which contributed to building public trust and enhancing procedural legitimacy.

Stakeholders, including parents and teachers, generally perceived the policy implementation positively, although concerns related to address manipulation and limited choice remain. These concerns point to areas requiring further oversight and policy refinement. Nevertheless, the school’s proactive approach in facilitating transparent and equitable access to education serves as a model for other institutions. In essence, the case of SMP Negeri 16 reflects a successful example of local-level policy implementation that upholds national education goals. It highlights the importance of leadership, community engagement, and institutional readiness in realizing education reform. While challenges persist, the school’s experience shows that with proper planning and commitment, zoning policies can contribute to greater equity in the Indonesian education system.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted in a single school—SMP Negeri 16 Bengkulu City—which limits the generalizability of the findings. While the case provides rich insights into local-level implementation, it may not fully represent the challenges and practices in other regions or schools with different demographic or administrative contexts.

Second, the study relied heavily on qualitative data gathered through interviews, observation, and documentation. Although triangulation was applied to ensure credibility, the absence of quantitative metrics, such as satisfaction surveys or statistical analysis of applicant data, limits the extent to which the findings can be measured or compared numerically.

Third, due to time and resource constraints, the study did not involve follow-up interviews or longitudinal observation. As a result, it was unable to capture the long-term effects of the zoning policy or assess how community perceptions might evolve over multiple academic years.

Lastly, potential bias from informants—particularly school staff—may have influenced the responses given, either consciously or unconsciously, in an attempt to portray the school in a positive light. Although efforts were made to maintain objectivity, this limitation is inherent in most case studies involving institutional self-reporting. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of analysis across multiple schools and incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the policy’s implementation and impact.

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