

Decentralization of Education in Indonesia: Problems of Implementation

Nuril Huda

Abstract: Decentralization of education is intended to achieve efficiency in education by accommodating aspiration of local communities. Reports on the implementation of a pilot project of decentralization suggest that it is not as easy as expected in its implementation. The problems include legal aspects that need to be revised, unreadiness of the region to take over the new responsibilities, attitude of the central authorities, and perception on the concept and goal of decentralization. Suggestions to improve its implementation include participatory approach, comprehensive planning, and building capacity of stakeholders.

Key words: decentralization, management of education, administration, autonomy, democratization, efficiency.

Like cases in many developing countries, in Indonesia, education personnel constitutes the largest group of civil servants. Consequently education has become the largest burden of the government; and, therefore, due to the scarcity of fund it has been one of the most difficult problems the nation has to solve. The goal of the national education system is simple, that is, to provide quality education to young citizens. The problem is how to make use of the limited budget efficiently and effectively in providing good education to them nation wide. A solution to the problem

Nuril Huda is Professor at the Faculty of Language and Art Education and currently Rector of the Institute of Teacher Training and Education at Malang.

which has been planned since the establishment of the nation in 1945 is to decentralize the implementation of educational responsibilities. A number of government regulations and directives have been issued, and yet the implementation has not yet achieved the expected outcomes.

Today, for reasons of democratization of public affairs, decentralization of education has again become public attention and concern (Huda, 1998). In this article how the concept of decentralization of education has been implemented in Indonesia will be examined. The discussion will begin with a look at an Indonesian view of decentralization of education. Its problems and issues, will, then, be discussed, and finally suggestions to decrease the problems will be offered.

RATIONALE FOR DECENTRALIZATION

Decentralization is delegation of responsibilities and powers to authorities at the lower levels. In the Indonesian context, decentralization of education is part of decentralization of government responsibilities. Its foundation is rooted in the 1945 Constitution which states that Indonesia is divided into big and small regions which shall be regulated by legal acts. In the explanatory section, the Constitution states that certain regions have autonomous governments but they are not state governments. The Act of Governments in the Region (1974) states that each regional government is responsible for its own internal affairs which include education. Thus, legally each regional government is responsible for the management of education in its own region. Certain educational functions have been delegated to the regional governments at the provincial level, some others at the regency level, and the others at district and school levels. However, most of the responsibilities of education remain to be those of the central government. Efforts have been made to distribute more responsibilities to lower levels of administration, but problems have appeared.

Why are responsibilities of the implementation of education decentralized? First, politically decentralization is a way of democratizing the management of public affairs. Under the decentralization scheme, certain responsibilities of education are given to the regional government. The regional parliament has the control over the planning and implementation of education in the region. By involving representatives of people in the educational affairs, it is expected that it will invite greater participation of the community in the implementation of education and in solving

problems related to it. Second, technically it is difficult to manage education efficiently in a vast area consisting of islands. Problems of communication and transportation between the central government and regions, particularly in the past, have been an important consideration for decentralization. Moreover, centralization would make it difficult to solve regional differences and to meet their unique needs and demands. Differences in cultures and in the level of development of each region contribute to the differences in needs and in the nature of approaches to the solution of problems. In Aceh region, for example, in which the community members are predominantly strong Moslems, appeal to religious teachings in solving problems would be effective. But the same approach would not be equally effective to be applied in other areas such as Jakarta. Finally, the main reason for decentralization of education is efficiency and effectiveness in handling problems related to the implementation of education. The Act of Governments in the Region (1974) states that harmony of management should have a higher priority to democratization in the implementation of decentralization (Sujanto, 1993). Another reason is to reduce the overloaded burden of administration of the central government (Sumardjan, 1966).

Several factors that support the idea of decentralization in Indonesia include differences among ethnic groups, political instability especially in the old days, difficulty in communication and transportation between regions, and the inability of the central government to provide prompt directions and guidance to the massive bureaucracies (Sadiyo, 1988). In addition, decentralization could motivate competition among regions in handling public affairs. The goal of decentralization of education is to improve decision making process by involving more stakeholders in the region, to produce sustained integration of the school with the local community, to realign the school with the needs and condition of the community, and finally to improve student motivation, attendance, and achievement (NCREL, 1993). Many a person, however, fear that full decentralization could lead to national disintegration and, therefore, they prefer that certain functions of education remain to be the responsibility of the central authorities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Writing a report for the World Bank on the decentralization of teacher management, Cathy Gaynor reviews literature on decentralization of edu-

cation in a number of developing countries. She identifies three models of decentralization of teacher management: administrative model, grass-roots model, and alternative model (Gaynor, 1998). The three models seem to reflect models of decentralization of education in general. In the administrative model, education is decentralized to the lower levels of government or of the education system itself. The grassroots model suggests that education is the responsibilities of the representatives of the community. The alternative model is used in innovative nonmainstreaming programs. This model does not replace, but exists along-side the education system itself (Gaynor, 1998).

In general, decentralization of education in Indonesia falls into the category of the administrative model. Responsibilities of education management are delegated to the lower levels of the education system itself and to the lower levels of government. Under the Act of Governments in the Region (1974), education is managed following the principles of decentralization along-side the principle of deconcentration. The decentralization principle suggests that education is delegated to the lower levels of government. In practice, only certain functions of primary education are delegated to the governments at the provincial and regency levels, while secondary education remains to be under a full control of the central government. To implement their responsibilities, regional governments establish offices of education at the provincial, regency, and district levels (i.e., *Dinas P & K*). In the management of the primary education, the provincial and regency governments are responsible for the appointment and professional development of education personnel and for the provision of school facilities (buildings and classroom facilities). Other functions such as teacher standard and curriculum are the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Under the principle of deconcentration, the Minister of Education and Culture established representative offices in the region at the provincial, regency, and district levels (i.e., *Kanwil Dikbud* and *Kandep Dikbud*). Thus in the region, primary education is under the management of two different government bodies, *Dinas* and *Kanwil/Kandep*. This situation has lead to dualism and controversies in the management of primary education over the years which is extremely difficult to solve. While the primary education falls under the responsibilities of two different bodies, the secondary education remains to be the responsibility of the *Kanwil* and *Kandep Dikbud*, both are extended

auxiliaries of the Ministry of Education and Culture (of the central government).

Pilot Project

As part of a government program to carry out decisions contained in the Act of Governments in the Region (1974), in 1995 a pilot project was conducted to implement decentralization of government, including education, in 26 regencies. Articles 7 and 8 of the Act of Governments in the Region (1974) state that (1) the region shall have the right, authority, and responsibility to deal with its own internal affairs in compliance with the existing law, (2) additional transfer of responsibilities to the region shall be regulated by a government regulation, and (3) additional transfer of responsibilities shall be accompanied by instrumental supports, facilities, and sources of funds.

In preparation of the pilot project, on April 21st, 1995, a government regulation was issued. The regulation determines the transfer of affairs, institutions, personnel affairs, and funding. Following this regulation, 16 minister directives were issued, two of which were issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Under these regulations and directives, 10 ministry offices (*Kandep*) at the regency level and 10 regional government offices (*Dinas*), including Ministry of Education and Culture offices (*Kandep Dikbud*) and regional government offices for education and culture (*Dinas P & K*), at the provincial level in 26 regencies were dissolved (Sinaga, 1996). Under this arrangement, responsibilities for managing education are transferred to regional government offices (*Dinas P & K*) at the regency level. Thus certain duties and responsibilities for education, which were originally taken care of by the Ministry of Education and Culture auxiliary offices, now become the responsibilities of regional governments.

Under the 8th Government Regulation of 1995, the following responsibilities were delegated to regional government offices at the regency level: pupil admission; personnel management and administration; management of public and private primary schools; scout organization (*Pramuka*), cooperation, and primary school libraries; school health units, sports and arts competition at the district and regency levels; and school auxiliary bodies. Education functions which remain to be the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Culture include the management

and administration of primary schools particularly of the academic affairs, extra-curricular activities, management and administration of school principals, and development of direction for school auxiliary bodies (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1998).

In 1996, the 25th of April was proclaimed as Region Autonomy Day by President Soeharto, and it is expected that in the year 2000 a full autonomy will be given to all provinces (*Bulletin Desentralisasi*, 1998).

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

From the preceding discussions, it can be seen that the idea of decentralization can be traced back to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Twenty-nine years later, in 1974 an act was legislated and put into effect; and twenty-one years afterwards a pilot project was conducted to implement the idea. There seems to be problems that restrict its implementation. The following are some of the problems.

Legal Aspects

If decentralization of education is to be implemented in all provinces, the law which sets up the management and administration of government affairs including education needs to be revised and updated. Drafting and legislating new laws seem to be of little difficulty, but implementing the laws is not always easy. For example, Article 8 of the Government Regulation on Basic Education (1990) states clearly that the appointment, management, and professional development of teachers; curriculum, textbooks, and educational facilities shall be the responsibilities of the Minister of Education and Culture; and the provision and maintenance of school building including the land for the Primary School shall be the responsibilities of the Regional Government. And yet, since 1951, the appointment, management, and professional development of teachers, which should be under the control of the auxiliary offices of the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kandep Dikbud*), have remained to be under the control of the Regional Government (*Dinas P & K*).

What laws need to be revised and updated? The first and foremost is the Act of Governments in the Region (1974). Under this act, the regional Parliament is considered as part of the Regional Government,

which is of course not appropriate; and it is not clear whether government at the district level is an instrument of decentralization or of deconcentration. Other laws which need to be revised include the Act of National Education System (1989) and several Presidential decrees (numbers 44 and 45 of 1974, numbers 27 and 48 of 1978, and number 47 of 1979). These Presidential decrees have been the basis of the centralization of education as reflected in the current organizational structure of the education system.

Capacities of the Region

A condition that makes authorities of the central government and the provincial government reluctant to decentralize education is the belief that regional governments, particularly at the regency level, are not ready yet. They believe that personnel of regional governments do not have yet the capacity and capability of taking over important responsibilities such as education. They simply do not have experience, and perhaps also educational background, required by the new duties. A good picture of this condition is the case of the implementation of the 1994 Curriculum of the Basic and Secondary Education. This curriculum consists of national and local contents. The local content is planned to be the responsibility of the region to develop and implement. But many regional authorities have difficulties in operationalizing the local content curriculum.

Another issue deals with the lack of facilities and the availability of instrumental supports in the region. They do not have enough buildings and personnel for the new responsibilities. More importantly, they do not have enough fund to carry out their duties and responsibilities.

Attitude

The unreadiness of the region to take over the responsibilities delegated by the central authorities, due to the lack of facilities, qualified personnel, and inadequacy of funds, is actually not the problem of the regions, but the problem of the central government. The problem itself is the product of the existing system. Thus it is the responsibilities of the central government to empower the regions in order to be able to take over the new responsibilities (Sujanto, 1993:24).

The key problem lies in the attitude and mental set of the authorities in the central government, and to some extent in the provincial governments (Saisa, 1996). Reports on the implementation of the pilot project in the 26 regencies indicate that decentralization program do not go smoothly. One big problem experienced by the regions at the regency level is that the responsibilities have been transferred to them, but the funds and facilities have not (Darussamin, 1996).

Perception

The inappropriate attitude of the central authorities towards the implementation of decentralization is perhaps caused by the fact that they do not have yet the same perception about the concept of decentralization. They do not have yet the same understanding of the virtues and goal of decentralization. They tend to perceive decentralization from their own points of view, particularly to what extent, decentralization will affect their positions. They do not have the same perception about the responsibilities that should be delegated to the regions and which ones that should remain with the central government (cf. Minister of Home Affairs, 1996). All of these problems have slowed down, if not hindered, the implementation of decentralization in all fields including education.

SUGGESTIONS

The following are some suggestions to alleviate problems encountered in the implementation of decentralization of education.

First, there should be coordinating bodies at the central and provincial levels. The coordinating body at the central level should be responsible for coordinating all ministries and other government offices involved in the planning and implementation of decentralization. The members of the coordinating body should consist of representatives of all ministries and the regional governments.

Second, there should be a comprehensive planning in the implementation of decentralization. The plan should be drawn up by involving all stakeholders and authorities to be involved in the implementation of the plan.

Third, decentralization of education should be implemented by motivating all stakeholders to participate in the programs. This idea can be achieved by inviting the participation of stakeholders in the planning

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from the early stage. They should be given opportunities to evaluate the effects of the program on their own positions.

Finally, as Gaynor (1998) suggests, in decentralization of education, the stakeholders, especially school principals and superintendents, should be empowered. They should be trained in the areas of knowledge and skill needed in the management of education under the new set up.

CONCLUSION

The idea of decentralization is rooted in the 1945 Constitution. The idea is developed and operationalized in the Act of Governments in the Region (1974) and in the 8th Government Regulation of 1995. A pilot project has been conducted to implement centralization of education in 26 regencies. Reports on the pilot project suggest several problems, which include legal aspects, readiness of regions, attitude, and perception of authorities about the goal and concept of decentralization.

Decentralization is a global trend which is believed to be a productive source of creativity and vitality to achieve quality education.

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