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Strategies for Improving Education Quality via New Student Admission Management

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Abstract

The study investigates the management of the zoning system for new student admissions (PPDB) at SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee in Aceh Barat Daya Regency, Indonesia. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, it explores the planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation processes. Key findings reveal that while adherence to Ministry of Education guidelines ensured systematic planning and implementation, challenges such as online registration difficulties, quota constraints, and misinformation persist. Supporting factors include skilled personnel, infrastructure, and collaboration, whereas hindrances involve resource limitations and community misinformation. The study recommends sustained evaluation and strategic improvements to enhance the PPDB process and advance educational quality in the region.



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1. Introduction

Education plays an important role in enhancing the quality of human resources for every individual. Its development is constantly evolving, following the changing times, science, technology, and cultural norms of society. Changes and developments in all fields, including education, are a consequence of the growing influence of globalization [1]. To keep pace with these global changes and developments, improving the quality of human resources is necessary.

As one of the efforts to enhance the quality of human resources, education should undoubtedly improve the quality of its implementation to achieve educational goals [2-4]. The quality of education will serve as the primary

foundation for expanding the knowledge and insights needed to shape the character of the nation's future leaders, enabling them to face any situation [5]. To achieve optimal education, the government needs to make continuous improvements to all components of education [6, 7].

Furthermore, Karmila et al. [6] suggest that the government needs to continuously improve all components of education. The national education goals can be achieved by developing strategies that address the problems facing education in Indonesia. The current educational issues in Indonesia include the quality of education, equal access to education, and education management [8]. These three critical issues in education

are prevalent in almost every country, with a lack of equal distribution of educational quality [9].

In Indonesia, there is still a clear and evident disparity in the quality of education, which is not evenly distributed in almost every region [10]. The problems of unequal distribution include a lack of facilities and infrastructure to support the educational process. The existence of these problems, as explained by Kaffa et al. [11], suggests that students who feel they have more abilities do not want to attend non-favorite schools and choose to attend favorite schools that tend to have adequate facilities, even if they are far from their residence [12]. Additionally, there is currently a striking gap between favorite or superior public schools and non-favorite public schools [13].

This study examines key questions about Indonesia's new student admission system, known as *Penerimaan Peserta Didik Baru* (PPDB), in Aceh Barat Daya Regency. It explores how the system helps improve the quality and fairness of education, identifies the challenges and supporting factors in its implementation, and looks for ways to improve planning, execution, supervision, and evaluation to make the system more effective in reaching its goals. The study aims to provide clear recommendations for improving PPDB management.

The research focuses on SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee because these schools are important in the region and have fully adopted the zoning system. They were chosen for their location and population differences, giving insight into how the system works in urban and semi-rural areas. These schools also face common challenges, making the findings useful for similar schools in the region.

This article offers a novel, focused investigation of the zoning system for PPDB in Aceh Barat Daya Regency, Indonesia. It provides a localized case study, examining how the system is managed in two schools, highlighting challenges and opportunities in context. The study uniquely analyzes the PPDB process across planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation stages, identifying strengths and gaps. It contributes practical recommendations to address systemic issues, such as online registration difficulties and zoning constraints.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Approach

The study adopts a phenomenological approach, which aligns closely with the research objectives of exploring the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals directly involved in the zoning system's implementation.

According to Creswell [14], this method is particularly suited for uncovering the nuanced and subjective aspects of the PPDB management process, including challenges, facilitating factors, and the system's impact on educational equity and quality. Focusing on the experiences of school principals and teachers provides in-depth insights that quantitative methods may overlook [15].

Phenomenology emphasizes understanding how individuals experience and interpret specific phenomena. Key principles such as epoché (bracketing preconceived notions) and intentionality (focusing on participants' consciousness and experiences) guided the research process [16]. The study applied these principles by conducting semi-structured interviews and observations to capture authentic experiences of the PPDB implementation. The procedures included identifying recurring themes from participants' narratives, reducing data to essential elements, and interpreting these in the context of the zoning system's goals and challenges.

This research is qualitative because the data obtained in the field are descriptive words and expressions provided from interviews between the researcher and the research subjects. The author will describe the results using descriptive and elaborative descriptions so that they are easy and understandable for readers.

2.2. Research Location and Time

The study focuses on SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee because these schools are representative of the broader educational context in Aceh Barat Daya Regency [17]. They were chosen due to their geographic diversity, with one school located in a semi-urban area and the other in a more rural setting, reflecting the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing the PPDB zoning system. These schools also differ in size and resources, providing a comprehensive view of how the zoning system operates under different conditions. This diversity ensures the findings are applicable to a broader range of schools in similar regions.

Due to their distinct characteristics, SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee serve as critical sites for studying PPDB management. SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa has a larger student population and serves a semi-urban community, whereas SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee caters to a smaller, more rural population. Both schools have adopted the zoning system and face challenges typical of schools in their respective settings, such as limited infrastructure in rural areas and higher enrollment competition in urban zones. Including these details

Table 1. Distribution of research subjects.

Subject	SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa	SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee
Principal	1	1
Teachers	5	6
Total	6	7

contextualizes the findings and enhances the transferability of the study to other settings with similar educational and demographic conditions.

The research was conducted over a three-month period (February to April 2024) to coincide with critical stages of the PPDB process, including planning, registration, and initial implementation. This time frame allowed the researchers to capture real-time data during key phases of the admissions cycle, ensuring that observations and interviews were aligned with the actual dynamics of the PPDB management. Conducting the study during this period also ensured that data reflected the system's immediate challenges and successes, making the findings more relevant and actionable.

2.3. Research Subjects

The research subjects are data sources that provide clarity about the object under study. In qualitative research, the subjects used are only sources that provide complete and accurate information about several events, people, and situations being observed. The subjects of this study were the principals and teachers of SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee. All of these subjects are expected to provide data on how the PPDB improves the quality of education in Aceh Barat Daya Regency. The distribution of research subjects is shown in [Table 1](#).

2.3.1. Justification for Selecting Principals and Teachers

The principals and teachers were selected as research subjects because they directly manage and implement the PPDB process. Their roles place them at the center of planning, execution, supervision, and evaluation, making their insights critical for understanding the system's strengths and challenges. This purposive sampling strategy ensures that participants have the necessary experience and knowledge to provide detailed and relevant information about the zoning system's implementation.

2.3.2. Demographic Information of Participants

The study involved two principals and 11 teachers (six from SD Negeri, 3 Jeumpa, and seven from SD Negeri, 4 Kuala Batee). The participants were diverse in age, ranging from 30 to 55 years, with a balance of male and female representatives. Their professional experience

varied from 5 to 25 years in education, and most held degrees in education or related fields. This range of demographics and professional backgrounds ensured a comprehensive understanding of the PPDB process from multiple perspectives.

2.3.3. Recruitment Process

Participants were recruited through a purposive sampling approach, targeting individuals with significant roles in the PPDB process [18]. The selection process began with formal invitations sent to the principals of both schools, followed by a request for their assistance in identifying teachers who were actively involved in PPDB-related activities. The researchers provided detailed information about the study's objectives and methods to ensure informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and all subjects were assured of confidentiality to encourage open and honest responses.

2.4. Research Instruments

In qualitative research, the main instrument is the researcher, but after the research focus becomes apparent, it is possible to develop simple research instruments, which are expected to complement the data and compare it with data that has been found through observation and interviews. The data in this study were collected using observation and interview guidelines.

2.4.1. Justification for Selecting Observation and Interview Guidelines

Observation and interview guidelines were selected as research instruments because they align with the study's phenomenological approach, which seeks to capture participants' lived experiences and perspectives [19]. Observations allowed the researchers to document real-time practices and interactions during the PPDB process, while interviews provided more profound insights into participants' personal experiences, interpretations, and challenges. Together, these instruments ensured a holistic understanding of the PPDB management process, consistent with the research objectives of exploring planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation.

2.4.2. Development of Observation and Interview Guidelines

The observation and interview guidelines were carefully designed to systematically collect relevant data while maintaining flexibility to capture emergent themes [20]. The development process began with drafting initial guidelines based on the research objectives, existing literature on zoning systems, and principles of phenomenology. These initial drafts focused on key

themes such as planning stages, challenges in implementation, supervisory mechanisms, and evaluation practices to align with the study's objectives.

The guidelines underwent expert validation to ensure they were clear, relevant, and aligned with the research focus. Specialists in educational management and qualitative research methods reviewed the drafts, providing feedback to refine the structure and content. This process ensured that the instruments were theoretically sound and practically applicable for data collection.

Following validation, the instruments were pilot-tested with a small group of educators who were not part of the main study. This testing phase evaluated the effectiveness of the guidelines in collecting meaningful data [21]. Feedback from participants in the pilot test informed adjustments to the phrasing of questions and the structure of the guidelines, resulting in tools optimized for the research setting.

2.5. Credibility Test

The scientific nature of a study is also determined by the validity of the data obtained by the researcher, namely by examination techniques based on a number of certain criteria. According to Sugiyono [15], the validity test of data in qualitative research includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability tests. Researchers used the credibility test to test the validity of the data. In this study, credibility testing was carried out using triangulation.

According to Moon [22], triangulation is checking data from various sources in various ways and at various times. The triangulation used by the researcher is technical triangulation. Technical triangulation is done by checking data from the same source with different techniques obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. If the credibility testing technique produces different data, the researcher conducts further discussions with the relevant data sources or others to ascertain which is considered correct or may be considered correct because of different points of view.

2.6. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques are methods used to collect data. They are an important step in research because the collected data will be used as research analysis material. In qualitative research, data collection is carried out in natural settings and primary data sources. The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation.

2.6.1. Observation

Observation is a method of data collection that involves directly observing the research object and making systematic notes. According to Arikunto [23], observation involves attentively examining an object using all senses, and it can be categorized as either participant or non-participant observation based on the researcher's level of involvement. In this study, non-participant observation techniques were employed. As explained by Sugiyono [15], non-participant observation involves the researcher acting solely as an independent observer without directly engaging in the studied activities. This approach enabled the researchers to objectively document the processes and practices related to the PPDB system.

2.6.2. Interview

Interviews, as defined by Brenner [24], are dialogues conducted by interviewers to gather information from interviewees. Rowley [25] categorizes interviews into three types: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Semi-structured interview techniques were chosen for this study. Semi-structured interviews combine the flexibility of open-ended questions with the consistency of predetermined topics. Researchers used a guideline that outlined key themes while allowing participants to express their experiences freely. This approach facilitated the collection of rich and detailed insights about the PPDB management process while ensuring alignment with the study's objectives.

2.6.3. Documentation

Documentation involves the use of records and materials from past events to complement other data collection methods, such as observation and interviews. In this study, documentation included photographs of student activities, field notes, and written archives related to the management of PPDB. These documents provided additional context and evidence, enriching the understanding of how the PPDB system was implemented and its impact on educational quality in Aceh Barat Daya Regency. The study ensured a comprehensive and well-rounded data collection process by triangulating information from these sources with observations and interviews.

2.7. Data Analysis Technique

After the data is collected, the next step for the researcher is to analyze the data. According to Sugiyono [15], data analysis is the process of systematically searching and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and other materials so that they are easy to understand.

Table 2. PPDB planning stages at SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee.

No.	Planning Stages	Description/Actions Taken
1	Holding PPDB meetings	Conducting discussions to outline the PPDB process and assign responsibilities.
2	Formation of the PPDB committee	Establishing a dedicated team to manage the admissions process.
3	Discussing the required budget	Allocating financial resources to support the planning and execution of PPDB activities.
4	Determining zoning mechanisms	Setting guidelines for student placements based on geographical zones.
5	Distribution of registration paths	Identifying specific pathways for student registration, such as zoning or achievement.
6	PPDB socialization	Promoting awareness of PPDB procedures through banners, brochures, and meetings.
7	Design of PPDB banners and brochures	Creating informative materials to disseminate to the community.
8	Establishing requirements for new students	Defining eligibility criteria for student registration.
9	Scheduling interest and talent tests	Setting dates for aptitude evaluations to assess applicants.

Furthermore, Sugiyono [26] states that data analysis starts by formulating and explaining the problem before going into the field and continues until the research results.

However, in qualitative research, data analysis is more focused on the field process and data collection. According to Huberman [27], activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and take place continuously until complete so that the data is saturated. Data analysis activities are collection, reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

2.7.1. Data Collection

Data collection involves activities in the field to gather the necessary information for research. This process is carried out using planned methods to ensure that relevant data is obtained systematically. During data collection, the analysis process begins concurrently as researchers read, study, and examine the available information from various sources.

2.7.2. Data Reduction

The amount of data collected in the field can be substantial, often growing as researchers spend more time engaging with participants and contexts. To manage this, data reduction is essential. According to Khoei & Singh [28], data reduction involves summarizing, selecting key elements, and focusing on the most significant aspects of the data. This process helps researchers identify themes and patterns while eliminating irrelevant information, making the analysis more efficient and focused.

2.7.3. Data Presentation

Once data has been reduced, the next step is to present it in a coherent and accessible format. According to Andrina et al. [10], qualitative data can be displayed

through brief descriptions, charts, flowcharts, relationships between categories, and other visual tools. Jaspersen & Stein [29] emphasize that narrative text, matrix graphs, networks, and charts are particularly effective for presenting qualitative research findings. These displays enable researchers to organize data visually, facilitating clearer interpretation and analysis.

2.7.4. Conclusion Drawing

The final step in data analysis is drawing conclusions and verifying their validity. Initial conclusions are typically tentative and subject to refinement as additional evidence is gathered. The conclusions become more robust if subsequent data collection supports these initial findings with consistent and credible evidence. This iterative process ensures that the study's conclusions are well-founded, reliable, and reflective of the collected data.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Planning

The planning of PPDB at SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee has been carried out according to the regulations set by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) and instructions from the Head of the Education and Culture Office of Aceh Barat Daya Regency. The planning stages include holding PPDB meetings, discussing the formation of the PPDB committee, the required budget, zoning mechanisms, distribution of registration paths, PPDB socialization, design of PPDB banners and brochures, requirements for new students, and schedules for interest and talent tests, as shown in Table 2.

The PPDB registration paths at SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee follow the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 1 of 2021, which includes

Table 3. PPDB registration paths and quota percentages.

No.	Planning Stages	Quota (%)
1	Zoning	50
2	Affirmation	15
3	Parent/Guardian Transfer	5
4	Achievement	30

Table 4. PPDB implementation stages.

No.	Planning Stages	Description/Actions Taken
1	Forming the PPDB committee	Establishing a dedicated team to oversee the admissions process and assign roles to its members.
2	Dividing the committee's tasks	Allocating specific tasks to committee members, such as registration, selection, and communication roles.
3	Forming the PPDB selection team	Creating a specialized group to vet applicants and ensure adherence to eligibility criteria.
4	Setting registration schedules	Establishing clear timelines for registration, document submission, and decision announcements.
5	Conducting administrative selection	Reviewing submitted applications to verify eligibility and completeness of required documents.
6	Announcing accepted new students	Publicizing the list of admitted students through both online and offline channels for transparency.
7	Re-registration schedules	Organizing a specific period for accepted students to confirm their enrollment.
8	Holding evaluation meetings	Reviewing the implementation process to identify challenges and areas for improvement.

Table 5. Parties involved in PPDB supervision.

No.	Internal Parties	External Parties
1	Principal	Aceh Barat Daya District Education & Culture Office
2	PPDB Committee	Aceh Education Quality Assurance Agency (BPMP)
3	School Committee	Regional Education Council (MPD)

zoning, affirmation, parent/guardian transfer, and achievement paths, as presented in [Table 3](#).

3.2. Implementation

The implementation of PPDB at SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee follows the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology regulations. The implementation stages include forming the PPDB committee, dividing the committee's tasks, forming the PPDB selection team, setting registration schedules, administrative selection, announcing accepted new students, re-registration schedules, and evaluation meetings, as shown in [Table 4](#).

SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee still apply the conventional PPDB system, although they also provide an online registration link. However, parents/guardians still face difficulties in uploading required documents online. Therefore, the conventional system becomes the primary choice in PPDB implementation.

3.3. Supervision

PPDB supervision is carried out in stages by both internal and external parties, as presented in [Table 5](#). The internal parties include the principal, PPDB committee, and school committee, while external parties include the

Aceh Barat Daya District Education and Culture Office, the Aceh Education Quality Assurance Agency (BPMP), and the Regional Education Council (MPD).

The supervision techniques used are in line with the monitoring techniques, namely the on-desk and on-site techniques. The on-desk technique involves careful examination of progress reports, while the on-site technique involves direct monitoring in the field.

3.4. Evaluation

Evaluation of PPDB at SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee is conducted daily, precisely in the afternoon or after the PPDB activities are completed. The evaluation aspects include daily evaluation, discussing shortcomings and solutions, follow-up and handling, preparing accountability reports, and monitoring and evaluation by supervisors and the Education Office, as shown in [Table 6](#).

The accountability report for PPDB activities contains supporting and inhibiting factors for the successful implementation of PPDB. The analysis of supporting factors for the success of SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee includes competent human resources, good cooperation among all members, available facilities, and information systems. Meanwhile, the inhibiting factors are the lack of committee members,

Table 6. PPDB evaluation aspects.

No	Evaluation Aspects	Description/Actions Taken
1	Daily evaluation after PPDB activities	Conducting end-of-day reviews to identify immediate issues and assess progress in the implementation stages.
2	Discussing shortcomings and finding solutions	Organizing discussions among stakeholders to address identified problems and develop actionable solutions.
3	Follow-up and handling of evaluation results	Implementing corrective actions based on evaluation findings to improve ongoing processes.
4	Preparing accountability reports	Compiling detailed reports documenting activities, challenges, and outcomes for internal and external review.
5	Monitoring and evaluation by supervisors and the Education Office	External bodies oversee and assess the implementation to ensure compliance with regulations and goals.

uncooperative registrants, and the spread of inaccurate information in the community.

3.5. Discussion

The planning of PPDB at SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee has been well organized, as evidenced by the formation of the PPDB committee in these schools [30]. This is in line with the opinion of Nurviana et al. [31], who states that planning for new student admissions based on the zoning system is indispensable in an educational institution because it will provide convenience for the community to register using the location of their residence. Also, the zoning system in new student admissions aims to provide justice for students who experience obstacles in registering through academic or economic fields by allowing registration through a radius zone.

The implementation of PPDB at SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee follows the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology regulations. This is in accordance with the opinion of Nurviana et al. [31], who states that the implementation of PPDB carries five principles: non-discriminatory, objective, transparent, accountable, and fair.

Both internal and external parties supervise PPDB in stages. This is in line with the monitoring techniques stated by Nurjaningsih [32], which include on-desk and on-site techniques. These techniques are combined to avoid deviations or errors so that they can be corrected and to ensure the policy implementation moves towards the desired goals.

The evaluation of PPDB at SD Negeri 3 Jeumpa and SD Negeri 4 Kuala Batee is conducted daily to assess and provide an evaluation of the implementation process, identifying any shortcomings or errors. This is in accordance with the statement of Nurjaningsih [32], who states that the results of evaluation activities are then followed by corrective actions or adjustments depending on the desired outcomes. Meanwhile, the factors influencing the success of PPDB activities include the

availability of competent and professional human resources, adequate facilities and infrastructure, accessible information systems, and good cooperation from all involved parties.

The lack of adequate management is a concern that starts with planning new student admissions, implementation, supervision, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of new student admissions. The planning of new student admissions has not been able to adjust to the goals, principles, and foundations of student admissions itself. The implementation appears to have not been carried out optimally by paying less attention to the established management standards and has not been able to carry out a process that produces quality students who become students in schools.

4. Conclusions

This study investigated the management of the zoning system for PPDB in two elementary schools in Aceh Barat Daya Regency, Indonesia, focusing on the planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation stages. The findings directly address the research objectives, highlighting that while PPDB management adhered to Ministry of Education guidelines, challenges such as online registration issues, quota constraints, and misinformation persist. Facilitating factors included strong collaboration among committee members, accessible information systems, and adequate infrastructure. These findings underscore the critical role of effective school-level management in achieving the objectives of zoning policies, particularly in promoting equity and educational quality.

The study's findings contribute to the broader discourse on educational quality improvement and equity in Indonesia. The zoning system aims to reduce disparities between "favorite" and "non-favorite" schools, and this research demonstrates how effective PPDB management can support these goals. However, systemic barriers, including resource limitations and digital literacy gaps, suggest a need for enhanced policy support and

community engagement. Policymakers should consider complementing zoning regulations with capacity-building initiatives, improved communication strategies, and technological infrastructure development to maximize the system's impact.

This research offers unique insights into the operational challenges and successes of PPDB management, emphasizing the importance of adaptive strategies at the school level. Unlike previous studies that focus on policy-level analyses, this study provides a detailed examination of the practical implementation of zoning policies, revealing critical areas for improvement. The findings contribute to existing knowledge by highlighting the interplay between regulatory adherence and localized problem-solving, underscoring the significance of collaborative efforts and ongoing evaluation in enhancing educational outcomes.

Future research should explore several areas to address identified gaps and advance the field. Longitudinal studies could assess the long-term impacts of the zoning system on student achievement and equity. Comparative studies across urban, semi-urban, and rural contexts would help uncover region-specific challenges and best practices. Research on technological integration in the PPDB process could provide insights into overcoming infrastructure and accessibility issues, particularly in resource-limited settings. Additionally, studies on community engagement could evaluate the role of public awareness campaigns in fostering acceptance and improving the effectiveness of zoning policies.

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