The Curriculum Change in Indonesian Junior High Schools: The 'Copy Paste' Phenomenon

Yuyun Yulia[1], & Ni Wayan Surya Mahayanti[2]

[1] Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

[2] Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Indonesia

Correspondence: Yuyun Yulia, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Received: June 16, 2024 Accepted: July 25, 2024 Online Published: August 23, 2024

doi:10.5430/wjel.v14n6p517 URL: https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n6p517

Abstract

The Indonesian government defines the curriculum as a set of plans, programs, and rules that outline the objectives, contents, methods, and materials in teaching and learning. These serve as guidelines for conducting instructional activities, with the aim of achieving the national education standards. Along with the spirit of decentralization that began in the early 2000s through the implementation of school-based management, schools now control the school-based curriculum, which should be tailored to the unique characteristics of both the school and the student. This research evaluates the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesian junior high schools, using various instruments across 12 case study schools. Most schools experienced a "copy and paste" effect in their curriculum. One could perceive this as mere decoration instead of actively engaging with the pedagogical and structured content. The actual implementation in class was mostly different from the school documentation. In other words, what teachers do and what they write in the lesson plans are different. Despite the document's effectiveness, schools rarely implement it. To make matters worse, principals appeared to accept school documentation without a critical review of practice. One could perceive this as an endorsement of the document.

Keywords: school-based curriculum, copy paste curriculum, decentralization, centralization, national education standards, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Decentralization has been an important trend in global educational reforms in response to improving education quality and equity. Decentralization forms the basis for empowering stakeholders because it entails the delegation of central authority to local levels, such as schools and district education offices (Irawati et al., 2022; Nugrohadi et al., 2022; Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2022). This change aims to enhance local flexibility and educational outcomes (Rahman, 2019; Sumintono, Hariri, & Izzati, 2023). Around the world, decentralization mechanisms have been used to address the heterogeneity of the target population and encourage greater participation in school governance (Al-Taneiji, & McLeod, 2008; Liguori and Winkler, 2020)

Indonesia began the decentralization of education in the early 2000s, following the fall of the New Order government in 1998. This shift in policies had its repercussions on the governance of different public sectors, among which education also has a central place. The policies of school-based management (SBM) and school-based curriculum (SBC) are essentially the fruits of the Indonesian government's expansion of decentralization (. In order to achieve this, the initiatives endeavored to empower schools to develop context-specific and need-based curricula (Bjork, 2004; Rahman, 2019). Sumintono et al. hoped that the decentralization policy would enhance the quality of educational services by fostering local ability and responsibility.

Although decentralization has ideal implications for improving school-based curricula, it has encountered some difficulties in practice in Indonesia. Previous studies (Bjork, 2004; Mukminin, Habibi, Prasojo, Idi, & Hamidah, 2019; Rahman, 2019) have flagged some of these issues, including inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and continued centralization of key aspects of education, but the current study explores new perspectives on these issues. The most common and widespread problem is the 'copy-paste' phenomenon: schools just transcribe the curriculum documents provided by the government without meaningful localization. Decentralization in education approaches this issue by limiting the ideal of decentralization to a one-size-fits-all approach (Nuraeni, Zulela, & Boeriswati, 2020; Wahyuni, & Aziz, 2016).

Some studies of curriculum implementation in Indonesian schools have identified the phenomenon of 'copy-paste.' (Kristiyani, 2019; Iskandar, 2020; Suyanto, 2017). Kristiyani (2019) examines the execution of the 2013 Indonesian curriculum and emphasizes concerns around academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, within the framework of incorporating 21st-century skills. The study highlights the difficulties that instructors encounter while adjusting to new instructional approaches and the inclination to rely on 'copy-paste' procedures because of these difficulties. Iskandar (2020) examines the extent to which EFL teachers in Indonesian high schools adhere to the curriculum policy. The study reveals that teachers often comply with the curriculum in a coercive manner due to top-down implementation policies, resulting in superficial compliance and practices such as 'copy-paste.' Suyanto's (2017) findings revealed that the majority of schools adhere solely to the government-determined curriculum guidelines without implementing any additional

modifications to tailor the curriculum to school requirements. This is because paid homework often results in a mere procedural obedience to curriculum standards rather than a deep commitment to learning the material or applying the methods used. The documented lesson plans revealed a significant discrepancy from the classroom implementation, indicating a disconnect between policy and practice (Nuraeni, Zulela, & Boeriswati, 2020; Rahman, 2019).

The absence of a comprehensive study that critically examines the implementation of the school-based curriculum in Indonesian junior high schools is a gap in the literature. However, there have been very few studies dealing specifically with the main focus of this paper, the 'copy-paste' phenomenon and its impacts on educational quality and equity (Rahman, 2019; Sumintono, Hariri, & Izzati, 2023). This book endeavours to close this gap by offering a thorough depiction of the curriculum implementation process in 12 Yogyakarta case study schools, specifically highlighting the roles of school principals and their adaptation of MoEC-developed curriculum documents to local contexts in these settings. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the prevalent 'copy-paste' approach to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Indonesian junior high schools. This study explores the incongruences between curriculum documentation and implementation by looking at the viewpoints of school principals (whom the school followed) and classroom approaches in practice. We expect this study to offer a thorough analysis of this issue within a decentralized education context, elucidating the challenges and opportunities of curriculum reform and offering guidance to policymakers, educators, and others (Rahman, 2019; Sumintono, Hariri, & Izzati, 2023).

The 'copy-paste' phenomenon hinders curriculum policy and practice in Indonesia. In order to move closer to this understanding, the study seeks to address the problem within the decentralized schooling context, intending to add to the current educational reform debate and suggest ways to increase curriculum implementation. Concrete actions to achieve decentralization goals and enhance the educational performance of Indonesian students can greatly benefit from its findings (Rahman, 2019; Sumintono, Hariri., & Izzati, 2023).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Indonesian Decentralized Schooling System

The 1999 Law transformed Indonesia from a centralized to a decentralized governance system, with significant implications for the education sector. The aim is to uphold democratic principles, enhance educational standards, and encourage greater local participation in school management. To implement the 1999 Law, the Indonesian government established the 2001 Education Sector-Specific Commission of National Education (Komisi Nasional Pendidikan). To build democratic character in schools, the commission recommended the establishment of boards of education (BOE) at the district level and school committees (SC). Local governments and schools designed these bodies to aid in enhancing educational quality at those levels (Bjork, 2006; Supriadi, 2001). As Kaestle (1973) explains, many cities and urban teachers were skeptical of decentralization, believing that the Chicago plan's roots were bourgeois budget-balancing strategies (see also Dobratz, 1975). Additionally, many local governments and schools lacked the capacity and resources to effectively implement the new decentralized structures (Bjork, 2004). There was also a wide variation in the effectiveness of the BOEs and SCs from region to region, which made for a lack of uniform education outcomes (Raihani, 2007).

The 2003 National Education System Law strengthened the capacity of BOEs and SCs to provide local education management support. It sought to improve the capability of local governments and schools to provide high-quality education (Yunus, & Suardini, 2021). Despite the rhetoric of decentralization, the central government-maintained power over education via the National Education Standard Agency (BSNP), which annually evaluated schools on the basis of eight standards (Bjork, 2004). Generally, woredas had significantly lower resources and capacities, and these differences between urban and rural schools limited the implementation of decentralized policies (Raihani, 2007).

Regional Schools of Prime (RSBI) is one of three categories established by the Government Regulation in 2005; the other two are school prospects and standard (SSN) nationally. These categories aim to stimulate learning institutions to reach and pass national standards (Supriadi, 2001). The introduction of the resulting sorting system led to the creation of wider gaps between schools capable of meeting higher standards, thereby leaving a majority of schools in impoverished areas without the basic necessities to meet the standards (Bjork, 2006). A Constitutional Court decision in 2013 ordered the termination of the RSBI program, thus illuminating a recurring impediment to the sustainability of ambitious educational reforms (Republika, 2013).

A 2006 implementation introduced the concept of school-based management (SBM) and the adoption of a school-based curriculum (SBC). This policy sought for education to be more based on the concrete conditions and population of a school or village (Nurdyansyah & Fahyuni, 2016). However, the problem for most schools in implementing SBM and SBC is the limited availability of personnel and resources (Lie, 2007). The extent to which SBM and SBC mechanisms can be successful was critically dependent on the leadership at the school level, and hence the results varied across the country (Supriatna, 2016).

In addition, the National Education Act No. 20/2003 and MONE Regulation No. 22/2013 have legalized national examinations, school examinations, and standardized student assessments. The goal was to ensure that all students met a minimum educational standard (Prihantoro, 2015). The focus was on national examinations, which often resulted in high-stakes tests and sometimes led to teaching solely for the test, neglecting other educational goals (Raihani, 2007). Similarly, performance findings on the examination also exhibit notable variations from region to region, which tend to in part express basic inequalities in resources and opportunities (Bjork, 2004).

This has made decentralization in the Indonesian school system a groundbreaking policy to encourage local participation and improve

educational quality. The implementation has had numerous obstacles to overcome, such as capacity constraints, resource inequities, and the requirement for ongoing support and training. Continued work by both to tackle these issues is essential to unlocking decentralized educational opportunities in Indonesia.

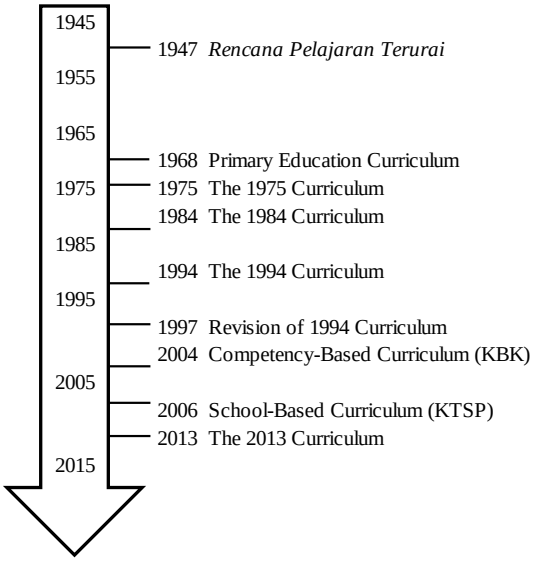
2.2 The Changing of the Indonesian Curriculum

Since independence in 1945, the Indonesian national curriculum has undergone numerous reforms and changes. The demands of a changing nation, educational philosophies, and societal trends led to these developments (Bjork, 2006; Yunus, & Suardini, 2021). The 1947 curriculum, *Rentjana Pelajaran Terurai* 1947, was the first national curriculum implemented in Indonesia. The purpose of this statement was to establish national character and a sense of freedom and equality among Indonesian citizens. However, this curriculum remained entrenched in the Dutch colonial education system, limiting its ability to foster a national identity. In 1968, new government-led programs (during Soeharto's New Order regime) introduced a revised national curriculum that focused on the philosophical ground of Pancasila's national ideology (Hamalik, 1971). The curriculum aimed to improve intelligence, emotional intelligence, art skills, health education, and basic knowledge of the following subjects: science, social science, and English; mathematics; Indonesian; and local languages (Gunawan, 1986). But critics said it was too dependent on the New Order regime's political agenda and less well-suited to promoting critical thought and independent learning (Sukamto, 1999).

The 1975 curriculum was based on the concept of "objective management," where a central curriculum set detailed objectives, instructional materials, teaching media, and evaluation methods (Semiawan, 1998). The curriculum aimed to ensure consistency in education and the proficiency of students across the nation. However, critics have criticized it for being inflexible, unable to adapt courses to better suit local contexts and a wider range of student needs (Bjork, 2004). As early as 1983, it appeared that the 1975 curriculum was unable to meet both socio-scientific application and scientific-technological imperatives (Hamalik, 2004). In response, the government implemented the 1984 curriculum, which sought to create more critical thinkers that were ready for the challenges of the future. Yet, a lack of teacher preparation and resources impeded the implementation of this curriculum (Tilaar, 2012).

There have been other curriculum reforms in Indonesia since 1984, such as the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) in 2004, the 2006 School-Based Curriculum (KTSP), and the 2013 Curriculum (Prihantoro, 2015; Yunus, & Suardini, 2021). The designers of both these curricula aimed to tackle specific issues in education and cater to the needs of developing nations. However, implementation challenges are often raised due to inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and resistance to change (Lie, 2007; Raihani, 2007).

The ongoing reformation of the Indonesian curriculum is one of the top ten Indonesian education reform agendas, documenting the nation's achievements to enhance educational quality and cater to changing societal needs. At the same time, robust policy design is a necessary but insufficient condition to ensure successful curriculum implementation, not least because programming requires teacher training, resource investment (Nurdyansyah, N., & Fahyuni, 2016; Supriatna, 2016), and stakeholder engagement. We continuously check and evaluate it to ensure its readiness for 21st-century problems.



Source : The Ministry of National Education

Figure 1. Timeline of the School Curriculum Development in Indonesia

According to (Bjork, 2006), the introduction of the Local Content Curriculum (LCC) in the 1994 curriculum marked a significant shift in curriculum renewal. This curriculum devoted 20 percent of its time to locally designed subjects. The curriculum transitioned from a centralized approach, prevalent since the Suharto era, to locally relevant subjects, such as cultivating vocational skills or traditional arts.

However, Bjork's 2006 research on LCC revealed that the teaching of topics categorized as LCC began before 1994.

In 2004, schools across provinces introduced the Competency-Based Curriculum as part of the shift to a decentralized education system and the introduction of school-based management. Significant revisions occurred in 2006, and it has become known as the school-based curriculum, or *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP).* While this curriculum continues to emphasize competency-based achievement, it grants schools the autonomy to shape their educational objectives, including the school's vision, mission, and goals, the curriculum's structure and content, the learning load, syllabuses, and lesson plans. They develop their school curriculum based on the guidelines set by the National Board of Educational Standards (BSNP, Badan Nasional Standar Pendidikan), in which they develop graduate competency and content standards, including the basic framework and curriculum structure.

To summarize, Indonesia has changed its curriculum eight times since independence (see Figure 1). Following the collection of data for this study, the Ministry undertook another curriculum change in July 2013, implementing it in 6,410 schools across provinces: 1,270 SMA, 1,021 SMK, 1,521 SMP, and 2,598 SD, thereby educating 1,535,065 students from primary (SD) to secondary (SMP and SMA/SMK). This new curriculum, according to two Indonesian senior linguists from two government universities, was similar to the previous curriculum (KTSP), with additional emphasis on competences and character building outlined in the 2006 curriculum (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 22 May 2013). The 2003 National Education Standard Law, which stipulates that the functions of national education are to develop the capability, character, and civilization of the nation for enhancing its intellectual capacity, places a particular emphasis on values and moral education. This law also aims to develop learners' potential to become individuals imbued with human values, faithful and pious to one and only God, possessing morals and noble character, who are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and, as citizens, democratic and responsible (Article 3).

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically a multiple-case study approach. This design allows for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon across 12 case study schools in Yogyakarta, providing a comprehensive understanding of the discrepancies between curriculum documentation and actual classroom practices (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2018). This study was part of a larger study of teaching English in junior high schools (Case Study 1–Case Study 12) (see Table 2). The subjects of this study were principals and English language teachers in twelve randomly selected districts in five districts in the Yogyakarta province, covering government and private schools under MONE (420 schools) and MORA (85 schools)—ten schools under MONE management and two schools with MORA: six were government and six were private schools.

Table 1. The Profile of the Twelve Case Studies

CS	No of Students (2011)	Type of School	School Location	School Status	Government Ministry
1.	418	National standard school	Urban	Government	MONE
2.	432	Medium sized Islamic	Urban	Private	MONE
3.	675	Large Catholic	City	Private	MONE
4.	968	Large school	City	Government	MONE
5.	586	Medium sized	Rural	Government	MONE
6.	568	Madrasah	Urban	Government	MORA
7.	130	Small school	Rural	Private	MONE
8.	93	Small female pesantren	Urban	Private	MORA
9.	324	Medium sized	Rural	Government	MONE
10.	150	Small sized Islamic	Rural	Private	MONE
11.	431	National standard school	Urban	Government	MONE
12.	74	Small sized private	Rural	Private	MONE

The schools' locations also varied—two in the city, five urban schools, and five rural schools. The researcher used random sampling to represent the overall profile of junior high schools in Yogyakarta province. These twelve schools have a total of 4849 students and 427 teachers, including 47 English language teachers. We gathered the data through a questionnaire survey of the English teachers, interviews with 24 English language teachers and 12 principals, class observation, and document analysis.

We collected data using various methods. The document analysis focuses on the curricular artifacts reviewed and analyzed in this paper (lesson plans, teaching materials, and school policies related to EFL teaching). We can conduct this analysis to determine the intended curriculum, which includes objectives, content, methods, materials, and other elements as outlined by the Indonesian government (Bowen 2009). These classroom observations were made to allow us to see and understand the teaching and learning process in EFL classrooms. The goal of these observations is to describe the aesthetic appearance of the classroom in terms of teaching practices, which specify the means, materials, and activities that teachers use. We employed observation protocols to systematically record and analyze the observed practices. (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2018). Semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers, school principals, and curriculum coordinators take place. These interviews delve into their approaches, views, and hurdles in curriculum implementation. The aim is also to unpack the phenomenon of the so-called 'copy-paste' of such ideas and the disconnect between plans and practices as documented. (Kallio et al., 2016). Students from the case study schools participate in focused group discussions. These discussions provide a deeper understanding of the students' experiences and perspectives on the applied EFL curriculum, as well as their involvement in the curriculum supplies and

habits (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

We analysed the data using thematic analysis. Coding is the process of selecting and interpreting data to identify themes related to curriculum implementation, potential discrepancies between existing documentation and practice, and copy-paste phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through this procedure, document content analysis takes into account the systematic analysis of curriculum-related handouts such as lesson plans and teaching materials. Before beginning, it is instructional to analyse the intended purposes, content, methods, and materials of the course in relation to what we observed in the classroom, paying particular attention to any areas where there are differences or inconsistencies (Lantz-Andersson & Vigmo, 2013). We use data triangulation to ensure the rigor of the results. We collectively used the data from document analysis, classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions for cross-checking and triangulating. Triangulation served as a means of translating a greater understanding of the 'copy-paste' phenomenon and the variances in curriculum implementation (Q., 2013).

4. Results

4.1 The Copy Paste Curriculum Phenomenon

Our analysis of school curriculum documents revealed a strong resemblance between the curriculum in Indonesian junior high schools and the government's exemplar curriculum, both in terms of content and format. Other studies (Bjork, 2003; Rahman, 2019) also confirmed this observation, showing persistent centralized control in ostensibly decentralized education systems. The concept of principals acting as curriculum improvement directors and facilitators suggests a top-down prescription for curriculum development, with central government guidelines heavily influencing local practices. As stated by the vice principal of CS 4, Jakarta has established competency standards and basic competencies, indicating a top-down implementation of the curriculum.

This pattern of top-down governance is consistent with (Bjork, 2004) findings that decentralization is largely rhetorical, as the policy is still mainly top-down, with the central government in Indonesia retaining a lot of power in the education sector. Because there isn't any supervision, including the part that principals play in speeding up the addition of new and different curriculum, this supports the idea that decentralization in Indonesia still does not provide a democratic form of localized autonomy and site-specific adaptability in learning material (Rahman 2019). On the other hand, the circumstances in the private rural Islamic school (CS 10) are a clear indication of the difficulties faced by under-resourced schools in curriculum delivery. The need for the principal to have the curriculum revised by an administrative staff member in the absence of a vice principal and part-time teachers highlights the resource limitations to effective curriculum development. Francis (2015) remarked that the literature on educational decentralization argued that a gulf (usually regional) separated between urban and rural schools was a factor that worsened educational inequalities in quality (also see Sumintono et al.). The extremely tiny private rural school (CS 12), whose principal 'copied and pasted' the curriculum from another school, serves as another example of the cost-effective administration of curriculum requirements. This copying of documents as curriculum without adaptations, hopefully progress paid for, shows both an absence of deep engagement with the curriculum and a failure to make that curriculum their own, fitting it into their school and community. The present finding is consistent with that of Supriani et al. This is consistent with Donaldson (2019) and Suyanto (2017), who found that when Indonesian schools adopt curriculum, many schools directly apply the curriculum guidelines provided by the government without any adjustment to the local curriculum or school characteristics.

The findings from this combination reveal an intriguing point: the curriculum at the Islamic boarding school (CS 8) aligns with both the government's vision and mission and the foundation's mission, also known as ‘misi pondok'. The principal believes that balancing two objectives—academic and religious—is an overwhelming challenge, highlighting the wider conflicts between the government's desires and the capabilities of certain religiously-oriented educational systems. This tension results in graduates who are precarious, underprepared academically, and ill-positioned to fulfill the mission of the religious foundation. This result corroborates the existing literature that religious education and national curriculum standards are often difficult to integrate, thus leading to dilemmas and trade-offs affecting learning outcomes in the end (Rahman, 2019). The principal further said,

> Other *Pondoks* do not care about the government stipulation such as ignorance of participating in the national examination, like some *pondoks* in Jawa Timur. If we implement such a system in Yogyakarta, I don’t think students will go to this school.

CS 10's principal admitted he did not review the curriculum every year because his budget was small, a common condition. For example, the statement itself from the English teacher that she did not know the curriculum and that she was using handouts prepared by a friend of her who teaches in the government school across town shows the absence of an institution equipped to improve her practice. Nuraeni et al.'s study aligns with these results. Janhawan et al. (2020) identified inadequate teacher training and professional development as one of the significant challenges to proper curriculum implementation in Indonesian schools.

Consequently, the district education office's panel of subject teachers developed these syllabuses and lesson plans during workshops for representative teachers from the various schools. The principal nominated teachers to participate in a seminar or workshop held once a month by the district education office, though most teachers contended they normally participated only once or twice in a semester due to their busy schedules and roster meetings. “We sent teachers to seminars or workshops, though sometimes by taking from students’ learning time,” said most principals. The school occasionally shared the workshop results informally with other teachers. Most subject coordinators ‘copy-pasted’ their syllabus and lesson plans from the government guidelines. The central government's 'pressure' through district supervisors, teachers' limited capacity, a lack of training or practical application, or a simple lack of time could have caused this situation.

The content and process standards are based on the 2003 Education Law concerning the national education system, MONE Regulation No. 22/2006 and 41/2007, which states that the curriculum for junior high schools is 32 teaching hours per week. In fact, due to the school-based curriculum, most schools underwent revisions, ultimately delivering at least 43 teaching hours over six days, which included 10 prescribed subjects, local content, and self-development classes.

The core subjects—Bahasa Indonesia, English, mathematics, science, and social studies—had more teaching hours because of the national examinations, though social studies was not one of the subjects examined. Based on the data, the aim of teaching according to the views of the principals and English teachers was to pass national examinations, as the schools tried hard to achieve higher scores. All schools, except for the isolated CS 12, implemented extra classes after school to achieve this examination aim, despite the limited number of teachers. Most principals and English teachers contended that the central government was exerting pressure on them to achieve high scores in the national examination.

Most schools typically teach the religion subject for two or three hours, accounting for approximately 6 percent of the weekly teaching time in CS 1, CS 3, CS 4, CS 5, CS 7, CS 9, CS 11, and CS 12. However, in Islamic-based schools such as CS 2, CS 6, CS 8, and CS 10, the religion subject with the explanation of the Qur'an and Hadith as well as the teaching of Arabic took seven to ten hours within a total range of 45–47 hours, or 20 percent per week. This was detrimental to the core subjects (refer to Table 4), as it meant that all four schools, with the exception of an urban Islamic school (CS 6), had more hours. The Catholic school, in contrast, only devoted two hours to religion out of 40 teaching hours, or 5 percent. The four core subjects received more teaching hours, ranging from four to six. While most schools dedicate two to four hours to local content subjects, the Islamic boarding school (CS 8) allocated an exceptional eight hours, with two hours dedicated to Javanese and six hours to Islamic arts, Arabic proverbs, and wise sayings, in addition to religion. This school dedicated 16 hours to Islamic and Arabic content, accounting for one third of the 47 teaching hours available, making it the highest of any school. In brief, the four Islamic-based schools had more teaching hours (45–47), except for a government madrasah (CS 6) than the secular-based schools. In addition, almost all schools conducted extra classes after school hours. Occasionally, the school's operational fund or parents also funded this activity. A senior teacher in CS 2 contended that the Year Nine students were at school from 6.30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., twice or three times a week.

Concerning 'the improvement or revision' of the curriculum, almost all principals noted three issues: teaching hours, especially for the core subjects; setting the minimum pass grade; and the selection of the local content, including its time allocation. The new female CS 1 principal clearly said that the curriculum improvement was about the minimum pass grade of each subject, particularly the core subjects, as well as the self-development subjects, which were in line with the school characteristics and the availability of teachers.

Each school sets its own minimum pass grades, 'evaluating or revising' the curriculum at the start of each semester or year. The CS 1 principal noted, "We have stated the general points in the curriculum, such as the minimum grade for each subject. English, for example, is 7.5 out of 10 that accords with what the government requires." However, for other schools, it was difficult to maintain 7.5 for English. "We previously had an average of 7, but now it has become 6.3," said the CS 5 vice principal. In contrast, the schools in the city (CS 3 and CS 4) required a minimum grade of more than 8 for all subjects. In summary, the minimum grade for each school depended on previous students' performances and previous achievements, and it could be raised or lowered compared to the previous year.

One female principal (CS 1) was very confident, saying that the students' minimum grade for the core subjects, particularly English, was 7.5, as stipulated by the government. In fact, a district supervisor with an English language qualification noted that it was very difficult for schools to reach 7.5 unless teachers in the school marked up students' test results, a not uncommon practice. This seemed to suggest that schools attempted to manipulate students' grades to qualify as national standard schools, which mandated a minimum pass grade of 7.5 for the core subjects.

Additionally, the curriculum underwent a revision in the self-development subject area. The principal of CS 1 outlined the revision of the curriculum, which included self-development activities like batik painting, playing traditional Javanese music in a band, and storytelling. The vice principal of an international standard school also validated this "revision." The vice principal of CS 4 referred to this revision as the 'Jakarta package', which schools actually implement. Jakarta mandates proficiency standards and basic competencies. The schools generally implement a minimum grade for all subjects, including self-development subjects and local content like teaching the vernacular language (Javanese), domestic science, and/or accounting, he noted.

The twelve school curriculum documents seemed to indicate that most principals had insufficient knowledge about the 'curriculum improvement or revision' or the local content. Their understanding seemed to suggest that local content referred to the vernacular language (Javanese). This was perhaps in line with the 1999 law regarding decentralism. The 2003 Education Law and the 2005 Government Regulation stipulate that schools select local content, either for a semester or for two teaching hours, in accordance with the 'district characteristics'. However, all schools taught Javanese, with a combination of Javanese and domestic science (seven schools) being the most popular. Only two schools (CS 3 and CS 4) offered accounting, not bothering with domestic science. Private schools also selected the school foundation subjects (*kemuhammadiyahan, ketamansiswaan, ke-Pagudiluhur-an, and ke-PGRI-an*).

From the data contained in the interviews and documentation, it was clear that when schools used the terminology of 'evaluating' or 'revising' or 'developing' the curriculum, they were essentially concerned about three issues: (1) the minimum grade for passing, (2) the schools' choice of the self-development subject, and (3) the choice of local content subjects such as the vernacular language taught (Javanese) and domestic science, accounting, or the school foundation subject. The term 'district characteristics' stated in the government's

curriculum guidelines seemed to imply the local vernacular language.

The principal, the local education council (represented by the district supervisor), and the school committee representative completed the 'improved' curriculum and then proceeded to 'rubber stamp' the minimally revised curriculum. "The school team invited the district education office supervisor and the school committee's parental representative to rubber stamp the actual curriculum revision," one principal (CS 1) stated. Furthermore, the vice principal of CS 11 expressed that the district education office supervisor typically assists with language and punctuation, rather than content, before the head of the district education office signs it. Additionally, two supervisors from different districts acknowledged, “Most schools had a copy-pasted curriculum because they had no idea how to develop it to be in line with the school characteristics; they are incompetent curriculum developers.” This revealed poor communication regarding curriculum development between the principals and district supervisors. A national curriculum designer remarked that the teachers were not ‘born’ to be curriculum developers. Curriculum development was not the teachers’ responsibility because their focus was on the teaching techniques to achieve the targets highlighted in the school curriculum. One vice principal (CS 4) noted,

> It’s been like this for decades that the school system was devised by the central government; when it’s now school-based management, it becomes stuck (school staff do not know what and how to implement it) even though such management has a larger community involvement through the empowerment of local education councils (*dewan pendidikan*) and school committees (*komite sekolah*).

Since 2006, CS 10 has only conducted a curriculum evaluation once, inviting various stakeholders, including the district supervisor, quality assurance personnel from the province, and the school committee representative. "We invited them only once in 2006 because we don't have enough money to support it annually." Instead of requiring students to pay school fees, we allocate all funds to the school's operational fund (Bantuan Operasional Sekolah, or BOS), leaving no budget for curriculum evaluation. We revised the curriculum only once with the district supervisor, who has a Javanese subject background; after that, we had a teacher meeting to make a syllabus and the lesson plans per group (*serumpun*). One vice principal (CS 10) commented, "We just need to attach three examples of lesson plans to the curriculum."

Since 2006, CS 10 has only conducted a curriculum evaluation once, inviting various stakeholders, including the district supervisor, quality assurance personnel from the province, and the school committee representative. "We invited them only once in 2006 because we don't have enough money to support it annually." Instead of requiring students to pay school fees, we allocate all funds to the school's operational fund (*Bantuan Operasional Sekolah*, or BOS), leaving no budget for curriculum evaluation. We revised the curriculum only once with the district supervisor, who has a Javanese subject background; after that, we had a teacher meeting to make a syllabus and the lesson plans per group (*serumpun*). One vice principal (CS 10) commented, "We just need to attach three examples of lesson plans to the curriculum."

Every year, before the academic year starts, the curriculum should undergo revision, which typically occurs in July. Based on observations, some schools revised and documented the curriculum annually, while others continued to use their "old" syllabus, which was created, for example, two to four years prior. Their reasoning was an insignificant revision of the previous curriculum, so they simply changed the year on the document cover.

An incident occurred in CS 12. When the researcher asked for the document, the principal remarked that the school accreditation was B (good), so all the data and documents were good, according to him. After a thorough review, the researcher found indications that the curriculum could potentially belong to other schools, despite the documentation's 2009 creation. "I attended a seminar in 2007; since then, our school has only changed the curriculum once," said the principal in CS 12, who has 33 years of principal experience and 44 years of teaching experience. The school's curriculum documentation was in disarray. For instance, the document called for extra-curricular activities to take place after school hours, Monday to Saturday, but this didn't happen. Additionally, the document did not explicitly mention or accurately reflect the school's strengths and weaknesses. The data suggested that the copy-paste phenomenon primarily occurred in all twelve case study schools, potentially mirroring the government's exemplar or spanning across different districts and schools.

5. Conclusion

The school-based curriculum, which was first introduced in 2006, together with school-based management in the decentralization policy, have not been implemented yet. The curriculum, which should be based on student and school characteristics, was difficult to implement. School staff followed their copy-paste practices due to their limited time and capacity. The principals seemed to ‘rubberstamp’ the school curriculum before the head of the district education office automatically signed off. Schools commonly engaged in this practice, leading the school staff to believe they had already revised or developed their school curriculum. Additionally, it was observed that the 'copy-paste' practices in the school-based curriculum, also known as KTSP, did not accurately reflect the characteristics of the school and its students. Principals delegate more responsibilities to their vice principals regarding curriculum matters, while teachers copy and paste documents from other schools within their district. This may occur due to the principals' limited time and capacity, as well as their ignorance of internal issues.

This research finding has implications for school principals' training in instructional leadership. Teachers’ professional deRegular in-service training for teachers is necessary, and they must actively participate to enhance their capacity for curriculum develEngaging in engaging activities in the classroom can enhance students' academic performance and boost their motivation.

Acknowledgments

We greatly appreciate the valuable contributions of our participants in this study and the authority who allowed us to conduct the study. We would also like to thank the colleagues (from RMIT University, Charles Darwin University, Australia and Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia) who assisted us in conducting the study or critiquing the manuscript.

Authors' contributions

Yulia was responsible for study design, data collection, and drafting the manuscript. The manuscript was then edited and revised by Mahayanti. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

"Not applicable."

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned, externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

References

Al-Taneiji, S., & McLeod, L. (2008). Towards decentralized management in United Arab Emirates (UAE) schools. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *19*(3), 275-291. https://doi.org/10.1080/09243450802246384

Bjork, C. (2004). Local responses to decentralization policy in Indonesia. *Comparative Education Review*, *47*(2), 184-216. https://doi.org/10.1086/376540

Bjork, C. (2006). Decentralisation in Education, Institutional Culture and Teacher Autonomy in Indonesia. In *The Role of the State* (pp. 133-150). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-3358-2_7

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Gunawan, A. H. (1986). *Kebijakan-kebijakan Pendidikan di Indonesia*. Bina Aksara.

Hamalik, O. (1971). *Pengadjaran Unit: Aplikasi Kurikulum Modern*. IKIP Bandung.

Hamalik, O. (2004). *Pengembangan Kurikulum Lembaga Pendidikan dan Pelatihan*. Trigenda Karya.

Irawati, D., Najili, H., Supiana, S., & Zaqiah, Q. Y. (2022). Merdeka Belajar curriculum innovation and its application ineducation units. *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan, 6*(2), 2506-2514

Iskandar, I. (2020). Teachers' fidelity to curriculum: an insight from teachers' implementation of the Indonesian EFL curriculum policy. *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation (IJHI), 3*(2), 50-55. https://doi.org/10.33750/ijhi.v3i2.79

Kristiyani, C. (2019). Implementing the School Curriculum in the Framework of the 21st Century Skills in Indonesian Context. *Social Science and Humanities Journal,* 1211-1221. Retrieved from https://sshj.in/index.php/sshj/article/download/392/161

Lantz-Andersson, A. S., & Vigmo, R. B. (2013). Crossing Boundaries in Facebook: Students' Framing of Language Learning Activities as Extended Spaces. *Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning*, *8*, 293-312. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11412-013-9177-0

Lie, A. (2007). Education Policy and EFL Curriculum in Indonesia: Theories and Practices. *TEFLIN Journal*, *18*(1), 1-14.

Liguori, E., & Winkler, C. (2020). From offline to online: Challenges and opportunities for entrepreneurship educationfollowing the COVID-19 pandemic. *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy*, *3*(4), 346-351. https://doi.org/10.1177/2515127420916738

Mukminin, A., Habibi, A., Prasojo, L. D., Idi, A., & Hamidah, A. (2019). Curriculum Reform in Indonesia: Moving from an Exclusive to Inclusive Curriculum. *CEPS Journal*, *9*(2), 53-72. https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.543

Nugrohadi, S., Herwanti, K., Mujiono, M., Ardini, S. N., & Novita, M. (2022). Analysis of a new learning paradigm basedon Kurikulum Merdeka. *Proceeding International Conference on Digital Education and Social Science*, *1*(1), 134-143.

Nuraeni, Y., Zulela, Z., & Boeriswati, E. (2020). A case study of curriculum implementation and K-13 challenges in Indonesia. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Studies*, *2*(1), 14-18. https://doi.org/10.29103/ijevs.v2i1.2263

Nurdyansyah, N., & Fahyuni, E. F. (2016). *Inovasi Model Pembelajaran Sesuai Kurikulum 2013*. Nizamia Learning Center.

Prihantoro, C. R. (2015). The Perspective of Curriculum in Indonesia on Environmental Education. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, *4*(1), 77-83. https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2014.915

Q., P. M. (2013). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd ed.)*. CA: Sage Publications.

Rahman, A. (2019). Decentralized education policy in Indonesia: An analysis of challenges and outcomes. *Asian Education Review*, *11*(2), 23-39.

Raihani, R. (2007). Education Reforms in Indonesia in the Twenty-First Century. *International Education Journal*, *8*(1), 172-183.

Rizki, R. A., & Fahkrunisa, L. (2022). Evaluation of implementation of independent curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka). *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogic Studies*, *1*(1), 32-41.

Semiawan, C. R. (1998). *Perkembangan Kurikulum di Indonesia*. Grasindo.

Sukamto, M. (1999). The Pancasila Transformation: A Study of the Indonesian National Ideology. *Studia Islamika*, *6*(2), 119-163.

Sumintono, B., Hariri, H., & Izzati, U. A. (2023). *Attraction of authority: The Indonesian experience of educational decentralization* (In Z. Sakh). Education in Indonesia. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-1878-2_10

Supriadi, D. (2001). Educational Decentralization in Indonesia: A Study on Policy and Implementation. *Journal of Educational Policy*, *16*(3), 233-247.

Supriatna, A. (2016). Indonesian Qualified Teachers for Better Education of Educational Philosophy and Theory. *American Journal of Educational Research*, *4*(10), 717-721.

Suyanto, S. (2017). A reflection on the implementation of a new curriculum in Indonesia: A crucial problem on school readiness. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, *1868*(1), 10008. https://doi.org/10.1063/1.4995218

Tilaar, H. A. R. (2012). *Kaleidoskop Pendidikan Nasional*. Kompas.

Wahyuni, S., & Aziz, M. (2016). The impact of school-based management on educational quality in Indonesia. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, *10*(2), 89-105.

Yunus, R., & Suardini, N. N. (2021). The Development of Indonesian National Curriculum: A Historical Review. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, *12*(2), 1-18.