

The Political Economy of Teacher Management Reform in Indonesia

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Abstract

Indonesia faces serious problems in the number, cost, quality and distribution of teachers. In recent years, its central government has introduced a range of reforms to address these problems but they have produced modest results. This paper suggests that this outcome reflects the way in which predatory political and bureaucratic elites have used the school system for decades to accumulate resources, distribute patronage, mobilize political support, and exercise political control rather than promote improved learning outcomes. Efforts to reduce teacher numbers, enhance teacher quality, and improve teacher distribution have accordingly constituted an assault on the interests of these elites, provoking powerful, if often subterranean, resistance. Broadly, reform has only occurred where the central government has employed policy instruments that have disciplined local governments and maintained a commitment to these instruments in the face of resistance. The paper concludes by assessing the implications for Indonesian education.

Keywords: political economy, education, teachers, teacher management, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Indonesia has plenty of teachers, around 3 million by one estimate (*The Economist* 2014). Indeed, with an overall supply of one teacher per 16 students at primary school level and 15 students at junior-secondary school level, it has one of the most generous student-teacher ratios in the world (Heyward *et al* 2017: 245). But the quality of Indonesia’s teachers is poor—many lack basic competencies, particularly with regards to subject knowledge and pedagogical skills¹—and a substantial proportion fail to turn up to work on any given day² (Jalal *et al* 2009; Pisani 2013; Chang *et al* 2014; McKenzie *et al* 2014). At the same time, Indonesia’s teachers are unevenly distributed between districts and between schools in urban areas and ones in rural and remote areas within districts (USAID Prioritas 2015; Heyward *et al* 2017). Finally, rising teacher salary costs, driven by growing teacher numbers and pay rises, have impaired the government’s ability to invest in other areas needed to improve education quality (Chang *et al* 2014).

Together, these problems have contributed to poor learning outcomes for Indonesian students. Indonesia regularly ranks in the bottom few countries in international standardized tests such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) below neighboring countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, and Singapore; and its performance has improved little since the early 2000s. To address these problems, the Indonesian central government has introduced a range of teacher management reforms over the past decade but these initiatives have produced few results. Indonesian teachers remain poor quality, often absent, inequitably distributed, and costly.

¹ This is indicated, for instance, by the results of standardised assessments of teacher competency. See Section 5.1 for further detail.

² McKenzie *et al* (2014: xiii) estimate that around one in ten teachers is absent when they are scheduled to be teaching.

This paper examines the reasons for this. Much analysis of teacher management reform in developing countries and Indonesia specifically has focused on defining and describing Indonesia's teacher management problems, prescribing policy solutions to these problems, and assessing the effectiveness of implemented solutions through impact evaluations. This paper, by contrast, endeavours to bring the political and social dimensions of teacher management to the fore. It argues that the failure of teacher management reform in Indonesia so far has reflected the way in which predatory political and bureaucratic elites have for decades used the school system—and teacher management in particular—to accumulate resources, distribute patronage, mobilize political support, and exercise political control rather than to maximize educational performance and equity. In this context, central government attempts to reduce teacher numbers, improve teacher quality, and promote better teacher distribution have represented a direct assault on elite interests—and, in particular, given the central role of local governments in managing the teacher workforce, the interests of local political and bureaucratic elites. Reform initiatives have consequently encountered considerable—if often subterranean—resistance. In broad terms, reform initiatives have only been successful where the central government has devised policy instruments that have been effective in disciplining local governments and maintained a commitment to these policy instruments in the face of this resistance.

In presenting this analysis, the paper begins by briefly outlining a conceptual framework for understanding teacher management reform in developing countries (Section 2). It then identifies the actors, interests and agendas that have been involved in struggles over teacher management in Indonesia (Section 3) and provides an overview of how these struggles have shaped teacher management policy and its implementation in Indonesia during the New Order

and post-New Order periods (Sections 4 and 5). The final section (Section 6) presents the conclusions.

2. Analytical Framework

Much analysis of teacher management policy and its implementation in developing countries has focused on three analytical tasks. The first has been to define and describe teacher management problems in these countries. In this respect, it has been concerned with questions such as the adequacy of teacher supply, utilization, and distribution; the adequacy of teachers' skills and capabilities; the quality of in-service and pre-service teacher training; the effectiveness of systems for teacher recruitment, evaluation and management; and the adequacy of teacher pay. The second analytical task has been to prescribe technical policy solutions to these problems taking into account existing levels of economic and social development and budget constraints. The third analytical task has been to assess the effectiveness of proposed solutions through evaluations of the impact of projects and programs and consider the implications for project/program design. The central problematic of this work has been how to maximize educational benefit (as measured, for instance, by national performance in PISA and similar examinations) within the context of a given resource envelope, understood in terms of both government budget finances and human resources. Mulkeen's (2010) detailed analysis of teacher supply, training and management issues in Anglophone Africa and Gaynor's (1998) analysis of teacher management decentralisation in developing countries represent perhaps the most prominent exemplars of this type of analysis. This type of analysis has also featured strongly in various recent reports on teacher management in Indonesia (see, for instance, Jalal *et al* 1999; World Bank 2010a; 2010b; Chang *et al* 2014; World Bank 2015; USAID Prioritas 2015).

This work has served to define a reform agenda in relation to teacher management consisting of measures to increase/decrease the number of teachers (depending on whether countries are considered to be in shortage/deficit); distribute teachers more efficiently throughout the school system; enhance the quality of teacher training; make teacher recruitment and evaluation processes more meritocratic; and ensure that teacher pay is sufficient to attract good candidates into the profession without being excessive. But because this work has focused largely on technical issues, it has not, in most cases, examined the political dynamics surrounding processes of teacher management reform even though some authors have acknowledged that such processes are inherently political in nature (see, for instance, Gaynor 1998 and Chang *et al* 2014). At the same time, to the extent that it has explored the political dimensions of reform, it has tended to construe things in terms of individual teacher behavior rather than broader contestation between competing political and social groups (see, for instance, Bruns *et al* 2011). The challenge, it is presumed, is to ensure that teacher incentives align with broader goals such as improved education outcomes and fiscal sustainability. This work has thus set aside an analysis of the broader political and social context and the limitations and possibilities this imposes in favor of making a case for a more efficient and effective allocation of resources and designing policy and institutional frameworks that establish the ‘right’ incentives for individual teachers.³

In contrast, this paper proposes that teacher management policy-making and implementation should be understood as an inherently political process characterized by contestation between competing political and social groups over access to and control over resources and power within specific contexts. The point here is threefold. First, teacher management reform has

³ One notable exception in this respect is Bruns and Luque’s (2015) analysis of teacher management in Latin America. This combines a consideration of the technical and political dimensions of reform, although the latter is ancillary rather than a central focus. Heyward *et al* (2017) have presented a similar analysis focusing on teacher redistribution in Indonesia.

redistributive dimensions: it shifts resources and power away from some political and social groups and towards others. In particular, it shifts resources and power away from political and bureaucratic elites, the patronage and political networks they control, and teachers and towards parents of schoolchildren, especially ones in poor areas that have under-resourced and poor quality schools. To the extent that budget savings are achieved through a more efficient allocation of teacher supply, it also shifts resources away from teacher salaries to other areas of public spending (including other areas of education spending) and the interests that are embedded in those areas of spending. For these reasons, teacher management reform is subject to political contestation between groups who stand to benefit from such reform and those who stand to lose from it. Second, this contestation plays out within specific historical and institutional contexts. The precise nature of the actors involved, their respective interests and agendas, the balance of power between them, and the particular forms that contestation takes (e.g. parliamentary struggles, court cases, street protests/demonstrations, media debates, strikes) all vary depending on countries' particular histories, social structures, political regimes, legal systems and so on. Third, contestation involves the use of context-specific strategies and tactics on the part of competing actors as they seek to prevail against one another in struggles over power and resources. The outcomes of these struggles reflect the effects of all these factors.

In this view, then, the analysis of teacher management reform in specific developing countries needs to focus on three levels of analysis:⁴

⁴ Space does not allow us to trace in detail the intellectual roots of this framework. Suffice it to say that it has much in common with the framework developed by Grindle (2004; 2007) in her work on the politics of education reform in Latin America, that developed by Hudson and Leftwich (2014) for the Developmental Leadership Program, and the 'social conflict' approach to the study of Southeast Asia's political economy (see Rodan *et al* 2006). The framework here is distinctive in its specific application to the problem of teacher management reform.

- Level 1: Actors, Interests, and Agendas: This level focuses on identifying the key political and social actors who are involved in teacher management policy-making and its implementation and their respective interests, policy agendas, and forms of leverage over policy and implementation. Such actors may be specific individuals (such as a local chief executive) but more commonly are groups of individuals or organizations. The latter may include, depending on the specific historical/structural context, technocratic elites, predatory political and bureaucratic elites, capitalist elites, teachers and their unions/representative organisations, non-government organizations (NGOs), and parent and student groups.
- Level 2: Institutions: This level of analysis is primarily concerned with understanding the way in which formal and informal ‘rules of the game’ such as written laws and regulations, cultural values, voluntary codes and standards, and the like structure interactions between political actors who have a stake in teacher management policy and its implementation. There is accordingly a strong emphasis on questions related to the institutional design of legal and political systems, the nature of laws and government regulations, bureaucratic structures, and the way in which these shape who has access to decision-making and implementation processes, citizens’ ability to organize and mobilize for collective action, and the responsiveness of political elites to their interests and concerns.
- Level 3: Agency: This level of analysis focuses on understanding the role of strategic choice and action, as exercised by individual and group actors, in policy-making and its implementation related to teacher management. In particular, it is concerned with these actors’ choices and actions with regards to, depending on their respective interests and agendas, the promotion of or opposition to teacher management reform.

These three different levels of analysis permeate all sections of this paper. However, Section 3 focuses on the first level of analysis. Sections 4 and 5 illustrate how changes in the institutional arrangements that characterized the New Order and post-New Order periods—specifically with regards to the nature of the country’s political regime and the division of responsibilities between the central and regional governments—have served to shape different actors’ influence over policy-making and implementation. The latter section also gives attention to the role of agency when it examines the politics surrounding specific teacher management reforms and, as part of this, looks at the strategies pursued by different sets of actors in pursuit of their respective agendas.

3. Actors, Interests and Agendas

Struggles over teacher management policy and its implementation in Indonesia have involved several sets of actors, each of which has had distinct interests, policy agendas and ways of exercising leverage over policy-making and implementation. These actors have included technocratic elites, predatory political and bureaucratic elites, teachers and their representative organisations, NGOs and parent groups.

3.1 Technocratic Elites

Technocratic elites are government officials with a high level of academic training—particularly in economics but also, in some cases, other fields—who have the capacity to analyze statistical data and make decisions on the basis of economic or scientific principles. While pragmatic in addressing the nation’s development problems, they have generally promoted neoliberal economic and social policies as the solutions to these problems (Prawiro 1998; Boediono 2009). With regards to education policy, their principal concern for several decades has been to promote improved access to education—in particular basic education but

in more recent years secondary education as well—through expansion of the school system and the introduction of policies of free and/or universal education (see, for instance, Prawiro 1998: 176-181). But they have also given attention to issues of teacher quality, teacher distribution, and teacher numbers and cost (Jalal and Musthafa 2001; Jalal *et al* 2009; *Jawa Pos* 2014; *Balikpapanpos* 2014). In seeking to address these issues, one of their key concerns has been to ensure that government spending on education—and in particular teachers’ salaries—is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to build human capital and promote national economic competitiveness without imposing an excessive burden on the budget (Jalal and Musthafa 2001; Jalal *et al* 2009).

Technocratic elites have risen to senior positions within government, gained control over government programs and budgets, and exercised leverage over government policy because their policy positions have served the interests of and been supported by ‘mobile capital controllers’ such as private financial firms and international donors (Robison 1986; Winters 1996; Rosser 2002).⁵ Broadly speaking, mobile capital controllers have favoured neoliberal policy settings, particularly in relation to economic policy but also social (including education) policy (Winters 1996; Pincus and Winters 2002; Torres and Schugurensky 2002; Klees 2012). When adopted, the technocrats’ economic and social policies have often been successful in stimulating new flows of private capital and foreign aid. With regards to teacher management reform specifically, the technocrats have worked closely with foreign donors engaged in Indonesia’s education sector, especially the World Bank. In addition to funding a series of projects focused on these issues, these donors have also carried out extensive related analytical

⁵ We follow Winters (1996) in our use of the term ‘mobile capital controllers’. Winters (1996: 5) defines mobile capital controllers as ‘the actors who control capital and invest it.’ Noting that ‘in many instances those who own capital do not control it in any meaningful way,’ he points to fund managers at US pension funds and officials at international donor organisations such as the World Bank as examples of such actors.

work (see, for instance, World Bank 2010a; 2010b; 2015; Al Samarrai *et al* 2012; and USAID Prioritas 2014; 2015).

Otherwise, however, the technocrats have lacked a significant support base. In contrast to many other domestic political actors, they have lacked the ability to mobilize large numbers of people for mass action to promote their policies or capture the state apparatus through the electoral process. They have also drawn little support from the domestic business community. This problem has been particularly pronounced in relation to teacher management reform. Indonesian businesses and their representative organizations (such as the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce, KADIN, and the Indonesian Employers Association, APINDO) have been largely ‘silent’ on education issues (Guharoy 2008), preferring to focus their lobbying efforts instead on trying to promote more flexible labor regulations and secure government largesse.⁶

3.2 Predatory Political and Bureaucratic Elites

Predatory political and bureaucratic elites are state officials who occupy senior positions in the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government at either the national or local levels and who—in contrast to technocratic elites—are driven primarily by rent-seeking and political agendas rather than a desire to promote policy reform (Robison and Hadiz 2004). Such officials have generally enriched themselves and their allies or mobilized resources for patronage purposes, favoured institutions, and pet projects by allocating government contracts, licenses, subsidies, and concessions to domestic and foreign business groups in exchange for kickbacks

⁶ It is unclear how exceptional Indonesia’s domestic business community is in this respect. Drawing on Latin American evidence, Tendler (2002) has argued that domestic businesses in developing countries typically ‘fear’ education because it can reduce the pool of potential employees willing to work as unskilled labour, lead to out migration and reduce national comparative advantage by pushing up wages. However, Kosack (2009) has presented evidence to suggest that domestic businesses in these countries will promote educational development when they require large numbers of skilled workers to grow their businesses. He cites Taiwan as an example in this respect.

or to business groups that are owned by close personal friends or family members (Robison 1986; Rosser 2002). Because they have exploited their political and bureaucratic authority to build corporate wealth, they have, like the technocrats, had an interest in policies that serve to promote economic development. But, in their case, this has often translated into proposals for state intervention that provides special deals for well-connected business groups rather than market reform.

Predatory political and bureaucratic elites have had important interests at stake with regards to teacher management. Firstly, teacher management has represented a way in which they have enriched themselves and their allies or mobilized resources for patronage purposes, favoured institutions and pet projects. Central government officials have had control over the number and type of teacher positions, enabling them to do corrupt deals with regional governments over how these positions are allocated between regions.⁷ Likewise, regional government officials have had control over teacher appointments, enabling them to sell teacher and school principal positions to the highest bidder or, alternatively, appoint friends, family members and political allies to such positions⁸ (*Kompas* 2002a) and, either way, gain control over school-level rent-seeking opportunities. Predatory elites have also been able to generate funds for pet projects and patronage purposes through levies on teachers' salaries, the latter generally being by far

⁷ Interviews with anti-corruption activists, Jakarta, May 2015.

⁸ The main constraints in this respect have been regulatory requirements for teachers to hold minimum academic qualifications and the bureaucratic principle of 'linearity'. The minimum academic qualifications required to be a teacher have been steadily ratcheted up over time. For instance, primary school teachers were required to hold the equivalent of a high school diploma during the late 1970s and early 1980 whereas, since the passage of the 2005 Teachers and Lecturers law, they have been required to hold a bachelor degree (S1) (Jalal *et al* 2009: 9, 19, 24). Linearity dictates that bureaucratic positions must go to people with relevant sectoral training—hence, the national education ministry and local education agencies are full of academics and/or teachers; the national health ministry and local health agencies are full of doctors, nurses and public health specialists; and so on. In some cases, it has been possible for individuals to circumvent these requirements by forging academic qualifications, something that media reports suggest was widespread and had a particular impact on teacher recruitment in the 1970s and 1980s (*Kompas* 1977; 1978; and 1989).

the largest single item of expenditure in national and local education budgets (*Kompas* 1992; 2002b).

Secondly, by cultivating patronage networks through teacher management decisions, these elites have also been able to build political support bases, mobilize votes during elections, and exercise political control (Heyward *et al* 2017: 257). The recruitment of additional teachers, increases in their pay, and offers of promotion or transfer to more lucrative roles (or correspondingly threats of demotion or transfer to less lucrative roles) has been a way for incumbent or aspiring politicians to secure political support within the school system (Ilfiyah *et al* 2015; Pierskalla and Sacks 2015). As leading figures within local communities (especially in rural, remote, and/or poor areas), teachers have been able to exercise some influence over how people in their communities vote at election time, making their support a potentially valuable asset. As the individuals responsible for delivering school curricula related to *Pancasila* (the state ideology) and more recently citizenship and behavior, teachers have also played a crucial role in ensuring Indonesian students and their families remain loyal to the state (Leigh 1998). To the extent that such practices have worked against educational quality and equity and fiscal prudence, they have been at odds with the technocratic agenda.

In pursuing their interests, predatory political and bureaucratic elites have been able to take advantage of the fact that they have occupied the state apparatus including institutions such as the Ministry for the Empowerment of the State Apparatus (MenPAN) (which has been the central government organ responsible for determining the number and type of new civil servant teacher positions awarded to regions) and various regional government bodies such as education agencies (*Dinas Pendidikan*), civil service agencies (BKD), and Advisory Boards for

Position and Rank (*Baperjakat*) (which have been the bodies responsible for hiring, transfer, and promotion decisions).

3.3 Teachers and their Representative Organisations

Indonesian teachers fall into two broad groups: i) civil servant teachers (*guru PNS*) and honorary teachers (*guru honor*). The former hold permanent positions and receive relatively good salaries and pension benefits compared to *guru honor*. They are also virtually un-sackable. The vast majority are found in public schools. Ambitious and successful *guru PNS* have a clear career path ahead of them that entails promotion to school principal (*kepala sekolah*), supervisor (*pengawas*), and then bureaucratic positions in the local education agency (*dinas pendidikan*), all the while retaining civil servant status.⁹ Those who make it through to head of the local education agency are then well-placed to run for district head or mayor. *Guru honor*, by contrast, are casually employed and do not have civil servant status. Most are employed directly by schools out of School Operational Assistance (BOS) grants¹⁰ transferred from the central government but some are employed by regional governments (the latter being referred to as *guru honor daerah* or *guru honda*). There would appear to be no consistency in the amounts that *guru honor* are paid or the basis on which they are paid with some being paid by the hour, others by the day, and other again a flat rate per month regardless of hours worked.¹¹ In contrast to *guru PNS*, honorary teachers have no clear career path ahead of them: without civil

⁹ It appears possible for teachers to skip over some rungs in this career ladder. One teacher we interviewed had been promoted to district education agency head directly from a school principal position. An anonymous reviewer advised us that supervisor positions are often regarded as unattractive because they attract few benefits and may be unattractive because of the travel involved (particularly to women with children), giving teachers an incentive to avoid this rung in particular, if possible.

¹⁰ The BOS program was introduced in 2004 to promote universal free basic education and school-based management by providing funds directly to government and private primary and junior secondary schools on a per pupil basis to cover 'operational' costs such as those related to the registration of new students, the purchase of textbooks, the production of report cards, stationery, teacher development and training, remedial teaching programmes, and examinations. Schools have been allowed to spend a certain proportion of these funds on hiring *guru honor*.

¹¹ Interviews with various school principals and teachers, June–August 2015. See also Padmawati (2010: 20).

servant status, they cannot be promoted to school principal or supervisory positions, or administrative positions in the local education agency.

Teacher management reform has presented a threat to both sets of teachers to the extent that it has entailed a possible reduction in teacher numbers, relocation to less desirable/more remote schools, increased workloads, fewer promotion opportunities, greater accountability with regards to teaching quality, and reductions in salary and conditions. For *guru honor* specifically, it has potentially entailed reduced work opportunities and/or the scope for them to upgrade to civil servant status. Where rewards have been offered to teachers who are subject to reform initiatives—for instance, access to new allowances—their incentives can be different. But in the absence of such rewards, teacher management reform has essentially been a threat rather than an opportunity.

In contesting teacher management reform, teachers have been severely constrained by the fact that they do not occupy positions of authority in the state apparatus. During the New Order period, they were also constrained by authoritarian controls on civil society activism and independent organization. During the freer political climate of the post-New Order period, they have had a number of avenues of protest available to them. These have included being able to engage in public debate over policy issues and organize for collective action through representative organisations . Other avenues of protest have included exploiting teachers' personal social and political networks to directly lobby local political and bureaucratic elites in relation to specific teacher transfer, promotion or other decisions; and challenging such decisions in court (Rosser and Fahmi 2016).

3.4 NGOs and Parent Groups

Two other groups of actors that have played a role in struggles over teacher management reform in Indonesia—albeit relatively minor roles—are NGOs and parents. A number of Indonesian NGOs have been active in challenging the perceived ‘privatisation’ or ‘commercialisation’ (and more generally the neo-liberalisation) of education in recent years in particular through the courts. Their principal focus has been government policies aimed at corporatizing public schools and higher education institutions, facilitating the entry of foreign higher educational institutions into Indonesia, and providing for a high stakes national exam (Rosser and Curnow 2014; Rosser 2015; 2016). But few NGOs have engaged with debates about teacher management specifically. In 2015, Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), one of the country’s most prominent NGOs and one active in the education sector, published the results of a USAID-funded study that i) acknowledged the need for improvement in teacher quality and distribution although not necessarily reductions in teacher numbers; and ii) lambasted the government for failing to implement its policies in this area (Ilfiyah *et al* 2015). As we will see below, it was also involved along with teacher groups, an educational stakeholder group, and other NGOs in efforts to stymie government efforts to link teachers’ pay rises to test results on a competency-based test. But in general such interventions have been rare.

For their part, parents of schoolchildren (hereafter simply ‘parents’) have played a similarly modest role. Parents in Indonesia are poorly organized: few parent representative groups exist and those that do have typically been formed to influence decision-making within particular schools in affluent areas. They have consequently been concerned with the particular problems of school management in these areas rather than schools in general. The principal exception in this respect are groups such as the Education Coalition and Education Forum that bring together

a broad set of education stakeholders including some parents.¹² Other mechanisms of potential parental influence have included school committees (*komite sekolah*) and district-level Education Boards (*Dewan Pendidikan*). But the former have generally been dominated by school principals while the latter have generally been dominated by local political and bureaucratic elites and/or parents from middle class backgrounds (Rosser and Joshi 2013: 184; Rosser and Sulistiyanto 2013). Both are typically poorly funded and sometimes inactive. Combined together, these factors have limited the scope for genuine involvement of parents in decision-making, particularly poor parents, and, along with limited NGO activity, severely constrained citizen demand for change. Parents have also played a role in relation to teacher management to the extent that they have constituted a resource upon which individual teachers have drawn in seeking to influence transfer and promotion decisions. But in this respect, they have tended to act in a way that has worked against teacher management reform rather than for it.

4. The Political Economy of Teacher Management Under the New Order

Under the New Order, Indonesian politics was dominated by predatory military and bureaucratic officials, well-connected domestic and foreign business conglomerates, and mobile capital controllers. Following a military coup in 1965, the leaders of the Indonesian military gained control over the state apparatus by emasculating the political parties, reducing the national parliament to a rubber stamp, infiltrating the bureaucracy, and subordinating the judiciary to political and bureaucratic authority. At the same time, they forged an alliance with controllers of mobile capital enabling them to overcome a severe economic crisis in the late

¹² The Education Coalition and Education Forum are Jakarta-based networks of individuals and organisations concerned about education. The dominant elements in both networks are activists from independent teacher representative organisations, parent groups, and NGOs. The Education Coalition is closely aligned with ICW while the Education Forum has generally worked in collaboration with the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute (LBH Jakarta), a prominent human rights organisation (Rosser 2015: 202-204).

1960s and a subsequent crisis in the mid-1980s. As part of this process, they accepted foreign aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the country's main bilateral donors, and granted broad authority over macroeconomic and fiscal policy to the so-called 'Berkeley Mafia', a group of liberal technocrats. Over subsequent decades, this ruling coalition expanded to include major domestic business conglomerates which emerged, in most cases, due to their close political ties and consequent privileged access to state credit, facilities and licenses (Robison, 1986; Winters, 1996; Rosser 2002; Robison and Hadiz, 2004). By contrast, popular forces—such as university students, labour and NGO activists—played little role in policy-making and implementation, reflecting the New Order's strategy of 'disorganising' civil society (Robison and Hadiz 2004). To legitimize its rule, the New Order argued that authoritarian government was necessary to promote 'development' understood primarily in terms of economic growth and stability and, to a lesser extent, fulfilment of economic and social rights.

Consistent with this political setting, the New Order pursued an approach to education policy that prioritised improved access to education, especially basic education, over educational quality. The New Order built thousands of new schools and recruited hundreds of thousands of new teachers particularly during the oil boom years of the mid- to late 1970s and early 1980s when it was awash with petrodollars and consequently had the fiscal space to fund this expansion (Prawiro 1998: 176-181). But the New Order invested little in ensuring that teachers had the required pedagogical skills and subject knowledge and faced incentives to be effective educators.

At the same time, it incorporated schools, particularly public schools, into the larger 'franchise' structure that characterized its rule, the key feature of which was the purchase of government

positions in exchange for access to the rents they could generate (McLeod 2000; Rosser and Joshi 2013). This in turn inserted teachers into the networks of corruption and patronage that permeated the state apparatus as both generators and beneficiaries of the rents that education budgets and teaching positions made available. The New Order also used schools as vehicles for mobilizing votes at election time and exercising political control (Schiller 1999: 11; Bjork 2003: 192-193). The school system was one of few national institutional structures that reached all the way down to the village level, making it an extremely important link between political and bureaucratic elites and the masses. The New Order required *guru PNS* (like other civil servants) to support Golkar, the New Order's electoral vehicle; display 'mono-loyalty' to the state; and take compulsory courses in the state ideology, *Pancasila*. If they failed to perform these responsibilities, they risked demotion or transfer to less attractive schools, particularly in remote areas. The New Order also required teachers to become members of the Indonesian Teachers Union (PGRI), the sole recognized teachers' representative organisation under the New Order. Established in 1945 as part of the nationalist resistance to Dutch rule, the PGRI operated during the New Order period as a corporatist mechanism for controlling teachers rather than one for articulating their collective interests. Its political subordination was made transparent by its incorporation into Golkar in 1970 (*Kompas* 1970). In exchange for its allegiance to the New Order, the New Order gave the PGRI a monopoly on the representation of teachers and the authority to extract fees from teachers' salaries with little or no accountability over use of the funds (Reeve 1985: 328).

One consequence of this situation was a marked growth in teacher numbers as elites sought to expand and consolidate networks of corruption and patronage, mobilise votes and enhance political control as well as promote educational development—or at least improved access to basic education. According to World Bank figures, the total number of primary and secondary

school teachers in Indonesia increased from around 700,000 in 1970 to 1.4 million in 1983.¹³ Another consequence was high absenteeism rates as teachers were permitted to sacrifice their teaching responsibilities to pursue income-earning opportunities outside of school without simultaneously sacrificing their salaries (World Bank 1998: 26-27). A third consequence was a mal-distribution of teachers as political and bureaucratic elites ensured that their friends, family and political allies gained teaching positions at schools in urban areas near their family and social networks. Particularly privileged in this respect were the *sekolah favorit* (popular schools) that schooled children of local government officials and other members of the middle class.

A fourth and final consequence was poor quality teacher training, both pre-service and in-service, with consequent effects for teacher quality. Until 1990, students were able to qualify as primary school teachers by graduating from senior vocational secondary schools known as Teacher Education Schools (SPG). According to Jalal *et al* (2009: 9), these offered low quality training and ‘graduates usually did not meet minimum standards of competency.’ Tertiary teacher training colleges known as IKIP (subsequently LPTK) were better in quality but they still faced serious issues such as underqualified faculty, a rigid curriculum, and inadequate facilities (World Bank 1996: 3-4). Indonesian teachers consequently generally had poor pedagogical skills and weak subject knowledge despite efforts from time to time to enable them to upgrade their academic qualifications.

By the 1980s, the negative impact of this situation on the quality, equity and cost of Indonesia’s education system had become apparent (World Bank 1989: 3), forcing the government to look more seriously at teacher management issues. The result was a series of initiatives during the

¹³ The figures are from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators database.

1980s and 1990s aimed at improving teacher qualifications, pedagogical skills and/or distribution including the First and Second Secondary Education and Management Projects (1984-1990 and 1990-1997 respectively), the Primary School Teacher Development Project (1992-1999) and the Secondary School Teacher Development Project (1996-2002), all of which were funded by the World Bank. In the end, however, these initiatives proved insufficient to fundamentally improve the quality of Indonesia's teachers, improve their distribution, or ensure their numbers matched the country's genuine need for teachers. Without the requisite political will to improve teacher quality and promote a more efficient use of teacher resources, a reflection of the underlying configuration of power and interest, there was little scope for significant change.

5. The Political Economy of Teacher Management in the Post-New Order Period

The Asian economic crisis in 1997 and demise of the New Order regime in 1998 produced a political context that was slightly more conducive to teacher management reform. By precipitating widespread corporate bankruptcy, the crisis undermined the economic base of predatory elites and their corporate clients. By simultaneously increasing the country's public debt and undermining sources of government revenue, it forced the government to negotiate a rescue package with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and accept increased aid. Both these factors enhanced the structural power of donors, at least for the period of the crisis and its immediate aftermath. While the IMF package did not address education policy issues beyond the introduction of new social safety net programs, it created an environment in which government technocrats and donors were able to exercise much greater leverage over education policy than they had before.

In this context, government technocrats, particularly in the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC)¹⁴, pushed hard for teacher management reform, leveraging the support of the World Bank and other members of the donor community. In September 1998, the Bank published a major report on Indonesia's education system arguing that: 'A key part of quality improvement is teachers—having them equitably distributed, giving them appropriate incentives, and ensuring they are adequately trained' (World Bank 1998: x). Immediately afterward, it then co-funded with Bappenas the establishment of a series of Task Forces to prepare reports on key education policy issues including teacher management (Jalal and Musthafa 2001). These Task Forces brought together a range of key stakeholders including Bappenas officials, MoEC officials, education academics and representatives of the PGRI. Over the next few years, donors provided loans and grants to the Indonesian government to support a series of projects related to teacher management reform.¹⁵

However, in seeking to promote reform, government technocrats and their allies in the donor community were constrained by four factors. The first was the fact that they had little direct authority over the implementation of teacher management policy. Under the New Order, regional governments already had primary responsibility for implementing teacher management policy notwithstanding the centralized nature of New Order rule and despite an effort in the early 1990s by the national Department of Education and Culture to seize that responsibility for itself (King 1995: 82-84). The introduction of new decentralization laws in 1999 and their implementation in 2001 consolidated the role of regional governments in this

¹⁴ The name of this Ministry has changed a number of times since the fall of the New Order reflecting changes in the institutional location of the culture portfolio. For the sake of simplicity, we refer to it as MoEC throughout the paper.

¹⁵ These included Bermutu, Kinerja, Prioritas and Prodep. See Rosser and Fahmi (2016: 24-25) for a brief description.

respect by granting them formal authority over education policy. Central government technocrats were accordingly forced to rely, by and large, on central government policy instruments that established incentives for regional governments to act in desired ways rather than direct control over implementation. The central government's lack of direct control over teacher management, however, severely constrained government technocrats' ability to promote change.

The second constraint was the continued political dominance during the post-New Order period of predatory political and bureaucratic officials and their corporate clients. As Vedi Hadiz (2003, 593) among others has argued, these elements were 'able to reinvent themselves through new alliances and vehicles' such as political parties with the result that they have maintained instrumental control over the state apparatus notwithstanding the shift to a more democratic political system. The result was that, at both national and regional levels, long-standing patronage and political networks remained an entrenched feature of governance. In the education sector, for instance, senior staff at MoEC and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) (which has had responsibility for managing religious schools) continued to be recruited largely from among rectors, deans and lecturers at the public universities under these Ministries' control, particularly those who had civil servant status¹⁶ and are members of Muhammadiyah or Nahdatul Ulama, the country's largest Islamic organizations, both of which have long been integrated into state-based patronage networks in the education sector. This included in most cases the Ministers themselves (although the appointment of Anies Baswedan, rector of the private Islamic Paramadina University, as Minister in 2014 represented a brief break with this pattern). At the same time, positions in local education agencies continued to

¹⁶ Like principals and teachers in public schools, university managers and lecturers in public universities often have civil servant status.

be awarded to former *guru PNS* who either bought their way into these positions or had close personal connections to more senior officials or members of the political elite; and schools and other local-level educational institutions remained part of the franchise structure of the state as well as mechanisms for mobilizing votes and exercising political control. In short, political and bureaucratic elites nurtured under the New Order continued to have enormous capacity to influence education policy and its implementation and, in the process, undermine technocratic reform initiatives.

The third constraint was the fact that democratization resulted in growing assertiveness by teachers in pursuing their interests, reflecting important changes in teacher representation. In 1998, the PGRI leadership announced that it would withdraw from Golkar and become officially non-partisan in party political terms (*Kompas* 1998). At the local level, it remained closely entwined with government: it remained common, for instance, for senior officials in local education agencies to be elected as head of the district/municipal arm of the PGRI (a pattern established under the New Order). But, at the national level, the PGRI sought to reposition itself as a formally independent institution, enabling it to take a more critical stance *vis-à-vis* government policy (see, for instance, PGRI 2015). At the same time, democratization led to the establishment of independent teacher representative organisations including ones specifically representing *guru honor*. Examples included the Indonesian Independent Teachers' Forum (FGII), the Independent Teachers Action Forum (FAGI), the Indonesian Teachers Union Federation (FSGI), the Indonesian Honorary Employees Community (KTSI), the Honorary Teachers' Communication Forum (FKGH), and the Indonesian Honorary Teachers' Association (IGHI). Claiming a membership of 1.9 million teachers (roughly two-thirds of the total) in the mid-2010s (PGRI nd), the PGRI remained the dominant vehicle for the articulation

of teachers' interests.¹⁷ But the newer representative organisations were very active and vocal, successfully attracting media attention and forging good links to NGOs and associated education activist groups, especially in the major cities. Some also tried to exercise influence by doing deals with local politicians whereby they traded policy support and access to government grants for help in mobilizing votes. This was particularly true of organisations representing *guru honor*.¹⁸

The fourth and final constraint was that democratization opened up new pathways through which teachers could influence policy-making and implementation. The advent of genuinely competitive elections¹⁹ at both the national and local levels, including for executive as well as legislative positions, provided an opportunity for teachers to leverage their electoral importance for advantage. In some cases, their lobbying entailed collective action by teacher representative organizations while in others it was more individualized in nature and tied to specific decisions related to, for instance, teacher transfers. In the latter cases, teachers were able to make use of their respective social and political networks—for instance, family, friendship, or clan relationships to political and bureaucratic figures—and, in some instances, the support of school communities.²⁰ Finally, democratization led to increased use of judicial pathways for challenging government decisions whether related to policy or implementation. At the local level, State Administrative Courts (PTUN)—which have authority to rule on the legality of administrative decisions including ones related to matters such as teacher transfers and the tenure of school principals—was the primary option in this respect. Taking matters to court

¹⁷ By contrast, the FSGI, for instance, reportedly had 3,000 members (Mustakim 2015).

¹⁸ Interviews with representatives of an organisation representing *guru honor*, May 2015.

¹⁹ This competition has typically been between different sections of the elite, although in some cases there is evidence of a more inclusive politics (see, for instance Mietzner 2013).

²⁰ Interview with the chairperson of a regional parliament, August 2015.

was a last resort for teachers but it was used or threatened in some cases (Rosser and Fahmi 2016: 37, 43).

The overall effect of this political context was to severely limit the extent to which the technocrats and their donor supporters were able to promote teacher management reform as we will see in detail below. The remainder of this section focuses on the political dynamics and outcomes in three specific policy areas: teacher numbers and cost, teacher certification, and teacher distribution.

5.1 Specific Issues

Technocrats and donors had some degree of success in reigning in rapid growth in teacher numbers and cost. The post-New Order period witnessed a massive increase in government spending on teachers' salaries as a result of strong growth in recruitment of teachers at all levels of the school system; large increases in teacher pay following the introduction of a new certification program in the late 2000s (see below); and the conversion of large numbers of *guru honor* into *guru PNS* (World Bank 2013: 44-45). This outcome reflected in part changes to the country's 1945 Constitution requiring governments at all levels to spend 20 percent of their respective budgets on education and incentives created by the system of central government transfers to the regions under decentralization (Lewis and Smoke 2017; McLeod 2017). But it was also consistent with the interests of predatory political and bureaucratic elites at both the central and regional levels in generating rent-seeking opportunities and building patronage and political networks as well as, of course, the interests of teachers themselves in increased pay.

With the fiscal implications of these policies becoming increasingly widely recognized, technocratic officials were able to secure a moratorium on new civil service appointments in 2011 in regions where government spending on salaries exceeded 50 percent of the regional government budget. In districts that were subject to the moratorium, the moratorium in turn appeared to produce a sharp reduction in the number of *guru PNS* making these districts more reliant upon *guru honor* to deliver the required number of classes, leading in some cases to concerns about a looming ‘teacher crisis’ (JPNN 2016). The PGRI made similar claims about a teacher crisis, arguing forcefully that the country was facing a severe teacher shortage (PGRI 2015; Kompas 2015a).²¹

Representatives of some regional governments pushed back against the moratorium suggesting that it was too blunt an instrument for trying to reduce the cost of teachers’ salaries (Boediwardhana 2011). The PGRI claimed that the moratorium breached the 2005 Teachers and Lecturers Law to the extent that the latter required the government to fulfill teachers’ needs including in terms of overall numbers (Kompas 2015a). Finally, organizations representing *guru honor* continued to organize regular demonstrations at both local sites and in Jakarta demanding that these teachers get a better deal including conversion to PNS status. In some regions, the result was the introduction of new allowances for *guru honor*—in one, for instance, the provincial government introduced a new monthly allowance for certain *guru honor* of Rp.50,000.²²

But, at the time of writing (June 2017), the central government had so far refused to budge on the moratorium, having little room to manoeuvre in the context of slowing economic growth

²¹ As noted earlier, much other analysis suggests that Indonesia has too many, not too few, teachers. See, for instance, Heyward *et al* (2017: 245).

²² This policy has in turn triggered demands from *guru honor* appointed by school principals to have their status changed to *guru honda*. Interview with a PGRI activist representing honorary teachers, August 2015.

and a tight budget. In fact, it had lowered the level at which the moratorium became effective from 50 to 40 percent of the regional government budget. It had also decided to reduce the proportion of BOS funds that could be used to employ *guru honor* from 20 percent to 15 percent, making it harder for schools to continue employing honorary staff to replace lost *guru PNS*.

In other areas of reform, however, technocrats and donors made relatively little headway. This was the case, for instance, in relation to teacher quality. Their principal strategy for improving teacher quality was to try to improve the skills and commitment of existing teachers through a new certification program linking teachers' salaries to their qualifications, competencies, and workloads. The World Bank-Bappenas Task Force that addressed teacher management issues in the late 1990s explicitly recommended that the government link future pay raises for teachers to 'an evaluation of professional criteria which connect directly with professional development, new skill acquisition, orientation change and learning practice, and collaboration for self-development' (Jalal and Mustafa 2001: 152). Coinciding with demands by the PGRI for new regulations providing for the welfare and protection of teachers (which it saw as a crucial step towards securing increased remuneration for teachers), technocratic efforts to promote improved teacher quality led to the passage of Law 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers. This law made it compulsory for Indonesian teachers to be certified and, in conjunction with a series of subsequent government regulations, specified the conditions under which they would be deemed to meet certification requirements and receive an associated professional allowance equal to teachers' base salary, effectively doubling their income.

Led by Fasli Jalal, a prominent technocrat within MoEC, and with World Bank support, a team of MoEC officials developed a model for assessing teacher competence. They determined that

teachers would be deemed competent if they: i) held the equivalent of a four year higher education degree (S1); ii) taught a minimum 24 periods per week; and iii) could demonstrate competence in teaching as assessed in the classroom by trained assessors and through a program of individualized in-service training.²³

This model ran up against opposition from the teacher representative organisations which saw the competency tests as a threat to increased pay for many of their members—something they in turn saw as a ‘right’. Led by the PGRI, they lobbied the national parliament—which had control over the budget for implementation of the competency tests—to have this element of the model thrown out, presumably threatening to mobilize the teacher vote against politicians who stood in their way. The result was a compromise whereby teacher competence was assessed in two stages. In the first stage, teachers prepared a portfolio of achievement comprising documents such as personal references, publications, certificates of attendance at in-service courses, and model lesson plans. These were then to be evaluated by local teacher education institutions selected by MoEC. Teachers whose portfolios were approved proceeded directly to certification. In the second stage, teachers whose portfolios were not approved were required to attend a 90-hour training program and assessed on its content. Teachers who passed the associated test then proceeded to certification as well (Chang *et al* 2014: 30).

The compromise system proved to be problematic in practice as corrupt behavior on the part of teachers, education agency officials, and staff at teacher education institutions undermined the assessment of portfolios and in the 90-hour training program. Teachers were soon able to buy portfolios on the street while virtually all participants passed the 90-hour program. In response, the central government changed the certification process so that the portfolio assessment

²³ Interview with an informed source, January 2013.

became a minor component and a 90 hour program of professional development became the principal pathway to certification. But this had little impact on pass rates.²⁴ Not surprisingly, numerous studies of the impact of the certification program have indicated that it led to little, if any, improvement in teacher subject knowledge or pedagogical skills or student learning (Chang *et al* 2014; World Bank 2015).

The central government subsequently introduced a Competency Test for teachers (*Uji Kompetensi Guru*) in 2012 aimed at assessing teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Conducted using multiple choice questions and done in part on-line, the results have provided further evidence of low teacher quality. Of 1.6 million teachers assessed in 2015, 1.3 million gained a score of below 60 on a scale from 0-100 (*Kompas* 2015b). The teacher representative organisations, including the PGRI, strongly opposed this test, apparently fearing that it would eventually be incorporated into the certification process in some way (Sugiharto 2012). The FSGI, supported by the FGII, ICW, LBH Jakarta and the Education Coalition, even went to the point of trying to challenge the test *via* a judicial review request in the Supreme Court (Liputan6.com 2012). The FSGI's Retno Listyarti has likened the Competency Test to 'malpractice' arguing that implementation of the test was often full of errors (e.g. incomplete questions, typographical errors, inappropriate questions given teacher's field of expertise) and that some teachers had to leave their classes and bear significant costs simply to take the tests (Ayuningtias 2012). In the face of such concerted resistance and with fiscal sustainability issues being addressed through the moratorium, the central government balked at incorporating the test into the certification process.

²⁴ Interview with an informed source, January 2013. See also World Bank (2015: 15).

Teachers representative organisations also expressed concern about the way in which the certification program was administered, noting many districts were slow in paying the professional allowance to teachers and that some teachers faced difficulty in meeting the 24 teaching periods per week requirement (Suryahadi and Sanbodho 2012). But with the program generating huge unconditional pay rises for teachers, they staunchly defended it, framing the pay rises as essential for improved educational quality and a matter of teachers' rights (PGRI 2015). In this position, they received strong support from regional political and bureaucratic elites, especially the leadership of local education agencies, for whom the pay rises represented an opportunity to lubricate networks of corruption and patronage.²⁵

Another area in which the technocrats and donors made little headway in promoting reform was teacher distribution. To address this problem, the Education Committee chaired by Vice-President Boediono, a former economics professor and a prominent technocrat, agreed that five central government ministers (the Minister of National Education, the State Minister for the Empowerment of the State Apparatus and Bureaucratic Reform, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Religious Affairs), all of whom were represented on the Education Committee, should issue a joint regulation instructing regional governments to redistribute teachers more equitably (*Kompas* 2010). Issued in 2011, the Five Ministerial Decree, as the regulation has become known, threatened regional governments with a range of sanctions if they did not comply. These included the withdrawal, in part or full, of education funding to regional governments; delays in the granting of new civil service teacher positions to regional governments; and delays in the provision of 'balancing funds' (*dana perimbangan*) to regional governments.²⁶

²⁵ Interviews with local education agency officials, May-August 2015.

²⁶ 'Balancing funds' are funds provided by the central government transfers to regional governments to enable the latter to carry out their functions under decentralization. They consist of general allocation funds (DAU), DAK, and Revenue Sharing Funds.

This regulation had little effect at the local level: as various commentators have noted, regional governments took little action in response (Ilfiyah *et al* 2015; *Republika* 2014). This does not appear to have been because of a lack of technical capacity at the local level to manage teacher redistribution. Rather, the lack of action appears to have been in part because regional governments did not see the threats contained in the regulation as credible—one of our informants noted that they would be disastrous if implemented²⁷—and in part, because of the political challenges that teacher redistribution entailed. In the few cases where local governments have endeavoured to promote teacher redistribution, there has been significant push-back from teachers involving lobbying of local politicians, especially members of the DPRD and regional executives and, in at least one case, an attempt to challenge redistribution in the courts (Rosser and Fahmi 2016: 38-44).

6. Conclusion

This paper has explained the origins of Indonesia's teacher management problems, identified the political obstacles to teacher management reform, and specified the political conditions under which the country has made progress in promoting reform. It has argued that the country's teacher management problems have their origins in the way in which political and bureaucratic elites have for decades used the school system to accumulate resources, distribute patronage, mobilize political support, and exercise political control. Under this system of school management, teachers have been incorporated into patronage and political networks the logic of which has been to position them as clients, vote mobilizers, and agents of political control and rather than agents of education and equity. While government technocrats and their donor supporters have endeavored to promote a range of teacher management reforms

²⁷ Interview with a Regional Secretary (*Sekda*), August 2015.

embodying an alternative logic—namely, improving educational outcomes with maximum budgetary efficiency—they have generally failed to have a significant impact in the face of fierce if often subterranean political resistance from predatory elites, teachers and, to a lesser extent, NGOs and parents. In broad terms, they have only had success where they have devised and employed national policy instruments that can effectively discipline local governments and the central government has maintained a commitment to these instruments in the face of this political resistance. This was the case with the moratorium but not the teacher certification program (which was watered down) and the five ministerial decree (which was roundly ignored at the local level).

Indonesia's teaching workforce is undergoing a process of generational change as teachers appointed under the New Order—and, in particular, during the big expansion in the education system during the 1970s and early 1980s—retire and are replaced by younger, better-trained individuals. Recent changes to civil service recruitment processes that reduce the scope for corruption, collusion and nepotism in civil service appointments have the potential to reinforce this trend (Rosser and Fahmi 2016: 32-33). However, the findings here suggest that teacher management reform will remain a difficult project in the future with obvious negative implications for student learning.

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