



EuroInsight Institute and Consultancy

MITIGATING SCHOOLING TRANSFER TO INDONESIA

A POLICY BRIEF

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Introduction

This policy brief aims to address the real schooling challenges faced by parents and their children when they return to Indonesia. In the process of students' educational transfer, we identify several ordeals this community has to undergo which vary from procedural and administrative to psychological.

Finding a solution to alleviate the tense complications is imperative and urgent as tens of thousands of Indonesian children temporarily live and study in foreign countries, and at certain moments will return to Indonesia. The students in this category are aged between 6-19 years old and generally sit in the primary and secondary levels of education abroad. These children are part of Indonesia's demographic dividend. Despite the productive manpower bonus in the country is expected to cease in 2041, they belong to the generations that would play pivotal roles when Indonesia celebrate her centennial anniversary in 2045.

We recommend seven policy options to different stakeholders which range from strengthening equivalency system, empowering overseas Indonesian schools (SILNs), affirmative domicile quota, standardizing students transfer administrative requirements, outreaching to principal scholarship providers, support for third culture kids (TCKs) to sound parental planning for their children education while abroad.

Background

The inconveniences emanating from the process of resettlement to Indonesia after living for a few or more years overseas for parents and their dependent children can be intensely challenging. The congested go-home matters and procedures they have to arrange in a restricted period leave simply a meagre segment of this group could manage the undertakings properly. For many, only after struggling attempts, could complete the process. Among a segment of parents with children of the above-mentioned category, seeking appropriate schools and enrolment are part of the home-return conundrum.

By a prudent assumption, about 30.000 dependent Indonesian children are studying abroad. From this number, nearly 3.000 are the children of graduate students. Compared to Indonesia's total number of registered students at the primary and secondary levels of education of around 44.4 millions, the figure in question is minuscule (0.007%).

Constitutionally speaking, however, all Indonesian citizens have the right to receive education and are obliged to complete basic education. Within this normative understanding, the education of every individual Indonesian child counts and matters, let alone the future destiny of approximately 3.000 children.

Another factor that gives weight to addressing this issue is that a large number of the parents – in the case of domiciling in developed nations – who fall into this category are employees of the government sectors such as diplomats, lecturers, researchers, etc. These groups are providers of public services and their dispatch overseas is typically part of Indonesia's national interests.

The complexity surrounding the transfer of students from abroad to schools in Indonesia involves multilevel government agencies and other stakeholders or affected parties.

Problem Statement

The first challenge for student schooling transfer to Indonesia concerns the equivalency of **academic grading systems, education levels and diploma recognition**. It depends on which country the postings are and the parents' spending power, but their likely option is enrolling their children on local schools as they are located nearby, and the tuition fees are typically more affordable than the international ones. The local schools are highly diverse in terms of education philosophy and objectives, standards, curricula, diplomas and grading systems.

Fortunately, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Mendikbudristek) in Jakarta has commissioned E-Layanan to provide services in diploma recognition for Indonesian children who have never had an Indonesian diploma or national student number. It also nurtures comparable services for foreigners who wish to pursue education in Indonesia. The applications can be made online, free of charge, and the decisions are issued within five working days on the condition that the applications are complete.

The **zoning policy for accepting new students oftentimes could not accommodate the returning students due to the classroom capacity**. As their return is not always during the admission period, the schools in their zones are already full. The parents then have to enrol their children at schools farther away from home or at schools of lower quality. Some got downgraded to lower class(es).

The next challenge is the **dissimilar administrative requirements** in Indonesia. Some schools apply rather relaxed administrative requirements while others utilise tighter procedures.

An alternative to alleviate this transfer hindrance is to enrol the children in SILNs. At present, around 27.000 students are enrolled in the SILNs all over the globe. For students studying at SILNs, the transfer process is usually seamless as the curricula, system and standards correspond. Nevertheless, not all children live in a country where an Indonesian school exists. Throughout Europe, after the closure of the Indonesian School of Belgrade and the Indonesian School of Moscow, only the Indonesian School of The Hague (SIDH) is still standing. To expand educational service to Indonesian children living away from Wassenaar, next to the regular programme, since 2008 SIDH has catered for a distance learning programme (PJJ). It is the first SILN that opened this mode of education programme.

Currently, some other SILNs are mandated by Mendikbudristek to nurture distance learning programmes for Indonesian children. The Republic Indonesian School in Tokyo's distance learning programme covers the East Asia region, the Indonesian School of Kuala Lumpur and Indonesian School of Kinabalu for Malaysia and Southeast Asia region, the Indonesian School of Riyadh is for West Asia and the Middle East regions, and SIDH to cover Europe and Africa.

At SIDH, the PJJ programme is supplementary so that the students are required to enrol at local or international schools due to the compulsory education law in their countries of domicile and where home-schooling is unrecognized. Despite its complementary nature, the PJJ programme would be an ideal choice for parents and children.

However, only **a segment of parents are aware of the existence and versatility of SILNs** which can help prevent the problematic student transfer to Indonesia. In the pre-departure orientation for diplomats and legates, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs usually circulates information on SILNs as options for school-aged children. Nevertheless, the graduate students or expats are definitely beyond this diplomatic grouping.

The next catch shifts from administrative to rather **psychological** namely concerning the third culture kid (TCK). The returning children who had earlier moved from one to another country or spent several years living in foreign countries may experience an identity dilemma. They do not feel a strong sense of belonging to any certain identity. They have to learn and adapt to – sometimes repeatedly – different cultures and environments. Besides interaction and communication challenges, most of these kids have to struggle to cope with the Indonesian language.

When their posting draws near, many parents become overwhelmed with a multitude of matters. In such precarious situation, the **issue on schooling transfer of their children to Indonesia can be overlooked** and it may create a clog for an orderly educational transfer of their children.

Policy Options and Recommendations

Enhancing E-Layanan and Educational Recognition

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Irrespective of the good service and procedure implemented by the E-Layanan at present, for accurate and fair equivalence decisions, it is imperative for the agency to learn, adapt and improve. The enhancement should include continuous monitoring and updating the equivalence systems based on the dynamics of educational standards and indicators in the countries where the children studied. Currently, E-Layanan recognizes the level of the diploma; while students' year/class placement is left to the school leaders to decide. Admission to SIDH from non-Indonesian education, for instance, new student need to show a declaration of class/year level from the Education and Cultural Attaché or Information and Cultural Function of corresponding Indonesian embassies. This latter procedure needs further scrutiny to evade entanglement of vested interests and to maintain the principle of fairness as in certain countries in Europe having different school levelling systems and the declaration can be made that the students from Indonesia can easily skip class(es) at SILNs, or returning from foreign schools to Indonesia. In other cases, the students were children of the officials/subordinates who issued the declarations.

Empowering SILNs

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The existence of SILNs is to provide Indonesian education, language and culture to Indonesian children abroad. Beyond that SILNs also reflect Indonesia's projection of soft-policy influence and facilitating students schooling transfer to Indonesian. Empowering and maintaining the existing SILNs should be imperative as setting up a new SILN is not an easy venture.

Affirmative Zoning Policy for Returning Students

3

To assure bench availability for returning students at public schools in their zone of domicile, Mendikbudristek should lay down an affirmative zoning policy for this category of pupils, that can be implemented by relevant agencies at the provincial/regency/district levels. Parents should initiate and maintain effective communications with public schools in their zone in Indonesia to arrange the availability of seat for their children.

Standardising/Simplifying Administrative Requirements

4

Standardising and simplifying the administrative requirements will create uniformity and ease student transfer. This action falls under the authority of Mendikbudristek and the relevant agencies at the provincial, regency and district administration levels to coordinate the implementation with the schools.

Communications with Major Scholarship Providers

5

Nowadays, graduate students are predominantly funded by Indonesia's Endowment Fund for Education Agency (LPDP) and other scholarship agencies. Working together with SILNs and LPDP, Mendikbudristek should disseminate to the awardees with school-aged children the information on and the benefits of enrolling their children at SILNs, either in regular or distance learning programmes. Meanwhile, the attentive expats who care about their children's education abroad would reach out to the proper SILNs. Simultaneously, on the other hand, to increase the visibility, SILNs should proactively promote their school services and programmes through the social media of of relevant niche/segment of these potential communities.

Facility and Support for TCKs

6

Most of the TCKs would typically experience of foreignness or difficulty to connect to either culture. These kids need transition period to reconnect with Indonesianness including the language, norms and values. The accepting schools should provide sufficient attention and support to these TCKs during their adaptation and recoupling period.

Solid Parental Planning for Children Education

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Moving and living temporarily overseas with children is a demanding endeavour. The parents are strongly advised to devise steady, realistic and strategic educational planning for their children as from the pre-departure, while abroad to the subsequent transfer to Indonesia at the end of their assignment. Excellent planning could accordingly prevent later headache during the injury time.

Concluding Remark

We have occasionally heard gripes from our diplomats on the transfer intricacies of their children to schools in Indonesia. Similar reports of difficulty were also heard among graduate students with children. Despite schooling being a matter of parents' choice, many became aware of the challenges until the last moments. Due to limited options, many children continued their studies in Indonesia but to a lower class(es) or had to enrol at private or far away schools. At the same time, parents were also normally pressured with thick administrative paperwork in completing the transfer.

The schooling transfer issue of Indonesian children to Indonesia has become a significant determinant. It sets the fate of around 3.000 Indonesian children hang in the balance. If we cannot address to solve the matter once and for all now, at least by implementing the policy options and recommendations we can expect to gradually ease the tension.

Considering the depth of the entanglements, solution should be bear through shared responsibility of all involved actors viz. the Mendikbudristek, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, related agencies within the regional governments, schools and parents. Since these transfer complexities are real facts from the field, this brief does not only recommend policy options, but also to democratise the policy making process and underline the importance of active interaction between bottom-up and top-down models in decision-making. We therefore courteously call for the policymakers and stakeholders to take measures and action with reference to the recommended policy options.