

Adaptation of Educational Quality Policy: An Implementation Study of Online Learning and Regional Development Implications

Zulkifli Musthan¹, Faizah Binti Awad², Jalaluddin Rum³,
Abdul Kadir⁴, Samrin⁵, Ahmadi⁶, Sarjaniah Zur⁷

Islamic Education, IAIN Kendari, Indonesia^{1,5,7}

Islamic Guidance and Counseling, IAIN Kendari, Indonesia²

Sharia Economics, IAIN Kendari, Indonesia³

Science Education, IAIN Kendari, Indonesia⁴

Constitutional Law, IAIN Kendari, Indonesia⁶

Corresponding Email: sarjaniahzur@iainkendari.ac.id

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the adaptation of government education policies from the pandemic period in Southeast Sulawesi, which are relevant to the current Regional Development Plan. The focus of this study is on policy implementation, challenges in learning access, and the solutions implemented. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method, with primary data collected through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in the education sector, including government officials, teachers, principals, educational staff, and students. Secondary data was gathered by examining government policy documents, learning guides, and associated reports. The results suggest that the implementation of learning policies in schools has not achieved complete congruence with national policy regulations. In response, various forms of policy adaptation are implemented at the school level, including modifications to learning strategies and increased parental involvement, which reflect the initiatives of local governments and schools aimed at meeting educational needs. A persistent challenge that has emerged as a primary concern in the execution of regional educational policies concerns the equitable provision of educational opportunities to all students. These results emphasize the necessity for more adaptive, context-based, and inclusive education policies, while positioning the regional development as a strategic tool to integrate local needs, strengthen teacher capacity, and ensure equitable access to educational infrastructure.

Keywords: educational policy, education quality, learning access, regional education development

ABSTRAK: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis adaptasi kebijakan pendidikan pemerintah mulai pada masa pandemi di Sulawesi Tenggara yang relevan hingga relevansinya terhadap Rencana Pembangunan Daerah (RPD). Fokus penelitian ini meliputi implementasi kebijakan, tantangan dalam akses pembelajaran, serta solusi yang diterapkan oleh pemangku kepentingan. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif, dengan data primer diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam bersama pejabat pemerintah, guru, kepala sekolah, tenaga kependidikan, dan peserta didik. Data sekunder dikumpulkan dari analisis dokumen kebijakan, panduan pelaksanaan pembelajaran, serta laporan pelaksanaan program. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penyelenggaraan pembelajaran di sekolah belum sepenuhnya sejalan dengan regulasi kebijakan nasional. Sebagai respon, terdapat berbagai bentuk adaptasi kebijakan di tingkat sekolah, seperti modifikasi strategi pembelajaran dan keterlibatan orang tua, yang mencerminkan inisiatif pemerintah lokal dan sekolah dalam memenuhi kebutuhan pendidikan. Tantangan lainnya yang masih menjadi prioritas utama dalam pelaksanaan kebijakan pendidikan daerah ialah akses pendidikan yang merata bagi seluruh peserta didik. Hasil penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya kebijakan pendidikan yang lebih adaptif, sensitif terhadap konteks, dan inklusif, dan menempatkan RPD sebagai alat strategis untuk

mengintegrasikan kebutuhan lokal, memperkuat kapasitas guru, dan memastikan akses yang adil terhadap infrastruktur pendidikan.

Kata kunci: *kebijakan pendidikan, kualitas pendidikan, akses belajar, pengembangan pendidikan regional*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in developing skilled and competitive workers, it is also an important factor in accelerating the country's social, economic, and cultural development. To achieve the national objectives, it is essential to provide all students with equal access to quality education and ensure that the services provided meet high standards. Therefore, developing the next generation requires a carefully planned and holistic system based on a stable and sustainable government structure, which distills the fundamental values, objectives, and approaches by which educational institutions are governed, and underlies informed management rationale for responsible decision-making (Pawero, 2021). In human capital theory, education is a crucial investment that enhances individual skills, thereby driving productivity and national economic growth (Becker, 1993). Therefore, comprehensive long-term planning is necessary, with strategies that consider the unique characteristics of each territory, to ensure that education policies operate optimally.

The pandemic period has officially ended, but the impact of this global crisis persists and has shaped the way the education system works nationally. The situation has created significant disruption to the learning process for students and has also highlighted critical weaknesses in the country's preparedness for emergencies. In response, the government introduced a new strategy that relied on online learning. This approach has become a vital component of the education system and remains in use today. However, the government encountered numerous obstacles in implementing the strategy effectively across all regions, particularly in areas with limited access to technology and where the community was unfamiliar with digital tools. The implementation of this strategy poses significant challenges, requiring a more thoughtful approach and educational program design tailored to the specific needs and conditions of each region. From a policy perspective, it is essential to recognize that education regulations are not merely rules imposed by the central government, but are grounded in various social factors, principles of utility, priorities, and relationships between different communities (Taylor et al., 1997). Therefore, when assessing the effectiveness of this regulation, we must consider not only the theory but also its effectiveness in addressing the community's needs and its flexibility in responding to the various challenges faced in the local context.

The time following the pandemic presents the government with an opportunity to comprehensively reassess education governance. Within this framework, the education system must be able to adapt to uncertain global conditions by employing flexible, participatory, and data-driven approaches to decision-making. Transformation also requires context-based evaluation mechanisms, learning innovations that are relevant to local needs, as well as

continuous improvement in teacher professionalism. As Bray and Mukundan (2003) pointed out, the delegation of authority is only effective if it is accompanied by clear roles, a well-organized system, and fair sharing of resources. In educational practice, decentralization empowers local authorities to continuously adapt national policies to local realities.

In support of locally based policies, the evaluation analysis results serve as the basis for preparing medium- and long-term education plans through the Regional Development Plan (RDP). This is an important strategy document that outlines the steps necessary to enhance services and strengthen infrastructure in key areas, such as education. In this case, the evaluation assesses the extent to which central government policies support the regional vision of educational growth. The evaluation not only assesses the results of implemented programs but also examines the integration between policy design, implementation challenges, and future regional development directions. The RPD serves as a strategic arena to ensure that national education policies are genuinely relevant to local needs and foster a sustainable, egalitarian, and resilient education system.

Empirical evidence has primarily confirmed that education policies should be based on the specific situations and needs of local communities. A previous study found that the current crisis has greatly affected how well students are learning. This includes problems such as teachers struggling to teach online effectively, limited access to technology for both students and teachers, and a decline in student interest and their ability to utilize digital tools (Das, Sahoo, & Pati, 2021). Other studies have also highlighted additional key challenges in distance learning. These include students not participating actively in online classes, students from rural areas being left behind, the lack of face-to-face interaction, which affects their mental health, and homes that are not conducive to learning environments (Hendricks & Mutongoza, 2023). This situation aligns with Honig's (2006) discussion of the gap between creating policies at the top level and their effective implementation on the ground. These obstacles reflect a mismatch between policy at the central level and the capacity of implementers in the field. Therefore, education policies are designed to anticipate and address implementation challenges, ensuring flexibility to remain effective in various contexts. Without this alignment, policies that appear effective on paper may fail to have a meaningful impact in practice.

This study employed an analytical approach that is grounded in the theories of educational decentralization and critical policy analysis to investigate the adaptability of central government policies to the distinct capabilities and needs of various regions, analyze the challenges encountered during implementation, and explore the diverse strategies and approaches devised by local stakeholders to mitigate these issues. The local cases are used as real-world examples to determine whether policies from the central government can be effectively implemented in the field. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to combine post-crisis educational policy studies with the conditions of regional autonomy in Indonesia. The findings of this study will not only contribute to academic discourse but also offer practical insights for policymakers in building a

more resilient, locally relevant, and socially inclusive education system that can better meet the needs of communities in the future.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach based on an interpretivist paradigm to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of education policies at the local level during a period of crisis. This approach was chosen to unveil social phenomena and policies in their natural context, particularly those involving interactions between individuals and their environment (Creswell, 2014). This study focuses on the adaptation of educational policies at the local level, examining the strategies employed by school leaders, the capacity of local systems, and the perspectives of teachers, students, and education officials. Researchers employed a naturalistic approach to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics unfolding in the field, exploring the actual experiences of policy enforcers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Schwandt, 2015).

Participants

The study was conducted in five selected areas of Southeast Sulawesi Province, namely Kendari, Konawe, Kolaka, Buton, and Konawe Island. These regions were specifically chosen to represent a variety of geographical characteristics and were among those that received Emergency Assistance Funds. The participants were principals, teachers, educational staff, and students at the senior high school level who were directly involved in implementing educational policy. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants based on their direct involvement and firsthand experience with educational policy implementation (Nasution, 2023). This technique was employed to gather contextual and in-depth data, aligning with the exploratory nature of a qualitative approach. Table 1 presents the Demographic Distribution of Schools and Participants:

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of Schools and Participants

Location	Number of Schools	Types of Schools (SMA/SMK/SLB)	Participants				Total
			Principal	Teachers	Staff Administration	Students	
Kendari	5	SMA/SMK/SLB	5	10	5	10	30
Konawe	3	SMA/SMK/SLB	3	6	3	6	18
Kolaka	3	SMA/SMK/SLB	3	8	3	6	20
Buton	5	SMA/SMK/SLB	5	7	5	8	25
Konawe Kepulauan	5	SMA/SMK/SLB	5	8	5	8	26

Data collection techniques

The research process began with site mapping, followed by data collection using three main techniques: semi-structured interviews, observation, and document study. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including school principals, teachers, education officials, and students, to explore their perceptions, experiences, and views on the implementation of education policies. Observations were conducted both on-site and online at selected schools to directly observe the implementation of adaptive policies and strategies applied by educational units. Presently, documentation studies involve analyzing official documents such as provincial education circulars, reports on the use of Emergency Assistance Funds, and regional development plans. The primary instrument used for data collection was an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions that covered four aspects: perceptions of education quality, efforts to improve learning, implementation constraints, and sustainability plans. The data collection process was conducted gradually and repeatedly at each site until data saturation was achieved. All collected data were carefully documented through recording, transcription, and organization systematically for further analysis.

Data analysis techniques

Data analysis was conducted in stages, interactively, and simultaneously from the data collection stage to the conclusion. In accordance with the qualitative approach, this analysis includes three main steps, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014). Data reduction involves simplifying and focusing the information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation, ensuring that only data relevant to the research focus are further analyzed. The data were presented in a systematic descriptive narrative to facilitate the identification of patterns, connections between findings, and to provide a foundation for concluding. Conclusions were drawn inductively, based on field evidence verified through source triangulation and the methods employed.

Ethical Consideration

This study adhered to all the standard rules and guidelines for ethical research. Before starting, the researcher clearly explained the purpose of the study and got approval from the school to collect data. The researcher also ensured that the research process met the requirements set by both the institution and the government, which had previously obtained administrative permission from the Southeast Sulawesi provincial office and the local district. To protect the participants, all data and personal identities were anonymized. All data obtained were used only for educational and research purposes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of National and Regional Education Policies

This study revealed that central government policies had been executed in the regions, but there are discrepancies in the application of the national

education policy. The implementation is carried out based on understanding and adapted to the conditions and needs of each region. The policy to eliminate national examinations was successfully implemented in all areas of Indonesia and proceeded efficiently. However, this was not the case with the distance learning policy, whose implementation varied and had different effects in each region. The effectiveness of this policy depended on differences in regional access to infrastructure. Some regions were ready for the change, but many others still had limitations and low digital literacy.

Several factors contribute significantly to creating this gap, and one of the most notable is the highly centralized nature of the education system's administration. This structure often limits the ability of local governments to make decisions that are tailored to their specific circumstances and local realities. To address this issue, decentralizing education has been suggested as a way to improve the current overly centralized system. A centralized approach to education is ineffective because it fails to address the unique needs and characteristics of different areas, ultimately impacting the overall quality of education (Muhdi, 2019).

In some situations, schools located in safe areas should be able to resume in-person classes, but they are still forced to follow strict online learning policies. This inconsistency leads to new administrative and teaching difficulties. Developing well-thought-out strategies that align with fundamental educational principles can significantly enhance the quality of education. In this context, local authorities have a crucial responsibility to employ effective methods and strategies when adapting and implementing national education policies (Lesnikowski et al., 2020; Grissom & Condon, 2021). This clearly demonstrates that a top-down approach does not always result in practical improvements in the quality of education. This idea was further supported by interviews with people involved in the education sector:

“We persevere in implementing policies established by the central and regional governments even though we are still in the safe zone” (School principal, JFR)

“When the official letter from the central government arrived, the principal gathered all the staff and teachers to talk about how the school organizes teaching and learning.” (Educational staff, RR)

This statement indicates that policy implementation reflects a centralistic characteristic, where the principal remains aligned with central government policies, even though they have a possible alternative. However, there are still technical obstacles, as expressed by one of the teachers.

“The government does not allow face-to-face teaching and requires that we use online learning, even so, the internet is insufficient” (Teacher, HZF).

"I am not very familiar with the government's policy. All we know is that we have been told to undertake the learning process online". (Teacher, ES)

This finding highlights the limitations of top-down policies, which fail to account for regional differences and do not provide sufficient space for adapting policies to local contexts. Effective education policy reform must be adaptive and contextual, tailored to local needs and characteristics, to ensure harmony between the centre and the regions (Dimmock, Tann, Nguyen, Tran, & Dinh, 2021). Another issue with this policy is that teachers often lack a thorough understanding of the government's policies. They primarily follow the instructions provided by their school, which are based on guidelines issued by the central government. Because of this, they may not fully grasp the broader implications or intentions behind the policies, which can limit their ability to implement them effectively in their teaching practices. Equipping rural teachers with pedagogical competencies will promote educational equity and enhance holistic development in rural schools (Chowdhury, 2021). Furthermore, as stated by Pujowati (2021), distance learning is less effective than face-to-face learning, particularly in areas that still lack adequate facilities, infrastructure, and human resources. Therefore, educational policies during a crisis should not only rely on the principle of equity but also consider affirmative approaches that address regional disparities.

Challenges in the learning process

The education policies established by the central government have not been sufficient to address existing problems in the regions, including infrastructure limitations, digital Learning Inequality, teachers' readiness and support, and student motivation and engagement. In the context of learning, these challenges are felt not only by teachers but also by students and education staff.

Teacher Preparedness for Online Learning

Teachers must be ready to swiftly adapt to the government's policy of transitioning from traditional classroom instruction to online learning. This transition has posed significant challenges for educators, particularly those unfamiliar with integrating technology into their teaching methods. Based on the results of the interviews, most teachers faced difficulties at the beginning of the crisis, as they had to learn how to use digital tools on their own:

"having been in that time made us prepare for the current situation and learn how to use technology on our own." (Teacher, SA)

"At first, it was a bit of a challenge for us to adapt to the situation with the virus, but after they learned how to use smartphones, we were able to communicate via WhatsApp" (Teacher, AH)

The lack of training provided to teachers in advance of implementing online learning is also a significant problem. This was conveyed by one of the teachers:

“We have to use technology that greatly affects the quality of learning. However, we have never been given training on the use of learning technology.” (Teacher, HZH)

“We do not keep up with the latest educational updates or information. Furthermore, we rarely receive information about how to improve teachers' skills in using technology for online teaching.” (Teacher, NF)

The findings from the interviews indicate that teachers still find it challenging to effectively integrate technology into their teaching. This difficulty arises from two main reasons: first, many teachers do not have the skills or confidence to use digital tools and IT resources, and second, the schools they work in often do not have the proper technology available. As a result, it becomes very difficult for them to gain the knowledge and experience necessary to use these technologies properly (Twagiramungu, 2023). There are many teachers in a rural area face a series of challenges in facilitating online teaching, including the poor quality of internet connection and a lack of online teaching training. Therefore, they require training in remote teaching and clear guidance for online teaching (Le et al., 2022; Tao & Gao, 2022). Thus, it is crucial to provide teachers with opportunities to develop their technological skills, thereby maximizing the learning process (Santagata et al., 2024). Teachers can help students feel more interested in and excited about learning by utilizing technology effectively (Francis, 2017).

Lack of Access and Infrastructure

The next challenge is related to educational infrastructure, especially in rural areas. Some schools lack the necessary facilities to support online learning, including adequate technology and internet access, such as computers, projectors, and stable internet connections. This has an impact on the limited and uneven reach of online learning, as some teachers state that:

“We have limited technological devices for online learning, remote geographic conditions with poor internet access, slow network connections, students struggling to stay focused, and the lack of interaction between teachers and students.” (Teacher, LK)

“We do not have much access to teaching and are not allowed to go to school. We only use cell phones because not all of us know how to use laptops well.” (Teacher, Hzf)

Student feedback also highlights a significant digital divide. Many students do not own personal devices and often have to share a single phone with other

family members. In addition, geographic challenges further limit access, leading to unstable or completely unavailable internet connectivity:

"We have limited internet access, our network is poor, and not all of our friends have cell phones. If there is something we do not understand, we ask via WhatsApp or during face-to-face meetings." (Students, AWN)

"The hardest subjects for us are science and math, as well as any subject that involves hands-on work. We find it difficult to understand the material taught online." (Students, ARN)

Both teachers and students are facing difficulties in accessing learning tools and technology as a medium for online learning. Some regions in Indonesia are geographically and topographically difficult to access the internet or network, especially in remote areas. Therefore, it is necessary to implement blended learning that combines technology and conventional learning (Prahmana et al., 2021; Pramana et al., 2020). This digital divide poses a significant challenge to the effectiveness of learning, as it hinders students' full participation in the learning process. Internet facilities represent a pivotal component in facilitating effective online learning. Therefore, a collaborative effort between educational institutions and the telecommunications industry is necessary to subsidize internet subscription costs or provide free browsing data for students and teachers as part of their social responsibility (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). Without adequate infrastructure support, distance learning policies risk creating disparities in access and quality of education between regions. Therefore, a needs-based affirmative approach should be prioritized in policy planning, especially in times of crisis.

Student Motivation and Engagement in Online Learning

Learning motivation is an important element in the success of the educational process. However, during times of crisis, student motivation and engagement have declined significantly, especially in the context of online learning. Based on field findings, most teachers report low student enthusiasm and participation, which is attributed to various factors, including limited access, a lack of direct interaction, and the psychological state of students who are not yet ready for distance learning models. As the teachers' quote that:

"Our students cannot focus on online learning. The internet connection is often unstable, so they have to keep logging in and out of Zoom. Additionally, our students are lacking discipline in online learning." (Teacher, ASN)

The teacher also reported that not all students actively participated in class. Some would simply check in for attendance without truly engaging in the lesson. This made it difficult for teachers to accurately assess students' understanding.

“Our challenge is related to students' motivation to learn. Even though we have tried various methods, there are still some students who never attend class, some fill in the attendance list, and some never respond when asked.” (Teacher, AHH)

The results of the interviews above indicate that online learning is considered ineffective for students due to various limitations, including the inability to monitor students directly, a lack of face-to-face interaction, difficulty in understanding students' individual needs, poor delivery of material, and limited teaching time. This ineffective learning hurts students' motivation and interest in learning. Online learning makes students less eager to interact and less enthusiastic about learning. As expressed by several students:

“Since we do not have lessons every day, our motivation to learn has dropped. After being at home for so long, we do not even feel like going back to school anymore.” (Student, JS)

“Learning to use Zoom is quite difficult; we find it hard to understand the material. We are also not ready and confused about how to do it.” (Student, AR)

The results of this interview suggest that online learning models necessitate a distinct approach to maintain student engagement. The lack of impact of teaching methods, along with a lack of social interaction, has reduced students' enthusiasm for learning. This is also supported by the findings of Rozhkova & Nadezhda (2020), who found that students' unpreparedness for online learning and the lack of supervision of classroom activities led to them being less motivated and less involved in the learning process. Psychological impacts are also an important factor influencing student engagement (Chieng, Tiew, Law, & Ling, 2023). This highlights the importance of a holistic approach in designing an online learning system that includes attention to students' emotional well-being, developing interactive and participatory learning strategies, and utilizing technology effectively (Al Shlowiy, 2022).

Curriculum and evaluation method adaptation

Achieving the goals set out in the curriculum and carrying out thorough assessments of student learning are the main difficulties that teachers encounter. The absence of meaningful interaction between teachers and students, along with the restricted amount of time available for learning activities, has greatly affected how well learning assessments can be conducted. Moreover, the sudden shift to using digital tools for assessments has made it harder to carry out evaluations in an effective and efficient manner. This shows that there is still a lack of strong, adaptable assessment methods in place within national and regional education systems, especially during times of crisis. Many teachers have pointed out that:

“...Curriculum objectives cannot be achieved, learning interactions are limited, and our evaluation system is not optimal (Teacher, AMN)

Some teachers also mentioned that the adaptation to the online assessment system was carried out instantly and without proper preparation, both in terms of equipment and teachers' capacity in developing digital evaluation instruments.

“At that time, it was extremely difficult for us to measure students' abilities and provide meaningful evaluation because online meetings were still very limited.” (Teacher, IH)

The interview demonstrates that there is a significant disparity in the quality and availability of education, particularly when it comes to how the curriculum is designed and how student learning is assessed. Almeida and Monteiro (2021) have highlighted a major issue in remote learning environments: there is an uneven balance between formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments, which are used to monitor student progress and guide teaching, are often underutilized in distance learning settings. On the other hand, summative assessments, which are typically used to evaluate student learning at the end of a course or unit, dominate the process. However, incorporating various formative assessment techniques, such as gamified activities or interactive learning experiences, can help make learning more engaging and foster greater teacher involvement in the process, as noted by Arifin and Setiawan (2022). Moreover, Hall (2011) emphasized the need for a more holistic approach to assessing learning, taking into account not just the intellectual aspects—such as knowledge and critical thinking, but also the emotional and behavioral dimensions of learning. This comprehensive approach ensures that the entire learning experience is effective and meaningful.

In terms of curriculum achievement, most teachers are unable to meet maximum learning objectives due to a lack of direct control over the learning process. As found by Arifin (2021), some competencies cannot be fully achieved, one of which is spiritual competence. This is due to inadequate monitoring of student progress by teachers during the learning process. Additionally, the demands of school management on teachers as a form of emotional support system during the transition have not been widely explored (Rohmah et al., 2024).

Adaptive Strategies and Solutions in Learning Implementation

The implementation of learning strategies requires the government, teachers, and stakeholders to adapt immediately. Findings in the field suggest that the implementation of central government policies depends on the methods and approaches employed by local governments. Several strategies implemented by teachers in the learning process during the crisis include adapting the use of

technology, developing appropriate learning materials, and collaborating with parents.

The use of technology and learning strategies adaptation

One key response of the teacher was the integration of digital learning media tailored to the specific infrastructure. Teachers in several schools began utilizing tools such as WhatsApp Groups, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, and Canva to deliver material, monitor student assignments, and actively communicate during learning. It can be seen from the following quote from the teachers:

“We use WhatsApp and Google Classroom. All students can learn and complete their assignments through WhatsApp groups.” (Teacher, LK)

“We have also introduced many online learning applications and learning technologies to students, so that teachers and students are well prepared for distance learning using tools such as Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp groups, Quizizz, Canva.” (Teacher, NA)

“Most teachers here use a combination of online and face-to-face meetings. This means that we still meet in person for students who don't have cell phones or internet access, but we keep our distance.” (Teacher, NAL)

This finding aligns with the policy on Online Learning in Emergency Situations, which encourages teachers to adapt materials and use accessible, simplified platforms (Suwartono et al., 2025). The adoption of this application demonstrates teachers' commitment to pedagogical transformation and their readiness to integrate technology into instruction (Fathayatih, 2023). Dehghan et al. (2022) also note that students' readiness to learn depends on access to technology and digital platforms. In this context, technology serves as a crucial link between teachers and students, facilitating task assignments and providing feedback. This approach also reflects the principle of flexible education, enabling the adaptation of standard learning pathways to better suit regional needs (Wessling & van der Velden, 2021).

Simplification of Material and Intensive Communication

To overcome limited interaction, teachers simplified the material and increased the number of assignments as alternative learning activities in the classroom. It became evident to educators that, in the context of online learning environments, the limited interaction that characterized these virtual spaces required a strategic adaptation on their part. This adaptation involved simplifying the instructional material, ensuring that students could continue to absorb and comprehend the material being taught. Additionally, more assignments were given to replace the hours spent in the classroom. As noted by the teacher:

"We deliver the material and assign tasks online, then collect the assignments directly at school. So we simplify the material to make it easier to digest online." (Teacher, AM)

"We try to encourage and guide students to stay on track with their lessons and assignments, use WhatsApp to communicate, and attend school once a week on their designated day." (Teacher, RR)

In addition, other teachers provided flexibility in the material, making it easily accessible to students through project-based assignments or independent exercises at home. This approach aimed to mitigate the burden of online learning while addressing the limitations of in-person interaction. They have even set up limited in-person meetings once a week at school, especially in safe areas, to keep students motivated and clarify difficult material. This demonstrates that the teacher's modification of the material is a form of learning strategy adaptation that reflects the principle of differentiation, considering the needs and abilities of students to ensure learning remains meaningful (Bozkurt, 2020). Regardless of the existing circumstances, adaptations to the content of the material, the learning process, and the learning outcomes need to be tailored to the diverse needs and circumstances of the students (Coubergs et al., 2017).

Parents' Role in Children's Education

Another important strategy is to build relationships with parents. Teachers actively communicate with parents to ensure that students can learn effectively at home. This is a way to assist students learning at home. Teachers can work to ensure that students who are doing well at home involve their parents. This is one way to ensure students do well, even when they cannot speak face-to-face with their teacher. As stated by several teachers:

"We keep the lines of communication open and works closely with parents." (Teacher, SA)

"We are working together and asking parents to help their children study at home." (Teacher, AM)

This approach highlights the critical role of parents in supporting students' learning continuity during distance education. Collaboration between teachers and parents helps students remain focused and provides essential emotional support during crises. These findings align with Thompson et al. (2014), who emphasize the importance of effective communication, parental involvement, and a supportive home environment in improving student outcomes. Emotional and pedagogical support from parents fosters engagement, reduces anxiety, and enhances understanding (Alvarez Chara et al., 2023). Building strong partnerships between schools and families is essential to address future challenges effectively.

Improved communication among teachers, students, and parents demonstrates increased flexibility and innovation in response to crises. These efforts underscore the importance of a personalized, collaborative approach to maintaining learning continuity. This shift reflects the ongoing evolution of the education system toward a more flexible, student-centered model.

Implications of the Study for Regional Education Policy and Development

The findings of this study have implications for regional development plans, particularly in the field of education. This suggests that the readiness of local governments to adapt national policies is crucial in designing effective regional development policies for the future. Therefore, the approach to education development in the region needs to be directed towards strengthening dimensions based on the challenges faced by teachers, students, and other stakeholders in implementing the education system during times of crisis.

Many schools in the region still struggle to effectively use technology for education. While some institutions have adopted technology, its use remains largely basic. This limited implementation highlights ongoing digital access disparities across Southeast Sulawesi. Such disparities have been linked to widening learning gaps during crises, affecting students' ability to benefit from technology (Van de Werfhorst et al., 2022). To address this, the government should prioritize developing digital infrastructure, expanding internet access to remote schools, supplying learning devices, and providing technology training for teachers and students as part of the Medium-Term Regional Development Plan (Harta et al., 2024).

The subsequent implication of government policy pertains to decentralization and differentiation of the curriculum. The study's findings suggest that educators employ a simplifying strategy in their instructional methods and adopt flexible approaches to align with the diverse abilities and circumstances of their students. This phenomenon can be attributed to the implementation of the principles of differentiated instruction (Coubergs et al., 2017) and the integration of a curriculum designed for distance learning. This curriculum employs a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning approaches, ensuring flexibility in the learning process and facilitating the achievement of learning outcomes (Chugh et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2023).

Collaboration between schools and parents at home is essential for fostering active student learning. To maximize student motivation and engagement, schools must prioritize intensive communication with parents. Local governments play a pivotal role in establishing policies and programs that strengthen these school-family partnerships, such as parent-teacher communication forums, family education counseling, and incentives for parental involvement. By creating a supportive online learning environment at home and encouraging consistent participation, parents directly enhance the effectiveness of distance learning (Kaphle & Rana, 2023).

Another important result is that teachers and school principals will become more effective in their roles. This will occur through training programs that cater

to the specific needs of the local community. These programs will help teachers and school principals become leaders who encourage new ideas in schools. Research indicates that when teachers and school principals adapt their teaching methods during a crisis, students tend to learn better. This illustrates the importance of adaptability for leaders and the need for teachers to adjust their approaches to accommodate new teaching methods. Teachers are agents of change. They have a significant responsibility in implementing the learning process and selecting teaching approaches that ultimately influence student achievement. This is why it is important to invest in developing teachers' skills. They must be prepared to adapt to changes, become agents of change themselves, and adjust their roles as needed (Zoretić & Čižmek Vujnović, 2023).

This study demonstrates that to enhance education in a region, it is essential to integrate national policies with local initiatives. We should continue to use adaptive strategies, not just as a crisis response, but as a flexible, community-based learning model. Thus, the results of this study provide a real contribution to the formulation of regional education policies that are more responsive, inclusive, and evidence-based.

CONCLUSIONS

The national government has introduced several education policies in response to the crisis, but their impact at the regional level remains limited. National policies often overlook the diverse geographical, social, and infrastructural conditions across regions. As a result, implementation is frequently uniform and does not address the specific needs of each educational institution. Regions with sufficient technological resources can adopt these policies more effectively, while those with limited access and infrastructure face significant obstacles. This disparity shows that uniform policies during emergencies may increase educational service gaps.

In this context, local governments should serve not only as technical implementers of central policies but also as active participants in adapting and integrating national policies into local development plans. These plans should strategically address local needs, such as digital capacity building, teacher training, and equitable educational infrastructure. Policy evaluations should assess not only regulatory compliance but also how effectively these policies support sustainable and inclusive education development in each region.

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