The International Standard School Project in Indonesia: a Policy Document Analysis

Thesis

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Abstract

The International Standard School project is a new education policy in Indonesia that was enacted with a main goal to prepare the students for global competitiveness. This policy is both an effort to internationalize schools in Indonesia and a part of the national education decentralization reform. The title International Standard School, SBI in Bahasa Indonesia, is given as an accreditation status to schools that have completed the required standards. The use of the terms “international” has drawn a lot of comments and concerns among the public in general. This study is aimed at analyzing the policy documents in seeking for an answer to a thesis question: Is the International Standard School project likely to achieve the intended goal of improving the quality of public education in Indonesia? A set of policy documents was collected and analyzed against literature on international schools and education decentralization. The analysis found that the policy documents lacked of clarity in explaining some critical terms and thus were not likely to help the national schools to achieve the intended goal of the policy. Some other important findings in relation to the use of the term “international”, the impetus of the policy, and the readiness of the system to implement the policy are presented.
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother Chatarina M. Juwati;

“sembah bekti lan atur panuwun kula, Ibu”
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Chapter 1: Introduction

A. Background

In light of a new democratic governance post the military authoritarian regime of Soeharto (Liddle, 2008), and pushed by the proposals for decentralization in the aftermath of the economic crisis in 1997, the Ministry of National Education (MONE) of Indonesia (2003) developed a new vision for the nation’s education reform. The new vision is geared towards “the implementation of the principles of democracy, autonomy, decentralization, and public accountability” (Act of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20, year 2003 on National Education System, p. 1). The rationale of the education reform is further stipulated in the act as follows:

A national education system should ensure equal opportunity, improvement of quality and relevance and efficiency in management to meet various challenges of local, national, and global lives; therefore it requires well-planned, well-directed, and sustainable education reform (2003, p. 4).

This act refines the principles of education provision and lays the foundation for the government’s initiatives in primary, secondary, and higher education.

One of the recently taken initiatives for primary and secondary levels of education is a project called Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional (International Standard School). Initiated approximately three years after the act, the project is based on the following law:

The government and local government organize at least a unit of education at all levels of education, to be developed further as a unit having international standards of

The goal of this International Standard School (SBI) project, in other words, is the establishment of one class or more in a primary and/or secondary school in each province and/or district that satisfies some international standards.

This internationalization of schools in Indonesia is not a novel trend among the private schools, but is indeed new to the public/state-funded schools. In the private sector, there are two types of international schools: international schools and national-plus schools. Most of these schools are found in big cities in Indonesia. International schools are owned and/or funded by foreign foundations that were initially established to serve the children of the expatriates working in Indonesia. National-plus schools are national-based private schools that, in addition to the national curriculum, employ an internationally renowned curriculum such as the Cambridge’s International General Certificate of Secondary Education. The word “international” was never attached to a name of a public school until recently when the SBI policy is enacted. The project is, therefore, an introduction to internationalism in education for the public schools in Indonesia.

B. Statement of Problem

Studies on “internationalism”, whether associated to international education (Hayden, Thompson, & Walker, 2002), international schools (Hayden, 2006), internationalizing education (O’Meara, Mehlinger, & Newman, 2001; Tsuneyoshi, 2005) international research on education (Dolby & Rahman, 2008) or education and globalization (Spring,
2008), have suggested that the term “international” in these coupled terms might be ambiguous (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004) and that the definition of an international school might be different from one country to another (Hayden, 2006).

As in the case in Indonesia, there has been a growing concern on the use of the word “international” in this SBI project (Winarti, June 27, 2008a, Widastomo, July 6, 2008, Winarti, June 27, 2008b). Parents, schools, and/or public in general might have interpreted the term international standards differently. Yet regardless of its ambiguity, this relatively new project soon became very popular in Indonesia, in part because the word ‘international’ connotes ‘prestigious’ (Winarti, June 27, 2008b). Many have written to alert the public from associating the word “international” with the quality of education the schools offer (Winarti, June 27, 2008a, Widastomo, July 6, 2008). Some also have questioned this project in terms of its affordability (Winarti, June 27, 2008a), its impact on “equal opportunity for all children” (Winarti, June 27, 2008b, p. 1), and the readiness of the schools for the project (Gower, July 6, 2008, p. 1; Davies, August 27, 2008; Dharmawan & Kuan, November 9, 2008).

The use of international benchmarks and high standard tests in school reforms is another major discussion in research on educational policy analysis. Researchers have investigated the influence of international benchmarks on the goal of the school (Hayden, Thompson, & Walker, 2002; Smith and Mickelson, 2000), the curriculum (Resnick, Nolan & Resnick, 1995), the students’ achievement and the assessment of the students’ achievement (Linn & Baker, 1995), and the school administration (Davies, 1990; Chapman, 2002). Among the crucial inquiries are questions like “what can we learn from
international assessments?” (Minslevy, 1995), or “what do international assessments imply for world-class standards?” (Linn & Baker, 1995). Yin (2006) studies the international curriculum particularly in the context of international schools in Malaysia; she inquired “how are they [international curriculum offerings] addressing the aspirations of South-East Asian students? (2006, p. 1).

The implementation of this SBI project is coupled with the application of school-based management, an education decentralization effort that the Indonesian government has promoted in the last 8 years. The transfer of authority in the school-based management scheme has allowed an SBI to make some crucial decisions like the school’s financial arrangements and the choice of curriculum. Bjork’s (2005) study on the implementation of Local Content Curriculum in Indonesia, a revised model of curriculum introduced in 1994, found that schools did not successfully demonstrate the capacities and the capabilities required to achieve the intended goals of that policy. Schools maintained their traditional conduct and were still quite dependent on the central government regardless of the alternate authority that the central government had given to the schools. Other studies on the process of education decentralization in Indonesia did not bring great news either. It is intriguing to understand how the SBI project implemented within the school-based management framework would be successful.

C. Research Questions

One of the long-term goals of the current education reform in Indonesia is apparently towards improved quality of education; and one of the short-term goals is to create world-class education through the SBI project. Given the controversies on the definition and the
precaution of whether schools are fully capable and ready to employ school-based management, this study is aimed at analyzing the policy in search of an answer to the following question:

Is the International Standard School project likely to achieve the intended goal of improving the quality of public education in Indonesia?

To answer the above question, two sub-questions are prepared as follows:

1. What is the International Standard School project?
2. How are the conditions required for successful decentralization policy implementation being met?

D. Research Framework

The study reviews an ample amount of literature regarding internationalism and education decentralization. Using the literature review and related policy documents, the International Standard School project will be observed in greater details. Next, an approach to policy analysis will be introduced and the results of the analysis will be discussed. Following the discussions, the findings will be resumed and some recommendations for future researchers will be proposed.

E. Significance of Study

The purpose of this study is to provide careful insights into the International Standard School policy and to identify the likeliness of the project to achieve the given goal. This study is potentially useful for policy makers, parents, teachers, school administrators, and other parties interested in studying Indonesian’s educational policies. For the policy
makers, discussions on the policy implementation might assist the policy makers in making some improvements on the project wherever and whenever required. The discussions would also help the parents and the public in general to make informed decisions regarding their choice of the children’s education. Indonesian teachers and school administrators, both those who are participating in the SBI project and those who are not, might benefit from the discussions as they gain better understanding of the policy. For future and fellow researchers, this study is expected to contribute to the ongoing discourse on international schools in particular and educational policy analysis in general.

F. Limitations of Study

The context of the study is Indonesian public schooling during the implementation of the SBI policy. Due to the specificity of the research and the descriptive nature of the study, findings are not generalizable. To help building the readers’ understanding on the context of the study, some depiction on Indonesian public schooling is presented.

Another limitation of the study is with regards to the language barrier. Some of the documents used in this study are written originally in Bahasa Indonesia, the national language of Indonesia. Besides the original English texts, the quotations provided here might have been translated from Bahasa Indonesia into English. I act as the primary translator and assisting as peer-reviewers is a number of Indonesian Fulbright scholars currently studying in the U.S. The peer-reviewers were chosen from those majoring in education and/or public policy, to ensure familiarity with the terms and the subject being discussed.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The International Standard School project is an initiative introduced as part of the current education decentralization reform in Indonesia. This chapter reviews literature on these two themes: international school and education decentralization. The first section of this literature review contains two parts. The first part is a short overview on the development of “international” schools in Indonesia. The second part is a review of research on international schools. The second section of this chapter reviews literature on education decentralization and education decentralization in Indonesia.

A. Internationalism of Schools in Indonesia

The government of Indonesia believes that the International Standard School project is a way to provide quality education for all (MONE, 2007). Several reports by some international organizations like the OECD and the UNESCO reveal a somewhat concerning state of Indonesian students’ performance. PISA studies by OECD show that Indonesia is in the lowest tier in each of the four items of the studies – mathematics, reading, science, and problem solving (OECD, 2003). Indifferent results are also reported by the UNESCO and a number of other international organizations. These reports seem to be the obvious reasons for the government of Indonesia to design an education reform to boost its position higher in the rankings, but what actually makes the government
confident that internationalizing a number of classes in some public schools around Indonesia is a manageable and potential strategy to arrive at the intended goal? A review on the history of internationalism in Indonesian schools provides some background for the impetus behind this initiative.

An international school is in fact not a new phenomenon in Indonesia. The first international school in Indonesia on record is the Jakarta International School which was established in 1951 to serve the children of the expatriates living in Jakarta. Two directories of international schools worldwide listed as many as 62 international schools located in different areas in Indonesia. The schools range from 50 years old to 1 year old. Almost all of these schools are affiliated with a certain religion, funded by international organizations, and were initially founded to serve the children of the expatriates. Many of these schools are now open for local children as well as hiring local teachers. English is spoken as the main medium of instruction in all of these schools, with Bahasa Indonesia as one of the core subjects. A summary of the schools’ profiles is presented in Appendix A: International School in Indonesia.

These international schools are not the only type of private schools that are providing international certificates to the students. Another group of schools that claims to have been offering international standard of education is private schools that call themselves National Plus (NP) schools. Unlike the first group of international schools, the schools in this second group are national schools whose foundation objective is not to serve the children of the expatriates. They also do not only offer an international program; instead, they combine the national curriculum with an international curriculum of their choice.
The quality of private schools in general is believed to be poor (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002a), but many of these exceptionally good private schools are perceived as outperforming the public schools. These schools are mostly religiously affiliated and the cost to enroll children in these schools is affordable for only a limited group of parents in Indonesia (ANTARA, 2008). Schools are competing in offering international standard education through the adoption of internationally renowned curricula and classes fully equipped with latest technology (ANTARA, March 3, 2009). Compared to many public schools and/or lower performing private schools that barely have well-maintained classrooms (Tomayah & Usman, 2004; ANTARA, March 3, 2009), these ‘international’ schools have obviously set the bar high.

The number of NP schools has grown a lot in the past eight years, but what the name means remains ambiguous to the public in general (Forde, January 10, 2006). This was one of the reasons for the foundation of the Association of National-Plus Schools (ANPS) in 2000. This association has since held conferences and defined some guidelines including the definition of an NP. There are seven characteristics of an NP according to the ANPS. The first characteristic is regarding the school policies and the procedures. An NP school should have developed, documented, published, and implemented a set of clear policies concerning the school’s vision and mission. The second characteristic defines an NP as having “a knowledge of and respect for Indonesian cultural values, diversity, and the natural environment” (ANPS, 2009).

The third characteristic on languages being used in the school indicates that students in an NP school “are educated in, and can communicate using both Indonesian and
English” (ANPS, 2009). The fourth characteristic requires an NP to have “a commitment to plan and implement ongoing staff professional development” (ANPS, 2009). A requirement that an NP school “develops and uses national and international learning outcomes in their curriculum framework” (ANPS, 2009) is listed as the fifth characteristic. Further explained, the school’s vision and educational practices of an NP are “inclusive of international standard and outcomes” (ANPS, 2009).

The sixth characteristic of an NP entails the school to have “educational programs, teaching methodologies and a range of assessment practices [that] support student-centered learning” (ANPS, 2009). One item in the indicators compels an NP to have developed, documented, and implemented a school-based curriculum for all grades and/or subjects. The last characteristic is calling for required resources and facilities; an NP should have “an appropriate range of resources and facilities [that] are provided to achieve described learning outcomes” (ANPS, 2009).

Besides facilitating communication among NP school managers and teachers, the ANPS also serves as an accreditation board. Yet, the association makes it clear that not all NP schools in Indonesia are members of the association, and that not all members of the association are accredited by the ANPS. So far, there are 69 schools listed as the members, with only 14 of them accredited by the association. List of the NP schools is provided in Appendix B: National Plus Schools.

B. International Schools

Research on international education and international schools have acknowledged that globalization has given an incentive for countries to “go international” and to
“internationalize” all aspects of education (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). Globalization, in spite of its debatable meaning, opens national boundaries, fosters interchange of almost any transferable entities, and increases interdependence among countries in the world, which in turn stimulates cooperation as well as competition in almost about anything including education. Stromquist (2002) elaborates the link between globalization and education as follows:

“The new globalization era is full of promises for individuals, institutions and countries. Among these promises is education-as advanced skills and sophisticated knowledge (heavily weighted in favor of science and technology) are deemed essential to the construction of the “knowledge society” and countries and regional blocs are positioned as competitive entities that will enter the global market with (it is hoped) superior strength and abilities. So, education as a means to succeeding in a globalized world is now given great importance…” (Stromquist, 2002, p. xiii-xiv).

Stromquist (2002) emphasizes the critical contribution of globalization in education and vice versa, and she further elaborates that the process of globalization in education is achieved through decentralization and centralization. She points out privatization as an example of decentralization and argues that centralization “appears through competition at all levels …, competition that, through comparisons seeking to identify those that excel, sets uniform criteria for judging all performance” (p. xiv). Interestingly, some countries are moving from centralized to decentralized education system while the others are moving exactly in the opposite direction, both influenced in one way or another by the globalization process; globalization surely has brought a huge impact on education.

Other researchers agree that education experiences a significant transformation due to globalization. Hayden (2006) argues that the concept of education in a mono-cultural developed community 50 years ago was straightforward. She points out the reason children were sent to school is “to acquire the knowledge and skills which would be
needed when we [the children] embarked on life in the adult world” (Hayden, 2006, p. 1). Yet amidst this globalization process, “even within the borders of a national system the concept of education is no longer straightforward” (2006, p. 4), by which she means the adult world the children would grow within may no longer be the adult world of their parents; it may be that of others beyond the national boundaries. She further suggests that teachers are now required to teach transferable skills; skills that in Hannerz’s words would enable these young adults to “make one’s way into other cultures” (1992, p. 252). So education in a globalization era is critical and no longer fire-walled by the national boundaries; education is going international. Yet researchers have reprimanded that the term international in education is a vast and inclusive umbrella and needs to be used with caution, as it has come with different meanings (Hayden, 2006; Dolby & Rahman, 2008) or in other words, ambiguous (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004).

The term international education is most frequently related to the field study of comparative and international education – “an academic discipline involved with making international comparisons between educational systems” (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004), but more recently, “the term has been used to denote an ideology of education towards ‘internationalism’ and ‘international mindedness’ and the education offered by international schools” (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004, p. 161). Hayden (2006) also recognizes this idea that “international education is by definition the education experienced by those who attend such schools [the international schools]” (p. 6). She continues, however, that “the fact that a school describes itself as an ‘international school’ does not necessarily mean that whatever education it offers should be described as ‘international education’” (Hayden, 2006, p. 6). A survey on the experience of
‘international education’ distributed to students in UK show that some students think they have experienced international education even though their schools do not consider themselves international, while some other students think that even though they attended international schools, they experienced a “Western” education as everything in school was taught in “Western” point of view (Hayden, 2006). So, what is an international school?

Hayden (2006) points out that the root of this potential for confusion is the fact “that no one organization internationally can grant the right to use the term ‘international school’ in a school’s title” (p. 10). An independent accrediting body like the International Baccalaureate (IB) Organization does give accreditation to schools wishing to use the IB curriculum and be part of the IB schools community, but the decision whether the school should call themselves international or anything else is not made by the IBO. The accreditation of this title may happen within the national system itself; most importantly yet, the underlining idea of this accreditation is that “schools describe themselves as international schools for a variety of reasons including the nature of the student population and of the curriculum offered, and the school’s overall ethos or mission” (Hayden, 2006, p. 10).

Given the variations of international schools, it has always been a challenge to categorize these schools. Hill’s (2006) approach is to classify international schools in four types by including both the international and the national schools in the dimension. The first is a national school abroad and national program of home country. This school is like a national school in the home country except that it is located in a foreign country; this school usually puts the name of the nationality in its name, like American
International in Kuwait. The second type is a national school in home country and international program. An example of this type of schools is a registered IB school in the United States. The third is an international school with an international program, and the fourth type is an international school with national program of one or more countries which perhaps also include the program of the host country. It is important to remember that these groupings are relative to a country’s perspective.

Another critical factor for a school to consider themselves international is the curriculum they are choosing. Hayden (2006) notes that if we consider Lawton’s (1989) assertion that the curriculum is “a selection from the culture of a society, leading to a list of cultural priorities for schools in best maintaining and developing the culture” (p. 131), the discussion on the curriculum in an international school is apparently complex. From which culture is the curriculum to be drawn? Which or what kind of culture does the school desire? Yin (April, 2006) studies international curriculum offerings in Malaysian schools and argues that “International schools should be examining how compatible their curriculum offerings are with [the] students’ aspirations” (p. 2). Two of her concerns are on the language being used as the medium of instructions and in the test and whether both parents and students “are confident of their value” – the value that the international curriculum offers (Yin, April, 2006). A study on internationalization of higher education in Japan conducted by Tsunoyeshi (2005) also reveals some cultural dilemma brought by the “englishization” of universities in Japan.

The choice of curriculum is essentially related to the education outcome the country desires. As has been indicated by Stromquist (2002), globalization stimulates international competitiveness in education. The desired curriculum most likely to be
chosen by an international school, or any school that is going international, is therefore the one that provides a world-class education that prepares the students to be globally competitive. The problem is, “there is no international consensus on what constitutes ‘world-class’ education” (Resnick, Nolan, & Resnick, 1995). Linn and Baker (1995) argue that “the notion of world-class performance is fundamentally normative” (p. 407), like the use of world-class athlete to refer to an athlete who won a gold medal in the Olympics. The authors add that “it is in a normative sense that international assessments are most obviously relevant in defining world-class standards” (Linn & Baker, 1995, p. 407). Mislevy (1995) writes that in a broadest term, the purpose of international assessment is “to gather information about schooling in a number of countries and somehow use it to improve students’ learning” (p. 419). The author analyzes the measures used in an international assessment for the purpose of understanding what we can learn from an international assessment. The result of the analysis shows that the “international comparisons of achievement status provide little information to guide educational policy or instructional practice” (Mislevy, 1995, p. 432). He nonetheless suggests that the international assessments can be useful if accompanied with other in-depth studies nation-wide. The international assessment is a helpful indicator, yet it is not “the right answer” (Mislevy, 1995, 434) to solve the educational problems at the national or local levels. Similar finding is also presented by Linn and Baker (1995) when analyzing what the international assessment implies for world class standards. The authors conclude that it is important to assure that “there is a close match between subsets of international and national assessment tasks if we are to rely linking such data sets to
provide international benchmarks for performance of students on national assessments” (Linn & Baker, 1995, p. 416).

The International Standard School project is implemented within the framework of school-based management. This decentralization scheme in education administration is part of a bigger reform of national decentralization movement in Indonesia. The second section of this literature review will be divided in two parts. The first part is focused on literature on educational decentralization in general. The second part is a review of studies on educational decentralization in Indonesia.

C. Decentralization of Education

Over the past 15 years, decentralization has become one of the most significant themes in educational planning all over the world (McGinn & Welsh, 1999); it is “truly a global phenomenon” (Fiske, 1996, p. v). In general, decentralization can be understood as a transfer of authority. In Fiske’s definition, school decentralization “involves substantial shifts – or at least the perception of shifts – in power” (1996, p. v). McGinn and Welsh (1999) offer a longer definition of decentralization in education as follows:

“Decentralization is about shifts in the location of those who govern, about transfers of authority from those in one location or level vis-à-vis education organizations, to those in another level.” (p. 17).

The authors further list four possible locations of authority as “the central government; provincial, state or regional governing bodies; municipal, county or district governments; and schools” (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 17).
There are three major types of decentralization in terms of power and/or authority transfer (Litvack, Ahmad, & Bird, 1998; Rondinelli, 1984; Hanson, 2006): deconcentration, delegation, and devolution. In deconcentration, other and/or lower units in the organization accept bigger responsibility in policy implementation but are yet allowed to make a policy. In delegation, “a particular function or program is assigned to a decentralized entity” (Kaiser, 2006, p. 317). This also means that “the authority can be withdrawn at the discretion of the delegating unit” (Hanson, 2006, p. 10). Devolution as the furthest form of decentralization implies that “something is given back to an organization from which it had been taken” (Fiske, 1996, p. 18); “[the] unit can act without first asking permission” (Hanson, 2006, p. 10). Rondinelli (1990) adds another form of decentralization namely privatization by which he means a transfer of authority from public to private sectors.

Besides these four types of decentralization, Kaiser (2006) noted three dimensions of decentralization: fiscal, administrative and political. Fiscal dimension of decentralization is about transfer of authority in terms of revenues and expenditures. Administrative dimension is about the allocation of human resources, while political dimension refers to the authority over decision making. These three dimensions are apparently interrelated and integrated as a decision regarding revenue must also affect the personnel and be influenced by who has the authority to make the decision. Behrman, Deolalikar, and Soon (2002b) observe decentralization from the impacts this authority transfer could bring. The authors discuss the potential effects of three forms of decentralization: financial decentralization, management decentralization, and curricular decentralization. One of the impacts of financial decentralization is that the local government and schools could
use the money more effectively. On the other hand, as fiscal responsibilities are being transferred from central to the localities, there is a concern that the local units “lacking experience and skills in managing such funds, may use these funds inappropriately” (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002b, p. 31). Management decentralization leads to greater responsiveness to local conditions, (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002b), but there are also two major concerns from this kind of decentralization. The first concern is with regards to the traditional culture of the principals and the teachers. In a decentralized education management like SBM, principals and teachers change their role from being the employees to being employees as well as managers. Without sufficient training in management and accounting, “SBM would take decision-making power out of the hands of able administrators and put it into the hands of a group of arbitrary and contentious amateurs” (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002a, p. 32). The second concern from management decentralization is that management at the local units becomes less monitored. If the public is not well-informed about the decentralization, “the possibilities for sustained abuse or incompetence increase” (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002a, p. 33). Curricular decentralization accommodates the local preferences more for good and ill. It allows the localities to be more sensitive to local needs, but it also increases heterogeneity in terms of curriculum offerings across municipalities. Behrman, Deolalikar, and Soon (2002a) suggest the national government to “take on regulatory role to ensure that students from all municipalities and communities meet at least some basic learning and skill standards” (p. 34).

The trend towards decentralization in education is not without any cause. McGinn and Welsh (1999) identify three major factors for the appearance of decentralization. The
first is the political-economic factor where a shift towards a more local market-based
decision-making and privatization are preferred. The second is due to the criticism that,
along with the increasing enrollment in schools, the central government lacks of the
capacity to maintain quality. The emergence of new information and technology is
considered the third factor as the demand towards a more efficient management is
increasing. These three factors have given reasons for local agencies to advocate for a
less centralized government.

Studies of the education reforms in developing countries in South-East Asia have
identified five major issues of education that stimulate the emergence of decentralization.
The first is on school access; the proposal for decentralization is desirable as local units
will be able to pay more attention to the development of local schools, thereby increasing
the students’ enrollment. The second deals with school quality; with increasing number
of schools at the local level, classes may become smaller, and teaching and learning
become more efficient, thus improving the students’ achievement. The third issue is on
school financing. Centralized education finance places a huge burden on the central
government; by sharing the responsibilities to fund schools with local units, the central
government is relieved from the financial strain. The fourth issue is on school
management. Centralized management has caused a long and complex bureaucracy, by
decentralizing the management, the education service is expected to be more cost-
effective. The last one is the most important one—the information issue. Behrman,
Deolalikar and Soon (2002a) believes that “In a rapidly changing world with great
heterogeneities and substantial shocks, moreover, information imperfections are
unavoidable” (p. 21). The communities may expect to receive better information as businesses are managed at the local levels.

To sum up, decentralization involves transferring authority from one unit to other lower ones. There are three kinds of authority transfer: deconcentration, delegation, and devolution, with devolution being the most advanced. Decentralization can take different dimensions: fiscal, administrative, and political. Which dimension decentralization takes is influenced by the factors affecting it. The studies of decentralization identify three main factors: political-economic problems, concerns on the education quality, and the development of information and technology. In developing countries, the educational issues that lead to the proposal for decentralization are issues dealing with school access, school quality, school finance, school management, and information.

In response to these concerns, the trend of education management, especially in Asian countries (Chapman, 2002; Bjork, 2006), is now going towards decentralization. Does a decentralized administration of education mean the absence of a centralized one? Hanson (2006) argues “there is no such thing as a truly decentralized educational system … almost all decisions retain degrees of centralization and decentralization” (p. 11). It is like a pendulum movement (King, Swanson, & Sweetland, 2003); at one time some authority would be coming from the central government to the local, and at another time the authority would swing back from the local to the central. In addition, McGinn and Welsh (1999) remind us that “what we have achieved today is … made possible through centralization of the governance of education” (p. 27). Hence, a decentralized government is not an absolute mechanism of governance and is, instead, enabled by the
existence of centralized governance. After all, the “issue is finding the appropriate balance” (Hanson, 2006, p. 11). In Fiske’s (1996) view, it is essential to “arrive at an appropriate balance of political objectives and needs and to create consensus among the various actors in support of this balance” (p. 11).

Studies on numerous decentralization reforms in a number of countries in Latin-America and Asia successfully identify some goals of decentralization. McGinn and Welsh (1999) categorize them into three schemes: political, financial, and efficiency. These goals align with the factors of decentralization the authors have proposed earlier. Slightly different to that of McGinn and Welsh, Hanson (2006) terms the goals of decentralization as political, economical, organizational, and educational. The first three are similar to the schemes presented by McGinn and Welsh respectively, while the educational goal refers to the improved quality of education.

Fiske (1996) notes that decentralization reforms in Colombia, Chile and Spain are examples of decentralization as a means for political legitimacy, adding that Spain is probably “the most successful example of decentralization as a means of achieving strictly political ends” (p. 26). Hanson and Ulrich (1994, 328) as quoted by Fiske (1996) write that “the real contribution of school based management [in Spain] has little to do with improving administration capability; … it represents in a highly visible manner the practice of democracy” (p. 27). During the 1980s, education decentralization reforms in many Latin American countries were “a logical response to the process of political democratization” (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002a, p. 24) that was taking place in those countries.
Decentralized education reforms in Argentina, Mexico, and Chile are examples of decentralization for financial efficiency (Fiske, 1996). Behrman, Deolalikar, and Soon (2002a) report that education decentralization in Developing Member Country of the Asian Development Bank has been driven in large part by fiscal constraints, thus making financial efficiency one of the main goals of education reforms in those countries. The authors observe two forms of decentralization for financial efficiency. The first is community financing of education which is an increased involvement of the local communities to finance education. The second is demand-side financing which is a suggestion to distribute the educational funding through students rather than through educational institutions in the forms of vouchers, students loans, and stipends.

Decentralization towards a more efficient system of administration is found in several countries – Mexico, Minas Gerais, Chile, and the Philippines (Fiske, 1996). Behrman, Deolalikar, and Soon (2002a) also found the push of decentralization for more efficient system of administration. Like I have mentioned earlier, centralized education management means long and complex bureaucracy. By transferring some authorities to the lower units, the delivery of education service to the local communities is expected to be more efficient. One of the forms of decentralization that has been adopted by some developing countries is the School-Based Management (SBM) (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2000a). This arrangement is an effort to “increase school autonomy and to devolve decision making to teachers and sometimes to parents, students, and community leaders as well” (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002a, p. 25). According to the authors, SBM generally involves community members in decision making over three areas: budget, personnel and staffing, and curriculum/programs.
Education reforms that successfully improved the quality of education were demonstrated by New Zealand and Minas Gerais (Fiske, 1996). Prawda (1993) reported that in Chile, scores on the national standardized tests were lower during decentralization. Fiske (1996) adds that the score decline in Chile could have been caused partly by “the pressure on decentralized system to increase enrollment” (p. 24). Curriculum reform is one of the strategies to improve the quality of education. Decentralization in curriculum allows local government and schools to adjust the curriculum to the need of the students (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002a), yet there is a question on the readiness and the level of expertise the school has to make the plan work.

Further discussing the goals for decentralization, McGinn and Welsh (1999) note that most of the decentralization reforms seek to achieve a combination of these goals – political, financial, efficiency, and education, thus creating a complexity in strategies for meeting the policy objectives. As decentralization is about the shift of power from one decision maker to others, the authors ask one major question i.e. who should control education.

McGinn and Welsh (1999) propose 3 positions with respect to who are best to make a decision. The first is political legitimacy. This position legitimates an appointed agency over governance in education. Decisions taken in this position are “right or correct because the authority takes them, not because they agree with expert knowledge” (McGinn and Welsh, 1999, p. 31). In a democratic society, advocacy for decentralization that is concerned for political legitimacy is spurred by calls for increased participation of the citizens. The shifting in authority over school management increases the participation
of the principals and the teachers in decision making. However, this does not necessarily mean increased in participation of the citizens (McGinn & Welsh, 1999). Increased citizens’ participation in a decentralized school management is greatly influenced by the availability of the mechanism to ensure the citizens’ participation as well as the readiness of the citizens to participate. For example, schools which have greater authority to make decisions over the content of the curriculum might not necessarily involve the parents in the decision making process. In McGinn and Welsh’s view, “success of school-based management in a Political Legitimacy system depends on the ability of school administrators (at the district and the school level) to maintain the involvement of the community in decision making” (1999, 34). Further, the authors conclude that “Political Legitimacy reforms are feasible in ‘strong’ states, that is, in societies in which sharing power with local communities is not likely to lead to destabilization of the central government” (1999, 36), because these societies are likely to endure high levels of diversity.

The second position McGinn and Welsh (1999) propose is Professional Expertise. While actions taken in a political legitimacy position are considered correct or right because they are taken by an authorized body regardless of its expertise, actions taken in this position are highly dependent on the knowledge of the professionals. This position is derived from the premise that education is better left to professionals and/or trained persons. Nonetheless, authorized experts are “always ultimately under political control, especially in a democracy” (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 36) as these professionals are appointed by the government officials. On the other hand sample studies from India, France and the USA show that once the experts enter the civil service, “they are almost
totally free of political interference (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 36). The key point to arrive at this goal, therefore, is to ensure the policies are derived and implemented through the application of expertise. McGinn and Welsh (1999) sum up the Professional Expertise position as follows:

“The logic of the Professional Expertise perspective on governance assumes that there is a small set of ‘best practices’ which, if implemented, will in all circumstances result in high levels of performance. Decentralization makes sense, therefore, only if those who will make decisions at lower levels in the system know and can carry out the best practices. … ‘Democratic decentralization’, given this position, is easier to achieve in countries with highly homogenous populations with high or equitably distributed levels of education and training.” (pp. 41-42)

The third position McGinn and Welsh (1999) propose is Market Efficiency. Proponents of this position criticize the idea of professional expertise with an argument that the “rule by professionals is necessarily a form of tyranny in which people are forced to consume what others think is good for them” (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 42). They also criticize the idea of political legitimacy; they argue that “the political process [is] a means to satisfy the legitimate desires and ambitions of members of a society” (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 42). The proponents, therefore, claim that the market is “the best way to use information about what the people want and what satisfies them” (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 43). In the authors’ view, marketization of education is not the same as privatization because funding by private organization is neither necessary nor sufficient to create a market of education. McGinn and Welsh (1999) provide three conditions where education market could exist: “[when] there is variety in the quality and content of education provided, [when] consumers are informed about options, and [when]
consumers are able to choose among the options” (p. 44). Based on these requirements, the authors believe that there will be no market “if all public schools are the same [or] if the only alternative schools are too expensive, or located far away” (p. 44) or if parents/communities are not well-informed. Hence, market mechanism is possible in a public school system, creating opportunities for choices to the parents.

Another critical question to ask is about the timing; Hanson (2006) proposes three questions with regards to the time frame for processing decentralization. The questions are: 1) whether decentralization is possible during periods of national stress or crisis, 2) what an appropriate time frame for decentralization is, and 3) whether simultaneous or incremental decentralization is best. Hanson (2006) and Heywood (1995) agree that decentralization in education is possible during the periods of national social, economical, and/or political stress because local centers of forces would gather to protect the national interest. He nonetheless adds that too much stress (e.g. in wartime) definitely would not provide incentive for decentralization. In terms of time frame, Hanson (2006) believes that decentralization, like other types of social change, requires sufficient time for the process to take place. He suggests that “nations should think in terms of years rather than weeks or even months” (Hanson, 2006, p. 18). A weaker nation may need more time than a stronger one. Hanson (2006) also notes that “within that time frame there needs to be a sequence of specifically defined stages, each achieved before the next is undertaken” (p. 19). The last question the author asked is more on how a nation would begin the process, simultaneously or incrementally. Hanson (2006) argues that although the “all at once” mode is the popular one, it is extraordinarily difficult to execute successfully. He presented reforms in Venezuela (1968), Argentina (1978), and Colombia
(1991) as examples of how this quick yet dramatic change was not successful. Nicaragua adopted an incremental approach that was referred as “learning to swim by swimming” (Hanson, 2006, p. 19). The Minister of Education in Nicaragua formulated a decentralization law “only after reasonable assurance has been reached that a workable model has been identified and tested” (Hanson, 2006, p. 19).

McGinn and Welsh (1999) ask another fundamental question in planning decentralization in education: which decisions should be relocated. Using a study by Rideout and Ural (1993), the authors discuss how the countries in the study distribute the authority to make decisions on seven categories. The summary of the categories and the items included in each category is presented in Table 1. As for the locations where the decisions are to be made, Rideout and Ural (1993) studied 4 locations: central, regional, district, and local.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>policy, planning, and implementation</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>School Organization</td>
<td>structure and minimum requirements</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Financing</td>
<td>recurrent and development</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>in-service, pre-service, and management</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>subjects, content, textbooks, textbook provision, language policy, instructional methods, and evaluation of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>accreditation, examination, pupil promotions, discipline, data systems, and school evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>needs, conduct, and implementation</td>
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Table 1. Functions Distributed in Decentralization (Rideout and Ural’s, 1993)  
The study shows the arrangements for sharing authority for decisions about education were considerably varied across the categories and the countries. The study also shows that a decision could be made in more than one level of authority. McGinn and Welsh (1999) further presents a study by OECD as a comparison to Rideout and Ural’s (1993) research. The OECD’s study on a number of OECD’s member countries presents an indifferent conclusion: there was a significant variety. McGinn and Welsh (1999) write that “even in highly decentralized countries such as Ireland and New Zealand, significant proportions of decisions are made at levels other than the school; some decisions are made by the Central Government” (p. 56). The authors further explain that the complexity of the concept of decentralization also lies in what is meant by ‘authority to make decisions’. The OECD’s study define three modes of decision-making: complete autonomy; made after consultation with another authority at an adjoining level; made within guidelines established by another authority, generally at the highest level (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, pp. 57-58). From both studies, McGinn and Welsh (1999) conclude that “it makes little sense to talk of ‘decentralization’ as a unitary process or phenomenon; comparisons of countries or education systems as more or less decentralized hide a great deal of variation within those countries” (p. 60).

In sum, there are different reasons for decentralization, and these reasons are what determine the goals of a decentralization reform. The goals to arrive at are often in conflict with each other; the reform should therefore be planned carefully. Some questions the researchers propose to guide the planning are questions like who is best to make the decisions, when and how the time arrangement is to provide enough time for the process to work, and which and where a decision should be made. Even though the
shape of a decentralization reform and the factors in it are varied across countries, researchers are quite unison in terms of aspects to be met for a successful decentralization. The first aspect is the availability of political and/or technical support for the proposed changes, and the second aspect is the readiness of those involved in the reform (McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Hanson, 2006). Fiske (1996) and Hanson (2006) add another critical aspect i.e. the existence of consensus to collaborate among those involved in the process of decentralization. The authors provide some guidelines of conditions to be met and some recommendation on how to make the process successful.

Stakeholders of education are very diverse as they refer to any “persons or groups with a common interest in [education] and its consequences, and who are affected by it” (McGinn and Welsh, 1999, p. 76). Parents are probably a group of stakeholders most related to the education services. Political parties are probably in the other end of interested stakeholders of education. McGinn and Welsh (1999) categorize these diverse stakeholders into three groups: producers, distributors, and users. The producers include parties like textbook writers and publishers, food and uniform vendors, universities, and domestic and international agencies working for educational establishment. The distributors include parents groups, teachers unions, and school managers. The users are anyone “concerned with the use to which the results of education can be put” (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 80). This group of stakeholders is concerned primarily on the use-value of education and therefore has got the most say on the content of education. The authors note that “any given person or group may occupy more than one of these stakeholder categories”, depending on where in the cycle of decision-making their interest is relevant. McGinn and Welsh (1999) give an example that a parent may be a user – when s/he is
dealing with her/his interest on the education of her/his child, as well as a producer and a distributor as s/he works in the ministry of education.

These groups of stakeholders link four polarities that McGinn and Welsh (1999) further suggest are required capacities for effective decentralization. The polarities are constitution, rules, staff, and civic. Constitution polarity is the constitutional provision in respect of decentralization. The expected finding of an analysis of constitutional polarity should be that the constitutional guidelines authorize and support the decentralization of the governance of education. The second polarity – the rules – includes any regulations and/or procedures that are derived from the constitutional provisions. The expected outcome of a rules polarity analysis is a demonstration that the rules are supporting the decentralization. The staff polarity addresses the knowledge, skills, aptitudes and experiences of the staff. This polarity is considered capable of supporting decentralization if there is a human resource development and investment program to prepare the professional staff for the implementation of the decentralization. The last polarity, the civic polarity, is the capacity of the citizens to participate in the decentralization. There is evidence to show that the citizens are prepared for the decentralization is when there is “an inventory of the statutory and voluntary bodies involved in the education and training of citizens to execute their rights and duties as active citizens” (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 92).

The interactions between the polarities and the relationship with the stakeholders are represented as four domains of interaction: the legal domain, the bureaucratic domain, the civic domain, and the political domain (see Figure 1). The legal domain is the interaction
between the constitution and the rules; the bureaucratic domain is the interaction between the rules and the staff; the civic domain shows the interaction between the staff and the civic, while the political domain is the interaction between the civic and the constitution. According to McGinn and Welsh (1999), the stakeholders are the generators of the system, and the conflicting interests between the stakeholders are what set the system in a constant motion. This ongoing motion and the recurrent interactions between the polarities yield a “persistent state of disequilibrium and learning” (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 85); two conditions that the authors believe as the “preconditions for the system to be able to notice, learn, adapt, and achieve high levels of decentralization (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 85).

Hanson (2006) shares some agreement with McGinn and Welsh (1999) and identifies four centers of power that are essential for decentralization namely political parties, national and regional government institutions, teachers’ unions, and local citizens. Hanson (2006) emphasizes the importance of a common shared vision and collaboration among these centers of power. He believes that “the single most important force in determining the fate of a decentralization initiative is whether or not the main political parties have a shared vision about the course and content of the reform and agree to collaborate” (Hanson, 2006, p. 13). Hanson (2006) presents the Venezuelan (1968) and the Argentineans (1993) reforms as examples of unsuccessful decentralization caused by different visions and failed collaboration among the political parties. The second important component is collaboration with the major institutions of government. In Hanson’s perspective, “any one of these institutions [the ministries, the regional and locals] can do significant damage to a decentralization strategy if it chooses to pursue its
own model and refuses to compromise” (2006, p. 13). The third significant center of power is the teachers unions. It is vital that the teachers unions do not feel threatened by the transfer of authority in the decentralization process. The last critical component is the citizens. Hanson (2006) believes that “decentralization in education can only work if community members are prepared to put in the time and energy necessary to make the reform work” (p. 13). The author reemphasizes the importance of a shared vision and concludes that “the greater the accepted vision of decentralization within and between the distinct centers of power, the greater the chance of success” (Hanson, 2006, p. 13).

Fiske (1996) discussed the importance of consensus in a single chapter, implying that the author places a great emphasis on the role of consensus for the success of decentralization in education. The reason for pursuing a consensus is apparently because the term decentralization may have different meanings (Fiske, 1996). As shown by studies in some countries, lack of commitment among principal parties has led to failed projects of decentralization. New Zealand and Spain are two countries that made decentralization reforms successful through initially building a maximum public consensus (Fiske, 1996; Hanson, 2006). Researchers have agreed that to thrive on school decentralization and to ensure that it has positive impacts on the quality of teaching and learning, “it must be built on a foundation of broad consensus among the various interest groups affected by such a change” (Fiske, 1996, p. 35).

In order to build that public consensus, Fiske (1996) suggests eight steps for planners and policymakers. The first step is to identify stakeholders and their interests; the second is to build legitimate interests into the model; the third is to organize public discussion;
the fourth is to clarify the purpose of decentralization; the fifth is to analyze the obstacles to decentralization; the sixth is to respect the roles of various actors; the seventh is to provide adequate training and the eighth is to develop a monitoring system. Fiske (1996) puts emphasis on the seventh step – to provide adequate training – as he argues that “consensus is not possible unless everyone in a position to pull his or her weight”; by which he means that participants in decentralization reforms “must be prepared to take on their new roles and responsibilities” (pp. 36-37). Similar argument is presented by McGinn and Welsh (1999) as they conclude that “if a local group is not willing, not prepared and lacks of resources, decentralization will fail to achieve the objectives held for it” (p. 94).

Behrman, Deolalikar, and Soon (2002a) added several other factors that might influence the success of decentralization. Beside local school management capabilities and local parental and community capabilities, the authors believe information, vested interests, incomplete decentralization, and competition are critical factors affecting the desired decentralization reform. Information is crucial because it affects the community’s ability to make informed choices. Vested interests may be problematic when the actors in the decentralization reform prefer the traditional centralized system as it gives them more benefit. The authors suggest implementing a whole package of decentralization simultaneously to avoid incomplete decentralization, a condition where one element contradicts with others. For example, in condition where a localized curriculum is implemented together with the implementation of a national standardized test, “local schools have little flexibility in tailoring the content of their education programs to local needs and capabilities” (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002a, p. 37). Alas, the authors
noted that competition is important “to circumvent some of the information problems and to induce more effective delivery of education services” (Behrman, Delolalikar, & Soon, 2002a, p. 37).

The literature by the authors reviewed above suggests three critical factors towards successful decentralization. First thing first, political and technical support should be available or otherwise, the reform will be moving without any direction and will face a lot of difficulties as no technical assistance is provided. The readiness of every party involved in the process is the second most crucial element in decentralization reform. All actors—political actors, private sectors, education practitioners, and community—in the system must be able to play the role and to work together to bring about change. Another essential element for successful decentralization reform is the existence of consensus. Sufficient training and information are two keys to build consensus. We will now review the process of education decentralization in Indonesia.

D. Decentralization of Education in Indonesia

The economic crisis that overwhelmed countries in Asia around 1997 was a huge blow to Indonesian economic and political stability. Following months of massive riot and restless demonstrations by students, the then reigning – President Soeharto was forced to resign from his administration in 1998. His successor, President Habibie, soon attempted to calm down this oscillation through several not-less-dramatic changes in the country’s governance like the introduction of free elections and the political transformation towards a more democratic government (Liddle, 2008). A dramatic change on educational governance was influenced by two laws issued in 1999 – laws no.
22 and no. 25; these two laws lay a foundation for a new decentralization policy of public administration. Law no. 22 on regional government directs the abolition of hierarchical relationship between the central government and the subordinate authorities, which used to be strictly tight. Law no. 25 on financial responsibility regulates a new system of revenue and spending sharing between the central government and the localities. Even though enacted in 1999, these two laws were not taken into action until 2001. Hence, the year of 1997 and 2001 mark the turning points of education reform movement in Indonesia. A review on the condition of Indonesian education before 1997, during the transition, and after 2001 is presented below.

D.1 Education in Indonesia before 1997

International organizations like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) reported that before the economic crisis in 1997, Indonesia had an outstanding performance in providing basic educational services (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002b; Bjork, 2005; Kristiansen & Pratikno, 2006). The government succeeded in abolishing the school fees for primary schools in 1973\(^1\) (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002b). This applauded achievement was caused by the economic boost around the 1970s, when a huge amount of block grant from windfall oil revenues were used to construct thousands of primary schools and to abolish school fees in public elementary schools (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002b; Kristiansen & Pratikno, 2006). Another indication of the government’s success in providing basic education for all was the 100 percent enrollment rate of students in primary schools; “With the infrastructure in place

\(^1\) Kristiansen and Pratikno (2006) noted a slightly different year; according to the authors, the “primary school fees in the public sector were officially abolished in 1977” (p. 5).
and crash program to train a large numbers of teachers, universal primary schooling was achieved by 1983” (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002b, p. 27). In 1989, the government was committed to extending basic education from 6 years to 9 years; hence every Indonesian child has since been required to attend 6 years of primary school and 3 years of junior high. Another push to government’s commitment towards providing 9 years of basic education was the abolishment of school fees in junior high schools in 1994. Despite of the government’s achievement in improving primary schooling, secondary enrolment rates remained lower especially among the lower income families regardless of the free school fees policy. The government’s focus on delivering primary education seems “to have traded off access to secondary schooling for large segments of the population, namely the poor and particularly those in the rural areas” (Behrman, Deolalikar & Soon, 2002b, p. 27).

The quality of education also did not match the impressive enrollment rate in primary schooling. The students’ scores in the national exam indicate low student achievement (Triaswati, 2000). Reports from the World Bank and the ADB in 1998 show upon the completion of basic education, the number of students lacking competencies in some basic skills like reading and numeric remained high. The reports also indicate that this poor quality was due to lack of revenue per pupil.

The management of primary and secondary schooling was largely centralized, highly bureaucratic, and complex. The decision making on the content of basic education was in the hand of the MONE, while the human resources and the infrastructures were under the administration of the Ministry of Home Affairs. According to Behrman, Deolalikar and
Soon (2002b), this duality in education governance “has resulted in ambiguity of managerial roles and responsibilities that led to neglect of the quality of basic education” (p. 29). On the other hand, secondary education was managed solely by the MONE, still with the exception of the religious schools which were managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

In terms of budgeting and financing the education, both public and private schools in Indonesia received a certain amount of support from the central government and the parents. Support from the central government to private schools was in the form of hiring teachers, while parental contribution was in the form of entrance fees, monthly instructional fees, and extra miscellaneous fees. Parents who enrolled their children in elementary and junior high public schools were not charged for the instructional fees since these fees were abolished in 1970s and in 1994. They still, however, paid some contributions in the form of entrance fees that were directed to maintaining and improving the school facilities.

There were five models of curriculum issued in-between the Indonesia’s declarations of independence and 1997. The first education minister of the new Republic of Indonesia issued the first national curriculum in 1947, two years after the country’s proclamation. This curriculum is referred to as Separate Subject Curriculum (Abdullah, May, 2007); the subjects taught in schools during the implementation of this curriculum were clearly separated from each other. Due to the concerns on the remoteness of the subjects, the successor minister of education released a new curriculum in 1968 entitled Correlated Subject Curriculum (Abdullah, May, 2007). Despite the attempt to make the subjects
more correlated to one another, the content of the subjects was still very much theoretical and unrelated to real life application. The newer curriculum issued in 1975 provide a set of general and specific instructional objectives. In terms of organization, this curriculum was much more integrated and comprehensive than the previous model (Abdullah, May, 2007).

In 1984, another model of curriculum was introduced to the Indonesian national education system. The philosophy underlying the development of this curriculum was that learning was a continuous process and that learning materials were supposed to be updated to suit the development and the needs of the society (Abdullah, May, 2007). When this curriculum was being implemented, there was already an informal discourse among the educational experts on integrating local component into the national curriculum. This is probably the earliest sign of curriculum decentralization.

Later, in a national conference of the Center for Curriculum Development in 1986, the members were proposing this idea (Abdullah, May, 2007; Bjork, 2005). In the following year, the Ministry of Education (then the Ministry of Education and Culture) issued a decree mandating the implementation of Local Content Curriculum nationally (Bjork, 2005).

The pilot project was unfortunately not very successful; then in 1994, a new version of Local Content Curriculum was made a formal component of the new national curriculum called the Objective Based Curriculum that was issued in the same year (Bjork, 2005; Abdullah, May, 2007). This latest curriculum received a lot of criticism as being too packed and too heavy (Abdullah, May, 2007), and schools did not seem to be
able to achieve the intended objectives (Bjork, 2005). Further discussion on the implementation of this first model of decentralized curriculum is presented in the following section.

D.2 Education in Indonesia between 1997 and 2001

In the beginning of the horrendous economic crisis in 1997, the pressure on the government’s existing commitment and plan to maintain the availability of education for all was very profound. Even before the economic crisis, the large expansion of primary school enrollment had put the government under pressure to find ways of financing the education of practically every child in the country. The financial constraints and the concerns on the inefficiency of education administration that was widely associated with the centralized governance have given incentive to start decentralizing the education management (Behrmann, Deolalikan, & Soon, 2002b). In order to reduce the heavy weight put on the government’s shoulder, the new administration under President Habibie passed two laws - Law No. 22 year 1999 and Law No. 25 year 1999 - regulating the transfer of authority and the sharing of financial responsibility between the central government and the regional government.

There is not a lot of literature available online discussing the impacts of the economic crisis on the access to schooling or the quality of schooling during these four years of transition. In terms of access to schooling, the statistics data available on the Website of the MONE may not be useful to draw a conclusion on the correlation between the fiscal capacities of the central government to the number of students earning basic education. Data on the cohort of pupils of primary schools show that the number of students is
continuously decreasing from grade to grade, both before and after 1997. The graduation rates from the academic years of 1994/1995 to 2000/2001 keep increasing, while the continuing rates in the same academic years are fluctuating for unidentified factors. A significant decrease from 55 percent to 51 percent could be observed in the continuing rates between the academic years of 1996/1997 to 1997/1998. It might be an indication of an impact of the economic crisis. Yet, the continuing rates in the following five years are either the same or increasing, hence negating the interpretation that the economic crisis gave a significant impact on the number of secondary school enrollment. Detailed information on this is presented in Appendix C: Students Enrollment Rates. Data on the students’ scores on the national exams during these four years was not available either.

In the matter of educational management, there was a growing discourse of School Based Management (SBM) amidst the proposals for decentralization that came to the public’s attention in these years. It is not very clear when the proposal for SBM was initially approved, but it is clear that it was not until the issuance of the two laws in 1999 that this scheme became a part of the national decentralization movement (Indriyanto, September 2003). Since the nation-wide implementation of this new framework of educational management was practically started along with the implementation of the two laws on regional autonomy in 2001, discussions on this decentralized education administration will be presented in section D.3.

The Local Content Curriculum (LCC) that was introduced earlier in mid 1990s was the major theme in the curriculum debates during these transition years. Christopher Bjork conducted an ethnographical research on the implementation of this curriculum in
several junior high schools in East Java. The study that was conducted for 14 months around 1997 captures the day to day picture of how the schools interpreted and carried out the mandate to implement this novel curriculum. The goal for the implementation of this LCC policy is to allow schools to adjust the curriculum with the local needs. School principal and teachers are put in the position of experts who know best what the local communities need and are given the authority to develop a curriculum to suit those needs.

Bjork’s (2005; 2006) studies did not find any significant change in the curriculum development and in the practice of the teachers and the school administrators, and the parents. Bjork (2006) reported that in the interview, the teachers and the principals “highlighted the importance of matching the curriculum to local conditions” (p. 141). Schools did reorganize and change the label of the courses “to comply with LCC policy directives, but the substance of what students studied remained constant” (p. 141). The deep-rooted traditional top-down system seems to be the main impediment to the success of the curriculum reform. In the old administration, public school teachers were kept in their comfort zone of receiving instruction and guaranteed security in their salary. So instead of becoming encouraged to make a change, school administrators and teachers “are clinging to behaviors that brought them security in the past; … they are rejecting opportunities to increase their levels of responsibility” (Bjork, 2006, p. 136; Bjork, 2005, p. 127). In terms of local community involvement, there seems to be no evidence either, that schools were capable of involving parents in the decision-making process. Schools interpret increased parental involvement as increased parental financial contribution (Bjork, 2006). This was not what the policy designers had expected. The MONE had wanted the schools to involve parents in the school management, including in the
curriculum development. Yet Bjork (2006) found that “Local educators and parents appear to have developed a definition of “parental participation” that does not match the MONE’s interpretation of that phrase” (p. 139). Bjork’s (2006) concluded the plan to transfer the authority over curriculum reform to local schools was too ambitious. The history of school leadership in Indonesia did not prepare school administrators and teachers to exercise authority in school management and instructional development. In addition to this history factor, there was “inadequate training and a shortage of materials” (Bjork, 2005, p. 127).

D.3 Education in Indonesia from 2001 to present

National decentralization reform that was stimulated by the economic and financial crisis in the late 1990s led to the implementation of SBM in Indonesian schools. Research on SBM has focused mainly on the impact this management scheme has brought to the school administration and school finance. Kristiansen and Pratikno (2006) study the impacts of education decentralization in 3 districts on administration and service delivery, on quality of schooling from the parents’ perspective, on costs charged on households, and on school accessibility. The authors found that a number of negative consequences of the education decentralization reform. First, there was “a total lack of transparency and accountability in government spending on education” (Kristiansen & Pratikno, 2006, p. 18). Second, the education costs per households were much higher than the previous three years. Third, there was a significant variability on the school enrollment rate, with a remote district being the lowest. Interestingly, based on the interview with the parents, Kristiansen and Pratikno (2006) found that parents thought education quality was higher
now than before the decentralization. According to the author, however, the increasing educational cost may have created “a feeling of quality improvement among parents” (Kristiansen & Pratikno, 2006). The authors further propose some suggestions for more community participation, governmental financial support, and political education for the lower units.

Sumintono (2006) conducted a qualitative study on the implementation of SBM in Mataram district and analyzed it against literature on SBM. The analysis was focused on the policy, the devolved authority and the community involvement at the national’s, districts’, and stakeholders’ perspectives. The author found that the regulation lacked of clarity (Sumintono, 2006); “The regulation did not establish obligatory institutions as mandated, nor did it offer clear statements about the transfer of powers for community involvement at district and school levels” (Sumintono, 2006, p. 199). It raises a serious concern as to what authorities the districts and the schools have. A similar problem was found in the matter of community involvement. The study found a merely superficial participation from the community at the district and school level due to the lack of clarity of what could be expected from the community. The community involvement was found “exclusive in relation to fundraising” (Sumintono, 2006, p. 205). Lack of clarity on the policy definitions seems to be the major cause of all the confusion and ambiguity found in the study.

The LCC was implemented until around 2004 when a proposal for a curriculum called the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) was submitted. This curriculum was submitted.

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2 I contacted Pratikno to inquire if the interview questions included curriculum as one of the items; he replied it did not, and added that the authors’ focus was more on general perspective on decentralization.
attempted in a pilot project for about a year before in 2005, the government passed a bill revising the CBC and renamed it Curriculum at Each Education Unit. This most recent curriculum is named *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* (KTSP) which I translated as Curriculum at Each Education Unit. KTSP is an effort by the government to decentralize the education management, which means the curriculum is to be designed and developed at a district and/or school level. The rationale behind the making of this policy is to accommodate the diversity of students’ demography and the inequalities of students’ academic performance in one area and in other areas in Indonesia, and to promote the richness of local cultures. KTSP shares one major commonality with LCC; both curriculums are designed at the school level, which means both require teachers’ expertise and autonomy.

In sum, decentralization of education in Indonesia might have started as early as 1994 when the authority to design the curriculum was redistributed to schools, but the official movement was started in 2001 along with the enactment of the regional autonomy law. The main goal of the reform, which was largely driven by the economic and political instability, is management efficiency which was translated into the implementation of SBM scheme. The national curriculum has evolved over time, from centralized to decentralized. Studies on the impacts of decentralization on access to schooling and the quality of education that have been conducted so far have not identified a satisfying progress in Indonesian schooling. The International Standard School (SBI) project is one of the initiatives taken in the current education reform. An analysis on the likeliness of the project to help improving the quality of education in Indonesia will contribute to the national efforts to provide better education for the community.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The International Standard School policy is relatively new and has become one of the recent public debates on education in Indonesia. There is a limited body of research on the policy and on how the policy is being implemented. While the policy is still on its initial implementation stage, a study on the policy will contribute to better implementation of the policy. The purpose of this study is to identify the likeliness of the International Standard School project to achieve the intended goal. To arrive at the answer, two sub-questions have been prepared. The first is to define the project and the second is to analyze if the system is ready for successful implementation of the project. The literature review presented on the previous chapter serves as the scientific foundation for the analysis. This chapter describes the data to be analyzed and the analysis approach to be introduced.

A. Types and Sources of Data

There are generally two types of data in policy research: documents and people (Bardach, 2009). Documents are “anything that has to be read” (Bardach, 2009, p. 69), for example: books, journal articles, government reports, statistical archives, and newspapers. People are any “single individual or a group, who is to be consulted in person” (Bardach, 2009, p. 69). This study uses only document type of data.
The documents I collected are in the form of: copies of the constitutional law, copies of handbooks, guidelines, and rules related to the policy, research articles on the policy and related policies, statistical archives published by the government, and newspaper editorials and articles. These documents were collected from different sources. Some soft-copies of the constitutional law, and other official policy documents like the statistical archives were downloaded from the websites of the Ministry of National Education (MONE) and the Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education Management (DGPSEM). I gathered some hard-copies of other documents like the handbooks and the guidelines of the policy with a help from a couple of acquaintances in Indonesia. Below is the list of official policy documents that I collected accompanied with a short description of the contents.

- Act of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20, Year 2003 on National Education System: this law is enacted by the House of Representative and the President of Indonesia. This document revises the nation’s education provisions and stipulates the education reform. I downloaded the official English version of this Act.

- Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 19, Year 2005 on National Education Standards: this regulation is published by the central government as a result of legislative consultation. This document stipulates the minimum standards of national education.

- Minister Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20, Year 2005 on National Examination Academic Year of 2005/2006: this regulation is published by the MONE. It lays the foundation for the use of national examination in Indonesian schools.
- Targets to International Standard National School: this handbook was published in 2005 by the DGPSEM. It contains the standards of the International Standard Schools.

- Guidelines for the Implementation of the International Standard School Initiative, High School Level: this handbook was published by the DGPSEM in 2007. This document contains the explanation of the policy and the guidelines for the implementation of the project; it is intended to be used by the school leaders.

- Implementation System of the International Standard School, for Primary and Secondary Education: this handbook was published by the DGPSEM in 2007. This document is similar to the document above, except that it contains general information for both primary and secondary levels.

- Guidelines for Quality Assurance of International Standard School/Madrasyah, for Primary and Secondary Levels: this handbook was published by the Department of National Education in 2007. This document contains the indicators of accomplishment of the implementation of the project.

I collected approximately 20 newspaper editorials and articles published between 2002 and 2009. The reason I selected the articles published during these years is because the policy was enacted in 2003, and the SBM policy was enacted in 2001. Almost all of the newspaper articles were printed from the newspapers’ websites. I mainly gathered the articles from two major newspaper publishers in Indonesia: The Jakarta Post and Kompas. The Jakarta Post is the first and probably the only national newspapers published in English. Articles retrieved from Kompas are all in Bahasa Indonesia. The list of the newspaper articles are provided in Appendix D: Newspaper Articles.
B. Analysis Approach

There are two questions to discuss in the analysis in seeking an answer to the thesis question. The first question is: what is the International Standard School project? The second is: how are the conditions required for successful policy implementation being met? The international standard school is both an internationalism movement and a decentralization reform. In order to answer the first question therefore, I approached the phenomenon of SBI from two perspectives. The first approach was to look at the SBI project using the perspective of international school, and the second was using the perspective of decentralization in education.

The trend of internationalism in schools that is largely driven by globalization process (Dolby & Rahman, 2008; Stromquist, 2002) has been examined in a large amount of research, and the findings have suggested that the term “international” in education is ambiguous and should thereby be used with caution. More recent studies on international education are leaning towards examining the ideology of internationalism and international mindedness (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004). The authors observe that a more common interpretation of international school is that it offers international education (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004), but Hayden (2006) argues that even when a school calls itself an international school, that does not mean “whatever education it offers should be described as ‘international education’” (p. 6). Hayden (2006) also suggests that an international school accreditation maybe given at the national level, instead of granted by an international accrediting body, as there is not any international organization that “can grant the right to use the term ‘international school’ in a school’s
Researchers in international schools have attempted at classifying the types (Hill, 2006), and examining the curriculum choices (Hayden, 2006; Yin, April 2006) and the influence of international comparisons on school policies (Resnick, Nolan, & Resnick, 1995; Linn & Baker, 1995; Mislevy, 1995). Discussion on SBI from the international school perspective would cover analysis on the definition, the curriculum, and the accreditation of an SBI and examine the relation between the reports of international assessments to the policy.

Education decentralization has been a major theme in educational planning in the past 15 years (McGinn & Welsh, 1999). Researchers on this field have proposed a number of approaches to understanding education decentralization. Litvack, Ahmad, and Bird (1998), Rondinelli (1984), and Hanson (2006) are among the prominent researchers who identify the types of decentralization in terms of authority transfer. Kaiser (2006) classifies education decentralization into three dimensions; Behrman, Deolalikar, and Soon (2002a) observe decentralization from its impacts on education. McGinn and Welsh (1999) and Hanson (2006) examine the factors and the goals of decentralization. Fiske (1996) studies decentralization in Latin American countries, while Behrman, Deolalikar and Soon (2002) focus their studies on education decentralization in developing countries in Asia. The competing interests on decentralization are further studied using questions of who the actors are (McGinn & Welsh, 1999), when and how the policy is best implemented (Hanson, 2006; Heywood, 1995), and where the location of authority transfer is (McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Rideout & Ural, 1993). Based on the aforementioned literature, discussion on the SBI project from the perspective of education decentralization covers five questions: what, why, who, when, and where. The questions
are as follows: 1) what type and dimension of decentralization could this SBI project be classified into?; 2) what is the impetus for this initiative? And what is the purpose?; 3) who are the authorities in this project?; 4) how is the time arrangement for the implementation of the project?; 5) where is the allocation of authority transfer in the implementation of this project?

In sum, to answer the first sub-thesis question, the SBI project was analyzed against the literature on international school and education decentralization. After answering the first question, an analysis on the policy documents was conducted to examine the likeliness of the project to be successful. The focus of the analysis was on the readiness of the system to implement the policy.

For the purpose of this analysis, I applied a model developed by McGinn and Welsh (1999)—the four polarities. The model is shown in Figure 1 below.

![Decentralization Polarities](source.png)

**Figure 1. Decentralization Polarities**
*Source: McGinn & Welsh (1999, p. 84)*

The four polarities in the analysis are constitutional polarity, rules polarity, staff polarity and civic polarity. Box number 1 represents the legal domain i.e. the relationship between
the constitutions and the regulations. Box number 2—the bureaucratic domain—represents the relationship between the regulations and the staff. Box number 3 is the civic domain, representing the relationship between the staff and the civic. Box number 4 is the political domain, showing the relationship between the civic and the constitutions. Notice that the arrows are bidirectional, indicating that the relationship is always in motion.

On the constitutional and organic law polarity section, I analyzed the constitutional documents that I collected for the impact on the SBI policy. On the rules polarity, I analyzed the policy definitions and instructions provided in the act and the handbooks authored by the Ministry and the Directorate. In the staff polarity, I analyzed some excerpts from the policy handbooks published by the Directorate and from the newspaper articles for staff requirements and the mechanism of authority transfer. In the civic polarity, I analyzed the same documents and related newspaper articles for the government expectations on community involvement and the public commentaries on the policy. Figure 2 below summarizes the approaches to the first and the second questions in this study.

Figure 2. Analysis Approach
I picture the SBI project as a ball on a curved plate. The SBI project is at least bi-dimensional because it appears as an attempt to internationalize schools in Indonesia—especially public schools, as well as an initiative within a greater decentralization reform movement in the country. This is why understanding an SBI should come from two perspectives: international school (left box) and decentralization in education (right box). The idea of placing the ball in a curved plate—instead of a flat plate—is from the understanding that, since SBI is a newly enacted policy, there should be a room for the initiative to wiggle in any directions necessary. The ball may not stay perfectly still as a social change never does. The HOW word under the plate represents the conditions to be met to support the project. It is intentionally left without any shape (not a triangle or else) because the conditions are flexible and should remain flexible to accommodate a change. The colors in the figure do not represent any significant meaning. After the analysis, I summarized the results on Chapter 5 along with my recommendations for improving the policy.
This chapter presents analysis on the SBI project. The policy documents and commentaries are analyzed against the literature reviewed on Chapter 2. The method for the analysis is presented on Chapter 3. Discussions on this chapter are organized in the manner I explain on the previous chapter.

A. The International School Perspective of the SBI Project

The International Standard School project is a policy initiated as part of the current education reform in Indonesia. The ultimate goal of this policy is to produce globally competitive students. Defined in the policy documents, an international standard school is “a national school that prepares the students based on the national education standards and offers an international standard [education] by which the graduates are expected to have international/global competitiveness” (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007 p. 3). The term International Standard School—more locally known as SBI—is not merely a popular jargon to call this type of school but is indeed an official accreditation title given to a public or a national private school that has fulfilled a set of requirements formulated by the MONE. Two critical requirements of an SBI are: the school must satisfy the national standards, and makes some adaptation and/or adoption from an international standard. The notions of “international” and “standards” are therefore very crucial in understanding this policy.
More frequently used in this so called globalization age, the word international in education is continuously contested as it can mean very general as well as very contextual. Adding to the debates, studies on international schools have found that there is not any international organization that could guarantee accreditation title of an international school and thus the accreditation is more likely to be defined and determined at a national level. In this International Standard School project, the term means anything but national, with a substantial tendency referring to developed countries. I draw this conclusion from the statements in the policy documents as follows:

“If a school has been able to achieve the national standards, subsequently it can be developed to achieve international standard” (“Panduan Penyelenggaraan,” 2007, p. 3),

“The graduates of SBI are expected, besides achieving the national standards, to have the key global skills needed to be equal with their cohorts from developed countries” (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” p. 4), and

“An International Standard School/Madrasyah is a school/madrasyah that fulfills all the national standards of education and is enriched in reference to an educational standard of a member country of the Organization for Economic and Co-operation and Development and/or other developed country that has a particular eminence in education so to have competitiveness in international forum” (MONE, 2007, p. 12).

The first excerpts is an If phrase indicating future probability that if a certain condition has been achieved—the national standards, a further process can be taken—international standardization. The second excerpt contains the word “beside” which indicates an equal comparison between one aspect—the national standards, and another—the global skills. Graduates of an SBI thereby are expected to have both qualifications equally. The third
excerpt contains a clause “is enriched” which indicates an addition to a feature—the national standards. Further, the clause is followed by a direction to the second aspect to be added—an educational standard of a developed country. Altogether, the above statements imply that the term “international” embedded in the school status refers to idealism that an *SBI is more than just a regular national school and has a quality equal to the education in a developed country.*

Given the understanding that the term international may refer to a developed country, the word standard coupled with the word international thus may refer to the education provision in that developed country. A formula found in the guideline book defines an SBI as: \( SNP + X \), with SNP refers to the national education standard, and X merely described as activities to enrich, extend, and improve the SNP. What is supposed to be taken from a foreign model so an SBI could enrich, extend, and improve the SNP? The document directs that the activities of improving the SNP are to be carried out “through adaptation or adoption of education standard from the country or foreign country, that is believed to have quality reputation renowned internationally” ("Sistem Penyelenggaraan," 2007, p. 7). Unfortunately the activity to adapt or to adopt a foreign education standard as prescribed in the quotation above is very little further clarified.

In the curriculum section of the list of requirements, the policy documents mention that an international standard curriculum is to be used in addition to the national curriculum. Referring to the previous excerpt, the expected curriculum to be adapted thus may mean the curriculum from one of those countries, or the curriculum published by educational institutions like the Cambridge and the IBO. As specific as it may seem,
however, it is not clear to what extent the adaptation or the adoption is allowed or how an SBI could determine which foreign curriculum suits the school best. The only instruction found in relation to this matter is that the adoption/adaptation must not be against Pancasila, the ideology of the country. This is an arduous task for the school administrators because this requirement means they need to be able to compare and contrast some foreign curriculum and make a choice. Ying (April, 2006) argues the international curricula being offered in Malaysian international schools are suitable to the students population being served. Her concerns are on the language being used and whether parents are aware of the value. Dharmawan and Kuan (November 9, 2008) admit that the trend of importing an international curricula in Indonesian schools is booming, but “finding the correct balance between Indonesian and international curricula is a very tedious task that may not be very feasible to accomplish fully in reality.” (Dharmawan & Kuan, November 9, 2008, pp. 1-2)

Another indication of what the government refers to as an international standard for an SBI is shown in a section explaining the accreditation of an SBI.

“SBI accreditation standard uses the school accreditation standards formulated by the National School Accreditation Body plus an international standard owned by the SBI partner abroad [developed country]. The international standard here for example refers to IB, Cambridge, ISO, IMO, TOEFL, and IELTS” (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007, p. 10).

This statement does not only imply that an SBI should apply for an accreditation from an international organization, it also implies that an SBI will earn two accreditations, one from the official national accreditation body, and the second is from an international
organization. The question now is: what is the expected benefit from having two accreditations? What appears to me as a benefit from having a national accreditation and an international accreditation is that the school is guaranteed the national standards as well as an acknowledgement from the international forum. Like in other developing countries, this international acknowledgement might have been seen critical in this era of global competition. Apparently, Indonesia expects that the more public schools acquiring an international accreditation, the firmer Indonesia would stand before the international community. Researchers have studied the use of the term “world-class” in education and found an analogy of it to the “world-class” status of an athlete. Using this as a reference, acquiring an international accreditation for an SBI will then become like winning a ticket to participate in the Olympics of education.

Research in international benchmarking has suggested that the reports from the international comparison studies like PISA have influenced many education reforms significantly in several different ways. Some countries design standardized national tests in accordance to the test used in the model country; some other countries adapt the teaching methodologies, while some schools in some countries decide to offer an IB certificate. The last example is probably the closest to what the government of Indonesia is idealizing for the project. Even though it is not limited to the IBO, the policy documents do mention the IBO as one of the potential partners, as shown in the following excerpt:

“an SBI needs to find an international partner like schools in the US, UK, Australia, Germany, France, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore whose quality has been renowned internationally, and training centers, industries, international

The statement above is quite specific in naming some model countries but ambiguous as it mentions TOEFL/TOEIC as a potential partner. The first obvious error in the above statement is to call TOEFL/TOEIC as an institution to build partnership with. The statement might actually have been expected to mean that teachers and students are supposed to have a certain level of English proficiency, and indeed, the guidelines do mention a certain set of TOEFL scores to be attained by the teachers and the school administrators and a passing score in English subject for students (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007a). I will give further explanation on this later in the discussion, but so far this point, the statement implies the government is not so clear in what they mean by building partnership with an international organization. The second problem with the statement above lies on the word partner itself; the kind of relationship described in that statement is more likely an instant one-way relation rather than a mutual and prolonged cooperation. Some of those multinational organizations are for-profit organizations that offer standardized certification; to “partner” with them would actually mean to buy their products and/or services. With the foreign countries on the list, there is a greater opportunity for partnership as an SBI could arrange a form of exchange, like a student exchange program or research collaboration. Yet, when it comes to borrowing the model country’s curriculum, the relationship will be similar to that with the multinational organizations; the product is ready made, and an SBI will simply use it without giving anything in return.
In sum, the word international standard attached in the name of the school is used to indicate that the school has fulfilled the national standards and provides quality education equal to that in a developed country. The main characteristic of an SBI is shown in the effort of the school to adopt and/or adapt an internationally renowned standard in addition to the national standards. The adoption appears to be in the form of curriculum borrowing and the adaptation is in the form of accreditation from an international organization. This arrangement is unfortunately not clear in at least two ways. First, the choice of the accrediting body or the curriculum to adopt is unclear, and second, to what extent the curriculum adoption is allowed. These two matters have been left to the discretion of the schools, a possibly reasonable gesture considering that this policy is introduced along with the recommendation for school-based management.

B. The Education Decentralization Perspective on the SBI Project

Researchers in education decentralization offer a number of approaches to understanding a decentralization policy. Based on the type of authority transfer, decentralization is classified into three groups: deconcentration, delegation and devolution (Livack, Ahmad, & Bird, 1998; Rondinelli, 1984; Hanson, 2006). In the SBI project, authority is transferred from the central government to the provincial and the district governments and to the schools.

The DGPSEM (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007, pp. 56-58) has prepared some guidelines explaining how the authorities and the functions are distributed between the central government, the provincial government, the district government, and the school. There are 7 classifications of tasks to be distributed among the authorities: 1) policy
making and standardization, 2) planning and finance, 3) curriculum, 4) facilities and infrastructures, 5) teachers and staff, 6) management, and 7) quality control. Due to the complexity of the details, the analysis will focus on significant proportions of authority transfer for these tasks.

Four of 5 items in the authority to make policies and to formulate standards rely heavily on the central government. The only function shared relatively equally among the authorities is in developing the system and information model of an SBI. Each of the authority collects and updates data for each of its administration. The power to make financial arrangement is placed equally between the four authorities, with each making arrangement for its administration. The general revenue sharing in the decentralization process in Indonesian governance is 50% on the central, 30% on the provincial, and 20% on the district. It is not clear, however, how the exact revenue sharing is for this SBI project. It could be assumed that, since the school is allowed to plan and manage the school budget, school administrators can always raise additional funding through the PTA. For decisions over curriculum, the school has the biggest portion of authority to design and develop the curriculum and the syllabus while higher authorities coordinate and supervise the schools.

The next task on the distribution of authority in the implementation of the SBI policy is on facilities and infrastructures. This authority is largely located on the central and the intermediary governments, with a slightly bigger emphasis on the provincial and district governments. Schools are given the responsibility to appropriately use and maintain the facilities and the infrastructures; the central government plans and sets the minimum requirements, while the provincial and the district make them available for the schools.
Similar authority distribution is found on delivering the task to manage the personnel. Schools do not have the authority to recruit or fire teachers or staff. The guidelines provided here are a little inconsistent with the idea that an SBI could be a public and a private school. I believe private schools have the authority to recruit, place, and fire teachers and staff. The guidelines hence need to be revised.

The distribution of authority in management and quality control is a perfect evidence of how decentralization is often followed with a recentralization, a pendulum movement. Even though schools are given a much bigger authority to involve stakeholders in the school management, the decision making authority over managerial and accountability matters is still in the hands of the central and the intermediary governments. Schools are indeed allowed and encouraged to be more innovative and inclusive and to apply what the government call as a total quality management, but the evaluation and the supervision are still conducted at the higher administrations.

With this regulation, the intermediary governments now have the authority to make decisions in several matters like raising funds to finance schools (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007, p. 57), and hiring teachers and staff (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007, p. 58). Schools are given a degree of authority on curriculum choice (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007, pp. 57). Decisions on the policy formulation remain in the hands of the central government (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007, p. 56). From these characteristics, the SBI project is still on the stage of delegation. This medium stage of decentralization involves an assignment of a particular function or program (Kaiser, 2006). The assigned unit has the authority to make decisions on a given function. Yet,
unlike in devolution stage, the assigned unit is still required to ask for permission. In terms of establishing an SBI for example, school still needs to earn permission from the central government.

Beside these three types of decentralization, Rondinelli (1990) identifies another form of decentralization i.e. privatization. The SBI project does not involve a transfer of authority from the public to the private sector because the project is run by the governments and the schools. There is nonetheless a slight possibility that this project might turn to be a form of privatization because schools are suggested to build partnerships with private companies.

Kaiser (2006) presents three dimensions of decentralization namely fiscal, administrative, and political. Stated in the opening remarks of the new law on national education, the current education reform is directed towards efficiency in management. Most commonly used in economics, the principle of efficiency in this project is also mainly applied in the financial arrangement. The intermediary governments now share the burden to yield revenues; schools are encouraged to increase the community involvement. Beside the fiscal dimension, this project has an administrative dimension indicated by the decision making in terms of personnel allocation. The political dimension might be there as well, but due to the limitation of the study, this dimension is not identified in this analysis.

As I have presented in Chapter 2, the main factor for national decentralization movement in Indonesia is the economic and political crisis in the late 1990s. As much as it is political-economic however, the initiative of this SBI project is more influenced by
the increasing attention to global competition and the fast development of information and technology. These two reasons are mentioned in the policy documents as the background of the project.

“The desire to initiate the establishment of an SBI is influenced by the following reasons. First, globalization era demands strong competitiveness in technology, management, and human resources…” (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007, p. 1)

“Globalization era is marked by strong competition in technology, management and human resources. To fulfill those [demands] technology skills are required to increase the value-added, improve the variety of products and services offered and the products’ quality” (“Panduan Penyelenggaraan,” 2007, p. 1).

Concerns on the quality of national education are also expressed by the public like in the following excerpts:

“In this present global environment of fierce competition, Indonesia simply cannot afford to watch the process of deterioration continue unchecked.” (The Jakarta Post, May 2, 2002, p. 2)

“In short, Indonesia’s educational system is in a mess. It is high time for us to stop arguing and start putting it in order. Unless we do this Indonesia might well be pushed further down the ranks of developing nations.” (The Jakarta Post, May 2, 2002, p. 2)

“Indonesia should look into how it formulates its education policy in seeking to bring about improvements in schooling and better preparation for young people as they enter an adult life of rapid change and deepening global interdependence.” (The Jakarta Post, July 7, 2003 p. 1)
“The UNESCO report on education published this week is yet more evidence of Indonesia’s poor education system. Obviously, whatever the factors are that are to blame (sic.), Indonesians cannot remain indifferent to the fate of the nation’s future generations. The question is (sic.), what can be done.” (The Jakarta Post, February 14, 2004, p. 1)

“The HDI report in year 2007/2008 (UNDP, 2007) shows that the education index of Indonesia is at number 107 from 177 countries.” (Soemantrie, August 2007).  

These emergent needs to improve the quality of education to be able to compete with other nations are urgent and for these purposes the SBI policy is designed. But why is it actually that the reform policy involves adopting an international standard?

If we put the growing trend of internationalism in Indonesia into consideration, it is much clearer as to why we are doing it, and why we are doing it this way. The number of schools claiming themselves as international schools and offer international certificates is increasing rapidly (Davies, January 22, 2009, p. 1). Although many perceive these schools offer better education and facilities, it might be too presumptuous to conclude that these schools are better than the public schools. Nevertheless, the growing number of this type of private schools shows that parents are increasingly interested in the notion of “international education”. Forde (January 10, 2006) admits that “what this [NP school] means to the population in general and many parents is ambiguous, but it is clear that the term national-plus, as a marketing tool, is a very effective way of attracting increase enrollments to a school”(p. 1). To analyze this phenomenon against the idea of market-education by McGinn and Welsh (1999)—there is no market in education if all schools

3 This excerpt is a quotation from an article authored by the Director of Secondary Education Curriculum Department at the Center of Curriculum.
offer the same content and quality of education—this project could have been a strategy to create a market within the public schools. By creating some special classes and name the school an international standard school, the government may expect to provide more choices to the parents. If successfully implemented, a non-private SBI may become even more desirable than an NP school since, with the subsidy from the government, an SBI may be offering a cheaper alternative to quality education.

All the above factors eventually lead the government into creating a project to prepare the students for global competition through modeling the education standard from a developed country, while at the same time succeeding the national fiscal and administrative decentralization reform. With this goal in mind, a scheme of authority transfer is prepared. The central government, the intermediary governments and the schools are sharing the roles as decision makers. The central government formulates the policy, the provincial and the district governments supervise the implementation of the policy, and the schools are to choose which curriculum to use or which international organization to partner. Considering the activities to be conducted in the development of an SBI, a professional expertise seems to be highly required. It is not very clear, however, whether the government had conducted a study, prior to the implementation of this project, to examine the capacity of the schools to provide the expertise required. The issue of readiness is very critical here.

A relevant decision affecting the successful implementation of the policy is the timing. Research on decentralization identifies two kinds of time frame for a decentralized policy implementation: all-at-once and incremental. While the school-based
management policy was initiated in all districts at once, the SBI project was implemented incrementally at three stages within a range of 5 years. The government is learning about the policy while doing it and probably revising it. With a three-stage process in 5 years, there might be enough time to develop this project, but as more and more schools apply for the SBI accreditation, the staff at the MONE may not be capable of handling such vast growing program. In within a year, “Recent reports suggest that in 2008, the Ministry of Education granted licenses to more than 200 new school projects that would include international education” (Davies, January 22, 2009, p. 1). Moreover, the implementation of this policy is almost simultaneous as schools adapt to the newest national curriculum which was enacted also in 2003. Using an incremental strategy for the implementation of this policy itself is a good idea, but combining it with the implementation of the SBM and the new national curriculum may harm either one or all of them.

Another approach to understanding the decentralization process of this project is with regards to the location of authority transfer. Rideout and Ural (1993) studied four locations where authority transfer might occur: central, regional, district, and local. Research on decentralization reforms in a number of countries in Latin America and Europe found a significant degree of diversity in terms of where the authorities are located. In this SBI project, the authority transfer is allocated at four locations: central, provincial, district, and schools. Discussions on what authorities and functions are being transferred have been presented earlier.
All of the researchers agree, however, that there are some conditions required for successful decentralization reform like the availability of political and technical support, the readiness of the system, and the existence of consensus. Measure to the readiness of SBIs to implement this decentralized policy is very crucial to identifying the likeliness this project would achieve the intended goal. Using an approach developed by McGinn and Welsh (1999), relevant documents are gathered and analyzed to identify the readiness of the system to successfully implement the policy. The four polarities to be analyzed are: the constitutional and organic law polarity, the rules or institutional polarity, the staff polarity, and the civic polarity.

C. Analysis on the Readiness of the Polarities

C.1 The constitutional and organic law polarity

The materials gathered for the analysis of the readiness of the constitutional and organic law polarity are the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia, the Act No. 20 year 2003 on National Education System, and the commentaries on the constitution. Some parts in the 1945 Constitution and the National Education Act will be analyzed to identify whether these constitutional and organic law support or inhibit the International Standard School project.

The 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945) is the legal foundation of the Republic of Indonesia that was named based on the year of the declaration of the country’s independence. There are two places in the constitution where primary provision on education in the Republic of Indonesia can be found. The first one is on the Preamble of the Constitution; it is declared in this opening remarks that one of the goals for the
foundation of the Republic of Indonesia is to “mencerdaskan kehidupan bangsa” (enlighten the life of the nation). As a country determined to surmount the colonialism, this goal is an ultimate conformity that the republic is aware that educating the citizens is an essential attribute of a democratic society.

Article No. 31 Section 1 of the constitution emanates that “every citizen shall have the fundamental right to education” (UUD 1945). This is another commitment of the founding fathers towards establishing democratic education. Even though it was not until 1999 that the proceeding leaders of the country performed a finer democracy in their administrations (Liddle, 2008), this educational provision has been enchanted and believed to be the dream of the nation. As I have reviewed in Chapter 2, the governments did make attempts to make the dream come true; one of them was through abolishing the school fees in the elementary and junior high schools. Both statements in the 1945 Constitution clearly indicate the nation’s devotion to providing basic education for every child. Hence, a policy that limits the opportunity of a child to earn the education that s/he needs does not align with this provision.

An SBI is by nature a merit-based policy because the students need to go through a selection process in order to be enrolled in the program. The selection process is designed by each individual school. Although different, there is one universal item of selection used by all schools i.e. the students’ national exam scores. The remaining items are varied from school to school; some schools require the students to take an academic aptitude test, an English test, a psycho test and a personality test (“Panduan Penyelenggaraan,” 2007). In all of the tests, students must score higher than 7 in a scale
of 10; this means students enrolled in the program are selected bright students. Because not all of the classes in an SBI offer an international standard program, lower-achieving students are enrolled in regular classes. This arrangement has drawn a concern that this project will widen the academic and social gap among the students and reduce the equal opportunity (Winarti, June 27, 2008b).

In addition to this academic selection, the financial scheme of an SBI creates a second-layer of selection. The revenues to finance the school come from four groups of sources: the central government, the provincial government, the district government, and the stakeholders—corporations, partners, and parents (“Panduan Penyelenggaraan,” 2007). Each of the revenue is channeled for different allocations; the money from the central government is for instructional improvement, funding from the provincial government is for the instructional facilities, support from the district is directed for investment, while stakeholders’ support is for professional development and miscellaneous. The revenues, however, seem to be insufficient because of the significantly higher per-pupil expenditure. An international standard class is to host up to 24 students, compared to approximately 33 students in a regular class. In addition, the class must be equipped with standard information and technology set (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007; “Panduan Penyelenggaraan,” 2007), a requirement which some schools interpret as providing a set of desk computer for each student. Not to mention the additional instructional cost the school needs to spend as it adopts a foreign curriculum and uses a different set of course books, and the additional administration fee as the school needs to obtain an international accreditation. In short, it is an expensive program especially talking in the context of a state-funded school. Parents who would like to
enroll their children to this program need to pay a lot more, and even though the government has emphasized that this program is not supposed to be exclusive (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007), this financial arrangement may have prevented students from lower-income families to participate.

Both the academic selection and the financial management of an SBI are necessary considering the meritocracy of this policy, but public is concerned on how limited the opportunity this costly project has to offer, especially if we remember that the main goal of this policy is to improve the quality of public education in Indonesia. Yet, the expense is hopefully paid off for parents who have all the means and all the reasons to enroll their children in this program.

C.2 The Rules or Institutional Polarity

The second legal framework for policy implementation in Indonesia is supposed to be the Government Regulation on the matter. Unfortunately, up to this moment, the regulations are still under construction. The materials available for the analysis of the readiness of the rules or institutional polarity therefore are the guidelines issued by the DGPSEM and the commentaries on the regulations. These documents will be analyzed to identify whether these rules support or inhibit the International Standard School project.

Generally the handbooks published by the DGPSEM contain information on: the background of the policy, the definition of the policy, the descriptions of an SBI including the required standards, the stages of implementation, the distributions of authorities, and the program evaluation. At a glance, the contents of the handbooks have covered important matters for a policy implementation, but many of the explanations are
unclear. In the previous discussions, I have pointed out the lack of clarity in the policy
documents on: the explanation of the policy definition and the distribution of authorities.
These two are very crucial not only because they should be providing the practical
guidelines for school principals and teachers, these two matters are interrelated;
ambiguity in one of the matter affects the clarity of the other. For example, because the
policy documents fail to clarify the choice of curriculum and the extent the international
curriculum to be adopted, the transfer of authority in curriculum decision from the central
to the localities might be unsuccessful. Schools in the end may remain dependent on
other units or may interpret the policy differently.

Mariati (2007) surveys the understanding of the school principals on the curriculum
to be used. The result of the survey shows that there is a variety on the way and the extent
an international curriculum is being used in addition to the national curriculum. The
author’s main concern, however, is not on the lack of understanding on the adoption
process of the international curriculum, but on the current national curriculum. Mariati
(2007) is specifically concerned in the fact that teachers adapt the teaching method from
the borrowed international curriculum, instead of from the national curriculum. Her
concern implies that schools are supposed to remain using the methods developed in the
national curriculum, but incorporate the content of the international curriculum. Yet due
to the lack of clarity in the guidelines provided by the central government, schools are not
to blame for this misunderstanding.

It is also important to note that the current national curriculum is still relatively new.
Initiated in the same year as this SBI initiative, some national schools in Indonesia are
practically adjusting to two changes simultaneously. The current national curriculum is
called Curriculum at Each Education Level; the name of this curriculum implies that the schools are now expected to customize their curriculum in accordance to the students’ characteristics and the local culture. The schools are given the autonomy to design and develop their own curriculum even though some guidelines are still given to align with the national standards. Similar to the implementation of this SBI initiative, the implementation of this curriculum is also within the framework of school-based management. It is indicated by the new authority the school exercises; in SBI, the school is allowed to make a choice over the international curriculum they want to adopt, while in the implementation of the new national curriculum, the schools are allowed to design and develop their curriculum to fit the students’ needs.

The guidelines published by the DGPSEM have provided some information for the implementation of the SBI project, but the insufficiency and the ambiguity of the policy may not only prevent successful implementation of the policy but also lead the schools to a much different direction from the government’s intention. Besides, because these guidelines are by far the only official rules to guide the development of an SBI, the rules polarity can be considered not ready for the implementation of the policy.

C.3 The Staff Polarity

The materials gathered for the analysis of the readiness of the staff polarity are the standards for teachers and staff published by the DGPSEM and the commentaries on the standards. Some parts in the requirements will be analyzed to identify whether these formulas support or inhibit the International Standard School project.
The Directorate publishes a handbook containing the standards or the minimum requirements to be fulfilled by the teaching and the administrative personnel in an SBI. A school principal in an SBI is required to have: 1) a bachelor degree, 2) a principal certificate, 3) school-based management skill, 4) visionary and situational leadership, 5) entrepreneurship, 6) digital data management skill, 7) English communication skill equal to a TOEFL score of 500, and 8) proficiency to operate Information and Communication Technology. I found these requirements to be largely driven by the demand for school-based management and the adoption of the international curriculum. As I have presented in the literature review, the school-based management scheme that was introduced following the aftermath of the economic and political crisis in Indonesia was largely driven by the financial constraints experienced by the central government. The provincial and the district governments should now share the burden to finance the education and the schools are demanded to increase the efficiency in management. As an incentive, schools are encouraged to open the door wider and involve the community in the decision making. Theories on education decentralization suggest involving the public and the parents in both the financial and the pedagogical aspects of schooling. The studies on decentralization in education in Indonesia, however, found that the community involvement so far remains limited to fundraising. Item no. 5 on entrepreneurship indicates that the government is calling for the skill of the school principal to run the business in the school.

The process of adopting the international curriculum apparently is understood as increased use of English as a medium of communication and of up-to-date technology. Indeed, these two items are frequently mentioned in the policy documents and have been
perceived as the two main characteristics of an SBI. In a survey distributed to school principals, Mariati (2007) found that the conception of an SBI was interpreted differently. Nevertheless, the respondents were unanimous in two characteristics of an SBI which are: using English as the medium of instruction and classes equipped by Information and Communication Technology. The survey implies that the principals might not have a good understanding on the background and the objectives of this initiative. Or providing they understand, these two characteristics of an SBI are what appeal to them the most. This should raise a concern because if an SBI is simply understood as an English-techno national school, an SBI may be developed into a different direction to what have been expected by the government.

The requirements for English proficiency and technology skill also appear in the list of requirements for a teacher in an SBI. Every teacher is required to have: 1) a bachelor degree, 2) course subject expertise, 3) a teaching certificate, 4) outstanding working performance, 5) proficiency to operate Information and Communication Technology, and 6) English instructional skill equal to a TOEFL score of 500. One of the plans in the development of an SBI is to deliver some course subjects, hard science subjects, in English. Therefore, while the English skill required for the school principal is for communication purpose, the skill required for the teacher is for instructional purpose.

There has been a lot of skepticism on whether Indonesian public school teachers are capable and ready to teach non-English subjects in English. Dharma (July 13, 2007) doubts the feasibility of instantly training hard science teachers to speak—and teach in—good English even when the teachers are sent to the best English course. The teachers’ language mastery itself may not create a significant problem, but when it impedes the
teaching and learning process, it raises a much serious concern. Winarti (June 27, 2008a, p. 1) reported that even though the classes were supposed to be taught in English, both the teacher and the students still speak plenty of Bahasa Indonesia. The report shows that in order to keep the classroom instruction in order, both the teacher and the students shift to Bahasa Indonesia. Another miscalculation in the policy formulation is to treat an English proficiency score equal to communication and instructional skills. There are several assumptions to draw about the teacher’s language mastery from a teacher earning 500 in a TOEFL, but one of them might not be whether s/he can teach a non-English subject in English well.

It has been clear that the requirements for the school principal and the teachers of an SBI are greatly influenced by the pressures to exercise the school-based management and to provide world-class education. Surprisingly, the standards published by the Directorate do not include requirements for curriculum development or curriculum analysis. This crucial competence with regards to the effort to adopt an international curriculum apparently has been overlooked.

Bjork’s (2005) studies on the implementation of Local Content Curriculum could also be used to predict the readiness of the schools in Indonesia to exercise the authority given to make decisions on the curriculum in this SBI project. The implementation of LCC required the teachers to exercise their expertise and autonomy on curriculum design. Similar to LCC, in this SBI project teachers are expected to be able to determine which international curriculum is suitable for the school and how the school should implement it. Bjork found that schools were not completely ready or able to benefit from the authority to the fullest extent. The school administrators and the teachers remained intact.
with the traditional way of developing a curriculum and putting the curriculum into practice. The main cause of this unsuccessful story of early school-based management is the manifestation of the centralized culture that had been deeply rooted in Indonesian schooling. What happened during the implementation of LCC is a lesson to learn; schools might be facing the same difficulties and the government might be doing the same mistake by not providing sufficient information and training.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the SBI policy might turn out to be a lot more successful due to the following reasons. First, the increasing popularity of the internationalism trend in Indonesian schools may be giving an incentive for schools to be more active in designing and developing a curriculum to suit the schools’ policies. Second, schools are now given bigger authority to manage their school finance; this transfer of authority might increase the motivation of the school once again. Third, ten years recovering from the political and economical stability seem to be enough for the citizens of Indonesia to thrive in the reform movements. While all of these hypotheses should expect a thorough examination, it seems fair for now to be extra cautious as schools might not yet have the readiness and the capabilities to exercise the authority.

C.4 The Civic Polarity

Analysis on the civic polarity is focused on the readiness of the parents and public in general to support the policy implementation. Little information can be drawn about this matter, but newspaper articles that I collected reported some perspectives of the public, the parents and the students on this policy. Most of the commentaries are about how costly the program is. Some others comment on the accreditation title of the school.
A student respondent:
“I wish to continue studying abroad. My school said the certificate from this class is recognized in all schools abroad, however, not all students with the certificate would be accepted into universities abroad; it still depends to (sic.) our grades.” (Winarti, June 27, 2008a, p. 1)

Parent respondents:
“I think ‘international standard’ for a state school is merely a label to get more money out of wealthy parents who are not well-informed.” (Winarti, June 27, 2008a, p. 2)

“Only the rich can take those kinds of classes; the classes tend to be based on the financial capability of the students’ parents, not their academic capability.” (Winarti, June 27, 2008a, p. 2)

Public respondents:
“Many schools are opening up that use international in their name and make claims of international education but we should take a careful look at what these schools really offer.” “We have to ask whether these schools really provide an education of international standards.” (Widastomo, July 6, 2008, p. 2)

“The use of the word international becomes just a name tag when schools are not managed professionally.” “There is the criticism and concern that schools are being managed solely for monetary gain.” (Widastomo, July 6, 2008, p. 2)

“The students were young and so perhaps easily led, but parents too can it seems be easily led.” “By simply adding the word international to a school or course it is possible to plant certain preconceptions in people’s minds.” (Widastomo, July 6, 2008, p. 1)

Expert respondents:
“It is just a way to legalize charging parents more money while releasing the government of its responsibility to make education available for everyone.” (Winarti, June 27, 2008b, p. 1)

“There was no official agency monitoring the development and operations of each of those schools; even if there were one, it would be ineffective and corrupt of bureaucracy.” (Winarti, June 27, 2008b, p. 1)

Even though there is too little to conclude whether the public is ready for the policy, or otherwise, the concerns expressed above are indications that the public might not have sufficient information on the project. Literature on decentralization of education suggests the importance of consensus for the success of the program. All actors and parties who
share interest in the policy should have a collective understanding. I have discussed earlier in the chapter how the explanation of the international standard is not very clear. This lack of clarity could cause different interpretations even among education practitioners, let alone the interpretations of the parents who most probably learn about the program from the mass media.

Research on education decentralization has suggested three critical factors for successful policy implementation: the availability of political and technical support, the readiness of the system, and the existence of consensus. From the analysis on the policy documents, I found that the political elements like the constitutional law and the regulations are available but not satisfactorily support the policy implementation because of the following reasons. First, the constitutional law does support the idea for education improvement, but also emphasizes the importance of equal opportunity. The merit-based nature of the SBI policy is feared to have limited the opportunity for low achieving students from low economic background to enjoy all of the privileges provided in an SBI. Second, the regulations were not completely available, and the ones that are available lack of clarity in explaining the activities to be taken to adopt or to adapt an international standard and the extent to which authority in curriculum choice is allowed, or whether it is limited at all.

The technical elements of the policy are not proven to be strong yet. It is not clear whether the capabilities of the teachers and the school principals have been assessed prior to the implementation of this SBI policy. With reference to studies on the implementation of LCC and SBM, teachers and school principals seem to receive little training if at all. The system does not appear to be ready yet to accommodate the policy implementation.
There is also no evidence to say that all of the actors involved in this SBI project—the government, the schools, the parents, and the private companies—have gained a consensus on the definition of the title “international standard” given to the schools or on what kind of participation is required and expected from the community.
Chapter 5: Findings and Recommendations

A. Findings

Globalization process has been considered as the reason for the initiative of this SBI project. Globalization has increased the competition among countries and the demands for quality human resources that have strong competitiveness, for this reason Indonesia needs to improve its education quality (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007; “Panduan Penyelenggaraan,” 2007). In addition to this drive to keep up with global competition, international comparison studies have reported a concerning state of Indonesian education. The government of Indonesia is urged to do something to reform the education and produce skilled students who would be able to compete with their cohorts from developed countries (“Sistem Penyelenggaraan,” 2007; “Panduan Penyelenggaraan,” 2007). This motivation was then translated into creating an education program that would offer world-class education to the students. What is world-class education?

Resnick, Nolan and Resnick (1995) argue there is any international consensus on what constitutes ‘world-class’ education. This normative notion is often used in sports competition like the Olympics where a gold-medalist is considered a world-class athlete (Linn & Baker, 1995). Indeed, the government of Indonesia desires to educate the children of the nation to take part in a similar worldwide competition, even when the measure of this equality is not yet clear. An education provision that later lays the foundation for the implementation of the SBI policy was introduced as part of the
national education reform stipulated in Act no. 20 year 2003 on National Education System. The provision directs the central and the local authorities to “organize at least a unit having international standards of education” (pp. 26-27). This provision was carried out approximately three years after the enactment of the law.

Even though this policy is relatively still very new, the project has attracted a lot of interests from both the schools and the communities. The number of schools applying for the SBI accreditation grows very quickly. In 2008, it is reported that “the Ministry of Education granted licenses to more than 200 new school projects that would include international education” (Davies, January 22, 2009, p. 1). While granting the accreditation might not be a difficult task, ensuring that the project is going in the right direction and could be expected to arrive at the intended goal would be much more challenging. I conducted a document analysis on the policy and found a number of critical problems that would require immediate attention from the policy makers and all actors involved in the implementation of this policy.

From my analysis on the policy definitions, the term “international” embedded in the school accreditation title refers to an idealistic idea that an SBI is more than just a regular national school and has a quality equal to the education in a developed country. The policy guidelines instruct that in order to be an SBI, a school should have accomplished the national education standards and make some adaptation/adoption from the education standards of a developed country whose quality has been renowned internationally. After further analyzing the policy, however, I did not find further explanations on to what extent the adoption or adaptation of an international standard is
allowed or on what kind of adoption or adaptation is actually expected. The policy
documents appear to suggest that the adoption/adaptation of international standard means
to borrow the curriculum of a developed country or any other internationally renowned
curriculum as well as acquiring an international accreditation. The benefit the
government expects from suggesting an SBI to acquire an international accreditation
might have been that this strategy would strengthen Indonesian position in the
international forum, to gain global acknowledgement. The guidelines also suggest an SBI
to build partnership with an international organization. Again, it is not clear what kind of
partnership is expected and how the school could build a partnership with the
international organization. Questions on to what extent the adoption/adaption of
international curriculum, on which international curriculum to choose, or on the
partnerships with the international organization seem to be left on the discretion of the
schools. Indeed, this SBI project is implemented along with the practice of a
decentralized education management called the School Based Management (SBM).

The SBM framework involves authority transfer from the central government to the
provincial and district governments and to schools. Schools now receive bigger authority
in school financial management, and in curriculum choice. For non-SBI schools,
authority in curriculum choice here means they are allowed to develop a curriculum to
suit the needs of the students and to address the culture of the local communities. For SBI
schools, this authority means the schools are placed in the position of an expert to analyze
the choices of international curriculum and international accreditation and to choose one
that suits the schools’ policies. Questions on the capabilities and the readiness of the
schools to exercise this authority are very critical.
I collected a set of policy documents and analyzed them using McGinn and Welsh (1999) model of decentralization polarities to identify the readiness of the system to successfully implement the policy. The results of my analysis are as follows:

1. Constitutional polarity: the constitutional law is available and supports the proposal for improving education quality. Yet the law also emphasizes the importance of equal opportunity for all children. The by-merit nature of the SBI policy has been criticized to limiting the equal opportunity for all children to earn education that s/he needs and to widening the social gap between the children from higher income to those from lower income families.

2. Rules polarity: the regulations and the guidelines are not ready yet. There are some major revisions required, especially in the parts of policy definitions and the descriptions of authority transfer. The lack of clarity in these two matters not only will prevent the actors from implementing the policy successfully but also may lead the schools to a different direction from what the government intended.

3. Staff polarity: the handbooks list some requirements for the teaching and administrative staff of an SBI. I found the requirements for the school principals to be driven largely by the expectation that the school principals would be able to raise necessary funds within the SBM scheme. The requirements for all teaching and administrative personnel and students lean heavily on technology and language skills—English language proficiency to be more precise. I found the TOEFL score requirements irrelevant to the objective of the policy. The tests do measure some aspects of language mastery, but one of them may not be the English language mastery needed to teach a particular subject.
4. Civic polarity: even though there is an informal discourse that doubts the community understanding on the policy, the commentaries quoted from newspaper articles provide little information on what the community and the parents understand about the policy. Yet the concerns expressed in the excerpts indicate that public needs to be informed a lot more regarding the policy goals and what kind of participation is expected from them.

We have learned that the policy documents do not satisfactorily define the policy and describe the authority to be transferred to the schools. This imprecision is a threat to successful policy implementation. I found a more important implication from this issue. Since schools are given the authority to choose the curriculum the schools want to adopt, the curriculum choice is diverse across schools, and across the country. The question is how could we expect a universal/national education improvement from this partial yet diverse curriculum reforms? Literature on decentralization has suggested the importance of consensus for successful education decentralization. Behrman, Deolalikar, and Soon (2002a) also highlight the importance of information, while informing us that increased heterogeneity in curriculum offering may prevent local schools from delivering sufficient information to the stakeholders. Lack of consensus and limited information in addition to the imprecision of the policy explanations will decrease the likeliness of the policy to be implemented.

In sum, answering the questions in this study, the present arrangement of the International Standard School project is less likely to achieve the intended goal because of two major problems: the policy documents are indistinct, and the four key polarities for successful decentralization reform do not seem to be ready yet. There are some
important cautions if the government would like to proceed with this plan. By allowing schools to choose curriculum without sufficient guidelines, the national education system is open to increased heterogeneity in curriculum offerings which would again decrease the likeliness of the policy implementation to arrive at the intended goal: to improve the quality of public education.

B. Recommendations

The recommendations I propose here are with respect to: the new responsibilities vis-à-vis authorities the school principals and the teachers receive in the SBI project and the meritocracy nature of the policy. The fact that SBI project is implemented within the framework of SBM has placed school principals and teachers as the decision makers over two main important matters in school management: finance and curriculum choice. New authorities always come with new responsibilities. While studies on the implementation of SBM have found decreased horizontal and vertical accountability in school finance management, which could leave a room for malpractice of the community’s trust, principals and teachers need to be aware that public accountability is an essential part that if practiced appropriately will enhance the progress of the school. It is important for schools to sit together with parents and design a mechanism of financial accountability. The parents may not be aware themselves that holding the schools accountable for the funds they raise is part of their democratic role. By creating a transparent financial report, community will gain opportunity to appreciate the investment they make in the school. This will eventually increase the community’s sense of belonging to the school, a condition that would attract even higher community participation.
Another form of community participation that could be enhanced to be useful for SBI project is public and parental involvement in deciding which international curriculum to adopt. While the central government should start working on refining the policy guidelines, schools may start building the culture of community involvement in the curriculum choice. It might be difficult in the beginning as both schools and the community may not have the expertise on curriculum analysis or to the lowest extent, may not have sufficient language proficiency to understand the whole international curriculum and accreditation. If that is the case, schools and the community need to communicate this matter to higher authorities. I believe the district and the provincial authorities have more opportunity to seek help from a university or any professional education institution.

Another suggestion concerning the curriculum choice is to develop a shared curriculum. If schools find difficulty in deciding which curriculum to use for the school, instead of simply following the popular trend, it would be better if schools in the same district or province work together and find a collective solution. Other schools in the district or the province may have more resources, or providing that is not the case, the schools in the same district or province could at least choose the same curriculum regardless of the reasons behind the choice. By implementing the same curriculum, schools not only will help building a regional consensus on the project, but also will be able to consult other schools for help with the curriculum.

In respect to the by-merit nature of the policy, my recommendation is more for the policy makers. I am not convinced that this policy is intended to improve the quality of
public education in Indonesia. It might be very useful for students intended to study abroad or for students whose parents can afford the program. It might also suit the needs of bright students much better. If these two outcomes are what the project most potentially yield, why not call it a special education program? The program is too costly not only in terms of money but also time and resources. The energy and time spent to develop the project might as well be directed to improving the regular classes. If a comparative study to other developed countries is useful for the improvement of Indonesian schooling, programs like teachers training and professional development with an orientation to examining what other countries do to improve the education might work even better. The use of the term “international standard” in the school accreditation like in this project is only meaningful if the purpose is to improve the education market. Improving the quality of public education is an urgent and crucial action Indonesia needs to take immediately, but implementing an imperfect policy for market efficiency might not be the smartest and wisest decision for the nation at present.

C. Further Questions

This study is an initial attempt into understanding the policy and how the policy is designed to meet the intended goal. While I hope that this study provides a significant contribution for the improvement of the policy, further studies on the policy implementation are strongly recommended. Some questions that I have found during the writing of this thesis are as follows:

1) I have a hypothesis that the interpretation of the term international standard between the government, the schools, the parents, and other stakeholders are diverse. This
hypothesis requires a scientific study. The questions to ask are: how is this term interpreted by the actors involved in the project; and how can it be improved to help the policy achieve the intended goal?

2) With regards to the combination of national curriculum with an international curriculum the school chooses, it is important to study the impacts of this curriculum duality on the teaching and learning process.

3) Considering the diversity of the students’ population, the economic development, and the local cultures in Indonesia, it is interesting to observe how the schools exercise the authorities given to them in this SBI project. An ethnographical study might be helpful to yield a careful observation.

4) The government hopes that students graduating from an SBI are competitive in the international forum. A study on the impacts of this SBI policy on some matters like the students’ choices of higher level of education should provide important contribution to the policy makers in improving the policy design to better meet the needs of the community.
References


Appendix A: International Schools in Indonesia

Sources: [http://www.english-schools.org/indonesia/](http://www.english-schools.org/indonesia/)  
[http://www.expat.or.id/orgs/schools.html](http://www.expat.or.id/orgs/schools.html)

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Appendix B: National-Plus Schools

Source: [http://www.anpsonline.org/content/view/37/37/lang.en](http://www.anpsonline.org/content/view/37/37/lang.en)

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<td>Sekolah Pelita Harapan Lippo Karawaci</td>
<td>Tangerang, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>PG &amp; TK Plus BPK Penabur</td>
<td>Bogor, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>PSKD Mandiri</td>
<td>Central Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Sacred Heart School</td>
<td>Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Saint Peter</td>
<td>North Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Santa Laurensia</td>
<td>Tangerang, Banten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Singapore School Kebon Jeruk</td>
<td>West Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Singapore School Kelapa Gading</td>
<td>North Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Springfield International Curriculum School</td>
<td>Depok, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Sekolah Sugar Group</td>
<td>Central Lampung, Lampung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Sekolah Tiara Bangsa-ACS International</td>
<td>East Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Sekolah Tunas Bangsa</td>
<td>Pontianak, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Sekolah Tunas Daud</td>
<td>Denpasar, Bali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Sekolah Tunas Mekar Indonesia</td>
<td>Bandar Lampung, Lampung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Sekolah Tunas Muda Kedoya</td>
<td>Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>Sekolah Tunas Muda Meruya</td>
<td>Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>Sekolah Victory Plus</td>
<td>Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>Yayasan Pendidikan Jayawijaya</td>
<td>Kuala Kencana, Papua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>Yayasan Pendidikan Kristen Petra</td>
<td>West Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>Yayasan Pendidikan Soroako</td>
<td>Soroako, South Sulawesi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>Sekolah Paramount</td>
<td>Palembang, South Sumatra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td>Sekolah Central</td>
<td>West Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>Sekolah Sevilla</td>
<td>Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>Sekolah Bina Gita Gemilang</td>
<td>South Jakarta, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.</td>
<td>Sekolah Cita Persada</td>
<td>Depok, West Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.</td>
<td>Sinarmas World Academy</td>
<td>Tangerang, West Java</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Student Enrollment Rates

Table 2.
Cohort of Pupils of Primary Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997/1998</td>
<td>4,856,096 (100%)</td>
<td>4,472,584 (92%)</td>
<td>4,319,658 (90%)</td>
<td>4,188,100 (86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/1999</td>
<td>4,987,500 (100%)</td>
<td>4,479,706 (92%)</td>
<td>4,346,179 (90%)</td>
<td>4,140,408 (86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>4,897,361 (100%)</td>
<td>4,561,957 (91%)</td>
<td>4,341,244 (89%)</td>
<td>4,150,711 (86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>4,932,517 (100%)</td>
<td>4,468,549 (91%)</td>
<td>4,455,098 (89%)</td>
<td>4,167,902 (86%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Contd.
Cohort of Pupils of Primary Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Continuing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997/1998</td>
<td>4,068,048 (82%)</td>
<td>3,763,092 (75%)</td>
<td>3,629,577 (72%)</td>
<td>2,571,856 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/1999</td>
<td>3,998,952 (82%)</td>
<td>3,735,148 (75%)</td>
<td>3,613,578 (73%)</td>
<td>2,559,796 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>3,998,666 (83%)</td>
<td>3,693,897 (76%)</td>
<td>3,612,842 (74%)</td>
<td>2,595,746 (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>3,972,611 (82%)</td>
<td>3,704,881 (77%)</td>
<td>3,608,801 (75%)</td>
<td>2,605,413 (53%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.
Trend of Number of Dropouts at Primary Schools
Year 1998/1999—2002/2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Dropouts</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 4.
Trend of Transition Rate Primary to Junior Secondary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Student Continuing</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>2,595,746</td>
<td>71.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>2,605,413</td>
<td>72.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/2002</td>
<td>2,544,849</td>
<td>70.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>2,495,335</td>
<td>69.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.
Cohort of Pupils of Junior Secondary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>New Enrollment</th>
<th>Grade 7</th>
<th>Grade 8</th>
<th>Grade 9</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Continuing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997/1998</td>
<td>2,571,856</td>
<td>2,583,040 (100%)</td>
<td>2,521,624 (98%)</td>
<td>2,474,059 (96%)</td>
<td>2,286,782 (89%)</td>
<td>1,704,877 (66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/1999</td>
<td>2,559,796</td>
<td>2,571,547 (100%)</td>
<td>2,519,123 (98%)</td>
<td>2,417,165 (94%)</td>
<td>2,316,779 (90%)</td>
<td>1,794,374 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>2,595,746</td>
<td>2,606,911 (100%)</td>
<td>2,496,117 (96%)</td>
<td>2,410,950 (92%)</td>
<td>2,249,932 (86%)</td>
<td>1,875,990 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>2,576,013</td>
<td>2,587,834 (100%)</td>
<td>2,499,155 (97%)</td>
<td>2,405,035 (93%)</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6.
Trend of Number of Dropouts at Junior Secondary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Dropouts</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997/1998</td>
<td>276,438</td>
<td>3.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/1999</td>
<td>313,282</td>
<td>4.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>388,208</td>
<td>5.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>262,728</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7.
Trend of Transition Rate Junior to Senior Secondary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Student Continuing</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>1,661,630</td>
<td>73.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>1,707,353</td>
<td>74.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/2002</td>
<td>1,794,374</td>
<td>77.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>1,875,990</td>
<td>83.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Newspaper Articles

   http://www.sampoernafoundation.org/content/view/504/126/lang,en/

   http://entertainment.kompas.com/read/xml/2008/05/02/00263342/pendidik


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