

TASS News

Strengthening Indonesian Education, Together



A FEW WORDS
FROM TASS
**ESSENCE OF
EDUCATION IS
EQUALITY AND
PROGRESS FOR ALL**

STRENGTHENING
EDUCATION POLICY
AND PRACTICE
IN INDONESIA
THROUGH A FACILITY
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A FEW WORDS FROM TASS

Welcome to the first edition of our quarterly newsletter: TASS News. In this newsletter, we are pleased to share stories, updates, and content from activities where we continue to play a role in providing technical support to advance education in Indonesia.

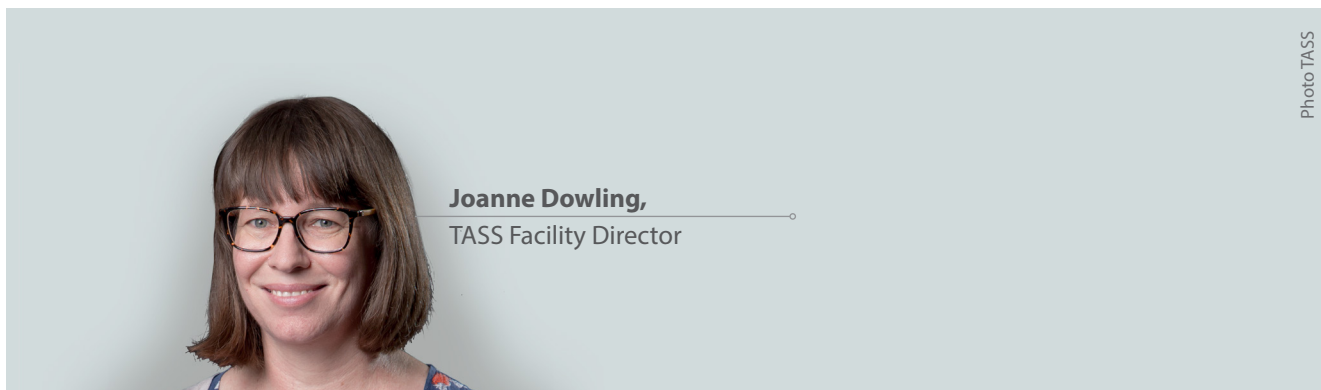
Improving the quality of education in Indonesia means equality and progress for all. Quality remains an ongoing priority, including in key areas of assessment reform, quality assurance, and teacher competency.

TASS directly supports the Indonesian Government's agenda to strengthen educational quality, and in doing so, improve the competitiveness of Indonesia's human resources and

shape the intelligence and adaptability of future generations. With better education, comes improved economic growth and the opportunity to change for the better.

TASS believes that cooperation and knowledge sharing are key elements to improving educational quality in Indonesia. In the spirit of information and knowledge sharing, TASS News extends a hand to partners, organizations, and institutions as together, we advance education in Indonesia.

We want to convey our gratitude to all those who have supported the launch of this first edition, and we look forward to sharing more.



Joanne Dowling,
TASS Facility Director

What is TASS?

TASS is a responsive, demand driven technical assistance facility funded by the Australian Government. Working with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, TASS seeks to strengthen key areas of Indonesia's education system. It does

this by supporting decision-makers to make changes to policy and plans, budgets and financing, and systems and practice to improve the quality of teaching and reduce the impact of disparities on learning outcomes.

The program began in January 2017, and will continue until January 2020.

STRENGTHENING EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE IN INDONESIA THROUGH A FACILITY APPROACH

WHY TASS?



Facility approaches are increasingly being used to deliver aid. As a specific aid modality, facilities allow resources to be shifted in line with evolving priorities and contexts both in the partner country and in the Australian aid program. They allow for earlier exit when support is not gaining traction; conversely, additional resources can be applied where leverage is high and returns are promising.

Facilities can also carry risk. Without clear alignment between individual activities and the facility's strategy they can suffer from 'strategic drift' and end up delivering a loosely connected set of activities which fail to combine to deliver on higher-order outcomes.

DFAT specifically chose the facility modality for TASS in response to lessons learned from the earlier \$368 million Australia's Education Partnership with Indonesia (2011-2016) program. Under this partnership, high level bilateral commitments at activity level constrained the program's ability to respond to evolving contexts in both countries. At the same time, the maturing Australia Indonesia economic partnership required a reshaping of the aid program be more nimble and catalytic, leveraging the Indonesian Government's (Gol) own resources, and working in a mature partnership that recognises Gol

leadership of its education reform efforts. This partnership recognises that Gol invests considerable financial resources in education, and has strong ownership of its education policy and systems. However, more can be done to strengthen these policies and systems for improved education quality. TASS was thus conceived as a responsive and demand driven facility with a broad mandate to provide short-term technical assistance in support of Indonesia's education reform efforts. TASS support will ultimately contribute to Indonesia's long term economic growth and human resource competitiveness.

During the first few months of the facility, TASS reviewed the existing literature on facilities to identify their strengths, weaknesses and lessons that could inform its overall strategy and implementation approaches. These lessons included the need for a clearly defined end of facility outcome, disciplined activity decision making, and monitoring and evaluation approaches that measure not just achievement of outputs and outcomes, but also the contribution of activity decision making and implementation approaches.

Thinking and working politically

As a facility working to effect policy and systems reform, TASS commissioned

an early paper on *Thinking and Working Politically* (TWP) to inform activity selection criteria and implementation approaches. A politically informed activity selection tool was developed to support the selection of activities that are both aligned with the end of facility outcome, and technically and politically feasible. Recent evidence on *Knowledge to Policy* (K2P) was also mined to inform stakeholder engagement and communications.

In line with the Indonesia Aid Investment Plan, TASS also undertook an initial mapping of Indonesian government priorities in education to identify the key constraints and 'wicked problems' in education that would be the targeted focus of the facility's efforts. These included:

- The poor quality of teaching and learning in schools and classrooms
- Persistent regional disparities
- Poor alignment of local government management and capacity with national policy and priorities
- Weak and poorly integrated accountability and quality assurance mechanisms.

Finally, a facility logic was developed that merges the technical and political in each level of the logic.

The activity screening process continues to be a strength of TASS' approach. This process looks closely at both alignment to the TASS program logic and the political context, including the level of Government commitment, prospects for change, and internal and external enabling and constraining factors. The process is helping TASS target its investment to activities that are politically and technically feasible and more likely to contribute to longer-term policy outcomes.

Learnings so far

Half way through the facility, TASS is on track to achieve its intended outcomes (as evidenced in a mid-term evaluation). Requests for technical assistance

coming into the facility are increasingly of high strategic value. Factors that have supported achievement of outcomes to date include: the use of TWP and K2P approaches in activity design and implementation; trusted adviser-counterpart relationships; the deliberate selection of activities that support existing change processes; and the short-term nature of technical assistance with the end of each short-term activity serving as a deliberate decision making point on whether further support is warranted, or resources re-allocated for other priorities.

Given the small, short-term nature of activities, TASS' approach to TWP and K2P must be rapid. It does not have the luxury of time as have programs with ongoing longer-term activities. Its political analyses cannot be lengthy and comprehensive. Rather, they must be undertaken continuously and often informally. As a respondent in the recent mid-term evaluation noted,

"Not only are the activities supporting broader reforms within each Ministry,

TASS is systematically assessing each activity for its potential to leverage and complement other work. In this way, TASS is systematically, maximising the opportunities for its activities to contribute to the longer-term outcomes."

TASS must continue to find rapid ways to develop a detailed appreciation of, and respond to, the local context. To date, it has done this through recruiting staff and STA who have a detailed knowledge of the education sector in Indonesia, who have networks in the sector and can link decisionmakers to other policy actors, and who are highly respected by government counterparts.

"TASS has built strong day-to-day working relationships with counterparts. They have an almost daily presence in two Ministries, with activity managers or STA based there for significant periods of time. This allows regular contact with senior staff, which allows them to understand the context and the needs. This close working relationship is allowing them to identify early when something needs to be adapted." – mid-term evaluation.

Looking to the future

The facility's work is not all smooth sailing of course, with ongoing challenges. These include retaining discipline in activity selection and the ability to resource surge capacity and remain responsive to policy reform windows. On a broader level, TASS visibility within the Australian aid program is not without challenge, given the sensitive nature of some of the policy issues TASS supports.

With a little over a year until the end of its first phase, TASS remains a strategic window into Government of Indonesia priorities and policy debate. Although small, its opportunity to influence and shape policy discussions is significant. At a time where the strengthening of Indonesia's education sector is crucial to downstream economic growth and competitiveness, this strategic support is essential.

FEATURE ARTICLE

EDUCATION SECTOR REVIEW

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

The five yearly education sector review remains a key strategic activity for the Indonesian Government, feeding important analysis and input into the development of the technocratic draft of the next five-year medium development plan (otherwise known as the RPJMN).

Led by Bappenas (the National Development Planning Ministry), and supported by TASS, the review is undertaken through high level workshops with key stakeholders. In addition to a range of government agencies - including Bappenas, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and Ministry of Religious Affairs - several donor programs and organisations

have been involved including TASS, INOVASI, the World Bank, UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank. Teachers and other practitioners have also been invited to join discussions at key points during the review process.

At its core, the review allows for discussion and debate around key education themes and issues, including education quality, infrastructure and facilities, teacher competency, religious education, education sector financing, and early childhood education. Specific policies and operating environments which support or hinder the achievement of educational outcomes and progress are also explored.

Key outcomes from the education sector review include a series of published background papers which provide essential recommended policy directions and strategies that Bappenas will draw on to prepare the 2020-2024 RPJMN. Bappenas will also share the draft RPJMN with candidates for the 2019 parliamentary and presidential elections.

Given its size and significance, the ESR was a large part of TASS' work in the first half of 2018. This first newsletter edition looks closely at the analysis associated with the ESR work.

Read more about key education sector review workshop outcomes and issues in the following articles.

THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT IS FOCUSING ON STRENGTHENING COMPETITIVENESS AND THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

In a February Education Sector Review meeting discussing higher education, Dr. Subandi MS.c (Deputy Minister for Human, Social and Cultural Development, Bappenas) reiterated how the education sector review focuses on evidence based assessments and proposed strategies, and emphasises the elements of quality and improved teacher capacity.

“The quality of education is a part of our effort to strengthen national competitiveness. The Education Sector Review is a series of efforts to take a look at what has been achieved in education and to set more specific targets in the strategic planning RPJMN for 2020-2024,” said Subandi.

Multi-stakeholder Cooperation

Coordination between stakeholders at all levels is a key focus for developing a quality education sector that guarantees access for all. Bappenas, together with a number of development partners, is now in the process of writing the draft 2020-2024 RPJMN, narrowing down the key directions, strategies, targets, and indicators.

The results of the education sector review will be used to formulate the priorities, targets, policies, programs, and priority development activities for the education sector for the next five years. Support from development partners consisted of technical assistance in providing a strong body of evidence for the 2020-2024 RPJMN.

Key contributing partners included the Government of Australia via the Technical Assistance for Education

System Strengthening program (TASS), ID-Teman (DFAT’s Trust Fund with the World Bank) and the Asian Development Bank.



Drawing on analysis conducted by the education sector review, TASS recommended six key directions to Bappenas for the next five year period. These are to:

1 Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all students acquire the basic skills, ability to think critically, and the personal values and character to be productive citizens and lifelong learners.

1

2 Accelerate efforts through targeting and compensatory strategies for poor children to systematically reduce regional disparities in access to quality education and thereby contribute to a more prosperous, just and harmonious society.

2

3 Strengthen vocational training and life skills at all levels to develop a skilled and flexible workforce with the personal attributes, basic skills, with ICT and vocational competencies for employment, for economic growth and nation-building.

3

6 Pilot new partnerships with education providers, public and private, to improve education quality through performance based funding and greater accountability.

6

5 Establish integrated governance with joint accountability and funding agreements between Ministries and between levels of government to improve education outcomes.

5

4 Expand the vision and mindset of teachers and administrators beyond a culture of compliance towards creativity and continuous improvement in providing quality education.

4

THE RPJMN ISSUES SERIES:

EDUCATION SECTOR FINANCING

A quality national education system requires a strong budget to support it. Education sector financing was the topic of discussion and review at a recent workshop to discuss the Indonesian Government's technocratic draft of the next five-year medium-term development plan, RPJMN. TASS is providing support to the education sector by working with key education development partners to collect important data and education achievement outcomes that will feed into essential analysis for the RPJMN.

In opening the workshop, Dr Subandi, Deputy Minister of Human Development, Society and Culture of Bappenas, explained that while future education budgets - maintained at a fixed percentage of the national budget and increasing as Indonesia's economy grows - will be larger in

the coming years, a priority will be to balance existing, regular commitments, such as teacher salaries, in the budget with initiatives to improve education quality at the national and subnational levels.

Subandi emphasised the effect of increased spending on teacher welfare and school improvement on the advancement of the education system, particularly in education quality and results. The improvement of both 1) school facilities and infrastructure and 2) teacher competency and quality remain key priorities in the upcoming plan.

"The focus on school improvement is very important because we have more than 250,000 schools and we need to ensure the budget reflects our work to improve the quality of education. We need to set clear indicators and targets

in the next RPJMN on education quality and learning in schools and madrasah," he explained.

Other key representatives, including from the Ministry of Education and Culture, valued the opportunity to discuss the improvement of education sector performance and ensuring this RPJMN builds on the last in Indonesia's strive for a quality education system - including the ongoing importance of budgeting and planning at all levels of education delivery.

Totok Suprayitno, Head of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Research and Development Agency reflected this, "we need to reflect what has not been achieved. The RPJMN and Renstra do not currently have key performance indicators specifically measuring quality".



INVESTING IN THE FUTURE THROUGH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early childhood is an important time of individual growth and development. International evidence shows that investments in early childhood education provide the highest return on investment. For this reason, Goal 4.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals prioritises access to one year of quality early childhood education

When sharing key findings and analysis from a situation analysis paper commissioned for the Bappenas Education Sector Review, Sheldon Shaeffer, a consultant for the TASS program for early childhood education and development (ECED), offered several reasons why national governments should pay more attention to early childhood education. Sheldon referred to many countries that have included early childhood education in their national plans as an integral part of their compulsory education systems however acknowledged that cost factors can mean that in some countries, not all children will be able to access a year of fully funded, quality early childhood education.

Early childhood is considered the most important phase in human capital development. If implemented well and to high quality standards, ECED will bear results thirty years into the future,

with achievements made in education, health, incomes, and economic growth in Indonesia, as well as progress in other sustainable development goal areas.

“If we talk about quality, comprehensiveness and integration [with other early childhood services], ECED is essential for early childhood development, for children’s health, and for future economic growth. However, it is vital that ECED services are of high quality to obtain optimal results in terms of school readiness and future prosperity. In Indonesia, the quality of ECED services remains a challenge,” said Sheldon at an Education Sector Review event held in Jakarta earlier this year.

Wartanto, Secretary of the Directorate General of Early Childhood and Community Education at the Ministry of Education and Culture, said that the ECED sector in Indonesia has grown rapidly in recent years. However it must be recognized that not all

ECED services are of high quality.

“The problem faced now is quality. The number of ECED centres have grown exponentially since the government commenced providing operational funding for ECED services,” said Wartanto.

When it comes to government support for ECED, Wartono explained that the current situation is far below their expectations. Provision for adequate teachers, classrooms, and playground facilities must be considered in future funding of the sector.

“In the future, after the provinces receive a budget for operational assistance, quality must be controlled. This includes teaching and learning resources and teacher education and training, and the learning process must be supported by an updated curriculum. The provinces must carry out quality assurance of ECED services,” he said.

Effective ECED will mean a stronger and successful future generation of students and workers. A number of downstream learning issues can be prevented if ECED is done well, and families have adequate access to quality centres. Funding for this critical foundation cannot be ignored.



MODERATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION A PRIORITY FOR 2020-2024



Indonesia is a diverse nation with a strong focus on its religious identities. Religion and Religious Education in schools and madrasah is a core feature of the education system to build religious character, nurture strong national vision and promote a tolerant society. However, the delivery of religious education poses strong ideological and also sociological challenges.

It has been identified in recent data that there is an increasing level of radicalization emerging in schools and madrasah in Indonesia. Prof. Dr. H. Kamaruddin Amin, Director General of Islamic Education of Ministry of Religious Affairs, referred to this trend in his opening speech in the Education Sector Review workshop (5/06/18).

“We recognise that we have to respond to these challenges. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is prioritising the quality of teachers and ensuring textbooks contain moderate religious education for schools and madrasah”, he said.

In June 2018, Bappenas and TASS facilitated a workshop discussing achievements and challenges of the last five years and the main priorities of religion and religious education for the next five year development plan.

Kamaruddin believes that these actions will shape students to be more tolerant and respectful toward others, not only in religious but also sociological manner.

“Hopefully this workshop will identify strategies and actions that will enable quality moderate religious education to be included in the RPJMN 2020-2024,” said Kamaruddin to conclude his speech.

Muhammad Iksan, a TASS technical consultant working with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, commented that radicalization is rife in the digital world. To counteract the rapid spread of radical information online, teachers need to equip themselves with knowledge of the digital socialisation process and start thinking about digitalizing religious and character education.

“This generation is active on social media and online. It’s time for teachers to engage online so that students have an alternative information source,” Iksan emphasized.

Proper regulation enforcement and supervision will have an impact on student character improvement, supported by the fulfillment of minimum standards for school quality and teacher competency.

Content Revision and Teacher’s Capacity Improvement

Religious education content tends to be static. According to Suharti, Head of Foreign Cooperation Planning of Ministry of Education and Culture, religious education content seems to be static and without changes. “It’s time we think about developing content in a tiered structure so that as students’

understanding grow, so does the content,” said Suharti.

Other issues persist, however, including limited budget allocation, distorted student-teacher ratios due to the teacher distribution process, limited facilities and infrastructure, and the need for teachers’ competency improvement.

The Religion, Religious and Character Education workshop was the last in the situation analysis phase of the education sector review to produce inputs for the drafting of the RPJMN 2020-2024.

Michelle Lowe, Counsellor for Human Development of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, stressed the importance of the education sector review and was pleased that Australia could provide support through the TASS program.

“The Australian Government, through TASS, will continue to play its role in supporting and participating in the preparation of the RPJMN and facilitating dialogue and consultation at the national and sub-national levels. We hope that this series of workshops and discussions has produced strong recommendations to provide the basis for drafting the RPJMN 2020-2024 and also contributes to the preparation of the Ministry strategic plans in the education sector,” she explained.

In his closing speech, Dr. Amich Alhumami, Director of Higher Education, Science and Technology and Culture of BAPPENAS, conveyed the need to support the mainstreaming of character education to support a child’s holistic education.

“It is time for us to nurture a moral society. We must offer proportional space for religious and character education in our planning documents,” said Amich.

LEARNING FROM AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL ASSESSMENT SYSTEM



The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture's Centre for Education Assessment (Puspendik) continues to pursue an assessment reform agenda which focuses on both formative and summative assessment, as well as a national monitoring system and international standard assessment.

In Indonesia, the current tool for assessing national education performance is the Indonesian Student Competency Assessment, or AKSI. AKSI is a national standardized test designed to enable the Ministry of Education and Culture to monitor the development of the national education system; provide performance information to the public, schools, teachers, headmasters, national and regional governments, and policymakers; and make evidence-based improvements to, for example, curriculum, teacher education, and classroom practices. Puspendik has used a number of international tests, including PISA, as a reference in the development of AKSI.

Over the years, Australia's experience, including in the implementation of the Australian national assessment program has been shared with Puspendik through donor programs such as ACDP and now TASS and INOVASI.

The Australian National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy

(NAPLAN) is a series of assessment focused on basic skills that is administered to Australian students each year. These standardized tests assess student ability in reading, writing, language (spelling, grammar, and punctuation) and mathematics and are managed by The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

NAPLAN was introduced in 2008 and has annually conducted these tests for grades 3, 5, 7 and 9 to measure student competencies. This year, 2018, is the first time that the NAPLAN test has been conducted online. Data obtained from the NAPLAN tests is collected and used at the school level to improve classroom teaching and learning processes, and to systemically share and compare the performance of each school against the national average and similar schools across the country.

A core feature of NAPLAN is complete reporting for students, parents, teachers, headmasters, education administrators and policymakers against the set competency standards for students.

Over recent months, TASS has worked closely with Puspendik to develop "competency descriptors" for AKSI. These descriptors describe expected levels of student competency in the classroom and in targeted subjects

of study, and will ultimately enable Puspendik and AKSI users to better understand student performance when compared to national competency standards.

Dr. Ida Marais, a TASS technical consultant from the University of Western Australia which provides technical support and analysis for the NAPLAN test, supported Puspendik in formulating technical guidelines for developing the descriptors. In a June workshop in Jakarta, Puspendik staff worked on applying the guidelines, accompanied by Dr. Marais, who gave technical advice during the process.

In June, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture also hosted its first national conference on Education Assessment and Policy, inviting policymakers and practitioners to explore ways to improve school practices and national assessment.

In her presentation at the conference, Dr. Ida Marais spoke specifically about the use of the Rasch model – a family of psychometric models for creating measurements from categorical data - as a means of improving test development.

"This model can help education practitioners in Indonesia to analyze and measure the quality of test questions and help identify the needs for appropriate learning," she explained.

During the opening of the conference, Totok Suprayitno, Head of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Research and Development Center, also highlighted the importance of bringing together education stakeholders in order to discuss assessment and policy.

"Hopefully from this meeting we will obtain richer feedback about how to improve the learning process at schools, after the assessment diagnosis is known. This conference is the place where we can all discuss this with one another."

DEVELOPING INDICATORS TO MEASURE AND IMPROVE EDUCATION QUALITY



Photo INOVASI

The quality of education in Indonesia, directly linked to national human resource competitiveness, remains a major challenge. Quality education can drive productivity, and is key to supporting strong economic growth.

The results of national tests such as AKSI, and international tests such as PISA and TIMSS indicate that about two-thirds of Indonesian students are not achieving the minimum competency standards. PISA scores over the past decade have shown increases in terms of literacy, but have declined in mathematics. These results have significant implications for Indonesia's future workforce, with direct impact on the basic skills needed to become productive citizens and lifelong learners.

In addition to this, Indonesia is still experiencing disparity in terms of participation and academic achievement for disadvantaged students. As an example of this, the results of the 2016 national AKSI test for the fourth grade indicated that in provinces with lower socio-economic status, such as Papua and East Nusa Tenggara, student performance was about 20 percent lower than provinces with higher socio-economic conditions, such as in the Jakarta and Yogyakarta special provinces. At the same time, school/madrasah accreditation data as of 2017 shows that about 80% of accredited schools and madrasahs have reached the rank of A

or B accreditation demonstrating the mismatch between school accreditation requirements and achievement of learning outcomes.

In his opening remarks at an education sector review workshop in May focused on education governance and education quality assurance, Totok Suprayitno, Head of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Research and Development Centre, pointed out the need to apply clearer and sharper indicators of education quality. He explained that the quality indicators used to date have been insufficient because they focus only on activities and inputs, using an approach which is designed to fulfill only basic requirements.

"What is the connection between the eight National Education Standards and educational outcomes? There is no clear logical connection. For this reason, we are calling for adjustments between the focus and activities of the National Education Standard Agency, school and madrasah accreditation, and the Education Quality Assurance Agency. We need strong indicators of school and system quality," said Totok.

To overcome and provide an equal distribution of quality in Indonesia's national education sector, efforts are needed to accelerate equity among schools and regions. This is in the spirit of improving quality standards across the board, for every child to have access to a quality education regardless of where they live, their family's economic circumstances, their gender or whether they have a disability.

"This is why we need standards. However, this is not just for the sake of meeting the standard, because we are also concerned about the burden on schools to follow the standards, because teachers are paying more attention to following regulations than on supporting student learning," said Totok.

Toni Toharudin, Head of the School/Madrasah National Accreditation Agency, emphasised that there are still some basic shortcomings which immediately require attention, in particular: the quality of teachers/instructors, provision of infrastructure and student graduate competencies.

"We are attempting to increase the credibility of assessors and are planning to strengthen the focus on increasing competencies," he explained.

Graham Dawson, a TASS technical consultant, shared his thoughts in the same forum, outlining that Indonesia must be realistic about the size and complexity of the education system, and begin focusing on matters which are shown to support fundamental improvements in the quality of education.

"In my view, teachers, leadership and resources are a good place to start," he said.

The quality of education and education quality assurance processes are mutually connected. Increasing quality must begin with a prioritisation of those issues that directly impact upon student learning.

ALTERNATIVE FUNDING FOR ISLAMIC EDUCATION: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?



Islamic schools (madrasah) play an important and strategic role in Indonesia's education system. These traditional Islamic schools account for the participation of around 20 percent of the total student population in Indonesia, and their presence in remote areas supports underserved communities to access education. However, madrasah are often seen as lower quality institutions, with the need to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in madrasah being one of the core issues for Indonesia to address.

Around 90% of madrasah in Indonesia are privately run institutions, meaning that typically madrasah funding is largely managed independent of government. However, state-run and private madrasah are provided with operational funding by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, with additional funding provided for teacher salaries in state-run madrasah, and some quality improvement initiatives such as the continuous professional development program.

To date, most of the budget for supporting madrasah has come from the central government. In 2018, the central government allocated Rp444.13 trillion (approximately A\$41.3 billion) for education. Of this, the Ministry of Religious Affairs received Rp52.68 trillion (approximately A\$4.9 billion) for paying teacher salaries and benefits and for school operational assistance funds. Yet the provision of central government funding alone is insufficient to support madrasah to improve quality education for their students. Fortunately, alternative

funding solutions do exist through district, city and provincial governments.

Budgetary support from district, city and provincial governments has been minimal, and many have not allocated school operational assistance funding for madrasahs through their regional budgets. Public schools on the other hand, in addition to receiving funds from the central government, also receive budget allocations from provincial and district/city governments.

Analysis conducted for the Ministry of Religious Affairs' continuous professional development program for teachers, supported by TASS, found that many provincial and district/city governments have not allocated funding for madrasah in their regional budgets. Because the national Ministry of Religious Affairs provides its own budget for madrasah, regional stakeholders do not feel obligated to contribute their own funding. Unlike public schools, which are the direct responsibility of district/city

and provincial governments, madrasah fall within the mandate of the national Ministry of Religious Affairs, and therefore district/city and provincial governments often do not know that they can fund madrasah. This remains a key concern for ensuring madrasah are adequately funded.

Regulation on funding for Islamic education services are already in place. Abdul Munir, an Islamic Education advocate and TASS technical adviser, explained that the existing regulatory framework clearly provides for sub-national government funding of madrasah. He refers to a number of regulations on the implementation of education including Law Number 20 of 2003 Regarding the National Education System that demonstrate this.

"Article 46 [of Law Number 20 of 2003] can be used as a strong basis for this; it states that the funding of education is the joint responsibility of the national government, regional governments, and the public, and that the national government and regional governments are responsible for providing budget for Education. There is also Article 55 of the same law that states that funding for running community-based education MUST be sourced from the organizers; the public, the national government, regional governments and/or other sources," he said.

The National Education System Law also states that community-based education institutions may receive technical assistance, subsidies, and other resources in a fair and equal manner from central and regional governments. Munir emphasized the importance of making correctly interpreting and understanding of the existing laws properly, so that the madrasah know when and how they can receive district/city and/or provincial government funding.

In addition to the National Education System Law, as quoted by news outlet kompas.com (09 June 2017), Article 15 of Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 regarding Character Education) emphasises that funding for the implementation of character education can come from the national government, regional governments, the public, and other legal sources.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo had said that this presidential regulation answers ongoing questions regarding allocation of funding for madrasahs.

“This gives the legal basis for cabinet ministers, governors, district heads, and mayors in setting aside budget for strengthening character education, whether in madrasah, in schools, or among the public. I think that the power of the Presidential Regulation is there,” said the President.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, through the Directorate of Madrasah Teachers and Education Personnel, continues to make breakthroughs in this domain, cooperating with regional governments in finding innovative means for madrasah financing. TASS has supported the socialisation of regulations supportive of alternative sources for madrasah funding, through supporting the Ministry’s consultations with local governments and using key knowledge products and infographics to promote dialogue on the issue.

In further driving this agenda, Suyitno, Director for Madrasah Teachers and Education Personnel, continues to work with regional governments and visit provinces and districts to encourage the allocation of regional funding for madrasah education. The first area visited was North Lombok in West Nusa Tenggara Province.

“Many programs from the Directorate

for Madrasah Teachers and Education Personnel can be synergized with regional governments, especially in strengthening and coaching madrasah,” explained Suyitno.

TASS is also supporting the Ministry of Religious Affairs to improve the capacity of teachers through a structured and systematic continuous professional development (CPD) program for teachers of religion, which should lead to improved learning outcomes for students in madrasah. TASS support includes technical advice to the Ministry related to drafting of regulations, technical guidelines, implementation guidelines, and encouraging the Ministry to develop strategic partnerships with the large private providers of Islamic education services to fund the CPD program. Cooperation has been ongoing with the Maarif Foundation in East Java and Central Java, and with Nahdlatul Wathan in West Nusa Tenggara.