

The Crisis of Accountability in Indonesia Education Performance Amid Low PISA Results: An Analysis of UNESCO Framework to Enhance National Competitiveness

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia low performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) raises serious questions about the effectiveness of the national education performance accountability system. This article analyzes the relationship between PISA outcomes and the crisis of educational accountability by using the UNESCO accountability framework as an analytical lens. A conceptual-analytical approach is employed to examine how monitoring systems, evaluation practices, data transparency, and continuous improvement mechanisms have not yet functioned optimally in Indonesia. The findings reveal policy fragmentation, weak data utilization, and a gap between national assessments and international competency standards. The UNESCO framework offers a holistic approach grounded in quality, equity, and collaboration that can strengthen education governance. This article recommends aligning national assessments with PISA competencies, strengthening data-driven accountability, improving the quality of teachers' pedagogy, and ensuring long-term policy consistency as strategies to enhance Indonesia's educational competitiveness.

ABSTRAK

Rendahnya kinerja Indonesia dalam Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) menimbulkan pertanyaan serius mengenai efektivitas sistem akuntabilitas kinerja pendidikan nasional. Artikel ini menganalisis hubungan antara hasil PISA dan krisis akuntabilitas pendidikan dengan menggunakan kerangka akuntabilitas UNESCO sebagai lensa analitis. Pendekatan konseptual-analitis digunakan untuk mengkaji bagaimana sistem pemantauan, praktik evaluasi, transparansi data, dan mekanisme perbaikan berkelanjutan belum berfungsi secara optimal di Indonesia. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan adanya fragmentasi kebijakan, lemahnya pemanfaatan data, serta kesenjangan antara asesmen nasional dan standar kompetensi internasional. Kerangka UNESCO menawarkan pendekatan yang holistik yang berlandaskan pada kualitas, kesetaraan, dan kolaborasi untuk memperkuat tata kelola pendidikan. Artikel ini merekomendasikan penyelarasan asesmen nasional dengan kompetensi PISA, penguatan akuntabilitas berbasis data, peningkatan kualitas pedagogi guru, serta penjaminan konsistensi kebijakan jangka panjang sebagai strategi untuk meningkatkan daya saing pendidikan Indonesia.

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1. Introduction

Background of the Study

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), evaluates the reading, mathematics, and scientific literacy of 15-year-old students within the context of solving real-world problems. A country's performance in PISA is frequently regarded as a proxy for the quality of its educational system and the readiness of its younger generation to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century. Indonesia has consistently participated in this international assessment; however, its performance in the most recently published assessment cycle remains below the average of OECD member countries, thereby prompting a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of the national educational accountability system.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasizes that educational accountability extends beyond ranking and comparative assessment. Rather, it encompasses systemic monitoring, data transparency, and continuous improvement aimed at enhancing both the quality and equity of learning outcomes. The tension between international indicators, such as PISA, and domestic evaluation practices reveals governance gaps that require strategic and comprehensive interventions to strengthen the effectiveness and accountability of the education system.

Research Questions

1. How relevant are the most recent PISA findings to the evaluation of Indonesia's education system?
2. What educational accountability challenges are associated with Indonesia's PISA performance?
3. How does UNESCO's accountability framework provide direction for systemic improvement in education?
4. What strategies are relevant for enhancing the competitiveness of Indonesia's national education system?

Objective of the Study

To analyze the crisis of educational accountability through the lens of PISA and to formulate recommendations based on UNESCO's accountability framework.

2. Method

This article employs a conceptual-analytical approach based on a comprehensive review of policy literature, international reports, and relevant scholarly studies. The UNESCO accountability framework is utilized as an analytical lens to identify and map the gaps among educational evaluation, data governance, and instructional practices.

3. Result and Discussion

1. PISA as a Reflection of Learning Quality

PISA assesses students' applied competencies rather than their ability to memorize curricular content. Consequently, its results often reveal the quality of pedagogical practices, learning cultures, and the effectiveness of assessment systems that may not be adequately captured through domestic examinations. By emphasizing real-world problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills, PISA provides a more comprehensive picture of how education systems prepare students to meet contemporary societal and economic challenges.

2. Challenges of Educational Accountability in Indonesia

Several challenges continue to hinder the implementation of educational accountability in Indonesia:

- a. Policy implementation fragmentation resulting from the decentralized governance system, which often leads to inconsistencies between national policies and local practices.
- b. Assessment systems that remain insufficiently holistic, with limited emphasis on measuring Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and complex competencies.
- c. Limited capacity for educational data management and utilization, constraining evidence-based decision-making and follow-up improvement initiatives.
- d. Substantial disparities in educational quality across regions, particularly between urban and remote areas, which undermine equitable educational outcomes.

3. UNESCO's Accountability Framework as a Systemic Solution

UNESCO emphasizes several key principles for strengthening educational accountability:

- a. A strong focus on both quality and equity in educational provision.
- b. Transparency in learning outcome data to support informed decision-making and public trust.
- c. Collaboration among central governments, local authorities, schools, and communities to foster shared responsibility for educational outcomes.
- d. Adaptive monitoring mechanisms grounded in continuous improvement and contextual responsiveness.

This framework shifts the orientation of accountability from merely "measuring for evaluation" to "measuring for improvement," thereby promoting a more developmental and sustainable approach to educational governance.

4. Strategic Recommendations

To strengthen educational accountability and improve Indonesia's performance in international assessments such as PISA, several strategic measures are proposed:

- a. Align the national assessment system with PISA competencies, particularly Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and contextual problem-solving abilities.
- b. Develop data-driven accountability systems, including school performance dashboards and regular evaluation meetings to support evidence-based improvements.
- c. Strengthen teachers' pedagogical competencies through innovative instructional approaches such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), inquiry-based learning, lesson study, and professional coaching.
- d. Integrate the PPEPP cycle (*Determination, Implementation, Evaluation, Control, and Improvement*) into school governance and quality assurance systems.
- e. Implement affirmative interventions in Indonesia's 3T regions (*Frontier, Outermost, and Least Developed Areas*) to reduce disparities in educational quality.
- f. Promote school principals' leadership based on instructional leadership, emphasizing the improvement of teaching and learning processes.
- g. Encourage active parental involvement as partners in educational accountability and student learning.
- h. Strengthen international benchmarking practices and ensure policy consistency over the long term (10–15 years) to sustain educational reforms and improve learning outcomes.

Policy Implications

1. Learning data should serve as the basis for evidence-based decision-making.
2. Evaluation systems should encourage improvements in classroom practices and instructional strategies.

3. Transparency should foster constructive pressure and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders.
4. Educational competitiveness can be enhanced gradually and sustainably through continuous improvement efforts.

Conclusion

The low performance of Indonesian students in PISA reflects persistent challenges in the accountability of educational performance. The UNESCO framework offers a holistic approach to strengthening monitoring systems, promoting transparency, fostering collaboration, and encouraging continuous improvement. Aligning national evaluation systems with international standards, strengthening pedagogical practices, and maintaining consistency in long-term educational policies are essential strategies for improving the quality and competitiveness of Indonesian education.

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