


## POLICY BRIEF

# MULTI-GRADE TEACHING



INOVASI is an education program partnership between the Governments of Indonesia and Australia. It aims to find and understand ways to improve student learning outcomes - specifically those related to early grade literacy and numeracy at the school and classroom level.

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NOVEMBER 2019

## WHY SHOULD MULTI-GRADE TEACHING MATTER IN INDONESIA?

According to the World Bank, over 30 per cent of the world's children are taught in multi-grade classes<sup>1</sup>. In many small primary schools and *madrasah* in Indonesia, there is no option other than to group children in multi-grade classes, for example, combining grades three and four in one group. There are simply not enough funds or enough teachers to provide one certified teacher for each grade group in all schools in Indonesia.

Mapping the supply of teachers in seven provinces and over 50 districts and cities in the 2013–2016 period revealed: (a) a shortage of permanent civil servant (PNS) teachers in nearly 50 per cent of primary schools and *madrasah* as well as in junior-secondary schools; this is partly due to teachers who were appointed during the major school construction *Inpres* program in the 1970s now reaching retirement; (b) the average number of pupils in government schools is small with fewer than 60 students per school in some districts (such as Wajo in South Sulawesi); and (c) many isolated primary schools and *madrasah* cannot be merged or 'regrouped' due to geographical barriers<sup>2</sup>.

The 2015 – 2019 National Development Plan (RPJMN) and the Ministry of Education and Culture's (MoEC) five-year strategic plan for the same period both refer to multi-grade (and multi-subject teaching for junior secondary) as a means of improving teacher deployment. This is a step in the right direction, but more can be done. One important development which resulted in part from the work of previous development assistance projects, is a change in the regulations, which previously restricted certified multi-grade teachers from receiving monthly professional allowances from the national government. While one of the requirements for the payment was that a teacher taught a minimum of 20 students in one grade and one class (PP 74 of 2009), this was amended in PP No. 19 of 2017, making it possible for multi-grade teachers to receive the benefit.

In many developed countries and progressive public and private systems of education, multi-grade approaches are seen as the approach of first choice with clear pedagogic advantages over traditional mono-grade classrooms<sup>3</sup>. In every classroom there are children of various 'learning ages'; advanced education systems do not expect every child to learn the same thing at the same time as this is not effective. In such systems multi-grade teaching is seen as an effective way of catering for individual needs<sup>4</sup>. However, in Indonesia multi-grade teaching is generally seen as 'second class' and considered inferior to traditional single-grade teaching. Traditional rigid curricula and whole-class, text-based teaching approaches make multi-grade teaching a challenge<sup>5</sup>.

## WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Based on recent analysis conducted by the Technical Assistance for Education Systems Strengthening (TASS) program, using data from MoEC's basic education database (DAPODIK), around 2.3 million teachers are currently employed in Indonesian state schools. Over half of these (65%, around 1.5 million) are civil servants, paid from general fund transfers from central to district governments. The remaining 800,000 are contract teachers, funded by school operation grants and district budgets. This suggests that Indonesia needs almost one million additional civil servant teachers to ensure all state schools are properly staffed. In other words, it needs to dramatically increase the number of teachers, and education spending. This is clearly not possible. Efficiencies must be found in teacher deployment.

Two options under consideration are multi-grade classes in primary schools and multi-subject teachers in junior-secondary schools.

In Probolinggo, where INOVASI has implemented a multi-grade pilot with eight schools, the need for multi-grade in many areas of the district is high. In INOVASI partner schools, the number of students per school ranges from 37 to 60, with 5 to 7 teachers per school. The number of students in each class is low and inconsistent, as seen in the following 3 partner primary schools<sup>6</sup>:

School Name	Total number of students per grade					
	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	5 <sup>th</sup> grade	6 <sup>th</sup> grade
SDN Ngadisari I	3	10	4	8	13	13
SDN Sukapura IV	4	11	12	5	6	5
SDN Wonokerto II	11	13	17	6	4	7

<sup>1</sup>World Bank 2010, 2014

<sup>2</sup>Heyward et al. 2017

<sup>3</sup>Angela W. Little. Education for All and Multigrade Teaching. Challenges and Opportunities. Springer: 20016.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9781402045905>

<sup>5</sup>[https://batukarinfo.com/system/files/Multigrade%20Teaching%20Policy%20Brief\\_English\\_final.pdf](https://batukarinfo.com/system/files/Multigrade%20Teaching%20Policy%20Brief_English_final.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>INOVASI Multi-grade study, 2019



Emerging evidence in Probolinggo expands to school support and improved teaching practice. By using multi-grade approaches, and improved lesson planning and learning media, class size increases, and teacher motivation increases in kind<sup>7</sup>. Other observed indications of change from INOVASI's multi-grade study in East Java included:

- Student peer tutoring, using a 'buddy' system
- Increased student enthusiasm and interaction in the larger class size
- A more engaging learning environment
- Teachers are better able to deliver learning material to students with different competency demands
- Better use of learning aids, and visible learning outcomes and results in the classroom. As a result of this pilot, the district has passed a new regulation to support multi-grade teaching and learning and is funding the multigrade training for a further 90 small schools.

## WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES?

### Teacher deployment and efficiency

Teachers are distributed unevenly between districts and cities and between schools within districts/cities. Typically, urban schools are oversupplied while remote, rural schools are undersupplied<sup>8</sup>. As a result,

multi-grade teaching is especially needed in the frontier, remote and undeveloped areas (*terdepan, terluar dan tertinggal*, known as the 3T areas). Thus the problem is not national or regional teacher shortages but that teachers are not evenly distributed between provinces, between districts/cities within the provinces and between schools within the districts.

### Teacher capacity and knowledge

Teachers' capacity to teach multi-grade classes is limited, particularly in relation to: differentiating the curriculum for learners of different ability; using a range of learning media; and managing learning activities and processes in a diverse classroom. The idea of child-centred learning is not well understood. Teaching tends to be traditional, text-book driven, and teacher-centred.

Little support is provided from central or district government to introduce multi-grade teaching in primary schools (or multi-subject teaching in junior-secondary schools). Specific issues include: (a) no accepted methodology or training for supervisors, principals and teachers; (b) no budget allocated to multi-grade or multi-subject programs; (c) no data collected on multi-grade classes; (d) no technical guidelines or instructions on multi-grade teaching and classroom management; and (e) no technical support for multi-grade programs (curricula or special modules that teachers can easily adapt and implement in multi-grade classes).



<sup>7</sup>INOVASI Multi-grade study, 2019

<sup>8</sup><http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/591981468259478517/pdf/587580BRI0poli10BOX353813B01PUBLIC1.pdf>

# POLICY IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## NATIONAL

Policy recommendations and priorities for strengthening multi-grade teaching and learning at the national level include:

1. Including multi-grade learning in the professional education for pre-service teacher preparation. This should be mandatory through the design and implementation of multi-grade teaching courses in teacher institutes and primary teacher training curricula to prepare teachers for a multi-grade situation. Furthermore, there should be continuing professional development of multi-grade teaching for in-service teachers, promoting it as beneficial for delivering quality in the classroom – not just as an efficiency measure.
2. Improving teachers' competencies, especially in multi-grade teaching, through cluster-based training (teacher and subject teacher working groups) in collaboration with agencies such as the Education Quality Assurance Institution and teacher training institutes; the focus needs to be on differentiated learning so teachers can teach subjects at different levels.
3. The national government could provide additional Special Routine Costs (BRK) and additional BOS assistance funding, as well as special incentives for multi-grade teachers, to compensate for the additional work they face in preparing for and teaching more than two grades at once.
4. The Ministry of Education and Culture could work with the Ministry of Finance to explore financial incentives for districts that make efficiencies in deploying teachers by implementing multi-grade and multi-subject teaching, regrouping schools and taking similar measures to reduce the need for teachers. Such financial incentives could include districts receiving a share of the cost savings back to use in quality improvement programs.
5. Addressing the industrial aspects of implementing multi-grade teaching in primary schools, as well as multi-subject teaching in junior secondary schools, will entail aligning national and minimum service standards for teacher provision, which specify one teacher per grade. This will require consultation with national ministries and teacher unions, including the United Teachers of the Republic of Indonesia (PGRI).

## DISTRICT

Policy recommendations and priorities for strengthening multi-grade teaching and learning at the district level include:

1. The heads of district education offices could issue regulations or decrees to strengthen school cluster working groups for teachers, principals and school supervisors with regard to multi-grade activities. These can include creating special-purpose teachers' working groups for multi-grade teachers and appointing special supervisors (*pengawas*) especially for multi-grade schools.
2. Mainstreaming multi-grade teaching is best supported through decree issued by a district or city head so that it can be recognised as a 'special service' (*layanan khusus*). In addition, it needs to be recognised in the basic education data collection (DAPODIK) process in terms of recording teachers' working load in teaching multi-grade and multi-subject classes.
3. Districts and cities could strengthen their teacher distribution policies and implement them with incentive systems to encourage and motivate teachers to teach in remote areas that usually face teacher shortages.
4. In remote areas where school regrouping is not possible, single-teacher satellite schools for early grades can be run as part of a multi-site school. In some areas these are known as distance classes. Regulations to legitimise and govern such practices would help to ensure they maintain a high standard.

*This Policy Brief was prepared by INOVASI and the Center for Education Policy Research, from the Ministry of Education and Culture's Research and Development agency.*

*Data includes results from INOVASI's baseline and endline studies in partner provinces West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, North Kalimantan and East Java.*