

Public Participation and Policy Development in Education: A Conceptual Review of Policy Models in Indonesia

Wahidin

Universitas Palangka Raya, Palangkaraya, Indonesia; wahidin@pls.upr.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Public participation is essential in education policy development because it strengthens policy legitimacy, responsiveness, and alignment with real educational needs. In Indonesia, however, education policy is often shaped by technocratic and elite-driven approaches, leaving limited space for meaningful involvement of teachers, parents, schools, and communities. This study aims to review education policy models and examine their relevance for promoting participatory policy development in Indonesia. This study employed a qualitative literature review using books, journal articles, policy documents, and relevant government regulations as data sources. The literature was analyzed through content analysis by identifying, categorizing, and comparing key concepts related to policy formulation, policy analysis, implementation models, and public participation. The review identifies three major categories of education policy models: formulation models, including institutional, elite, rational, incremental, mixed-scanning, strategic, and deliberative models; analysis models, including prospective, retrospective, and integrative models; and implementation models, including top-down and bottom-up approaches. The findings indicate that Indonesian education policy remains strongly influenced by elite, rational, and technocratic orientations, while deliberative and bottom-up mechanisms are still limited. The study suggests that education policy development in Indonesia should shift toward a strategic-deliberative model that positions the public as active policy actors rather than passive beneficiaries. Strengthening public deliberation, institutionalizing participatory forums, and integrating evidence-based analysis with local aspirations are necessary to improve the legitimacy, sustainability, and effectiveness of education policy.

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Corresponding Author:

Wahidin

Universitas Palangka Raya, Palangkaraya, Indonesia; Wahidin@pls.upr.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

In general, education policy cannot be separated from societal dynamics, where social, economic, and political perspectives influence its implementation and effectiveness. For example, a region's economic conditions significantly impact access to training and resources for educators, as seen in the uneven implementation of the 2013 Curriculum in Bandung and Yogyakarta (Krisna, 2020). Furthermore, economic factors contribute significantly to determining more inclusive policies,

especially for students facing financial difficulties (Novrian et al., 2024). From a social perspective, principals and teachers have a responsibility to adapt policies to the local context, while unequal access to internet access during the pandemic worsens learning conditions (Rosyada et al., 2021; Siska & Rudagi, 2021).

Effective education policies play a central role in shaping access, quality, and public trust in the education system. Education is a crucial instrument for humans to improve the quality of personal and social life, while also serving as a means of fulfilling basic needs through the application of scientific and technological principles. In Indonesia, the mandate for educational advancement is constitutionally stipulated in Article 31 Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 of the 1945 Constitution. However, in its implementation, the results of government policies are often seen as less than optimal in genuinely and comprehensively advancing education (Iskandar, 2019; Irianisyah, 2020). This emphasizes that policy is not merely a routine decision, but rather an interpretive and flexible instrument that must be able to solve problems without eliminating local characteristics (Darwis, 2013).

Despite the variety of education policy models, public participation in education development in Indonesia remains limited. Reality shows that many current education policies are not fully based on an ideal policy cycle, resulting in a frequent disconnect between written regulations and actual needs on the ground. In fact, education policy should reflect values allocated through a thorough process, from determining motivation to evaluating impact (Slamet PH, 2005). When public participation is sidelined, policies tend to lose their responsiveness to increasingly rapid environmental changes, ultimately hindering the achievement of transformative learning goals.

Theoretically, the formulation of good public policy must go through systematic stages. According to Lester and Stewart (2000), this cycle includes determining motivation, policy definition, implementation, and policy completion. Similarly, Dunn (2003) emphasizes five crucial steps: determining motivation, formulation, selection, implementation, and evaluation. Educational policy is a broad decision carefully considered by the highest decision-makers as a boundary and general direction for educational administrators to move (Nurkolis, 2004). Therefore, the effectiveness of a policy depends heavily on transparent monitoring and control at every stage so that the policy is not only legislative in nature but also has positive political consequences for the advancement of educational subjects.

Considering the complexity of current educational issues, an in-depth analysis of various policy models is necessary to ensure that the formulations can truly realize learning objectives that balance educator authority and student sovereignty. Policy model analysis is crucial for practitioners and policymakers to understand as a reminder in resolving various educational issues. This paper explores various education policy models—formulation, analysis, and implementation—with a focus on their relevance in promoting participatory education reform in Indonesia.

Character, education, and government behavior are similar. The meaning of the approach is also often interpreted as a legislative issue because it carries political consequences and political behavior. In other words, the approach can be an implication for a conclusion, an instrument for realizing a goal. Public policy is ultimately related to the achievement of public goals. According to Lester and Stewart, current public policy considers various stages as summarized in the public policy cycle, which includes the stages of 1) determining motivation, 2) defining policy, 3) implementing policy, 4) evaluating policy, 5) modifying policy, and 6) finalizing policy (Lester & Stewart, 2000; Arlita et al., 2020). Meanwhile, according to Dunn, the stages in implementing policy go through five steps: 1) determining motivation, 2) formulating policy, 3) selecting policy, 4) implementing policy, and 5) evaluating/evaluating policy (Dunn, 2003). These five stages, respectively, have different levels, all stages must be monitored and controlled by the creators and implementers of the open approach. The steps in making this approach mean that an approach must be carried out in stages and through preparation, planning, implementation and evaluation.

The current reality is that policies are not based on the five values mentioned above, thus serving as a reminder for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to be able to solve various problems through sound policy formulation. Based on previous studies, the concept of policy analysis is usually explained

in various disciplines (Bintari et al., 2016). There needs to be a focus on the discussion of education specifically. Understanding policy model analysis is crucial so that the resulting policies can achieve learning objectives. Several policy formulation models exist in education to address existing problems. Therefore, the author feels it is important to write an article entitled "educational policy formulation models," to understand the various models that exist and can be applied in the world of education.

Learning is a human interaction procedure characterized by a balance between the sovereignty of the educational subject and the authority of the educator, an effort to prepare the educational subject to face an environment that is experiencing increasingly rapid change. Education improves the quality of personal and social life, providing tips for applying the principles of science and technology to form a holistic personality. Evaluation of situational demands and elements of the value system that operate within an institution as a general plan to guide decision-making to achieve the intended educational goals is known as educational policy. Policy is made with reference to the new educational paradigm. Policy is a statement or writing that provides general instructions on determining the scope that provides boundaries and general direction for managers to move. Policy also means a broad decision that serves as a basic benchmark for management implementation. The decision in question has been carefully and thoroughly considered by the highest decision-maker and is not a repetitive and routine activity that is programmed or related to decision-making rules (Nurkolis, 2004). On the other hand, according to Slamet PH (2005), educational policy is what is said (decided) and done by the government in the field of education. Thus, educational policy includes decisions and actions that allocate values.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative literature review with a conceptual review design to examine education policy models and their relevance to public participation in education policy development in Indonesia. This method was selected because the study aimed to synthesize theoretical concepts, policy models, and previous research findings rather than collect primary data from field participants. The review focused on three main aspects: education policy formulation models, education policy analysis models, and education policy implementation models, with particular attention to how each model provides space for public participation in the Indonesian education policy context.

The literature search was conducted systematically through several academic databases and online repositories, including Google Scholar, Garuda, ResearchGate, Scopus-indexed journal sources where accessible, and official government websites such as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. The search was conducted using Indonesian and English keywords to obtain broader and more relevant sources. The main keywords included "education policy," "education policy model," "policy formulation," "policy analysis," "policy implementation," "public participation," "deliberative policy," "top-down policy," "bottom-up policy," "kebijakan pendidikan," "model kebijakan pendidikan," "partisipasi publik," "formulasi kebijakan," "implementasi kebijakan," and "kebijakan pendidikan Indonesia." Boolean operators were also used, such as "education policy" AND "public participation," "policy formulation" AND "education," and "deliberative policy" AND "Indonesia."

The literature selection was limited to sources published between 2014 and 2024 to ensure relevance to contemporary education policy issues. However, several classical and foundational works published before 2014 were retained because they provide essential theoretical foundations for policy analysis, such as works on public policy models, policy formulation, implementation theory, and education policy analysis. The sources reviewed consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, research reports, legal documents, government regulations, and official policy documents related to education policy in Indonesia.

The inclusion criteria were as follows: first, the source discussed public policy, education policy, policy formulation, policy analysis, policy implementation, or public participation in education; second, the source was relevant to the Indonesian education context or provided a theoretical framework applicable to education policy analysis; third, the source was published in a credible academic journal, academic book, institutional report, or official government document; and fourth,

the source provided sufficient conceptual or empirical contribution to the discussion of education policy models. The exclusion criteria included sources that were not directly related to education policy, sources without clear authorship or institutional credibility, non-academic opinion articles, duplicate sources, inaccessible full texts, and sources that did not contribute substantially to the conceptual analysis.

The screening process was conducted in four stages. In the first stage, the researcher identified literature through database searches using the predetermined keywords. In the second stage, duplicate sources and sources with incomplete bibliographic information were removed. In the third stage, titles and abstracts were screened based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. In the fourth stage, the full texts were reviewed to assess conceptual relevance, methodological quality, and contribution to the study focus. After this process, the sources were selected as the final literature corpus for analysis.

Data were analyzed using content analysis. The analysis began with repeated reading of the selected sources to identify key concepts, arguments, and theoretical classifications related to education policy models. Relevant information was then coded and grouped into three main analytical categories: policy formulation models, policy analysis models, and policy implementation models. Within each category, the sources were further analyzed based on their orientation toward public participation, such as elite-driven, rational-technocratic, incremental, strategic, deliberative, top-down, and bottom-up approaches. The analysis also compared the strengths, limitations, and contextual relevance of each model in Indonesian education policy development.

To maintain the quality and credibility of the review, several strategies were applied. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from academic books, peer-reviewed articles, government documents, and previous research reports. Second, priority was given to peer-reviewed and institutionally published sources. Third, each source was assessed based on relevance, credibility, publication quality, and contribution to the research focus. Fourth, classical literature was used only when it provided foundational theoretical concepts and was supported by more recent studies or policy documents. These steps were taken to ensure that the review was not merely descriptive but also analytical and conceptually grounded.

Since this study used publicly available documents and did not involve human participants, formal ethical approval was not required. Nevertheless, all sources were cited properly to maintain academic integrity and avoid plagiarism. Through this method, the study is expected to provide a rigorous conceptual foundation for understanding education policy models and their relevance to strengthening public participation in education policy development in Indonesia.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This literature review found that education policy development can be understood through three interrelated categories of policy models: policy formulation models, policy analysis models, and policy implementation models. These three categories are not separate stages, but part of a continuous policy cycle in which public problems are identified, policy alternatives are formulated, decisions are made, programs are implemented, and outcomes are evaluated. In the context of Indonesian education, the relationship among these models is particularly important because policy success depends not only on the quality of formal regulations, but also on the extent to which policy processes involve public participation and respond to local educational realities.

Table 1. Critical Comparison of Policy Formulation Models

Model Type	Key Features	Decision Orientation	Implementation & Issues in Indonesia	Potential for Public Participation
System (Paine & Naumes)	Input-Process-Output; dynamic interaction with the environment.	Descriptive-Systemic	The government's reaction to the issue of low literacy (input) became a new curriculum (output).	Limited to the "input" (demand) provider.
Authority Orientation (Elite)	Policies flow from the elite to the masses; upper-class values.	Top-Down/Exclusive	The dominance of the central bureaucracy in determining national graduation standards.	Very Low; society is only an object.
Benefit Orientation (Rational & Incremental)	Rationale: Maximum benefit; Incremental: Gradual/safe change.	Techno-Biocratic	Annual education budget adjustment (Incremental) vs. Education Digitalization (Rational).	Moderate; focus on technical efficiency, not aspirations.
Mixed Scanning	Combination of wide view (wide camera) and detail (focus camera).	Comprehensive Synthesis	A comprehensive evaluation of the national education system while focusing on teacher reform in 3T areas.	High on the detail scanning stage.
Deliberative & Strategic	Deliberation, public argument, and long-term planning.	Participatory-Democratic	Public review of the Education Bill; involvement of professional teachers' organizations and civil society.	Very high; the public as the determining subject.

3.1 Education Policy Formulation Models and Public Participation

The first finding shows that education policy formulation involves various models with different assumptions about authority, evidence, and public participation. The institutional model views policy as the product of formal government institutions. In this model, legitimacy comes from official authority, laws, and bureaucratic structures. This model is relevant in Indonesia because education policy is commonly issued through ministries, local governments, and formal regulations. However, when the institutional approach becomes too dominant, public participation may be reduced to policy socialization after decisions have already been made. This limits the ability of teachers, parents, and communities to influence policy direction.

The elite model explains policy as a product of decisions made by political, bureaucratic, or intellectual elites. In this model, policies flow from decision-makers to society, while the public is positioned mainly as the recipient of policy. This model can accelerate decision-making, but it risks

producing policies that are weak in social legitimacy because they do not sufficiently reflect local needs and classroom realities. In the Indonesian education context, this tendency can be seen when national education reforms are designed centrally with limited involvement from schools and communities. Such a process may create a gap between policy design and policy implementation (Parsons, 2006; Winarno, 2012).

The rational model emphasizes evidence, efficiency, and the selection of the best policy alternative based on measurable goals. This model is useful in education policy because decisions related to curriculum, funding, school zoning, teacher distribution, and digitalization require systematic data. However, rational policy analysis also has limitations. Education problems are not only technical but also social, cultural, political, and geographical. A policy that appears efficient at the national level may not be equally relevant in remote, rural, or socio-economically disadvantaged areas. Therefore, rational analysis should be combined with contextual understanding and public deliberation (Dunn, 2003; Vedung, 2017).

The incremental model views policy development as a gradual adjustment to existing policies. This model is often practical in complex education systems because sudden reform can create resistance or implementation problems. Incremental change may be appropriate for budget revision, curriculum refinement, and school management improvement. However, if used without critical evaluation, incrementalism may preserve existing inequalities. For this reason, incremental policy must be supported by continuous feedback from schools and communities so that gradual change remains responsive to educational needs (Lester & Stewart, 2000; Wahab, 2014).

The strategic model emphasizes long-term planning and policy sustainability. This model is highly relevant for Indonesian education because frequent policy changes often occur alongside changes in political leadership. When education policy is driven mainly by short-term political interests, schools may experience policy fatigue and uncertainty. A strategic model can help ensure that education reform is guided by long-term goals rather than temporary political agendas. However, strategic planning should not become a top-down technocratic exercise. It must include public dialogue so that long-term policy directions are socially legitimate and practically relevant (Parsons, 2006; Winarno, 2012).

The deliberative model provides the strongest basis for public participation. This model views policy as the result of public reasoning, dialogue, and negotiation among stakeholders. In education, deliberation requires the meaningful involvement of teachers, principals, students, parents, professional organizations, local communities, and civil society. Public participation should not be treated as a symbolic procedure, but as an essential part of policy quality. Through deliberative processes, policy development can better capture local aspirations, implementation barriers, and diverse educational needs. Therefore, the deliberative model is important for strengthening the legitimacy, responsiveness, and sustainability of education policy in Indonesia (Dewi, 2017; Parsons, 2006).

3.2 Education Policy Analysis Models

The second finding concerns education policy analysis and models. Policy analysis is needed to examine policy alternatives, predict consequences, assess implementation, and evaluate outcomes. In the reviewed literature, policy analysis can be categorized into prospective, retrospective, and integrative models.

Prospective policy analysis is conducted before a policy is implemented. It aims to predict the possible impacts, benefits, risks, and costs of a policy. In education, prospective analysis is important before implementing major reforms such as curriculum change, school zoning, education funding schemes, or teacher professional development programs. Without prospective analysis, policies may create unintended consequences for schools and students. However, prospective analysis should not rely only on statistical data or administrative assumptions. It also needs input from teachers, parents, and local education actors who understand the practical conditions of schools (Dunn, 2003; Vedung, 2017).

Retrospective policy analysis is conducted after a policy has been implemented. It focuses on evaluating whether a policy has achieved its intended goals and identifying lessons for future improvement. This model is particularly important in Indonesia because education policies are often replaced or revised before their long-term impacts are adequately evaluated. Retrospective analysis can strengthen accountability by examining whether policies improve access, quality, equity, and learning outcomes. It can also reveal implementation gaps between formal regulations and school-level realities (Dunn, 2003; Wahab, 2014).

The integrative model combines prospective and retrospective analysis. This model is suitable for complex education systems because it supports continuous policy learning. Policymakers can use evidence from past implementation while also forecasting the possible effects of future reform. In the Indonesian context, the integrative model is especially relevant because education policy must respond to national goals while remaining sensitive to regional diversity. It also creates more space for public participation because stakeholders can contribute both before policy implementation and during policy evaluation (Lester & Stewart, 2000; Vedung, 2017).

3.3 Education Policy Implementation Models

The third finding relates to policy implementation models, particularly top-down and bottom-up approaches. The top-down model views implementation as the execution of decisions made by central authorities. This approach is common in national education policy because the central government often sets standards, curriculum frameworks, funding mechanisms, and administrative regulations. The strength of the top-down model is that it can ensure national coordination and policy uniformity. However, its weakness is rigidity. Policies designed centrally may not match the infrastructure, human resources, culture, and needs of local schools (Wahab, 2014; Winarno, 2012).

The bottom-up model emphasizes the role of local actors in interpreting and implementing policy. In this model, schools, teachers, local governments, communities, and parents are not merely policy recipients but active policy actors. This approach is important because education takes place in specific social and cultural contexts. A policy that is effective in urban schools may not work in rural or remote areas. Bottom-up implementation provides greater space for public participation because it values local knowledge and school-level experience (Parsons, 2006; Winarno, 2012).

However, neither top-down nor bottom-up implementation is sufficient on its own. Indonesian education policy requires a hybrid approach that combines national direction with local flexibility. A network governance perspective can help bridge this gap by positioning the government not only as a regulator, but also as a facilitator and coordinator among stakeholders. In this approach, ministries, local governments, schools, teacher organizations, parents, and communities share responsibility for policy implementation. Such collaboration can help maintain national standards while allowing local innovation and contextual adaptation (Wahab, 2014).

3.4 Public Participation in Indonesian Education Policy

The fourth finding indicates that public participation in Indonesian education policy remains more formal than substantive. Although mechanisms such as school committees, education councils, public hearings, and consultations exist, participation often occurs after key decisions have already been made. In many cases, the public is involved mainly in policy socialization or implementation support, rather than in problem identification and policy formulation. This suggests that public participation is still frequently treated as an administrative requirement rather than a democratic process.

This condition reflects the continuing dominance of elite and technocratic models in education policymaking. Technocratic policy may be useful for producing standardized programs and measurable targets, but it becomes problematic when it ignores local voices and lived experiences. Teachers and parents often understand educational problems that are not fully visible in statistical data.

For example, curriculum implementation, digital learning, school zoning, and teacher distribution may produce different challenges across regions. Without meaningful public participation, policies may lack contextual relevance and practical feasibility (Dunn, 2003; Rosyada et al., 2021).

The gap between formal policy and local implementation is one of the central challenges in Indonesian education. Ambitious policies may fail to achieve their goals when they are not supported by adequate infrastructure, teacher capacity, funding, and community readiness. This confirms that education policy should not be treated only as a legal or administrative product. It must be understood as a social process that requires negotiation, adaptation, and shared responsibility among stakeholders (Wahab, 2014; Winarno, 2012).

3.5 Toward a Strategic-Deliberative Model

Based on the review, Indonesian education policy development should move toward a strategic-deliberative model. This model combines long-term strategic planning with meaningful public deliberation. It positions the public not as passive beneficiaries, but as active participants in policy development. Teachers, school leaders, students, parents, professional organizations, local communities, and civil society should be involved from the early stages of problem identification to implementation and evaluation.

A strategic-deliberative model offers several advantages. First, it improves policy relevance because decisions are informed by real educational needs. Second, it strengthens legitimacy because stakeholders are involved in shaping policy direction. Third, it supports policy sustainability because reforms are not dependent solely on changes in political leadership. Fourth, it encourages shared responsibility among government, schools, and society.

To apply this model, the government needs to institutionalize meaningful participation forums. Education councils and school committees should function not only as administrative bodies, but also as spaces for policy dialogue. Public consultation should be conducted before policy decisions are finalized, not merely after regulations are issued. In addition, policy analysis should integrate quantitative evidence with qualitative insights from teachers, parents, students, and communities. This integration is necessary to ensure that education policy is evidence-based, participatory, and context-responsive.

Overall, the findings show that education policy development in Indonesia should move beyond elite-driven and purely technocratic approaches. Institutional authority, rational analysis, and national standards remain important, but they must be balanced with deliberation, local knowledge, and participatory governance. Public participation should be viewed as a core component of policy quality because education policies directly affect the daily lives of students, teachers, parents, and communities. When these actors are meaningfully involved, education policy becomes more legitimate, responsive, inclusive, and sustainable.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that education policy development in Indonesia requires a shift from predominantly elite-driven and technocratic models toward a more strategic-deliberative model that meaningfully involves teachers, parents, schools, communities, professional organizations, and civil society in the policy cycle. The main finding shows that education policy models can be grouped into three interrelated categories: formulation models, including elite, rational, incremental, strategic, and deliberative approaches; analysis models, including prospective, retrospective, and integrative approaches; and implementation models, including top-down, bottom-up, and hybrid approaches. Among these, the strategic-deliberative model is considered the most relevant for strengthening public participation because it combines long-term policy direction with inclusive dialogue and contextual responsiveness. However, this study is limited by its conceptual literature review design, which relies on secondary sources and does not include empirical data from policymakers, teachers, school leaders,

parents, or community actors. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as a conceptual contribution rather than direct evidence of policy practice in specific educational settings. Future research is recommended to conduct empirical studies using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approaches to examine how public participation actually occurs in education policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation across different regions of Indonesia. Further studies should also investigate the effectiveness of deliberative forums, education councils, school committees, and community-based policy mechanisms in improving the legitimacy, sustainability, and practical impact of education policy.

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