



KIAT Guru

Social Accountability in Action: Improving Teachers' Presence and Teachers' Service Quality



The User Committee announce teachers' performance scores in a meeting attended by the representatives from Ministry of Education and Culture, the sub-district education department, the village government staff, school staff and community members (Photo: KIAT Guru).

That morning on the very last day of May 2017, a young woman was standing in a classroom that was transformed into a meeting hall. She held the microphone steady, her voice loud and clear, with no trace of nervousness or fear in front of an overwhelmingly male audience. She was reading the scores given to each teacher in the school for their service performance that month.

“Service indicator number one. Principal is present on time, from Monday to Thursday, from 07.15 until 13.00, and from Friday to Saturday, from 07.15 until 11.30. The maximum score is 20. The score given by the User Committee is 17,” said that young woman.

She is Alfiana Pamut, the Head of the User Committee in SD Inpres Golo Popa, a primary school located in Manggarai Timur District, in East Nusa Tenggara, one of the poorest regions in Indonesia.

As I sat at the back of the room, observing how the meeting went, I could not help being impressed by the scene. In a different context, citizens making demands on teachers to provide better service may be a normalcy. However, SD Inpres Golo Popa is located in Compang Necak, a very remote village, three hours' drive from the nearest town. The last nine kilometers of the distance took an hour's drive, due to a very badly paved, uphill, and winding road. In isolated villages like Compang Necak, teachers tend to be very well respected due to their higher-level of education, income, and social status.

Unfortunately, precisely because of the remoteness of villages like Compang Necak, the government education department staff at the district level and the supervisors at the sub-district level can provide very little supervision to these teachers, if any.

A UNICEF study in 2012 revealed that the lack of supervision to schools resulted in higher teacher absenteeism. An unannounced survey by Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership (ACDP) in 2014 found that every one of five teachers was absent from remote schools, which was double the national rate.

A World Bank unannounced survey conducted at the end of 2016 in SD Inpres Golo Popa found that one of the seven teachers was absent from the school. None of the 51 students tested (of 61 registered students) had achieved their grade-level competencies in either Bahasa Indonesia or mathematics.

Such was the disheartening situation before KIAT Guru (Teacher Performance and Accountability) pilot started. The pilot is a collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Culture, the National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (TNP2K), and governments of five districts with disadvantaged villages, including Manggarai Timur. Yayasan BaKTI implements the program with technical supports from the World Bank and funding from the Government of Australia and USAID.

The pilot aims to improve education service delivery in remote villages. It empowers communities to hold teachers accountable by agreeing to prioritize between five to eight bottom-up service indicators to improve student learning environment. In some pilot schools, the community empowerment is combined with pay for performance of a part of teacher's income, based on either User Committee's verification of teacher presence, or User Committee's score on teacher service performance.

After Alfiana completed reading the service performance scores for all seven teachers in the school, the village cadre, who moderated the meeting, invited the principal and parents to provide their responses. Ester Esem, the School Principal, took the offer after a few other teachers did. She asked, "The UC gave me a score of 6 out of 10 for indicator 7. Principal checks on teachers' teaching and learning activities and teachers' presence every day. I would like to get an explanation. I conducted daily supervision."

In SD Inpres Golo Popa, the teacher service performance scores evaluated by the User Committee determined the amount of remote area allowance that eligible teachers received. In other words, the principal, whose total score was 91, would receive 91% of her remote area allowance for the month of May. Since the total amount of the remote area allowance is one times the base salary, the User Committee's score is high-stake for teachers.

The audience went silent after Ester spoke. I could feel a lot of them were getting apprehensive. While waiting for the moderator to transfer the microphone over, a few people carefully shifted their weights, making sure that the wooden chairs on which they sat did not creak.

Once Alfiana got the microphone, she said, still with loud, and clear, and confident voice as before, "We checked the document, conducted observation, and interviewed the students before giving the score. In the teacher presence form, two teachers marked themselves as being present in school. However, on that day, they were supervising tests in other schools. So, your supervision [of the two teachers] was not very maximal, and we saw that this was not good."

I was very much impressed by the User Committee. During lunch break, I had an informal chat with some of them. I was curious how they became so brave, and how they could voice their demands so strongly and solidly.

They responded, "For us, becoming members of the User Committee is the responsibility of the heart. We divide ourselves into two groups and take turns to visit the school and every classroom every two weeks. We have to score teachers as fairly as we could, because we know that our score will determine their allowance. However, we also could not give high scores to teachers who do not deserve them, as we have to be accountable to the wider communities."

Comprised of nine members, six of them parents of students and three of them community leaders, the User Committee members are elected by the parents and community members. The User Committee in Golo Popa consists of five females, and led by one.



At the end of the meeting, Alfiana hands over the Service Performance Scoring Form to the school principal and signs the minutes of meeting (Photo: KIAT Guru).

While what I witnessed in Golo Popa may be one of the best-case scenarios, it is still very encouraging to see how, after only three months of community facilitation process, the User Committee could already hold the principal and teachers accountable to the service indicators that they had agreed to. It may take longer for other communities to achieve similar level of social accountability, but Golo Popa shows that it is definitely possible!

At the end of my visit, after thanking Ester, the school's principal for her hospitality, I asked her how she felt about the User Committee. To my surprise, she told me that their presence has made it easier for her to hold her teachers accountable.

"I had often reminded my teachers of their responsibilities to come on time and to prepare for their lessons. But as a female principal, the male teachers would not listen to me. Now I have all of the User Committee members conducting the monitoring on my behalf," she said.



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