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Policies on the Recruitment of Madrasah Teachers in Indonesia: Empirical Evidence from Rural Areas

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ABSTRACT

Teacher shortages remain one of the most critical challenges affecting educational equity and quality in Indonesia's remote regions. While previous studies have primarily focused on teacher distribution and workforce availability, limited attention has been given to how teacher recruitment policies are implemented and why they frequently fail to meet local staffing needs. This study examines the implementation of madrasah teacher recruitment policies and their implications for religious education services in remote areas, using Sukabumi Regency, West Java, as a case study. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Data were validated through clarification, description, and explanation techniques. The findings reveal that teacher recruitment policies have not effectively addressed teacher shortages in remote madrasahs. The main obstacles include unclear program design and technical guidelines, overlapping institutional authority among implementing agencies, sociocultural adaptation challenges experienced by recruited teachers, weak compliance of local governments with staffing regulations, and limited commitment to policy evaluation and monitoring. The study further demonstrates that policy implementation failures are driven not only by resource constraints but also by governance and coordination weaknesses across administrative levels. This research contributes to the literature on educational policy implementation by highlighting governance-related barriers in teacher recruitment programs and proposing the need for more adaptive, context-sensitive, and coordinated recruitment strategies to improve teacher retention and educational service delivery in remote madrasahs.

Keyword:

Teacher shortage; teacher recruitment policy; policy implementation; madrasah education; remote areas

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INTRODUCTION

The equitable and unequal distribution of teachers remains one of the most persistent challenges in improving educational quality and equity in developing countries, particularly in remote and underserved areas (OECD, 2023; Febriana *et al.*, 2018). Recent studies indicate that teacher shortages are increasingly associated with high turnover rates, particularly in underserved and rural areas where retention remains a persistent challenge (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020; Evans, 2021;). Previous studies have shown that inadequate teacher distribution contributes to excessive workloads, multi-grade teaching practices, and declining educational performance in remote schools (Wang, 2006; UNICEF, 2016). UNESCO (2024). According to (UNESCO, 2024) emphasizes that teacher availability and retention remain critical determinants of educational quality in remote and marginalized communities.

The shortage of teachers in remote areas increases the workload of existing teachers, as they are required to teach multiple classes (Myriad Research, 2015). In Indonesia, this challenge is particularly evident in madrasahs, where teacher shortages continue to undermine the provision of quality religious education. The issue has become increasingly urgent as approximately 4,000 madrasah teachers retire annually, while recruitment efforts remain insufficient to meet demand. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the national shortage reaches 57,245 teachers in public madrasahs and more than 527,000 teachers in private madrasahs. Despite various recruitment programs and incentive schemes, teacher shortages persist, especially in remote regions where educational infrastructure, transportation, and public services remain limited (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2023). International evidence suggests that recruitment policies alone are insufficient unless accompanied by retention strategies and supportive working conditions (See *et al.*, 2020).

Sukabumi Regency in West Java represents an important case for examining this issue. As one of the largest regencies in Java, several of its sub-districts are classified as remote areas characterized by difficult geographical access, inadequate infrastructure, and limited educational facilities. The availability of teachers and high-quality teachers is a key factor in educational success, as it contributes to student achievement (Blömeke, *et al.*, 2016; Kooli, 2019; Kyriakides *et al.*, 2020). Meanwhile, factors influencing teacher quality standards include inefficient teacher recruitment (Sutcher *et al.*, 2016).

Previous studies have examined teacher deployment, teacher retention, and educational access in remote areas (Meha, *et al.*, 2013; Syafii (2018); Citra Dewi (2018); Agus and Bambang (2013) dan Rahayu, Nugroho and Berliani (2019). However, most studies focus on teacher distribution patterns or the challenges experienced by teachers after placement. Limited attention has been given to the implementation of teacher recruitment policies and the governance factors that influence their effectiveness in addressing persistent teacher shortages in remote madrasahs. Consequently, there remains insufficient understanding of why teacher shortages continue despite the existence of recruitment programs, incentive policies, and regulatory support.

This study addresses this gap by examining the implementation of teacher recruitment policies in remote madrasahs in Sukabumi Regency. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on teacher distribution outcomes, this research analyzes how policy design, institutional coordination, administrative capacity, and local implementation processes shape recruitment effectiveness. By applying these perspectives, the study seeks to explain the factors that contribute to the continuing shortage of teachers in remote madrasahs despite ongoing government recruitment initiatives. The study therefore contributes to the educational policy implementation literature by identifying governance-related barriers that hinder the successful fulfillment of teacher needs in remote areas.

Teacher Shortages in Rural Educational Settings

Teacher shortages have become a persistent global challenge affecting educational quality and equity, particularly in rural and remote regions. International evidence suggests that the problem extends beyond the insufficient supply of teachers and encompasses issues of unequal distribution, high turnover rates, and difficulties in attracting qualified educators to underserved communities. Schools located in geographically isolated areas often experience chronic staffing shortages due to inadequate infrastructure, limited access to professional development opportunities, and unfavorable living conditions. These circumstances significantly reduce the attractiveness of rural teaching positions and contribute to educational disparities between urban and remote regions (Ingersoll and Tran, 2023).

Existing studies indicate that teacher shortages negatively influence instructional quality, increase teacher workloads, and limit students' access to educational opportunities. As a consequence, schools in rural areas frequently struggle to maintain effective learning environments, which ultimately affects student achievement and educational outcomes. The unequal allocation of teaching personnel therefore represents not only a workforce issue but also a broader challenge related to educational justice and social equity (Monk, 2007).

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

The literature distinguishes teacher recruitment from teacher retention. Recruitment refers to efforts aimed at attracting and appointing teachers to available positions, whereas retention concerns the capacity of educational systems to maintain teachers in their assigned locations over time. While many governments prioritize recruitment initiatives, evidence suggests that retaining teachers presents a more complex challenge, particularly in rural and disadvantaged communities (Rhinesmith *et al.*, 2023).

Research has demonstrated that financial incentives alone are often insufficient to ensure long-term teacher commitment. Retention is strongly influenced by working conditions, professional support, career advancement opportunities, and the degree of social integration within local communities. Teachers who develop strong connections with local residents and perceive meaningful professional growth opportunities are generally more likely to remain in their positions. Consequently, effective teacher workforce policies require an integrated approach that simultaneously addresses recruitment and retention concerns.

Policy Implementation and Educational Governance

The effectiveness of public policy is largely determined by how successfully it is implemented. According to Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), policy implementation outcomes are influenced by several interconnected factors, including policy objectives, resource availability, communication among implementing agencies, organizational characteristics, socio-political environments, and the attitudes of policy actors. Policies may fail to achieve their intended objectives when one or more of these variables are inadequately addressed.

Similarly, Grindle (2017) argues that successful implementation depends on both the content of policy and the context of implementation. The content dimension encompasses policy goals, available resources, and expected benefits, while the contextual dimension refers to institutional arrangements, power relations, stakeholder interests, and environmental conditions. Within the education sector, these factors are particularly relevant because multiple actors—including central governments, local authorities, schools, and communities—are involved in policy execution.

In the context of teacher recruitment policies, implementation challenges often emerge when administrative responsibilities overlap, coordination mechanisms are weak, or policy objectives are interpreted differently by implementing agencies. Such conditions may undermine policy effectiveness and contribute to persistent teacher shortages despite ongoing recruitment efforts.

Educational Governance in Rural Areas

Governance arrangements play a critical role in determining the effectiveness of educational service delivery in rural communities. Compared with urban areas, rural regions face unique challenges related to geographic isolation, limited public infrastructure, restricted access to educational resources, and lower administrative capacity. These conditions require governance mechanisms that are flexible, adaptive, and responsive to local circumstances.

Recent scholarship emphasizes the importance of collaborative governance approaches involving government agencies, educational institutions, and local communities. Such arrangements facilitate resource mobilization, strengthen accountability, and enhance the legitimacy of educational policies. Community participation is particularly important in rural settings because local stakeholders often possess contextual knowledge that can support policy implementation and improve educational outcomes (Febriana *et al.*, 2026).

Consequently, efforts to address teacher shortages should not rely solely on centralized recruitment strategies but should also incorporate local governance mechanisms capable of supporting teacher adaptation, professional engagement, and long-term commitment to rural communities.

Madrasah Teacher Recruitment in Indonesia

Teacher recruitment within Indonesian madrasahs presents unique challenges due to the dual administrative structure governing Islamic education. Unlike general public schools, madrasahs operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs while simultaneously interacting with broader national education policies. This institutional arrangement often creates complexities related to teacher workforce planning, recruitment mechanisms, and personnel management.

Recent reports indicate that Indonesia continues to face a substantial shortage of madrasah teachers, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas. Although various recruitment initiatives have been introduced, many regions still experience difficulties in attracting qualified teachers and ensuring their long-term retention. The shortage is further exacerbated by retirements, uneven teacher distribution, and limited incentives for serving in geographically isolated locations (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2023).

Given these conditions, examining the implementation of madrasah teacher recruitment policies provides valuable insights into the broader challenges of educational governance and public service delivery in rural Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach to describe an event; this method views an event as something that must be understood holistically, prioritizing process over outcome. The researcher serves as the primary instrument responsible for collecting, processing, analyzing, interpreting, and verifying data and information. Observation and participant observation were conducted systematically by analyzing the implementation process of the teacher placement policy in remote areas of Sukabumi Regency, where the program's implementation falls under the responsibility of the Education Office (Disdik) of Sukabumi

Regency, West Java. This analysis is conducted from the perspective of officials as policy implementers and the community as service recipients, supported by theoretical frameworks.

Through this qualitative research, it is hoped that comprehensive and detailed data can be obtained regarding the implementation of the teacher recruitment program for elementary schools in remote areas, with the program’s execution and factual aspects analyzed. The focus of the teacher recruitment program for elementary schools in remote areas includes the clarity of program details, resources related to the program, authority, and the consistency of policy actors in implementing the program.

Data sources were collected regarding the processes, outputs, and outcomes of the implementation of policies for recruiting teachers in remote areas within each Regional Work Unit (SKPD). The required data includes both primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of words, statements, and the actions or behaviors of informants and serves as a research instrument. Secondary data, on the other hand, consists of relevant documents that also answer the research questions. The data used include: 1) Documents related to various policies on teacher recruitment in remote areas and data on the implementation of these policies. 2) In-depth observations of empirical facts regarding the placement of teachers in remote areas. 3) In-depth information gathering regarding responses, perceptions, and views on teacher recruitment in remote areas.

The informants in this study include all officials and bureaucratic staff serving as implementers, as well as school-age children in the communities being served. The number of informants required is adjusted based on the availability of information from the informants. A total of 24 informants were interviewed, comprising: 1 regional official the Head of the Sukabumi Regency Education Office; 4 technical operational staff; 5 senior staff representatives; 5 non-civil servant field surveyors; and 14 representatives of elementary/MI and junior high/MTs teachers.

Data collection began with interviews of key informants, namely the Head of the Education Office and the Head of the Civil Service, Education, and Training Agency (BKPP); subsequently, in accordance with the nature of the data collection process in qualitative research, the list of informants interviewed expanded.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The shortage of madrasah teachers has become a problem for Islamic religious education in Sukabumi Regency. Teacher shortages are increasingly understood as governance challenges involving recruitment, retention, and workforce planning rather than merely staffing deficits outcomes (Garcia & Weiss, 2020). Table 1 presents the distribution of schools, students, classes, and teachers across selected remote subdistricts of Sukabumi Regency. The data provide an overview of educational resource availability and highlight disparities in teacher allocation among remote areas.

Table 1. Distribution of Schools, Students, Classes, and Teachers in Selected Remote Subdistricts of Sukabumi Regency, 2024

No	Subdistric	Elementary	Junior High Schools	Students	Grade	Teachers
1	Tegalbuleud	32	10	3060	225	23
2	Ciracap	37	10	4910	344	21
3	Jampang Tengah	51	16	5855	510	50
4	Jampang Kulon	35	15	4120	368	8
5	Cisolok	50	22	7024	336	39
6	Bojong Genteng	20	13	3010	165	18

7	Bantar Gadung	32	12	4037	410	47
8	Ciambar	22	7	4130	282	23

Source: Sukabumi Regency Education Office, processed.

As shown in Table 1, teacher availability varies considerably across remote subdistricts. The most notable imbalance is found in Jampang Kulon, which serves 4,120 students with only eight teachers, indicating severe staffing shortages compared to other subdistricts. This pattern suggests that teacher distribution remains uneven despite ongoing recruitment efforts.

Implementation program to ensure the availability of teachers is the responsibility and authority of the Sukabumi Regency Education Office. However, from a technical and administrative personnel management perspective, the agency authorized to oversee this process is the Civil Service, Education, and Training Agency (BKPP), which is subsequently established by a Decree of the Regent of Sukabumi Regency. As for teachers who transfer or request a transfer from schools in one area to another, including to and from remote areas within Sukabumi Regency, the mechanism involves submitting a proposal to the BKPP through the Education Office, provided they meet the eligibility requirements for transfer, including having completed a five-year assignment contract in a remote area.

The importance of systematically designed programs for planning and action lies in their implementation as more specific projects. Supervision or mentoring programs for teachers in remote areas must be carried out with effective coordination to ensure that the intended changes in the policy environment such as improved work ethic among teachers and their ability to adapt to new work environments are achieved. Generally, local governments send teachers to work in remote areas merely as a gesture of goodwill through a symbolic handover, without accompanying post-placement follow-up programs with clear and measurable implementation guidelines.

Moreover, for teachers requesting a transfer, the applicable rules and regulations governing such requests often do not align with current regulations. An illustrative example is a teacher directly approaching the Regent to submit a transfer request letter, leveraging personal connections outside their official duties as a civil servant teacher. The Regent's disposition letter subsequently serves as the official request for approval, and naturally, the relevant government agency processing the transfer finds it difficult to reject the teacher's request to leave that remote area. As stated by a retired elementary school teacher from Ujung Genteng: "After serving for about ten years at the most remote elementary school in this area, I once applied to transfer to an elementary school closer to my hometown. The application documents were revised three times, but by the time I retired, I still couldn't transfer. This was different from my peers who had connections to department officials; they were able to transfer."

Regulatory-wise, the policy on the appointment and placement of teachers is governed by Law No. 14 of 2005, Article 25, Paragraph 1, which states that transparency and objectivity are the primary principles guiding its implementation. Furthermore, Article 28, Paragraph 1 specifies that teachers appointed by the central government or local governments have an inherent right to transfer to a different duty station. Efforts to improve the quality of basic education align with the very essence of regional autonomy, namely enhancing and empowering the well-being of the community. The tangible realization of democratic values is a society that is intelligent, critical, and strong (Keban, 2008).

Good governance regards accountability as an inherent and inseparable characteristic of a civil society (Suparman, 2017). Several research findings indicate that the public remains

highly dependent on public officials and, more importantly, expects their intervention, particularly in the administration of education (Suratno, 2014);Purnastuti, Salim and Joarder, 2015). However, educational services for remote communities do not appear to be a primary consideration in the implementation of various programs, resulting in a further decline in the quality of education in remote areas (Hargreaves, Kvalsund and Galton, 2009) where teachers, as a determining factor in educational quality, are of low quality (Luschei and Zubaidah, 2012). Outside the government's bureaucratic hierarchy, there are powerless citizens facing bureaucratic officials (Thoha, 1984). Due to such situations, the services provided by the public bureaucracy ultimately fail to meet the growing expectations and initiatives emerging within society.

The teacher placement program in remote areas of Sukabumi Regency has not included detailed supplementary explanations in the form of updates or revisions to the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) regarding the technical implementation of overlapping authorities between the Sukabumi Regency Education Office and the Civil Service, Education, and Training Agency. The orientation period for teachers particularly those from outside the region to familiarize themselves with their work environment has not been incorporated into the program; consequently, many teachers struggle to adapt to the local culture, values, and customs, leading them to request a transfer.

The finding regarding overlapping institutional authority is consistent with previous studies showing that fragmented governance and unclear distribution of responsibilities frequently undermine the implementation of education policies. See et al. (2020) argue that teacher recruitment policies often fail to achieve their intended outcomes when recruitment, deployment, and personnel management are administered by different institutions without effective coordination. Similarly, Tournier and Chimier (2022) found that teacher deployment in developing countries is frequently constrained by institutional fragmentation, resulting in delays in recruitment, mismatches between staffing needs and teacher placement, and limited accountability among implementing agencies.

However, this study extends previous findings by demonstrating that institutional fragmentation in Sukabumi is not merely an administrative coordination issue but also reflects overlapping legal mandates between the Education Office and regional personnel management agencies. This situation weakens decision-making authority, prolongs recruitment processes, and limits the responsiveness of local governments in addressing teacher shortages in remote madrasahs. Unlike previous studies that primarily examine teacher distribution or retention, the present study highlights governance fragmentation as a critical implementation barrier affecting policy effectiveness. These findings suggest that strengthening inter-agency coordination alone may not be sufficient. Greater institutional clarity regarding organizational roles, authority, and accountability is equally necessary to improve the effectiveness of teacher recruitment policies in geographically disadvantaged regions.

Various efforts to address the shortage and uneven distribution of teachers have been undertaken. Support for related programs includes financial assistance for teachers in remote areas from the Provincial Government for 14 sub-districts in Sukabumi Regency, disbursed regularly each month. This incentive policy is implemented to ensure that the equitable distribution of teaching staff reaches areas classified as underdeveloped and isolated. Evidence from developing countries demonstrates that deployment policies often fail when incentives and local adaptation mechanisms are insufficient (Tournier & Chimier, 2022). Another program of a similar nature involves the allocation of school operational funds from the provincial APBD re venue to hire contract teachers in remote areas, including

scholarships for underprivileged students, thereby increasing the gross enrollment rate in education (Sparrow, 2007; Afridi, 2011; Filmer and Schady, 2014). Support resources for teacher placement in remote areas from Sukabumi Regency itself consist of additional incentives and the provision of living facilities for teaching and health personnel in remote areas. However, the steps taken to facilitate support for teachers to ensure the success of the teacher placement program have not yet shown significant results. Data released by the West Java Education Advocacy Institute indicates that in several sub-districts of Sukabumi Regency particularly those classified as remote the rate of teacher transfers from underdeveloped areas to other regions continues to rise. Moreover, the additional hiring of contract teachers to address the shortage of civil servant teachers has led some existing civil servant teachers to frequently neglect their duties. They choose to go on “off-site assignments” to the Education Office in the regency capital to handle administrative matters or for various other reasons rather than fulfilling their duties as teachers. The same trend is also observed in several other sub-districts.

In addition to providing additional incentives, an effort to ensure teachers are willing to be assigned to and remain in service in remote areas involves a contractual commitment to serve in remote regions for a minimum of five years, and they may only transfer to another area if a suitable replacement is available. The Sukabumi Regency Education Office requires all teachers to sign this agreement. Another effort involves recruiting teachers from the local area (local residents); however, the problem is that the number of teachers who are local residents remains limited.

Table 2 presents the distribution of teachers and students across remote subdistricts in Sukabumi Regency. The data illustrate substantial disparities in teacher availability, as reflected in the teacher–student ratios observed across the study areas.

Table 2. Teacher-Student Ratios in Remote Subdistricts of Sukabumi Regency, 2024

No	Subdistrict Name	Number of Classroom Teachers	Number of Students	Average Students Per Teachers
1	Kec. Bojong Genteng	18	3.010	167
2	Kec. Ciracap	21	4.910	233
3	Kec. Jampang Tengah	50	5.854	117
4	Kec. Jampang Kulon	8	4.120	515
5	Kec. Cisolok	39	7.024	180
6	Kec. Tegalbuleud	23	3.060	133
7	Kec. Bantar Gadung	47	4.037	85
8	Kec. Ciambar	23	4.130	179
Jumlah		229	36.145	157

Source: <https://dapo.dikdasmen.kemdikbud.go.id> dan referensi.data.kemdikbud.go.id/

As shown in Table 2, teacher availability is unevenly distributed across remote subdistricts. The most severe imbalance occurs in Jampang Kulon, where only eight teachers serve 4,120 students, resulting in a ratio of 515 students per teacher. In contrast, Bantar Gadung records the lowest ratio at 85 students per teacher. These disparities indicate that teacher shortages are not merely a matter of overall teacher supply but are also closely related to distribution and deployment challenges. Such conditions place additional burdens on existing teachers and potentially affect the quality and accessibility of educational services in remote madrasahs.

Regarding the importance of institutional characteristics in the teacher recruitment program for elementary schools in remote areas, both the Education Office and the BKPP of Sukabumi Regency are considered to be lacking. The Education Office, as the authorized SKPD (leading sector), provides a feasibility assessment for teacher placement, which subsequently serves as a prerequisite for processing by the SKPD with the authority to place and transfer civil servants; however, in certain situations, it becomes powerless once the transfer request submitted by the teacher has received approval from the regional head. The regent's approval, which is forwarded to the relevant technical agencies for further consideration and processing of the teacher's transfer request, results in certain provisions including the five-year service contract in remote areas being disregarded.

Bureaucracy ensures and plays a crucial role in the placement of teachers in remote areas by providing resources and resolving conflicts of interest among various parties (Leer, 2016). Referring to the principle of the division of labor taught in Weberian bureaucracy, this government bureaucracy is divided according to its specialization, namely the Regional Government Agencies (SKPD) at the local government level. In addition to horizontal division of labor, the bureaucracy also operates vertically through the administrative hierarchy, namely provincial/district/municipal governments.

To ensure and equalize the quality of education provided by local governments, the central government adopts a regulatory approach by establishing Minimum Standards for Basic Education as a reference for stakeholders in achieving improved educational quality in accordance with the mandate of the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution. Basic education services have so far been a weak point for the government in meeting the variables of the Human Development Index (HDI) and the standards for human development established by the United Nations (UN).

In addition to primary education, teacher shortages are also evident at the junior secondary level. Table 3 presents the distribution of teachers and students in SMP/MTs across remote subdistricts of Sukabumi Regency, providing an overview of teacher availability and workload disparities at this educational level.

Table 3. Teacher-Student Ratios in Junior Secondary School (SMP/MTs) in Remote Subdistricts of Sukabumi Regency, 2024

No	Subdistrict Name	Number of Classroom Teachers	Number of Students	Average Students per Teacher
1	Kec. Bojong Genteng	20	1.785	89
2	Kec. Ciracap	49	1.983	40
3	Kec. Jampang Tengah	14	1.957	139
4	Kec. Jampang Kulon	32	1.866	58
5	Kec. Cisolok	57	3.212	56
6	Kec. Tegalbuleud	20	931	46
7	Kec. Bantar Gadung	15	1.459	97
8	Kec. Ciambar	15	1.565	104
Jumlah		222	14.758	66

Source: <https://dapo.dikdasmen.kemdikbud.go.id> dan referensi.data.kemdikbud.go.id/

As shown in Table 3, teacher distribution at the junior secondary level remains uneven across remote subdistricts. Jampang Tengah records the highest workload, with 139 students per teacher, while Ciracap and Tegalbuleud exhibit comparatively lower ratios.

These disparities suggest that teacher allocation mechanisms have not fully accommodated variations in student enrollment and local educational needs. Consequently, schools in several remote areas continue to face challenges in maintaining adequate instructional capacity and educational service quality.

From the local government's perspective, the trend of teachers relocating from remote areas demands innovative empowerment programs for teachers, with full attention given to various aspects of their well-being so that teachers are more inclined to remain in their posts. Teacher placement is just as important as maintaining the factors that can encourage teachers to stay and love their work in remote areas. Reasons frequently cited by teachers who wish to leave their posts in remote areas include feeling out of place, high living costs, and difficulties adapting to the social and cultural environment.

Community participation is a vital component in improving educational quality, sharing responsibilities cooperatively with the government (Pradhan *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, in the context of teachers' presence in remote areas, community participation is absolutely essential to strengthen these programs. However, cohesion in the form of emotional bonds between migrant teachers and local residents has not yet been achieved because, in reality, the majority of teachers who relocate lack an emotional connection with the community or do not possess other binding factors such as ownership of assets like land, livestock, and buildings, which could serve as considerations for continuing to serve in remote areas. Working conditions and social adaptation significantly influence teachers' willingness to remain in remote assignments (Kraft *et al.*, 2021).

With a projected shortage of 69 million teachers worldwide over the next 15 years, focused and targeted efforts must be developed and implemented to ensure that all students, regardless of their physical location or zip code, have access to relevant and beneficial educational opportunities. The incentives developed by many countries to promote teaching careers and expand the pool of potential teachers are important first steps, but these initial efforts cannot be the only initiatives undertaken to strengthen the pipeline of teachers entering the classroom. Specific efforts should be developed to help resolve ongoing challenges with retaining current educators (in all settings including rural schools), addressing factors that lead to teacher frustration and burnout, and cultivating a new generation of school leaders who will be needed to replace retiring or departing principals, headmasters, and superintendents (Wallace Foundation, 2022). Without the development of comprehensive and extensive initiatives that directly impact and benefit classroom teachers, teacher shortages will continue, and likely expand, well into the mid-21st century. As teacher numbers dwindle, the impact on student learning will be substantial – a very concerning development as global events and ecological concerns will require a highly educated generation of young people that will emerge in the mid-21st century (Kotok and Knight, 2022).

Rural schools are frequently the first educational institutions to be impacted by educator shortages and serve as an indicator for larger issues related to the appeal and desirability of teaching as a profession. Local rural students frequently find themselves attending schools that may have a low-quality or nonexistent teacher, simply as a result of the imbalance related to the current teacher labor supply (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). Today, many rural schools are operating without qualified teachers and instructors in key academic disciplines such as math and science (Dobo, 2022). Students in rural schools are required to either self-teach themselves these subjects or forgo classwork and learning in specific content areas. While it is admirable that these students continue to push forward despite significant odds, this situation highlights larger issues related to rural education and equity.

In suburban and urban schools, particularly in the affluent sections of a city, it is assumed and expected that students will have access to a highly trained teacher with knowledge about specific academic subjects or pedagogical approaches. In rural schools, however, having this skilled individual leading a classroom is not always a safe assumption. Vacant teaching positions and ineffective teachers are common in more remote parts of the world (Amminson, 2022). This has led to the emergence of a concerns regarding school equity and educational access. Students who are fortunate to be able to attend schools in suburban or urban areas with qualified teachers in all classrooms, contrast dramatically with their peers in poorly staffed rural locations (Coenen *et al.*, 2018).

Today, many schools look to technology to help “level the playing field” and provide instruction through internet-based video applications and platforms (Economist, 2017). Yet, this implementation of virtual teachers or on-line education highlights the inequity found between those students in rural schools and urban/suburban schools that continue to employ in-person faculty. Where rural students are frequently provided a virtual teacher to provide instruction from a distance, non-rural schools infrequently use video instruction as their primary mode of teaching (Li, Sun and Gee, 2019; Barry and Easterly III, 2021).

This lack of qualified educators staffing rural schools leads to additional questions regarding educational equity and the role of geography on the quality of education available to a student. Ideally, the student in a rural school in a remote location will have the same opportunities and resources as their peers in urban and suburban locations, yet there is emerging evidence that this is not the reality in most rural schools (Gagnon and Mattingly, 2015). The current shortages of qualified teachers in rural schools should be seen as a precursor to future staffing challenges in urban and suburban schools. While a school in a remote location today may not be able to secure the services of a secondary chemistry teacher, this vacancy could well exist tomorrow in schools in large urban areas or in suburban schools. Without proactive and intentional action to secure the services of qualified and enthusiastic rural teachers, school effectiveness will be limited and academic development for students in more remote location will be impeded. Effective teacher recruitment requires comprehensive workforce strategies that integrate recruitment, preparation, placement, and retention policies (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of madrasah teacher recruitment policies in remote areas of Sukabumi Regency has not yet effectively addressed the persistent shortage and unequal distribution of teachers. The findings demonstrate that policy implementation is constrained by ambiguities in policy interpretation, overlapping institutional authority, inconsistent application of recruitment and transfer regulations, and weak coordination among implementing agencies. In addition, the recruitment system remains heavily dependent on teachers recruited from outside the assigned regions, many of whom subsequently request transfers because of limited social and cultural adaptation, thereby reducing the sustainability of teacher deployment in remote schools. These findings indicate that teacher shortages are not merely the result of limited human resources but also reflect weaknesses in governance and policy implementation. The study therefore highlights the need for a more integrated teacher recruitment policy that combines clear institutional responsibilities, stronger inter-agency coordination, consistent enforcement of recruitment and transfer regulations, systematic monitoring and evaluation, and greater priority for recruiting qualified local teachers. Such an integrated governance approach is expected to

improve teacher retention, ensure a more equitable distribution of teachers, and ultimately strengthen the quality and accessibility of educational services in remote madrasahs.

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