



Reorientation of the Education Quality Assurance System in Indonesia: Integration of Village Potential, Social Capital, and Participatory Governance in Improving the Quality of National Education

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Abstract: The Education Quality Assurance System in Indonesia is still dominated by administrative and centralistic approaches, making it less responsive to the local context, especially in rural areas that face inequality in the quality of education. In fact, villages have strategic potential in the form of social capital, local wisdom, and community participation which has the opportunity to become an alternative foundation for the development of national education quality. This study aims to analyze the urgency of reorienting the Education Quality Assurance System in Indonesia through the integration of village potential, social capital, and participatory governance in an effort to improve the quality of inclusive and sustainable education. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method based on a literature study on primary and secondary sources related to quality assurance policies, community-based education, and village development, which was studied from July to October 2025. The literature search process was conducted systematically on publications from 2015–2025 through academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ERIC, and SINTA-indexed journals. The selection of literature was carried out purposively by prioritizing peer-reviewed publications, internationally reputable journals, policy documents, and studies with strong relevance to education quality assurance, social capital, participatory governance, and rural education development. The objects of the study include national education quality assurance policies, educational practices in rural areas, and the role of village communities in quality management. Data analysis is carried out through data reduction, thematic categorization, and critical interpretation with policy and sociological approaches. The results of the study show that the integration of village potential and social capital can strengthen a contextual culture of education quality, increase the relevance of education to local needs, and encourage accountability and public participation. However, limited institutional capacity and bureaucratic resistance remain major challenges. This research emphasizes the importance of the community-based education quality assurance paradigm with villages as strategic actors of national education quality.

Keyword : Education policy, participatory governance, social capital, village potential, system of education.

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How to Cite :

Introduction

National education in the 21st century faces increasingly complex and multidimensional challenges, especially in ensuring the quality of education that is fair, equitable, and sustainable in the midst of the dynamics of decentralization and

inequality in regional development. The Education Quality Assurance System (SPMP), which has been designed as an instrument to improve the quality of national education, still faces a fundamental problem: the dominance of administrative, centralistic, and regulatory compliance-based approaches, which are often less responsive to the diversity of regional social, economic, and cultural contexts, especially rural areas (Sulistiawati et al., 2024). Within the broader field of educational studies, this condition reflects an unresolved tension between standardized quality governance and contextual educational transformation, where education policy frequently prioritizes procedural accountability over socially meaningful learning outcomes. If in the early phases of education development the main challenge revolves around expanding access and provision of infrastructure, then the latest challenge lies in how to ensure the quality of education in a substantive, contextual, and participatory manner in the midst of disparities between regions that are still sharp (OECD, 2021).

In the Indonesian context, villages occupy a strategic and paradoxical position in the development of the quality of education. On the one hand, villages are often perceived as areas with limited resources, institutional capacity, and quality of educational services (Dahlan R et al., 2025). However, on the other hand, villages actually store significant social potential in the form of social capital, community networks, local wisdom, and the practice of mutual cooperation which has been the foundation of the social cohesion of Indonesian society. Unfortunately, this potential has not been systematically integrated within the framework of the Education Quality Assurance System which is still oriented towards technocratic indicators and uniform national standards. As a result, quality assurance is often reduced to an administrative audit process, instead of being a living institutional learning mechanism rooted in the educational community itself (Lundin, 2025). From the perspective of educational governance and community-based education, this phenomenon indicates that the development of education quality in Indonesia still tends to marginalize local educational ecosystems as active agents in shaping meaningful and sustainable learning environments.

This phenomenon reflects a problematic shift in national education governance. The quality assurance system can no longer be understood solely as a quality control instrument from the central to the regions, but must be positioned as an arena of relations between the state, educational institutions, and society (Stensaker & Matear, 2025). In many cases, over-reliance on formal standards and quantitative evaluation instruments actually excludes the qualitative dimensions of education, such as local relevance, community participation, and the meaningfulness of the learning process for learners (Stensaker & Matear, 2025). In other words, there is a substantive crisis in quality assurance of education, where quality is narrowed down to procedural compliance, not pedagogical and social transformation. In contemporary educational

discourse, this tendency is increasingly criticized because it weakens the emancipatory function of education as a medium for social empowerment, democratic participation, and contextual human development.

The crisis is not only structural, but also cultural. When the quality of education is perceived as a purely bureaucratic matter, schools and society lose a sense of ownership of the process of improving the quality of education. In rural areas, this condition is further exacerbated by limited human resource capacity, weak inter-institutional synergy, and lack of space for community participation in educational decision-making (Kobayashi & Ogawa, 2025). As a result, education often runs separate from the social reality of the village, thus failing to function as an instrument of empowerment and local development. This separation illustrates a broader educational problem in developing countries, namely the disconnection between formal schooling systems and the socio-cultural realities of local communities, which ultimately reduces the relevance and transformative impact of education itself.

Such conditions demand a paradigm shift in the Education Quality Assurance System in Indonesia. The old paradigm that places quality as a result of standardization and vertical supervision is no longer adequate to answer the challenge of inequality in the quality of education (Kurrohman & Firdaus, 2024). A reorientation towards a more participatory, contextual, and community-based approach is needed. In the perspective of modern education governance, quality is not solely produced by state regulations, but by the dynamic interaction between policies, institutional practices, and community participation (Mifsud & Wilkins, 2025). In this context, villages need to be positioned not as quality policy objects, but as strategic actors in the national education quality assurance ecosystem. Within the educational field, this shift reflects the growing recognition that sustainable educational improvement depends not only on institutional regulation, but also on the social capacity of communities to co-produce educational quality collaboratively.

This research is based on the assumption that the integration of village potential, especially social capital and participatory governance, is an important prerequisite for sustainable development of education quality. Village social capital, such as trust, social networks, and collective norms, has a crucial role in building a culture of quality at the level of educational units. Without the support of social capital, the quality assurance system risks becoming a formalistic mechanism that loses its transformative power (Moloi & Dlomo, 2024). Therefore, quality assurance must be understood as a social process that involves state actors, schools, and communities collaboratively. This argument strengthens the educational perspective that quality learning environments emerge through relational and participatory processes rather than through administrative compliance alone.

A number of previous studies reinforce the urgency of this approach. Studies on community-based education show that local community involvement contributes

significantly to improving the relevance and sustainability of education quality (Jailani et al., 2025). Other research confirms that a participation-based quality assurance system is able to increase public accountability and public trust in educational institutions (Elhakim, 2025). Meanwhile, the study of village development highlights the role of social capital as a key factor in the success of education programs in rural areas (Watson et al., 2017). However, these studies are still rarely comprehensively integrated within the framework of the national Education Quality Assurance System. Consequently, there remains a theoretical and practical gap within educational research regarding how village governance, social capital, and educational quality assurance can be integrated into a coherent and sustainable educational policy framework.

Furthermore, research by (OECD, 2021) shows that education quality assurance systems that overemphasize uniform national standards tend to ignore the local context, resulting in low policy effectiveness in rural and remote areas. In a similar framework, (Lopes, 2021) emphasized that collaborative governance allows the integration of state and community actors in public decision-making, including in the management of education quality, resulting in more adaptive and sustainable policies. These findings reinforce the argument that educational quality should be understood not merely as institutional performance, but as the capacity of education systems to respond adaptively to diverse social realities and local learning needs.

Departing from this gap, this study focuses on three main domains: (1) the relationship between the national education quality assurance system and the rural context, (2) the role of village social capital in building a culture of education quality, and (3) participatory governance as an integration mechanism between policies, educational institutions, and local communities. Thus, this study not only evaluates the effectiveness of the existing system, but also offers an alternative conceptual framework for the development of village-based education quality assurance. Within the field of education, this study contributes to the growing discourse on socially responsive educational governance by positioning villages as epistemic and participatory spaces for the co-construction of educational quality.

Unlike previous studies that tend to separate the issue of quality assurance of education and village development, this article offers an integrative approach that places villages as strategic nodes in improving the quality of national education. This approach emphasizes that the quality of education cannot be separated from the social context in which it takes place (Kolleck, 2025). Theoretically, this study expands the discourse on education quality assurance by integrating the perspective of social capital and participatory governance. Practically, the findings of this research are expected to make a strategic contribution to the formulation of education quality assurance policies that are more inclusive, contextual, and equitable, while strengthening the role of villages in national education development. At the same time,

this study contributes to educational theory by reconstructing the concept of quality assurance as a collaborative and context-sensitive educational process that integrates institutional accountability, community participation, and local social sustainability within the broader agenda of equitable national education development.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with a literature study method (*library research*) to critically analyze the Education Quality Assurance System in Indonesia in relation to the integration of village potential, social capital, and participatory governance (Annasthasya et al., 2025). This approach was chosen because it allows a reflective and interpretative reading of the relationship between national education policies, quality assurance practices, and rural social contexts, while simultaneously criticizing the dominance of administrative and centralistic approaches in education quality governance. Through this method, the study does not merely describe educational phenomena, but also examines the epistemological, sociological, and policy dimensions underlying the construction of educational quality in Indonesia.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic search of academic literature and policy documents published between 2015–2025. The search process utilized several academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, and SINTA-indexed national journals, as well as policy repositories from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Villages, UNESCO, and OECD. The literature was selected purposively based on several inclusion criteria: (1) publications had undergone a peer-review process or were issued by credible institutions; (2) studies discussed issues related to education quality assurance, SPMP, community-based education, village development, social capital, or participatory governance; and (3) publications possessed strong conceptual or empirical relevance to the Indonesian or developing-country educational context. Meanwhile, exclusion criteria included: (1) literature unrelated to the context of Indonesia or developing countries; (2) studies that did not specifically address education quality assurance or SPMP-related issues; (3) opinion articles lacking methodological clarity; and (4) sources that had not undergone academic review or institutional verification processes.

The initial literature search identified 186 academic sources consisting of journal articles, books, conference proceedings, and policy documents. After the duplication removal process, 154 sources remained for preliminary screening. At the screening stage, 67 sources were excluded due to limited relevance, weak methodological quality, or lack of contextual relation to education quality assurance and rural education governance. Subsequently, 87 publications underwent full-text review, resulting in 54 sources being selected as the final analytical corpus, comprising 38 peer-reviewed journal articles, 10 academic books, and 6 national and international policy

documents. This selection process was adapted from the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure transparency, consistency, and analytical rigor in literature selection.

Table 1. Literature Selection Process

Selection Stage	Number of Sources
Initial identification through databases	186
Sources after duplicate removal	154
Excluded during preliminary screening	67
Full-text sources assessed	87
Final sources analyzed	54

Data analysis was carried out using themematical-critical analysis techniques through four main stages: (1) thematic categorization, (2) analytical interpretation, (3) conceptual synthesis, and (4) normative reflection. The literature is mapped into four areas of study, namely: (1) the development of the Education Quality Assurance System in Indonesia, (2) the potential of villages and social capital in education development, (3) participatory governance in education policy, and (4) the integration of education quality assurance with the sustainable village development agenda.

To strengthen the depth of the analysis, this study uses a historical-critical and contextual approach to trace the paradigm shift in quality assurance and understand the dynamics of the relationship between schools, village governments, and local communities.

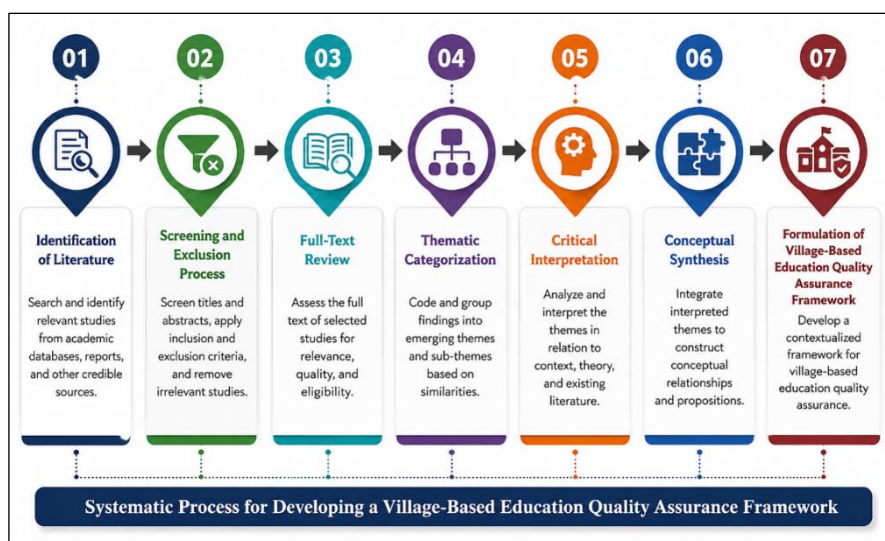


Figure 1. Research Flow Design

Through this methodological design, the research is expected to be able to formulate a conceptual framework for quality assurance of village-based education that is more contextual, participatory, and sustainable, and relevant for strengthening the quality of national education.

Result and Discussion

Limitations of the Administrative Paradigm in the Education Quality Assurance System

The results of this study show that the Education Quality Assurance System (SPMP) in Indonesia is still strongly influenced by a centralistic administrative-technocratic paradigm, as reflected in the practice of implementing National Education Standards (SNP), School Self-Evaluation (EDS), and quality assessment instruments based on quantitative indicators (Sampe & Arifin, 2024). Within this framework, the quality of education is reduced to compliance with formal standards, filling in evaluative instruments, and achieving certain scores, while the social, cultural, and contextual dimensions of education, especially in rural areas, lack adequate attention. This condition affirms the criticism (Patil, 2024) that modern education policy regimes tend to change quality into a " *technology of governance*", rather than a lively and contextual social learning process. In the broader field of education, this phenomenon reflects the persistence of managerialism in educational governance, where schools are increasingly measured through bureaucratic efficiency and performance indicators rather than through their pedagogical capacity to foster meaningful learning, social inclusion, and community empowerment.

Normatively, the Ministry of Education and Culture's SPMP documents such as *the Quality Assurance System for Primary and Secondary Education* (Kemendikbud, 2019) have actually emphasized the importance of internal quality culture and stakeholder participation. However, at the implementation level, these principles are often reduced to top-down administrative routines. Schools, especially in rural areas, are positioned more as objects of quality audit than subjects of reflection and quality innovation. This is in line with the findings (Sahlberg, 2016) which show that quality assurance systems that rely too much on external standards and accountability tend to weaken local creativity and reflective capacity of educational institutions. From an educational perspective, such conditions undermine the transformative role of schools as learning communities capable of developing contextual pedagogical practices rooted in local realities and student needs.

In the rural context, this administrative approach is increasingly problematic. Villages have distinctive social characteristics, strong social capital, close communal relations, and local wisdom that is rooted in the daily practices of the community (Fitrianto & Farisi, 2025) When SPMP is unable to read and integrate this context, national standards actually function as a "structural burden" that widens the quality

gap between the center and the periphery. (Mikiewicz, 2021) emphasized that the success of public institutions, including schools, is highly dependent on the quality of social capital and local trust networks, factors that are often absent in bureaucratic-based quality assurance frameworks. Within educational development studies, this finding confirms that educational quality cannot be detached from the socio-cultural ecosystem in which schools operate, because learning outcomes are deeply influenced by community participation, local legitimacy, and social cohesion.

Furthermore, the dominance of the administrative paradigm risks giving birth to what (Gendron, 2024) calls an *audit society*, which is a condition in which educational institutions are more busy "appearing to be of quality" than really "quality". Schools are encouraged to meet formal documents, reports, and indicators, but do not have enough reflective space to dialogue quality with the real needs of students and village communities. As a result, the quality of education loses its transformative dimension and fails to become an instrument of social justice. In educational terms, this condition illustrates how excessive bureaucratization can depoliticize and dehumanize education by reducing schools to administrative units instead of dynamic spaces for critical learning, democratic participation, and contextual knowledge production.

Table 2.
Comparison of Education Quality Assurance Paradigm

Aspects	Paradigma Administratif-Sentralistik	Community-Based Paradigm
Orientation	Regulatory compliance and national standards	Contextual relevance and local needs
Main actors	State and educational bureaucracy	Schools, rural communities, and local stakeholders
Quality instruments	Numerical indicators, audits, and formal evaluations	Participatory reflection, social dialogue, and contextual practice
The role of schools	Evaluation object	Quality development subject
Impact	Central-village uniformity and gap	Inclusivity, sustainability, and quality justice

The table emphasizes that the reorientation of the Education Quality Assurance System (SPMP) towards a community-based paradigm is not intended to negate the role of national standards as a quality normative framework. Rather, this reorientation is a conceptual and pragmatic effort to complement it with social, cultural, and

participatory dimensions that have been marginalized. By integrating the role of schools, rural communities, and local stakeholders as active subjects of quality assurance, the quality of education is no longer reduced to procedural compliance, but is understood as a meaningful, contextual, and equitable social process (Mith & Zalez, 2025). In this perspective, national standards serve as a beacon of justice and equality, while a community-based approach ensures that the quality of education grows in line with local needs, social capital, and the sustainability of people's lives.

Village Potential and Social Capital as the Foundation of Contextual Education Quality

Results of the literature review show that villages have strategic potential that has not been optimally positioned within the framework of the national Education Quality Assurance System (SPMP). In the paradigm of education policy that is still dominated by centralistic and administrative logic, villages are frequently treated merely as spaces for policy implementation rather than as sources of educational knowledge, social values, and contextual learning practices capable of enriching the meaning of educational quality itself (Dewi & Suriansyah, 2025). Within the field of education, this tendency reflects a long-standing imbalance between centralized educational governance and locally rooted educational practices, where educational success is often measured through standardized outputs rather than through the social relevance and transformative impact of learning in local communities. In fact, various studies of community-based education development confirm that local contexts, including social, cultural, and inter-actor relationships, have a significant influence on the success and sustainability of the quality of education (Rofiki et al., 2024).

One of the main strengths of the village lies in the social capital it has. Referring to (Martono et al., 2023), social capital encompasses networks of trust, collective norms, social solidarity, and mutual cooperation practices that enable communities to work collaboratively toward shared goals. In the educational context, village social capital functions not only as a social support system, but also as an educational infrastructure that strengthens school management, collective learning processes, and community-based accountability mechanisms. Educational sociology perspectives emphasize that schools embedded within communities with high social trust tend to develop stronger educational resilience because relationships between teachers, parents, local leaders, and learners are characterized by shared responsibility and participatory engagement rather than bureaucratic distance. Consequently, educational quality improvement in villages often grows organically from local awareness and collective commitment instead of depending solely on top-down administrative intervention.

Furthermore, education rooted in the village community shows a higher level of relevance to the real needs of learners and the community. This approach is in line with the concept of *place-based education* that has developed in the global critical

education literature, where curricula, pedagogical practices, and quality assessments are structured taking into account the local social, economic, and cultural context (Sulaiman, 2015). In the context of rural Indonesia, the integration of local wisdom, village economic practices, ecological knowledge, and local cultural values into the educational process not only increases the meaning of learning, but also strengthens the social legitimacy of schools as relevant institutions that are needed by the community (Wahyuni et al., 2024). Within educational theory, this approach reinforces the argument that effective learning cannot be separated from students' lived experiences and local environments, because contextual learning increases both cognitive engagement and social relevance.

This finding also challenges the old assumptions in education quality assurance policies that tend to place the state as the sole actor of quality production. Contemporary public policy literature affirms that the quality of education is the result of *co-production*, which is the dynamic interaction between the state, educational institutions, and society (Guo & Lin, 2025). From the perspective of educational governance, this shift represents a transition from bureaucratic education management toward collaborative educational ecosystems in which local communities are recognized as legitimate educational actors rather than passive beneficiaries of policy. In this framework, villages are no longer understood as passive entities that must be "improved in quality" through technocratic interventions, but rather as strategic actors who have the capacity, social resources, and contextual knowledge to produce the quality of education in a sustainable manner (Arifannisa, 2025).

Schools in rural areas that are able to integrate local potential, both natural resources, cultural traditions, and social practices, show a stronger tendency to build *a sense of ownership* of the quality of education. This sense of belonging has direct implications for increasing parental participation, community leader involvement, and social support for the learning process and school management. In line with the findings (Sahlberg, 2016), education systems that rely on social trust and community participation tend to be more adaptive, resilient, and resilient in the face of structural resource limitations. Within educational development discourse, this demonstrates that sustainable educational quality emerges not only from material resources, but also from the social capacity of communities to collectively sustain learning ecosystems.

In the context of national SPMP, these findings indicate the urgency of a paradigm shift from administrative compliance-based quality assurance to community-based quality assurance. The integration of village potential and social capital into SPMP does not mean eliminating national standards, but rather reconstructing these standards to be more contextual, participatory, and sensitive to Indonesia's social diversity (Mith & Zalez, 2025). This reconstruction is particularly important within the field of education because standardized quality systems that ignore local diversity often fail to capture the social dimensions of meaningful

learning, equity, and cultural relevance. Thus, the quality of education is no longer understood as uniformity of administrative achievements, but as the ability of the education system to respond to local needs in a fair and meaningful manner.

By placing villages as strategic actors, the education quality assurance system has the opportunity to become more inclusive and sustainable. Villages are not only the locus for the implementation of quality policies, but also the production space for knowledge, values, and educational practices that enrich the face of national education quality (Listrianti et al., 2024). From the perspective of educational transformation, this signifies a critical shift from viewing rural communities as peripheral educational spaces toward recognizing them as epistemic centers capable of contributing to national educational innovation. Consequently, strengthening village social capital should not be viewed merely as a complementary policy strategy, but as an epistemological and sociological foundation for reconstructing educational quality in Indonesia amidst persistent structural inequality and uneven development.

Table 3. Comparison of Administrative Quality and Village Community-Based Quality

Analysis Aspect	Mutu Administratif-Sentralistik	Village-Based Quality
Main Orientation	Compliance with national standards, regulations, and formal indicators	The relevance of education to local needs and social sustainability
Quality Assurance Logic	Top-down, technocratic, bureaucratic instruction-based	Bottom-up, participatory, community collaboration-based
The Role of the School	Object of evaluation and policy implementation	Quality development subjects and community learning centers
The Role of Village Communities	Passive, limited to administrative support	Active as a co-producer of quality education
Quality Instruments	Formal assessment, accreditation, administrative reporting	Social capital, mutual cooperation practices, community-based reflective evaluation
Measure of Success	Score achievement, document completeness, standard compliance	Social impact, relevance of learning, sense of ownership
Local Context Adaptability	Low, cross-border uniforms	High, contextual and culturally sensitive

Quality Sustainability	Relying on state intervention and budget	Based on social commitment and community sustainability
Key Risks	Formalism, symbolization of quality, central-regional inequality	Fragmentation when there is no policy support and institutional capacity

The comparison between administrative-centralistic quality and village-based quality presented in the table above confirms the existence of a fundamental paradigm shift in understanding educational quality. Administrative approaches, as criticized by (Sahlberg, 2016) and (Shore & Wright, 2024), tend to reduce educational quality to procedural compliance and the fulfillment of formal indicators, thereby generating what is often described as an “audit culture” in education. In such conditions, schools become preoccupied with demonstrating administrative conformity rather than cultivating meaningful educational transformation. Within educational studies, this phenomenon illustrates the increasing dominance of performativity in schooling systems, where institutional success is measured through bureaucratic visibility rather than pedagogical depth and social impact. In Indonesia, this tendency contributes to widening disparities between urban and rural educational contexts because national standards are implemented uniformly without sufficient sensitivity to social, economic, and cultural diversity (OECD, 2021).

In contrast, village-based quality offers a more contextual and sustainable educational approach by positioning schools as social learning communities rather than merely administrative institutions. In line with the arguments of village social capital—comprising trust, collective norms, social solidarity, and mutual cooperation—functions as a social infrastructure that strengthens horizontal accountability and collective ownership of educational quality. Educationally, this model reinforces the idea that learning ecosystems are most effective when schools are socially embedded within communities and supported by collaborative educational relationships. In this framework, communities are no longer treated as passive recipients of educational policy, but as active co-producers of educational quality who participate directly in planning, implementation, and evaluation processes (Rofiki et al., 2024).

However, the literature also emphasizes that community-based educational approaches cannot stand independently without adaptive policy support and institutional strengthening. Without adequate regulatory frameworks, village-based educational quality risks becoming fragmented and uneven across regions (Jailani et al., 2025). Therefore, the integration of administrative and community-based paradigms becomes essential. The state must continue functioning as the guarantor of constitutional educational rights and minimum quality standards, while villages and local communities should be granted participatory space to articulate contextual

educational priorities. From the standpoint of educational governance, this hybrid model represents a more democratic and socially responsive form of quality assurance in which standardization and contextual flexibility coexist within a shared framework of educational justice.

Ultimately, the reorientation of the Education Quality Assurance System toward a village-based paradigm should not be understood merely as a technical policy innovation, but as an epistemological transformation in the field of education itself. Educational quality is no longer interpreted solely through measurable outputs and administrative indicators, but through the broader capacity of educational systems to empower communities, strengthen social cohesion, preserve cultural relevance, and foster sustainable human development. This perspective broadens the conceptual horizon of educational quality by integrating pedagogical, sociological, and participatory dimensions into the national education quality discourse, thereby positioning education not only as a bureaucratic institution, but as a transformative social process rooted in community life.

Participatory Governance and Reorientation of the Quality Assurance System

The results of the analysis demonstrate that the integration of village potential into the Education Quality Assurance System (SPMP) requires a fundamental transformation in the paradigm of national educational governance, shifting from a hierarchical-centralistic model toward participatory and collaborative governance (Nugraha et al., 2025). Within this framework, educational quality is no longer produced exclusively through bureaucratic control mechanisms implemented by the state, but emerges from dynamic interactions among government institutions, schools, village communities, and local stakeholders. *In the field of education, this transition reflects a broader global movement from managerial and technocratic educational governance toward democratic and community-centered educational governance, where educational quality is interpreted as a shared social responsibility rather than merely an administrative target.* Participatory governance therefore positions parents, village governments, religious leaders, traditional leaders, youth organizations, women's groups, and local communities as active co-governors within the entire educational quality assurance cycle, encompassing planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes (Kobayashi & Ogawa, 2025).

Theoretically, these findings align with participatory governance theory, which argues that the quality and legitimacy of public services improve significantly when stakeholders directly affected by policy decisions are actively involved in decision-making processes (Fauzi & Setiawan, 2025). In educational contexts, particularly within rural communities, participation functions not only as a mechanism of social control but also as a source of contextual educational knowledge that enables schools to develop learning systems relevant to local realities. From the perspective of

educational theory, this reinforces the understanding that educational quality is inherently relational and contextual; schools cannot effectively fulfill their pedagogical mission when detached from the socio-cultural environment in which learning takes place. Consequently, quality assurance evolves beyond compliance with national standards and becomes a reflective social process rooted in collective educational experiences and local aspirations (Rahaju, 2025).

Furthermore, participatory governance contributes substantially to strengthening public accountability and rebuilding social trust in educational institutions. When village communities are meaningfully involved in educational decision-making, schools cease to be perceived merely as extensions of state bureaucracy and instead become shared public institutions whose success is collectively owned by society. A number of studies indicate that sustained community participation positively correlates with stronger educational sustainability, improved institutional legitimacy, and the development of enduring cultures of quality (Yanti et al., 2023). Within educational sociology, this condition is highly significant because schools that cultivate strong participatory relationships with communities tend to foster more inclusive learning environments, stronger student engagement, and greater educational resilience in facing structural limitations. Participation, therefore, should not be interpreted narrowly as an administrative requirement, but as a sociological and pedagogical foundation for sustainable educational transformation.

In the context of rural education, participatory governance also allows educational institutions to become more adaptive to local socio-economic conditions. Village communities possess experiential knowledge regarding cultural values, local economic practices, ecological conditions, and social dynamics that are often inaccessible to centralized educational bureaucracies. Through participatory governance, this local knowledge can be integrated into school planning, curriculum contextualization, extracurricular programs, and educational evaluation mechanisms. Within educational practice, such integration strengthens the relevance of schooling because learning processes become connected to students' lived experiences, local identities, and community realities rather than remaining abstract and detached from everyday life. As a result, educational quality is measured not only through academic achievement scores, but also through the extent to which education contributes to local empowerment, social cohesion, and community sustainability.

However, this study also reveals that the implementation of participatory governance within SPMP faces significant structural and institutional challenges. Limited village institutional capacity, low levels of educational policy literacy among local communities, unequal power relations between educational bureaucracies and citizens, and the persistence of centralized administrative culture remain major obstacles (Kayupa et al., 2025). In many cases, community participation remains symbolic rather than substantive; communities may be invited into deliberative

forums, yet possess limited influence over strategic educational decisions. This phenomenon confirms the criticism articulated in Arnstein's "ladder of participation," where participation frequently stops at consultation without meaningful redistribution of power (Yusof et al., 2025). Within educational governance studies, symbolic participation represents a critical problem because it creates the illusion of democratic involvement while maintaining centralized control over educational policy and institutional direction.

In addition, bureaucratic resistance toward decentralized educational governance constitutes another crucial challenge. SPMP, historically constructed within the logic of administrative compliance and vertical accountability, often perceives community participation as a threat to the uniformity of national standards. Consequently, village-based educational initiatives frequently fail to receive formal institutional recognition or sustainable policy support. From the perspective of educational policy studies, this tension reflects an unresolved contradiction between standardization and contextualization in educational reform: while centralized systems seek uniformity and comparability, local educational communities demand flexibility, relevance, and cultural responsiveness. Without adaptive and affirmative regulatory frameworks, participatory governance risks remaining fragmented, temporary, and dependent upon individual local leadership rather than becoming an institutionalized component of national educational quality assurance (Sahlberg, 2016).

Moreover, the challenge is not solely institutional but also epistemological. Conventional educational quality assurance systems are largely built upon positivistic assumptions that prioritize measurable outputs, standardized indicators, and bureaucratic accountability. Participatory governance, by contrast, introduces alternative epistemologies that value dialogue, local experience, contextual relevance, and collective reflection as legitimate dimensions of educational quality. Within critical educational discourse, this shift is highly significant because it expands the meaning of educational quality beyond technical efficiency toward broader concerns of social justice, democratic participation, and human development. Thus, participatory governance not only transforms educational administration but also reconstructs the philosophical foundations of quality assurance itself.

Therefore, the reorientation of SPMP toward a participatory governance model requires multilayered and structural policy interventions. The state should no longer position itself exclusively as the controller of educational quality, but also as an enabling institution that facilitates collaboration, capacity building, and institutional empowerment for village actors. This approach aligns with the paradigm of *network governance* in public policy, which emphasizes the importance of collaborative interaction among state institutions, schools, communities, universities, and civil society organizations in addressing complex educational challenges such as inequality

and social exclusion (Dovigo, 2024). Within educational governance frameworks, network-based collaboration is increasingly recognized as essential for building adaptive and sustainable educational systems capable of responding to rapidly changing social realities.

Operationally, this transformation requires several strategic measures. Educational quality assurance regulations need to explicitly incorporate participatory mechanisms within school evaluation systems. Village institutions such as Village Consultative Bodies (BPD), village governments, and local community organizations should be formally integrated into school quality planning and evaluation forums. Educational funding systems should also encourage collaborative and community-based financing schemes that strengthen local ownership of educational development. At the same time, universities and teacher education institutions can function as strategic partners in mentoring village communities and schools in participatory educational planning and evaluation. In educational practice, such collaborative arrangements can strengthen institutional sustainability because educational quality becomes embedded within broader community development processes rather than remaining isolated within formal school structures.

Thus, participatory governance should not be understood merely as a technical instrument for improving educational management, but as an epistemic, pedagogical, and political prerequisite for realizing inclusive and equitable education. The integration of village potential and community participation into SPMP opens possibilities for constructing a national educational quality model that is not rigidly uniform, but contextually diverse and socially responsive. Within the broader field of education, this study demonstrates that sustainable educational quality emerges most effectively when schools function as collaborative social institutions rooted in community life, democratic participation, and local knowledge systems. In this perspective, villages are transformed from peripheral policy objects into strategic educational actors that actively co-produce educational quality, social empowerment, and sustainable national development (Arifin, 2025).

Towards a Village-Based Education Quality Assurance Paradigm

Based on the synthesis of findings and literature review, this study emphasizes the urgency of reorienting the Education Quality Assurance System (SPMP) in Indonesia toward a village-based educational quality assurance paradigm. This paradigm emerges from a critical response to the limitations of conventional quality assurance models that remain heavily administrative, centralistic, and oriented toward procedural compliance. Such models are increasingly unable to capture the complexity of educational realities, particularly in rural areas characterized by diverse socio-cultural conditions and unequal developmental capacities. In line with the arguments of (Sahlberg, 2016), educational quality cannot be reduced merely to technical

indicators and measurable outputs, but must be understood as a dynamic social process shaped through interactions among policy structures, educational institutions, communities, and local cultural contexts. Within the field of education, this perspective represents a shift from technocratic educational governance toward socially embedded educational transformation, where quality is interpreted through contextual relevance, participation, and human development rather than administrative conformity alone.

Within the framework of village-based quality assurance, educational quality is conceptualized as the result of an ongoing dialectical relationship between national educational standards and local contextual realities. The state continues to hold a strategic role as the guarantor of constitutional educational rights, provider of regulatory frameworks, and guardian of distributive justice within national education policy (Yanuarto et al., 2025). However, educational quality implementation is no longer monopolized by central bureaucracies; instead, it is distributed across local educational ecosystems through the active involvement of villages as spaces for innovation, participation, and contextual educational practice. From an educational governance perspective, this paradigm reconstructs the relationship between central authority and local educational actors by transforming villages from passive recipients of policy into active educational stakeholders capable of shaping meaningful and sustainable learning processes.

This paradigm is strongly aligned with community-based education and school-based quality assurance approaches that emphasize active public participation throughout the educational quality cycle, including planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement (Wahyudin, 2021). In village contexts, participation is mediated through social capital manifested in forms of trust, social solidarity, mutual cooperation, local leadership, and dense social networks. (Rofiki et al., 2024) emphasized that social capital constitutes an essential prerequisite for successful public policy implementation because it strengthens collaboration, collective responsibility, and horizontal accountability. Within educational sociology, this reinforces the understanding that educational quality is deeply influenced by relational and communal dimensions, where schools embedded within cohesive social environments are more capable of cultivating sustainable cultures of learning and participation. The findings of this study support this argument by demonstrating that schools with strong relationships with village communities tend to develop more adaptive, resilient, and context-sensitive educational cultures.

Furthermore, village-based educational quality assurance transforms the meaning of accountability itself. In conventional SPMP frameworks, accountability is generally interpreted through vertical mechanisms such as accreditation systems, administrative reporting, standardized evaluations, and quantitative performance indicators. According to (Wullschleger et al., 2025) such approaches risk producing

what is described as a “performativity culture,” in which educational institutions prioritize appearances of quality rather than substantive educational transformation. In contrast, village-based paradigms reinterpret accountability as a collaborative and reflective process involving continuous dialogue among schools, communities, village governments, parents, and learners regarding the relevance, impact, and sustainability of education. Educationally, this model broadens the concept of accountability beyond bureaucratic compliance toward democratic educational responsibility, where educational success is evaluated according to its contribution to social empowerment, cultural relevance, and community well-being. This perspective aligns closely with the concept of democratic accountability in education proposed by (Smith & Benavot, 2019), which argues that educational quality should also be measured by its contribution to equity, participation, and social justice.

The reorientation of SPMP toward a village-based paradigm also carries significant epistemological implications. Educational quality is no longer generated solely through universalized formal standards imposed uniformly across regions, but through recognition of local knowledge systems, cultural practices, ecological wisdom, and the lived experiences of rural communities. This perspective resonates with decolonial approaches in educational policy articulated by (Heilbronn, 2025), which criticize urban-centric biases and homogenizing development logics within modern education systems. Within critical educational theory, this paradigm is highly important because it challenges the assumption that legitimate educational knowledge can only emerge from centralized institutions, thereby recognizing local communities as valid producers of educational meaning and pedagogical practice. By integrating local wisdom into quality assurance systems, rural education is no longer positioned as a deficient version of urban education, but as a legitimate and contextually valuable educational model in its own right.

At the same time, this study emphasizes that village-based educational quality assurance cannot function effectively without strong state support and institutional facilitation. Community-based educational approaches, while highly participatory and contextually responsive, remain vulnerable to fragmentation, inequality, and institutional inconsistency when unsupported by adaptive policy frameworks and sustained capacity-building programs (Kayen et al., 2025). Therefore, the reorientation of SPMP should be designed as a hybrid governance model that combines the normative and distributive functions of the state with the innovative and participatory capacities of village communities. In educational governance discourse, hybrid governance represents an important middle path between excessive centralization and uncontrolled decentralization, enabling educational systems to maintain national equity standards while simultaneously accommodating local diversity and contextual adaptation.

Operationally, this paradigm requires transformative policy redesign. Educational quality standards should incorporate contextual indicators reflecting community participation, local relevance, and socio-cultural sustainability. School quality evaluations should include collaborative forums involving village institutions and local stakeholders. Teacher professional development programs should encourage contextual pedagogy and community engagement. Village governments should also be institutionally connected to educational planning processes through participatory educational deliberation mechanisms. Within educational practice, these reforms would strengthen the integration between schools and local communities, thereby transforming education into a socially rooted institution that contributes directly to local empowerment and sustainable rural development.

In addition, the village-based paradigm contributes significantly to reconstructing the philosophical orientation of educational quality itself. Conventional quality assurance systems often operate within neoliberal and managerial paradigms that emphasize efficiency, competition, measurement, and institutional performance. Village-based educational quality assurance introduces an alternative orientation centered on solidarity, participation, contextual relevance, sustainability, and collective empowerment. Within the field of education, this represents a profound paradigmatic shift from viewing education primarily as an instrument of economic productivity toward understanding education as a democratic and humanistic process aimed at strengthening communities and advancing social justice. Educational quality, therefore, becomes inseparable from broader questions of dignity, inclusion, cultural recognition, and equitable development.

Thus, the village-based educational quality assurance paradigm opens a new horizon for the future of Indonesian education. Quality assurance is no longer interpreted merely as a bureaucratic control mechanism designed to monitor institutional compliance, but as a collective learning process involving the state, schools, communities, and local actors collaboratively (Širec & Rožman, 2025). Within educational transformation discourse, this study demonstrates that sustainable educational quality can only emerge when educational systems are socially embedded, culturally responsive, and democratically governed. In this perspective, villages are no longer peripheral spaces within national education policy, but strategic educational foundations that actively produce knowledge, values, participatory practices, and socially meaningful educational innovation relevant to Indonesia's diverse realities and long-term developmental aspirations.

Policy Implications and Operational Recommendations for Village-Based Education Quality Assurance

The findings of this study indicate that the reorientation of Indonesia's Education Quality Assurance System (SPMP) toward a village-based paradigm cannot

stop at the level of conceptual discourse alone; it requires concrete institutional transformation and measurable policy intervention. Without operational redesign, the discourse of participatory and contextual quality assurance risks remaining normative rhetoric without structural impact. In the field of education, this transformation is important because quality assurance is not merely an administrative mechanism, but also a pedagogical instrument that shapes learning culture, educational participation, and the social relevance of schools within community life. Therefore, this study proposes several strategic policy recommendations aimed at strengthening the integration of village potential, social capital, and participatory governance within the national education quality framework.

First, the government needs to revise the regulatory orientation of SPMP so that quality assurance is no longer dominated solely by administrative compliance and quantitative indicators. Existing SPMP regulations should explicitly recognize community participation, local contextuality, and village social capital as integral dimensions of educational quality. In practical terms, this can be operationalized through the inclusion of “community participation indicators” and “contextual relevance indicators” within school quality evaluation instruments. Such indicators may include the intensity of school and community collaboration, the integration of local knowledge into learning practices, the participation of village institutions in school governance, and the contribution of education to local social sustainability. This approach allows educational quality to be measured not only through achievement scores, but also through the ability of schools to create meaningful and contextually relevant learning experiences for rural communities. This recommendation aligns with (UNESCO, 2021) argument that future-oriented quality assurance systems must balance measurable outcomes with contextual and socio cultural dimensions of learning.

Second, this study recommends the institutional involvement of village governance structures, particularly the Village Consultative Body (BPD), village governments, and local community organizations in school quality evaluation processes. Their involvement should not be symbolic or ceremonial, but structurally integrated into local educational planning and evaluation forums. Through this mechanism, quality assurance becomes a shared social responsibility rather than a bureaucratic exercise monopolized by educational authorities. In this context, village deliberation forums (*musyawarah desa*) can be transformed into participatory educational governance arenas where schools, parents, teachers, youth groups, religious leaders, and village officials collectively identify educational challenges and formulate contextual quality improvement strategies. This collaborative model strengthens the role of schools as community-based educational institutions that function not only as service providers, but also as centers of local empowerment and social learning. Such an approach reflects the principles of democratic accountability

emphasized by (Apple, 2018) and participatory governance theory developed by (Fung, 2015).

Third, the study highlights the urgency of developing community participation-based educational funding schemes. Current educational financing mechanisms remain highly dependent on state allocations and formal budgeting structures, often limiting local innovation. A village-based SPMP requires flexible collaborative funding models that enable villages to support educational quality initiatives through Village Funds (Dana Desa), local partnerships, community philanthropy, and social entrepreneurship initiatives linked to education. This does not imply shifting state responsibility to communities; rather, it encourages co-financing models where state support and community participation reinforce one another. Such collaborative financing mechanisms can strengthen school autonomy, encourage local educational innovation, and increase community ownership of educational development. (OECD, 2021b) emphasizes that resilient education systems are characterized not merely by centralized financing capacity, but by their ability to mobilize local resources and strengthen community ownership of educational development.

Fourth, capacity-building programs for village actors and school stakeholders must become a strategic priority. Participatory quality assurance cannot function effectively if village communities lack educational policy literacy, institutional management skills, or evaluative capacity. Therefore, the Ministry of Education, local governments, and universities should collaboratively develop continuous mentoring programs focusing on participatory educational planning, community-based evaluation, and local innovation management. In this regard, higher education institutions can function as knowledge partners that bridge national educational policy with local implementation realities. This capacity-building agenda should also strengthen teachers' competencies in contextual pedagogy and collaborative educational leadership, enabling schools to integrate local wisdom and village realities into the learning process. Such collaborative governance models resonate with the concept of network governance proposed by (Sørensen & Torfing, 2017).

Finally, the study proposes the establishment of a hybrid quality assurance model that combines national standards with contextual local adaptation. National standards remain essential as instruments of equity and constitutional educational rights; however, their implementation should allow contextual flexibility for rural communities to articulate locally relevant indicators of educational success. Within this framework, educational quality is no longer interpreted merely through standardized achievement scores, but also through indicators such as social inclusion, cultural relevance, ecological awareness, community participation, and local empowerment outcomes. To operationalize this model, this study proposes the formation of Village-Based Education Quality Forums involving schools, village

governments, parents, youth organizations, and local leaders as collaborative spaces for educational reflection and participatory quality evaluation. This conceptual shift represents what (Tikly, 2019) describes as a socially just approach to educational quality.

Below is the conceptual synthesis framework generated from the overall analysis of this study:

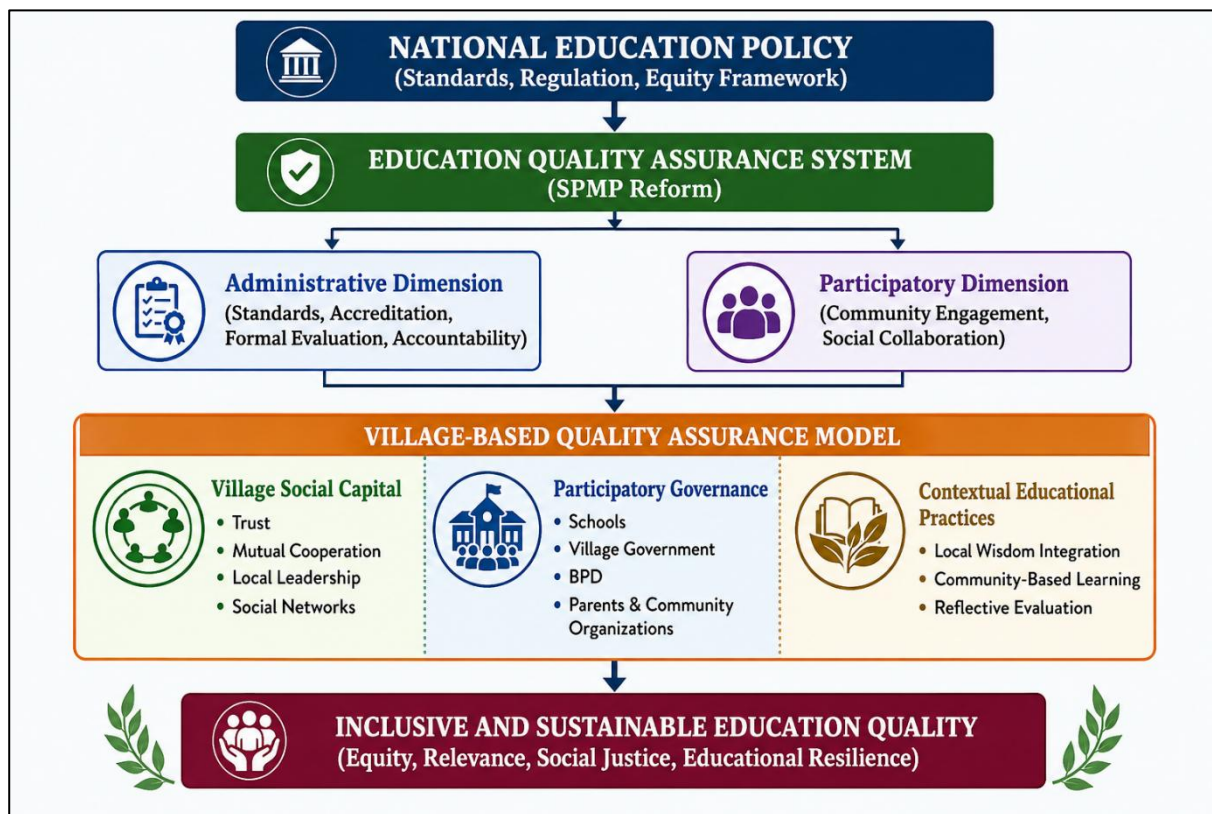


Figure 2.

Conceptual Framework of Village-Based Education Quality Assurance

The conceptual framework above demonstrates that village-based educational quality assurance is constructed through the interaction between national policy frameworks and local social dynamics. In this model, villages are not passive recipients of educational policy, but active epistemic actors that co-produce educational quality through social participation, contextual knowledge, and collaborative governance. Theoretically, this framework extends social capital and participatory governance theories into the field of educational quality assurance by positioning village social capital not merely as a supporting factor, but as a constitutive foundation of educational quality governance itself. This framework also reinforces the theoretical novelty of the study by positioning village social capital not merely as a supporting variable, but as a foundational pillar in reconstructing Indonesia's education quality assurance paradigm in the era of equitable and sustainable development.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the Education Quality Assurance System in Indonesia still tends to operate within an administrative and centralistic framework, rendering it insufficiently responsive to the complexity of educational quality issues, particularly in rural areas. The findings demonstrate that approaches which neglect local contexts tend to weaken educational relevance, social ownership, and the long-term sustainability of quality improvement. Conversely, the integration of village potential including social capital, local wisdom, and community participation possesses significant strategic capacity to foster a more contextual, inclusive, and socially grounded culture of educational quality. Within this perspective, villages are no longer positioned merely as passive objects of educational policy, but as active social actors capable of participating in the design, supervision, and evaluation of educational quality through participatory mechanisms. Theoretically, this study extends the discourse on social capital and participatory governance by demonstrating that village social capital functions not merely as a supporting factor, but as an epistemic and institutional foundation for reconstructing education quality assurance in decentralized and socially diverse contexts.

However, the study also identifies several structural challenges that hinder such reorientation, particularly limited institutional capacity at the local level and bureaucratic resistance toward decentralized quality governance. Therefore, a paradigm shift in educational quality assurance from an administrative control model toward community based participatory governance is urgently needed, with villages positioned as strategic nodes in the development of national educational quality. This reorientation requires adaptive policy support, institutional capacity strengthening, and sustained cross-sectoral collaboration to ensure that quality assurance systems do not merely guarantee formal standards, but also promote educational justice, contextual relevance, and social sustainability throughout Indonesia. Future research is recommended to: (1) conduct comparative empirical studies between rural and urban quality assurance models to examine the effectiveness of community-based governance in different socio-cultural settings; (2) develop quantitative measurement frameworks for assessing the contribution of village social capital to educational quality outcomes; and (3) explore the role of digital governance and educational technology in strengthening participatory quality assurance mechanisms at the village level. Such studies are essential to deepen the operational and theoretical foundations of village-based educational quality assurance in Indonesia and other developing contexts.

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