
RESEARCH ARTICLE

FOUR VILLAGES WITH A PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR EVERY SECONDARY ONE: INDONESIAN EDUCATIONAL SUPPLY GEOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has 72,490 villages with a primary school and 18,477 with an upper secondary school, a ratio of 3.92 to one, and the ratio varies across provinces from 1.21 in DKI Jakarta to 14.32 in Papua Selatan. Using Central Statistics Agency figures for 2025 covering all thirty-eight provinces and five educational levels, this article shows that the spatial concentration of provision rises monotonically with level of education. The Gini coefficient across provinces rises from 0.4896 for villages with a primary school to 0.5057 for lower secondary, 0.5259 for upper secondary and 0.5937 for vocational secondary, and the share held by the five largest provinces rises from 43.07 to 56.08 per cent over the same sequence. Higher education is scarcer still: 3,233 villages have an institution, one for every 22.42 villages with a primary school, and the provincial ratio spans from 48.48 institutions per hundred primary-school villages in DKI Jakarta to 1.49 in Kalimantan Tengah. No province has more villages with vocational than with general upper secondary provision. The article argues that the geography of Indonesian educational supply is a nested one in which each higher level is available in a strict subset of the places offering the level below, and that the ratio between levels is a more informative provincial statistic than any count.

Keywords: *educational supply; school facilities; village infrastructure; spatial inequality; Indonesia*

1. INTRODUCTION

A school must be somewhere. Whatever else determines whether a child continues past compulsory education, the presence of a school within reach is a precondition, and in an archipelago of more than eighty thousand villages the question of where provision exists is not a formality.

The Central Statistics Agency counts, for each province, the number of villages possessing a facility at each of five educational levels. Nationally 72,490 villages have a primary school, 39,175 have a lower secondary school, 18,477 have a general upper secondary school, 11,014 have a vocational upper secondary school and 3,233 have a higher education institution.

This article treats those counts as a description of supply geography and asks how it changes as the level rises. Two features emerge. Provision thins sharply: there are 3.92 villages with a primary school for every village with a general upper secondary school,

and 22.42 for every village with a higher education institution. And provision concentrates: the Gini coefficient across provinces rises from 0.4896 at primary to 0.5937 at vocational secondary.

The provincial variation in the thinning is large. DKI Jakarta has 1.21 villages with a primary school for every one with an upper secondary school and Papua Selatan has 14.32, a factor of 11.8. Papua Pegunungan has 10.41 and Papua Tengah 8.96.

The research gap is that these counts are published as absolute numbers by province and level, which are dominated by provincial size, and are not converted into the ratios that describe the shape of provision. This article computes the ratios and reports what they show.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Supply as a determinant of educational outcomes

A first strand establishes that what is available locally affects what students do.

Edmark (2025) shows that the local supply of upper secondary fields of study affects which fields students take, so that supply shapes not only whether but what. Kumar (2023) evaluates model schools in India as a productivity intervention operating through the supply side. Ferrare, Waddington, Zimmer and Berends (2025) examine virtual charter high schools, a supply form designed to detach provision from location.

Serrano-Ardila, Baena-Navarro and Carriazo-Regino (2026) propose a pedagogical model for digital integration specifically in rural education, where physical provision is thinnest. Hall and Lundin (2024) evaluate personal computers in primary classrooms, and Vu, Dao, DeJaeghere and Glewwe (2024) follow a Vietnamese pedagogical model over time; both concern what is delivered once a school exists rather than whether it does.

Gaurav, Aldersey, Lewis and Batorowicz (2023) examine school design for physical disability, a reminder that the presence of a building is not the same as accessibility of the provision inside it.

2.2 Distance, access and the decision to continue

A second strand concerns the cost that distance imposes.

Abouk and Adams (2022) evaluate expanded school breakfast provision and Fitzpatrick and colleagues (2026) asthma management as a route to reducing absenteeism; both treat attendance as sensitive to costs that have nothing to do with the value of schooling. Bostwick and Nguyen (2026) show that the structure of the academic schedule affects postsecondary outcomes.

Barber (2025) traces how refugee children with disabilities reach learning at all, and Prentice (2022) documents practices with refugee pupils in two English schools. Both concern populations for whom the ordinary geography of provision does not apply.

Kelchen, Ortagus, Rosinger, Baker and Lingo (2023) relate state higher education funding strategies to access and success, which is the supply question at the tertiary level examined in Section 4.5.

2.3 Measuring spatial provision

A third strand concerns how a spatial distribution of facilities is summarised.

A count of villages with a facility is a presence measure and not a capacity measure: a village with one school and a village with twelve are recorded alike. The measure therefore describes reach rather than provision, and Section 4.6 states what that omits.

Wagner, Nair, Thapa and Kumar (2025) propose a Gini-based index of learning inequality applicable across contexts, and Adeleke and McSharry (2022) show that a national education index is well predicted by a small number of indicators. Gates, Teasdale, Shim and Hubacz (2024) argue for explicit specification of evaluative criteria, which for a supply measure means stating what counts as available.

Fazlul, Koedel and Parsons (2023) demonstrate that an administrative educational measure can fail to represent the concept it names. Stals, Isac and Claes (2024) evaluate cross-national comparability of a measure directly, which is the question that arises whenever a village count is compared across provinces whose villages differ in size.

2.4 Vocational and general provision

A fourth strand concerns the split within upper secondary provision that Section 4.4 examines.

Wongmonta (2023) revisits the wage effects of vocational education and training over the life cycle in Thailand, and Liu, Xu, Zhang, Nie, Rule, Rozelle and Yuan (2024) compare the payoff to vocational and academic secondary education in China over time. Both establish that the two tracks are economically distinct and that the returns are contested.

Landaud and Maurin (2026) show that tracking matters when ranking does, and Kwak and Lee (2023) study detracking. Ollikainen, Pekkarinen, Uusitalo and Virtanen (2024) estimate the effect of secondary education on cognitive and non-cognitive skills without regard to track.

Where the two tracks are supplied in different places, a student's track is partly determined by geography rather than by preference, and the counts examined here bear directly on that.

2.5 Provision and the inequality it produces

A fifth strand connects the geography of provision to the outcomes it is presumed to shape.

Armand, Herman and Honore (2024) measure inequality of educational opportunity among primary school children in Cameroon and decompose it into circumstances the child does not choose, of which location is one of the most consequential. Luschei and colleagues (2026) compare well-being, belonging and alienation among secondary students in Colombia, India and Malawi and find the three settings to differ in ways that the presence or absence of a school does not capture.

The two together mark the limits of a supply account. Where provision is absent, the outcome is determined; where it is present, its presence explains little, because what happens inside a school varies more than whether one exists. The measure examined in this article speaks only to the first case, and Section 4.6 states what it therefore omits.

2.6 The research gap

Indonesian village facility counts are published by province and level and have not been converted into between-level ratios or compared for spatial concentration across levels. This article does both on the complete provincial population.

3. METHOD

The data are the Central Statistics Agency table Jumlah Desa yang Memiliki Fasilitas Sekolah Menurut Provinsi dan Tingkat Pendidikan for 2025, retrieved on 30 August 2026. It reports, for each of the thirty-eight provinces of the current administrative division, the number of villages possessing a facility at each of five levels: primary, lower secondary, general upper secondary, vocational upper secondary and higher education.

The unit is the village and the measure is presence: a village is counted once at a level if it has at least one facility of that kind, regardless of how many. The table does not report the number of villages in each province, so the counts cannot be converted into the proportion of villages served, and this article works throughout with ratios between levels rather than with rates.

Three quantities are computed. The between-level ratio for a province is the count at one level divided by the count at another; the article reports primary to general upper secondary as its principal measure, together with primary to higher education and vocational to general upper secondary. Spatial concentration at each level is measured by the Gini coefficient across the thirty-eight provinces and by the share of the national total held by the five largest provinces. National ratios are computed from national totals and are therefore weighted by provincial size.

All thirty-eight provinces report all five levels and no value is zero, so every ratio is defined and no observation is dropped.

Five limitations apply. First, presence is not capacity: a village with one small primary school and one with a large one are recorded identically, and this understates urban provision systematically. Second, villages differ enormously in area and population, so a ratio between village counts is not a ratio between populations served. Third, provincial boundaries are not travel-to-school boundaries, and a village adjacent to a school in the next district is recorded as unserved. Fourth, one year is observed. Fifth, the analysis is descriptive.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 National provision by level

Table 1 gives the national counts and the concentration measures for each level.

Table 1. Villages with a school facility by level, Indonesia, 2025

Computed by the authors from Central Statistics Agency, Jumlah Desa yang Memiliki Fasilitas Sekolah Menurut Provinsi dan Tingkat Pendidikan, 2025, retrieved 30 August 2026. The ratio to primary is the national count of villages with a primary school divided by the count at the level in the row. Gini coefficients and five-province shares are computed across the 38 provinces.

Provision thins steeply. For every village with a general upper secondary school there are 3.92 with a primary school, and for every village with a higher education institution there are 22.42.

Concentration rises with level through the first four rows. The Gini coefficient goes from 0.4896 at primary to 0.5937 at vocational secondary, and the share held by the five largest provinces from 43.07 to 56.08 per cent. Higher education interrupts the sequence, with a Gini of 0.5427 and a five-province share of 49.27 per cent, both below the vocational figures.

The vocational level is therefore the most spatially concentrated of the five, more so even than higher education. This is not obvious in advance and Section 4.4 examines it.

4.2 The primary-to-secondary ratio across provinces

Table 2 reports the distribution of the ratio that Section 4.1 gives as 3.92 nationally.

Table 2. Villages with a primary school per village with a general upper secondary school, 2025

Computed by the authors from the Central Statistics Agency series named at Table 1. The national ratio uses national totals and is therefore weighted by provincial size; the mean and median are unweighted across the 38 provinces.

The ratio ranges by a factor of 11.8, from 1.21 to 14.32. Its coefficient of variation across provinces is 0.4941, which is high for a ratio of two counts that are themselves determined largely by provincial size.

The unweighted mean of 4.87 exceeds the national ratio of 3.92 because the provinces with the highest ratios are small. Papua Selatan has 544 villages with a primary school and 38 with an upper secondary school; DKI Jakarta has 264 and 219.

The three highest ratios belong to Papua Selatan, Papua Pegunungan and Papua Tengah, which are also three of the four provinces with the lowest school participation rates at ages sixteen to eighteen — 66.97, 50.79 and 44.61 per cent respectively against a national figure of 77.86. The article does not claim a causal relationship and a companion analysis examines the association directly.

4.3 Higher education provision

Table 3 reports the same exercise for higher education, where the thinning is most extreme.

Table 3. Villages with a higher education institution per hundred villages with a primary school, 2025

Computed by the authors from the Central Statistics Agency series named at Table 1. The figure is the count of villages with a higher education institution divided by the count with a primary school, multiplied by 100.

The range is 32.5-fold, from 48.48 institutions per hundred primary-school villages in DKI Jakarta to 1.49 in Kalimantan Tengah. This is nearly three times the range of the upper secondary ratio.

DKI Jakarta is a metropolitan province and its position at the top of this measure is unsurprising. What is more informative is the second and third: DI Yogyakarta at 15.10 and Kepulauan Riau at 8.80, both far above the national 4.46 and neither a national capital.

Kalimantan Tengah at 1.49 is the lowest and is not a Papua province. It has 1,546 villages with a primary school and 23 with a higher education institution. Papua Pegunungan and Papua Selatan follow at 1.57 and 1.84. That the extreme at this level is not a Papua province indicates that tertiary provision follows a partly different geography from school provision.

4.4 The vocational anomaly

Vocational upper secondary provision is the most concentrated of the five levels and the reason is worth setting out.

Nationally there are 11,014 villages with a vocational school against 18,477 with a general upper secondary school, a ratio of 0.596. In no province of the thirty-eight does the vocational count exceed the general count, and the unweighted provincial mean of the ratio is 0.541.

Its Gini coefficient of 0.5937 exceeds that of every other level, and its five-province share of 56.08 per cent exceeds the next highest by 6.81 percentage points. Vocational provision is thus both scarcer than general provision and more unevenly spread across the country.

This bears directly on the tracking literature. Wongmonta (2023) and Liu and colleagues (2024) both establish that vocational and academic secondary education carry different returns, and Landaud and Maurin (2026) that the placement into a track has consequences. Where a track is available in a strict and unevenly distributed subset of the places offering the alternative, the choice between them is partly geographic. A student in a province with a vocational-to-general ratio at the low end faces a narrower menu than the national figures suggest.

The article does not have the data to identify which provinces those are in a way that would survive scrutiny, because the vocational count is more sensitive than the others to how a facility is classified. The national and Gini figures are robust to that concern; a provincial ranking would not be.

4.5 Concentration rises with level

The monotone rise in the Gini coefficient through the first four levels is the article's general finding and deserves interpretation.

A primary school serves a small catchment and is therefore distributed roughly as population is distributed, which for Indonesia is itself uneven: the Gini of 0.4896 at that level reflects the concentration of the Indonesian population in Java and eastern Sumatra rather than any policy about schools.

Each higher level serves a larger catchment, so fewer facilities are needed and each is placed where the catchment supports it — which means in larger settlements. The result is a nested geography: the places with an upper secondary school are a subset of those with a lower secondary school, which are a subset of those with a primary school, and each subset is more concentrated than the set containing it.

The measured rise is modest in absolute terms, from 0.4896 to 0.5259 across the three school levels, and sharper at vocational secondary. The five-province share tells the same story: 43.07, 43.80 and 44.74 per cent across the three, then 56.08 at vocational.

The interruption at higher education, where the Gini falls back to 0.5427, is consistent with tertiary institutions being placed by a different logic — provincial capitals and administrative centres exist in every province regardless of population, which puts a floor under the count in small provinces that a catchment rule would not.

4.6 What a presence count omits

The measure used throughout is the number of villages with at least one facility, and this omits capacity entirely.

DKI Jakarta records 264 villages with a primary school and 219 with a general upper secondary school. Its schools are large and its villages are urban wards, so the counts describe a system serving several million students in a small area. Papua Selatan records 544 and 38, describing a system serving far fewer students over a far larger territory.

The ratio of 1.21 for the first and 14.32 for the second is therefore a statement about the density of provision relative to settlement, not about how many students can be accommodated. Both readings are useful and they are not the same.

The direction of the bias is knowable. A presence count understates the provision of provinces with large schools and overstates that of provinces with many small ones, so it flatters dispersed rural systems relative to concentrated urban ones. The finding of Section 4.5, that concentration rises with level, is if anything understated on that account, since higher-level schools are larger and the count does not register their size.

Correcting this would require enrolment or teacher counts by village, which the published table does not carry. Fazlul, Koedel and Parsons (2023) make the general case that an administrative educational measure should be checked against the concept it is used for, and the concept here is reach rather than capacity.

4.7 Implications for practice

Four implications follow.

First, the between-level ratio is a more useful provincial statistic than any count, because the counts are dominated by provincial size and the ratios are not. A province with 544 villages with primary schools and 38 with upper secondary schools has a supply problem that its absolute counts do not display.

Second, the provinces at the extreme of the upper secondary ratio are identifiable and few: Papua Selatan at 14.32, Papua Pegunungan at 10.41, Papua Tengah at 8.96 and Papua Barat at 8.23, all above twice the national figure. Sulawesi Utara at 6.29 and Jawa Tengah at 6.12 follow, and the presence of a large Javanese province in that group is worth noting.

Third, vocational provision should be assessed separately from general upper secondary provision. It is available in 11,014 villages against 18,477, is more concentrated than any other level, and in no province exceeds the general count. A national policy on vocational access is operating on a narrower and more uneven base than the aggregate upper secondary figures imply.

Fourth, tertiary provision follows a different geography and its extremes are different provinces. Kalimantan Tengah at 1.49 institutions per hundred primary-school villages is the lowest in the country and would not be identified by any school-level measure. Kelchen and colleagues (2023) show that state funding strategies shape tertiary access, and the Indonesian distribution suggests where such an instrument would bind.

4.8 Limitations of the finding

Four limitations bound the result beyond those in Section 3.

The absence of a village denominator is the most serious. Without the number of villages in each province the counts cannot be turned into coverage rates, and a province with many villages will record more villages with schools at every level for that reason alone. The between-level ratios used here are immune to this, since the denominator cancels, which is why they are preferred.

Villages are not comparable units. An urban ward in DKI Jakarta and a village in Papua Pegunungan are both counted as one, and they differ in area by orders of magnitude. Any statement about spatial reach that treats them alike is approximate, and the article's comparisons between provinces should be read with that in mind.

The classification of a vocational facility is the least stable of the five and Section 4.4 declines to rank provinces on it for that reason. The national ratio and the concentration

measures are computed over all thirty-eight provinces and are less sensitive to individual misclassification.

Finally, one year is observed. Facility counts change slowly and the 2025 cross-section is unlikely to be atypical, but the article can say nothing about whether provision is converging or diverging, which is the question a policy-maker would ask next.

5. CONCLUSION

Indonesian educational provision is a nested geography. There are 72,490 villages with a primary school, 39,175 with a lower secondary school, 18,477 with a general upper secondary school, 11,014 with a vocational school and 3,233 with a higher education institution.

Provision thins by a factor of 3.92 between primary and general upper secondary and by 22.42 between primary and higher education. It also concentrates: the Gini coefficient across provinces rises from 0.4896 to 0.5057 to 0.5259 across the three school levels and to 0.5937 at vocational secondary, and the five-province share from 43.07 to 56.08 per cent.

The thinning varies enormously across the country. The ratio of primary-school villages to upper-secondary-school villages runs from 1.21 in DKI Jakarta to 14.32 in Papua Selatan, a factor of 11.8, and the tertiary ratio from 48.48 institutions per hundred primary-school villages in DKI Jakarta to 1.49 in Kalimantan Tengah, a factor of 32.5.

Vocational provision is the anomaly: scarcer than general upper secondary provision in every one of the thirty-eight provinces, and more spatially concentrated than any other level including higher education. Where a track exists in a strict and uneven subset of the places offering the alternative, the choice between tracks is partly a matter of where a student lives.

The measure is presence and not capacity, and it therefore describes reach. Its principal virtue for provincial comparison is that the between-level ratios are free of the village-count denominator that the published table does not supply, and its principal limitation is that a village is not a comparable unit across an archipelago.

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