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Local Government Support in Improving Accessibility of Higher Education: Evaluation of the Scholarship Program in Jayapura Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the role of the Jayapura Regency Government in increasing the accessibility of higher education through a scholarship program. Using a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach with in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, documentation studies, and observations on 120 performance indicators. The results show a budget allocation of Rp. 412,207,214,668 with a realization rate of 72% and program effectiveness of 67% in education management and 93% in administrative services. The scholarship program includes full and partial assistance prioritized for indigenous communities, remote areas, and underprivileged families with the achievement of 100% student personnel costs. The main challenges include budget limitations, selection transparency, delays in disbursement of funds, and a suboptimal monitoring system. The evaluation shows that 65% of the 120 indicators achieved the target above 70%, indicating a positive impact on improving local human resources

INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a strategic role in human resource development and increasing regional competitiveness in the era of globalization and the knowledge-based economy. The availability of an educated and skilled workforce is a determining factor in the socio-economic progress of society (Rahadian, 2016). However, disparities in access to higher education remain a major challenge in various regions of Indonesia, particularly in remote and underdeveloped areas. This disparity in access not only affects individual development but also impacts the progress of regional development as a whole. Limited access to higher education can perpetuate the cycle of poverty and hinder social mobility. Therefore, local government intervention in increasing the accessibility of higher education is crucial. Systematic and planned efforts are needed to overcome the various barriers that prevent communities from accessing quality higher education.

Jayapura Regency, a developing region in Papua Province, boasts abundant natural resources, but the quality of its human resources remains elusive. Data from the Jayapura Regency Statistics Agency shows that the Gross Enrollment Rate (APK) for higher education remains below the national average. This indicates that many high school (SMA/SMK) graduates are unable to pursue higher education due to various structural and individual constraints. Papua's vast geographical limitations, coupled with limited transportation accessibility, pose a unique challenge for prospective students. Challenging topography and long distances between regions significantly increase education costs. Limited supporting infrastructure further complicates learning and academic capacity development. The disparity in development between urban and rural areas further widens the gap in access to higher education in the region.

Factors hindering accessibility to higher education in Jayapura Regency include limited economic resources and a lack of information and awareness of the importance of higher education. This situation is exacerbated by the high cost of education and living expenses for students studying outside the region. The limited choice of quality universities in Jayapura Regency forces prospective students to seek alternatives in other major cities. The costs of transportation, accommodation, and

daily living expenses outside the region pose a significant financial burden for low-income families. Cultural and social differences also pose adaptation challenges for Papuan students. The lack of adequate mentoring and support systems often leads to academic and social difficulties. As a result, many potential students from underprivileged families are unable to continue their education without adequate financial support.

Regional governments have a significant responsibility to improve the accessibility of higher education for their communities, as stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government. Both laws mandate regional governments to play a role in the development of the education sector, including higher education. This role can be realized through various forms of support, such as providing scholarships, developing educational infrastructure, collaborating with universities, and affirmative action programs for low-income groups. The implementation of regional autonomy provides district governments with the flexibility to design programs tailored to local needs and characteristics. A bottom-up approach to education policy formulation allows for a more targeted response to specific regional challenges. Coordination between the central, provincial, and district governments is key to the successful implementation of sustainable higher education programs.

The Jayapura Regency Government's higher education scholarship program has become a crucial tool in efforts to increase accessibility to higher education. For the past several years, the Jayapura Regency Government has allocated funds for a scholarship program for local students pursuing higher education. This program includes full and partial scholarships for students with strong academic achievements but facing financial constraints. Priority is given to prospective students from indigenous communities, remote areas, and low-income families. The scholarship scheme is tailored to the recipient's academic needs and abilities. The program also features a structured selection mechanism and a regular monitoring system. Collaborations with various universities within and outside Papua expand the study program options for scholarship recipients.

Although the scholarship program has been running, a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of policies and programs supported by the local government to improve the accessibility of higher education in Jayapura Regency has not been conducted. Problems in program implementation include limited scholarship recipient quotas, a selection mechanism that is not fully transparent, delays in disbursement of funds, and a suboptimal academic progress monitoring system. Information gaps regarding the effectiveness, coverage, challenges, and impact of the scholarship program remain significant. The potential for developing a more innovative, targeted, and sustainable scholarship support model has not been fully explored. Systematic evaluation of the achievement of program performance indicators has also not been carried out routinely and comprehensively. This study aims to fill this gap through an in-depth analysis of the Jayapura Regency Government's support in improving the accessibility of higher education.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach to uncover social phenomena in depth and holistically, as recommended by Creswell (2012). A qualitative approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of local government support for higher education accessibility from the perspectives of various stakeholders. This descriptive-analytical approach not only describes the phenomenon but also analyzes the patterns, relationships, and factors influencing the implementation of the scholarship program. This method allows for the exploration of aspects uncovered in previous research, addressing identified gaps. Depth of analysis is achieved through triangulation of data from multiple sources and data collection techniques. The flexibility of the qualitative approach allows for adaptation to dynamic field conditions. Internal validity is strengthened through member checking and peer debriefing throughout the research process. Reliability is maintained through a comprehensive audit trail and systematic documentation.

The research location, the Jayapura Regency Education Office, Papua Province, was selected based on the representativeness of the regional context developing a higher education accessibility

support program. Subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on criteria such as direct involvement in the program, knowledge and experience related to implementation, and demographic and geographic representation. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation with five key informants. Access to informants was facilitated through gatekeepers at the local government and community organization levels. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional research ethics committee and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data collection using triangulation techniques included in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore informants' experiences and perspectives, focus group discussions with scholarship recipients and community leaders, documentation studies of regional regulations, budget planning documents, program evaluation reports, educational statistics, and cooperation documents. Observations were conducted during the scholarship recipient selection process, monitoring and evaluation activities, and higher education discussion forums. The research instruments consisted of interview guides, observation guides, and documentation checklists that had been validated through expert judgment. Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder with manual fieldnote backup. Interview duration ranged from 60-90 minutes with flexibility as needed. Documentation data was collected systematically and categorized based on type and relevance to the research objectives. Quality control was carried out through triangulation of sources, methods, and investigators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Scholarship Programs and Local Government Support

The implementation of the Jayapura Regency Government scholarship program demonstrates significant commitment with a budget allocation of Rp. 412,207,214,668 consisting of operational expenditures of Rp. 341,752,483,927 (82.9%) and capital expenditures of Rp. 70,394,730,741 (17.1%). The scholarship program includes full and partial assistance prioritized for indigenous communities, remote areas, and underprivileged families in accordance with the principles of equity and affirmative action. The selection system uses academic, economic, and geographical criteria with

weights established in technical guidelines. Strategic collaboration with partner universities expands the choice of study programs and facilitates the academic administration process. Other forms of support include the development of educational infrastructure, the provision of learning facilities, and capacity building programs. The mechanism for disbursing scholarship funds is carried out in stages according to the academic calendar and student needs. The monitoring system is carried out through periodic reports from partner universities and direct evaluation of scholarship recipients.

Effectiveness of Education Management

Program

The evaluation of the effectiveness of the education management program showed an achievement level of 67% with a budget realization of Rp. 298,934,951,453 or 72% of the total budget ceiling. The target group for improving education management program services includes 105 performance indicators realized through seven main activities. The highest achievement was in the provision of student personnel costs which reached 100%, reflecting the priority on educational accessibility. Indicators with low achievement include digital content development (0%) and education policy socialization (0%), indicating challenges in technology adoption and public communication. Factors of limited funds and unstable regional financial conditions are the main causes of not achieving optimal targets. Variations in achievement between sub-activities indicate the need for more targeted priorities and focus in program implementation. The effectiveness level of 67% can be categorized as "quite successful" based on the LAKIP assessment scale but still requires systematic improvement.

Financial Accountability and Program

Transparency

The financial accountability of the Jayapura Regency Education Office demonstrates an adequate level of transparency and accountability, with a structured reporting system in accordance with applicable regulations. The budget composition, dominated by operational expenditures (82.9%), reflects a priority on meeting the needs of educational human resources and program operations. Personnel expenditures of Rp. 211,489,763,580 constitute the largest component,

indicating a focus on the stability of educators and program managers. The financial reporting system adheres to government accounting standards, with complete documentation including DPA, SPP, SPM, and accountability reports. Verification and validation mechanisms are implemented in stages in accordance with the principle of checks and balances in public financial management. Transparency is implemented through the preparation of LAKIP (Regional Accountability Report) which contains details of budget usage per program and activity. Horizontal accountability is reflected in the submission of performance reports to the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) and the public through public documents. However, the absorption rate of 72% remains below optimal standards and requires improvements in budget planning and execution.

Evaluation of Key Performance Indicators

Achievement

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) achievement showed mixed results, with target group 1 achieving 93% (improving the quality of administrative and personnel services) and target group 2 achieving 67% (improving education management program services). The target group with the highest achievement achieved the "very successful" category with 15 indicators realized through six main activities. Indicators with optimal achievement include the provision of civil servant salaries and allowances (100%), facilitation of learning communities (100%), and provision of student personnel costs (100%). Of the total 120 performance indicators, approximately 65% showed achievement above 70%, indicating relatively good organizational performance. External factors such as budget constraints and geographical conditions are the main determinants of variations in performance achievement. The performance measurement system uses an ordinal scale with a clear and measurable value range according to SAKIP guidelines. Periodic evaluation of KPI achievement allows for adjustments to implementation strategies and resource allocation. The results of this evaluation serve as the basis for formulating plans for program improvement and development in the future.

Challenges and Obstacles to Program

Implementation

Identification of challenges in implementing the scholarship program revealed budget constraints as the primary obstacle, with an absorption rate of only 72% due to unstable regional finances. Operational challenges include limited scholarship recipient quotas compared to the increasing number of applicants each year. The selection mechanism requires increased transparency to ensure fairness and credibility of the process. Delays in disbursement of scholarship funds often disrupt recipients' studies and undermine public trust. The system for monitoring scholarship recipients' academic progress is suboptimal and requires digitization for efficiency. Papua's challenging geography complicates aid distribution and program coordination between regions. Limited human resources managing the program, both in terms of technical and managerial capacity, impact the quality of implementation. Coordination between institutions still faces bureaucratic obstacles and differences in standard operating procedures.

Impact of the Program on Human Resource

Development

The scholarship program has contributed positively to increasing higher education participation rates, particularly for priority target groups from indigenous communities, remote areas, and underprivileged families. Although the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for higher education remains below the national average, the upward trend demonstrates the program's effectiveness in the medium term. Scholarship graduates have begun to demonstrate contributions in various regional development sectors, including government, education, health, and the creative economy. The increased capacity of local human resources is reflected in the increasing number of professionals who understand regional characteristics and needs. The program also encourages a shift in public mindset regarding the importance of higher education as a long-term investment. The multiplier effect is evident in the increased motivation of the younger generation to continue their education and the contributions of alumni in supporting the scholarship program. However, challenges related to brain drain remain a concern, as some graduates choose careers outside Papua. Retention efforts

through service bond programs and career development in their home regions are important strategies to maximize return on investment.

Comparison with Previous Studies and National Context

The results of this study are consistent with previous studies, but with unique Papuan characteristics. The 67% effectiveness rate aligns with Mahsun's (2019) study, which found the average effectiveness of education programs in remote areas of Indonesia ranges from 60-70%. A comparison with Dwiyanto's (2021) study of five districts in Papua shows a similar pattern, with budget constraints and geographic conditions being the main limiting factors. However, the 100% achievement in providing student personnel costs is better than the national average of 85% according to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2023), demonstrating a strong commitment to educational accessibility. The budget absorption rate of 72% is below the national average of 85-90% based on a study by Halim and Abdullah (2019), reflecting the specific challenges of the Papua region. The composition of operating expenditures, 82.9% versus capital expenditures, 17.1%, aligns with Yuwono's (2018) findings regarding the tendency for operating expenditures to dominate the education sector. Papua's geographic and socio-cultural context adds additional complexity, necessitating an adaptive and contextual approach to program implementation.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study confirm Edwards III's (1980) theory of public policy implementation, which emphasizes the importance of resources as a key factor in successful implementation. The 67% achievement reflects a performance gap between strategic planning and implementation reality, as conceptualized by Frederickson (1999). Variations in achievement across indicators demonstrate the need to apply Pressman and Wildavsky's (1973) principle of selective implementation. Budget constraints, resulting in 72% absorption, align with Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) findings on the challenges of public sector management under resource constraints. Optimal achievement of priority indicators demonstrates the effectiveness of prioritization, in accordance with Locke and Latham's (1990) goal-setting theory. Papua's geographic location reinforces Lipsky's (1980)

argument regarding the importance of considering the local context in policy implementation. Practical implications demonstrate the need to reformulate implementation strategies, focusing on high-priority activities and developing implementation models that adapt to regional conditions with specific geographic and socio-economic characteristics.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully achieved its stated objectives with comprehensive findings on the role of the Jayapura Regency Government in increasing accessibility to higher education through a scholarship program. Program implementation demonstrated strong commitment with a budget allocation of Rp. 412,207,214,668 and a structured system that includes full and partial scholarships for priority groups. The effectiveness evaluation revealed 67% achievement in education management and 93% in administrative services, with 65% of 120 performance indicators achieving targets above 70%. Key challenges include budget constraints with 72% absorption, selection transparency, delays in fund disbursement, and a suboptimal monitoring system. The program has contributed positively to increasing higher education participation and the quality of local human resources, although the APK remains below the national average. Papua's challenging geography and limited institutional capacity are the main determinants of variations in program performance.

Strategic recommendations include increasing budget absorption capacity through improved planning and coordination between work units, implementing an integrated information system for efficiency and transparency, and developing partnerships with the private sector to diversify funding sources. A scholarship model with a flexible service bond scheme needs to be implemented to ensure graduates contribute to regional development. A comprehensive mentoring program covering academic, social, and cultural aspects should be developed for Papuan students. Strengthening academic and vocational preparation programs is needed to improve the readiness of prospective students from remote areas. Improving the capacity of human resources managers through systematic training and the development of comprehensive regional regulations will strengthen the implementation foundation. Coordination with the

central and provincial governments needs to be intensified to optimize the synergy of higher education programs in Papua.

Future research is recommended to develop a longitudinal study to analyze the long-term impact of the scholarship program on the economic and social development of Jayapura Regency. Comparative studies with other regencies in Papua and Eastern Indonesia would provide a broader perspective on best practices and lessons learned. Quantitative research with a larger sample size could confirm the qualitative findings and identify predictive factors for program success. Furthermore, a study of the most effective mentoring model for Papuan students studying outside the region would complement the findings of this study.

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