

Education Policy on Operational Assistance Management at the Local Level: A Challenge and Recommendations

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Abstract

This research discusses the Implementation Operational Assistance Program (BOP) at the local level as a fund management mechanism to support educational activities in schools, provide equitable access to education, encourage educational inclusion, and reduce disparities between regions. This study uses a qualitative approach with a focus on thematic analysis. This approach was chosen to guide researchers to find sources of analysis directly from the government by identifying several official government documents. This study's findings indicate several challenges in managing BOP locally, such as a need for more resources, infrastructure and technical capabilities. Several policy recommendations are suggested to overcome these challenges, namely by increasing monitoring and evaluation, transparency, management capacity, use of technology, and collaboration. With the implementation of the right policies, BOP management at the local level can be improved so that education can become a more inclusive, quality and sustainable means for all parties.

Keywords: *Education Policy, Government Response, Regional Development, Education Gap, Policy Implementation.*

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A. INTRODUCTION

Education at the local level has a critical urgency in developing a country (Brooks et al., 2021; Datta & Singh, 2019). Education at the local level allows easier access for people in the area. The proximity of schools to students' homes makes education more accessible to children, especially those who live in remote areas or areas with limited access (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lewis & Forman, 2002; Magnússon, 2020). Education at the local level allows the application of local cultural values and traditions. This is important because education that respects and maintains regional cultural identity can help encourage a sense of pride and maintain cultural heritage from generation to generation (Alisaari et al., 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Education at the local level can empower communities by providing access to knowledge and skills needed to improve quality (Santos et al., 2019; Žalėnienė & Pereira, 2021). With quality education, communities can develop the skills and knowledge needed to contribute to local economic sectors. This can create job opportunities, reduce the unemployment rate, and increase the income of society as a whole. In addition, education at the local level can also be a means of overcoming social problems and inequality that exist in society. Providing quality education to all levels of society, including those less fortunate or marginalized, can help reduce social and economic inequalities between individuals. Education that embraces inclusion

and equality will create a more just and harmonious society (Fomba et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2020).

The importance of education at the local level demands a strong response from the government (Garcés & O'Dowd, 2021; Hou et al., 2022). The government needs to allocate a sufficient budget for education at the local level. This includes building and repairing educational infrastructure, providing operational funds for schools, and providing necessary educational facilities and resources (Lennox et al., 2021). The government can encourage active community participation in the management and supervision of education at the local level. Communities must be involved in educational decisions, such as setting policies. The government should focus on reducing the education gap between urban and rural areas and between remote and more affordable areas. This can be done by providing adequate educational facilities, providing incentives for teachers to teach in remote areas, and developing programs specifically aimed at increasing access and quality of education in marginalized areas (Antonowicz et al., 2017; Csizmadia et al., 2008; Shirrell et al., 2019).

A critical aspect of the government's response to education at the local level is the provision of Operational Operational Assistance (BOP) for education. Implementation Operational Assistance (BOP) is financial support the government provides to schools as part of their response to the urgency of education at the local level. BOP can play an essential role in increasing the accessibility of education at the local level. By getting operational assistance, schools in remote or poor areas can maintain their operations and provide education to students. BOP helps overcome financial constraints that may be a barrier for these schools, thereby enabling broader and more equitable access to education (kemdikbud, 2023).

Although many studies have been conducted on education development locally, only some have found specific and simultaneous research results linking and discussing issues surrounding local education with government programs through Operational Operational Assistance (BOP). The purpose of this study is to accommodate the gaps in previous research by maximizing thematic analysis. Several research questions are considered relevant to support this research. (1) How is the BOP management mechanism at the local level? (2) What are the main challenges faced in managing BOP at the local level? (3) What are the recommendations for improving BOP management at the local level? By answering these three questions, the research will provide a deeper understanding of BOP management at the local level and provide direction in improving the management of education operational funds to be more effective and sustainable.

B. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a focus on thematic analysis. The thematic analysis was chosen to maximize analysis on Operational Assistance Management (BOP) and its implementation at the local level. This approach was chosen to guide researchers to find sources of analysis directly from the government. A data search was carried out by identifying official government documents. The

official documents identified are Service Guidelines, Institution Guidelines, Permendikbud Number 19 of 2020, and Permendikbud Number 20 of 2020.

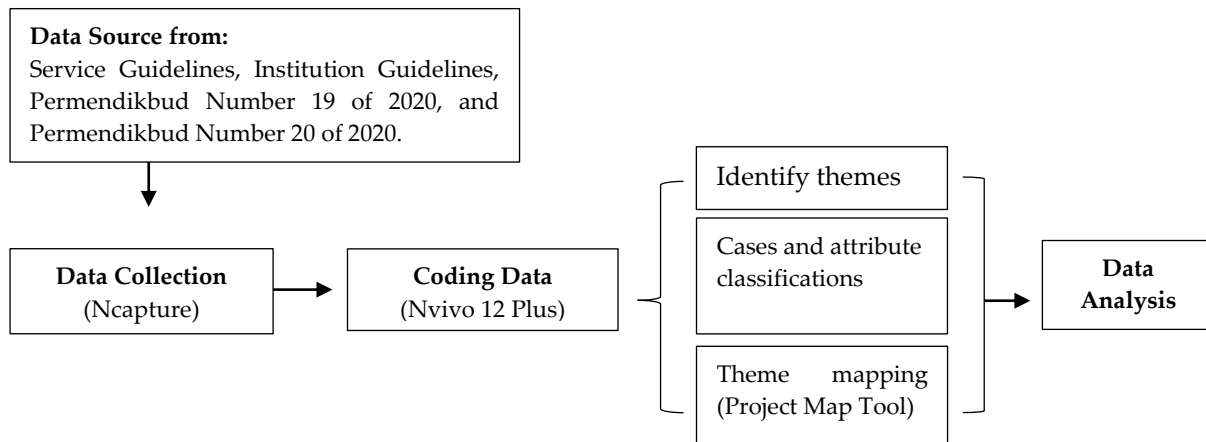


Figure 1. Data Analysis Process

Figure 1 is the analysis stage carried out in this study with the process of collecting data sourced from official government documents, including; Service Guidelines, Institution Guidelines, Permendikbud Number 19 of 2020, and Permendikbud Number 20 of 2020. Data collection was carried out using Ncapture on Google Chrome. The collected data is then transferred to the analysis tool, namely Nvivo 12 Plus. The research data coding process maximizes the analytical features provided by Nvivo 12 Plus, such as Identifying themes, Cases and attribute classifications, and Theme mapping (Project Map Tool). The Identify Themes feature is used to identify information on the official website. Cases and attribute classifications are used to categorize the collected data. At the same time, Theme mapping is used to map the results of the overall data coding. The data that has been collected and coded is then analyzed and described in order to answer the research questions posed.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Development of Education: BOP Management Mechanism

Management of Operational Operational Assistance (BOP) for education at the local level is one of the essential mechanisms in education development. BOP is the government's financial support to local schools to meet their operational needs (kemdikbud, 2023). The BOP management mechanism includes various stages, from submitting funds, budget allocation, and distributing funds to schools to monitoring and accountability for using funds (Kemendikbud, 2021). hrough this mechanism, local governments can ensure that the operational funds provided are on target and are used effectively to improve the accessibility, quality and sustainability of education at the local level. The government needs to apply a transparent, accountable and data-based BOP management mechanism to achieve optimal results in education development. The mechanisms considered necessary are as follows:

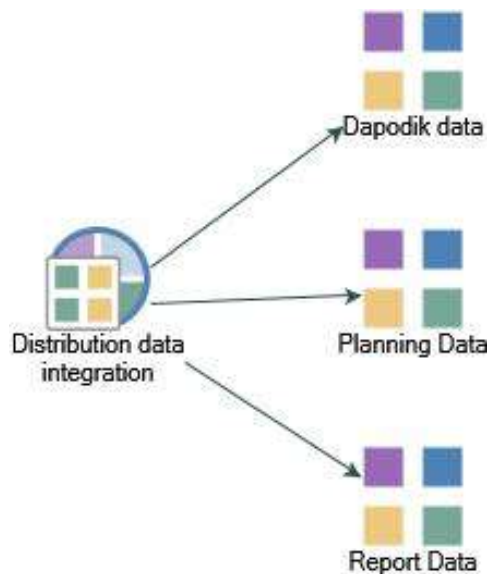


Figure 2. Important Mechanism

The mechanism maximizes the digitalization approach to ensure that all stages of assistance through DOP are correctly implemented. The process has 3 essential menus: Dapodik Data, Planning Data and Report Data. The Dapodik Data menu can only display data on the number and list of students according to the criteria, multiple students, and a list of students (Kemendikbud, 2021).

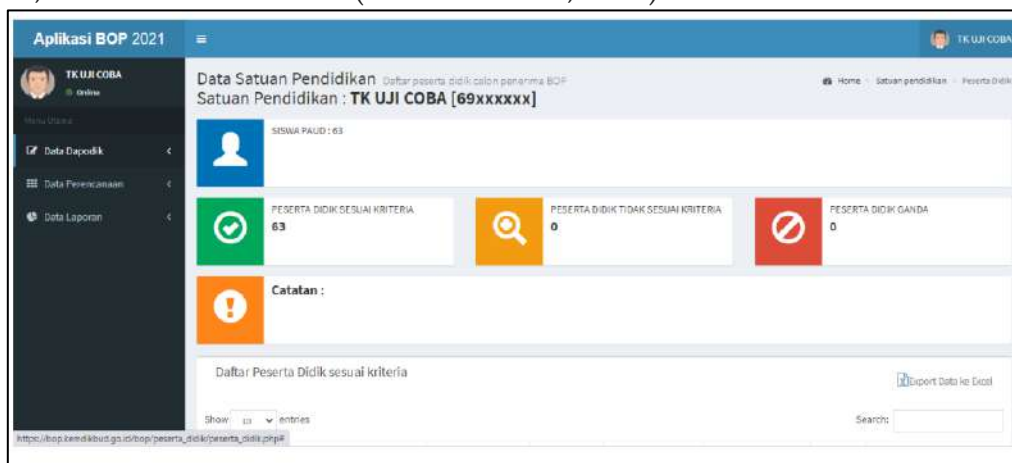


Figure 3. Menu display on Dapodik Data

The Dapodik Data menu can only display data on the number and list of students according to the criteria, multiple students, and a list of students (Kemendikbud, 2021). This menu can be used as a correction for students who are multiple and do not meet the criteria. By utilizing the Dapodik Data menu, analysis can be carried out to identify students who still need to meet predetermined criteria. For example, are there students who are at the wrong level of education, have an age outside the permitted range, or need to meet other requirements. This identification can be the basis for making data corrections and ensuring that student data recorded in the system is accurate and by applicable regulations. Using the Dapodik Data menu, you can find students double registered in the system. Data analysis will enable the identification of students with the same or similar information, such as names, dates of birth, or identification numbers of identical or similar students.

In this case, corrective steps can be taken to combine student data into a single entity, thereby avoiding data duplication and ensuring better data integrity. Analysis using the Dapodik Data menu can also provide broader insight into student data quality as a whole. An evaluation of common errors, omissions, or weaknesses in recorded data can be made. This information can be used to improve the data collection process, train staff responsible for entering data correctly, and implement necessary remedial measures to maintain the accuracy and quality of student data. By utilizing the Dapodik Data menu for data analysis, the necessary corrective steps can be taken to correct discrepancies in student data and identify double-registered students. This will help ensure that the education data recorded in the system is accurate and reliable and provides a sound basis for practical education planning and decision-making.

Apart from Dapodik data, there is also Planning Data which is an important mechanism (Kemendikbud, 2021). Planning data focuses more on ceilings, planning activities and budgets. Schools can start making school activity plans and budgets if the Education Office disburses BOP Funds. Input the activity plan and budget sequentially from above, namely Type of Component, Type of Use, Goods and services spent, Quantity, Unit, and unit price. The process of inputting the activity plan and school budget sequentially from above, namely the types of components, types of use, goods and services spent, quantities, units, and unit prices, allows for valuable analysis in managing BOP funds. By grouping school activity plans and budgets based on the type of components needed, such as procuring books, repairing facilities, extracurricular activities, and so on, an analysis of the proportion of spending on each component can be carried out. This analysis will provide a clearer picture of schools' priorities for using BOP funds, making it possible to make more effective budget adjustments and arrangements.

In the activity plan and school budget, there are specific categories of use of funds, such as spending on educators, administration, maintenance, or curriculum development. By analyzing expenditures based on the type of use, it is possible to identify the allocation of funds in each category and evaluate whether the proportion of the use of funds is by the desired educational needs and goals. The activity plan and school budget have a unit price for each item or service to be spent. By analyzing the unit price comparison of the various available options, schools can evaluate the efficiency of using funds. This analysis can assist schools in selecting the best options with appropriate quality and competitive prices so that the available budget can be used optimally.

After the activity plan and school budget are made, a comparative analysis can be conducted between the plan and the realization. This will assist in monitoring the use of BOP funds regularly and see to what extent the plans that have been made are achieved. Suppose there is a significant difference between the plan and the realization. In that case, an evaluation can be carried out to evaluate the causal factors and make the necessary improvements in the planning and use of funds (Bromham et al., 2016; Giglio et al., 2016). By analyzing the school's activity plan and budget inputs,

a better understanding of the use of BOP funds by schools can be obtained. This analysis provides valuable insight into the management of BOP funds, enabling schools to optimize the use of funds, prioritize essential activities, and increase the effectiveness and accountability of education fund management. Educational assistance like this can be a valuable solution to advancing education (Dumas, 2016; Yuan et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2016).

Finally, namely, Report Data, where data can be a valuable source of information for evaluating the performance and effectiveness of using education funds (Kemendikbud, 2021). Report data can provide information about implementing planned activities using BOP funds. Analysis can be carried out to see how far the activities have been carried out according to plan, whether the targets have been achieved, and whether the activities have positively impacted education at the local level. This data can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of using BOP funds in supporting educational goals. The report data also provides an overview of the expenditures made by schools using BOP funds. Analysis can be carried out to compare the planned budget with actual expenses. Significant differences between budgets and expenditures can be considered in making budget adjustments or identifying factors that affect expenditures.

Report data can also provide information about the quality and educational outcomes achieved using BOP funds. For example, report data could include pass rates, test scores, student participation in extracurricular activities, or student skill improvement. Analysis of this data can assist in evaluating the extent to which BOP funds have contributed to improving education quality and outcomes. Report data can also be used to evaluate the compliance and accountability level in using BOP funds. Analysis can be carried out to ensure that the use of funds follows applicable regulations, transparent and accountable. This data can also assist in identifying potential problems or weaknesses in fund management that need improvement. By analyzing the report data, local governments and schools can gain deeper insight into the performance of BOP funds and their impact on education at the local level. This analysis can be the basis for making better decisions in planning, monitoring, and increasing the effectiveness of using BOP funds.

Thus, it is known that the availability and updating of data is a very crucial aspect in supporting the government (Adam & Alarifi, 2021; Dunn et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2020), especially in the field of education, which is integrated with technological advances such as websites (Akinosho et al., 2020; Yates et al., 2021). Accurate and up-to-date data provide an in-depth understanding of the challenges and needs in the education sector so that the government can formulate appropriate policies and allocate resources effectively. The availability of complete and detailed data also helps the government understand the condition of education in a country or region. This data includes the number of schools, students, graduation rates, student attendance rates, teaching quality, and more. With rich data, governments can identify existing trends, patterns, and problems in the education system (Grek et al., 2009;

Schafft, 2016; Titus, 2009). For example, through data analysis, the government can direct appropriate resources to improve the quality of education in the area.

In addition, up-to-date data is also essential in identifying disparities in access to education. By comparing data between urban and rural areas or different socio-economic groups, governments can identify existing disparities and take necessary actions to ensure that all children have equal access to quality education (Guo et al., 2020; Wu, 2011). For example, up-to-date data can help identify areas where education infrastructure is still lacking so that the government can allocate appropriate resources to improve it. Overall, data availability and updating is a crucial aspect of supporting education governance. Accurate and up-to-date data helps in policy planning, program evaluation, decisions, and stakeholder collaboration. By using data effectively, governments can improve the quality of education and create education systems that are more efficient, inclusive and responsive to societal needs.

Challenges faced in managing BOP at the local level

Management of Operational Operational Assistance (BOP) at the local level faces several challenges that need to be faced by the government and educational institutions. These challenges can affect the effectiveness and efficiency of using BOP funds and the quality of education provided.

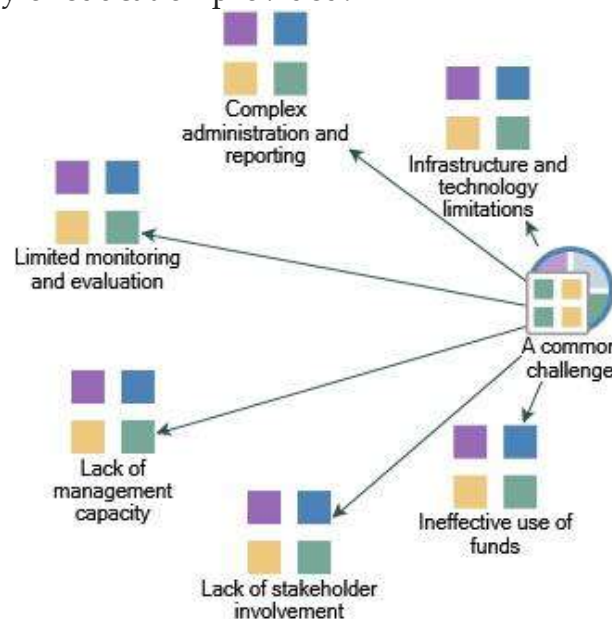


Figure 4. Common Challenges

Several challenges must be seriously addressed by the government, namely the ineffective use of funds, lack of stakeholder involvement, lack of management capacity, limited monitoring and evaluation, complex administration and reporting, and limited infrastructure and technology. The ineffective use of BOP funds at the local level resulted in these funds needing to be used efficiently and on target. This can be caused by a need for more understanding of financial management, transparency, or adequate monitoring and supervision (Darmawan, 2019; Rangongo et al., 2016; Wagithunu et al., 2014). Efforts are needed to improve the management of BOP funds more effectively, including training for stakeholders, increased

transparency, and a robust monitoring system. Apart from these problems, another challenge is the need for more involvement and active participation from relevant stakeholders, such as schools, teachers, parents, and the community (Louis & Gordon, 2009; Msila, 2012). When stakeholders are not involved in making decisions regarding the management of BOP funds, there can be a discrepancy between the real needs of schools and the allocated funds. It is essential to build a mechanism for participation and strong involvement of stakeholders in planning, implementing and monitoring the use of BOP funds.

Another challenge is the lack of an effective monitoring and evaluation system to oversee the use of BOP funds. A lack of solid monitoring mechanisms can lead to misuse or waste of funds and hinder identifying and resolving problems that arise (Mestry & Naidoo, 2009). It is essential to strengthen an adequate monitoring and evaluation system to ensure accountability and the effective use of BOP funds. Other challenges were also identified in BOP management, which involved complex administrative and reporting tasks. Complex administrative processes and the need for regular reporting can strain schools and education staff, especially at the local level, where resources may be limited. This challenge can be overcome by simplifying administrative processes, using information technology, and adequate support from related parties.

The BOP processes and stages that maximize the potential of digital technology are also a challenge in itself. In some areas, more infrastructure and technology can help manage BOP. Access to the internet, lack of adequate hardware and software, and lack of training in the use of technology can help efficiently manage BOP funds. It is essential to strengthen infrastructure and support adopting adequate technology at the local level to support better BOP management. Limited or unstable access to the internet can hinder schools from accessing data collection systems, reports or online platforms related to the management of BOP funds. This can hinder the process of reporting, monitoring, and coordination between related parties. To overcome this challenge, it is essential to improve the internet network infrastructure in the area, including through government programs or cooperation with the private sector (Farooq et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2013; Qian et al., 2019; Wu, 2011).

2. A policy Recommendation: Improving BOP Management

Improving the management of Operational Assistance (BOP) at the local level is a complex challenge and requires appropriate policies. To address this challenge, several policy recommendations can be implemented. First, there is a need for robust monitoring and evaluation to oversee the effective use of BOP funds. This can be done by strengthening the internal auditor team and establishing an independent agency responsible for monitoring BOP funds. Second, transparency and accountability need to be increased by providing clear information about the allocation and use of BOP funds. Active participation from stakeholders can also increase transparency and accountability (Akther & Xu, 2020; Stathopoulou et al., 2019). Third, management capacity at the local level needs to be increased through training and assistance related

to finance, budget planning and monitoring. Fourth, using information technology can increase the efficiency of BOP management, so local governments need to encourage schools to use adequate hardware and software.

In addition, strong collaboration and partnerships between local governments, educational institutions and relevant stakeholders will strengthen the overall management of BOP. The implementation of this policy needs to be adapted to local conditions and context. It involves the active participation of all relevant parties to achieve optimal results in BOP management at the local level. In addition to the policy recommendations previously mentioned, several additional aspects need to be considered in managing Operational Assistance (BOP) at the local level, namely the importance of strengthening the internal control system in schools. Schools must have an effective oversight mechanism in managing BOP funds, such as a clear division of tasks and responsibilities, strict verification of expenditures, and regular oversight of administrative processes. Strong oversight will help prevent the misuse of funds and ensure that BOP funds are used as intended.

Furthermore, it is essential to prioritize the use of BOP funds in efforts to improve the quality of education. BOP funds should support learning activities, curriculum development, teacher training, procurement of books and educational equipment, and improvement of school physical facilities. In managing BOP funds, the focus should be placed on improving the quality of education as a top priority. Finally, effective communication between the school, local government and related institutions is essential. Good cooperation and coordination will strengthen the management of BOP funds at the local level. Accurate and timely information must be conveyed to all relevant parties, including policy changes, fund use guidelines, and reporting. By taking these additional aspects into account, BOP management at the local level can better meet educational needs, maintain accountability, and improve the overall quality of education.

D. CONCLUSION

Education at the local level is critical to the development of society and the country. Supporting this idea requires a government response. Through the Implementation Operational Assistance (BOP) program, the government aims to support the management and financing of school operational activities. However, managing Operational Assistance (BOP) locally has complex challenges. However, BOP management can be significantly improved with the right policies, such as strengthening monitoring, increasing transparency, strengthening management capacity, encouraging the use of technology, and optimizing collaboration. It is also essential to strengthen the internal control system, involve the active participation of school committees and parents, focus on improving the quality of education, and maintain effective communication between related parties. With the implementation of the right policies, the management of BOP can improve the quality of education, efficiency in using funds, and overall accountability.

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