

# The Impacts of School Operational Assistance in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** *This study was aimed to identify the impacts of school operational assistance. The research is located in the province of East Java consisted of 19 regencies/cities. One elementary school was chosen from each region as the research subject. Such selection was conducted via purposive sampling. It was a descriptive study using the quantitative approach. The researchers collected the data through the questionnaires from the contributions of school operational assistance which was managed by the school principals. The data were analysed through descriptive quantitative method to determine the level of intensity or effectiveness of the school operational assistance. The research findings revealed that the effectiveness of school operational assistance can be seen in the aspects of the curriculum, teacher, students, infrastructure, and education financing.*

**Index Terms:** *Effectiveness; School Operational Assistance; Indonesia.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The school operational assistance program which was initiated in July 2005 has had a significant role in accelerating the achievement of the 9-year compulsory education program. It has positive effects on school performance (Abdullah, 2016). The implementation of School Operational Assistance Policy has increased positively and significantly teacher performance and student parent participation in improving student learning achievement, namely of as much as 27.81%, while 72.19% of improved student learning achievement is affected by factors besides such implementation of school operational assistance policy (Hadiyanto, 2015). Since 2009, the government has altered the purpose, approach, and orientation of the school operational assistance program which include an extension of access towards quality improvement. The school operational assistance program has experienced an increase in personnel cost and the relevant distribution mechanism change. Since 2012, the distribution of school operational assistance fund is performed through bank transfer to various provinces and transfer the fund to the school's online accounts. The school assistance program aimed to ease the social burden of educational financing to achieve a quality 9-year compulsory education. The school operational assistance program is expected to have a significant role in accelerating the

achievement of a minimum standard of service in schools.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The government expects the school operational assistance program to be able to give positive contributions to education in Indonesia, especially primary education. It disburses block grants for public elementary schools and public junior high school. Moreover, it frees poor students from all types of charges, both in public and private schools. It also eases the burden of school operational costs from students in private schools. School operational assistance also holds a significant role as a facility to improve access to quality primary education. It ensures that poor students do not have to leave schools because of financial issues, such as the inability to buy school uniforms/stationaries and other necessities. The school operational assistance assure that the elementary school graduates are capable of continuing to junior high schools. The school operational assistance requires transparent and accountable management. It does not prevent the students, parents, or guardians who are capable of giving voluntary donations to schools. Such voluntary contributions depend on parent's willingness on unspecified time and amount and do not discriminate those who do not give donations.

For low-income countries, such as Indonesia, foreign aids become one factor affecting the success of the school operational assistance. However, the aids are often delayed. (Turrent & Oketch, 2009) point out that the distribution of development assistance for 52 low-income countries is done selectively even though there is a universal international commitment for primary education. The aids are allocated only for well-performing countries, so it leads to the absence of community development in incompetent countries.

The effectiveness of school operational assistance closely relates to the social factors, human resources, and applicable decentralization policies. Reference (Finch, Goff, & Houck, 2016) stated that the unique combination of social, political and economic factors in a country results in unpredictable school financial reforms, especially when such factors are shifting from time to time. Reference (Mehrotra, 2012) recorded a rapid increase in the allocation of the central and state governments of India. They found that there is a difficulty in finding human resources since the global economic crisis causes a high fiscal deficit. However, one's right to obtain education cannot be denied or delayed. (Zhao, 2009) says that there

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was a shift from decentralization to re-centralization since the mid-1990s, especially since the 2000s in China. By the end of 2005, there was a gap declining between villages and cities, regional disparity, and inequality of budget expenses and total amount per student. Additionally, the difference between villages and cities declined faster than the regional disparity, and the inequality in primary school expenditure declined faster than that in junior high school expenditure.

This research was based on the practice of educational development in the last decade, especially since the enactment of regional autonomy in Indonesia. A series of educational development policies have been applied to remove the gap in educational distribution and to improve the efficiency of educational management. Nonetheless, several educational development policies still cannot solve the principal issues of the educational gap since there is different emphasis between the educational development assumption and the real condition of the society. The falsely selected variables of educational funding have worsened the quality of the educational process and outcome. Variable costs of education are commonly allocated for the implementation of education, teacher and staff remuneration/welfare, educational infrastructure provision, professional development, school management, learning tool provision, educational facility maintenance, and student supervision.

There is a high expectation from the society and government that the school operational system will lead to educational service and quality improvement. Based on such background, this study aimed to identify the impacts of school operational assistance in Indonesia.

III. METHODOLOGY/MATERIALS

The research located in the province of East Java, which includes 19 regencies/cities, from each of which one elementary school was selected as the research subject. The selection was performed by using purposive sampling. The selected schools were the best schools regarding school operational assistance management from each regency/city. The researcher collected the data through questionnaires and the answers to such questionnaires in the form of a list of impacts of school operational assistance managed by the school principals. The data were utilized to determine the level of intensity or effectiveness of school operational assistance.

This research utilized the survey method and was performed quantitatively to describe the attitudes, opinions, behavior, or special characteristics of the population (Soetjipto, 2015). The researcher collected the data through the means of open questionnaires and the answers to such questionnaires in the form of a list of impacts of school operational assistance which are confronted by the respondents. The researcher used the data to analyze the level of difficulties.

The selected technique for data analysis allowed the respondents to measure the intensity of the difficulties independently. The successfully collected data were analyzed via descriptive statistics. The researcher

categorized the respondent’s answers to such open questions into themes and transformed such responses into numbers. The researcher conducted the data analysis to identify general trends. The entire research processes were done descriptively, including data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and drawing conclusion. Subsequently, the results of the analysis were discussed according to the theories and logical reasoning to reach a conclusion eventually.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results of the research show that the impacts of school operational assistance are found in the components of the curriculum, teacher, student, infrastructure, and educational financing. The effects of school operational assistance on the component of the curriculum are reflected on the fulfillment of complete textbooks, well curriculum implementation, smooth learning activities, and improved educational quality. While the effect of school operational assistance on the teacher component is reflected on the improved teacher performance. The impacts of school operational assistance on the component of student can be seen from the declining number of dropped-out students, an improvement on poor student participation, improvement on student academic and non-academic achievement, increasing number of student works, declining gap among income levels, and well-managed extracurricular activities.

Meanwhile, the impacts of school operational assistance on educational infrastructures can be seen from the increasing number of the school library collection, better physical quality of school buildings, well-maintained school buildings, and adequate level of school sanitation. The impacts of school operational assistance also appear on the component of educational financing, such as free school fee, transparent fund appropriation, higher accountability, decreasing fund misappropriation, and financial transparency from all parties. The influences of the school operational assistance on the component of society are represented on the more public opportunity to obtain an education and the more conducive relationship among school communities. Table 1 shows the level of each impacted component.

Table 1 Research Findings on the Impacts of School Operational Assistance

Impacted Component	Indicator	Level of Indicator
Curriculum	The fulfillment of complete textbooks	5.26
	Well curriculum implementation	4.39
	Smooth learning activities	3.51
	Improved educational quality	3.51
Teacher	Improved teacher performance	16.67



Student	Declining number of dropped-out students	4.39
	Improvement on poor student participation	2.63
	Improvement in student academic achievement	2.63
	Improvement on student non-academic achievement	2.63
	Increasing number of student works	1.75
	Declining gap among income levels	1.75
	Well-managed extracurricular activities	0.88
Infrastructures	Increasing number of the school library collection	5.26
	Better physical quality of school buildings	4.39
	Well-maintained school buildings	3.51
	An adequate level of school sanitation	3.51
Financing	Free school fee	4.39
	Transparent fund appropriation	3.51
	Higher accountability	3.51
	Decreasing fund misappropriation	2.63
	Financial transparency from all parties	2.63
Society	More widespread opportunity to obtain an education	8.77
	More conducive relationship among school communities	7.89

The impacts of school operational assistance can be observed through several components by observing the school performance through aids management and substantial functions. The results of this study point out that the impacts of school operational assistance include the components of the curriculum, teacher, student, infrastructure, and educational financing. Based on the findings of the research done by (Scott-Clayton & Minaya, 2014), financial aids allocated for schools give strongly positive effects on the aid receivers of accessing the program, and can eventually expand the targets of subsidy.

The allocation of government expenditure becomes an adequate benchmark to measure the impacts of such expenditure upon the educational development, through the affecting variables. The false allocation of educational financing variable contributes to the declining quality of the educational process and outcome. The variable of educational financing is usually allocated to educational implementation, teacher and staff remuneration/welfare, the provision of educational infrastructure, professional development, school management, the provision of learning tools, educational facility maintenance, and student supervision. The variables affecting the quality of the

educational process and outcome vary. It can be seen from the cost allocated for each variable. Management manipulation can be done if the variable of educational cost contributes significantly to the quality of the educational process and outcome. To enhance the quality educational process and outcome, an additional charge for educational input can be allocated for the variables which significantly contribute to the quality of the educational process and outcome. (Chaudhary, 2009) stated that more education spending on enhancing teacher remuneration by decreasing the size of the classroom has an influence on school performance improvement.

Unfortunately, the allocation of educational funds is frequently affected by many other matters and interests which are not in line with educational purposes. (Heath, 1998) said that the government expenditure is under the increasing pressure to give good results with efficient costs. Therefore, markets are seen as the most efficient mechanism to allocate goods and service, even for public goods, such as education and health.

The findings of this research point out that the impacts of school operational assistance on the curriculum component are reflected on the completeness of textbooks, well-implemented curriculum, smooth learning activities, and the improved educational quality. Nowadays, the 2013 curriculum is applied in Indonesia with the expectations to produce productive, creative, and innovative students through effective teaching by strengthening student character, skill, and knowledge which are integrated to overcome difficult problems. There is a dilemma at the end of the effective period of 2013 curriculum. Such a dilemma initiates the occurrence of dual curricula (2006 curriculum and 2013 curriculum) in one school with one principal. The principal as the highest management of an educational unit has to manage two different curricula, one of which is made by the educational unit and the other one is made by the (central) government. (Motala, 2001) stated that positive changes in the policies and legislations are not likely to cause changes in schools.

The policies on a curriculum implementation require effective strategies to be efficient and effective in producing quality human resources. (Eisenkopf & Wohlschlegel, 2012) said that school-managed educational funds allocated to prepare a curriculum are not efficient. The schools are imprudent in developing high-quality students, even regarding internalization of external factors. On the other hand, schools with sufficient management prepare a more adaptive curriculum to educational funds.

The research findings also present that the school operational assistance still has a small effect on the teacher component, which can be found on the increasing teacher performance. In accord with the results of this research, teacher activities which include the planning to effectively and efficiently utilize the limited sources can realize the expectation to effectively and efficiently achieve the educational purposes. Also, the effort of professional control can be implemented

through teacher monitoring and supervision. Then the strategies for teacher implementation and empowerment should be started from planning, implementation, and monitoring. The research performed by (Hadiyanto, 2015) pointed out that the implementation of school operational assistance has a positive and significant impact on the development of teacher performance and parent participation in improving the student learning achievement with the percentage of 27.81%, while the other 72.19% is influenced by other factors besides the school operational assistance.

The allocation of educational funds for teachers contributes to the improvement of school performance, educational quality, and student achievement. (Chaudhary, 2009) stated that the increased allocation of educational funds to increase the teacher remuneration by decreasing the size of the classroom has an impact on the development of school performance. The school organizational context highly shapes the teaching process and teacher performance. It shows that the support of professional teachers in schools is essential to narrow down the educational gap between villages and cities (Wang, Wang, Li, & Li, 2017). (Balch & Springer, 2015) stated that the paid programs to improve teacher performance are associated with the increased student score in mathematics and reading during the early years of implementation.

The results of this study also reveal that the impacts of school operational assistance on students can be seen from the declining number of dropped-out students, the increasing poor student participation, improving student academic and non-academic achievements, the increasing number of students' works, the decreasing gap among the income groups, and the well-implemented extracurricular activities. (Ziderman, 2002) stated that the scheme of student support is effective to improve poor student access to education and to prevent school dropouts. (Martínez-Aguilar, Fuchs, Ortiz-Juarez, & Carmen, 2017) said that the fiscal policy distribution in Chile in 2013 indicated positive impacts of the fiscal intervention on poverty and the inequality of basic and secondary education. (Jeong, Lee, & Cho, 2017) found that fiscal decentralization gives a positive impact on student learning outcome. On the contrary, there is little evidence of the relationship between the politic decentralization, school resources, and student outcome.

Meanwhile, the influences of school operational assistance on educational infrastructure can be seen from the increasing number of the school library collection, improving physical condition of school buildings, well-maintain school buildings, and adequate school sanitation system. (Mappincara, 2012) pointed out that sufficient infrastructure is required to support the creative development of both the teachers and students. In Indonesia, there are various levels of educational infrastructure provision, utilization, and maintenance. Usually, schools, which are located in cities and become favorite schools, have a sufficient learning infrastructure. In the provision of school facilities, the schools with "active and responsive" principals who have a good relationship with the policymakers tend to

obtain more learning facilities than the schools without "active and responsive" principals who do not have a good relationship with the policymakers, even later schools do not receive any facilities at all.

The impacts of school operational assistance on educational financing can be seen from the free school tuition fee, the transparent fund allocation, higher accountability, decreasing fund misappropriation, and the occurrence of financial transparency from all parties. (Diputra & Indra, 2013) stated that school operational assistance should be managed more effectively based on the principle of transparency so that it can improve student learning achievement.

Lastly, the findings of the research show the impacts of school operational assistance on the society which can be seen from the more widespread opportunity to obtain education and the conducive relationship among the school communities. The results of research conducted by (Wijaya, 2016) showed that the implementation of free education policy supported by the school operational assistance program is already appropriate. (Chyi & Zhou, 2014) pointed out that the policies consist of the ease of educational cost, free textbooks, and cost for living subsidy initiated in 2003 have significantly positive effects on female student registrations in villages, but not for male student registrations. Such gender differential resulted in improving numbers of poor female student registrations. (Cohen-Zada, 2006) pointed out that parents decide to send their children to private religious schools to protect their children from external influences and therefore they can maintain their identities. (Karding, 2008) revealed that the burden of school operational costs is eased by the support of school operational assistance. Meanwhile, the learning facility quantity and quality are improved. Hence, it can reduce the number of school dropouts in the society

## V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the impacts of school operational assistance can be seen from the components of the curriculum, teacher, students, infrastructure, and educational financing. The impacts of school operational assistance on the component of the curriculum are reflected on the fulfillment of complete textbooks, well curriculum implementation, smooth learning activities, and improved educational quality. While the effect of school operational assistance on the teacher component is reflected on the improved teacher performance. The impacts of school operational assistance on the component of student can be seen from the declining number of dropped-out students, an improvement on poor student participation, an improvement on student academic and non-academic achievement, increasing number of student works, declining gap among income levels, and well-managed extracurricular activities. Whereas, the impacts of school operational assistance on educational infrastructures can be seen from the increasing number of the school library collection, better physical quality of



school buildings, well-maintained school buildings, and adequate level of school sanitation. The impacts of school operational assistance also appear on the component of educational financing, such as free school fee, transparent fund appropriation, higher accountability, decreasing fund misappropriation, and financial transparency from all parties. The influences of the school operational assistance on the component of society are represented on the more public opportunity to obtain an education and the more conducive relationship among school communities.

It is suggested that the schools can manage the educational funds to prepare an effective curriculum. Therefore, the school can develop low-quality students. Also, it is necessary to take into account the internalization of some external factors. The implementation strategy and teacher empowerment are essential to be initiated since the planning stage, implementation stage, and monitoring stage of the school operational assistance. The reinforcement of professional teachers in schools is necessary to narrow down the educational quality gap between the villages and cities. The scheme of student support is sufficient to improve poor student access to education and to prevent school dropouts.

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