

EVALUATION OF PUBLIC POLICY IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR: HOW CAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OPTIMISE THE USE OF EDUCATION FUNDS?

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Abstract

Public policy evaluation in the education sector plays an important role in ensuring the efficient and targeted use of education funds. This article discusses efforts to optimise state administration in managing the education budget through increased transparency and accountability, equitable distribution of funds, and collaboration between stakeholders. The study in this research uses the literature method. The results show that the implementation of a clear and accurate monitoring system, as well as the use of information technology, is crucial in minimising the potential for misuse of funds. In addition, the allocation of funds based on needs and appropriate priorities, especially in remote areas, will help achieve equality in education quality. Active participation from educational institutions and communities was also identified as an important factor to support the state administration in adjusting and refining policies, so that education funds can be maximally utilised to achieve national education goals.

Keywords: Evaluation, Public Policy, Education Sector, Public Administration, Optimisation of Use, Education Fund.

Introduction

Education is one of the determinants of the quality of human resources that has a significant impact on the social and economic development of a country. Through quality education, individuals not only acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to enter the world of work, but also develop the capacity for critical and innovative thinking. This is important to improve national productivity and competitiveness in an ever-changing global era (Sartika & Fransiska, 2024) ; (Irwan et al., 2024) ; (Juliani & Aslan, 2024) . In addition, education also plays a role in strengthening social awareness and increasing citizen participation in the development process, thereby creating a more inclusive and empowered society. Therefore, investment in education is a long-term investment that provides a sustainable positive impact on the progress of a nation. (Mariska & Aslan, 2024) ; (Hayani et al., 2024) ; (Arnadi et al., 2021) .

One of the countries that places education as a top priority in planning and managing the state budget is Indonesia. The large allocation of education funds budgeted annually shows the government's commitment to creating a qualified and competitive generation in the global arena (Tekel & Su, 2023) .

The high budget allocated to the education sector reflects the government's commitment to improving the quality of human resources as the main pillar of national development. A large budget allows for the improvement of education infrastructure, such as the construction and renovation of schools, the provision of better learning facilities, and the distribution of adequate books and learning tools (Choi & Chun, 2020) . In addition, a large allocation of funds also allows for the improvement of the quality of teaching staff through training programmes and improved teacher welfare, so that they can teach more effectively and inspiringly. With adequate financial support, scholarship programmes and education subsidies can be expanded to ensure access to higher education for all. Overall, the high budget for education is expected to produce graduates who are competent, innovative, and ready to face global challenges, while reducing socio-economic disparities in society (Eriksen & Katsaitis ., 2020)

However, the high allocation of funds is not always directly proportional to the improvement of the quality of education in the field. Various education indicators such as national exam results, school enrolment rates and dropout rates, often still show problems that need to be addressed. This is where the important role of public policy evaluation in the education sector becomes very relevant. This evaluation aims to ensure that every dollar allocated is actually used optimally and on target (Warner, 2024) .

One of the central issues often highlighted is the mismatch between budget planning and implementation in the field. There are many cases where education funds are unevenly distributed or disbursed late, which in turn hampers the education process itself. In addition, bureaucratic red tape and lack of transparency often hamper the efficient use of education funds (Ortynsky et al., 2021) .

In this context, public administration has a very important role. Good and effective administration can support more transparent and accountable management of education funds. Optimising the use of education funds through appropriate public policy mechanisms needs to be the main focus so that the goal of improving the quality of education can be achieved.

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a thorough evaluation of public policies in the education sector to identify weaknesses and find effective solutions. This evaluation should not only cover financial and administrative aspects but also consider sustainability and how the policy contributes to the achievement of national education goals.

Research Methods

The study in this research uses the literature method. The literature research method is a research approach that involves collecting, analysing, and interpreting data from various published written sources, such as books, journals, scientific articles, research reports, and other documents. This method is used to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular topic by reviewing and synthesising existing information, so as to build a strong theoretical framework or conceptual foundation (JUNAIDI, 2021) ; (Abdussamad, 2022) . Literature research usually involves steps such as identification of relevant sources,

evaluation of the quality and credibility of sources, and organisation of key findings in a systematic and critical form. This method is particularly useful for identifying gaps in existing knowledge, strengthening arguments, and providing new insights that can form the basis for further research or practical implementation in the field (Wekke ., 2020)

Results and Discussion

Public Policy in the Use of Education Funds

Public policies on the use of education funds play a very important role in ensuring that available resources are used effectively and efficiently to improve the quality of education. One of the key elements of this policy is transparent and accountable budget planning, which involves allocating funds based on clear needs and established priorities. This process involves various stakeholders, including central and local governments, education institutions and communities, to ensure that funds are channeled towards programmes and activities that have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning (Chaturvedi et al., 2022) .

In addition, public policy should also focus on monitoring and evaluating the use of education funds. Strict and systematic supervision is needed to prevent any irregularities or misuse of funds. The government can establish an independent oversight body tasked with monitoring expenditure and results achieved, as well as conducting regular audits to ensure compliance with applicable regulations. Continuous evaluation is also important to assess the effectiveness of funded programmes, so that improvements and policy adjustments can be made when necessary to achieve the desired educational goals (Mullen, 2021) .

Public policies should also include support for capacity building, both for education institutions and teaching staff. Investments in teacher training and professional development, school management, and strengthening education management are critical aspects that must be considered. By improving these capacities, it is expected that the use of education funds can be optimised, and the quality of education provided can be significantly improved (Sajida & Kusumasari, 2023) . In addition, policies should encourage innovation and the use of technology in the education process, so that adaptation to changing times can be done more quickly and efficiently (Fayed, 2022) .

Finally, community participation and transparency of information should be key principles in education fund utilisation policies. The public, including parents and students, should be involved and provided with clear information on the allocation and use of funds. This can increase a sense of shared responsibility and build public trust in the education system (Vitálišová et al., 2024) . Information transparency also helps the public to monitor and provide constructive feedback on education policies and programme implementation, creating a more accountable and sustainable education environment.

Thus, public policies on the use of education funds should be designed with a focus on transparency, accountability and community participation to ensure that the available funds are used effectively and efficiently. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation are needed

to prevent misuse and to assess the effectiveness of education programmes. In addition, improving the capacity of education institutions and teaching staff and encouraging innovation are important steps to maximise the results of the use of funds. With the implementation of inclusive and quality-oriented policies, the education system can have a significant impact in creating quality human resources.

Challenges in Optimising the Use of Education Funds

Optimising the use of education funding faces a variety of complex challenges that require attention and careful handling. One of the main challenges is the lack of transparency and accountability in the allocation and expenditure of funds. In some areas, the education financial management system lacks transparency, creating the risk of misuse and corruption. Without strict oversight and effective audit mechanisms, funds that should be used to improve the quality of education often do not reach their intended destination (Tahirović & Kuka, 2024).

The second challenge is the inequitable distribution of education funding from one region to another. Geographical and economic differences often lead to disproportionate allocation of funds, with remote or disadvantaged areas receiving less funding than urban areas. This inequity in distribution can exacerbate education disparities and hamper efforts to improve the quality of education in areas of greatest need (Veiga, 2022).

Another challenge relates to the financial and human resource management capacity of educational institutions. Many schools, especially in remote and less developed areas, lack skilled personnel capable of managing education funds properly. This can lead to ineffective allocation of funds and poor implementation of planned programmes. Training and professional development for financial managers in schools is essential to address this issue and ensure more optimal use of funds (Lema, 2021).

The fourth challenge faced is the lack of community participation in the monitoring and decision-making processes related to the use of education funds. Low community participation is often caused by a lack of information transparency and education about their rights and responsibilities in overseeing the use of education funds. As a result, social control over fund management is weak and communities often do not have enough information to demand accountability from those responsible (Demirkasımoğlu & Demir, 2023).

Finally, the low adaptation of technology in the education system is an equally important challenge. In today's digital era, the use of technology can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of education funds. However, many educational institutions have not fully utilised technology in the process of managing education funds and administration (Kurniawan et al., 2020). This obstacle is often caused by the lack of technology infrastructure and the ability of educators and school managers to use the technology. Efforts to improve IT infrastructure and training to improve digital literacy are needed to overcome this challenge (Bedi et al., 2021).

By understanding and addressing these challenges, optimising the use of education funds can be done more effectively, so that efforts to improve the quality of education can produce maximum and equitable results throughout the region.

Strategies that can be applied to improve the efficiency of education fund utilisation

Improving the efficient use of education funds requires an integrated and comprehensive strategy. One of the key steps that can be implemented is to strengthen transparency and accountability in fund management. This can be done through the implementation of a rigorous and regular audit system, as well as the implementation of publicly available financial reports. A strong audit system enables early detection of misuse of funds, while transparent financial reports facilitate oversight by various parties, including the public and oversight institutions (Banerjee, 2022).

The second strategy is to ensure equitable allocation of education funds, especially for disadvantaged and remote areas. The government can use education data and indicators to identify areas that need more attention and allocate funds fairly and proportionally. In addition, additional funds can be allocated for special programmes aimed at improving the quality of education in areas that have been left behind, such as through improving school facilities, providing scholarships and teacher training programmes (Tubulingane & Sikopo., 2023)

On the other hand, improving the financial management capacity and human resource capability of educational institutions is also crucial. School managers and administrative personnel should be given adequate training and mentoring on financial management so that they are better able to plan, manage and control the use of funds. Engaging financial experts or consultants can also help ensure that funds are used efficiently and in line with education priorities (Rajagopal & Mahajan, 2023).

Active community participation in monitoring the use of education funds is also very important. Governments and education institutions must provide clear and open communication channels so that the community can provide input, exercise control and participate in decision-making. Strengthening the role of school committees and involving various elements of the community can create a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the successful use of education funds (Christopher & James, 2020).

Technology integration in education fund management is an important strategy that should not be overlooked. The implementation of an information technology-based financial management system can help facilitate financial recording, control and reporting more effectively and efficiently. In addition, the use of technology can also be optimised in the teaching and learning process, which in turn can improve the quality of education. Investments in technology infrastructure as well as training for educators and school administrators in the use of these technologies are needed to ensure this strategy works (Cotterill et al., 2023).

By implementing these strategies, the efficiency of using education funds can be improved, so that the allocation of funds can really have a positive impact on the quality of education, equal access and improved quality of learning in all regions.

Conclusion

Public policy evaluation in the education sector is an important step to ensure that the allocation and utilisation of education funds are effective and efficient. One of the main conclusions of this policy evaluation is the need for increased transparency and accountability in the administration of education finance. State administration must be able to provide a clear and accurate monitoring system, including through the application of adequate information technology. Thus, the potential for budget misuse can be minimised and education funds can be fully directed towards achieving the stated educational goals.

Apart from transparency, public policy evaluation also highlights the importance of equitable distribution of education funds to achieve equality in the quality of education in various regions, including in remote and underdeveloped areas. The state administration must ensure that the allocation of funds is based on appropriate needs and priorities, so that all children get the same good learning opportunities, without being constrained by limited funds in their area. Responsive policy implementation based on accurate data is a strategy that needs to be improved to optimise the use of education funds.

Finally, collaboration between the state administration, educational institutions and the community is key to optimising the use of education funds. Active participation from all stakeholders will ensure that policies and programmes can be evaluated on an ongoing basis, and needs and problems can be addressed more quickly. Thus, the state administration can be more adaptive in adjusting and improving policies, so that education funds can provide maximum benefits for the development of the national education system.

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