

## Free Education for Gorontalo People-Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This research discussed about the implementation of free education policy for people in Gorontalo Province. Main problem in this research as follow: legal basis; executor organization; operational budget fund distribution/disbursement of fund technique and accountability report and its evaluation. This research approach method was descriptive qualitative research type. The research result showed that free education policy by government of Gorontalo Province is very ideal and noble, however in its implementation there was obstacle in coordination aspect of the executives. There was also no assertive regulation yet. The created executor organization was not represent professional attitude and built more in indirect coordinative relationship with the school. The established operational budget was quite large and burdening the regional government budget. However, if it is seen from its distribution then it is very helpful for the people. Financial accountability and evaluation are very important aspect to see its well-regulated administration, success and failure of a policy.

**Key words:** Free education, implementation, public policy, government, Gorontalo

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### INTRODUCTION

Education policy in Indonesia has been formulated in preamble of UUD 1945 (The 1945 Constitution of Indonesian Republic) which is to develop nation's intellectual life. It is clearer in Act No. 20 Year of 2003 about National Education System that national education aims to develop ability and create character and dignified nation civilization in order to develop nation's intellectual life. It shows that national education is government obligation to the people. However in actual it can't be implemented yet as people expectation (Ajisafe *et al.*, 2015; Boyer and Hamil, 2008). Education service policy should be implemented as the constitution, because basically education is not the right for certain group but it must be given to all people equitably and well distributed from the public policy (Sooter, 2013).

Public policy has been formulated as idea that presented writtenly and ratification was conducted by formal authority as guide or activity guidance and as result from a policy management process (Donovan and Jackson, 1991; Imurana *et al.*, 2014). In the implementation, policy is not only related to the outline of political decisions through bureaucracy but it is more than that, it is related to complexity, who's decision and gaining what from a policy (Gilens and Page, 2014). For the effective implementation of public policy a number of actions have been created such as free education for all people. Formulation and implementation of a policy are important function from a government.

Therefore, enough ability and understanding from policy maker to the creating process (Rosenberg and Hickie, 2013) become very important part for the realization of fast, accurate, clear public policy and enough budget allocation. Free education policy is one of Indonesian government policy to obligate Indonesian children to get learning start from Elementary School level to Junior High School level or it is mostly called as 9 Years Learning Obligation (Government Regulation No. 47 Year of 2008).

The implementation of free education in Gorontalo Province as what been mentioned in Regional Regulation No. 7 Year of 2012, gives opportunity for people to send their children to the school in Senior High School or same level free. This policy is giving school incentive fund to each Senior High School or Vocational High School students for Rp. 1,200,000 in each semester. However in actual, free education still have many problems such as committee activity levy that burdened to the student's parent, student extracurricular activity payment and school operational cost that imbalance with education implementation (Supriyatno, 2010). It results in many people have no ability yet to send their children to the school until Senior High School level because the implementation of this free education policy is not well-distributed by school committee. It needs transparency in the implementation of this policy from government in this case is Regent and Mayor, such as legal basis, executor organization, budget/operational fund incentive, fund distribution and disbursement also accountability report in order to make well implementation in the school.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Research approach:** This research used qualitative and descriptive approach method (Baxter and Jack, 2008). The research procedure was directed to the setting and individu holistically to result descriptive data writtenly or orally from the observed people or behavior.

**Research focus:** This research was focused on:

- Legal basis of free education policy
- Executor organization
- Operational budget
- Fund distribution/disbursement
- Accountability and evaluation

**Data analysis method:** Data analysis in this research was conducted since the beginning of data collection activity until theme finding. In analyzing data, this research referred to interactive model (Miles and Huberman, 1984) which consists of three analysis components, “data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing”.

**Data validity:** Data validity is credibility or confidence level of research result (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) in qualitative research, a reality is complex, dynamic, thus there is no consistent and repeated part as earlier. To obtain qualified research result then it is really needed a data validity. Data validity level will be determined by four factors as follow: credibility level, transferability, dependability and conformability.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Legal basis:** In general, the establishment of a policy cannot be separated from legal basis such what’s been mentioned in Fig. 1 which is basis to formulate a policy and its well-regulated to the implementation. The estuary from national education policy constitutionally regulated in 1945 Constitution of Indonesian Republic Article 31 and 6 and explained in Act No. 20 Year of 2003 about National Education system and more specific in Act No. 32 Year of 2004 about Regional Government in which case in education field has been decentralized to the regional area. The effort to improve education quality is a cultural process involving all society components, either in school or supporting environment. Government Regulation No. 19 Year of 2005 gives legal frame and vision about education standard and quality which need clear strategic steps to realize it (Anonymous, 2003, 2004, 1945). To improve education quality which meets national standard, since 2012 the Government of Gorontalo Province has

established superior program as asset which heavily determines the decrease or progress of human resource in certain area. In order to support realization of regional superior program about the development of human resource and as responsibility of regional government to implement free education, it has been formulated with Regional Regulation No. 7 Year of 2012 about the implementation of education for all people. However, before the establishment this Regional Regulation, the legal basis referred to Gorontalo Governor Regulation No. 09a Year of 2012 about the implementation of free education program. This Governor Regulation functioned as legal basis when this free education policy implemented for the first time. After that, technically it is outlined through policy of Regional Work Unit which is Department of Education Youth and Sports of Gorontalo Province in decree.

Education is very fundamental thing and strategic effort to develop human resource. Therefore, the improvement of education quality heavily determines the decrease or progress of an area. However in its implementation, free education quality still faces obstacle and friction from government coordination side. It is caused by no assertive regulation in giving instructive task in managing the policy. In his theory (Thomas, 1992) stated that public policy has many choices and in taking a policy then it must be implemented in all government levels, thus responsibility of policy makers will be different in every level as with the authority.

**Executor organization:** To ease coordination in the implementation of free education policy to district/city until the level of education unit in this case is school, then the government of Gorontalo Province has created executor organization with the organization formation as follow.

That management team in implementing the task has responsibility to convey direct report to Governor through regional secretary of Gorontalo Province. The team led by program executor unit which selected directly by Governor by involving province Department of Education Youth and Sports as executor unit of field task. Province Education Department has central role in running this policy which is conducting reporting verification, conducting monitoring and reporting, publication to City and District Education Department and also follow up the report related to this policy.

In this case, province Education Department will cooperate with City and District Education Department to coordinate with all schools as end executor in realizing regional government program which is free education for senior high school and the same level. This structured accountability is identical with theory of (Randall, 1985) which based on three aspects:



Fig. 1: Legal Basis of free education implementation in gorontalo

- Compliance level to the upper bureaucracy or bureaucracy level as what been ruled in the Act
- Smooth routine and no obstacle
- The wanted implementation and effect (benefit) from all programs in order to make it well-directed

Meanwhile, according to Goggin *et al.* (1990), policy implementation process as information or message transfer effort from higher institution to the lower institution is assessed its success based on variables as follow:

- Encouragement and compulsion in federal level
- Federal/state capacity
- Encouragement and compulsion in federal to regional level

Encouragement and compulsion variable in federal level is determined by legitimation and credibility which is the more valid policy that established by federal government in regional side the larger credibility obtained, vice versa.

**School operational budget:** School operational budget such what's been mentioned in Table 1 which planned by government of Gorontalo Province in the form of grant that will be distributed to the school through grant agreement by governor.

The establishment of free education assistance budget still not reaches all schools both public and private in Gorontalo province. For budget in Gorontalo City with 17 schools, approximately 9,040 students are not getting the assistance yet until 2012. With the number of 23 schools in Gorontalo City and which obtaining assistance only 6 schools, then 17 other Senior High Schools/same level in Gorontalo City are not getting this program assistance. With calculation for 7 Senior High Schools 4,200 students are not getting the assistance yet with total budget for Rp 4,200,000,000 whereas for 10 other Vocational High School, 4,840 students are not getting the

Table 1: The receiver of free education implementation assistance for senior high school/same level according District/City 2014

| Districts                | School | Student | Budget (Rp.)   |
|--------------------------|--------|---------|----------------|
| Gorontalo city           | 6      | 1,234   | 988,400,000    |
| Gorontalo district       | 37     | 12,201  | 12,846,400,000 |
| Boalemo district         | 18     | 5,051   | 5.417,000,000  |
| Pohuwato district        | 21     | 5,592   | 5.493,200,000  |
| Bone Bolango district    | 16     | 4,785   | 5.172,400,000  |
| Gorontalo utara district | 15     | 3,980   | 4.106,400,000  |
| Nominal                  | 113    | 32,843  | 34,106,400,000 |

fund assistance from government yet with total budget Rp 5,808,000,000. This unequal distribution of budget giving in Gorontalo City is very regrettable by people; it is due to conflict of public officer which is between Governor of Rusli Habibi with Mayor of Gorontalo Adhan Damba, where the mayor rejected this program due to political reason that actually disadvantage people interest. While, 6 schools as what's been mentioned above are education unit that supervised directly by Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Budget establishment processes through long steps and full of dynamic also dominantly more emphasizes on political dimension. In this budget establishment, political condition played important role as with the theory of (Wildavsky and Caiden, 2003) which stated that budgeting meaning has opened new thing and budget allocating in many ways and emphasizes on its political dimension. Discussion of free education policy will have long process and conflict when it is discussed in Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) of Gorontalo province to obtain result institutionally. It is expected that regional government can keep implementing this free education policy from year to year with well arranged system.

**Budget distribution and disbursement:** To ease budget distribution of free education implementation for the schools, it must follow preparation steps that been formulated as follow: every school/Islamic school must submit a proposal that authenticated by management team of District/City by enclosing:

- School Budget Activity Plan (RKAS-Rencana Kegiatan Anggaran Sekolah) that must be signed by School/Islamic School Principal and Committee and special for private school/Islamic school it must be added by Foundation Chief signature
- School Budget Activity Plan must be completed by fund utilization plan in detail which made annually and every semester
- Submission proposal must be made in 3 copies and yellow cover which then will be sent to district management team
- Utilization realization accountability and each fund source
- Every expense transaction must be supported by validated receipt
- The report must fulfill elements as follow: every activity must be made in activity result report, fund utilization report, general treasury book, treasury assistance book, bank assistance book, tax assistance book with the proofs and all financial data files

After that, management team of District/City will propose and recommend school/Islamic school as receiver candidate of free education fund to province management team. The next step is province management conducts proposal assessment that submitted by school/Islamic school. Management team of District/City and province together with bank side verify bank account number all schools/Islamic schools that still active to distribute the funds. After all requirements are fulfilled then Chief of Department of Education Youth and Sports of Gorontalo Province establishes the school/Islamic school as fund receiver of free education program.

The step and procedure also requirement of school operational budget distribution and disbursement are relevant with theory of (Quade, 1982) stated that implementation process of an ideal policy will involve interaction and reaction from implementer organization, target group and followed by bargaining or transaction. From the transaction, it is obtained feedback by policy maker which can be used as input in the next policy formulation. Implementation process of an ideal free education policy in Gorontalo Province will involve interaction and reaction from implementer organization and society. The interaction and transaction are requirement and procedure of budget distribution and disbursement of target group in this case is school as actual executor.

**Financial accountability and evaluation:** In order to discipline or make well-regulated financial management, the school must conduct receiving record, expense and financial statement such what's been mentioned in Fig. 2. This record is conducted in order to fulfill administration accountability. The defined accountability in the component scope of school/Islamic school operational cost management including:

- Financial management accountability for every school/Islamic school
- Must make book keeping

The accountability report delivered to Department of Education Youth and Sports of Gorontalo Province, at least on the first week of July for first semester and fourth week of December for second semester. For clearer steps then it can be seen as follow.

The accountability report is part of policy evaluation over program realization and funds that realized in the implementation through plan, implementation, accountability and evaluation as what's been mentioned by Rossi and Freeman (1993) that evaluation used to study the obtained result in a program, its implementation, controlling people attitude who responsible in the implementation. Besides that, evaluation is not only functioned to consider the use of a running program but also to see new program and initiative, management effectiveness, program administration and also make accountability to the parties that support the program including to government of Gorontalo Province. Implementation, accountability and evaluation activity of policy maker which is Regional Government of Gorontalo Province will know the extent of formulated policy can run well and can be accepted by people. Policy evaluation heavily related to policy formulation including free education policy which is it must go through number of step such as final step, evaluation and monitoring. This policy is very possible to be revised or terminated if it is proven to be a problem.

Administratively, financial accountability basically shows to the school as implementer. If the report from the lower part is good, completed with legal proofs, then government of Gorontalo Province will not have obstacle in the financial accountability. It may be able to be stated as financial accountability has been fulfilled but moral accountability is still difficult to be implemented. Therefore, there are still any other levies and it is occurred to almost all schools in District/City. It is caused by quite high school operational cost while this free education fund is very limited. However, in the other side, this policy is lighting school and parent burden, although the nominal is small. Thus, this policy service need to be

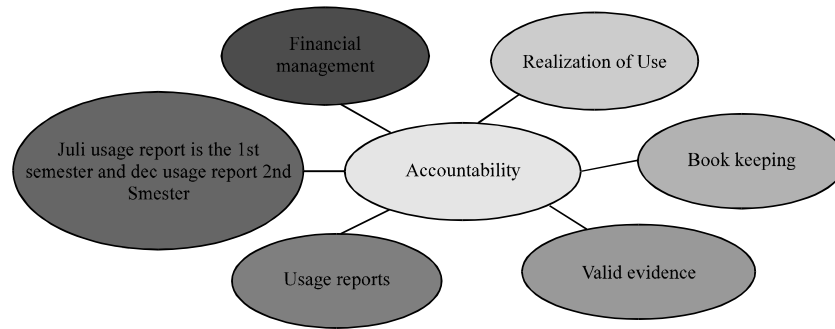


Fig. 2: Financial and reporting accountability flow

reviewed for evaluation importance, both for Regional Government and people interest also for service system improvement of free education policy.

Free education policy program is formulated by government of Gorontalo Province which purposes to manage qualified, reachable and fair education service system. In its implementation, it needs strong legal basis in order to make the implementation runs as with the rule and order. Such what's been mentioned by Ugoh and Ukpere (2009) research result that was conducted in Nigeria stated that a taken policy must have clear regulation and legal basis. Once a program made by government then budget process will be arranged and involve many organization unit and also all executive and legislative unit before it becomes a government policy. In order to avoid the deviation and legal problem then it needs clear regulation as legal basis in its implementation.

The success of free education policy implementation is heavily determined by actual policy implementation. With abundant budget every year then it needs maximal role from each related element, it is explained by Tummers *et al.* (2012) in the research which explained that it needs professional attitude from each parties in order to success public policy implementation. Every implementer and executor in the field must be able to run their role objectively, started from executive level which is governor and mayor and also regent, management team that been selected and final executor in the field which is the school. Thus, this program can run well and no more levies in the school.

There is no concept that can characterize correctly about disbursement and budgeting process that conducted by government of Gorontalo Province. This distribution and budgeting process simultaneously are very strong and weak. Such what's been mentioned in previous discussion by Ugoh and Ukpere (2009) in their research which explained there was problem in the implementation of budgeting and disbursement

process in Nigeria such as corruption, management administration error, ability of executors and interference from government. It is based on executor institution and its practice very structured, however most of time it is not run as what's been expected. It is complex which reflecting profit and expense type, consistency among institutions and many participants interacted each other in the policy. The politic is polarized but investigation and balance encourage to radicalism and affect policies to the policy center. In short term, budgeting process is opposite process with actual implementation.

Every policy maker needs to make accountability both administratively, implementation process and its evaluation. In the implementation, the policy will not always run smoothly or free from obstacle. The implementation of this free education service still has resistance, especially from actors of policy determinant in District/City. The resistance occurred by inharmonious relationship which implied to a policy, such what's been mentioned by Ayuso and Argundona (2007a, b) and Smith (2011), an organization runs well because there is responsibility from all stakeholders. Besides that Zainal (2006) stated that policy evaluation has manysteps such as process evaluation and final evaluation. Final evaluation can't be conducted without process evaluation. Process evaluation is not only limited to the implementation or activity monitoring. However, infinal evaluation, what's been conducted must be accounted, moreover when it is related to the financial. Financial accountability is very strategic administrative area as policy source and well implementation of free education policy.

## CONCLUSION

Free education policy by government of Gorontalo Province is very ideal and noble but in its implementation there was obstacle and friction from coordination side, no clear regulation in giving task to each stakeholder. The created executor organization not worked professionally

and showed arrogant attitude and needs improvement in the management of executor organization. Operational budget allocating that been established by government of Gorontalo Province seen totally was very large and burdened regional government budget. If it is seen from the distribution in each student/semester/school then the nominal is small, however it is very helpful for student's parent. Financial accountability and evaluation are very important aspect to see well-regulated administration, success or failure of a policy. However, in the other side, moral accountability is difficult to be conducted because there is still many levies.

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