



From Limitations to Innovation: Strategies to Improve Education Management in Aceh Besar

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ABSTRACT

The management of the budget and education financing in Aceh Besar Regency during the period 2020 to October 2023 shows interesting results to be analysed. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of education budget management and develop improvement strategies based on SWOT analysis. The results of the analysis show that the effectiveness of budget management is in the category of less effective, with an average score of 75.96%. This is due to the discrepancy between planning and budget realization, as well as the lack of recording in 2023. On the other hand, efficiency measurement shows an efficient status with an average score of 60.05%, indicating that the utilization of resources in education is quite optimal even though the data is not fully updated. Although the existing education system is already considered optimal, the results of the SWOT analysis show the potential for development through collaboration with the private sector and non-governmental institutions. The proposed strategy is to increase cooperation and innovation in funding and develop a more relevant curriculum. The study concludes that although the effectiveness of budget management is challenging, efficiency shows good potential for improvement of the education system. Therefore, concrete steps are needed to improve recording and reporting to achieve national education goals more effectively and efficiently in the future.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the key to the progress of a nation, and in Indonesia, this sector plays a vital role in the development of quality human resources. However, the quality of education in Indonesia still faces many complex challenges, including gaps in access, teaching quality, and curriculum relevance Damayanti (2023) (Safarah & Wibowo, 2018) (Sahira, 2023). Quality education contributes not only to the individual but also to sustainable economic and social development. The term "sport for all" reflects one of the efforts to increase public awareness and involvement in inclusive education (Wahyudi, 2022). Therefore, it is important to explore the different policy models that exist.

In the context of education reform, comparisons with other countries' education systems, such as Singapore, show that learning approaches, evaluation systems, and technology integration in education play an important role in the quality of learning outcomes (Sa'adah, 2020). For example, the success of education in Singapore can be seen from the implementation of more effective and innovative learning practices, which are exemplary by relevant parties in Indonesia (Daniati et al., 2024; Sa'adah, 2020). Research that analyses these aspects of learning can provide critical insights to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the education system in these two different countries.

Education policy in Indonesia has also undergone many changes, both in the pre-independence period and the Reform era. The development of an appropriate and contextual curriculum is very important to ensure that the education provided is relevant to the needs of society and the challenges of today (Hailitik, 2024). Through policies such as the Zoning Program, the government seeks to equalize the quality of education in various regions, including in remote areas (Safarah & Wibowo, 2018). However, the implementation of these programs often faces obstacles on the ground, such as a lack of infrastructure, funding, and sustainable community participation in education (Sahira, 2023).

These challenges indicate education quality should not be understood merely as a pedagogical issue, but also as a local governance issue. Local governments are responsible for formulating context-specific education policies, ensuring equitable access, managing education resources, and involving stakeholders in education improvement. Taufiq & Nashihah (2023), emphasize that the role of government in improving education quality includes policy formulation, access provision, and participatory governance. Therefore, the case of Aceh Besar is relevant because the effectiveness of education management depends not only on curriculum implementation, but also on the ability of local government to align budget planning, institutional capacity, infrastructure distribution, and stakeholder participation.

Aceh Besar Regency, as one of the regions that has a strategic role in the development of human resources in Aceh Province, has shown commitment to improving its education system. The implementation of education in Aceh Besar Regency was initially based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 28 of 2016 concerning the System for

Improving the Quality of Primary and Secondary Education Services jo. Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture, Research and Technology Number 12 of 2022, where education units must carry out improvement of education quality services. Nowadays, the implementation of education in Aceh Besar Regency refers to Qanun Number 1 of 2022 concerning the Integrated Education System in Aceh Besar. To achieve a quality culture in the education unit, the education unit will be prepared and guided by the Education Office and the Education Quality Assurance Centre (BPMP). Referring to the National Education Standards (SNP) in this era, as regulated through Government Regulation (PP) of the Republic of Indonesia, Number 57 of 2021, provides a limit that the National Education Standards are the minimum criteria for the education system in all jurisdictions of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

To realize the quality of education as per the above standards, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched the Independent Learning Program, where several strategic programs in the field of education at the level of education implementation, namely: (1) Driving School Program, (2) Data-Based Planning, and (3) Implementation of the Independent Curriculum. In Aceh Besar Regency, APK (Gross Participation Rate) in 2018-2021 reached 35% to 38% for Early Childhood Education Units with an increasing trend, 67% to 72% for elementary education units with a decreasing trend, 65% to 66% for junior high school education units with a stagnant trend, and 65% to 72% for SM (Secondary School) education units with an increasing trend. Meanwhile, APM (Pure Participation Rate) shows that in 2018-2021 there was no data available for Early Childhood Education Units, 60% to 67% for elementary education units with a decreasing trend, 48% to 54% for junior high school education units with a stagnant trend, and 44% to 53% for SM (Secondary School) education units with a downward trend. The potential for basic services in Aceh Besar Regency turns out to be a great strength, where Aceh Besar Regency is included in the list of the 10 best-performing districts related to the implementation of SPM; there are only three districts in Sumatra that are included in the national best list, and all three are from Aceh, namely Aceh Besar, Aceh Tamiang, and Aceh Jaya. In line with the above, in the 2023 fiscal year, it is necessary to conduct a study on Optimizing the Implementation of the Education System in Aceh Besar Regency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The government's policy in improving the quality of human resources is through improving the quality of education. In line with the changes in the current educational environment and the business world, professionalism is needed in all fields, including the world of education. National development in the field of education is an effort to educate the nation and improve the quality of Indonesian people in realizing an advanced, fair, and prosperous society. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that the National Education System is all interrelated educational components in an integrated manner to achieve the goals of national education, namely

developing abilities and improving the quality of life and dignity of Indonesian people. Furthermore, in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, it is mandated that education is a basic service affair that must be carried out by the Regional Government. To carry out this educational affair, the annex to the law states the division of authority between the Central Government, Provincial Regional Governments, and Regency/City Regional Governments.

Education is a field that not only pays attention to the aspect of knowledge, but also the development of quality human resources (HR). In this context, a lot of research has been conducted to evaluate and understand the dynamics of education both in Indonesia and in other countries, focusing on different policies and practices. One of the countries that is often used as a comparison is Singapore, where its education system is known to be effective and innovative.

Daniati et al. (Daniati et al., 2024) stated that the success of the education system in Singapore lies not only in innovative learning approaches, but also in structured evaluation and high-quality educators. This research shows that the consistency of government in education policy also plays a vital role. In contrast, in Indonesia, the education system still faces many challenges, including gaps in the quality of education and variations in learning approaches, which are obstacles to achieving national education goals (Daniati et al., 2024; Sa'adah, 2020).

Furthermore, competency development has been discussed by Ananda and Rizqi (Ananda & Rizqi, 2023), who explain that education and training should be planned to improve human resource capabilities. This is in line with recommendations to focus on training that suits job needs, and improve the technical, theoretical, conceptual, and moral capacity of employees in the educational environment (Ananda & Rizqi, 2023; Rusandi et al., 2023). This comprehensive development is expected to prepare educators to be better prepared to face the challenges of the ever-changing world of education.

In the context of educational leadership, Destiana (Destiana, 2023; shows that adaptive and collaborative leadership must be applied to encourage the development of a culture of quality in the public sector. The government and educational institutions must take responsive leadership to improve the quality of education in Indonesia, as well as improve the motivation and quality of teaching staff (Destiana, 2023; Pahira & Rinaldy, 2023). This concept is in line with the view that inspirational leaders can create a positive trajectory for the quality of education.

The Government of Indonesia establishes the National Education Standards (SNP) through Government Regulation Number 57 of 2021. The SNP includes eight standards, namely graduate competency standards, content, processes, assessments, educators and education personnel, facilities and infrastructure, management, and financing (Government Regulation No. 57 of 2021, Article 4). SNP is used as the main reference in curriculum development and education implementation throughout Indonesia.

Data-based planning is particularly important in education financing because budget allocation must be linked to measurable needs, service gaps, and expected outcomes. Inadequate data recording can weaken the reliability of performance assessment and obscure whether low budget realization is caused by implementation delays, administrative bottlenecks, or actual program underperformance. Therefore, education budget analysis should be connected to institutional data governance and performance accountability, not treated only as a financial calculation.

With the enactment of Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, education has become a mandatory affair that must be organized by local governments as part of basic public services. The implementation of education at the district/city level includes early childhood education (PAUD), basic education, and non-formal education (Law No. 23 of 2014, Attachment to the Division of Government Affairs).

In decentralized education governance, district governments are expected to translate national education standards into operational policies, budget priorities, and measurable service outcomes. This requires not only regulatory compliance but also institutional accountability. Nashihah et al. (2023), in their study on improving the Government Agency Performance Accountability System in Malang City, show that performance improvement requires stronger standard operating procedures, periodic service evaluation, inter-agency coordination, public complaint management, and policy socialization. These elements are relevant to education management because weak recording, delayed budget realization, and uneven service delivery often reflect broader weaknesses in public sector performance management.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive-qualitative approach with quantitative support in the form of performance indicator analysis and educational statistics. This approach aims to obtain a comprehensive picture of the education delivery system in Aceh Besar Regency, including factors that affect the quality and effectiveness of its services. This research not only explains the existing phenomenon, but also analyses the potential for optimizing the education system based on empirical and regulatory conditions.

The data used consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through observation methods, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and in-depth interviews with stakeholders such as Education Office officials, school principals, teachers, and community leaders. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from laws and regulations documents, agency performance reports, education statistics data, and official publications from BPS and the Ministry of Education and Culture. Data analysis is carried out systematically and logically through:

1. Analysis of the education system, with an input-process-output-outcome (IPOO) approach.
2. Cost and Benefit (C/B) analysis, to see the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the education system.

3. SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, to identify the strategic position of the regional education system.
4. Analysis of regulatory needs, to project regional regulations needed for the optimization of the education system.

The combination of IPOO, C/B, and SWOT analysis allows this study to connect financial performance with institutional and service-delivery factors. The IPOO approach is used to trace whether education inputs, including budget and human resources, are translated into program outputs and education outcomes. The C/B analysis supports the assessment of effectiveness and efficiency, while SWOT analysis identifies internal and external factors that shape the strategic position of Aceh Besar's education system. This analytical combination is necessary because budget performance alone cannot fully explain education management quality without considering institutional capacity, infrastructure distribution, teacher availability, and community participation. Quantitative data such as APK indicators, APM, number of educators, and budget effectiveness are analysed statistically descriptively to support the validity of qualitative findings. The effectiveness assessment is carried out using Key Performance Indicators (KPI) which include the output and outcomes of the regional education system. Some of the KPIs used include the achievement of APK and APM, the number of certified educators, the availability of educational infrastructure, and the effectiveness of the implementation of the Driving School Program and the Independent Curriculum in the education unit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Effectiveness and Efficiency of Education Budgets

Education financing is one of the important factors to increase quality Human Resources (HR). In the 1945 Constitution, Article 31 Every citizen has the right to education. This mandate explains that there is a responsibility of the State in providing equal educational services for all citizens without discrimination (education for all) to get quality teaching to improve their lives. The mandate of the 1945 constitution also proves the existence of equal education measures for all Indonesian citizens. Not everyone can get a proper education, due to various factors including the high cost of education that must be incurred by parents or the community. This condition then encouraged the inclusion of a clause on education in the amendment of the 1945 Constitution. The Constitution mandates the government's obligation to allocate 20% of education funds from the State Budget and Regional Budget so that people can obtain adequate and affordable educational services. This provision provides a guarantee that there is an allocation and that it is used for the implementation of education.

In the management of the budget and financing of Education in Aceh Besar Regency, during the period 2020-2023* (*until October), on average, the effectiveness measurement is at the Less Effective status, this is because the average amount is 75.96% and based on the interval the criteria are at the Less Effective interval. This lack of effectiveness is because the recording in 2023 is

still not all recorded, so the gap in numbers is very wide compared to the previous year. In the calculation of efficiency during the period 2020-2023* (*until October), the average efficiency measurement is in the Efficient status; this is because the average amount is 60.05% and, based on the interval, the criteria are in the Efficient interval. This efficiency is because the recording in 2023 is still not all recorded, so the gap in numbers is very wide compared to the previous year. The budget allocation every year fluctuated in 2020 of IDR 110,418,293,200, increased in 2021 by IDR 123,496,387,450. Then, in the following year, namely in 2022, it decreased by IDR 117,334,309,900. This makes the realization of the budget also change every year, causing fluctuations in effectiveness and efficiency.

a. Budget Effectiveness (2020–2023)

The effectiveness of the education budget in Aceh Besar Regency decreased significantly from 2020 to 2023. Based on calculations, the effectiveness of the implementation of the Aceh Besar Regency budget in 2020 is 98.52% (Effective). Then in the following year, 2021, the effectiveness rate decreased to 96.26% (Effective). Then in 2022, the effectiveness rate decreased again to 88.44% (Quite Effective). In 2023*, the effectiveness rate increased to 20.64% (Ineffective). As illustrated in the following table is the effectiveness data:

Table 1. Effectiveness of the Education Budget in Aceh Besar Regency 2020-2023

Year	Budget (Rp)	Realization (Rp)	Effectiveness (%)	Category
2020	110.418.293.200	108.780.280.600	98,52%	Effective
2021	123.496.387.450	118.882.512.819	96,26%	Effective
2022	117.334.309.900	103.774.015.768	88,44%	Quite Effective
2023*	83.790.822.101	17.291.206.104	20,64%	Ineffective
Rata-rata	—	—	75,96%	Less Effective

Source: Data Processing Results, 2025

This table shows a comparison between the budget allocation and the realization of the education budget for four years. The closer it is to 100%, the more effective the use of the budget will be. In 2020 and 2021 they were effective, but their effectiveness decreased drastically in 2023 due to low budget realization, which was only around 20.64% until October. This indicates obstacles in the implementation of programs or budget distribution.

If we look at the composition of the recorded activities realization, it can be concluded that the approach taken by the budget users of education providers in Aceh Besar Regency is through the Purpose approach. This approach tries to measure the extent to which an institution succeeds in realizing the goals to be achieved. The objective approach in measuring effectiveness begins with identifying the organization's goals and measuring the level of success of the organization in achieving those goals. An important goal to consider in measuring effectiveness with this approach is a realistic goal to provide maximum results based on official goals by paying attention to the

problems they cause, by focusing on the output aspect, namely by measuring the success of the program in achieving the planned output level. Thus, this approach tries to measure the extent to which the organization or institution has succeeded in realizing the goals to be achieved.

b. Budget Efficiency (2020–2023)

Based on calculations, the effectiveness of the implementation of the Aceh Besar Regency budget in 2020 is 32.85% (Efficient). Then in the following year, 2021, the effectiveness rate decreased to 55.81% (Very Efficient). Then in 2022, the effectiveness rate decreased again to 55.04% (Very Efficient). In 2023*, the effectiveness rate has increased to 98.51% (Less Efficient). As illustrated in the following table:

Table 2. Education Budget Efficiency in Aceh Besar Regency 2020-2023

Year	Direct Shopping (Rp)	Indirect Shopping (Rp)	Efficiency (%)	Category
2020	35.735.058.410	73.045.222.190	32,85%	Highly Efficient
2021	66.344.014.406	52.538.498.413	55,81%	Highly Efficient
2022	55.040.613.768	48.733.402.000	53,04%	Highly Efficient
2023*	17.032.749.600	258.456.504	98,51%	Less Efficient
	—	—	60,05%	Efficient

Source: Data Processing Results, 2025

Efficiency is calculated from the ratio of direct spending to total spending. The smaller the percentage, the more efficient it is because more indirect spending (salaries, allowances) does not absorb the project budget. In 2023, it will be "less efficient" because the direct budget allocation is much higher than indirect spending, even though output does not appear to be optimal.

In general, the management of the education budget in Aceh Besar Regency has a very good tendency in terms of meeting the physical needs of school facilities and infrastructure from early childhood education to junior high school and even non-formal education does not go unnoticed. The structure of the realization of the implementation of activities from the education budget of Aceh Besar Regency according to the available data is that as much as 60% of the activities carried out are the construction of school facilities and infrastructure, and the rest is operationalization assistance to education organizing agencies.

2. Student Conditions

Every student always experiences a learning process in their life where learning will allow students to get changes in themselves. The change in question is a change in behaviour for the better, a change from the ignorant to the knowing, gaining knowledge and skills, and being able to organize in the

environment. The changes obtained by students are the goal of the learning process. To achieve these learning goals, students must be ready to learn.

The number of students in 2023 shows an uneven distribution. Darul Imarah District recorded the highest number for elementary (4,325 students) and junior high school (2,056 students), while Krung Barona Jaya has 847 elementary schools and does not have a junior high school. Example of student data:

Table 3. Data on Aceh Besar Regency Students in 2023

District	SD Total	SMP Total
Darul Imarah	4.325	2.056
Ingin Jaya	3.271	1.589
Mesjid Raya	2.101	933
Lhoong	899	271
Krung Barona Jaya	847	0

Source: Data Processing Results, 2025

This table shows the inequality of the distribution of students. Darul Imarah and Ingin Jaya sub-districts dominate the number of students, showing the concentration of population and educational facilities in the area. Meanwhile, Krung Barona Jaya does not have a junior high school, which is an indicator of the low equitable distribution of access to secondary education.

3. Data on Teachers and Education Personnel

There are 2,498 elementary school teachers and 1,302 junior high school teachers in Aceh Besar, the majority of whom are female. The distribution of teachers is still concentrated in urban areas, especially in Darul Imarah and Ingin Jaya Districts.

Table 4. Data on Teachers and Education Personnel

District	Elementary School Teacher	Junior High School Teacher
Darul Imarah	272	112
Ingin Jaya	235	134
Indrapuri	130	83
Pulo Aceh	67	35
Leupung	34	11

Source: Data Processing Results, 2025

This data illustrates the uneven distribution of teaching staff. Districts with a high number of students generally also have enough teachers. On the other hand, the outermost areas such as Pulo Aceh and Leupung experienced a shortage of educators. This hinders the equitable distribution of the quality of education. Unequal student and teacher distribution also reflects the broader problem of territorial equity in public service delivery. Nashihah (2023), in her study on infrastructure, social, and economic development in a developing

village, shows that educational infrastructure is part of a wider local development problem and cannot be separated from community involvement and coordination between government and local actors. In the Aceh Besar context, this implies that education management strategies should not only focus on budget absorption, but also on spatially targeted intervention for underserved districts, especially areas with limited school availability, teacher shortages, and weak access to secondary education.

4. SWOT Analysis of the Education System

After being analyzed through SWOT analysis, using the qualitative approach method, many strengths and opportunities were found in educational institutions in Aceh Besar Regency, which influenced the effectiveness of improving the quality of education, which then had an impact on related agencies.

Table 5. SWOT Analysis of Education System

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The input and output of students increase every year. ○ The principal routinely conducts Monev. ○ Educators with D2 to S3 education. ○ Active and prestigious extracurricular activities. ○ The availability of facilities and infrastructure in some schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is not an even level of educational facilities in all regions. ○ Lack of local curriculum development. ○ Many teachers do not teach in accordance with the scientific field. ○ Stakeholder participation has not been maximized. ○ Dayah education is not balanced in human resources and facilities.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading interest increases due to book literacy. ○ Students are active in improving their self-quality. ○ There are superior classes and competition coaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The dominance of school choice in Banda Aceh reduces trust in local schools. ○ Dependence on contract teachers. ○ Low budget for non-formal education (dayah)

This analysis describes the internal and external factors that affect the education system. Strengths can be used to answer opportunities (S-O strategy), while weaknesses need to be overcome to avoid the impact of threats (W-T strategy). Inequality and competitiveness with schools outside the region are the main challenges that need a special strategy.

The SWOT results suggest that Aceh Besar should prioritize an integrative strategy rather than a sectoral response. The strengths in student input, school monitoring, extracurricular activities, and available facilities should relate to opportunities in literacy development, student self-improvement, and partnership expansion. At the same time, weaknesses such as uneven facilities, limited local curriculum development, teacher-field mismatch, and low stakeholder participation require corrective strategies. In this regard, collaboration with communities, private actors, and non-governmental institutions should be positioned not merely as supplementary support, but as part of education governance innovation.

Furthermore, Christianingrum (2022) states that the school merger policy implemented in several regions in Indonesia is motivated by efforts to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in the use of the budget. This policy is considered a strategic step to optimize educational resources, although practice on the ground shows challenges related to the uneven allocation of funds.

In addition, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis on the education system in Aceh Besar Regency identified several internal and external factors that affect the quality of education. Fitriani and Hidayat, Fitriani & Hidayat (2024) show that SWOT analysis can be used to formulate strategies to improve the quality of education. They noted that while there is strength in increasing learner input and output, challenges such as lack of distribution of educational facilities and reliance on contract teachers need to be seriously addressed. Considering all aspects that have been discussed in previous studies, it is important for education programs in Aceh Besar to formulate strategies that are more integrative and responsive to existing challenges and opportunities. Thus, budget management is crucial in optimizing the quality of education for all levels of society.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the analysis that has been studied, the management of the education budget and financing in Aceh Besar Regency, during the period 2020-2023* (*until October), on average the effectiveness measurement is at the Less Effective status; this is because the average amount is 75.96%, and based on the interval, the criteria are at the Less Effective interval. This lack of effectiveness is because the recording in 2023 is still not fully recorded, so the gap in numbers is very wide compared to the previous year. In the calculation of efficiency during the period 2020-2023* (*until October), the average efficiency measurement is in the Efficient status; this is because the average amount is 60.05%, and based on the interval, the criteria are at the Efficient interval. This efficiency is because the recording in 2023 is still not complete, so the gap in numbers is very wide compared to the previous year. These findings indicate that the main challenge of education financing in Aceh Besar is not the absence of budget allocation, but the weak conversion of budget planning into timely realization and measurable education outcomes. Therefore, future improvement should focus on strengthening budget recording, accelerating procurement and program implementation, integrating data-based planning with school-level needs, and linking budget realization to education quality indicators such as access, teacher distribution, infrastructure readiness, and curriculum implementation. In the implementation of education in Aceh Besar Regency, in general, the education system that has been carried out has been very optimal, so that based on the results of the SWOT analysis that has been carried out, a strategy with the highest value has emerged in a strategy that combines strength and opportunity (S-O) with an aggressive growth pattern. This means that the optimal implementation system must be improved again to achieve the goals of national education in the region.

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