

Implementation of the Compulsory Nine-Year Basic Education Program: Opportunities and Constraints at Household and Community Level

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Introduction

The right of education for all in Indonesia has been mandated in some articles of the Indonesian constitution. Article 31 the 1945 Constitution states that ‘Every citizen is entitled to basic education and the government shall be obliged to finance such education’. Similarly, in article 34 of law 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, it is stated that ‘The central government and local governments shall guarantee the implementation of compulsory basic education at least to the level of basic education without charging any fees’. To fulfil this mandate, the Indonesian government emphasises the implementation of the compulsory basic education program for all children. This is also in line with the international agreement on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which has as a goal that all children by 2015, wherever, men and women, can complete their basic education.

Since it was launched in 1994, the implementation of the Compulsory Nine-year Basic Education Program has had its ups and downs. At first, the government hoped that it would be completed by the end of 2003. However, because of the effects of the financial crisis in 1998, the completion date was shifted to 2008–09. Quantitative goals to be met, among others, are that the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) for elementary

schools and, equally, that the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for junior high schools be equal to or more than 95 per cent.

In connection with the targets, the Minister of National Education recently expressed optimism that the goals would be met successfully at the end of the 2008–09 year.¹ Such confidence was based on the achievement in 2008 of a net enrolment ratio for elementary schools and a gross enrolment ratio for junior high schools that reached 94.73 per cent and 93.79 per cent, respectively. It is likely that the national (and macro) goals will be achieved. However, in some population groups with particular socio-economic and cultural conditions, the achievement falls short of the goal. Issues related to the Compulsory Nine-year Basic Education Program are those of school age children who do not go to school or who drop out. Based on 2006 BPS National Socio-Economic Survey data, there are 705,000 Indonesian children aged 7 to 12 years who do not go to school, and there are 2,000,000 aged 13 to 15 years who are not in school (BPS, 2007). Another problem is the gap in education enrolment between regions and the gap between enrolment urban and rural areas that is caused by income differences. The gap in educational attainment between income groups indicates the existence of the poor's limited access to education services. This is mainly caused by the high costs of education, direct and indirect.

The central and regional governments, to achieve the aims of the policy and program, have made various efforts, so that the constitutional mandate (of quality basic education for all residents) may be fulfilled. There are other programs: the School Operational Assistance (BOS) program, which has been conducted since 2005; the Special Assistance for Students (BKM) program since 2005, and BOS Book since 2006. However, these policies and programs have not been implemented as fully as expected, so there are still many gaps to be filled.

This paper explains the opportunities and constraints at the household and community level in increasing education enrolment, which is the goal of the Compulsory Nine-year Basic Education Program. The paper

¹ See <http://www.depdiknas.go.id>

is based in part on the results of research done by the Population Research Center in 2007 in the West Lombok District (West Nusa Tenggara) and the Solok District (West Sumatra). These two locations have been selected because of the fairly high percentage of poor people, and the achievement of education enrolment ratio (GER at junior high school level) falling below average level of education in each province.

The methods used were quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative methods entailed collecting data through surveys of 600 households (300 households for each district). For each district, two sub-districts were purposely taken as sample populations, taking into account the differences in socio-economic background (urban and rural areas). Household samples were selected on the criterion of households that have 'school aged children (6 to 24 years old). The sampling used the *random sampling* from the administrative *sampling frame* (RT/RW/Jorong), so that the samples are spread throughout the villages or *nagari*. Analysis of data was based on quantitative data descriptively and inferentially using regression models. Qualitative data analysis was performed to deepen the analysis and add to the explanation of quantitative data.

Achievement of Compulsory Basic Education in Solok and West Lombok Districts

Based on data from the local Education Offices in 2007, the achievement of GER at the junior high school level and equivalent in West Lombok reached 92.5 per cent. But in Solok, it still is less than 80 per cent. The relatively high education enrolment ratio in West Lombok is affected by, among other things, the contribution of students from Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), which had previously not been included in the calculation of the enrolment ratio, although the public interest in West Lombok in the *pesantren* is very high. This is especially because of the stipulation contained in a Joint Decree (SKB) (I/U/KB/2000 and MA/86/2000) by the Minister of Education and Minister of Religion on 'Implementation of Compulsory Nine-year Basic Education in Pesantren', which includes the *pesantren* as part of the compulsory

education program. The implementation of this Joint Decree has been in operation since around 2005, so that it affects the increased achievement of education enrolment.

Determinants of Education Enrolment

Education enrolment as the *dependent variable* studied is determined by many other variables, *independent variables*; that is, the education of parents, the education of household members (ART) and the occupation of parents and the occupations of household members (ART). Occupations of parents and household members (ART) were measured using the Standard International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status, which was developed by Harry BG Ganzeboom and Treiman (1989). The higher the index value, the higher one's socio-economic status. Determinant factors or factors in education enrolment were analysed based on the results of a regression equation model.

Based on the regression equation model, it may be explained that education enrolment viewed from the children's years of schooling, which is a *dependent variable*, is influenced by various factors: social (parent's education, education of household members), economic (parent's occupation, occupation of household members, and household income), and demographic (age of child, gender, and the number of household members). Regression equation models show that the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test (F test), produces the value of F was calculated to have a value of 378.83 at significance level. Thereby, the regression model may be used to predict education enrolment viewed from the length (in years) of education for people aged 6 to 24 years. The model of the functional relation between the length of education for people aged 6 to 24 years and social, economic and demographic factors is statistically demonstrated by the regression coefficients. There are differences in the pattern of relations between the length (or years) of children's education and social, economic and demographic variables in Solok and West Lombok, which may be stated as follows:

Social factors

The functional relation between the length of children's schooling and social factors (paternal education, maternal education, and household members) has an R-square of 59.5. This means that there is an approximately 59.5 per cent variation in the length of children's education (aged from 6 to 24 years), which may be explained by variations in social factors, and the remainder may be explained by other variables. A negative constant (-3.63) means that when independent variables (paternal education, maternal education, and education of household members) are of small value, then the length of children's education is also small or even zero (that is, no education).

In Solok, the education of the parents has significant positive effects on the length of children's education. The higher the education attainments of the father and mother in a household, the higher will be the education level of the children in such households. Regression coefficient of maternal education is slightly greater than the paternal education, which means that the influence of a mother's education on children's education is stronger than the influence of the father's. This is likely to be related to the heritage of values that emphasise that women are *bundo kandung* or *lampapeh rumah gadang*, 'pillar of big house' (Yunus, 1980). The symbolic meaning is that the advance of a particular community is highly dependent on women, in this case, taking on roles as the ones in charge of the education of the children. The role of men is traditionally as a family worker and not culturally responsible for their children's education. Women experienced this symbolic role as a matter of *cultural pride* that they had to accept. It is not surprising that there are many stories of how mothers encourage their sons to thrive, although social changes have recently occurred with the increasingly developing format of core family values in Minangkabau society (Koentjaraningrat, 1987).

In West Lombok, the effect is rather different, because it is maternal education only that affects the children's years of schooling. In general, in two study areas, there is the same trend, that is, maternal education is more influential on the children's years of schooling. The influence

of parents' education on their children's education becomes different after it is combined with economic factors. Parent's education in Solok remains significantly influential on the children's years of schooling, in which the higher parent's education, the higher children's education. However, in West Lombok, economic factors are more influential than social, and variables relating to parents' education become insignificant, but the economic factors of parents can have significant effects on the length of children's schooling. This can be explained by considering the background of Lombok people who generally have a low education because of the historical or cultural heritage that always places such community groups in the position of marginal social status. Therefore, parents strive to improve their economic conditions in order to be able to send the children to school; it is a way to increase social mobility.

The same phenomenon also occurs when social, economic, and demographic factors are collectively used as independent variables. Parents' education in Solok still affects the children's years of schooling, but in West Lombok households economic factors have significant influence. This strengthens the finding in the District of Solok, that social factors are significant in affecting the length of children's schooling, but in West Lombok, economic factors are dominant.

Economic factors

Functional relations between economic factors (parent's occupation, household members' occupation, household income) and the children's years of schooling, regardless of other factors, have a varied pattern. In West Lombok, economic factors have a significant effect on children's years of schooling, but the father's occupation has a greater effect than the mother's does. This is probably related to decision-making in the household, which is determined more by the father (who in general has a role as head of household).

In Solok, a rather different pattern of relations occurs, that is, it is only the paternal occupation that has a significant effect on the length of children's education. This condition is related to the culture of the

main breadwinner, usually the household head (father), although the social role of the mother is quite dominant. The household members' occupation variable also has a significant effect, but with a negative correlation coefficient. Despite the high occupational rating of the household members, children's years of schooling tend to be low. This condition can be described with a few cases of households found in the research site of Nagari Supayang, where the youngsters, after finishing senior high school or even junior high school, tend to migrate and work in industries in Batam. This, the need to find work, motivates children to enter the job market faster.

The findings based on the results of regression analysis become different when economic factors are under control of social factors. Parents' occupations in Solok has no significant effect on the children's years of schooling. But in West Lombok, a parent's occupation still has a significant effect. The same thing happens when economic factors are under control of social and demographic factors.

Demographic factors

The influence of demographic factors (especially the sex variable) on the children's years of schooling, shows a significant pattern of relations in the research area of Solok, but is insignificant in West Lombok. In Solok, the sex variable regression coefficient is negative (-0.89), which means that the boys have fewer years of schooling than the girls do. A cultural factor that can explain this phenomenon is that the traditional role of men is as 'family workers'. At home, the men work on *harto pusako* in the form of lands owned by women. In days of yore, migration was often used to pursue a higher education, because at that time success in higher education guaranteed economic wellbeing. Now, people have started to feel that education does not guarantee future prosperity. Young people generally migrate to find a high-paying job. The concept of advance in the past can be understood as the success of undergoing education; now, on the contrary, it is success in having a good income. One of the sources, a community leader, said, 'There

are many young people in the research area wandering to find income. In addition, another stimulating factor is that at home most of the rice fields have been pawned (*pagang*). Men by leaving school enter the job market faster than women do’.

The relation between demographic factors and children’s years of schooling, although it has been influenced by social and economic factors, does not change the pattern in the Solok District. The sex variable still has a significant effect on the children’s years of schooling and sex variable coefficient remains to have negative value, meaning that if other variables are considered constant, the length of boys’ schooling is shorter than that of girls. The data from West Lombok show that the variables, sex and the number of household members, have no concrete effect on children’s years of schooling.

Opportunities and Constraints at Household Level

Based on the results of analysis of the factors that affect education enrolment at household level as has been stated, then various opportunities and constraints may be summarised as follows:

- 1 In Solok, the higher a parent’s education, the higher the education level of the children. A high level of parental education encourages or provides opportunities for increased education enrolment in the household. The influence of the mother’s education level on her children’s education enrolment is stronger than the influence of the father’s education. This is related to the heritage or cultural values that emphasise that women are *bundo kandung*. Thus, the mother’s education level is a better guide to the children’s final education attainment.
- 2 In West Lombok, a parent’s education does not affect the children’s education enrolment. However, a mother’s education does have a significant influence. Women’s education in West Lombok is to a relatively low standard and this becomes an obstacle for increasing

children's education enrolment. In the two study areas, there is the same trend, that is, a mother's education is more influential on children's education enrolment than father's education is.

- 3 The influence of parent's education in Solok is more dominant than that of economic factors (occupation), so that education enrolment is more influenced by parent's education. Meanwhile, in West Lombok, economic factors are more influential on children's education enrolment than social factors. This situation can be explained by considering the background of Lombok people who generally have lower status occupations, and they tend to have children with low education expectations and enrolment as well.
- 4 Functional relations between economic factors (parent's occupation, household income) and children's years of schooling regardless of other factors have a significant relation. In the West Lombok, economic factors have a significant effect on children's education enrolment, where father's occupation has a greater effect than mother's occupation does. This is likely related to decision-making in the household, which is determined more by the father (who in general has a role as head of household).
- 5 In Solok, there are constraints in the completion of Compulsory Nine-year Basic Education, especially related to the household members who migrate to work outside the region. This increasingly weakens children's education enrolment and even motivates children to leave school and enter the job market faster.
- 6 The demographic factors on education enrolment have a significant influence. This finding particularly occurs in the Solok District, and even has negative value, meaning that, *ceteris paribus*, education enrolment of boys is lower than that of girls. In contrast, West Lombok shows that sex and the number of household members' variables have no significant effect on children's years of schooling.

Opportunities and Constraints at Community Level

Increased education enrolment is a goal of completion of Compulsory Nine-Year Basic Education Program, in addition to confronting constraints at household level, it also confronts obstacles and constraints at community level.

- 1 In West Lombok, especially in areas with pockets of poverty, early marriage, according to public opinion may reduce the burden on families. In addition, students are forced to quit school because they must help parents to work. This is substantiated by the need for labourers with low educational qualifications (rough labour) with the emergence of labour-intensive industries such as stone and brick construction, livestock, fisheries and waiter service, which are likely to involve children.
- 2 In West Sumatra, an area that had a head start in the field of education, the people have a positive perception of formal education. Aspirations of the community for particular professions also affect preferences for the type of education. In Solok, the public holds government officials and teachers as a professional ideal, so that formal education is important. Similarly, in West Lombok, in addition to preference of type of occupation, the value of education as an investment also affects the achievement of education enrolment. However, for the poor, formal education is seen more as a cost burden and even considered to be a lost opportunity for their children to work.
- 3 Aspirations of parents for their children's education in both areas, in general, are relatively high, but there are still parents who want their children to continue until the levels of junior and senior high school only, because they assume that no matter how high their academic attainment is, finding work is going to be very hard. Also, the research team found the phenomenon of fading trust of people (parents) in the results of education. The phrase, 'schooling is no good because you will be unemployed in the end', seems logical because employment opportunities are

limited. The inability to pay for education in the community, and the 'negative' perception of the outcome or results of education, presents constraints to increasing education enrolment.

Conclusion

Compulsory nine-year basic education is a constitutional mandate that needs to be guarded together. Government, family, and community need to synergise. Thus, compulsory basic education involves various parties: government agencies and non-government institutions, and community groups. The national goals can be achieved, but there are still small areas that will present difficulties in achieving completion, either because of geographic, social, economic, or cultural barriers.

The results of this study have raised a variety of opportunities and constraints in the implementation of compulsory basic education program. Thus, in the completion of the Compulsory Nine-year Basic Education Program, the existing constraints need to be eliminated. On the other hand, potentials need to be improved. It is now for basic education-age children, especially from the less fortunate groups, to get more access to basic education services. A more intensive provision of subsidy is required that not only includes direct costs, but also indirect costs such as transport and school stationery. The increase in the education budget in 2009 and promises of free schooling in the election campaign will enable support to materialise, especially for those who are underprivileged in achieving their educational dreams.

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