



Education Equity For The Remote, Disadvantaged Youth: Acceleration Of The Human Capital Development In NTB

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Abstract .Indonesia's youth hold promise for economic growth, but disadvantaged youth in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) face hurdles in education and employment. It is not surprising if the NTB's Human Development Index (HDI) lags the national average, reflecting educational shortcomings. There are still many youths lack access to quality education and often lack undergraduate degrees due to language barriers. While scholarship programs like Bidikmisi exist, financial limitations discourage participation, the NTB government's Beasiswa NTB program offers financial aid, but resource constraints limit its reach and scholarship amounts. Fact shows enrolment rates in higher education are significantly lower in rural areas and for less affluent youth. Thus, the NTB government acknowledges these disparities but needs further action to address them. This is a qualitative research examining the NTB government's strategies through a self-administered survey and document analysis. Findings depict that there are two key programs; Beasiswa NTB, which supports high-achieving students domestically and internationally, and Rumah Bahasa, which offers language training, particularly English, to increase access to international scholarships. The government can address these disparities through targeted programs, scholarships, mentorship, and collaboration with NGOs and private entities. The NTB government collaborates with universities abroad through shared funding to support disadvantaged students. Limited funding, reaching remote areas, and ensuring adequate financial support are challenges for the NTB government. While NTB's scholarship programs and collaborations promote educational equity, further efforts are required to bridge the gap and empower disadvantaged youth.

Keywords: Education Equity, Disadvantaged Youth, Acceleration, Human Capital Development

1. BACKGROUND

Indonesia is projected to experience a demographic bonus between 2025 and 2030, which presents a favourable opportunity for economic progress through factors such as an increased labor force, accumulation of savings, and enhanced human capital. Youth and adolescents play a significant role in this process; however, they encounter a range of challenges, such as a substantial poverty rate and restricted access to fundamental services and opportunities for satisfactory employment. However, not all the youth across Indonesia have same developmental quality index. Some are still left behind, like West Nusa Tenggara (henceforth: NTB) province. According to the NTB Statistics Board (2022), the province of NTB holds the second position in the Bali Nusra region in terms of ranking, with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 68.65. This places NTB just below Bali, which boasts an HDI of 75.69. The aforementioned numerical value remains lower than the HDI of the nation. The low Human Development Index (HDI) suggests the presence of substantial deficiencies and challenges in key domains of human development.

The Human Development Index (HDI) in Indonesia is influenced by a variety of factors. These factors encompass economic growth, government spending on education, inflation rate, protein consumption, early marriage, health and educational facilities, unemployment, and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (Sukartini, 2022; Sari, 2022; Nurlina et al., 2023). Enhancing livestock technology and increasing productivity in regions such as Sijunjung Regency can also have a substantial impact on the HDI through the enhancement of cattle breeding and fattening programs (Santi et al., 2024). Furthermore, the HDI, which is a reflection of the quality of life, is influenced by a variety of factors, including the expected duration of schooling, school enrollment rates, poverty levels, spending per capita, and life expectancy (Sumarni, 2023). Indonesia can strategically improve the welfare and prosperity of its population and enhance its HDI by comprehensively addressing these diverse factors.

One of many factors that contributes to the low Human Development Index (HDI) of NTB is low education level. Aldini (2020) argues that education attainment in NTB is still under 50%, compared to other provinces in Indonesia. The percentage of youth and adolescents who have not successfully obtained an undergraduate degree remains relatively high. These disadvantaged youth in West Nusa Tenggara actually face several challenges that impact their education, employment, and overall well-being. Poverty, limited access to quality education and language barriers are among many factors contributing to the high rate of education inaccessibility. The current level of access to higher education remains limited, as only a quarter of the youth population has the opportunity to pursue studies at the tertiary level. There is also a presence of disparity in access, whereby enrolment rates for urban areas and affluent demographics exhibit significantly higher levels of attainment, particularly at the senior high school and higher education levels.

According to NTB regional board of statistic (2021), it is founded that seven regions and a city have under 10% of higher education attainments; west Lombok (4,31%), central Lombok (4.95%), east Lombok (4.54%), Sumbawa (6.82%), Dompu (8.48%), Bima (7.84%), and north Lombok (2.83%). Moreover, data from the Directorate General of Population and Civil Registration of the Ministry of Home Affairs (2021) depicted that the total number of tertiary or undergraduate students in West Nusa Tenggara as of June 2021 was 302,140. The aforementioned numerical value corresponded to a mere 5.59% of the overall populace, which amounted to 5.41 million individuals. This numerical value emerges as a significant factor contributing to the low levels observed in the Human Development Index within the region of NTB.

In fact, the central government has broadened educational prospects for Indonesian citizens by implementing initiatives such as Bidikmisi and the Indonesian Smart-card. These scholarships aim to facilitate access to higher education at various universities across the country. However; The limitations of the Beasiswa Bidikmisi or Smart Card (KIP) scholarship program in Indonesia involve difficulties in precisely identifying the appropriate beneficiaries of the scholarship (Sari et al., 2022). This program imposes a quota restriction to accommodate the amount of students who have submitted their work and met the necessary criteria (Maspur & Dadang, 2021).

In my syntheses, the insufficiency of financial resources for the provision of living allowances, for instance, within the aforementioned scholarships have resulted in a discouragement among numerous underprivileged youth in NTB, leading to a reluctance to pursue further education. As a result, a significant number of highly capable candidates who possess financial constraints are unable to qualify for the scholarship, irrespective of the restricted availability. Consequently, a significant number of scholarship recipients hailing from economically disadvantaged backgrounds face ongoing challenges in meeting their basic needs, including but not limited to housing, nutrition, transportation, and essential expenditures. Insufficient provision of financial assistance for living expenses can give rise to supplementary financial challenges and exert adverse effects on the well-being and academic achievements of students. As such, it is imperative to examine how the local government can effectively guarantee equitable opportunities for underprivileged youth through the provision of scholarships. *The purpose of this paper is to examine the approach taken by the NTB government in ensuring educational equity for disadvantaged youth residing in remote areas.*

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Disadvantaged Youth

According to Semeru Research Institute (2019), the term "youth" refers to a demographic cohort encompassing individuals between the ages of 16 and 30 years. While, the term "disadvantaged youth" encompasses individuals who encounter substantial obstacles in their lives, potentially impeding their ability to attain success and accomplish their goals. Individuals who experience economic disadvantage, are not currently enrolled in educational institutions, or are engaged with the juvenile justice system. There is a higher probability of high school dropout, early parenthood, and intergenerational poverty among disadvantaged youth. Individuals lacking postsecondary education or vocational credentials face considerable obstacles

when competing in the job market (Miller, C., 2003). This situation underscores the significance of addressing the obstacles that impede individuals from attaining their maximum capabilities and the necessity for focused assistance and interventions to facilitate the success of underprivileged youths.

Human Development

The SDGs' (the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals) framework acknowledges a transformative function for education in achieving sustainable development (Brissett & Mitter, 2017). The fourth Sustainable Development Goal is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Education is viewed as a facilitator of other development objectives, such as poverty reduction, gender equality, and inequality reduction. Future generations can be empowered by educating them to actively contribute to sustainable development, foster social cohesion, and establish tranquil and inclusive communities.

Several theories assert that human capital and economic growth are closely related (Savvides & Stengos, 2008; McMahon, 2018). Human Capital Theory, developed by economists such as Gary Becker (Fleischhauer, 2007; Teixeira, 2014; Weiss, 2015), asserts that education is an investment that increases an individual's productivity and economic potential. In particular, Dawes and Larson (2011) asserted that three essential aspects that require attention in the development of youth education: fostering a forward-looking approach to learning, cultivating competence, and encouraging the pursuit of a meaningful purpose. Furthermore, Wobbekind (2012) posits the quality education could lead to the development in physical capital, human capital and technological progress. This concept asserts that education should equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to increase their productivity and employability. A highly educated labor force may contribute to economic growth, innovation, and social progress by boosting productivity, enhancing technical advancements, and fostering a more skilled labor market.

Factor Contributing to Human Development Index

Several research have been conducted on investigating factors which contribute to the Human Development Index (HDI) (Yolanda, 2017; Humaira & Nugraha; 2018; Barus & Tarmizi, 2021; Fadillah & Setiartiti, 2021). The HDI itself serves as a statistical instrument and a singular metric for evaluating a country's accomplishments and progress (NTB Statistics Board, 2022). Its primary objective is to ascertain the three fundamental elements of human development: education, health, and a respectable standard of living (Faesal, et al., 2023).

Based on the findings of the researchers, attaining a substantial level of education is identified as a significant contributing factor, among others. The education should be equal, regardless gender disparity.

Education Equity

Svara and Brunet (2005) and Wooldridge and Gooden (2009), define the terms equity as being fairness, justice, and an absence of systematic biases or discrimination. Meanwhile, Shafritz and Russell (2002, cited in Wooldridge & Gooden, 2009) asserted that the equity is characterized by a sense of fairness or justice, specifically the correction of extant imbalances in the distribution of democratic and social values. Regarding the concept of equity, the youth education in social equity is regarded as a fundamental human right and a pillar of social progress. Multiple theoretical frameworks highlight the significance of education in shaping the social lives of individuals and advancing communities as a whole. This theoretical framework examines significant aspects that highlight the importance of adolescent education.

Sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu pioneered the Social Reproduction Theory, which highlights the significance of education in reproducing and maintaining social disparities (Mishra, 2012). According to this hypothesis, educational institutions can perpetuate existing social inequality by providing unequal opportunities and resources to different social groups. Access to quality education becomes a crucial factor in social mobility, and nations should strive for greater social justice and equality by providing youth with equal educational opportunities. Saigaran et al. (2015) emphasised the importance of education in enhancing human capabilities and defending individual rights. According to this perspective, education empowers individuals by enhancing their ability to live a prosperous life. Thus, equity in education provides young people with knowledge, critical thinking skills, and opportunities for personal development, allowing them to make informed decisions, participate in civic life, and make substantial contributions to society.

Contributing Factors on the Educational Inequality

Research studies have found multiple elements that influence educational disparity. Family financial status, societal structure, cultural influences, barriers within the educational system, and disruptive occurrences like as the COVID-19 pandemic are all factors that contribute to educational disparity (Guangrong, 2024). Furthermore, educational disparity is influenced by factors such as digital exposure, household occupation, wealth quintile, and household size, as well as within-group components and rural-urban divisions (Mausam et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the educational disparities in the prevalence of diarrhea among children under the age of five in low- and middle-income countries are influenced by the literacy levels of mothers. Key factors contributing to this disparity include the socioeconomic position of the home, the age of the mother, and the socioeconomic status of the neighbourhood (Adeniyi et al., 2021). In addition, macroeconomic variables such as the expansion of education, the ratio of capital to GDP, and the ratio of female to male primary enrolment play a role in equalising the distribution of education. However, per capita real income and the growth rate of the rural population can worsen educational inequality (Jirada et al., 2012).

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilised a qualitative approach to examine the government's strategy in enhancing the education index. The primary objective of this methodology is to achieve a thorough comprehension by persisting in sampling until no additional significant information is obtained (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Moreover, Creswell and Creswell (2018) posit that qualitative research plays a crucial role in enabling researchers to explore, discern, and comprehend the significance that individuals or groups attribute to social or individual interaction.

Participant Selection

The researchers employed a purposive sampling methodology to determine the participants for the study. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), this particular method of data collection has the capability to effectively choose and recognise individuals or groups who possess knowledge and firsthand experience of the phenomenon in question. Therefore, it is assumed that the individuals chosen (the head of human resource department in NTB Research Agency and director of LPPNTB) possess knowledge and experience pertaining to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas, et al., 2015).

Data Collection

Research data was collected through the utilisation of a self-administered survey implemented in the form of a google form questionnaire and document analyses. Qualitative research can employ the utilisation of open-ended questions to investigate or delineate a subject matter, as stated by Queensland Health (2007). By employing this methodology, the investigator can amass qualitative data from a more extensive cohort, thereby acquiring insights into the

viewpoints, encounters, or dispositions of the participants in relation to the subject matter under investigation.

Analysis Procedures

In order to examine the data obtained from the open-ended question in the survey, the researcher employs a thematic analysis approach. During the process of data generation, the researcher followed the recommended steps proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) for data analysis. These steps encompassed data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The data analysis commenced promptly following the completion of the survey and documents by the researchers. Subsequently, the researchers initiated the process of data reduction by carefully selecting crucial phrases, sentences, and words, which were subsequently presented for further analysis. Additionally, this method utilises basic descriptive statistics to facilitate the researcher in effectively and meaningfully summarising the gathered data (Yang, 2017).

4. FINDING & DISCUSSION

Findings

- **Research Questionnaire 1** (*What government programs promote education equality for young learners? Can you describe any significant application features?*)

There are two programmes that possess interconnected roles; Beasiswa NTB & Rumah Bahasa. Firstly, the Beasiswa NTB programme, aiming to provide opportunities for outstanding individuals to pursue higher education abroad, is a prominent initiative of the NTB Provincial Government, administered by LPPNTB, with the primary objective of improving the quality of human resources in the NTB regions. Through this programme, 1000 Gemilang Scholars were selected and financially supported to pursue undergraduate, masters, or doctoral studies. The programme is currently supported by the local government, with its budget being derived from 20% of the education fund. However, it is worth noting that during its initial stages, the programme received funding from private corporations (LPPNTB, 2019). Apart from Beasiswa NTB 1000 Cendikia, three distinct categories of scholarships that are accessible to the youth population in NTB. One of the available scholarships is the Beasiswa Umum, which is open to both undergraduate and graduate students.

Another category of scholarship is the Beasiswa Stimulan Unggulan, which is intended for individuals who are in need of partial financial assistance for their education. This scholar-

ship is awarded annually and covers the expenses for the ongoing academic year, take for instance the tuition fee or research funding. Another scholarship available is the Beasiswa Miskin Berprestasi, which is specifically designed to support financially disadvantaged youth residing in NTB. This scholarship is open to those who have achieved academic or non-academic accomplishments at the D1, D2, D3, or S1 level in private universities within the NTB Province. Since its establishment in 2018, a total of 4.4 million individuals have been deemed deserving of scholarships. Among these recipients, 702 individuals were granted scholarships to pursue undergraduate degrees at private higher education institutions in NTB. Additionally, 2969 individuals were awarded scholarships based on their achievements, while the remaining 730 individuals were provided with scholarships to pursue master's and doctoral degree programmes abroad.

The provision of Beasiswa NTB has expanded the educational prospects for individuals from NTB, enabling them to pursue studies both domestically and internationally. However, there exists a significant population that continues to face barriers in accessing opportunities, such as the inability to even apply, primarily due to limitations in language proficiency. Based on the findings of EF (2018), it has been observed that the English proficiency level of individuals in Indonesia is comparatively lower in comparison to the average English proficiency level observed across Asian countries. The data in NTB reveals a concerning situation, characterised by a shortage of qualified teachers and inadequate supporting facilities. The Rumah Bahasa (hereafter referred to as RB) has the potential to serve as a supplementary initiative aimed at increasing the proportion of young individuals pursuing further education within their home country or overseas. According to LPPNTB (2023), the data reveals that a significant number of individuals from NTB region have participated in language training programmes, specifically in English, Mandarin, and French. Notably, the majority of participants fall within the age range of 18 to 35 years, indicating a strong representation of youth in these programmes. In addition to providing comprehensive training, the programme offered by RB also includes official tests that grant a certificate recognised for applications to scholarships such as Beasiswa NTB, Australian Award, and LPDP scholarships.

- **Research Questionnaire 2** (*what is the legal bases in the program implementation?*)

The aforementioned programmes have been implemented in accordance with the technical guidelines provided by the scholarship (BridaNTB, 2022). Various legal foundations are utilised in the execution. According to the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, it is stipulated that each student within an educational institution is entitled to receive a scholarship in cases where they demonstrate exceptional academic performance and their parents are

unable to financially support their education (Sisdiknas Law No. 20 of 2003). The second source is derived from the Regulation of the Minister of National Education, specifically Number 26 of 2007, which pertains to the collaboration between higher education institutions in Indonesia and their counterparts abroad, including other educational institutions. Other bases for regional cooperation include Regional Government Regulation Number 50 of 2007, which outlines the procedures for implementing such cooperation. Additionally, Minister of Domestic Minister Number 22 Year 2009 provides technical guidelines for regional cooperation procedures. Governor Regulation No. 5 2022 (the second amendment to Governor Regulation Number 49 of 2020) focuses on scholarships, while a joint agreement between the West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Government and the Education Development Institute (LPPNTB) Number 420/130/KJS/2019 and Number 001/LPPNTB/SP/01/2019 aims to enhance the capacity and quality of human resources in West Nusa Tenggara Province.

- **Research Questionnaire 3** (*In what ways does the government address the disparities in educational opportunities between different socio-economic backgrounds and marginalized communities?*)

Policy and legislation can be implemented by the government with the objective of mitigating educational disparities and fostering equitable educational opportunities for all individuals, regardless their areas. This may encompass legislation that forbids discrimination on the basis of socio-economic background or marginalised status, and guarantees the right to education for all children. Another way is by targeted programs and initiatives. The implementation of targeted programs and initiatives by the government aims to address the specific needs of socio-economically disadvantaged and marginalised communities. These programs have the potential to offer supplementary resources, assistance, and prospects to students hailing from these particular backgrounds, encompassing scholarships, mentorship initiatives, and extracurricular activities.

- **Research Questionnaire 4** (*In what ways does the government collaborate with NGOs, private organizations, and international partners to enhance education equity for the youth?*)

In addition to the aforementioned scholarship, the government of NTB actively engages in the initiation of shared funding programmes with two universities, one located in Russia and the other in Malaysia. According to BridaNTB (2022), the programme effectively targets individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas or families. Brida argued that a significant proportion of the participants are individuals who face financial constraints that prevent

them from pursuing further education, despite being recipients of the Bidikmisi scholarship. In this collaborative funding model, the government of NTB provides financial support exclusively for the preparation and departure programmes. Conversely, the universities assume full responsibility for meeting all the students' requirements throughout their academic pursuits, encompassing tuition fees, living expenses, book expenses, insurance allowances, and other university-related necessities. A significant number of young individuals have been deemed deserving of such programmes. According to the BRIDA officers, the allocation of shared funding serves as an alternative to continue sending young individuals for overseas education, while also partially alleviating the strain on the regional budget.

- **Research Questionnaire 5** (*What challenges has the government encountered in their efforts to promote education equity for the disadvantaged youth?*)

BRIDANTB face challenges in the efforts to promote educational equity, which are primarily associated with issues pertaining to funding and the allocation of resources. This commitment is exemplified and supported by the allocation of a portion of the education regional budget, specifically 20% (Bapenas, 2022). Another concern pertains to the selection phase, wherein the BRIDANTB team encountered challenges in reaching candidates residing in areas with limited internet connectivity. This is done to due that some candidates have inadequate financial resources to cover transportation expenses to come to BRIDANTB office in the city. As such, partnering with respective local community is the considerable option BRIDA takes.

Discussion

Educational Equity Initiatives in NTB Province, Indonesia: A Multi-Faceted Approach

The government of Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) province in Indonesia has adopted a comprehensive strategy consisting of multiple measures to ensure equal access to education for young students. This strategy comprises two interconnected initiatives: Beasiswa NTB and Rumah Bahasa (RB). NTB Scholarship program provides funding for undergraduate and graduate education, both inside the country and abroad. The Beasiswa Miskin Berprestasi scholarship is primarily aimed at economically disadvantaged young individuals. This program has undeniably broadened educational options for people of NTB. Nevertheless, a major obstacle to obtaining scholarships is a restricted command of the English language. In response to this difficulty, the NTB government created the RB program, which provides language instruction in English, Mandarin, and French. The data indicates a significant presence of young individ-

uals in these programs, suggesting that they are beneficial in preparing them for higher education. Significantly, RB offers formal language certificates that are acknowledged for scholarship applications, so reinforcing the link between the two efforts.

Legal Framework and Collaboration: Building a Strong Foundation

These programs are supported by an extensive legislative framework. The National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 ensures that outstanding students with financial constraints are eligible for scholarships. Furthermore, the Ministry of National Education and regional government rules establish guidelines for cooperation between educational institutions, both within the country and outside. A significant collaboration between the NTB administration and the Education Development Institute (LPPNTB) highlights their dedication to improving the province's human resource capabilities. This cooperative approach guarantees a solid basis for the execution of the program.

Addressing Disparities: Targeted Programs and Policy Measures

The NTB administration acknowledges the necessity of resolving discrepancies in educational opportunities. Policy initiatives, such as enacting laws that forbid discrimination based on socio-economic background, are designed to establish equal opportunities for everyone. In addition, focused initiatives such as scholarships, mentorship programs, and extracurricular activities provide specific support to students from underprivileged neighborhoods. These projects offer essential resources, support, and opportunities that can allow these students to achieve academic success.

Expanding Horizons: Partnerships for Enhanced Equity

The administration of NTB aggressively pursues collaborations to enhance educational fairness for young individuals. A cooperative finance initiative aimed at individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged families is being implemented in Malaysia in partnership with colleges. This strategy enables the NTB government to provide financial assistance for pre-departure fees while the institutions are responsible for covering the ongoing academic costs. This collaboration enhances prospects for international education while mitigating the fiscal strain on the local budget.

Challenges and Moving Forward: Ensuring Sustainability

Although the NTB government has achieved several notable accomplishments, it still encounters obstacles in its efforts to promote educational parity. The main problems are the constraints in funding and the allocation of resources. However, there is a clear commitment to fairness, as demonstrated by the allocation of 20% of the education budget. Communicating with candidates in remote places with restricted internet connectivity adds more complexity to the screening process. Collaborating with local communities is a highly effective approach to overcome this obstacle. To ensure the ongoing success of its educational equity measures, the NTB government can address these difficulties and implement new solutions.

5. CONCLUSION

The provision of education is considered a fundamental right for every citizen of Indonesia. Education can yield significant benefits for individuals in terms of their economic and social well-being, among other aspects. The recognition and preservation of Indonesian values, particularly those pertaining to the nation's intellectual sphere, impose a significant responsibility upon the government. Scholarships targeting students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or marginalised communities are a crucial and pressing initiative. The allocation of 20% of the budget towards education would provide support for initiatives such as Beasiswa NTB and Rumah Bahasa. To date, the government of NTB has demonstrated successful implementation of the initiative. The scholarship programme offered by NTB has provided assistance to numerous students, encompassing those who have pursued education abroad as well as those who have chosen to remain within NTB schools. Furthermore, the government of the NTB region has effectively established collaborative alliances with two nations to facilitate financial sharing. This initiative, coupled with the support from the APBD, has significantly contributed to enhancing the government's budgetary efficiency. In addition to the Beasiswa NTB programme, numerous alumni from Rumah Bahasa have been deemed eligible for prestigious scholarships such as the Beasiswa LPDP, Australia awards, and various other opportunities to pursue higher education abroad. Consequently, the strategies employed by the NTB administration to cultivate the development of human capital are highly effective.

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