

## Evaluation of the Implementation of Government Regulations on Education Standards in the Strategy to Improve the Quality of Junior High School Education in Jepara Regency

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**Abstract.** *This study aims to evaluate the implementation of government regulations on education standards in the strategy to improve the quality of junior high school education in Jepara Regency. The background of this study stems from the fact that the implementation of regional education policies has not yet fully yielded uniform results in improving school quality. This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods, through data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. Research informants include Education Agency officials, school principals, teachers, and school committees. The results of the study show that local government policies have a significant influence on the direction and quality of education, as reflected in the Jepara Regency Education Report Card, including an increase in the Minimum Service Standard (SPM) index from the Young Completion category to Medium Completion, an increase in junior high school literacy and numeracy achievements. However, policy implementation has not been evenly distributed, especially in schools in rural areas that still face limitations in infrastructure, unequal distribution of teachers, and readiness in implementing the new curriculum. Administrative factors, budget constraints, and weak inter-agency coordination also have an impact on the effectiveness of policy implementation. The findings show that school strategies to improve education quality are greatly influenced by the extent of policy intervention received; schools with stronger support are able to implement more focused quality strategies, while schools with limited support face obstacles in optimizing quality improvement. Overall, this study confirms that the success of regional policies has not been fully reflected even across all educational units, thus requiring equitable support, strengthened cross-sector coordination, and the use of Education Report Card data as a basis for continuous improvement.*

**Keywords:** Education Quality; Education Quality Improvement Strategy; Government Policy.

## 1. Introduction

Education is a crucial aspect of national development, as quality education plays a significant role in producing competent human resources who are ready to face global challenges. In Indonesia, education is a sector that receives serious attention from the government, both at the central and regional levels. As part of regional autonomy, local governments have the authority to design and implement education policies tailored to local needs. Education is key to developing superior and globally competitive human resources. Within the context of regional autonomy, district/city governments play a strategic role in formulating and implementing education policies that are tailored to local characteristics. Jepara Regency, as a region in Central Java Province, faces significant challenges in improving the quality of education, particularly at the junior high school (SMP) level.

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Jepara Regency in 2022 shows that the Human Development Index (HDI) for education remains below the provincial average, with an average length of schooling of only 7.8 years and a junior high school dropout rate of 3.5%. This indicates a gap between the expectations of local government policy implementation and the reality on the ground. Despite various policies and programs, such as increased BOS funding, teacher training, and educational infrastructure development, the quality of graduates, equitable access, and the quality of the learning process have not significantly improved.

Furthermore, successful educational strategies elsewhere, such as Total Quality Management in Education, community-based learning, and cross-sector collaboration, will serve as references for developing an appropriate model for improving education quality in Jepara. This phenomenon raises questions about how local government policies can effectively improve education quality in Jepara. Education policies implemented by local governments play a crucial role in determining the direction of education development. These policies include the distribution of education budgets, curriculum development tailored to local needs, training for educators, and adequate educational facilities. However, despite these policies' existence, their impact on education quality in Jepara has not yet been fully realized.

Regional government policies in the education sector play a crucial role in addressing these issues. With decentralization and regional autonomy, district governments have a strategic role in formulating policies that directly impact the education sector. However, there is insufficient evidence to confirm the effectiveness of these policies in improving the quality of education in Jepara. This creates an interesting gap phenomenon to study: the disparity between implemented policies and the results achieved on the ground.

This gap phenomenon prompted the author to conduct a more in-depth study of strategies for improving education quality in Jepara, as influenced by local government policies. Therefore, this study will explore how policies implemented by the local government can improve education quality in Jepara, as well as the factors that influence their effectiveness.

From the perspective of public policy theory and educational quality improvement strategies, this situation indicates problems in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of regional education policies. In this situation, a GAP analysis approach was used to analyze the differences between ideal (expected) and actual conditions at junior high schools in Jepara Regency.

## **2. Research Methods**

The approach used is descriptive qualitative with a gap analysis method, to identify discrepancies between the implemented education policies and the results achieved. This approach was chosen to explore the views, experiences, and input from key stakeholders through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD).

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1. Regional Government Strategy in Improving the Quality of Education**

Based on an interview with the Regent of Jepara, the regional government's primary strategy for improving education quality is rooted in the regional development vision of "Prosperous, Superior, Sustainable, and Religious." This vision is translated into various education policies oriented towards equal access, improving the quality of learning, and strengthening teacher competency. The regional government places the education sector as a strategic priority, reflected in a number of programs such as the Prosperous Teacher Card, the Jepara Graduate Card, strengthening PKBM (Center for Community Learning), and facilitating out-of-school children (ATS). These policies are formulated through a participatory planning mechanism, while still taking into account national policy directions.

The Education Office then formulated operational strategies to improve the quality of learning based on the Independent Curriculum, strengthen Subject Teacher Consultations (MGMP), and provide more equitable educational infrastructure. Teacher development was focused on training and mentoring programs, both online and offline, although implementation was deemed uneven. These strategies demonstrate the regional government's efforts to develop a holistic approach encompassing aspects of teaching staff, facilities, and access to educational services.

The Chairperson of the Jepara Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) emphasized that his institution supports this policy through a significant budget allocation, approximately 24–26% of the regional budget (APBD). The DPRD carries out legislative and oversight functions to ensure that education policies are implemented in accordance with regulations and community needs. Thus, the strategy to improve education quality in Jepara has a strong formal basis, both in terms of budget and programs.

### **Implementation of Education Policy in the Field**

Despite well-formulated strategies and programs, policy implementation on the ground has not shown uniform results. Interviews with school principals revealed that implementation of local government policies was more readily felt in schools located in urban areas, as seen at SMP Negeri 1 Tahunan. This school benefited significantly from teacher training and facility assistance, enabling it to implement the Independent Curriculum more adaptively.

In contrast, schools in rural areas, such as SMP Negeri 1 Batealit and SMP Negeri 3 Batealit, face various obstacles in implementing education policies. Limited infrastructure, the lack of regional BOS funds, delays in the disbursement of central BOS funds, and the lack of ongoing teacher training mean that these schools have not yet felt the significant impact of the policy. This situation indicates that educational decentralization has not fully achieved equitable service quality across Jepara.

Furthermore, school involvement in the policy formulation process remains very limited. Schools primarily act as policy implementers (policy takers) rather than policy makers. This results in many specific school needs not being accommodated in regional policies, as information from the field is not comprehensively incorporated into the planning process.

### **Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Education Policy**

Based on analysis of interview and focus group discussion data, the effectiveness of education policies in Jepara is influenced by several internal and external factors. Internal factors include regional fiscal capacity, the quality of human resources (HR), and the availability of infrastructure. Limited regional fiscal capacity makes it difficult for the government to provide Regional Operational Assistance (BOSDA) to all schools, particularly public schools in rural areas. Meanwhile, the quality of teachers and education personnel is a key determinant of successful policy implementation, but available training has not been able to reach all teachers equally.

External factors include geographic conditions, community participation, and parental awareness of education. Schools in rural areas face geographical barriers and limited access to technology, slowing the implementation of the school digitalization program and the Independent Curriculum. Although rural communities have shown considerable support through mutual cooperation (gotong royong), economic constraints prevent them from providing significant material support.

The Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) chairperson and education figures in the FGD also highlighted weak cross-sectoral coordination and suboptimal evaluation of education policies. Without regular, data-driven evaluation, policies are difficult to adapt to meet real needs on the ground.

### Obstacles in the Implementation of Education Policy

In general, the obstacles faced by local governments and educational institutions encompass three main dimensions. First, the structural dimension, which includes budget constraints, slow budget bureaucracy, and uneven teacher distribution. Second, the infrastructure dimension, particularly in rural schools, which face limited classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and internet connections. Third, the socio-cultural dimension, such as low parental awareness in supporting their children's education and the lack of digital competence among teachers in some schools.

These obstacles are interconnected, impacting the implementation of education policies. Without systemic solutions, conceptually sound policies will struggle to produce equitable improvements in education quality across Jepara Regency.

### Evaluation of Regional Government Policies and Their Implementation in Schools

Evaluations of local government policies indicate that various strategic programs to improve education quality have been formulated, but their implementation has not been fully equitable across all educational institutions. Schools in urban areas, such as SMP Negeri 1 Tahunan, tend to benefit more from teacher training programs, infrastructure assistance, and departmental supervision. This is influenced by easier access, resource availability, and higher frequency of mentoring compared to schools in rural areas.

**Table Policy Evaluation**

No	Regional Government Policy	Form of Implementation in the Field	Schools Receiving Benefits	Schools that do not receive / receive minimal benefits
1	Teacher Training & Workshop (Curriculum, MGMP)	Regular training in the city, some online	Urban junior high schools have easy access, teachers can participate regularly	SMPN 1 Batealit, SMPN 2 Batealit & SMPN 3 Batealit (limited transportation access, unable to attend all sessions)
2	Infrastructure Assistance (RKB, ICT equipment)	Construction of new classrooms & procurement of equipment	More allocated to urban schools	The school on the outskirts of the laboratory is not yet standard, the facilities are minimal.
3	ATS & PKBM Handling Program	Assisting dropouts to return to learning	All regions, but more active in urban areas	Rural areas have less than optimal reach
4	COMMITTEE Fund	Additional school operational costs from student guardians	In almost all urban schools, parents have full awareness to help the school.	SMPN 1 Batealit, SMPN 2 Batealit & SMPN 3 Batealit are having difficulty adding parent fees to the school
5	Regional Scholarship Program (Jepara Scholar Card)	Tuition assistance for high school graduates	Urban students have more access	Rural schools have minimal access to information



No	Regional Government Policy	Form of Implementation in the Field	Schools Receiving Benefits	Schools that do not receive / receive minimal benefits
6	Supervision and Monitoring of the Service	Routine supervision to schools	More frequent in urban schools	Rural schools monitoring is not intensive
7	District BOSDA Fund	Additional school operational funds from the APBD	There are no beneficiary schools.	There are no beneficiary schools.

This table clarifies the disparity in policy implementation between urban and rural schools, particularly regarding BOSDA, teacher training, and infrastructure development.

#### Table Summary of Findings from Main Interviews

No	Informant	Information Focus	Key Findings
1	Regent of Jepara	Direction of education policy	Equal access, quality improvement and teacher welfare
2	Jepara Regional People's Representative Council	Oversight & Budget	APBD 24–26%, but there has been no additional BOSDA assistance
3	education authorities	Technical implementation	Teacher training is uneven, rural infrastructure is lagging behind.
4	Headmaster	Field reality	All schools in Jepara Regency do not receive BOSDA
5	Education Figures (FGD)	Regional recommendations	The need for affirmative classes, training centers, infrastructure that meets SNP standards and the need for SNP to be evenly distributed

### 3.2. Regional Government Policies Influence Strategies for Improving the Quality of Education in Junior High Schools in Jepara Regency

The research results show that local government policies have a strong influence on strategies to improve the quality of education in junior high schools in Jepara Regency. These strategies are reflected in various programs such as the Prosperous Teacher Card (Kartu Guru Sejahtera), the Jepara Graduate Card (Kartu Sarjana Jepara), strengthening PKBM (Community Learning Center), facilitating ATS (Academic Training Center), strengthening the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), MGMP (Student Leadership Group), and infrastructure. This finding aligns with policy theory.

The local government has provided a strategic foundation through the vision of "Prosperous, Superior, Sustainable, and Religious," which has been translated into education policy. This supports the finding that public policy is not only normative but also serves as operational guidance for educational units. Budgetary support, reaching 24–26% of the regional budget (APBD) from the Jepara Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), reinforces that the political and budgetary structures support the implementation of quality improvement strategies, in line with implementation theory (e.g., the theory that resources are key to successful implementation).

Improving quality strategies through government approaches—such as teacher development, infrastructure provision, and curriculum strengthening—demonstrates a comprehensive strategic effort aligned with educational quality management theory. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is largely determined by how schools implement them. Schools in urban areas, such as SMPN 1 Tahunan, have been able to optimally utilize these policies, while rural schools have not experienced the same benefits.

Empirical data from the Jepara Regency Education Report strengthens this analysis. Based on the 2024 Education Report, the Minimum Service Standards (SPM) index for Jepara Regency is in the "Complete Middle" category with a score of 82.73, up from 69.08 in 2023 when it was in the "Complete Young" category. The School Participation Rate (APS) for 13–15 year olds (which generally includes junior high school students) in 2024 was recorded at 99.01%, an increase compared to 2023. Similarly, for general junior high school students, literacy achievement in 2024 was in the good category with a score of 77.77.

Thus, the education report card data shows that at the district level, the quality of education services in terms of school participation, literacy, numeracy, and other indicators has indeed shown an upward trend. This aligns with research findings that policies and strategies implemented by local governments have a positive impact on education quality. However, the study notes that benefits are not evenly distributed across schools (urban and rural) remains relevant. Although district education report cards improve, this does not necessarily guarantee equitable implementation at all school levels. Local conditions, school capacity, and internal school resources remain key determinants of policy effectiveness.

### **Gap Between Actual Conditions and Ideal Conditions in the Implementation of Education Improvement Policies in Jepara**

Research findings reveal a significant gap between the ideal conditions envisioned in the policy and its actual implementation on the ground. Ideally, education policy in Jepara is designed to provide equitable quality through teacher training programs, facility assistance, funding support, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), and strengthening access to education for all groups. However, implementation shows significant variation between urban and rural areas.

Schools in rural areas, such as SMPN 1 Batealit and SMPN 3 Batealit, experience difficulties accessing teacher training, lack of BOSDA (Regional Operational Assistance), and are hampered by the disbursement of central BOS funds. This situation demonstrates a structural gap between policy design and the reality in schools. This supports Mazmanian & Sabatier's (1983) assertion that policy implementation is heavily influenced by socio-political conditions and local capacity.

This unequal access also demonstrates that educational decentralization has not fully resulted in equitable service quality. Ideally, education policies are formulated through bottom-up mechanisms that address school needs. However, field findings indicate that

schools remain policy-takers, not policy-makers. As a result, school-specific needs are not fully reflected in policies, creating a gap between policy formulation and implementation.

Although district outcomes have shown improvement—for example, the increase in the SPM index from “Young Complete” to “Mad Complete,” the increase in the APS for 13–15 year olds to over 99%, and the increase in junior high school literacy scores across the district—these improvements have not been evenly distributed across schools. Urban schools have been able to utilize policy programs optimally, while rural schools remain behind due to limited access, infrastructure, and operational support. This gap indicates that Jepara's education policy is conceptually sound, but not yet fully adaptable to real-world conditions across the region. Policy implementation is still influenced by gaps in infrastructure, human resource capacity, and access to government programs. This underscores the need for policy adjustments that are more responsive to the real needs of schools, particularly in areas with limited resources.

Thus, the gap that occurs illustrates that the education policy in Jepara is good in concept, but is not yet fully adaptive to real conditions, especially in areas with limited infrastructure, human resources, and access to government programs.

### **Factors Influencing the Suboptimal Implementation of the Education Policy Strategy**

Further analysis shows that the suboptimal implementation of the education strategy is caused by various interconnected internal and external factors. Internal factors include regional fiscal capacity, the quality of educational human resources, and the condition of infrastructure. Fiscal capacity is a key factor in the absence of the Regional Operational Assistance (BOSDA), which prevents schools in rural areas from receiving adequate funding. This aligns with Edwards III's policy implementation theory, which states that resource limitations directly impact implementation effectiveness.

Furthermore, uneven and unsustainable teacher training has left many teachers unprepared for implementing the Independent Curriculum or learning innovations. Educators lacking adequate digital competencies are also a significant obstacle in the era of digitalized education.

External factors such as geographic location, economic constraints, community participation, and parental awareness also influence implementation success. Rural schools with limited access to technology are automatically left behind in the adoption of digital learning systems. This indicates that digitalization programs are not supported by environmental readiness.

Weak cross-sector coordination and a lack of data-driven evaluation contribute to the deterioration of education policy implementation in Jepara Regency. The absence of a robust evaluation mechanism results in policies being unresponsive to actual needs on the ground, demonstrating a weak feedback loop within the public policy cycle. This finding is even more



relevant when compared to the 2022–2024 Jepara Regency Education Report, which shows that despite an increase in the SPM index from "Young Complete" to "Mad Complete" at the district level, an increase in the APS for 13–15 year olds to over 99%, and an increase in literacy and numeracy scores at the junior high school level, the number of students enrolled in the program has increased.

Schools in rural areas still face barriers to accessing training, local government-funded financial assistance (BOSDA), and infrastructure, preventing the full absorption of policy benefits. Therefore, the factors contributing to the suboptimal implementation of education policies are not only technical but also structural and sociological. Without comprehensive improvements through cross-sectoral coordination, strengthening school capacity, and data-driven evaluation, these obstacles will continue to hamper efforts to equitably distribute quality education in Jepara Regency. Therefore, education report card data shows that at the regency level, the quality of education services in terms of school participation, literacy, and numeracy has shown an improving trend. This aligns with the policy efforts undertaken by the local government.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of the research analysis can be concluded that local government policies have a very crucial role in determining the direction and quality of education in Jepara Regency, as seen from the achievements of the Education Report which show positive trends such as the increase in the Minimum Service Standards (SPM) index from "Tuntas Muda" to "Tuntas Madya", an increase in junior high school literacy-numeracy achievements, and the School Participation Rate (APS) for 13-15 year olds reaching more than 99% in 2024. Although the policy has been formulated in accordance with the regional development vision and the need for quality improvement, its implementation has not been evenly distributed between urban and rural schools. The policy contribution is seen significantly through programs to improve teacher competency, curriculum development, provision of infrastructure, and strengthening school governance, but the Education Report data also shows variations in achievements between educational units indicating that quality equality has not been achieved. Implementation obstacles such as inequality in teacher distribution, training sustainability, school readiness for the new curriculum, limited infrastructure, as well as administrative constraints, budgets, and weak cross-agency coordination also affect the effectiveness of the policy. Furthermore, school quality improvement strategies are strongly influenced by the strength of the policy interventions they receive. Schools receiving support such as regional BOS (School Operational Assistance), teacher competency improvement programs, or infrastructure revitalization are able to develop more targeted quality strategies, while schools with limited support face challenges in optimizing quality improvement. These findings overall confirm that the success of district-level policies has not been fully reflected at the school level. Therefore, equitable distribution of support, improved coordination, and more systematic use of Education Report Card data are key to

encouraging more equitable and sustainable improvements in the quality of junior high school education in Jepara Regency.

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