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## Analysis of the Role of the State in Equitable Access to Higher Education

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### Abstract

*This study examines the role of the state in supporting equal access to higher education by linking constitutional promises and existing realities. This study aims to combine constitutional, fiscal policy, and empirical perspectives on access to higher education to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the existing gaps. Using secondary data analysis methods, it was found that constitutional promises have not been fully realized in terms of equal access to higher education, because the problem of access to higher education in Indonesia cannot be separated from the imbalance between affirmative policies for individuals and the strengthening of institutional funding for higher education. Assistance programs such as KIP-Kuliah have positive potential, but implementation dysfunctions such as inaccurate data validation and disproportionate quota allocation reduce their effectiveness. Limited student assistance and inadequate higher education funding result in the burden of higher education costs being shifted to students. This condition confirms that the realization of constitutional promises in the field of higher education still faces deep structural challenges.*

**Keywords**– Higher Education, Educational Inequality, Education Budget, UKT, KIP-K



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## **1. Introduction**

Education is one of the most important aspects in nation building. Education is an effort so that humans can develop their potential through the learning process and/or other ways that are known and recognized by the community. Education is also a variable that determines the quality of a nation's human resources. Therefore, it is the government's responsibility to be able to ensure the implementation of education with good quality.

Higher education is a key role in national development. Through education, research, and community service, education at the university level can contribute significantly to creating quality human resources, developing science and technology, and improving community welfare. The role of higher education is in line with the state's goals as stated in the preamble to the 1945 Constitution paragraph IV regarding national development, one of which is about educating the nation's life.

Universities can also help achieve a Golden Indonesia 2045 through various programs such as internships/work practices, projects in villages, teaching in schools, research, student entrepreneurship, studios or independent projects. Therefore, higher education is an important part of the national education system which has the goal of developing all students' potential, producing competitive graduates, and producing science.

The state's purpose is reaffirmed in various articles, one of which is in Article 31 Paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution which mandates that, "The State prioritizes the education budget at least twenty percent of the State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBN) as well as the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) to meet the needs of implementing national needs." This fund allocation aims to eliminate financial barriers so that equitable distribution of education quality is guaranteed. However, the reality on the ground shows that there is still an inequality between the promise of the constitution and the equal access to higher education.

Analysis of previous literature that discusses budget equity and access to higher education tends to focus on several key issues. First, the issue of UKT and

tuition fees. The majority of studies show a strong correlation between the decline in student participation and the increase in tuition fees, confirming that finances are still the dominant factor that hinders access to higher education. Second, the issue of the effectiveness of the assistance program. Studies of aid programs provided by the government often have problems with targeting, which makes the benefits of the program not fully enjoyed by people in need. Third, the issue of fiscal policy. Several researchers have analyzed that the allocation of 20% of the State Budget has not been effective, such as the State University Operational Assistance (BOPTN) from the State Budget is not large enough, so that PTN is often forced to rely on income from UKT.

Based on the above synthesis, it can be seen that there is a fundamental research gap. Most of the literature tends to partially examine the issue of education costs, the effectiveness of education assistance, and the implementation of education budget policies. However, studies that comprehensively link the constitutional mandate regarding the right to education, the distribution of the higher education budget, and its implications for access to higher education are still relatively limited. Therefore, an analysis that is able to combine constitutional perspectives, fiscal policy, and the empirical reality of access to higher education is needed to understand more fully the disparities that occur.

Thus, this research aims to support previous research in examining the extent to which the role of the state in realizing the promise of the existing constitution in an effort to educate the nation's life is reflected in the equal distribution of access to higher education in Indonesia. This study critically analyzes the three issues that have been mentioned, namely economic barriers that are one of the causes of the difficulty of people accessing higher education, then associated with state aid influenced by the distribution of the 20% education budget through BOPTN.

## **2. Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a secondary data analysis method that aims to gain an understanding of the issue of equitable access to

*Nazwa Putri Balqis, Talitha Cinta Kurnia, Amanda Dea Moza, Supriyono*

education in Indonesia. This research is validated by the collection of strong secondary data to ensure that the research findings are accurate and relevant in the context being studied.

Data were obtained from government policy documents, laws and regulations, statistical reports of the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), as well as relevant scientific journal articles from previous research. Furthermore, the data collected was analyzed through a critical interpretation of texts and policies to identify systemic barriers that cause a gap between the promise of the constitution and the equitable distribution of the higher education budget in Indonesia.

### 3. Result and Discussion

Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that the School Participation Rate (APS) in the age group of 19 to 23, which represents the level of higher education, has decreased significantly compared to the previous age group. This phenomenon indicates that there are structural obstacles to fulfilling access to education, especially economic factors that prevent people from continuing their education to the university level.

**Table 1** School Participation Rate (APS) for 2021 to 2025

Year/Age	7-12	13-15	16-18	19-23
2021	99,19	95,99	73,09	27,72
2022	99,10	95,92	73,15	27,61
2023	99,16	96,10	73,42	28,96
2024	99,19	96,17	73,64	29,01
2025	99,23	96,30	77,86	29,13

In addition to reflecting the limited access to higher education, the low School Participation Rate (APS) in the age group of 19–23 years also shows the ineffectiveness of policies in encouraging the transition of secondary education graduates to the university level. The stagnation of APS in the range of 27% to 29% over the past few years indicates that the increase in the national education budget allocation has not translated into a significant expansion of access to

higher education. This condition emphasizes the urgency to review the direction and distribution of the higher education budget in Indonesia.

**Table 2.** National Education Budget Allocation for 2022-2025

Year 2022	IDR 542.8 trillion
Year 2023	IDR 612.2 trillion
Year 2024	IDR 665.0 trillion
Year 2025	IDR 724.3 trillion

The table above shows an increase in budget allocation every year. In 2022, the education budget was recorded at IDR 542.8 trillion and continues to increase to IDR 724.3 trillion in 2025. This increase not only fulfills the 20% obligation, but also shows that the government is increasingly prioritizing the education sector. The increase in the budget was reinforced by Musgrave's (1959) statement that government investment in public services was a strategic step to ensure equitable distribution of learning opportunities.

However, policy implementation on the ground shows a real structural gap. Although the government has formally achieved the 20% allocation target, its effectiveness is hampered by the dominant administrative and bureaucratic patterns. According to data from the Ministry of Finance, the realization of expenditure on education is only around 75-80% of the total budget set over the last three years (2022-2024), while the remaining 3-5% is trapped as a reserve budget that is rarely realized due to complicated procurement procedures and limited regional fiscal capacity.

Although higher education is declared a national priority, budget realization is still dominated by routine employee and administrative spending, while investment in quality improvement and access expansion is relatively marginalized. As a result, the increase in the education budget is not directly proportional to the increase in higher education participation. This explains why APS aged 19–23 years tends to stagnate even though the allocation of the education budget continues to increase.

Politically, this condition confirms that the distribution of the higher education budget is not fully based on the principle of distributive justice as

*Nazwa Putri Balqis, Talitha Cinta Kurnia, Amanda Dea Moza, Supriyono*

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mandated by the constitution. The state tends to allocate funds based on institutional performance and accreditation, rather than based on real needs, so that structural inequalities in higher education continue to be reproduced. As a result, higher education still continues to grapple with limited financing and high dependence on student dues.

At the beginning of its implementation, the Single Tuition system was established by the Ministry of Education and Culture as an effort to improve access and quality of higher education, as well as provide fairness in the allocation of higher education funds as explained in Permendikbud No. 2 of 2024 article (2), namely the determination of operational costs based on indicators of achievement of national standards for higher education in accordance with accreditation, types of study programs that consider lectures theoretically, practices, and laboratories, and the cost index of each different region.

However, in practice, the UKT system actually raises new problems. The data verification mechanism in the UKT group determination scheme is still manual and relies on administrative documents such as payslips and electricity accounts, which do not always represent real economic conditions. As a result, many poor students are trapped in the high UKT group, while the able group can evade data manipulation. This situation shows that public policies that are not supported by valid data systems and strict evaluation mechanisms will lose their redistributive function. The state seems to be present only at the policy level, but absent at the implementation level.

Several studies have found that the increase in UKT can have a negative impact on the ability to access higher education, especially for prospective students who come from low-income families. Research shows that the increase in UKT has the potential to reduce access to education, put financial pressure on low-income families, and widen the social gap in higher education in Indonesia (Rahmania, 2025:1891). Increased costs can also lead to a possible decrease in the number of new applicants as well as the threat of dropping out of college for students who have financial limitations.

Access to higher education is highly dependent on the economic ability of the family. This is clearly contrary to the constitutional mandate that places education as a universal right. As tuition fees continue to rise, vertical social mobility through education becomes increasingly narrow, and higher education has the potential to become an instrument of reproduction of social inequality.

The government seeks to close the gap in access to higher education by creating an affirmative strategy in the form of the Indonesia Smart College Card (KIP-K) program, this program functions as a social safety net that ensures the accuracy of targets for underprivileged groups. The KIP-Lecture program is a positive step for the state in expanding access to higher education. However, its effectiveness is largely determined by the accuracy of the data and the smooth running of the bureaucracy.

However, conceptually, the KIP-K program is still residual, that is, it only reaches certain groups and has not been designed as a universal policy that is able to raise higher education participation systemically. The dependence on the validity of poverty data and quota limitations make the impact of KIP-K on the increase in national APS relatively limited. Therefore, the existence of KIP-K has not been able to offset the high burden of higher education costs that must be borne by most households.

Based on the findings of various reports, around 20-30% of KIP-K recipients do not really come from poor families, while some poor students are not included in the list of recipients due to unupdated socio-economic data. According to a report by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2024), only 60% of the KIP-K quota is actually distributed to those who are eligible, while the problem of DTKS data causes 25% of underprivileged students to not be listed. The problem of validating poverty data is still the main obstacle. The Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS) used as a reference is often not up-to-date and does not reflect field conditions.

The registration and administrative verification process for KIP-K is still relatively complex, especially for prospective students from remote areas who have limited internet access. Policies that aim to be inclusive have become

*Nazwa Putri Balqis, Talitha Cinta Kurnia, Amanda Dea Moza, Supriyono*

exclusive due to digital constraints. Research from the Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2023) on "Higher Education Funding in Indonesia" revealed that KIP-K has succeeded in increasing the engagement of students from low-income families by 15%, but digital barriers in remote areas reduce its effectiveness by 30%, with the risk of unaffordability for 10% of potential recipients.

The lack of a transparent monitoring and evaluation system also weakens the effectiveness of the program, which shows weak coordination between educational institutions, ministries, and social services. In addition, limited quotas are also an obstacle.

**Table 3** Number of KIP-K registrants from 2022 to 2025

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
Quantity	713.8 thousand students	994.3K Students	1.1 million students	1.1 million students

Based on the table above, the number of KIP-K registrants from 2022 to 2024 will increase and stabilize in 2025. However, the quota provided still far exceeds the capacity of the recipients. This indicates that there is a huge demand for higher education, but the state has not been able to respond proportionately.

On the other hand, the implementation of State University Operational Assistance (BOPTN) has not been fully effective as the main support for higher education financing. Instead of reducing the dependence of state universities on student tuition fees, the portion of BOPTN is relatively stagnant and even tends to decrease when accounting for inflation and increasing operational costs.

From 2020 to 2021, BOPTN funds for state universities (PTN) reached IDR 4.67 trillion with an absorption of 97.7%. However, this amount only accounts for about 1% of the overall education budget in the state budget, and covers less than 30% of the average operating costs per student. Until 2024, the allocation figure will increase to IDR 6.62 trillion for 125 PTNs (including PTNBH and vocational), as well as IDR 615 billion for PTKIN and IDR 772 billion for PTKL which are used as samples. However, this percentage is still at 1.1% of the total education ceiling of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The disparity between PTNs can be seen from the low average BOPTN per student, which is IDR 2.9

million/year at the Ministry of Education and Culture, in contrast to PTKL in 22 other ministries/institutions which reached IDR 32.8 trillion overall. The insensitivity of the distribution scheme to economic inequality between regions has also widened the funding gap between universities.

This imbalance also arises due to the inconsistent distribution based on standard costs among PTNs, PTKINs, and PTKLs, which makes PTNs in eastern and remote areas get a smaller share compared to PTNs in Java. Research shows that the realization of BOPTN 2021 has a positive relationship with the financial health of state universities, but this difference reduces the competitiveness of smaller institutions. Between 2020 and 2024, the state budget savings policy will reduce the portion of allocation, exacerbating the access gap for underprivileged students despite the KIP Lecture program.

In addition, the situation is strengthened by the policy of university independence within the framework of the Public Service Agency (BLU) which encourages campuses to seek funding sources abroad. In practice, this orientation shifts the role of universities from social instruments to entities that operate with market logic, so that the burden of financing education is increasingly shifted to students.

This condition creates a constitutional paradox, when the limitation of student assistance through KIP-K is not balanced with the strengthening of institutional funding through BOPTN. As a result, higher education tends to move towards semi-commercialization, making access to education a conditional right to individual economic ability and institutional capacity, rather than as a state-guaranteed public right.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This research reveals that the promise of the constitution in the 1945 Constitution Article 31, which guarantees the right to education and prioritizes 20% of the budget for education, has not been fully realized in the equitable distribution of access to higher education in Indonesia. Overall, the results and discussion show that the problem of access to higher education in Indonesia

*Nazwa Putri Balqis, Talitha Cinta Kurnia, Amanda Dea Moza, Supriyono*

cannot be separated from the imbalance between affirmative policies for individuals and strengthening institutional funding for higher education.

Although budget allocations are met, the small distribution through BOPTN forces universities to rely on high UKT, which widens the social gap and hinders access for low-income families. Aid programs such as KIP-Lecture have positive potential, but implementation dysfunctions such as inaccurate data validation and disproportionate quota allocation reduce their effectiveness.

To close this gap, the government needs to carry out comprehensive policy reforms on budget politics and higher education governance in Indonesia so that the promise of this constitution can still be realized substantially. This can be done by strengthening the distribution of the budget based on real needs and regional economic capacity, reviewing the financial independence policy of universities, strengthening the supervisory and transparent function in education budget politics, reforming the UKT system to be more transparent and fair, expanding the scope and funding of the KIP-Lecture program and improving the data validation system through periodic DTKS updates.

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