

Higher Education Sector and Public Policy : Analysis of Obstacles and Challenges in The Prabowo Era

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INDEXING	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Keyword 1; Public policy Keyword 2; Higher education Keyword 3; Obstacles Keyword 4; Challenges Keyword 5; Sector	The purpose of this paper is to explain public policy in the higher education sector. This research method uses descriptive analysis with literacy comparisons and triangulation methods. The results of this study indicate that public policy in the higher education sector plays an important role in determining the direction, quality and equitable access to education. Literacy analysis and triangulation of higher education policies in various countries have similarities in terms of improving quality, relevance to the needs of the world of work, and equitable access, but there are differences in financing approaches and governance models. Overall, effective public policies in the field of higher education must pay attention to quality access, inclusiveness, and sustainability to answer the challenges of globalization and technological development.

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INTRODUCTION

Public policies in Indonesia are being watched by the public, especially policies in the higher education sector (Gaus, 2019). With the topic of public policy in the higher education sector, it is very necessary to explain it more deeply, especially in the context of changes in national leadership (John *et al*, 2018). This is important because the direction of public policy is strongly influenced by the vision, mission and development priorities of the country's leaders.

Some previous studies with the same topic include Mulyani (2024), Rosyida, Sa'diyah, dan Aziz (2025), Adiatma dan Nursafitra (2023), Siregar (2021), Simatupang dan Yuhertiana (2021). Although they discuss higher education policy, these studies have different approaches. This research uses a literature study method with a comparative approach to the policies that have been, are being, and are likely to be implemented in the Prabowo Subianto administration.

The striking difference between this research and previous studies lies in the year of study and the research methods used. This research is a literature review and analytical, while previous studies are more descriptive or field study-based. This study does not only explain the public policies of the higher education sector, but also analyzes the obstacles and challenges that are likely to be faced in their implementation during Prabowo's leadership era.

The purpose of this research is to provide a deeper understanding of higher education policy in Indonesia, particularly in the context of the new government. This research will examine how higher education policy is directed, the structural and social barriers that arise, and the main challenges that have the potential to affect policy effectiveness in the Prabowo era. This analysis is expected to contribute to the development of policies that are more responsive and inclusive to the needs of society and education in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Policy

Public policy is an attempt to organize the management of resources in the public interest, i.e. the community. The process involves the interaction between different ideas, ideologies, and interests within the country's political system. Policies are tools that governments use to operate in sectors such as transportation, education, health, and others, with the intention of having a positive impact on people's lives (Mulyani, 2024). Not all policies are implemented through laws or regulations, although every law or regulation is considered a policy. In this context, public policy aims to preserve individual rights and improve public welfare, especially in the education sector (Okafor *et al*, 2025). When education is considered as a component of public policy, in accordance with the ideal relationship between education policy and public policy, education is considered an integral part of public policy (Arfan *et al*, 2024).

According to Mulyani (2024), public policy in the field of higher education is a strategic tool used by the government to organize, direct, and manage the higher education system in a country. The importance of this policy cannot be underestimated, given the crucial role of higher education in shaping individuals, society, and the economy. One of the key aspects of public policy in higher education is affordability and accessibility.

Higher Education

Based on the opinion of Adiatma and Nursafitra (2023), higher education is an institution that has been developing for a long time. This institution is responsible for developments in society, considering that graduates from higher education will generally work to build civilization. Higher education institutions are one of the backbones of human resource development in a country. Higher levels of education are associated with higher levels of social justice in society. Higher education institutions face challenges that are always dynamic in accordance with the times but also face various unfavorable challenges such as budget reductions. This has the consequence that higher education institutions need to think about the management that is carried out to be able to continue to run. Management is a management effort carried out in an organization to achieve its goals. This also needs to be done in higher education institutions.

Education Reform

According to Suhra *et al* (2020) and Jiao (2025), education plays the following roles: (1) Preparing and updating the psychological mental devices of citizens to be ready to face a more advanced and changing life by the development and demands of the times, (2) Preparing citizens with skills and work skills needed by society and the workforce, (3) Preparing citizens who have a colorful character and dare to live independently, without

relying on other parties, and (4) developing creative and adaptive abilities to utilize their potential.

Siregar (2021) argues that the ongoing education reform is actually to restore the role of education as everyone should long for the birth of an education system that can raise the dignity of the Indonesian nation high. With the willingness of various parties due to political will, Reformasi is believed to be rolling in the desired direction, even not only stopping reform but also towards transformation.

Higher Education Management

Adiatma and Nursafitra (2023) suggest that higher education management is a process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling in managing higher education institutions with the aim of achieving the goals and objectives set by higher education institutions. Generally, higher education management is carried out with the aim of improving the quality of higher education, increasing competitiveness, increasing efficiency and effectiveness, and maintaining sustainability. Higher education management in a narrower sense, should implement the PDCA management cycle or known as Plan- Do- Check- Act.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The data collection technique was conducted through a literature study that involved analyzing various literature sources related to public policy. It provides a comprehensive and in-depth picture of public policy in the higher education sector, as well as the various obstacles and challenges that emerged during the administration of President Prabowo Subianto. Data sources were obtained from books, scientific journals and relevant policy documents. Data analysis was conducted comparatively by comparing concepts in the literature to find similarities, differences, and relevance in the context of higher education sector policies. The triangulation method was used to test the validity of the data by checking the consistency between sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Higher education in Indonesia is currently experiencing rapid progress compared to the modern era. Of course, this progress comes from relevant policy changes by adjusting the needs of the community. However, the development of education that has been felt by the Higher Education sector still occurs several problems that continue to accompany, one of which is the problem of financing (Secretariat General of the Ministry of Education, 2024). The chaos of the Single Tuition Fee (UKT) has erupted again. Some time ago, Riau University was in the public spotlight, because Sri Indarti, as the Rector of Riau University, reported students who criticized the high UKT. The Ministry of Education and Culture said that the increase in UKT and donation money for the campus was due to the new components charged to students. Several factors that can affect the high and low costs that must be incurred by students can be seen from several things, including history, institutional status, utilization of PTN resources in supporting their activities (Rosyida, 2025).

Impact Analysis of Higher Education Policy in the Prabowo Era

Jihan Makailah (Kompasiana, 2024), explains that the budget efficiency policy implemented by the Prabowo Subianto government has created a major dilemma in the education sector. One of the efficiency measures was to cut the Ministry of Education's

budget by up to Rp8 trillion. This cut had a direct impact on several important programs, including the postponement of the rehabilitation of educational infrastructure and the reduction of the target for Teacher Professional Education (PPG) participants, which was originally planned for 806,000 teachers but was cut by almost half. Furthermore, concerns were also raised regarding the sustainability of performance allowance payments and lecturer certification. Member of Commission X of the House of Representatives, Sofyan Tan, revealed that the proposed allowance of Rp2.5 trillion has not been reflected in the budget structure, even though the number of lecturers who need the allowance reaches more than 80,000 people, and only about 30,000 are accommodated.

Although programs such as the Indonesia Smart Card (KIP) and the Indonesia Smart Program (PIP) are still being implemented, the article emphasizes the paradox in this efficiency policy. On the one hand, the government cut education funding for the sake of austerity, but on the other hand, it formed a cabinet with more ministers than the previous government, which actually increased the budget burden.

This paradox has led to criticism from various parties. Efficiency policies are considered inconsistent and have the potential to sacrifice the education sector, which should be the top priority in human resource development. Policy evaluation and adjustment are needed so that budget efficiency does not undermine the quality and accessibility of higher education in Indonesia.

President Prabowo Subianto's administration has shown a strong initial commitment to the education sector, including higher education. In the Inaugural Cabinet Meeting held at the State Palace on October 22, 2024, President Prabowo emphasized that the education sector would be the highest priority in his administration. In fact, the 2025 education budget allocation is said to be the largest in Indonesia's history (CNBC Indonesia, 2024). This shows an ambitious policy direction and opens up opportunities for the transformation of the higher education system towards a more inclusive and quality one.



Figure 1. Prabowo Era Education
Source: Instagram @investortrust.id (2024)

Challenges Facing The Higher Education Sector

In Qnews.co.id (October 22, 2024), National Coordinator of the Indonesian Education Monitoring Network (JPPI) Ubaid Matraji revealed at least 5 challenges that must be resolved by the Prabowo-Gibran government in the education sector.

- 1) The cost of education is very expensive and unaffordable for the community. Ubaid said, this is felt by the community, both at the primary and secondary school levels, to universities. In the last 5 years, protests and pros and cons due to failing to participate in PPDB (which resulted in expensive private schools) and UKT fees have always colored the education sector every year. The majority of people are hampered by economic factors. Based on the records and reports submitted to JPPI during 2014-2024, there are many reasons why children do not/drop out of school.
- 2) The quality of schools is still very concerning. When reflecting on Pisa data from 2015-2022, Indonesia's score has not increased, but has consistently decreased (OECD, 2015-2022). Specifically in the field of mathematics, from 386 slipped to 366. While in the field of science, from the initial 403 turned into 383.
- 3) The emergency of violence in schools that seems to be ignored. Although violence prevention regulations and task forces have been established in various regions and in schools, it has not been able to dispel the trend of violence in schools. Based on JPPI monitoring in the last 5 years (2020-2024), the trend of violence in schools has actually increased. Meanwhile, data compiled by JPPI, as of September 2024, showed that there were 293 cases of violence in schools. When viewed from the number, there is an increasing trend in each year. The type of violence in general is dominated by sexual violence, reaching 42%. Followed by cases of bullying (31%), physical violence (10%), psychological violence (11%), and policies that contain violence (6%). In cases of sexual violence, most victims are still women, 78%. While male victims were only 22%.
- 4) Character education in schools seems to be running in place. In the last 10 years, there is no data that shows an increase in the level of character education in schools. The 2023 Education Integrity Assessment Survey (SPI) shows that the national education integrity index is still at a low level. The higher the level of education, it turns out that the integrity reflected in character, ecosystem, and compliance has shown the opposite, namely getting lower.
- 5) The rise of extortion and corruption in schools. Educational institutions should be free from corrupt practices. Ironically, education management in Indonesia has turned into a wetland for corruption. ICW data shows that there were 424 corruption cases from 2015 to 2023 with a potential state loss of 916.67 billion rupiah. This is related to cases of procurement of goods and services in schools. In addition, SPI Education 2023 data also shows that 25% percent of school residents stated that they knew that prospective students were accepted because they gave rewards to the school.

Higher Education Policy and Innovation

Higher education innovation initiatives are holistic efforts to utilize all sources and potential assets to drive sustainable innovation growth. Explicitly, the four documents highlight that educational innovation capabilities will be achieved at least through: (1) building capabilities to achieve organizational and administrative excellence, (2) identifying potential knowledge assets that can be “exploited” for higher education innovation growth, and (3) developing spatial learning environments accompanied by the design of learning

experiences through research and development. What innovations should higher education do to respond to change. In much of the literature, there is little doubt that the higher education sector must change, even though change is expensive and not easy. Several alternative innovations are offered to build institutional capabilities, including (1) building a higher education paradigm: life-based learning, (2) mental models (mindset) of higher education, (3) learning approaches, (4) curriculum redesign, (5) learning landscape redesign, and (6) network system redesign and ICT management.

CONCLUSION

Public policy in the higher education sector in the Prabowo era shows a commitment to improving the quality and access to education, but is still faced with various obstacles such as cost inequality, budget efficiency that has not been targeted, as well as challenges to system reform and governance. To respond to the challenges of globalization and future human resource needs, higher education policies must be inclusive, adaptive, and oriented towards equity and sustainability.

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