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# The Urgency of Eliminating Basic Education Fees in Reducing the School Dropout Rate In Bekasi City (A Study on Government Regulation No. 47 of 2008 on Compulsory Education)

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Abstract: Education is the fundamental pillar guiding a nation's development and serves as an investment for creating quality human resources. Various efforts have been made by the government to improve the quality and equity of education, one of which is the elimination of education costs through the compulsory education program. This study aims to examine the urgency of eliminating basic education fees in reducing dropout rates, focusing on how well the compulsory education program has been implemented. The research method used in this study is empirical legal research, with data analysis based on George C. Edwards III's policy implementation theory (1980), using a sample from one region in Indonesia, namely Bekasi City. The results show that the elimination of basic education fees has not been properly implemented due to the involvement of certain individuals in several schools who hinder the execution of the compulsory education program through uniform costs and other charges explicitly prohibited by existing regulations. Therefore, there is a need for government-led socialization, guidance, and assistance to the community, as well as increased budget allocations for educational aid, more schools, and joint evaluations between the government and society to achieve an effective compulsory education program that reduces dropout rates.

Keyword: Education Costs, Dropout Rates, Basic Education.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is a right for all Indonesian citizens, as clearly stated in the constitution. The fulfillment of education is carried out through the implementation of school processes for formal education and through additional lessons outside school hours for informal education. Paulo Freire argued that education is about humanizing humans based on their culture, so they act in accordance with their cultural values (Salim Hani & Ilham, 2021). To receive education, funding, referred to as education costs, is necessary. Education costs refer to all expenditures related to the administration of education. One of the major problems often encountered in the process of educational financing is the issue of operational costs, financing for assessment and learning processes, procurement of facilities and infrastructure, as well as their repair and

maintenance, and finally, financing related to the National Education Standards (SNP) set by the government (Apriyani et al., 2022).

The fundamental milestone for the direction of a country's development is based on the quality of education. Insufficient education will lead a country to lag behind; in other words, a country with a highly educated population will have a rapidly growing economy (Sudarmono et al., 2021). Therefore, financing is needed for the education process, and the state accommodates the financing of basic education in its entirety based on Article 31, Paragraph 2 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states, "Every citizen is obliged to attend basic education and the government is obliged to fund it," meaning that the implementation of basic education is clearly the responsibility of the government.

The education financing guaranteed by the government, in reality, is often just rhetoric that is not well-implemented in several regions, such as Bekasi City. The rhetoric outlined in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia is also reflected in Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, and further elaborated in Government Regulation No. 47 of 2008 on Compulsory Education, which in Article 1 states, "Compulsory education is the minimum education program that must be followed by Indonesian citizens, which is the responsibility of the Government and local governments." This means that the compulsory education program is entirely the government's responsibility. Therefore, both the central and local governments must ensure that through the compulsory education program, Indonesian children, as the future generation, receive quality education in a fair and equitable manner. The compulsory education program aims to improve access and equity in quality basic education services that are accessible to all segments of society (Hasanah, 2014).

Based on data from Susenas 2023, the national education completion rates are as follows: 97.83% for elementary school/equivalent, 90.44% for junior high school/equivalent, and 66.79% for senior high school/equivalent (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). This shows a significant disparity between the completion rates for elementary, junior high, and senior high education. Therefore, it can be said that the overall implementation of the compulsory education program needs to be reviewed.

Bekasi City is one of the regions in West Java Province that runs the compulsory education program and is part of the autonomous regions, including education. In 2023, the population of Bekasi City, based on SP2020 projections, was estimated at 2.63 million people, with 1.32 million men and 1.31 million women .(Penyusun/Compilers, 2024). From this population data, 1,349 children are reported to have dropped out of school, based on the Data Pokok Pendidikan (Dapodik) for the 2020/2021 academic year provided by the Bekasi City Education Office. Thousands of children who dropped out of school are from elementary and junior high school levels, with the following breakdown: 342 children from public elementary schools, 303 children from private elementary schools, 257 children from public junior high schools, and 446 children from private junior high schools. According to reports, the causes of school dropouts include parental neglect of education and economic factors .(Arfian, 2021). In other words, the educational financing outlined in the laws and regulations deserves to be reconsidered.

#### **METHOD**

This research is an empirical legal study. Empirical legal research is focused on primary data (field research results), through direct interviews with the Bekasi City Education Office and school representatives. This research employs a socio-legal approach used to analyze issues related to educational financing in the compulsory education program. To support this empirical research, normative research with a regulatory approach is also used to trace and examine laws and regulations related to educational financing in the compulsory education program in Indonesia, with a particular focus on Bekasi City.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

## Regulation of the Compulsory Education Program in Bekasi City

"Compulsory" refers to an obligation that, if not carried out, will have legal sanctions for anyone who violates the agreed-upon rules. "Learning" refers to relatively permanent behavior or behavioral potential as a result of reinforcement through practice. Therefore, compulsory education can be concluded as the minimum educational program that must be followed by Indonesian citizens, with the responsibility lying with the government and local governments .(Hidayah, 2021). Meanwhile, the 12-year compulsory education is understood as the obligation for children aged 7-18 to receive basic education from Elementary School, Junior High School, and Senior High School. This aligns with Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which states that the education levels in Indonesia are divided into three: Basic Education, Secondary Education, and Higher Education. Compulsory education is organized to provide the widest possible opportunity for Indonesian citizens to receive education.

The 12-year compulsory education program in Bekasi City is implemented based on Governor Regulation (Pergub) No. 165 of 2021 on Technical Guidelines for the Provision of Regional Education Operational Costs for Senior High Schools, Vocational High Schools, and Special Needs Schools in West Java Province, as well as Bekasi City Regional Regulation No. 11 of 2023 on Education Management and Implementation. These two legal frameworks explain how education funds are allocated to educational units and outline the implementation process of the compulsory education program in Bekasi City.

The planning of the 12-year compulsory education program has been carefully considered to achieve a competitive education system in Bekasi City in the era of globalization, with the government's aim to improve graduation rates for Bekasi City residents. This is based on Governor Regulation (Pergub) No. 165 of 2021 on Technical Guidelines for the Provision of Regional Education Operational Costs for Senior High Schools, Vocational High Schools, and Special Needs Schools in West Java Province, and Bekasi City Regional Regulation No. 11 of 2023 on Education Management and Implementation. It is important to note that these regulations accommodate all provisions of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System and Government Regulation No. 47 of 2008 on Compulsory Education.

### **School Dropout Rates in Bekasi City**

Table 1. Number of Dropout Students in Public and Private Elementary Schools in Bekasi City

No.	Region	Issued	Resign	Drop Out	Amount
1	Bantargebang	29	11	6	46
2	Bekasi Barat	18	35	0	53
3	Bekasi Selatan	14	39	32	85
4	Bekasi Timur	33	29	0	62
5	Bekasi Utara	53	8	9	70
6	Jati Sampurna	25	19	0	44
7	Jatiasih	58	8	0	66
8	Medan Satria	16	9	9	34
9	Mustika Jaya	13	16	0	29
10	Pondok Melati	37	19	0	56
11	Pondok Gede	24	28	13	65
12	Rawalumbu	14	33	0	47
	Amount	334	254	69	657

Source: Bekasi City Education Office collected during the research on October 15, 2024

Based on the data, the number of dropout students for the 2022/2023 academic year was 69. This figure excludes students who were expelled or voluntarily withdrew. If all three categories are combined, the total reaches 657 students.

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Table 2. Number of Dropout and Repeating Students in Public and Private Junior High Schools in Bekasi City

No	Region	Issued	Resign	Dropout	Amount
1	Bantargebang	9	14	0	14
2	Bekasi Barat	13	38	19	70
3	Bekasi Selatan	2	25	0	27
4	Bekasi Timur	13	37	0	50
5	Bekasi Utara	10	58	4	72
6	Jati Sampurna	2	8	0	10
7	Jatiasih	10	81	4	95
8	Medan Satria	7	19	0	26
9	Mustika Jaya	2	54	0	56
10	Pondok Melati	1	26	0	27
11	Pondok Gede	5	14	0	19
12	Rawalumbu	11	72	4	87
	Amount	76	446	31	553

Source: Bekasi City Education Office collected during the research on October 15, 2024

Based on the data, the dropout rate in Bekasi City was 31 students. When combined with expelled and voluntarily withdrawn students, the total reaches 553. This indicates a significant number of children not continuing their education.

Table 3. Number of Dropout Senior High School Students in West Java Province for the 2022/2023 Academic Year

Number of High School Dropouts in West Java			
Province	District/City	Amount	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Bogor	66	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Sukabumi	82	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Cianjur	44	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Bandung	26	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Garut	100	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Tasikmalaya	78	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Ciamis	3	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Kuningan	9	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Cirebon	7	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Majalengka	3	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Sumedang	0	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Indramayu	80	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Subang	24	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Purwakarta	5	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Karawang	7	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Bekasi	9	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Bandung Barat	79	
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Pangandaran	1	
Jawa Barat	Kota Bogor	0	
Jawa Barat	Kota Sukabumi	13	
Jawa Barat	Kota Bandung	10	
Jawa Barat	Kota Cirebon	1	
Jawa Barat	Kota Bekasi	38	
Jawa Barat	Kota Depok	3	
Jawa Barat	Kota Cimahi	1	

Jawa Barat	Kota Tasikmalaya	0
Jawa Barat	Kota Banjar	1
	Amount	688

Source: Center for Data and Information Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (KEMENDIKBUDRISTEK).

(https://data.kemdikbud.go.id/dataset/p/peserta-didik/jumlah-siswa-putus-sekolah-sma). Diunggah 15 Oktober 2024.

Table 4. Number of Dropout Senior High School Students by Region in West Java Province for the 2022/2023 Academic Year

Number of High School Dropout Rates Based on Provinces in Indonesia		
No Province Amount		
1	Aceh	299
2	Sumatera Barat	1263
3	Sumatera Utara	241
4	Riau	232
5	Jambi	191
6	Sumatera Selatan	397
7	Bengkulu	119
8	Lampung	261
9	Kep. Bangka Belitung	23
10	Kepulauan Riau	61
11	DKI Jakarta	337
12	Jawa Barat	688
13	Jawa Tengah	166
14	DI Yogyakarta	5
15	Jawa Timur	842
16	Banten	342
17	Bali	21
18	Nusa Tenggara Barat	919
19	Nusa Teenggara Timur	596
20	Kalimantan Barat	167
21	Kalimantan Tengah	104
22	Kalimantan Selatan	62
23	Kalimantan Timur	75
24	Kalimantan Utara	16
25	Sulawesi Utara	154
26	Sulawesi Tengah	270
27	Sulawesi Selatan	924
28	Sulawesi Tenggara	211
29	Grontalo	168
30	Sulawesi Barat	82
31	Maluku	262
32	Maluku Utara	103
33	Papua	402
34	Papua Barat	72
Amount	Overseas	16
	Indonesia	10091

Source: Center for Data and Information Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (KEMENDIKBUDRISTEK).

(<a href="https://data.kemdikbud.go.id/dataset/p/peserta-didik/jumlah-siswa-putus-sekolah-sma">https://data.kemdikbud.go.id/dataset/p/peserta-didik/jumlah-siswa-putus-sekolah-sma</a>). Diunggah 15 Oktober 2024.

Table 5. Number of Dropout Vocational High School Students in West Java Province for the 2022/2023

Academic Year

Academic Tear		
Number of High School Dropout Rates in West Java		
Province	District/City	Amount

Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Bogor	328
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Sukabumi	248
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Cianjur	184
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Bandung	89
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Garut	95
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Tasikmalaya	20
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Ciamis	19
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Kuningan	48
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Cirebon	129
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Majalengka	13
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Sumedang	4
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Indramayu	41
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Subang	67
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Purwakarta	9
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Karawang	46
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Bekasi	89
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Bandung Barat	38
Jawa Barat	Kabupaten Pangandaran	13
Jawa Barat	Kota Bogor	10
Jawa Barat	Kota Sukabumi	0
Jawa Barat	Kota Bandung	22
Jawa Barat	Kota Cirebon	3
Jawa Barat	Kota Bekasi	35
Jawa Barat	Kota Depok	22
Jawa Barat	Kota Cimahi	8
Jawa Barat	Kota Tasikmalaya	8
Jawa Barat	Kota Banjar	7
	Amount	688

Source: Center for Data and Information Technology, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (KEMENDIKBUDRISTEK).

(<a href="https://data.kemdikbud.go.id/dataset/p/peserta-didik/jumlah-siswa-putus-sekolah-smk">https://data.kemdikbud.go.id/dataset/p/peserta-didik/jumlah-siswa-putus-sekolah-smk</a>). Diunggah 15 Oktober 2024.

Table 6. Number of Dropout Vocational High School Students by Region in West Java Province for the 2022/2023 Academic Year

Number of High School Dropout Rates Based on Provinces in Indonesia		
No	Province	Amount
1	Aceh	169
2	Sumatera Barat	2283
3	Sumatera Utara	252
4	Riau	253
5	Jambi	68
6	Sumatera Selatan	274
7	Bengkulu	198
8	Lampung	127
9	Kep. Bangka Belitung	51
10	Kepulauan Riau	8
11	DKI Jakarta	192
12	Jawa Barat	1595
13	Jawa Tengah	652
14	DI Yogyakarta	20
15	Jawa Timur	1645
16	Banten	580
17	Bali	34
18	Nusa Tenggara Barat	661

	Indonesia	12404
Amount	Overseas	0
34	Papua Barat	75
33	Papua	294
32	Maluku Utara	107
31	Maluku	49
30	Sulawesi Barat	356
29	Grontalo	149
28	Sulawesi Tenggara	221
27	Sulawesi Selatan	528
26	Sulawesi Tengah	199
25	Sulawesi Utara	158
24	Kalimantan Utara	16
23	Kalimantan Timur	55
22	Kalimantan Selatan	121
21	Kalimantan Tengah	105
20	Kalimantan Barat	223
19	Nusa Teenggara Timur	686

Sumber: Pusat Data dan Teknologi Informasi KEMENDIKBUDRISTEK

(<a href="https://data.kemdikbud.go.id/dataset/p/peserta-didik/jumlah-siswa-putus-sekolah-smk">https://data.kemdikbud.go.id/dataset/p/peserta-didik/jumlah-siswa-putus-sekolah-smk</a>). Diunggah 15 Oktober 2024.

Based on the data, the number of school dropouts at the senior high school (SMA) level in Bekasi City is 36 students, while at the vocational high school (SMK) level, there are 35 students. In total, the dropout rate for SMA and SMK levels in Bekasi City is 71 students. On the other hand, since senior high education is under the jurisdiction of the province, in this case, West Java Province, the data shows that the total number of SMA dropouts in West Java Province is 688, while for SMK, it is 1,595. In other words, the dropout rate in West Java is quite high, and the province is one of the top three with the highest dropout rates at the SMK level, after North Sumatra and East Java. At the SMA level, West Java ranks fifth for the highest dropout rates, after North Sumatra, South Sulawesi, West Nusa Tenggara, and East Java. This situation becomes a consideration for improving education in Bekasi City. Based on this, it can be said that the 12-year compulsory education program in Bekasi City requires further in-depth review for its implementation.

### **Educational Financing**

At the elementary and junior high school levels, education costs are borne by the government, including the central government, local government, provincial government, and city/district government. According to Article 49 of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, it states that education funds, excluding teacher salaries and official education expenses, must be allocated at least 20% of the State Budget (APBN) in the education sector and at least 20% of the Regional Budget (APBD). This means that educational funding comes from the APBN and APBD, but it is directly managed by the Bekasi City government, unlike SMA funding, which is managed by the provincial government.

At the elementary school level, no contributions or fees are applied, but upon closer examination, some schools have violated this by selling sports uniforms (training gear), name tags, batik uniforms, hats, and ties as school supplies, which is clearly prohibited by existing regulations. This places a burden on some families, as allowing parents to purchase their own uniforms would simplify financial access for each family. If the school mandates payment for uniforms, the cost would inevitably be higher. Such issues become a point of consideration for both the government and the public regarding the essence of the compulsory education program, which should make access to education easier for the community.

At the junior high school level, there are no monetary contributions or fees. Contributions from the community are not always in monetary form but may include things like student work, extracurricular support, and so on, especially to support the implementation of the current independent curriculum at the junior high school level. However, certain school uniforms must be provided for students to participate in the learning process, such as batik uniforms, belts, hats, name tags, and headscarves for Muslim students. This indicates that the compulsory education program is not truly free. Additionally, honorary teachers become a new burden for the community, as they are paid from contributions made by parents, even though they should be funded by the government through the School Operational Assistance (BOS) program. This should be a major consideration for the government when implementing the compulsory education program, where policies are good but implementation is lacking.

At the senior high school level, there is still a strong reliance on community contributions. If the government were to bear the full cost, the educational process would not proceed. Initially, mandatory education contributions (SPP) were imposed, with set amounts and deadlines. Over time, due to complaints, SPP was replaced with voluntary contributions, which are not regulated in terms of amount or deadline but still apply to all parents. One way to cover the shortfall in funding at the senior high school level is through voluntary contributions from parents.

# Analysis of the Urgency of Freeing Basic Education Costs in Reducing the School Dropout Rate in Bekasi City

Socioeconomic status is often used as an indicator of welfare and influences behavior, including decisions related to schooling. Household economic factors play a crucial role in determining an individual's education level. While there are various educational assistance programs like BOS (School Operational Assistance), these are still insufficient, as there are many other expenses that need to be covered for the continuation of education. The 12-year compulsory education program still has potential for misuse by some individuals, as some schools do not fully implement the program as mandated by regulations (Hayati, 2019). The most important issue in education management that must be considered is financing, which is an essential element that must be available. According to Article 49 of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, education funds, excluding teacher salaries and official education expenses, must be allocated at least 20% from the APBN for the education sector and at least 20% from the APBD. This shows that the government has allocated education funds as part of its commitment to the compulsory education program.

Education budgets from the APBN and APBD are distributed for the sustainability of the compulsory education program through the BOS and BOSDA programs. BOS is a government program for non-personnel funding for basic and junior high schools, as well as senior high schools, as part of the 12-year compulsory education program. BOS funds are provided for school operations to facilitate basic and secondary education. BOS funding includes BOP PAUD, BOS, and BOP Kesetaraan. The schools that receive BOS include SD, SDLB, SMP, SMPLB, SMA, SMALB, SLB, and SMK. BOS is divided into regular BOS and performance BOS, based on the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 63 of 2022 on the Guidelines for Managing BOS.

Based on existing regulations, it can be said that BOS exists to alleviate the financial burden on communities for the 12-year compulsory education program in Bekasi City. However, it should be noted that BOS and BOSDA are not directly given to students or their parents, as the funding goes to the schools for operational purposes. This means that BOS is the main hope for supporting funding for the 12-year compulsory education program in Bekasi City.

Bekasi City's 12-year compulsory education program is regulated by the Governor Regulation (Pergub) No. 165 of 2021 on Technical Guidelines for Regional Education

Operational Costs for Senior High Schools, Vocational High Schools, and Special Needs Schools in West Java Province, as well as the Bekasi City Regional Regulation No. 11 of 2023 on Education Management and Implementation. Articles 107 and 122 of the Bekasi City Regional Regulation No. 11 of 2023 state that educators and school committees are prohibited from:

- a. Selling textbooks, teaching materials, school uniforms, or school uniform materials in the education unit.
- b. Charging for private tutoring or lessons from students or their parents.
- c. Undermining the integrity of student learning assessments directly or indirectly.
- d. Undermining the integrity of student admissions directly or indirectly.
- e. Conducting any activities that undermine the integrity of the education unit directly or indirectly.
- f. Collecting fees from students directly or indirectly that are contrary to regulations.

These prohibitions must be adhered to by educational units, as they are accommodated by the BOS and BOSDA programs for elementary, junior high, and senior high schools.

For some schools, these regulations are merely rhetoric wrapped in binding laws. The compulsory education program cannot truly be free because each school context differs. At the senior high school level, there is still a heavy reliance on community contributions. If schools were to rely solely on government funding, education would not continue. Initially, mandatory education fees (SPP) were set with deadlines and amounts, but over time, as complaints arose, SPP was replaced by voluntary contributions, the amount and timing of which are not specified but apply to all parents. One way to make up for funding shortfalls at the senior high school level is through voluntary contributions from parents.

While regulations have outlined the prohibitions related to the implementation of the compulsory education program, schools have not fully implemented what is mandated in the laws due to financial constraints and the involvement of certain individuals within the schools. The people of Bekasi City find it difficult to distinguish between mandatory fees and voluntary contributions. Education fees are mandatory, binding, and have fixed amounts and deadlines, while contributions are voluntary, non-binding, and can take the form of money or services, as stated in Article 1, Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 44 of 2012 on Fees and Contributions in Primary Education Institutions.

Based on these facts, uniform fees and other school-related charges mentioned earlier are forms of disguised mandatory fees, caused either by school management issues or insufficient government funding to meet school needs. All citizens have the right to free basic education, but the term "free" is only rhetoric. In practice, many school-related needs must still be covered by parents, leading to many parents choosing not to send their children to school due to financial limitations. The improper targeting of assistance for the poor is also a major problem. Therefore, this requires significant effort from both the government and the community to ensure that the people of Bekasi City can truly access their right to education.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The urgency of eliminating basic education fees to reduce the school dropout rate in Bekasi City is crucial for the success of an effective 12-year compulsory education program. The failure to implement free education significantly impacts the school dropout rate in Bekasi City, primarily due to economic limitations, which should not be an excuse for not educating children. While regulations state that education costs should be borne by the government, the reality is that in some schools, there are violations in the form of fees for uniforms and other mandatory contributions, which are prohibited by existing laws. In conclusion, government-guaranteed education financing remains a rhetoric that has not been effectively implemented.

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