

Driving Efficiency through Innovative Funding Governance: A Study on Vocational Public Schools

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Abstract

This study investigates how transparency and accountability influence the efficient utilization of the School Operational Grant (BOS Fund) in Indonesian vocational public schools, with school financial reporting introduced as a mediating variable to assess governance effectiveness. Employing a quantitative causal research design, data were collected from 200 vocational schools through structured questionnaires distributed to school principals and BOS fund treasurers. Using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the analysis reveals that both transparency and accountability significantly enhance the effective use of BOS funds, with financial reporting playing a critical mediating role. Schools that maintain accurate and comprehensive financial records demonstrate higher compliance with regulations and reduced instances of mismanagement. These findings underscore the importance of institutionalizing robust financial reporting within school governance frameworks. The study highlights the need for improved financial literacy among administrators, stronger accountability mechanisms, and increased community and stakeholder oversight. By positioning financial reporting as a key link between governance principles and financial outcomes, the research proposes a practical model for funding governance tailored to vocational education. Furthermore, it fills a notable gap in the literature by offering empirical insights into vocational school financing in Indonesia, contributing to the broader discourse on innovative governance and resource efficiency in education.

Keywords

Operational Grant, Public Management Governance, Reporting, Quality of Education, Vocational

Introduction

Vocational education is increasingly recognised as a strategic pillar in achieving inclusive economic growth, reducing youth unemployment, and closing skills gaps between education systems and labour market demands. In many countries, vocational public schools are tasked with delivering not only industry-relevant training but also institutional resilience through sound financial governance. This dual challenge, ensuring relevance and efficiency, has placed growing attention on how public vocational institutions are funded, managed, and held accountable (JinJie, 2023) (Chakraborty & Blackburn, 2013).

In the context of Indonesia, vocational education has undergone substantial transformation in the last decade, marked by decentralisation, school-based management, and the growing role of non-state actors. However, funding governance within vocational schools remains fragmented, often characterised by rigid budget classifications, inconsistent allocations, and weak cost-monitoring systems (Situmeang & Habibi, 2018). These structural limitations not only constrain operational flexibility but also hinder schools' responsiveness to rapid changes in industry needs and regional economic priorities.

Several international studies have underscored the importance of integrated and adaptive governance models in improving institutional efficiency. Pyra (2020), for instance, found that vocational schools in Poland's Lubelskie Voivodeship with clear cost structures and performance-oriented funding mechanisms were more effective in resource utilisation and learning outcomes. Similarly, JinJie (2023) highlighted that governance systems that balance central oversight with local autonomy tend to achieve better alignment between financial inputs and strategic outcomes. These insights affirm that funding governance is not merely a technical concern but a reflection of how institutional incentives, stakeholder roles, and accountability frameworks are structured.

Indonesia presents a unique policy environment in which collaborative governance is becoming increasingly relevant. According to Faisal (2023), the integration of local governments, private industries, and community organisations into school planning and budgeting processes, while still evolving, has the potential to reduce institutional silos and improve service delivery. A complementary study by Syahril (2019) explored the implementation of Permendikbud No. 75 of 2016 concerning the revitalisation of school committees, revealing that empowered community participation in funding decisions can enhance transparency, trust, and the sustainability of school programs. These findings suggest that broadening stakeholder involvement and aligning funding with local performance indicators can offer significant leverage for reforming vocational education governance.

However, the operationalisation of such collaborative and performance-based funding models remains limited and uneven across Indonesia's vocational education system. Challenges such as unequal fiscal capacity across regions, lack of integrated financial reporting systems, and insufficient regulatory incentives continue to constrain progress. In many cases, school-level innovations in funding governance are not systematically documented, evaluated, or scaled, resulting in a gap between policy intention and institutional reality.

Given these dynamics, this study seeks to explore how innovative funding governance can serve as a catalyst for institutional efficiency in vocational public schools. It focuses on three interrelated dimensions: (1) performance-based financing models; (2) cost-accountability mechanisms such as unit cost analysis; and (3) collaborative funding strategies involving schools, government units, industries, and communities. Drawing on comparative international frameworks and empirical cases from Indonesia, this paper offers a conceptual and practical lens through which education policymakers and institutional leaders can design more adaptive, equitable, and transparent funding systems.

By situating the discussion within broader public governance theory and development economics, this study also contributes to the growing discourse on how institutional reforms, particularly in the education sector, can be driven not only by technical adjustments but also by reconfiguring governance relationships. In this regard, strengthening funding governance in vocational schools is not simply about improving efficiency in narrow financial terms, but about enabling schools to become more responsive, accountable, and integrated into their socio-economic environments.

Education is a fundamental pillar of national development, and governments bear the responsibility of ensuring equitable access to quality education for all citizens. In Indonesia, this mandate is enshrined in Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees every citizen the right to education and obliges the state to finance basic education. In line with this commitment, the Indonesian government has adopted several strategic policies to support education financing. Among the most prominent is the School Operational Assistance (BOS) program, a component of the Educational Unit Operational Assistance Fund (BOSP). This program is designed to subsidize non-personnel operational expenses in schools, thereby enhancing both access to and the quality of education at the primary and secondary levels.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Permendikbudristek) has issued regulations to guide the allocation and utilization of these funds, emphasizing the principles of transparency and accountability. Effective management of the BOS Fund is crucial for achieving the program's objectives. Transparency ensures that stakeholders, including parents and the community, are informed about how funds are utilized, fostering trust and collaboration. Accountability requires schools to provide clear and accurate reports on fund usage, adhering to established regulations and standards. Mardiasmo (2018) underscores the importance of these principles in public sector financial management, noting that they are essential for preventing misuse and promoting efficient resource allocation.

Despite the clear regulations and guidelines, challenges persist in the implementation of transparency and accountability in BOS Fund management. Research by Zainudin (2019) and Turmudi et al. (2022) highlights that many schools lack transparency in their financial operations, with limited access to information regarding budget planning and expenditure. This opacity can lead to mismanagement and erode public trust in the educational system. Furthermore, a 2024 report by the Directorate of Vocational High Schools (SMK) indicates that 41% of SMKs do not fully understand the regulations related to BOS and Non-Physical Special Allocation Fund (DAK) management, suggesting a gap in knowledge and capacity that hinders effective implementation.

The absence of robust oversight mechanisms further exacerbates these issues. Wardani et al. (2019), and Muhsin & Mulyanti (2023) identify the lack of community participation and weak regulatory enforcement as significant factors contributing to the misuse of BOS funds. Without active engagement from the community and stringent enforcement of regulations, opportunities for fraudulent activities increase, undermining the objectives of the BOS program.

Given these challenges, it is imperative to examine the level of transparency and accountability in BOS Fund management, particularly in Vocational High Schools (SMKs) in Bogor Regency. Bogor Regency has the highest number of SMKs in Indonesia, according to the Basic Education Data (DAPODIK), making it a critical area for study. Understanding the extent to which transparency and accountability are practiced can provide insights into the effectiveness of the BOS program and inform strategies for improvement.

This study aims to analyze the application of transparency and accountability principles in the management of BOS Funds in SMKs in Bogor Regency. By assessing current practices and identifying gaps, the research seeks to contribute to enhancing the financial governance of schools, ensuring that resources are utilized efficiently and effectively to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. To frame this study, several theoretical perspectives are considered:

1. **Fraud Pentagon Theory:** This theory expands upon the traditional Fraud Triangle by adding two additional factors: capability and rationalization (Mashitoh et al, 2023; Antoni et al., 2024). It posits that fraud occurs when opportunity, pressure, rationalization, capability, and competence convergent. In the context of BOS Fund management, these factors can manifest in various ways, such as inadequate oversight (opportunity), financial pressures (pressure), justifications for misuse (rationalization), lack of internal controls (capability), and insufficient knowledge (competence).
2. **Fraud Control Plan (FCP):** Implementing an FCP involves establishing internal policies, structured management procedures, internal monitoring, and training to prevent and detect fraud. The use of technology can also enhance transparency in fund usage. However, challenges such as limited human resources and resistance to change can impede effective implementation.
3. **Transparency and Accountability in Public Sector Financial Management:** Mardiasmo (2018); Zulfathurrahmah et al. (2024); Wiguna et al. (2024) emphasize that transparency and accountability are fundamental principles in public sector financial management. They ensure that resources are used efficiently and that stakeholders are informed about financial decisions and outcomes (Shofiyati & Shaleh, 2024; Ningrum & Arifin, 2024).
4. **Community Participation and Regulatory Enforcement:** Wardani et al. (2019) and Istiqomah & Abidin (2025) highlight the importance of community involvement and strong regulatory enforcement in preventing misuse of public funds. Active participation from the community and stringent enforcement of regulations can deter fraudulent activities and promote responsible fund management.

Despite the existence of regulations and guidelines, the implementation of transparency and accountability in BOS Fund management remains inconsistent. Studies indicate a lack of understanding and capacity among school administrators, inadequate oversight mechanisms, and limited community involvement. These gaps hinder the effective utilization of BOS Funds and compromise the quality of education.

This study aims to analyze management practices in vocational schools (SMKs) in Bogor Regency, identify the factors contributing to the lack of transparency and accountability, and propose improvement strategies. The findings are expected to inform policymakers and stakeholders in strengthening the governance of educational funds. The management of BOS Funds is a crucial part of Indonesia's education financing system. By examining practices in SMKs, this study contributes to efforts to improve transparency, accountability, and sustainable development in the education sector.

Methods

This study adopts a quantitative research approach using a causal research design to examine the influence of transparency and accountability on the use of School Operational Assistance (BOS) Funds, both directly and indirectly through the mediating variable of school financial reporting. A quantitative approach is employed to statistically test the hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework by using structured data collection and numerical analysis (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023). This approach enables objective measurement of the relationships among the studied variables, enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

The research was conducted in 2024 in Vocational High Schools (SMKs) in Bogor Regency, West Java. This location was strategically chosen due to its status as the regency with the highest number of SMKs in Indonesia, making it a representative area for analyzing BOS Fund management practices at the vocational education level. The sample selection used a purposive sampling technique with specific inclusion criteria:

(1) The school must have more than 200 registered students, and (2) the school must have received BOS funds consistently within the last fiscal year. Based on these criteria, a total of **200** SMKs were selected. The research subjects were individuals directly responsible for school financial management—namely, school principals and BOS fund treasurers—who possess the relevant knowledge and authority over BOS fund planning, reporting, and usage.

Data were collected using a digitally distributed structured questionnaire, which was developed based on validated indicators of transparency, accountability, and financial reporting effectiveness. The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Before distribution, a pilot test was conducted on a small group of respondents to ensure the clarity, reliability, and validity of the instrument.

The data analysis was conducted in two stages:

1. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to summarize the characteristics of the respondents and the distribution of responses across variables.
2. Inferential analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was chosen due to its suitability for complex models involving latent variables and its ability to handle non-normally distributed data and relatively small to medium sample sizes (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

The model was evaluated in two parts:

1. The outer model was assessed for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and instrument reliability.
2. The inner model was tested to examine path coefficients, R-squared (R^2) for predictive relevance, and Q-squared (Q^2) to determine the model's explanatory power.

The findings from this analysis aim to provide empirical evidence on how transparency and accountability, along with the mediating role of financial reporting, affect the effective use of BOS Funds in SMKs. These insights are expected to support the development of more robust, transparent, and accountable financial governance systems in Indonesia's vocational education sector.

Results and Discussion

The respondents in this study are the school principals or BOS treasurers at SMKs in Bogor Regency, West Java. The profile of the respondents who participated in this study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Sample Number of SMKs

Description of the number of students	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0-499	116	58.00
500-999	57	28.50
1000-1499	22	11.00
>1500	5	2.50
TOTAL	200	100.00

Source: Authors' construct, 2025

Table 1 shows the distribution of the number of students in SMKs in Bogor Regency based on four student number categories. From the data, the majority of respondents have a student population between 0 and 499. Specifically, there are 116 SMKs in this category, which represent 58% of the total SMKs recorded in this study. This figure indicates that more than half of the SMKs in Bogor Regency have a relatively small number of students.

Validity Test

Below are the output results of the loading factor for the latent variables of Transparency, Accountability, School Financial Reports, and School Fund Utilization in Smart PLS, as presented in Figure 1.

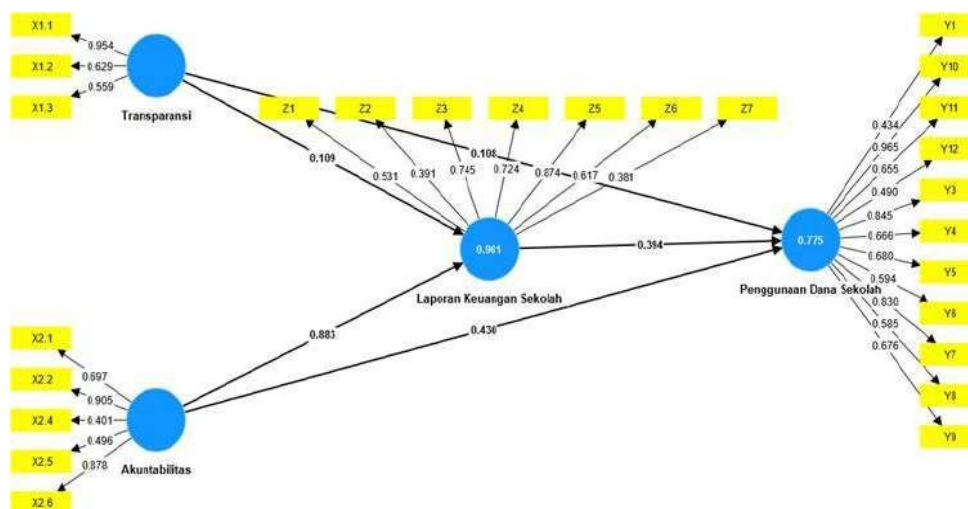


Figure 1. Research Loading Output

Source: Authors' construct, 2025

Based on the factor loading values above, several factor loadings with values below 0.50 are X2.4, X2.5, Z2, Z7, Y1, and Y12. These indicators can be considered valid if the loading factor > 0.30 . This was stated by Hair et al. (2019).

Reliability Test

Based on the reliability output results in Table 2, it can be concluded that each latent variable has good reliability and can measure its construct. This can be seen from the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values greater than 0.7 and the AVE value greater than 0.5

Table 2. Reliability Test: Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable/Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Transparency (X1)	0.730	0.769	0.540
Accountability (X2)	0.724	0.819	0.507
School Financial Report (Z)	0.719	0.812	0.500
School Fund Utilization (Y)	0.884	0.905	0.577

Source: Authors' construct, 2025

Hypothesis Testing

Direct Effect on the PLS SEM Model

Tables 3 and 4 show that the effect of Transparency on School Fund Utilization has a regression coefficient value of 0.108, and Accountability on School Fund Utilization has a regression coefficient value of 0.430. This means that when transparency increases by 1, School Fund Utilization will increase by 0.108, and when Accountability increases by 1, School Fund Utilization will increase by 0.430. Conversely, if transparency and Accountability decrease, School Fund Utilization will also decrease.

Table 3. The Relationship Between Exogenous Latent Variables and Endogenous Latent Variables

Direct Effect Variable	Parameter Coefficient	P Value	Information
Transparency on School Fund Utilization	0.108	0.014	Significant
Accountability on School Fund Utilization	0.430	0.000	Significant

Information: Significant at level 5%

Source: Authors' construct, 2025

Indirect Effect on the PLS SEM Model

Table 4. Indirect Hypothesis Testing Results

Indirect Effect Variable	Parameter Coefficient	P Value	Information
Transparency School Financial Report on School Fund Utilization	0.108	0.014	Significant
Accountability School Financial Report on School Fund Utilization	0.430	0.000	Significant

Information: Significant at level 5%

Source: Authors' construct, 2025

Discussion

This study explores the influence of transparency and accountability on the utilization of School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds in Vocational High Schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan or SMKs) located in Bogor Regency, Indonesia. As public education financing continues to attract national attention, ensuring that funds are managed effectively and equitably has become a crucial concern. In this context, transparency and accountability emerge as central principles in public financial governance, particularly in educational settings where resource allocation directly impacts learning quality and institutional credibility.

The study's findings indicate that both transparency and accountability significantly influence the effective use of BOS funds, both directly and indirectly through the mechanism of school financial reporting. These results reinforce existing literature and align with prior research that highlights the importance of governance principles in enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness of fund management in the education sector.

Specifically, the analysis reveals a statistically significant and positive direct effect of transparency on BOS fund utilization. The structural equation model yielded a parameter coefficient of 0.108, with a T-statistic value of 2.199 and a P-value of 0.014. This empirical evidence confirms the argument made by Sudyartini and Wafa (2024), who emphasize that transparency plays a critical role in improving the governance and management of BOS funds. When schools provide open access to clear, accurate, and timely financial information, such as budget allocations, spending priorities, and reporting outcomes, they promote trust among stakeholders, including parents, educators, policymakers, and the general public. This trust, in turn, helps establish a shared commitment to responsible resource management and creates a positive feedback loop in public school governance.

Moreover, transparency functions not only as a communication tool but also as an instrument of public accountability. By allowing the public and relevant authorities to access and scrutinize financial activities, transparency facilitates an external oversight mechanism that deters mismanagement or fraudulent use of funds. In the school context, this can manifest in various ways, such as community involvement in budget planning meetings, publication of financial reports on school notice boards or websites, and responsiveness to public inquiries regarding fund usage. Such practices enhance institutional legitimacy and encourage educational actors to uphold ethical standards in financial decision-making.

The study also finds that accountability has a highly significant and positive effect on the utilization of BOS funds. The statistical analysis shows a parameter coefficient of 0.430, a T-statistic of 3.528, and a P-value of 0.000. This result aligns with earlier studies by Rakhmawati (2018), Trisnawati (2018), and Jusasni et al. (2023), who argue that accountability is a cornerstone in the effective management of public educational resources. In the context of vocational schools, accountability entails that school principals, treasurers, and other administrative staff are answerable for their decisions and actions concerning financial planning, disbursement, and reporting. When they are held responsible, through audits, performance evaluations, or stakeholder feedback, they are more likely to comply with applicable regulations and guidelines, ensuring that funds are allocated and used in alignment with policy objectives.

Accountability also demands that schools demonstrate not only compliance with formal regulations but also tangible outcomes in line with their strategic goals. This includes providing evidence that financial resources have been used to support teaching and learning activities, infrastructure improvements, student services, and other areas stipulated in BOS fund guidelines. By documenting and reporting such outcomes, schools not only fulfill their legal obligations but also contribute to institutional integrity and long-term educational quality.

Beyond these direct effects, the study uncovers a mediating role played by school financial reporting in the relationship between transparency, accountability, and fund utilization. Both transparency and accountability are found to positively influence BOS fund utilization indirectly through the presence and quality of school financial reports, each with a parameter coefficient of

0.043. These findings suggest that financial reporting serves as a crucial link that enhances the effectiveness of transparency and accountability mechanisms. A school that regularly compiles, verifies, and disseminates financial reports provides stakeholders with a structured and comprehensive overview of how public funds are managed, thereby reinforcing both oversight and institutional learning.

However, while financial reporting has a positive mediating effect, its influence is less pronounced than the direct effects of transparency and accountability themselves. This implies that while good financial reporting can support and amplify governance outcomes, it cannot substitute for genuine transparency and accountability practices. Instead, it should be seen as a complementary tool that supports the overall system of school financial governance.

Despite this, the importance of maintaining accurate, timely, and accessible financial reports should not be underestimated. These reports offer a critical source of information for stakeholders, including government regulators, local communities, and education boards, enabling them to monitor compliance, assess performance, and propose improvements. Additionally, consistent reporting helps schools identify internal inefficiencies, improve budget planning, and foster data-driven decision-making.

The findings of this research offer valuable insights for both educational policymakers and practitioners. To enhance the governance of BOS fund utilization, authorities at all levels must invest in institutionalizing transparency and accountability practices. This can be accomplished through several measures. First, the development of standardized guidelines and templates for financial disclosure will help ensure consistency and clarity across schools. Second, regular audits, both internal and external, can reinforce accountability and deter malfeasance. Third, training programs aimed at building the financial literacy and management skills of school administrators will enhance their capacity to apply governance principles effectively.

Equally important is the need to engage a broader range of stakeholders in the financial governance process. Teachers, parents, community leaders, and student representatives all have valuable perspectives that can inform budgetary priorities and hold institutions accountable. Encouraging their active participation through school committees, transparency boards, or participatory planning sessions can foster a more democratic and inclusive governance environment.

Finally, the study underscores the relevance of cultivating an organizational culture that values integrity, openness, and responsibility. Policies alone are insufficient without a shared commitment from school leaders and staff to embody these values in their daily operations. Embedding transparency and accountability into the ethos of educational institutions requires ongoing effort, continuous dialogue, and the willingness to adapt practices in response to feedback and evolving challenges.

Conclusion

This study highlights the pivotal role of transparency and accountability in enhancing the effectiveness of BOS fund utilization in Vocational High Schools (SMKs) in Bogor Regency. High levels of transparency, reflected in open and accessible financial information, encourage stakeholder engagement and minimize the risk of fund misuse. Likewise, strong accountability, demonstrated through detailed and regulation-compliant financial reporting, ensures efficient and goal-oriented fund allocation.

The findings also reveal that financial reporting functions as a mediating variable that strengthens the influence of transparency and accountability on fund utilization. Schools with well-established financial reporting systems are more likely to uphold transparent and accountable financial practices, thereby enhancing compliance and efficiency.

Importantly, the study shows that while financial reporting plays a mediating role, the direct effects of transparency and accountability on fund utilization are more substantial. Thus, educational institutions must prioritize the implementation of strong governance practices to optimize BOS fund management and ultimately improve educational outcomes.

Nevertheless, challenges remain. Some schools have yet to fully disclose their financial practices, risking diminished public trust. To address this, there is a pressing need to strengthen understanding of regulatory frameworks and enforce more rigorous oversight mechanisms, ensuring that BOS funds are managed transparently, accountably, and in alignment with national education objectives.

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