

# Education and Social Mobility for Orang Asli Papua<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*Human resources issues are complicated in Papua due to the educational barriers that make it difficult for Indigenous Papuans, Orang Asli Papua (OAP), to achieve upward social mobility. Many factors have contributed to these educational barriers, including poverty, conflict and war, a lack of teachers, and poor infrastructure. Ideally, these obstacles should be solved through the Special Autonomy Law (SAL) and the "special autonomy funds" it provides. Although these funds have been provided since 2001 to address inequality and improve human resources in Papua, conditions have not improved significantly. This qualitative study explores the experiences of the Mappi and Puncak OAPs whose educations were financed through these special autonomy funds. This study finds that, although the SAL has reduced educational barriers and increased social mobility for OAPs, there are still some areas that must still be improved. OAPs' experiences show that formal education is a main determining factor in upward social mobility. It also highlights several areas for change: greater support for informal education; equal development on the coast and in the highlands; increased community participation; and strengthening political will.*

**Keywords:** education; social mobility; Orang Asli Papua; special autonomy law

## Introduction

According to Law Number 2 of 2021 concerning Special Autonomy for Papua, Indigenous Papuans—including the people in Papua Province and West Papua Province, internationally known as "West Papuans"—are "people who come from the Melanesian racial group consisting of

Indigenous tribes in Papua" (Titifanue, et al., 2016). In Papua, the easternmost part of Indonesia, most areas are still underdeveloped (Halmin, 2006). History shows that OAPs are the most disadvantaged people in Indonesia's socio-political history due to the social conflicts, state violence, and discrimination that have constantly happened on their land

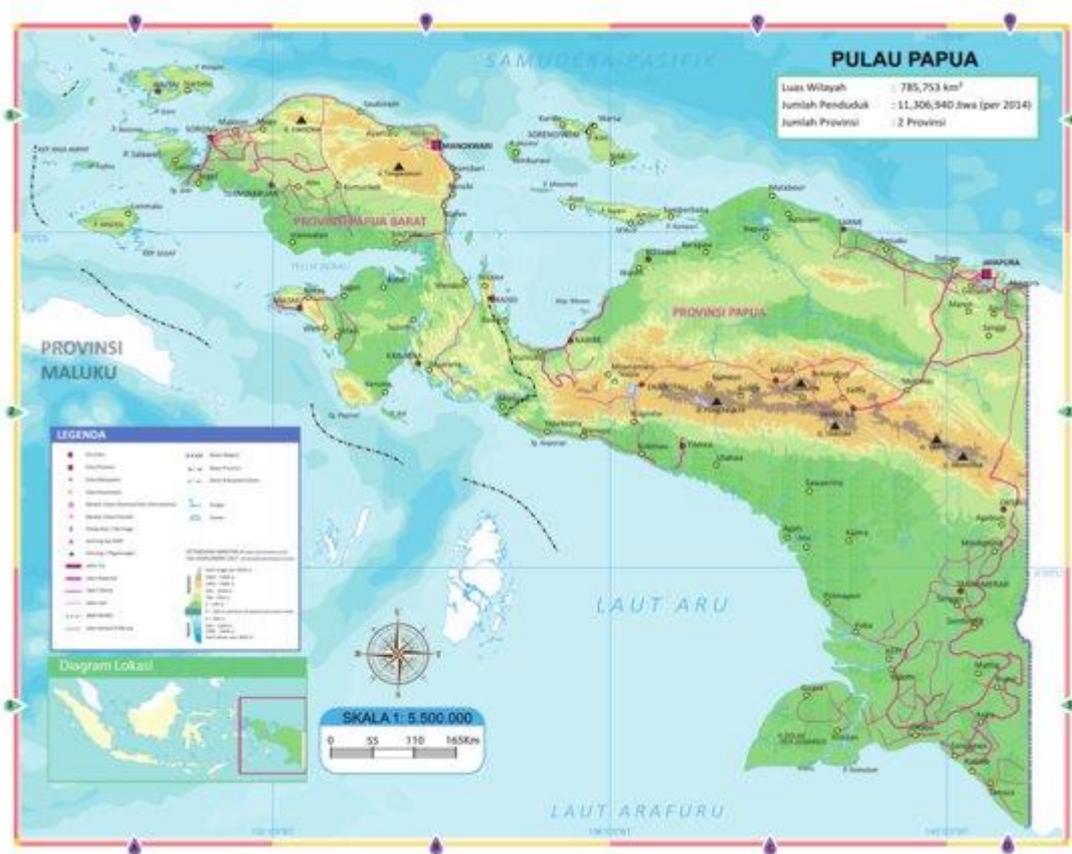
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(MacLeod, 2015; Heidebüchel, 2007). They have thus demanded to separate

themselves from the Republic of Indonesia on various occasions.

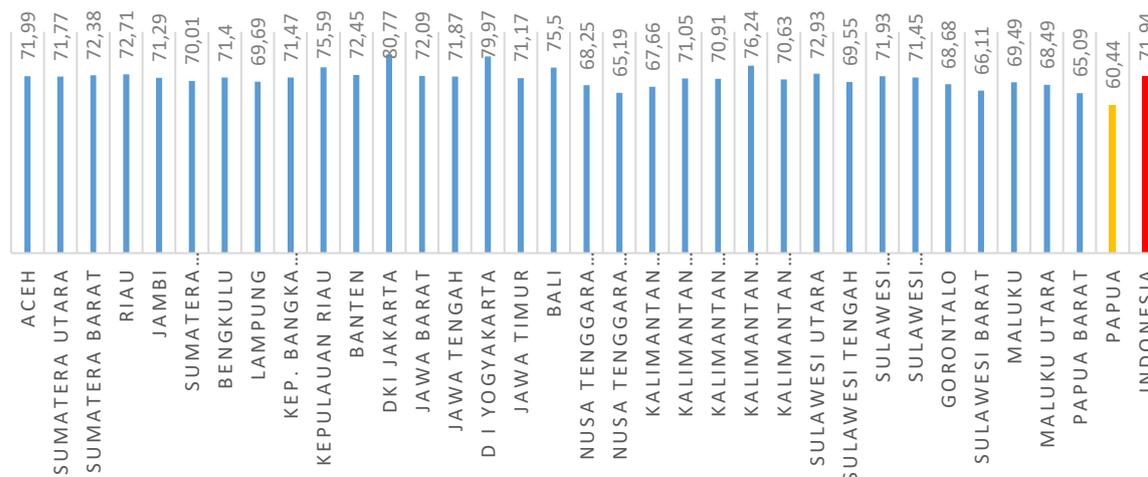
**Figure 1. Maps of Papua Island**



Demands for separation have reduced over the last two decades since the passage of the Special Autonomy Law (SAL), which was created as a political consensus between the Indonesian government and OAPs. The law was designed to focus on the welfare issue of OAPs, mainly through the provision of special autonomy funds (Widjojo & Budiatri, 2012). One of the main points determining the policy's success is realising excellent

human resources through quality education. Education is believed to be a tool for upward social mobility. However, education faces crucial challenges in Papua, such as geographical location, poverty, social conflict, state violence, and human rights violations (Blades, 2020; Elisabeth, 2012). It implies that Papua's low education indicators have detrimentally affected Indonesia's human development index (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. HDI of Indonesia, 2020**



Source: BPS (2021)

Poor human development amongst OAPs is not a new issue in Papua; it has occurred throughout history since the territory was integrated into Indonesia in 1963 (Viartasiwi, 2018; Anderson, 2013; Saltford, 2002). Previously, education had become a major issue in Papua due to the Indonesian government's limited education investment before the reform era, resulting in teacher shortages, poor school infrastructure, and low education performance indicators (Mollet, 2007). This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that OAPs belong to the Melanesian race, whose numbers are lower and who are often regarded as backward, poor, and uneducated (Malik, 2019; Gietzelt, 1989). Some Indonesian people have acted in a racist and discriminatory manner, creating various educational barriers that have alienated them from their social environment and made upward social mobility challenging. For this reason, social policies for Indigenous peoples have been urgently needed to protect, recognize, and affirm the existence of OAPs.

This article understands "Indigenous social policy" as having the precise

meaning provided by the United Nations. According to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), every country in the world is encouraged to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples, both individually and collectively, including the right to education. In addition, the declaration is also in line with the fourth point of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seeks to ensure that all students have the right to receive a high-quality education that is inclusive and fair and lifelong learning opportunities available to all (UN, 2012). The jargon "Education for All", therefore, should reflect education as a human right regardless of background.

Education quality in Papua continues to lag behind that of other provinces in Indonesia, and what education is available is unevenly distributed. According to a study, most highlanders receive a lower quality education than those on the coast (Karim, 2012). In addition, despite receiving government assistance on a significant and consistent basis (in the form of special autonomy funds), local governments have not managed their agendas effectively and

efficiently, resulting in budget inconsistencies, mismanagement, and poor plan execution (Prabowo et al., 2021; KPK, 2021; Agustinus, 2013).

As a result, a welfare approach is required. Such an approach is offered by the Papua Roadmap, a framework created by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) to address the root causes of unresolved problems in Papua, such as history and political status, military operations, marginalization, and development failures (Widjojo et al., 2010). Having laid the groundwork for a "new, peaceful, and fair" Papua, this roadmap provides a comprehensive approach that several ministries and agencies have adopted. However, some issues remain, particularly in the implementation of cross-institutional policies.

At this point, this study examines the relationship between education and social mobility through the learning experiences of two groups of OAPs from the highlands and the coast, both of whom were supported by special autonomy funds. The historical and welfare approaches are used to present the analysis. The findings show, that although formal education has played an essential role in providing OAPs with upward social mobility, other determinants exist.

## Literature Review

There is debate regarding the relationship between education and social mobility. In general, education refers to what is worth learning and how people should learn it, whereas social mobility refers to how individuals or groups move from position to position. According to Blau and Duncan (1967), social mobility is

closely related to "status attainment," where human expansion in education has supported vertical mobility, the causal effect of which can be seen in post-industrial theory (i.e., the OED triangle). Goldthorpe (2014; 2016) adds the concepts of education and socioeconomic class movement to the "OED triangle" theory. Chan and Zhang (2021) highlight the gap in the relationship between education and social mobility, attributing it to the government's failure to investigate the relationship between these things. To achieve upward social mobility, it is necessary to understand historical dynamics and create structural change (Viartasiwi, 2018). These can only be achieved by breaking down barriers, developing hard and soft skills, and making use of determinants other than formal education.

In the context of Papua, Munro (2013) has investigated the Dani tribe, finding that even those who are educated do not necessarily gain an increase in social status, authority, or employment due to limiting factors such as in-migration, primitive stigma, school quality, poor teacher recruitment, and security sector violence. Fatgehipon et al. (2021) further acknowledge that OAPs who receive affirmation scholarships from local governments experience different educational barriers; only a tiny proportion are successful in academic and social life. This failure is influenced by several factors, such as the lack of living allowances, the difficulty finding a place to live that supports the learning process, limited motivation for learning, and the absence of regular assistance and evaluation. It indicates that various inhibiting factors,

both internal and external, can affect social mobility.

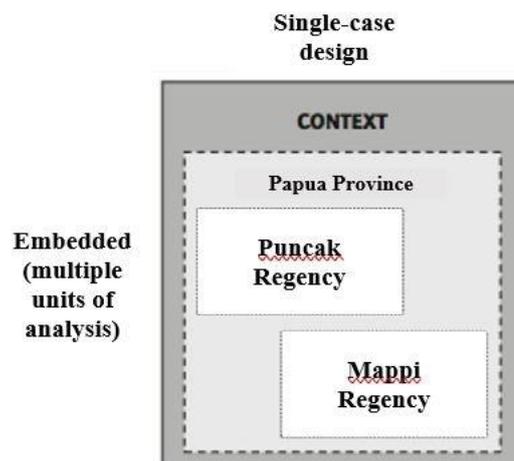
Furthermore, Mollet (2007) has highlighted that education in Papua today does not encourage competition among students, as imbalance exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and there is no comprehensive plan for human resource management. Although the topic of education has been an area of social policy research for many years, attention remains focused on general social policy; little attention has been given to the effect of social policy on Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are the most vulnerable subjects (Li, 2000). Therefore, this study focuses on the effect of social policy (i.e., the SAL) on Indigenous peoples, as well as its ability to reduce barriers to education and improve the social mobility of Indigenous peoples.

### Methodology

This article uses a case study, which Yin (2014) defines as "an empirical inquiry

that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be evident" (p. 16). Case studies aim to examine research questions and problems by recognizing that phenomena cannot be separated from the context in which it occurs. This study uses a descriptive research model to provide solutions to existing problems based on field data. The purpose of this study is to provide a factual and accurate description of the subject being investigated (Sudjarwo & Basrowi, 2009; Nazir, 2011). This model is much more focused than the exploratory model, as the researcher knows enough about Papua to define the propositions, hypotheses, and research questions before commencing research. Thus, this model tries to explain everything that happened while revealing patterns and connections with several relevant theoretical constructs. This is helpful for theoretical development, and thus it is considered an intensive case study (Mills et al., 2010).

**Figure 3. Basic Design for Case Study**



Source: Yin (2009)

This study employs a single case design, following Yin (2009), using two analytical units: Puncak Regency and Mappi Regency, Papua. It aims to explain the relationship between SAL and its influence on education and social mobility. It is expected that the different patterns of OAPs in these regencies would provide different nuances and provide a more holistic understanding of the educational conditions in Papua. Following certain criteria, interviewees were chosen to represent three groups: OAPs, implementers, and policymakers. Each group received an interview session that was ordered based on the priority of the subjects studied. Interviews were conducted with indigenous students from both Puncak and Mappi Regency who could access education through special autonomy funds. The researcher interviewed three implementers of the SAL, representing the Puncak government, the Mappi government, and the UGM Papua Task Force; these actors were expected to explain their experiences in implementing SAL and provide evaluations. Finally, the researcher conducted two interviews with policymakers and experts (academics) involved in planning and developing SAL at the national level. They were expected to tell how SAL was designed to protect Indigenous rights, including education.

### Overview of OAPs

Papua is a complicated land. One of the most protracted conflict zones in modern history, Papua has been under the fragile control of the Indonesian government authority for decades (Chauvel & Bhakti, 2004). Since becoming incorporated into Indonesia in 1963, as confirmed by PEPERA/The Act of Free

Choice in 1969, development has stagnated due to ineffective government intervention at the central and local levels (Saltford, 2002). Likewise, development disparities and perceived injustices have driven a significant desire for separation from Indonesia (Rumansara, 2015). Moreover, there is often distrust among stakeholders (Sugandi, 2008). Thus, if the Indonesian government is determined to maintain Papua as part of Indonesia, it must transform its governance and cultivate public trust.

Such changes should start with state initiatives to become present in the community, where the government is obligated to provide essential services, facilitate accessibility, and respond to social problems experienced by OAPs. Policy complexity can stem from various factors, such as limited control, limited costs, and even political will (Widjojo & Budiatri, 2012; Resosudarmo et al., 2014). The decades of suffering experienced by OAPs, during which they did not feel the presence of the state, must be paid for with adequate social protection programmes designed to promote quality human development (Mollet, 2007; Prabowo et al., 2021). Without a state initiative to protect Indigenous peoples, this very diverse population will only call for the disintegration of the current nation—as seen in previous periods (Singh, 2008).

One benchmark of successful human development is the Human Development Index (HDI), which represents the population's basic capabilities (Hou et al., 2015). HDI is calculated based on three primary dimensions: life expectancy, survival rates, and knowledge levels (BPS, 2021). HDI is strategic for Indonesia, as it measures government performance and

determines the General Allocation Fund (DAU). In the context of Papua, HDI is useful for measuring human capital achievements and determining Papua's level of development compared to other regions (Resosudarmo et al., 2014). According to official statistics, Papua's HDI is the lowest in Indonesia. Furthermore, high disparities are evident between regencies, as seen when comparing Jayapura City (HDI 79.94 highest) with Nduga Regency (HDI 31.55, lowest) (BPS, 2021). Most areas of Papua are considered underdeveloped, and areas with high HDI levels are marked by large levels of migration, such as in Jayapura, Merauke, Nabire, and Timika. Therefore, the development challenges in Papua cannot be taken lightly.

Regardless of the complexity of Papua's problem, all parties agree that social development (especially education) is sorely needed by OAPs (Mollet, 2007; Pentury, 2011; Agustinus, 2013; Prabowo et al., 2021). Social investment, in the form of education, is expected to bring benefits to OAPs. Although the number of OAPs is relatively small, enormous diversity is evident. There are various ethnic groups, cultures, languages, social, organizational structures, leadership systems, religions, and livelihoods. Papua, as a diverse society, has unique characteristics that affect the educational barriers and experiences of the population. Overall, OAPs can be divided into two groups, namely highlanders and coastal people (Rumansara, 2015). To

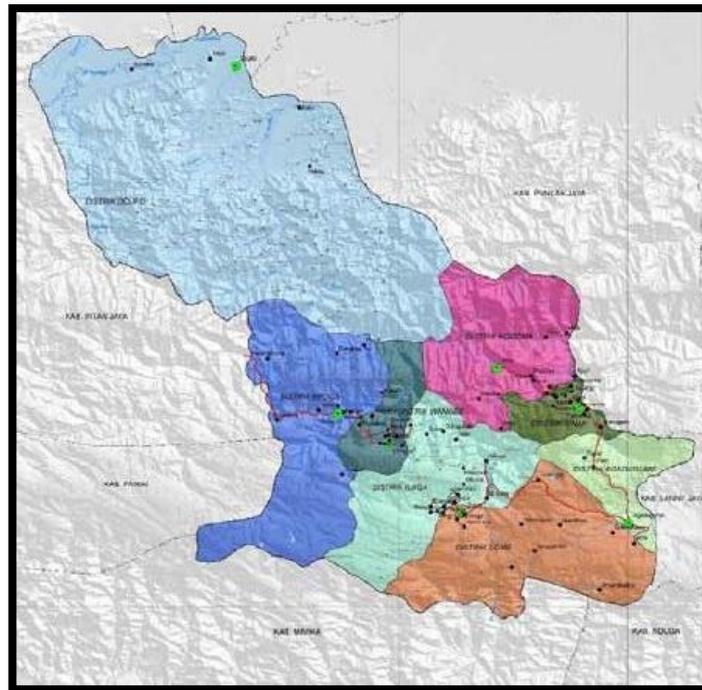
explain their respective findings, the researchers used Puncak Regency to represent conditions in the highlands and Mappi Regency to represent conditions on the coast, as the unit of analysis.

### 1. The Highlands People and Education

Puncak Regency is an autonomous region created out of Puncak Jaya Regency through Law Number 7 of 2008 concerning the Establishment of Puncak Regency in Papua Province. Puncak Regency has an area of 8,055 km<sup>2</sup>, with the capital in Ilaga. Geographically, Puncak Regency is located in the Central Highlands of Papua, with an average height between 500 and 4,000 meters above sea level (Pemda Puncak, 2018).

When first established, Puncak Regency only had eight districts; this increased to 25 districts in 2015. This was done to limit control and bring essential services closer to the community. According to the 2020 Population Census, Puncak Regency had a population of 114,741 people, making it the largest regency in the Central Mountains region (BPS Papua, 2021a, p. 9). In addition, Puncak Regency has a very young population, as seen by its population pyramid. This implies high levels of dependency, with birth rates remaining high despite the limited availability of jobs, low average income, and the lack of quality education for youths (Ginting et al., 2020).

Figure 4. Map of Puncak Regency



Source: Puncak Regency RTRW (Pemkab Puncak, 2012)

According to official statistics, Puncak Regency ranks 28th of the area's 29 regencies/cities in terms of HDI, indicating underdevelopment (BPS Papua, 2020a). This has prompted the Puncak government to improve human resource development through educational policy intervention, with the Puncak government pioneering the usage of special autonomy funds for education. The most advanced scheme, involving the Puncak government and the Papua Task Force of Gadjah Mada University (UGM), was initiated in 2012. As explained to the author:

*"The Puncak government's collaboration with UGM is a more magical scheme for us than any other. There are two types of teacher recruitment: teacher recruitment and sending prospective students to the best universities. Puncak's future excites me, and I cannot wait to see it." (Implementer 1, 2021).*

In particular, the UGM Papua Task Force conducted a preliminary assessment of the basic education needs in the Puncak Regency, mostly related to education indicators and fiscal capacity. Several leading indicators were assessed through the teacher recruitment programme, starting from the number of schools, classrooms, facilities, teachers, and education performance indicators. Other influencing factors must also be considered, such as the distance between settlements and schools, transportation, teachers' homes, socio-cultural conditions of the community, and potential security disturbances. Meanwhile, when sending prospective students, the indicators assessed included the knowledge and expertise required by the Puncak government, the abilities of candidates, and the student coaching models used. Both programmes have considered the Puncak government's financial capacity to run a

high-cost programme. This was explained to the author as follows:

*"UGM has assessed them for its programmes. The result is that Puncak Regency is underdeveloped. We may know that the truth is heartbreaking, but we need to accept it and move forward to address the most challenging issues, even if costs are prohibitive" (Implementer 3, 2021).*

It should be remembered that Puncak Regency is an area where people have had limited access to state actors. Special autonomy funds would be depleted quickly if not managed appropriately. It also shows that, despite limited funds, the Puncak government has considered its policy priorities, and these have included education. A serious commitment, therefore, is necessary.

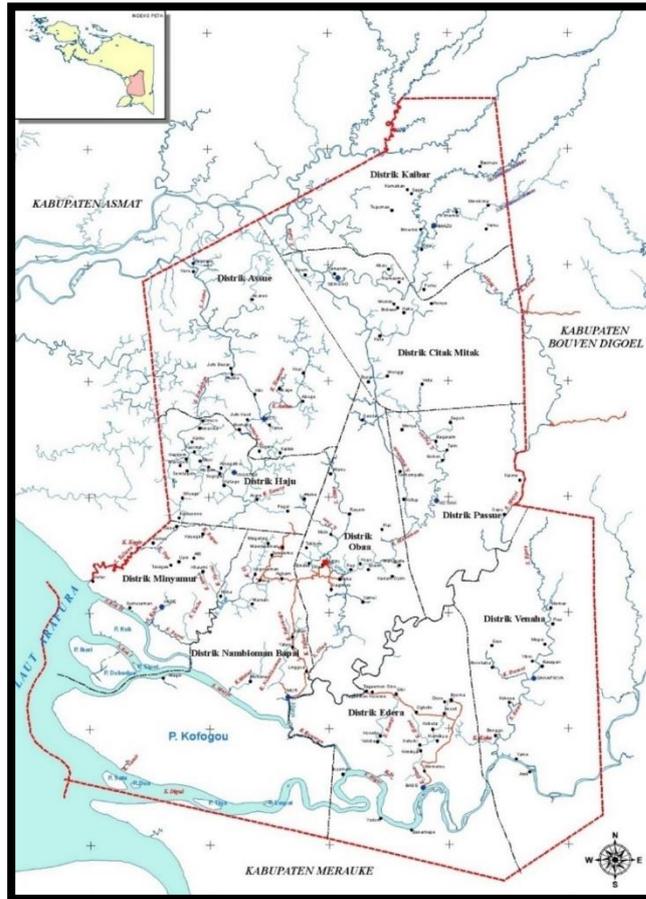
The abovementioned findings highlight the complexities of education governance where the issues revolved around a lack of teachers, inadequate educational facilities, poverty, and conflict. Special autonomy funds, despite their significant size, have been unable to solve the problem immediately. Careful planning was necessary, and thus the collaboration between the Puncak government and the UGM Papua Taskforce was the breakthrough in the education sector (Implementer 1, 2021).

## 2. The Coastal People and Education

Mappi Regency is an autonomous region that was created from Merauke Regency, Papua Province, through Law Number 26 of 2002 concerning the Establishment of Mappi Regency in Papua Province. Mappi Regency, which covers an area of 28,518 km<sup>2</sup>, has its capital in Kepi. The people of Mappi Regency are classified as coastal people, as the regency averages 0 to 1,000 meters above sea level and includes 215 kilometres of beaches, as well as large rivers and swamps. Many rely on traditional means of transportation (*ketinting*), fast boats, and motorcycles (Bappeda Mappi, 2018).

When first created, Mappi Regency consisted of only six districts; this increased to 15 districts in 2015. This was motivated by the increasing accessibility and connectivity among districts. According to the 2020 Population Census, Mappi Regency had a population of 108,295, making it the third-largest regency in the southern part of Papua after the Merauke and Asmat Regencies (BPS Papua, 2021a, p. 9). In addition, Mappi Regency also has an expansive population pyramid, one marked by a large youth population. As such, the dependency ratio of the population is high.

Figure 5. Map of Mappi Regency



Source: RPJMD of Puncak Regency (Bappeda Puncak, 2018); RPJMD of Mappi Regency (Bappeda Mappi, 2018)

Official statistical data shows that Mappi Regency has an HDI of 58.15, being ranked 13<sup>th</sup> out of 29 regencies/cities; however, it is still below the average for Papua Province (BPS Papua, 2020a). Although Mappi's HDI is close to the median, educational standards are insufficient to provide quality and competitive human resources. The Mappi government, therefore, is committed to improving education governance.

After Puncak and Intan Jaya, Mappi Regency was one of the pioneers in the programme to utilize special autonomy funds for education. This can be seen through the cooperation between the

Mappi Government and UGM, fostered by the UGM Papuan Task Force since 2015. As in Puncak Regency, two forms of cooperation were practised: recruiting teachers at the elementary and high school levels and sending prospective students to study at UGM through the affirmative selection route. The UGM Papuan Task Force used the same assessment pattern in Mappi Regency as it did in Puncak Regency. As explained to the author:

*"A few regencies in Papua have inspired us, and we tend to focus on education and improving human capital. This is possible to achieve through collaborative programmes with UGM. They provide assessment,*

recruitment, and measurement. They also help us implement good governance." (Implementer 2, 2021).

Finally, although Mappi Regency existed before Puncak Regency, human development still faced significant obstacles. The distribution of students and schools in certain districts was a challenge; to cross great distances, students relied heavily on traditional modes of transportation called *ketinting*. It shows that the Mappi government needed to consider its policy priorities and ability to

improve human resource quality, despite the limited availability of funding.

The findings of the UGM Papua Task Force were included in the Mappi Regency Short- and Long-Term Development Plan. Its discussion revolved around the same four issues as in Puncak, but with different levels of complexity. Special autonomy funds likewise required careful management to ensure good educational performance. Cooperation between the Mappi government and UGM could provide a positive step forward for education reform in Papua.

**Table 1. Comparison of Barriers to Education Between the Regencies**

No	Indicator	Barriers	
		Puncak	Mappi
1.	Poverty	High poverty rate (36.96% as of 2020); exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which pushed millions of people into poverty. Very low Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP).	High poverty rate (25.04% as of 2020); exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which pushed millions of people into poverty. Low Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP).
2.	Conflict and war	Intense conflict between the Papua separatist movement (OPM) and Indonesian security forces. Inter-clan fighting caused by diverse factors such as politics, infidelity, and revenge.	The regent did not get support from some officials as the education development programme was related to potential conflicts of interest. Inter-clan fighting caused by diverse factors such as politics, infidelity, and revenge.
3.	Lack of teachers	Teacher recruitment for both civil servants and honorary employees does not consider teachers' competence and suitability. Lack of discipline and commitment from teachers when carrying out educational tasks.	Teacher recruitment for both civil servants and honorary employees does not consider teachers' competence and suitability. Lack of discipline and commitment from teachers when carrying out educational tasks.

<p>4. Lack of infrastructure</p>	<p>The education office was not active, and thus education affairs were handled by the Social Service. Minimal educational facilities. Paved roads were found only in Ilaga and a small number of other districts. Locations were far from each other and separated by hilly areas.</p>	<p>Although the Education Office was active, it could not cover everything included in the development plan. Lack of educational facilities. Paved roads were found in only some districts. Locations were far from each other and separated by large rivers.</p>
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Source: RPJMD of Puncak Regency (Bappeda Puncak, 2018); RPJMD of Mappi Regency (Bappeda Mappi, 2018)

### Educational Experiences of OAPs

On October 25, 1925, Pastor Izhak Samuel Kijne provided an important message of Wasior in the history of education in Papua. He described himself as the "Father of Civilization" for OAPs and said: "I carved the Papuan Civilization into this rock. Even if people have exceptional intelligence, reasoning, and wisdom, they are unable to lead this nation currently. This nation will rise and lead itself in the future" (Feneteruma, 2017; Kudiai, 2015). This message contains two meaningful words: "rise" and "leading". The word "rise" refers to the call for OAPs to not sleep, whereas the word "lead" refers to the desire for OAPs to be empowered and manage themselves. Such things could be accomplished through education, which creates social mobility.

Nevertheless, education is a challenging issue in Papua, something that is clear from various community stories about deteriorating school buildings and the lack of teachers and textbooks in remote areas. It is a story that both previous generations and the current generation have felt. The school buildings in Papua's interior in the 1970s are very similar to those there today. With the rise of

government-run public schools in rural areas and the abandonment of boarding-style education, few schools have teaching materials and libraries. Furthermore, the number of teachers has not increased significantly, resulting in the closure of many schools in Papua's interior. Geographic constraints have exacerbated the problem, making access to the internet and telecommunications networks difficult now. It can be traced by interviews with policymakers:

*"The Papua issues are more complex than they seem. The government cannot solve it all alone, and by involving stakeholders, including local governments, academicians, and society, we can create a new paradigm of governing education." (Policymaker 1, 2021).*

*"Special autonomy funds are not enough if they are not supported by collaborative efforts to solve educational barriers, as it results from the interactions of complicated history and structure." (Policymaker 2, 2021).*

Political discrimination is the source of these various educational barriers, which have resulted in economic marginalization and inequity. Many OAPs from low-income

families have been forced to drop out of school and support their families, despite having limited education and job opportunities (Cahill & Beadle, 2013). Several government efforts to raise OAPs' socioeconomic status have been limited to distributing cash to OAPs through village funds, which does not educate OAPs. At the same time, racism (fuelled by negative stigma) has put great pressure on OAPs (Munro, 2020).

Upward social mobility cannot be realized unless OAPs know who they are. They must identify themselves when they face social mobility determinants influenced by history and structural change, as well as general, local, and specialized knowledge. Furthermore, they must be equipped with soft and hard skills to face the challenges of an uncertain era. It is consistent with the Papua Roadmap, which takes a welfare-oriented approach (Widjojo et al., 2008). The educational experiences of highland and coastal students, as well as special autonomy funds. In summary, the following findings are presented.

### **1. Students in Puncak Regency**

Before the educational cooperation between the Puncak government and UGM was established, education was never truly available. Historically, the OAPs of Puncak have been the ones who suffered the most due to endless conflicts and the area has seen the slowest development. When government-run state schools replaced the church-run dormitory-style schools, this

created a schism between local society (which relied heavily on the church, including in matters of education) and the state's obligation to provide national education. Various evidence reveals that curricular mismatches have made it difficult for the OAPs of Puncak to advance themselves (Implementer 1, 2021).

By 2015, the workforce of Puncak had limited education, with most having only completed their elementary school educations; few have completed high school, let alone tertiary education, and this has limited their employment options (Bappeda Puncak, 2018). The workforce lacks the necessary competencies for advancement. As a result, the Puncak government chose to work with the UGM Papua Task Force to recruit teachers from all over Indonesia to teach students in Puncak and provide prospective students with scholarship opportunities to continue their studies. This strategy was thought to be an effective one and brought about a long-term programme in which students who had completed twelve years of compulsory education (from elementary school to senior high school) could continue their studies. As a result of improved teaching methods, children who had previously faced educational challenges began to progress. The following table shows the various achievements of Puncak's OAPs before and after the cooperation programme was implemented, as measured by several indicators.

**Table 2. Indicators of Upward Social Mobility in Puncak Regency**

Indicator	Before	After
<b>Knowledge</b>		
General	Having less general knowledge than most citizens, as well as difficulty reading, writing, and counting.	Having general knowledge that is relatively equal to that of other citizens. Furthermore, despite having difficulty with calculations, they can read and write following the rules of Indonesian grammar.
Local	Mastering local knowledge and applying it in daily life.	Mastering local knowledge and consistently applying it, with certain adjustments.
Field of study	Having no special knowledge.	Having knowledge related to their field of study.
<b>Soft skills</b>		
Critical thinking	Lacking the ability to respond to issues; unstructured thought and needing dictation.	Able to respond to issues more systematically, provide rebuttals, and be independent.
Social	Having difficulty adapting and working with new people.	Being able to adapt to new environments and cooperate with people from other regions.
Communication	Expressing the contents of their hearts and minds with difficulty due to a lack of confidence.	Being bolder in voicing their hearts and thoughts.
<b>Hard skills</b>		
Computer technology and the internet	Unable to operate a computer, internet, and social media.	Able to operate computers and basic Microsoft Office programmes and social media (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube).
English	Studying the basics of English and using the language in limited conditions.	Studying English, with some applied in everyday conversations.

*Source: Interview Results (2021)*

The findings above indicate that OAPs in Puncak were able to achieve upward social mobility. Most researchers believe that upward social mobility for

Indigenous peoples is possible if supported by determinants, such as education, socioeconomic status, and opportunity (Walter, 2016; Garcia-Altes & Ortun, 2014).

It helps avoid horizontal or even downward mobility. Interviews revealed the

determinants of social mobility for OAPs in Puncak, which can be seen below:

**Table 3. Determinants of Social Mobility for OAPs in Puncak**

Factor	Description
Formal education	Considered the most dominant factor in increasing social mobility, especially when going to school is a privilege.
Informal education	The quality of the social relationship between parents and children affects the abilities of children. Education was provided in the family, where it is considered to affect their inner strength. However, they acknowledged that, due to poverty, their families did not play a significant role in their upward social mobility.
Birth location	Born in the highlands, they had few opportunities to develop due to geographical challenges and high social costs.
Social	They had fewer chances to achieve upward social mobility due to their limited interactions with diverse people.
Political will	Local governments committed to investing 30% of special autonomy funds for education, which could encourage the creation of superior human resources.

*Source: Interview Results (2021)*

For OAPs, their success or failure in upward social mobility was primarily determined by a formal education system wherein migrant teachers sincerely devoted themselves to advancing education in Puncak. This occurred because the family failed to act as an informal educational institution and instead treated education as if it was only the school's responsibility. Meanwhile, their inaccessible birthplace made them isolated. Socially, they interacted with a homogeneous community, and thus there were few opportunities to exchange information and knowledge. The only good news was the political will of the Puncak government, which allocated 30% of its special autonomy funds to reducing barriers to education.

## 2. Students in Mappi Regency

In Mappi, education was viewed as a crucial sector, one that required the assistance of the UGM Papua Task Force for improvement. Even though Mappi's OAPs benefited more from these programmes because they lived on the coast and because the government existed before that of Puncak, various obstacles could still be encountered, particularly the lack of teachers and political support from bureaucrats. The national education system, therefore, was more accepted than in Puncak, but Mappi had yet to achieve an optimal level of education. Most of the regional government's failures in realising regional development were influenced by the low-quality human resources involved in vital government activities. According to official statistics, only sixty people had attained a baccalaureate degree and five had earned a post-graduate degree; none had received a doctoral degree (Bappeda

Mappi, 2018). Most of these university graduates had studied at universities in Papua, which were perceived as worse than universities elsewhere—especially in Java. The lack of educated graduates and the unavailability of better education prompted

the Mappi government to create a planned education programme, one that spanned from the elementary through the tertiary levels. The achievements of Mappi's OAPs because of the programme can be seen below.

**Table 4. Indicators of Upward Social Mobility in Mappi Regency**

Indicator	Before	After
<b>Knowledge</b>		
General	Having general knowledge that differed from that of most people.	Having general knowledge that was relatively equal to that of the public.
Local	Mastering local knowledge and applying it in everyday life.	Mastering local knowledge and seeing its relevance in everyday life.
Field of study	Not having particular knowledge in specific academic fields.	Having exceptional knowledge in specific academic fields.
<b>Soft skills</b>		
Critical thinking	Unable to respond to issues.	Able to respond to issues by considering all related aspects.
Social	Having difficulty adapting and working with new people.	Able to adapt to new environments and cooperate with people from other regions.
Communication	Expressing their hearts and thoughts with difficulty.	Able to voice their hearts and thoughts.
<b>Hard skills</b>		
Computer technology and the internet	Unable to operate a computer, internet, or social media.	Able to operate a computer, basic Microsoft Office programmes, and social media (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Tik-Tok, and YouTube).
English	Studying the basics of English and using the language in limited conditions.	Learning more English and applying it in everyday conversations.

*Source: Interview Results (2021)*

The findings showed an increase in general and specific knowledge, as well as

modifications to their local knowledge. Three indicators related to soft skills

experienced significant growth. Meanwhile, regarding hard skills, improvements in English fluency and computer/internet

technology were noted. This was influenced by several factors, as follows.

**Table 5. Determinants of Social Mobility for OAPs in Mappi**

Factor	Description
Formal education	Formal education was considered the most critical factor in increasing social mobility.
Informal education	Families have not yet played a significant role in the educations of their children.
Birth location	Born in a coastal area, they had a greater chance to enjoy development.
Social	OAPs in Mappi were more likely to achieve upward social mobility if they interacted with diverse people.
Political will	The local government committed to investing 30% of its special autonomy funds in education, thereby encouraging superior human resources; however, this was tempered by bureaucrats' political support.

*Source: Interview Results (2021)*

OAPs in Mappi recognised formal education as the dominant factor in their upward social mobility. This was due to the influence of the information and knowledge brought to Mappi by migrant teachers. At the same time, the effective learning methods offered by UGM made it easier for OAPs to receive knowledge. The family has not played a role in education, acting instead as an agent of violence against children. Furthermore, their coastal location allowed them to enjoy more infrastructure and interact with others from diverse backgrounds, providing them with access to heterogeneous people, giving them access to more information and knowledge. However, the Mappi government's political will to improve the education system has been hampered by state bureaucrats' limited political support.

### **The Role of the Special Autonomy Law in Reducing Barriers to Education**

Over the years, thorough research has been conducted to examine the effect of the SAL on the development of Indigenous peoples. Some studies argue that special autonomy has reduced problems, such as poverty and political conflict. Others, however, believe that there remain many failures in national development, and thus the results tend to be associated with poor performance. The SAL is not a product of negotiation, but a solution imposed by the state (Bertrand, 2014), and thus it has been seen as not accommodating the interests of indigenous peoples (Lele, 2021). The state continues to dominate OAPs' right to self-determination (Scott, 2001); they continue to face social and geographical challenges (Resosudarmo et al., 2014), and other problems remain unaddressed (Widjojo et al., 2008). Although special autonomy has been an area of social policy research for many years, the main concern is that this law will be used as a tool for political

machinations rather than human resource development. It offers an important instrument for protecting and empowering the people (Poku et al., 2007). It is for this reason that this study has analysed the effect of the SAL on education in the context of OAPs' social mobility.

The case of OAPs was used for several reasons. First, Papua has long been an isolated area and OAPs have tended to be alienated within the social structure. Although special autonomy's contribution to development funding has increased sharply in the last two decades, this has not translated to social welfare. Given that Papua is the province in Indonesia with the highest rates of poverty and inequality (World Bank, 2019), an analysis of the impact of special autonomy was essential. Second, the complexity of the SAL could not be separated from the numerous national policies that are not compatible with the local Papuan context (Sullivan, 2003). This was exacerbated by OAPs' difficulty obtaining essential social services, employment, and access to economic resources, as a result of which it has become increasingly difficult for OAPs to occupy political positions at the regional level. In addition, OAPs have had difficulty competing with the migrants who have arrived in Papua, including in competitions for prospective civil servants (Nugroho, 2021). In the end, OAPs are spectators in their homeland, and thus it was, therefore, essential to analyse whether human resource development could be better realized through SAL.

This article holds that, although Papua has seen progress over the past two decades, it has not been enough. There remain four barriers to education: poverty, conflict and war, lack of teachers, and

infrastructure. These barriers are found in both the highlands and coastlands and may be understood from various perspectives (i.e., historical, socio-cultural, and political). The findings of this article reinforce those of Agustinus (2013), which saw that the SAL failed due to irregularities in the management of its funds.

In addition, the article supports the findings of Sugandi (2008), who found distrust among Papuan stakeholders; Karim (2012), who highlighted the local government's limited capacity; and Widjojo et al., (2010), who identified unresolved problems. However, this article contradicted previous studies of the SAL's benefits for OAPs, such as economic concessions and human resource development (Widjojo and Budiatri, 2012). Although OAPs have made economic gains, these have been limited to local elites. Human resource development has occurred predominantly in urban areas, such as Jayapura, Merauke, Nabire, and Timika.

Furthermore, one of the main objectives of the SAL was to increase equity in development. This article's analysis showed that Papua's HDI lagged far behind that of other provinces, and that, although a few regencies had a high HDI, most regencies did not. Equitable development, thus, had not occurred in most of Papua. Furthermore, the advancements that have been made occurred mainly in cities/regencies with large migrant populations. As such, special autonomy funds were enjoyed more by immigrants than by OAPs.

Meanwhile, as special autonomy funds have been managed unprofessionally by local governments, spending has not been well-targeted. In

education, for example, spending has increased but focused predominantly on staffing. Finally, the increase in special autonomy funds did not correlate directly with the improved quality of education. Local governments failed to design and implement development plans that were suited to local contexts.

Carefully targeted measures would undoubtedly help organisations, including the government, improve. At the same time, however, not all things can be easily measured in the real world, and not everything that can be easily measured is essential. Mismeasurements often occur not because the government does not know how to measure correctly, but because it has chosen to deliberately measure the most specific indicators. For example, the success of the SAL was assessed based on budget absorption, without considering more complex issues such as bias, focus on insignificant things, and false claims of success. It is thereby necessary to measure success using important indicators, rather than easy ones, to ascertain the benefits of special autonomy.

Lastly, the special autonomy funds should have provided the government with an instrument for solving educational problems in Papua. Ideally, the government should collaborate with universities and OAPs to improve education governance in Papua. In this sense, universities require the resources to assess and map problems, using particular indicators developed by the Puncak and Mappi governments. Likewise, the participation of OAPs was expected to provide them with a decent means of asserting public control over the government and ensuring accountability. In this way, if its progress could be measured

appropriately, the SAL would help reduce educational barriers.

### **Education and Social Mobility**

As mentioned above, the relationship between education and social mobility theory is often analysed, particularly when identifying the factors determining upward social mobility. The author believes that the link between education and social mobility has driven several of the most monumental achievements in human history, providing the basis for new perspectives, knowledge, and skills. First, referring to the literature review, social mobility is always associated with education, but other indicators must also be considered (for example, the impact of socio-political transformation and background contexts). This argument is strengthened by this study, in which OAPs acknowledged that the new paradigms provided by education had wrought significant academic and social changes in their lives. They developed skills and knowledge while learning in a supportive system (i.e., dormitory and mentorship programmes). They followed an alternative education pattern, from the elementary to the university level, that brought about significant changes for themselves and their communities. At the same time, however, this contradicted earlier findings that OAPs had difficulty improving their social status even when they were educated (Munro, 2013).

This contradiction represents the complexity of the definition of "education." Education is often understood as solely involving schools or universities, i.e., formal education; in such cases, the family and its role in informal education are neglected. Indeed, the findings of this article showed a

strong correlation between formal education and social mobility. OAPs also acknowledged that formal education was the strongest driver of their upward social mobility—but not the only one. As Anderson (1961) notes, conditions other than formal education also play a significant role in social mobility. This article, too, refuted claims that formal education was still the only factor for OAPs; other factors, such as informal education, place of birth, social interactions, and political will, were also determinant factors.

Furthermore, the government's reason for supporting education was to encourage people to achieve upward social mobility, with the underlying assumption that special autonomy funds could facilitate education. However, these special autonomy funds ultimately became a source of conflict and proved vulnerable to corruption, and thus they were not properly targeted. To avoid such issues, LIPI recommended that the government employ a holistic and integrative framework by considering OAPs' most fundamental needs (Elisabeth et al., 2017, p. 2). The Papua Roadmap also provided a basis for the UGM Papua Task Force's efforts to assess, map, and find alternative solutions to the problem of education governance in Puncak and Mappi.

In conclusion, with special autonomy funds not being used to improve the quality of education in remote areas, OAPs found it challenging to achieve social mobility. They continued to be marginalised, and this exacerbated their sense of alienation and animosity. Furthermore, the government should have employed a participatory approach to development planning, involving local governments and OAPs in the development of a comprehensive policy

for Papua. Such a policy must consider the various things that influence OAPs negatively, such as mass migration, curriculum, and special autonomy funds (McGibbon & Alagappa, 2004, p. x).

### **Differences in Educational Experiences**

The author believes that, although special autonomy funds have a dark side (Sugandi, 2008; Widjojo & Budiatri, 2012), they could provide an essential resource for improving the quality of life for OAPs (Samputra, 2020; Prabowo et al., 2021). It was shown in the previous section that special autonomy funds have played an important role in Papuan society, especially in supporting educational programmes (such as school construction, teacher recruitment, teaching material procurement, and scholarships) for OAPs in remote areas.

It was explained that OAPs in Puncak and Mappi continued to face obstacles to their education. However, the factors that hindered them may not be clearly understood by the public. As such, this study sought to gain an adequate understanding of OAPs' educational activities, the obstacles that hindered them, and opportunities to improve their position.

First, an analysis of differences in formal education revealed that the process was no better in the highlands than it was in coastal areas. In both Puncak and Mappi, the number of schools, classrooms, teachers, and teaching materials in Puncak was similar (MoEdu, 2021). However, both areas were able to benefit from the learning methods used by teachers recruited through the GPDT programme. With their help, a small number of OAPs managed to continue their studies at university.

Meanwhile, informal education showed that families in Puncak and Mappi played a limited role in social mobility, due to their poor socio-economic background, and that children often experienced domestic violence that made them less confident (OAP 1, 2021; OAP 2, 2021; OAP 3, 2021; OAP 4, 2021).

Analysis of location, meanwhile, revealed that persons born in the highlands had fewer opportunities to enjoy development than those born on the coast, as they were required to surmount geographical challenges and high social costs (Munro, 2013). Furthermore, analysis showed that, socially, those living on the coast were more open to change than in the highlands due to the intensity of their interactions with diverse people (Rumansara, 2015). Finally, both governments agreed to cooperate with the UGM's Papua Task Force to facilitate the government's usage of special autonomy funds for education.

There were differences in educational performance in Puncak and Mappi. Learning techniques varied; in Puncak, OAPs tended to use learning strategies that were close to nature or outside the classroom (OAP 3, 2021; OAP 4, 2021), while in Mappi, OAPs tended to rely on face-to-face learning in the classroom (OAP 1, 2021; OAP 2, 2021). In addition, OAPs in Puncak faced more significant constraints, including poorer road access and higher transportation costs than in Mappi. A broader picture of the various educational barriers faced by different OAPs would provide the Papuan government with valuable policy insight.

## Conclusion

This study looked at the impact of the SAL on education and social mobility. It was initially necessary to unpack the relationship between education and social mobility. In a nutshell, education (as part of social policy) was thought to increase human resources and determine upward social mobility. This paper investigated whether education is the sole determinant of social mobility or whether other factors were involved. Furthermore, the implementation of the SAL through special autonomy funds was highlighted by this paper as the main means of overcoming educational barriers in Papua. Because of the disparate social conditions between the highlands and coastal areas, the researcher decided to focus on two regencies that were deemed representative of their respective regions, i.e., Puncak (highlands) and Mappi (coastal). This was done to identify lessons that could be drawn from their experience using special autonomy funds for education. According to this research, poverty, conflict, war, staffing, and infrastructure have all significantly impeded education in Papua. Due to various educational barriers, human resources in Papua have advanced slowly, even two decades since the passage of the SAL. Although some changes have occurred, problems remain, due in part to actors' failure to comply with existing regulations and the general failure to ensure public participation. Effective implementation of the SAL, thus, was expected to improve the quality of human resources in Papua.

This article's case studies of Puncak and Mappi, Papua, allowed for an Indigenous theory of social policy. The SAL has paved the way for dramatic changes in how OAPs access education as well as



their opportunities to achieve upward social mobility. Its goal was to foster collaboration between local governments and universities by reimagining the existing education system through the eyes of OAPs. The success of this measure depends on the local government's political will to adapt to educational realities. In this sense, the SAL has encouraged fundamental changes that expand OAPs' access to education while also striving to ameliorate the conditions that hinder their development. Aside from formal education, this study also emphasised several factors that determined whether OAPs could achieve upward social mobility, including informal education, place of birth, social environment, and political will.

Finally, the SAL has the potential to tear down educational barriers and promote upward social mobility amongst OAPs. However, this is only possible in a supportive strategic environment wherein mutual trust exists between governments and OAPs, universities are involved as partners, and all parties are committed. The SAL could have done a better job accelerating human resource development in Papua. To summarise, the use of the SAL came with inherent challenges, but when implemented effectively, it could improve the quality of education provided to OAPs and increase their social mobility

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