

# Inclusive Education Policy In Indonesia: Best Practices, Challenges, And Future Directions

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## **Abstract.**

*Inclusive education in Indonesia aims to provide equal access to education for all children, including those with special needs. The government's adoption of inclusive policies aims to create a discriminatory-free educational environment. Best practices involve developing a curriculum that supports diversity, providing teacher training to enhance their understanding of the needs of special students, and fostering an inclusive school environment. Despite challenges such as a lack of resources and social stigma, collaboration among schools, parents, and communities is considered crucial for success. Overcoming these challenges requires further efforts. The future direction of inclusive education policies includes teacher training, improving the accessibility of educational facilities for students with special needs, and expanding collaborations with relevant stakeholders. Policy updates and responsive educational programs are key to creating a sustainable inclusive education system in the future.*

**Keywords:** Education Policy, Inclusive Education, Inclusive Education in Indonesia and Education Policy in Indonesia.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The inclusive education model is an alternative option introduced by the government to cater to Children with Special Needs (CSN). This education system is not intended to replace segregated education within the context of special education in Indonesia, which has traditionally been served by Special Schools (SLB) and Integrated Schools. This system enables CSN to attend regular schools, thereby expanding access to a broader education for them. Individuals with Special Needs (ABK) do not have access to education due to various factors, such as the considerable distance between the residence of ABK and specialized schools, the rejection of ABK to attend the nearest school, the tendency of parents of ABK to conceal their children's disabilities, and the low motivation of parents to enroll their children with special needs in school. The challenges mentioned above are evidently beyond the capacity of the community to address independently; hence, government intervention through public policy is necessary. Public policy can be defined as actions taken by political actors as a strategy to address public issues, taking into account existing constraints and potentials to achieve desired goals. The policy-making process begins with identifying policy issues, formulating policies, implementing policies, and evaluating policies.

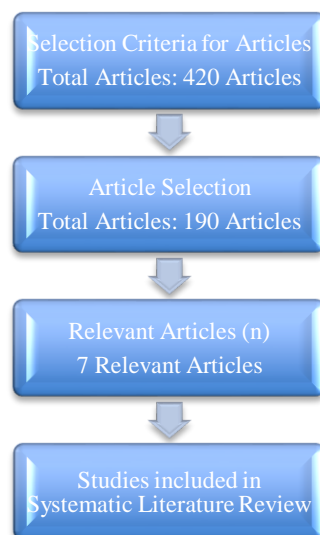
Steps following policy evaluation often require policy revisions to redefine strategies. The policy implementation stage is crucial in the policy process. Even if the policy is well-formulated, ineffective implementation poses the risk of policy failure. Indonesia's efforts to realize inclusive education began with the issuance of Circular Letter No. 380/C.C6/MN/2003 by the Directorate General of Primary and Secondary Education of the Ministry of National Education on January 20, 2003. This initiative was subsequently reinforced by the issuance of Ministerial Regulation No. 70 in 2009 concerning Inclusive Education for students with disabilities who demonstrate intelligence and/or special talents. These measures align with the agreements reached at the World Conference in Salamanca in 1994 and the Dakar Declaration in 2000, aiming to meet the basic needs of society regarding Education for All, irrespective of race, religion, and the potential of students. The community's response to this approach is quite positive, as reflected in the increased number of inclusive schools and a significant rise in student enrollment. However, despite this, the on-the-ground implementation has yet to meet the desired expectations. The main obstacle lies in the lack of commitment and support from the government.

## II. METHODS

In this paper, a systematic literature review method is employed, specifically a type of review known as a mapping review (Grant & Booth, 2009). The literature review process is conducted transparently to investigate published research articles, evaluated through extraction, analysis, and finally, synthesis is performed in the last stage (Robinson & Lowe, 2015). This literature review was conducted from October to November 2023. The study on inclusive education policies covers an extensive area with various discourses and research focuses. In searching for articles, the author utilized Harzing Publish or Perish as the database. The decision to choose these two databases was based on their open access availability and the ease of downloading articles, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of inclusive education policies, particularly in terms of implementation, challenges, and future directions. The initial search using the keyword "Inclusive Education Policy" yielded almost a thousand articles from various sources.

Therefore, to narrow down the search focus, the author used keywords such as "Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy in Indonesia," "Challenges in the Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy," and "Direction of Inclusive Education Policy." The search for articles using the Harzing Publish Or Perish database with the mentioned keywords resulted in 420 articles from 2015 to 2023. Subsequently, these articles were screened and filtered to obtain those relevant to this literature review. Articles that were not relevant to the two literature review questions were identified based on the mismatch of results and discussions regarding Inclusive Education Policy. The selection and screening process involved analyzing article titles, keywords, abstracts, problem backgrounds, research questions, as well as results and discussions. This stage yielded 190 articles, which were then analyzed more thoroughly and reconsidered for further selection and screening. In the next stage, 7 published articles were chosen to be used as literature review materials, providing comprehensive reviews and syntheses in answering the questions posed in this study. The article search was restricted to the period from 2015 to 2023. The differences in the stages of article search used in this literature review are presented in Figure 1, and the selected articles are displayed in Table 1.

**Fig 1.** Stages of Article Selection and Screening



**Table 1.** Overview of The Study

No	Study	Method
1	(Nisak, 2018)	Descriptive qualitative
2	(Fernandes, 2018)	Qualitative, and case study methods
3	(Kristen Satya Wacana et al., 2017)	"Evaluative research."
4	(Munajah et al., 2021)	Descriptive qualitative
5	(Sania, 2019)	Qualitative method
6	(Husnul, 2019.)	Qualitative method
7	(Tri Wibowo et al., n.d.)	Descriptive qualitative

The total number of relevant articles for this literature review is 7. Despite the limited quantity, the selected articles are focused on the analysis of the implementation of inclusive education policy, emphasizing the challenges faced and future directions. The process of searching for additional references for this literature review supports the findings discussed, aligning with the two literature review questions that have been formulated to discover new concepts or conceptual frameworks in inclusive education policy. The organization of data is based on the three research questions introduced in the background/introduction section. The author structures the collected data to identify the answers found in this literature, then designs broader categories by comparing the literature's outcomes. Table 1 presents the 7 selected articles for this literature review, encompassing various programs within inclusive education policy.

### **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy**

According to Minister of National Education Regulation No. 70 of 2009, inclusive education is a system of educational provision that provides opportunities for all students with differences and special intelligence/talent potentials to participate in the educational process or learning within the same educational environment as regular students. The implementation of inclusive education here refers to the principle of providing education for all (education for all). The focus is on children vulnerable to marginalization, and schools accept all children without discrimination. Fundamentally, inclusive education aims to serve the community without regard to ethnicity, religion, wealth, poverty, disabilities, and other factors. Additionally, efforts are made to fulfill the accessibility facilities of government offices (departments/agencies) and public facilities, with the goal of facilitating community transactions and activities. The establishment of inclusive schools in Indonesia is based on the right of children to access education. Every being has needs. As beings considered to have the highest status among other creatures, humans have the most numerous and complex needs.

Human needs generally include physical or health needs, social-emotional needs, and educational needs. Like regular individuals, children with special needs also have similar requirements. Based on the content of Article 5, it can be concluded that exceptional children have rights that ensure the continuity of their education, and even children with special needs have the right to opportunities for lifelong learning. In subsections 2, 3, and 4, it is explained that exceptional children are entitled to receive special education services. The concept of exceptional children here does not only refer to those with physical, social, emotional, and intellectual disorders but also includes those with potential intelligence and special talents, who are also entitled to receive special education services. A teacher has the responsibility to provide opportunities for children with special needs to actualize themselves through education in schools. Education for children with special needs is not limited to special schools but also includes integrated education that allows them to learn alongside normal children. This type of education system is known as inclusive education.

#### **Challenges in the Implementation of Inclusive Education**

Common obstacles that often occur in schools regarding inclusive education, as analyzed by Ina Agustin (2019), involve a shortage of special education teachers compared to the number of students with special needs (ABK) in inclusive schools. Additionally, the lack of competence among special education teachers in handling ABK includes difficulties in Teaching and Learning Activities (KBM), a lack of teacher understanding regarding ABK, and teachers' educational backgrounds that do not align with GPK qualifications. The ability of teachers to recognize the characteristics of students with special needs is limited. Insight and knowledge among regular teachers regarding the implementation models of inclusive learning are also minimal. Teachers often feel they lack the skills to teach students with various special needs, even though policies demand that they accept the presence of students with special needs in their classrooms. This can impact the acceptance and treatment of these students by teachers. Nevertheless, because educators have experience and understand their respective responsibilities, regular teachers strive to maximize learning services for students with special needs. They continue to enhance their competence through various sources.

Conversely, some challenges in facilities and infrastructure in inclusive education, which are inadequate, make teachers feel a heavier burden in providing services to students with special needs.

This occurs when they are influenced by facilities and infrastructure that are unsupportive and do not align with the needs of students with special needs. This is consistent with the statement (Kustawan, 2013: 130) regarding the duties of special education teachers (GPK), which involve providing assistance in curriculum development, individual education programs, teaching, assessment, media, and learning resources, as well as facilities and infrastructure with adequate accessibility. In connection with this, (Ina Agustin, 2016) mentions that to meet the specific needs of students with special needs, proposals are submitted to the relevant education department and government for the provision of specialized facilities and infrastructure. Additionally, several managerial challenges can be identified in the implementation of inclusive education in schools. One of these challenges is the absence of a specific working group or task force for inclusive education in schools. This can result in a lack of a formal platform that supports collaboration and the exchange of ideas among educators involved in inclusive education. Furthermore, some schools have not yet developed Annual Programs (prota) and Semester Programs (promes) specifically designed for inclusive education, as disclosed by Sunaryo (2016). The lack of clarity regarding references or guidelines for teachers in delivering services to students with special needs can arise due to this absence, leading to uncertainty in the movement toward effective inclusive education in the school.

### **The Future Direction**

As a follow-up to the above-mentioned issues, the school aims to maximize the roles and capabilities of its teachers. Furthermore, the school will establish collaboration with the government to assist and address these challenges. Additionally, the school will submit proposals to the local government. In Indonesia, the availability of special education services capable of accommodating the learning processes of Children with Special Needs (ABK) is still very limited. If available, this undoubtedly requires special education services that can effectively accommodate the learning processes for the disabled group (Khusnul Khotimah, 2019). It can be outlined that school standardization in the implementation of inclusive education encompasses several crucial elements. Firstly, every educational unit designated or not designated to organize inclusive education is required to have at least one special education teacher. Their role is to provide specific assistance and guidance to students with special needs. Moreover, standardization efforts also involve providing competencies in the field of special education for all educators and education staff in educational units that implement inclusive education. This aims to ensure that all involved parties have adequate understanding and skills in serving students with special needs. Equally important, standardization includes support tailored to the needs of educational units in implementing inclusive education. This support can be obtained through professional assistance provided by the local government. This step ensures that schools have sufficient resources and assistance to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. In supporting the implementation of inclusive education, the role of the teacher as the primary facilitator in the classroom is crucial.

Teachers are not only responsible for delivering course materials but also need to play a proactive role in assisting students in overcoming learning difficulties they may encounter. To achieve this, teachers need to have a deep understanding of the learning styles of each student in their class. Being aware of the variations in students' learning styles allows teachers to tailor teaching methods and approaches that are most effective for each individual. This requires a high level of awareness of the diverse learning characteristics of students, including those with special needs. Therefore, teachers need to be trained and provided with a comprehensive understanding of inclusive teaching strategies. In addition to the role of teachers in the classroom, the organization of inclusive education must also consider the presence of Special Education Teachers (SET). The presence of SET becomes crucial in providing specific support for students with special needs. SET can offer additional assistance, develop customized learning programs, and provide guidance to regular teachers to optimize the learning experience for every student. The primary goal of having SET is to ensure that students with special needs can absorb knowledge to the fullest extent possible. With this specialized support, it is hoped that students with special needs will not lag far behind in terms of academic development compared to their peers who have more conventional learning needs. Inclusive education is not

just about providing physical access to the classroom but also about creating a learning environment that supports, understands, and responds to the diverse needs of students. Involving teachers, SET, and the entire school community in this effort is a crucial step to ensure that every student, including those with special needs, can reach their full potential in the world of education.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the discussions obtained, the author concludes that the implementation of inclusive education policies in Indonesia to realize education for all children with the principle of equal service still has significant limitations. Inclusive schools are considered a solution to discriminatory issues in providing educational rights between typical children and Children with Special Needs (CSN). Efforts to achieve inclusive education can be made by improving special education services and providing equal access to education for all layers of society. However, there are several challenges in the implementation of inclusive education in schools, such as the limited role and abilities of teachers.

To address these challenges, cooperation between the government and schools is considered important to provide support and solutions. Teachers' understanding of students with special needs is still relatively limited, but efforts are continuously made to maximize learning services for them while enhancing competence through various sources. Furthermore, regarding facilities and infrastructure, the differences between CSN and typical children have not been fully addressed. This condition causes facilities and infrastructure for CSN students to be neglected. Therefore, special attention is needed to ensure that all students, including those with special needs, can enjoy education facilities that are equivalent and adequate.

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