The Shifting of Special Education Orthodoxy in Implementing Inclusive Education Policies in Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to portray the implementation of inclusive education policies organized by two different educational institutions for students with disabilities, namely Special School Angkasa Lambeyan and Primary School Bintang Poncol in Magetan Jawa Timur. A qualitative multiple case study was selected as the research method by involving school principals, support teachers, and student guardians as participants. Data were collected through unstructured interviews, observation, and analysis of policy documents implemented by the two schools. All data collected from the two cases were analyzed using an explanation technique and the credibility of the data was guaranteed through method triangulation techniques. The results of this study showed that the implementation of inclusive education policies in each school positively impacts the ability of students with disabilities to obtain an equal education. The readiness of those schools to implement inclusive education programs is also reflected in this study. Communication, interaction, and collaboration between local governments and educational institutions need to be improved to guarantee and realize accessibility for inclusive education.

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Introduction
Education is the most basic human right for every human being, including children with disabilities (CwD) (McLeod, 2018). CwD often experiences discrimination regarding their human rights to education (Gordon, 2013). They have the same rights and obligations as their peers without disabilities, including the right to education and learning together in public schools (Carrington et al., 2019; Windarsih & Devianto, 2017). Inclusive education is considered one of the government’s policies and programs to overcome the issue of discrimination in the education sector (Miles & Singal, 2010). Inclusive education was initiated based on an open spirit to embrace all people in education, which is also the implementation of education that has a multicultural perspective that can help students understand, accept, and respect other people of different ethnicities, culture, values, personality, and physical and psychological functioning (UN, 2018; Windarsih & Devianto, 2017).

In some regions in Indonesia, inclusive education is run well. For instance, a study by Taufik and Rahaju (2021) concluded that the inclusive education system could be implemented properly because of an appropriate number of teachers and an adequate learning atmosphere where students without disabilities accept their peers with disabilities without any discrimination. However, communication between policymakers was still constrained, so financial resources still needed to be improved to support the implementation of inclusive education (Nurwan, 2019). On the other hand, many schools in Indonesia face difficulties and
challenges in successfully implementing an inclusive education system (Rasmitadila et al., 2021). These difficulties and challenges include a lack of knowledge and skills about what inclusive education is and how to teach students with disabilities, an assumption that children with disabilities are considered difficult to work with in participating in the learning (Chairunnisa & Risma, 2022), as well as the government’s role which is still lacking in providing policy support, and infrastructure (Winarsih & Devianto, 2017).

Reflecting on the various obstacles and challenges Schools Providing Inclusive Education (SPIE) face, parents still rely on education for children with disabilities to attend special schools (Hanifah et al., 2022). A special school is the oldest special education institution that accommodates children with various types of disabilities (Iqbal et al., 2023). In its development, education for children with disabilities has undergone many changes; that is, what was originally segregation in nature has now shifted towards an inclusive education system (Jauhari, 2017).

Parents who have children with disabilities perspective are currently experiencing a positive manner in determining education for their children (Novita & Yuliani, 2021). Internal and external factors influenced parents sending their children with disabilities to regular schools (Primadatala et al., 2015). The number of parents sending their children with disabilities to regular school has arisen because they know their children’s voices will be listened to, and parents have hope and a dream for their children (Soesilawati & Tiyas, 2019). Some of the parents sent their children with disabilities to regular school because of religious reasons (to be educated in religious values) (Winata, 2019), while some other parents did not want their children with disabilities to be labeled with disabilities or special needs (Elkins et al., 2003) as given by the surrounding environment (Volk & Cheak, 2003); therefore the parents prefer SPIE rather than special schools (Evans & Lunt, 2002).

Two main factors influencing the endurance of children with disabilities are parents’ perspective toward their children and strong political will from the government (Primadatala et al., 2015). The role of educational institutions and the bureaucracy needs to be reviewed to determine how far inclusive education policies have been implemented and what position of persons with disabilities is in obtaining education (Ointu, 2016). Policy implementation is an activity that can be seen after a legal directive has been issued from a policy which includes efforts to manage inputs to produce outputs for social society (Sutmasa, 2021). The policy implementation stage can be distinguished from the policy-making stage (Wibawa, 1994). Policymaking is a process with a bottom-up logic, which means that the policy process begins with submitting aspirations, requests, and public support (Fraser et al., 2006). On the other hand, it also has a top-down logic, which means a decrease in macro policy alternatives into concrete or micro-actions (Wibawa, 1994).

There are several models of policy implementation, and this research uses the policy implementation model according to Grindle Merilee S, 1980, which is known as “implementation as a political and administrative process” (Wurjandari et al., 2019). According to Grindle, after the policy has been transformed into actions or individual projects and costs have been provided, policy implementation is carried out, but the process does not run smoothly, depending on the ability to implement the program, which can be seen in the context and content (Khusufmawati et al., 2021). According to Grindle (1980), the success of policy implementation is influenced by two significant variables, namely the content of the policy and the context of the implementation (Khusufmawati et al., 2021).

This study focuses on how two different education systems: Special School Angkasa Lambeyan and Primary School Bintang Poncol (an SPIE) implemented an inclusive education system. The two selected cases were mainly because Special School Angkasa.
Lambeyan and Primary School Bintang Poncol are located in the same district, and both are highly committed to accepting and supporting children with disabilities (Wibowo & Muin, 2018). Special School Angkasa also claimed they implemented an inclusive education system, although the school is a special school (Utomo & Thaibah, 2021). Therefore, it is essential to study more deeply how inclusive education is carried out in the two schools.

Research Method

A qualitative multiple-case study approach was used to produce a rich description (Iqroni & Ali, 2022) about implementing an inclusive education system. Ten participants (five from each school) were recruited through a purposive technique, and their willingness to participate in this study was asked before data were collected. The participants are two principals (Agus and Eko), two classroom teachers (Intan and Anita), two support teachers (Silvi and Astri), and two parents of students with disabilities (Gita and Bayu), from Special School Angkasa Lambeyan and Primary School Bintang Poncol respectively.

The three main data collection techniques are interviews, observation, and document analysis. Open-ended and in-depth interviews were conducted with all participants for about 60 minutes for each of them. Direct observation was carried out on the learning process (how students with disabilities learn with their peers) and the school’s physical environment. The documents analyzed were in the form of teaching books and curricula used to strengthen and improve the validity of the data. In other words, the credibility of the data is guaranteed through method triangulation techniques (Fusch et al., 2018). According to Grindle, guidelines for interviews, observation, and document analysis refer to the variables in the policy implementation model. These variables include (Akib, 2012):

1) Content of policy, including interest affected, type of benefits, extent of change envisioned, site of decision making, program implementor, and resources committed.
2) Context of Implementation includes power, interest, and strategies of actors involved; institution and regime characteristics; compliance and responsiveness.

All data collected from the two cases were analyzed using an explanation technique according to Yin (2014), which was by making an in-depth explanation of the two cases and associating them with variables in the policy implementation model according to Grindle (Fiulaizi et al., 2021).

Results and Discussion

Overall, inclusive education policies at Special School Angkasa and Primary School Bintang are based on the regional policy of Magetan Regency Regulation No. 5 of 2021 concerning “Respect, Protection, and Fulfillment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”. Both school members have a positive view of students with disabilities and have tried to support learning for them. However, the two schools investigated rely heavily on the presence of support teachers to provide special education services to students with disabilities.

Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy at Special School Angkasa

Reaffirming that the acceptance of students with disabilities at Special School Angkasa is based on Article 2 Government Regulation No. 72 of 1991, which states: “Special education aims to help students with physical and/or mental disabilities to be able to develop attitudes, knowledge, and skills as individuals and members of society in establishing reciprocal relationships with the social, cultural, and natural environment and can develop skills in the world of work or follow further education.” Based on this regulation, the head of Special School Angkasa accepts students with visual, deaf, intellectual, and physical or movement disabilities. In 2013, as the school had just been established, the principal admitted that not many students...
enrolled in this special school because there was still little awareness of parents who have family members with disabilities to allow them to attend school. In the interview, AG said:

_Most parents have low education and work as agricultural laborers and farmers, so they are unaware of educating their children. This school accepts all students with various special needs without exception. The teachers tried their best so that students could go to school by picking students up at home and in various ways to give people an understanding of the importance of education._

For school programs, AG admitted he always supports students’ progress while studying independently, especially for students with intellectual disabilities. It was proven that in 2020, there was one Grade 4 Primary Special School student with a mild intellectual disability who could continue to the public school. This reality is an attempt by schools to implement government policies regarding inclusive education (Sharma & Das, 2015). However, this policy must be written in school regulations because the principal cannot target students who graduate from this special school to continue in public schools (Menken & Solorza, 2014). AG stated:

_I always support students so they can continue their education in public schools, and I always convey that to all my colleagues and my teachers. As long as students can be taught, they should be sent to a public school, but if those students cannot follow the public school in their way, we at this special school are willing to take them back._

AG’s statement indicates that even though Special School Angkasa does not specifically design an inclusive education program, support is always provided for children who wish to continue their education in public schools.

The local policy for Special School Angkasa was derived from the Regional Regulation of Magetan Regency No. 5 of 2021 concerning Respect, Protection, and Fulfillment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. One of the implementations is that every child who enrolls in Special School Angkasa has the same opportunity to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to education. AG mentioned:

_... who else will accommodate them (children with disabilities) if not us. Serving them comes from the heart, which only some understand deeply. We continuously provide intensive assistance for them, especially when learning takes place. It is not just a mere service; providing a sense of security and comfort for students with disabilities is accessibility to their environment._

This statement indicates that Special School Angkasa is committed to providing education for children with disabilities.

Special School Angkasa has implemented an Emancipated Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) since the 2022/2023 academic year. This has positively impacted the intra- and extra-curricular programs in this school. Learning is more well-directed, and children learn according to their individual abilities (Efendi, 2020). For example, blind children are provided with teaching materials in Braille format, equipped with Mobility Orientation (OM) and massage skills, which they hope to use independently after graduation. Deaf children learn to use speech, sound, and sign language; sewing skills are usually trained for them. For example, some deaf students have skills in sewing shorts, trousers, and tote bags and are learning to make simple patterns for clothes/shirts. For children with intellectual disabilities, learning programs are focused on learning outside the classroom using natural media and electronic media to gain children’s concentration, and the skills developed are self-development, such as fashion show skills, batik, braid, dance, cooking class, and beauty class. As for children with physical disabilities, Special School Angkasa focuses on continuous movement and speech development, and skills and expertise are focused on simple drama arts. These examples of curricular and extracurricular activities indicate that Special School seeks to meet the learning needs of children with disabilities.
The number of programs implemented by Special School Angkasa has not been supported by fully accessible facilities and infrastructure (results of direct observation of physical buildings). This school has six wheelchairs, one cane, and two buildings (including the pathways) that are not yet fully accessible. The principal said that the infrastructure still needs to be optimal at Special School Angkasa because the budgeting system for school buildings still needs to be available. Funds or financial sources obtained from the State Budget (APBN) (Suwandi et al., 2022), namely School Operational Cost (BOS), are placed for learning needs and support, not infrastructure (Santosa et al., 2022). The school provides a policy for parents of students not to spend money on tuition fees, school equipment, or other student needs (Story et al., 2009).

Special School Angkasa still has various problems in implementing inclusive education policies (Sugiharti & Azura, 2021). First, there are still many graduates of Special School Angkasa who have yet to be able to continue their education in public/regular schools. Second, the awareness of parents who have children with disabilities to send their children to school is still low (Lestari et al., 2017). Third, the role of the school stakeholders, community, and government is unequal in promoting the right to education for persons with disabilities (Subasno, 2016). Fourth, funding for facilities and infrastructure is not fully available, so there has been no significant improvement in the accessibility of the buildings (Ikoya & Onoyase, 2008).

**Implementation of inclusive education policy at Primary School Bintang**

Officially, Primary School Bintang Poncol was declared an SPIE in 2015, even though this school has been accepting students with disabilities since 2004. EK, the principal, asserted that the main reason for accepting students with disabilities is that no special school is provided in Poncol Regency, and it is hard to reach the nearest special school because it is more than 17 km away. Similarly, AN, the homeroom teacher, said:

> Poncol Regency does not yet have a special school. Most parents of students with special needs come from low-middle economy classes, so they cannot afford a special school that is a long way from here; this is a big obstacle. Our school is determined to ensure all students can attend despite their limitations; we are here to help them.

EK added that students with all kinds of disabilities could be accepted, including those with intellectual disabilities, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), slow learning, and emotional and behavioral disabilities (Shaywitz et al., 1995). To help students with disabilities in learning activities, this school provides a support teacher. EK said that the support teacher assists and supports each individual with disabilities in class so that they can learn with their peers. AS, the support teacher, mentioned that the inclusive education program mentioned in the law and national regulations makes this school try the best support and supportive learning environment for students with disabilities. AS asserted:

> I always try my best for my students with disabilities. For example, providing learning outside the classroom because they are happy when learning outside the classroom. I use simple methods, for example, learning to recognize letters, the Arabic alphabet, and sometimes writing on the floor using chalk. In addition, they also like to do cleaning activities. Homeroom teachers also provide visual media to stimulate students to be interested and focus on learning.

EK, the principal, stated:

> I want the inclusive education program to run as expected in this school. Even though we use the Curriculum 2013, we simplify it for students with disabilities. Most importantly, they can socialize well with their peers.

On the other hand, physical accessibility and facilities for students with disabilities remain limited in Primary School Bintang. From the observations on the physical building,
this school is not yet fully accessible for wheelchair users and people with other physical disabilities, even though some learning materials are modified, adapted, and can be accessed and provided for some students with disabilities. AN said:

- **Accessible physical environments or buildings are not yet available.** This is because most of our students have intellectual disabilities, so we are currently focusing more on learning and how teachers can attempt modifications of teaching media and visual aids. We have also added play equipment and reading books for those students.

The observation found that facilities and infrastructure at Primary School Bintang still need to meet the standards set by the government for inclusive schools. This was also agreed upon by the two informants who were interviewed,

- **There are no special facilities for students with disabilities according to their special needs.** All students can use all rooms in this school. No difference or special room exists for students with disabilities (AN).
- **This school should also have a special room for services for children with special needs or those who need assistance, such as guidance and counseling rooms, but the school still needs to prepare this.** This has led to a long journey for Primary School Bintang to become a good and quality inclusive school (AS).

EK mentioned that the school atmosphere, social environment, and family are needed as mutual support for the school to provide the best service for students with disabilities. Similarly, the homeroom teacher mentioned that implementing inclusive education at Primary School Bintang has received much support from parents, committee members, the school environment, and the surrounding community. Supportive communities are the central core of implementing inclusive education policies. In addition to the support shown by the local communities, there are several obstacles experienced by Primary School Bintang to realize accessible learning, namely the lack of facilities that suit the needs of students, the limited support teachers, the lack of knowledge about the inclusive setting, and most of the children with disabilities come from families of the lower middle-class economy. Likewise, EK commented that the school still needs programs that lead to the implementation of inclusive education but are limited to assistance and care in learning in the classroom.

**Cross Case Analysis**

Table 1 compares two cases regarding implementing inclusive education.

| Table 1. Cross-case analysis in Special School Angkasa and the Primary School Bintang |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Special School Angkasa | Primary School Bintang |
| Both schools have the same goal of fulfilling the right to education for all children. |
| Principals, support teachers, and parents of students with disabilities have limited understanding of inclusive education stated by the laws, national legal frameworks, local regulations. |
| Homeroom teachers and support teachers do not fully understand the characteristics of students with disabilities and how to serve their learning needs. |
| Infrastructure, facilities, wheelchairs, canes, adaptive learning media, and teaching aids that are modified simply are available. | Infrastructure and facilities have not been adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities. |
| The school has programs designed for students with disabilities namely capacity building. | School has no special programs for students with disabilities. |
| A Supportive environment is provided to support the implementation of inclusive education. |

The inclusive education policy in Special School Angkasa and Primary School Bintang has not yet been fully implemented. However, this implies that the orthodoxy of special education has shifted into an inclusive education model. Special School Angkasa recommends that all students with disabilities continue their education in public schools to
allow them to learn with their peers without disabilities. On the other hand, Primary School Bintang always accepts students with disabilities regardless of their disabilities. Findings from the two cases indicate that the successful implementation of inclusive education policies is highly dependent on strong will and good system support. This echoes the study of Muazza et al. (2018) and Haryono (2013).

Special School Angkasa and Primary School Bintang face some limitations in their implementation of inclusive education policies. In Primary School Bintang, teachers lack knowledge about what inclusive education is and have no place to consult how to provide education in an inclusive manner as this school declared as an SPIE, as also mentioned in Jannah and Hermanto (2022); Mularsih (2019); Supriatini et al. (2019) studies. Accessibility to physical facilities and information has been provided in two schools; however, some facilities need to be upgraded to support the needs of students with disabilities. This finding is in line with Kristensen et al. (2006) study, which stated that opportunities for inclusion could be gained by providing facilities such as wheelchairs, canes for the blind, tables and chairs for autistic students, as well as accessible bathrooms.

Conclusion
The results of this study conclude that implementing inclusive education policies in each school positively impacts the ability of students with disabilities to obtain an equal education. The readiness of those schools to implement inclusive education programs is also reflected in this study. Communication, interaction, and collaboration between local governments and educational institutions must be improved to guarantee and realize accessibility for inclusive education.

Recommendation
Schools that welcome students with disabilities should have a policy on inclusive education implementation because, according to this study, the policy is a significant factor contributing to school members’ understanding of how they implement the inclusive education system. Teachers must be provided with insight and a good understanding of the importance of being anti-discriminatory towards people with disabilities. With sufficient insight and understanding, the teacher can be expected to be the main driving force that will build students’ awareness of not taking discriminatory actions against peers with disabilities. Schools must provide special needs and services for students with disabilities. Physical building accessibility, such as wheelchair ramps, lanes for the blind, and special parking for the disabled, must be provided. Information accessibility, such as the provision of materials that students with certain types of disabilities can access, should also be provided.

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