



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND JUSTICE FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN MADRASAS

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Abstract: Inclusive education strives to provide equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their disabilities, to access education. While inclusive education is vital to ensure justice and equal opportunities for every child, the effectiveness of catering to each child's unique needs and potential is still up for debate. This article delves into research conducted in 2023 in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, which explores the implementation of inclusive education and its impact on justice. The study used focus group discussions with principals, teachers, and parents of two madrasas (Islamic schools) in two regencies, the Ministry of Religious Affairs representatives, the Inclusive Madrasa Educator Forum, and a non-governmental organization. The results show that the implementation of inclusive education in madrasas has made significant progress, including an increase in the number of inclusive madrasas, positive attitudes from the school community, individualized education programs, the establishment of the Inclusive Madrasah Educator Forum, and collaboration between the government, non-government organizations, and the community. However, challenges such as limited resource allocation, a lack of teacher professional development, and obscure study plans, processes, and evaluations still exist. These unresolved challenges may lead to injustice for children with special needs in madrasas.

Keywords: inclusive education, justice, students with special needs, madrasas, Islamic schools

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Introduction

THE inclusive education policy in Indonesia has been progressively developed in response to international imperatives. The Salamanca Statement declared in the World Conference on

Special Needs Education required all United Nations countries to include all children in mainstream schools, regardless of individual differences.¹ Subsequently, the Dakar Framework for Education for All appealed to all governments to ensure that all children, including those with difficult circumstances, have access to primary education.² From 2000 to 2007, the World Bank assisted the Indonesian government in capacity building on inclusive education and developing an inclusive education management system.³ Accordingly, the Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of Indonesia issued decree No. 380/C.66/MN (2003), stating that every district government must develop at least four inclusive schools from primary to secondary levels. The Indonesian Ministry of National Education then issued regulation No. 70 (2009) on inclusive education for students with disabilities and unique talents.

Inclusive education is crucial for ensuring that students with special needs have the same opportunities to learn and grow as their peers. There are 6,764 special schools available for children with disabilities, most of them in cities. As a result, only 269,398 (12.26%) of 2,197,833 children with disabilities are admitted to special schools despite the high number of children in need of these services. Inclusive education does not replace special education. Instead, inclusive schools have been established alongside other school systems for children with disabilities. The Indonesian Ministry of National Education has mandated the appointment of at least one primary school and one junior secondary school in every sub-district and one senior secondary

¹ UNESCO, "The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education" (World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, Salamanca, Spain, 1994), ix, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427>.

² UNESCO, "The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments (Including Six Regional Frameworks for Action) - UNESCO Digital Library" (Conference World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000), 15, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000121147>.

³ Jeanine Braithwaite et al., "Disability and Development in the World Bank : FY2000-2007" (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2008), 10, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/209731468158074202/Disability-and-development-in-the-World-Bank-FY2000-2007>.

school in every regency as an inclusive school (Indonesian Ministry of National Education Regulation, 70, 2009). In 2023, it has resulted in 44,477 inclusive schools across the country, catering to students from kindergarten to senior high school levels. As per the Indonesian Ministry of National Education,⁴ 146,205 (6.65%) were enrolled in inclusive schools. It means that only 18.91% of children with disabilities gain formal education.

Inclusive education's aim at providing the broadest education opportunities and quality learning for students with disabilities to their needs and potentials has not been achieved optimally. The above figure raises the question of whether the regency government and inclusive schools have made some effort to reach and admit children with disabilities. Inclusive education is a new concept that communities may not recognize; otherwise, it is merely symbolic policy.

In addition, although half of inclusive schools have modified curricula, syllabi, and instructional materials, less than 10 percent of inclusive schools have sports, arts, and vocational programs as well as equipment, media, and resources that support the needs of students with disabilities.⁵ Regarding learning achievement, Sunardi et al. illustrate that there was a 16 percent dropout rate among students with disabilities in inclusive schools.⁶

⁴ Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, "Kemendikbudristek Ajak Wujudkan Pendidikan Inklusi Yang Adil dan Merata," *Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi* (blog), 2023, <https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2023/03/kemendikbudristek-ajak-wujudkan-pendidikan-inklusi-yang-adil-dan-merata>.

⁵ See Sunardi et al., "The Implementation of Inclusive Education for Students with Special Needs in Indonesia," *Excellence in Higher Education* 2, no. 1 (2011): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.5195/EHE.2011.27>; Abdul Somad, Sigit Haryanto, and Darsinah Darsinah, "Inclusive Education for Special Needs Students in Indonesia: A Review of Policies, Practices and Challenges," *JMKSP (Jurnal Manajemen, Kepemimpinan, dan Supervisi Pendidikan)* 9, no. 2 (August 12, 2024): 1024–35, <https://doi.org/10.31851/jmksp.v9i2.16192>; Siminto Siminto et al., "Inclusive Education in Indonesia: Policy Analysis, Challenges, and High-Quality Implementation Efforts Towards Achieving Access and Educational Equality for All Students with Special Needs," *International Journal of Teaching and Learning* 1, no. 3 (October 24, 2023): 221–33, <https://injotel.org/index.php/12/article/view/20>.

⁶ Sunardi et al., "The Implementation of Inclusive Education," 8.

The entitlement of students with disabilities to mainstream schools does not always guarantee the fulfillment of their needs and potential. Research suggests that most inclusive schools lack the necessary resources and facilities to cater to the needs of disabled students.⁷ Additionally, many teachers in mainstream schools have negative attitudes toward students with disabilities, which highlights a lack of competencies in implementing inclusive education.⁸ This raises concerns over how students with hearing or speech impairments, for instance, can learn and socialize in a mainstream school where no one communicates in sign language. Moreover, it is unfair that students with visual impairments do not receive Braille learning materials while their peers can easily read free textbooks. Although inclusive education supports liberalism, it fails to ensure the fulfillment of special needs. Justice as entitlement might assure citizens' rights but can also create wider disparities.⁹ Inclusive education creates wider inequalities when students with special needs are more disadvantaged by an unsupportive mainstream school environment. To provide quality education for students with special needs, inclusive education should involve the manifestation of justice as fairness, where

⁷ See Sunardi et al., "The Implementation of Inclusive Education"; Somad, Haryanto, and Darsinah, "Inclusive Education for Special Needs Students in Indonesia."

⁸ See Esti Wungu and Abraham Seonghee Han, *General Teachers' Attitude toward the Inclusion of Students with Visual Impairments (VI): A Study in DKI-Jakarta Indonesia* (Bandung, Indonesia: Pustaka Ilmiah Unpad, 2011), <https://pustaka.unpad.ac.id/archives/72551>; Misri A. Muchsin et al., "An Overview of Inclusive Education in Eastern Aceh, Indonesia: What Do the Educational Elements Say?," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 10, no. 2 (May 30, 2022): 297–318, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v10i2.631>; Mohd Hanafi Mohd Yasin et al., "An Analysis of Inclusive Education Practices in East Java Indonesian Preschools," *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (February 16, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1064870>; Hery Noer Aly and Bustomi Bustomi, "Quran Literacy for Students with Special Needs," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (December 31, 2022): 177–90, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i2.17609>.

⁹ Mark Olssen, John Codd, and Anne-Marie O'Neill, *Education Policy: Globalization, Citizenship, and Democracy* (London: SAGE, 2004), 217.

different needs are recognized, considered, and satisfied. As Marx stated, "To each according to his needs."¹⁰

In addition to promoting inclusivity, resource allocation efficiency has been a key focus in developing education policies. To save resources, they encourage enrolling students with disabilities in mainstream schools rather than building new special schools to cater to their needs.¹¹ This approach is perceived to be effective and cost-efficient. However, some argue that this policy neglects investing in opportunities for disadvantaged students and favors neoliberalism.¹² Like other developing countries like Cambodia, the World Bank assisted Indonesia in the disability and development project.¹³ Inclusive education is preferred because it is low-cost.¹⁴ To ensure that students with disabilities receive equal opportunities and quality education in mainstream schools, sufficient resources should be allocated to developing school facilities, equipment, learning resources, and staff competencies that meet their learning needs.

Inclusive education has been implemented in inclusive schools under the Ministry of Education and Culture and madrasas under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Several studies have been conducted on this topic, each focusing on a particular variable, such as teacher perceptions,¹⁵ attitudes,¹⁶ and teaching strategies.¹⁷

¹⁰ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983), 25.

¹¹ Endis Firdaus, "Pendidikan Inklusi dan Implementasinya di Indonesia," http://file.upi.edu/Direktori/FPIPS/M_K_D_U/195703031988031-ENDIS_FIRDAUS/Makalah_pro_internet/1ncls_Seminar.pdf.

¹² Olssen, Codd, and O'Neill, *Education Policy*, 217.

¹³ Braithwaite et al., "Disability and Development in the World Bank," 10.

¹⁴ Maya Kalyanpur, "Paradigm and Paradox: Education for All and the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Cambodia," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 15, no. 10 (2011): 1058, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2011.555069>.

¹⁵ Kieron Sheehy and Budiyanto, "The Pedagogic Beliefs of Indonesian Teachers in Inclusive Schools," *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education* 62, no. 5 (2015): 469–85, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2015.1061109>.

¹⁶ Farida Kurniawati et al., "Empirical Study on Primary School Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education in Jakarta, Indonesia," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, International Conference on Education & Educational Psychology (ICEEPSY 2012), 69 (December 24, 2012): 1430–36,

While some studies have taken a more comprehensive approach to evaluating the implementation of inclusive education in schools,¹⁸ research on inclusive education in madrasas under the Ministry of Religious Affairs is still rare. This makes the current research focusing on inclusive education and justice for children with special needs in madrasas in West Nusa Tenggara significant. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the concept of justice. This aspect has not been thoroughly examined in prior studies that mainly assessed inclusive education programs based on one or more variables.

This article presents the findings of a qualitative study conducted in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The study aimed to explore the implementation of inclusive education and justice in three key areas: processes, progress, and challenges. The research incorporated data collection techniques such as document analysis, focus group discussions, and observation. Twenty-three participants, consisting of school principals, teachers, parents, and high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of West Nusa Tenggara, Inclusive Madrasah Educator Forum, and members of a non-governmental organization, were involved in the study. The data were analyzed through the lens of inclusive education and justice, as detailed in the subsequent section.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.12.082>; Wungu and Han, *General Teachers' Attitude toward the Inclusion of Students with Visual Impairments (VI): A Study in DKI-Jakarta Indonesia*.

¹⁷ Kurniawati et al., "Empirical Study"; Farida Kurniawati, "Exploring Teachers' Inclusive Education Strategies in Rural Indonesian Primary Schools," *Educational Research* 63, no. 2 (2021): 198–211, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2021.1915698>; Ni Nyoman Padmadewi and Luh Putu Artini, "Teaching English to a Student with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Regular Classroom in Indonesia," *International Journal of Instruction* 10, no. 3 (2017): 159–76, <https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2017.10311a>; Sunardi Gunarhadi et al., "The Effect of Cluster-Based Instruction on Mathematic Achievement in Inclusive Schools," *International Journal of Special Education* 31, no. 1 (2016): 78–87, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1099973>.

¹⁸ See Sunardi et al., "The Implementation of Inclusive Education"; Zola Permata Sari, Riska Sarofah, and Yusuf Fadli, "The Implementation of Inclusive Education in Indonesia: Challenges and Achievements," *Jurnal Public Policy* 8, no. 4 (October 30, 2022): 264, <https://doi.org/10.35308/jpp.v8i4.5420>.

Inclusive Education and Justice

Inclusive education has been defined differently. In its narrow meaning, inclusive education is the education of children with disabilities and learning difficulties in regular schools.¹⁹ In its later political text, UNESCO reframed the vision of inclusion to ensure access to education for all children regardless of their differences in gender, socioeconomic status, culture, religion, race, and disabilities. According to UNESCO, "Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education."²⁰

Inclusive education is a system that allows all learners with disabilities and unique talents to participate in mainstream schools together with regular students (Indonesian Ministry of National Education Regulation, 70, 2009). Inclusive education is aimed at providing the broadest opportunity for all learners with disabilities or unique talents to obtain quality education to their needs and establishing an education system that respects diversity and resists discrimination against such learners (Indonesian Ministry of National Education Regulation, 70, 2009).

Mild, moderate, and severe disabilities are covered in inclusive education. According to the Indonesian government, students with disabilities are learners with visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech disorders, mental retardation, physical impairments, social maladjustment, learning disabilities, slow learning, autism, motoric disorders, addiction to drugs or

¹⁹ See Thi Xuan Thuy Nguyen, "Deconstructing Education for All: Discourse, Power and the Politics of Inclusion," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 14, no. 4 (2010): 341–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802504564>; Jane Kibla Lartec and Felina Panas Espique, "Communication Strategies of Teachers Educating Students Who Are Legally Blind in the General Education Setting," *Insight: Research and Practice in Visual Impairment and Blindness* 5, no. 2 (2023): 70–82; Sheldon Shaeffer, "Inclusive Education: A Prerequisite for Equity and Social Justice," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 20, no. 2 (2019): 181–92, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-019-09598-w>.

²⁰ UNESCO, "Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All" (UNESCO Digital Library, 2005), 13, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000140224>.

other addictive substances, and/or other disabilities (Indonesian Ministry of National Education Regulation, 70, 2009).

However, in the policy implementation, not all types of disabilities are admitted in inclusive schools. There is no student with an addiction to drugs or other addictive substances enrolled in inclusive schools. The restriction of disabilities included in policy and practice is due to limited human and material resources. Students with severe disabilities need the specialized knowledge and skills of teachers who graduate from the special education program. In contrast, regular teachers in mainstream schools only attend professional training in inclusive education.

Special education can sometimes lead to the exclusion of children with disabilities from participating equally in society. When these children are isolated in segregated special schools, they may have fewer educational opportunities, which can further perpetuate their exclusion from society.²¹ Teachers and students with special needs may also feel excluded and hidden away in their schools, and even the best-equipped schools cannot fully replace the normal environment.²²

Inclusive education has been shown to foster important character values such as acceptance, respect, empathy, care, and recognition. These values are crucial for students with disabilities to feel included and participate equally with all kinds of people. According to a meta-analysis conducted by Carlberg and Kavale,²³ which analyzed 50 studies, the social effects of inclusive education had an effect size of 0.11. Moreover, Staub and Peck²⁴ identified five benefits of inclusion, including reducing fear of individual

²¹ Anat Greenstein, *Radical Inclusive Education: Disability, Teaching, and Struggles for Liberation* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 104.

²² Volker Rutte, "Integration Models for Elementary and Secondary Schools in Austria," in *Making It Happen: Example of Good Practice in Special Need Education & Community-Based Programme* (Paris: UNESCO, 2014), 1, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000096884>.

²³ Conrad Carlberg and Kenneth Kavale, "The Efficacy of Special Versus Regular Class Placement for Exceptional Children: A Meta-Analysis," *The Journal of Special Education* 14, no. 3 (1980): 295–309, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002246698001400304>.

²⁴ Debbie Staub and Charles A. Peck, "What Are the Outcomes for Nondisabled Students?," *Educational Leadership* 52, no. 4 (1995): 36–40.

differences, boosting self-esteem and more significant concern for students with disabilities, fostering social cognition, improving self-concept and personality development, and cultivating meaningful and close friendships.

Inclusive education has emerged as a recent development in the Indonesian context, demonstrating a favorable impact on social inclusion for children with disabilities. While available research on the effect of inclusive education on equal social participation for students with disabilities is limited, evidence suggests that disabled children experience meaningful learning when engaged in social and collaborative activities with their nondisabled peers.²⁵

Although proponents of inclusive education strongly advocate for equality, it often creates more inequality. While inclusive education does address the inequality of access to schooling for children with disabilities, it fails to address the broader issue of educational inequality. The meaning of equality of educational opportunity is multifaceted, encompassing both equal access to school resources and academic achievement.²⁶ Similarly, the concept of inequality also has various interpretations.

Inclusive education has been strongly criticized for its undesirable consequences of perpetuating inequality instead of reducing it. However, the Indonesian government has proactively tackled this issue by implementing comprehensive policies that differentiate opportunity, treatment, and related outcomes. These policies ensure that all students have equal access to education and are treated fairly, regardless of their background or circumstances. Overall, the Indonesian government's efforts in promoting inclusive education are commendable and represent a positive step towards achieving greater equality in education.²⁷

²⁵ Sheehy and Budiyanto, "The Pedagogic Beliefs of Indonesian Teachers in Inclusive Schools," 475.

²⁶ Jeanne Ballantine and Floyd M. Hammack, *The Sociology of Education: A Systematic Analysis* (Boston: Pearson, 2012), 71.

²⁷ See Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 758 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Implementing Inclusive Education in Madrasas; Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 32 of 2022 concerning Technical Standards for Minimum Education Services; Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of

Ensuring equal access to education is only the first step towards true equality. To provide a high-quality education for all students, we must also prioritize equal treatment. This includes creating learning opportunities for students with disabilities or unique talents that meet their needs and implementing an education system that values diversity and rejects discrimination against any student group (as outlined by the Indonesian Ministry of National Education Regulation of 2009). Inclusive education is grounded in diversity, recognizing that educational practices must consider and cater to every student's unique abilities, talents, interests, and needs.

In order to promote fairness and inclusivity for students with disabilities, the Indonesian government has implemented a program providing block grants of fifty million rupiahs (equivalent to roughly 5050 US dollars) to every inclusive school annually. These grants are specifically intended to facilitate staff training in curriculum design and the development of instructional and administrative materials that cater to the unique needs of students with disabilities.²⁸ Moreover, the Indonesian government has made a continued effort to enhance teacher professional development in the field of inclusive education.²⁹

In order to ensure equal treatment for students with disabilities, it is necessary to provide specialized teaching resources and approaches within an inclusive classroom setting. Such classrooms feature a team of two teachers, one regular teacher and one special teacher, who work collaboratively to teach both regular and disabled students.³⁰ Teaching approaches are tailored to meet individual needs and may include collaborative learning.³¹

the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 of 2024 concerning Adequate Accommodation for Students with Disabilities in Educational Institutions at the Ministry of Religious Affairs; West Nusa Tenggara Governor Regulation Number 78 of 2022 concerning Inclusive Education.

²⁸ Sunardi et al., "The Implementation of Inclusive Education," 3.

²⁹ Sheehy and Budiyanto, "The Pedagogic Beliefs of Indonesian Teachers in Inclusive Schools."

³⁰ Sheehy and Budiyanto, 477.

³¹ Sheehy and Budiyanto, "The Pedagogic Beliefs of Indonesian Teachers in

The principle of equal treatment often yields equality of outcomes. The government has promoted inclusive education, ensuring that students with disabilities receive the same quality education as their peers in mainstream schools. This approach to education emphasizes the importance of providing quality education to all students, including those with disabilities, as a cornerstone of inclusive education.

Achieving high-quality inclusive education requires a tailored curriculum, personalized instruction, and specialized learning facilities, all of which align with the principle of diversity wherein every student receives an education that caters to their unique needs. For example, research has shown that cluster-based instruction, which groups students with similar learning challenges into smaller cohorts, has significantly impacted the math achievement of students with disabilities in several inclusive schools in Surakarta, Indonesia.³² Adopting differentiated teaching strategies, such as individual learning plans with visual media, co-teaching, and a “buddy program,” has also effectively supported students with disabilities in learning English. These approaches are valuable tools for inclusive classroom programs aiming to achieve equitable student outcomes.

Inclusive education is vital to achieving educational equality for children with special needs. However, its implementation has also led to particular challenges. The following section delves into the progress and obstacles in implementing inclusive education in madrasas in West Nusa Tenggara.

Progress

Inclusive education policies have been established in Indonesia since 2009. Despite this, West Nusa Tenggara province has been at the forefront of implementing inclusive education since 2016. Some schools had already accepted students with special needs even before the term “inclusive schools” was officially coined. Over the past eight years, there has been notable

Inclusive Schools”; Kurniawati et al., “Empirical Study.”

³² Gunarhadi et al., “The Effect of Cluster-Based Instruction on Mathematic Achievement in Inclusive Schools.”

progress in inclusive education, including a rise in the number of inclusive madrasas, positive attitudes from the school community, individualized education programs, the creation of Inclusive Madrasa Educator Forum (*Forum Pendidik Madrasa Inklusi/FPMI*), and cooperation among government bodies, non-governmental organizations, and communities.

The Increasing Number of Inclusive Madrasas

Inclusive schools are educational institutions that are designed to enroll students with disabilities. The government determines the establishment of these schools to provide proper educational opportunities for all students. Despite this initiative, data shows that a significant number of children with disabilities still face barriers to accessing education. Nevertheless, the number of inclusive schools is steadily increasing. As of 2024, the West Nusa Tenggara Province has 34 inclusive schools under the Ministry of Education and Culture and 19 inclusive madrasas under the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

In 2016, West Nusa Tenggara began implementing inclusive education in their schools. This initiative began by transforming three regular madrasas – Madrasa Ibtidaiya (Islamic Elementary School) Nahdatul Wathan in Tanak Beak Narmada, West Lombok, Madrasa Tsanawiyah Darul Anshar (Islamic Middle School) in Praya Central Lombok, and Madrasa Tsanawiyah Al-Fathiyah Kongfati in Central Lombok – into inclusive madrasas. Over the next eight years, the number of inclusive madrasas increased from three to nineteen, comprising five public and fourteen private. In West Nusa Tenggara, there are a total of 143 madrasas, out of which 19 madrasas are inclusive. Among these 19 madrasas, five are elementary, and the remaining are middle schools. However, there is currently no inclusive Islamic high school in the region. This means that approximately 13% of madrasas in the area are inclusive, indicating positive efforts towards creating a more equal education system. The rise in the number of inclusive madrasas can be attributed to the strong enthusiasm shown by officials in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the increasing awareness among principals and teachers about the importance of transforming their madrasas into inclusive environments, and the growing demand

from the community for educational opportunities for children with special needs. The table below lists inclusive madrasas in West Nusa Tenggara.³³

Table 1 Inclusive Madrasas in West Nusa Tenggara

| No | School | Regency | First Year of Inclusive Madrasa Designation | Status |
|----|-------------------------------|----------------|---|---------|
| 1 | MIN 1 Lombok Tengah | Central Lombok | 2022 | Public |
| 2 | MTs Darul Anshar Praya Tengah | Central Lombok | 2016 | Private |
| 3 | MTs Al-Fathiyah Kongfati | Central Lombok | 2016 | Private |
| 4 | MTs Hidayatul Athfal Rebile | Central Lombok | 2022 | Private |
| 5 | MI NW Tanak Beak | West Lombok | 2016 | Private |
| 6 | MIN 1 Lombok Barat | West Lombok | 2023 | Public |
| 7 | MI Al-Badriyah Rarang | East Lombok | 2023 | Private |
| 8 | MTs 1 Sumbawa | Sumbawa | 2022 | Public |
| 9 | MTs NW Samawa | Sumbawa | 2022 | Private |
| 10 | MTs Darul Ikhlas | Sumbawa | 2022 | Private |
| 11 | MTs Abu Bakar Islamy | Sumbawa | 2022 | Private |
| 12 | MTs Bahrul Ulum Utan | Sumbawa | 2022 | Private |
| 13 | MTs Penyaring | Sumbawa | 2022 | Private |
| 14 | MTs Gunung Galesa Putra | Sumbawa | 2022 | Private |
| 15 | MTsN 3 Sumbawa | Sumbawa | 2023 | Public |
| 16 | MTs Nurul Yasin NW Propok | Sumbawa | 2023 | Private |
| 17 | MTs NW Alas | Sumbawa | 2023 | Private |
| 18 | MTsN 2 Kota Bima | Bima | 2022 | Public |
| 19 | MIS Al-Amin | Mataram | 2023 | Private |

Source: The Ministry of Religious Affairs of West Nusa Tenggara, December 1, 2023

No data is available regarding the total number of students with special needs admitted to inclusive madrasas in West Nusa Tenggara. However, the two inclusive madrasas that participated in this study have confirmed that they accept all applications from

³³ The Ministry of Religious Affairs of West Nusa Tenggara, Focus Group Discussion, December 1, 2023.

students with special needs. The knowledge of these inclusive madrasas is primarily spread by word of mouth among parents of prospective students. The table below showcases the varying number of students with special needs currently enrolled in these inclusive madrasas.

Table 2: Inclusive Madrasas and Students with Disabilities

| No. | School | The total number of students | The number of students with special needs | The types of disabilities |
|-----|--|------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | MI NW Tanak Beak (Private Islamic Elementary School of Nahdatul Wathan, West Lombok) | 273 | 34 (12.45%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing impairment (2 or 5.88%) • Cerebral palsy (1 or 2.94%) • Severe autism (2 or 5.88%) • Moderate autism (1 or 2.94%) • Mild autism (1 or 2.94%) • Slow learning (20 or 58.82%) • Dyslexia (1 or 2.94%) • Intellectual disability (1 or 2.94%) • Gifted (1 or 2.94%) • Down syndrome (1 or 2.94%) • Hyperactive (3 or 8.82%) |
| 2 | MTs Darul Anshor (Private Islamic Middle School of Darul Anshar, Central Lombok) | 42 | 12 (28.57%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow learning (8 or 66.66%) • Intellectual disabilities (1 or 8.33%) • Learning difficulty (3 or 25%) |

Source: Focus group discussions with the principals and teachers of the schools

Based on the data presented, the number of students with special needs admitted to inclusive madrasas exceeds the government's specified limit. To ensure high-quality educational services for these students, the government has set a maximum percentage of 10% for students with special needs in each inclusive school. Accommodating the individual needs of all disabled students can be a challenge for schools like MI NW Tanak Beak and MTs Darul Anshor, which have limited resources. Despite this, both schools have been unable to reject applications from any student with special needs due to the scarcity of special schools and the limited number of regular schools that accept them. MI NW Tanak Beak in West Lombok even accepted a student with special needs from the regency of Mataram,³⁴ highlighting the pressing need for inclusive education opportunities for students with disabilities.

Different schools have various caps on the number of students with disabilities they can admit. A previous survey of 186 inclusive schools revealed that approximately 53.3% of these schools have a quota for students with disabilities.³⁵ Some of these schools may have a limit of four students with disabilities per inclusive classroom.³⁶ The quota set by half of inclusive schools is related to the available resources that support the unique needs of children with disabilities. In other words, inclusive education considers that students with diverse abilities should be taught differently to ensure equality of treatment.

The School Community's Positive Attitudes

The unwavering support and positive attitudes of the principals, regular teachers, and nondisabled students are crucial in reinforcing the principles of social inclusion and inclusive curricula. The school community needs to develop a sense of ownership and value towards inclusion in their local, national, and regional context. According to the findings of this study, all two

³⁴ MI NW Tanak Beak, Focus Group Discussion, October 12, 2023.

³⁵ Sunardi et al., "The Implementation of Inclusive Education," 6.

³⁶ Sheehy and Budiyanto, "The Pedagogic Beliefs of Indonesian Teachers in Inclusive Schools," 477.

inclusive madrasas reported that their communities accept and respect students with special needs, and there have been no reports of bullying or discriminatory practices against them.

The progress of inclusive education can be seen in the positive attitudes of teachers and nondisabled students toward students with disabilities in mainstream schools. A student with hearing or speech impairments may struggle to learn and socialize in a mainstream school where no one can communicate using sign language. However, some teachers have successfully faced such communication challenges. For example, MI NW Tanak Beak has two deaf students, and one teacher learned sign language independently to communicate with them.³⁷ Other teachers and students cannot use sign language.

Building teachers' confidence in the ability of each learner to receive an education, regardless of their background or characteristics, is another essential component of an inclusive curriculum.³⁸ While teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education vary, most teachers hold positive attitudes. According to another study by Kurniawati, which surveyed 208 teachers from three special schools, four inclusive schools, and six regular schools, teachers generally held positive attitudes toward inclusion. This is a surprising result, as inclusive education has only recently gained momentum, and many participating teachers lacked knowledge and experience in special education.³⁹ Furthermore, teachers with experience teaching students with special needs and those working with special needs students were more favorable toward inclusion.

Individualized education programs

The independent curriculum allows schools to customize their teaching approach and evaluation methods. To promote inclusivity, the curriculum should be adapted to cater to the needs

³⁷ MI NW Tanak Beak, Focus Group Discussion, October 12, 2023.

³⁸ Renato Opertti and Jayne Brady, "Developing Inclusive Teachers from an Inclusive Curricular Perspective," *PROSPECTS* 41, no. 3 (2011): 459–72, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-011-9205-7>.

³⁹ Kurniawati et al., "Empirical Study," 1433.

of each student. This may involve accommodating different learning styles and modifying the instructional level, content, or performance criteria. In this study, two inclusive madrasas adjusted their curriculum to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities by setting individualized targets, differentiating teaching and learning processes, and providing customized assessments.

For instance, the teachers at MTS Darul Anshar take a personalized approach to teaching and learning. Differentiated learning can go a long way in ensuring that students with special needs receive the support they need to succeed academically. The teachers tailor the curriculum to meet the unique needs of each student and, even more so, to see how learning targets have been adjusted to help students acquire skills that will enable them to care for themselves independently. The teachers recognize students' learning abilities and provide them with lessons catering to their strengths even though they still cannot read and write at 17 years old. This is an excellent example of how inclusive education can be successfully implemented in schools. Teachers in MTS Darul Anshor explained, "The learning targets for students with intellectual impairment are being able to socialize with other students and to perform compulsory prayers as Muslims. They cannot learn to read and write. As long as they come to school, it is enough."⁴⁰ This study supports government policy and prior research that advocates for special accommodations for students with disabilities in inclusive schools to address their needs.⁴¹

⁴⁰ MTS Darul Anshor, Focus Group Discussion, October 14, 2023.

⁴¹ See the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 758 of 2022 concerning Guidelines for Implementing Inclusive Education in Madrasas; Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 32 of 2022 concerning Technical Standards for Minimum Education Services; Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 of 2024 concerning Adequate Accommodation for Students with Disabilities in Educational Institutions at the Ministry of Religious Affairs; West Nusa Tenggara Governor Regulation Number 78 of 2022 concerning Inclusive Education; Sari, Sarofah, and Fadli, "The Implementation of Inclusive Education in Indonesia."

The Establishment of the Inclusive Madrasah Educator Forum

Despite the increasing number of inclusive schools, teachers often lack the necessary competencies to educate students with special needs effectively. Unlike their counterparts in special schools, many teachers in inclusive madrasas do not possess a degree in special education. Instead, they learn by doing, relying on in-service teacher professional development in inclusive education. However, focus group discussions with two inclusive madrasas revealed inadequate training. Instead, many teachers turn to online resources to better understand how to teach students with special needs. The Ministry of Religious Affairs in West Nusa Tenggara does not have sufficient resources to provide comprehensive training for teachers in inclusive madrasas. Nevertheless, they acknowledge the importance of providing guidance and assistance to inclusive madrasas.

The Inclusive Madrasa Educator Forum (*Forum Pendidik Madrasah Inklusi/FPMI*) was established in Jakarta on September 22, 2021. FPMI aims to enhance the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia. In West Nusa Tenggara, FPMI is supervised by the Governor and the Head of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. FPMI comprises experts in special and inclusive education from universities, non-government organizations, special schools, and the community. From 2021 to 2023, FPMI made several efforts to support the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in establishing inclusive madrasas, disseminating information on inclusive education, providing technical guidance for special assistants and regular teachers in inclusive madrasas, collaborating with agencies that can assist students with special needs, and working alongside the Inclusive Education Resource Center (*Pusat Sumber Pendidikan Inklusi/PSPI*). Limited human and financial resources constrain FPMI to run its programs.⁴²

⁴² FPMI, Focus Group Discussion, November 21, 2023

The Collaboration among Government, Non-Government Organizations, and the Community

The statistics indicate the exclusion of children with disabilities from education, with a mere 18.91% receiving formal education. Research shows that low socioeconomic families, some residing in rural areas, are the primary sufferers, as all 46 special needs students admitted to two inclusive madrasas come from such backgrounds. While these findings may not be generalized to all children with special needs, many likely come from similar backgrounds and are unaware of the educational services available to them.

Therefore, the government, NGOs, and the community should collaborate to promote inclusive education. The Child Protection Institution (*Lembaga Perlindungan Anak/LPA*) is one NGO in West Nusa Tenggara that works tirelessly towards improving education for disabled children. The *Gawe Gubuk* program, initiated by LPA and the government of Central Lombok, aims to reach out to children with special needs who do not attend school and provide them with access to educational, health, and welfare services.⁴³ MTs Darul Anshar also tries to reach out to children with special needs and provide them with educational opportunities. It is essential to ensure that every child is given access to formal education, regardless of their disabilities or special needs.⁴⁴

Challenges

The inclusive education policy strives to provide equal learning opportunities for all children and ensure that students with special needs receive the same quality of education. When children with disabilities are educated in segregated schools, they are often isolated and have limited access to educational opportunities, which can prevent them from participating fully in society.⁴⁵ While inclusive education promotes values of equality and social inclusion, it may not always ensure fairness or justice. Terzi suggests that if inclusive education promotes educational

⁴³ LPA, Focus Group Discussion, December 4, 2023.

⁴⁴ MTs Darul Anshar, Focus Group Discussion, October 13, 2023.

⁴⁵ Greenstein, *Radical Inclusive Education*, 104.

equity, children with disabilities and difficulties in mainstream schools should be entitled to a distributive element, which means a fair distribution of educational resources.⁴⁶ Even with the best intentions, implementing inclusive education may still result in injustice due to structural inequalities within the educational system: limited resource allocation, the lack of teacher professional development, and obscure study plans, processes, and evaluations.

Limited Resource Allocation

Efficient resource allocation is a crucial tool in developing inclusive education policies. Inclusive schools are the most cost-effective measure, saving precious educational budgets. With a large number of disabled children scattered across 6,000 of the 17,000 Indonesian islands, building new special schools would be a daunting financial challenge. However, enrolling these children in existing mainstream schools is a more economical option, promoting efficiency in resource allocation and avoiding heavy investments in improving opportunities for disadvantaged students. The Salamanca Statement further reinforces this, stating that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes and creating welcoming communities.⁴⁷ Building an inclusive society and achieving education for all can be easily achieved through this approach. Inclusive education improves the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the education system by providing practical education to most children.

Even though inclusive education is a cost-effective option, it is essential to provide adequate resources to ensure that students with disabilities receive the same quality of education as their peers. Many inclusive schools have failed to provide the necessary facilities, equipment, and resources to meet the needs of disabled

⁴⁶ Lorella Terzi, "Reframing Inclusive Education: Educational Equality as Capability Equality," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 44, no. 4 (2014): 484, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2014.960911>.

⁴⁷ UNESCO, "The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education."

students due to limited resource allocation. Schools must receive sufficient funding to develop facilities, educational resources, and staff competencies to ensure fairness and equal opportunity for all students.

This research focuses on two inclusive madrasas situated in West Nusa Tenggara. The results of this study affirm the findings of previous research conducted by Sunardi et al. in 2011.⁴⁸ The two private schools have limited facilities, equipment, and resources to support students with special needs. They do not have restrooms designed for disabled students, and only one of them has a resource room for students with behavioral disorders, which may cause disruptions in regular classrooms. In addition, they lack sufficient learning materials and resources for students with special needs.

It is quite disheartening to learn about the condition of the two private inclusive madrasas, which are impoverished. However, they have received special grants to support their efforts in implementing inclusive education. MI NW Tanah Beak Narmada has received financial assistance four times, amounting to Rp.35,000,000.-, Rp.15,000,000.-, Rp.50,000,000.-, and Rp.30,000,000.- respectively.⁴⁹ These funds have been utilized to improve the learning environment for students with special needs. MTs Darul Anshar, on the other hand, has received Rp.25,000,000.- and Rp.77,000,000.- to develop a resource room and purchase learning equipment specifically designed for students with disabilities.⁵⁰ Despite their challenges, these schools are trying to improve the quality of education for all students.

The wage disparity between public and impoverished private school teachers is saddening. While government-funded public school teachers receive a fair salary at approximately Rp.5,000,000.- to Rp.10,000,000.-, private school educators are often paid significantly less, with monthly earnings ranging from Rp. 300,000 to Rp. 500,000. Furthermore, MI NW Tanak Beak teachers must instruct and care for 34 students with special needs, while

⁴⁸ Sunardi et al., "The Implementation of Inclusive Education."

⁴⁹ MI NW Tanak Beak, Focus Group Discussion, October 12, 2023.

⁵⁰ MTs Darul Anshor, Focus Group Discussion, October 14, 2023.

those at MTs Darul Anshor are responsible for 12 special needs students. This presents a difficult challenge for these educators, who must strive to perform their duties to the best of their abilities despite the inadequate compensation they receive.

The Lack of Teachers' Professional Development in Inclusive Education

Inclusive schools may struggle to adequately serve students with disabilities due to resource limitations, while special schools are structured to meet the specific needs of these students. Inclusive schools often lack crucial components such as qualified teachers, comprehensive curriculum, appropriate instructional materials, and necessary facilities to provide equal educational opportunities. As a result, achieving social equality through inclusive education requires overcoming resource-related challenges. Furthermore, teachers in inclusive schools may not always possess the necessary skills to support students with disabilities, resulting in inadequate support for these students.

Inclusive schools do not universally have both regular and exceptional teachers. This study found that MTs Darul Anshor has one special assistant teacher while MI NW Tanak Beak has three. A regular teacher will teach the majority of students in the class. In contrast, a special teacher will instruct a smaller group of students with disabilities in the same classroom or a separate resource room. These special assistant teachers are often regular teachers with minimal professional training in inclusive education. "To address this, the government could provide a specific budget to support these children and allow schools to offer special services. Alternatively, training regular teachers to become special assistant teachers may be beneficial so they can handle and anticipate the unique challenges these children may face. Though it is not the responsibility of regular teachers to provide this training, having specially trained assistants could help ensure that the needs of all students are met."⁵¹

Another educator emphasized the pressing need for professional development in inclusive education, stating, "We have had some online training, but subject teachers need more

⁵¹ MTs Darul Anshar, Focus Group Discussion, October 14, 2023.

comprehensive training to support students with special needs effectively. We struggle to identify and analyze students' needs and provide appropriate treatment. Our implementation of inclusive education is limited to our knowledge and experience, which is insufficient. We require specialized government training and support to achieve true inclusion. While we can try our best, we still lack the necessary resources. Few experts are available, and most special schools are staffed primarily by general teachers, including the principal and vice principal. We face challenges accessing relevant information, but the government must provide more resources in this area.⁵²

Sheehy and Budiyanto conducted research that reveals that students with disabilities benefit from specialized teaching methods, such as additional instruction time and modified assessments, in inclusive classrooms.⁵³ In West Nusa Tenggara, this study found that inadequate professional training programs, lack of knowledge and experience in special education, and limited understanding of diverse students among teachers contribute to inequity in learning opportunities for students with disabilities. The insufficient preparation of educators for inclusive practice leaves them feeling helpless and unable to deliver a curriculum that meets the unique learning needs of children with disabilities.

Obscure Study Plan, Process, and Evaluation

Upon examination of two inclusive madrasas, it was found that individualized education programs were implemented for students with special needs. These programs aimed to provide unique learning targets, experiences, and assessments tailored to the individual needs of each student. However, it was observed that the teachers had not developed a detailed study plan, process, or evaluation for these students. Students with special needs attended regular classes, receiving instructions from their teachers. They were redirected to a resource center or special assistant

⁵² MI NW Tanak Beak, Focus Group Discussion, October 12, 2023.

⁵³ Sheehy and Budiyanto, "The Pedagogic Beliefs of Indonesian Teachers in Inclusive Schools."

teachers when they could not follow instructions. The effectiveness of this approach in providing quality learning experiences for these students remains uncertain.

The academic achievements of students with special needs also often fall significantly short of those of their typically developing peers. For instance, a 17-year-old student with a cognitive impairment was unable to read or write, yet the teachers at the inclusive madrasah did not take any action to address this issue. Schools catering to these students primarily focus on socialization rather than academic success.

Conclusion

Adopting inclusive education policies has made significant strides in promoting inclusive schools, fostering positive attitudes among teachers and students alike, tailoring education programs to individual needs, establishing resource centers for inclusive education, and fostering collaboration among government, non-governmental organizations, and the community. This approach is designed to reduce inequality by providing equal access to education and opportunities for children with special needs to participate fully in society. Despite its laudable aims, challenges remain, including teachers' lack of professional development, limited resources and equipment, and obscure study plans, processes, and evaluations. Furthermore, the implementation of inclusive education policies has also revealed some inequities. To further improve inclusive education, we must address these issues of injustice head-on.

Inclusive education remains an under-researched area. Further studies are necessary to evaluate and investigate the implementation of inclusive education to gauge its effectiveness and ensure that it promotes equality and equity in learning for all children.

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