

## Implementation of Inclusive Education Policies at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* in Central Java, Indonesia

Hakiman\*<sup>1</sup>, Siti Choiriyah<sup>2</sup>, Khuriyah<sup>3</sup>

\*Corresponding author: [hakiman.iman@gmail.com](mailto:hakiman.iman@gmail.com)

<sup>123</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia

### Abstract

*The implementation of inclusive education in Islamic elementary schools (madrasah ibtidaiyah) in Central Java Province, Indonesia was investigated. This study is a qualitative research. The data were collected through interviews, participant observation, documentation, and forum group discussion. Policy makers, principals, vice principals of curriculum, vice principals of student affairs, classroom teachers, shadow teachers, and inclusive education teams were involved. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Keji Semarang, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ma'arif Sidomulyo, and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Salafiyah Kebumen became the research objects. The results show that the policy of inclusive education is stated in the school's vision, mission, objectives, and flagship programs. It is also included in the decrees concerning the establishment of inclusive education team, collaborative curriculum team, assessment team, and collaborative learning team. The policy to build an inclusive school culture is implemented in the provision of inclusive education services and capacity building for both teachers and professional staffs.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education Policy, Inclusive Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Implementation*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 90 of 2013 stipulates that *madrasas* are among educational units obliged to provide inclusive education. This confirms the commitment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to realize the "education for all" program. Inclusive education is a medium-term program of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to provide equal distribution of Islamic education for all citizens. The presence of inclusive *madrasas* is aimed to provide education services for children with special needs without disengaging them from educational process. Children with special needs and regular students learn in the same environment, namely a non-discrimination classroom but with special treatment.

As the elementary education unit under the auspices of the Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* has organized inclusive education. Inclusive *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* provides education for students with diverse backgrounds as well as special needs to develop their talents and potentials. While inclusive education in *madrasas* has been initiated since 2008, the policy was officially issued in 2013. The Director General of Islamic Education promulgates the Decree No. 3211 of 2016 on elaborating the establishment of 22 inclusive *madrasas* in Indonesia, including elementary school level *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* and junior secondary school level *Madrasah Tsanawiyah*.

Inclusive *madrasas* are expected to facilitate learning opportunities for children with special needs in which approximately 70% of 1.6 million children with special needs have not received proper education. Wahyudi & Kristiawati (2016) reported that in 2016, only 29,317 schools (ranging from elementary to senior secondary) or 11% of the total number of schools in Indonesia delivered the inclusive education program. In addition, there are 160 inclusive *madrasas* under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Nevertheless, Sumarni (2019) and Ramadanti & Wicaksono (2021) claimed that the implementation of inclusive education in *madrasas* was less optimal due to the lack of support from experts, shadow teachers, learning facilities, curriculum, and parents, as well as the absence of supervision from the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Wibowo et al., (2019) investigated the implementation of inclusive education in a *madrasa* in Central Java and found the shortcomings due to the absence of regulation issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs related to the matters. Consequently, *madrasas* must be creative and innovative in providing inclusive education. The study suggested the necessity of rigid and detailed regulations regarding the implementation of inclusive education in *madrasas*.

Similarly, Rahmi & Muqowim (2019) reported that the *madrasas* in the West Sumatra were unable to conduct optimal inclusive education since they had not been supported by adequate policies and human resource, including professional teachers. Mosia, (2014) suggested that inclusive education can only be achieved if the related policies are set to support students. Moreover, the policies must be developed and reviewed based on the national and international standards to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education.

Previous studies have reported the realization of inclusive education in educational institutions, including *madrasas* in Indonesia. In the present study, we attempt to explore the implementation of inclusive education in *madrasas* in Central Java, Indonesia, in terms of policies and culture in inclusive schools.

## **2. METHOD**

The present study is a qualitative research. The data were collected through several methods, including interviews, participant observation, documentation, and FGD. The participants included policy makers, foundation administrators, school principals, vice principals of curriculum, vice principals of student affairs, classroom teachers, shadow teachers, parents and guardians, and experts. The participant observation and documentation were carried out in four *madrasas*. Triangulation using multiple data sources, methods, and theories was performed to check the validity of the data. The interactive analysis, consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing introduced by Miles et al., (2014) was carried out to analyze the data.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The inclusive education in *madrasas* is the realization of public access to special education under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The normative basis for inclusive education in *madrasas* as contained in the Guidebook for Inclusive Education in *Madrasas* is the Quran, Surah Al-'Alaq verses 1-5 and Surah 'Abasa verses 1-16 (Qomariyah et al., 2017). The empirical basis is the implementation of inclusive education prior to policy/decreed (initiated in 2008), after the Ministry of Religious Affairs began to devise the policy regarding the inclusive education in 2013, and after the Directorate General of Islamic Education issued a decree on the establishment of 22 inclusive *madrasas* in 2016. The juridical basis is the related laws, government regulations, and ministerial regulations that have been issued by the authorities. Fernandes, (2017) suggested that the adaptation of inclusive education should emphasize the enforcement of government policies instead of school proposals.

The response of *madrasas* to concerns about education access for children with special needs is supported by the government, in this context the Ministry of Religious Affairs. It is manifested in the decree on the establishment of *madrasas* that provide inclusive education. Principally, Islam is a religion that upholds equality and Islamic teaching is a strong foundation in realizing inclusive education in *madrasas*. Mukaffa, (2017) affirmed that the policy of inclusive education in *madrasas* gains positive response and is followed up by various changes in *madrasas*.

The field observations were carried out in three *madrasas*, namely *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Keji Ungaran Semarang*, *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ma'arif Sidomulyo Kebumen*, and *Madrasah Salafiyah Banyumas*. The impact of inclusive education policy and the culture of inclusive school were

investigated. Essentially, the implementation of inclusive education covers three pillars, namely culture, policies, and practices (Booth & Ainscow, 2022).

The culture of inclusive school is demonstrated by the acceptance of students with special needs in the classroom without discrimination and on an equal basis. *Madrasas* also facilitate and accommodate the implementation of inclusive education by providing learning tools for cognitive and motor therapy. Moreover, the involvement of all school members is vital, particularly in handling any difficulties that might be faced by students with special needs. The academic staffs assist students in providing administrative services, the school guards direct them to the classroom, the canteen staffs help them pick safe food, and other assistances. Briefly, a paradigm shift in inclusive education occurs with more emphasis on social justice and human rights. Köpfer & Óskarsdóttir, (2019) stated that inclusive education takes place when human rights are transformed into a school culture that supports all students.

Establishing an inclusive school culture in *madrasas* is the initial step in the implementation of inclusive education in *madrasas* in which the entire academic members are required to understand the importance of inclusiveness and participate in providing assistances for children with special needs. Such culture is manifested by giving respect to children with special needs, avoiding offensive terms, providing facilities to support them, providing training or workshops for teachers to recognize and handle children with special needs on a regular basis, collaborating with parents as partners and observers in devising learning programs for them. The school awareness is the main internal factor in realizing an inclusive culture in schools (Marcoulides et al., 2005).

To support the inclusive school culture and professional insight in *madrasas*, teachers are motivated to participate in special needs education training and workshops, both online and offline. Nevertheless, they had to actively search and attend the training and workshops since the *madrasas* have not organized such programs independently. From the three *madrasas* under this study, none of them that had arranged any scheduled training or workshop. The allocation of budget became the main reason. Francis et al., (2020) argued that the strategies for inclusive education include the school culture, high expectations from various school communities, administrative support, professional development, collaboration, student evaluation, accommodation and modification, paraprofessional support, and parental involvement.

To support an inclusive school culture, the policies related to inclusive education are stated in the vision and mission of *madrasas*. Table 1 presents the vision and mission statement of the *madrasas* involved in the present study.

**Table 1: The Vision and Mission Statement**

Inclusive School	Vision	Mission
<i>Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Keji Ungaran, Semarang Regency</i>	To realize Muslim generations who uphold the Islamic values based on the Quran and who demonstrate excellence and compassion.	To implement child-friendly learning environment by organizing inclusive education.
<i>Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Salafiyah Kebarongan</i>	To empower student to acquire self-resilience, excellence, and good moral characters.	
<i>Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ma'arif Sidomulyo</i>	To generate students who uphold the Islamic values, and who are excellent and inclusive.	To carry out an integrated professional learning that promotes the values of <i>Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah</i> by organizing inclusive education.

The visions and missions of the *madrasas* represent the emphasis on inclusiveness, particularly on the mission of *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Keji Ungaran*, Semarang Regency and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ma'arif Sidomulyo*. The objectives and programs of the *madrasas* are demonstrated in table 2.

**Table 2: The Objectives and Programs of Inclusive Madrasas**

Inclusive School	Objectives	Program
<i>Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Keji Ungaran Semarang Regency</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To provide education to students with special needs in inclusive school.</li> <li>- To realize inclusive attitudes and behavior in the <i>madrasa</i> environment.</li> </ul>	Inclusive education for students with special needs.
<i>Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Salafiyah Kebarongan</i>		The flagship programs of <i>Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Salafiyah Kebarongan</i> are the Quran memorization (Chapter 30) and inclusive education.
<i>Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ma'arif Sidomulyo</i>		Inclusive education for students with special needs (The Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 3211 of 2016 on the establishment of 22 inclusive <i>madrasas</i> in Indonesia).

Table 2 shows that inclusive education is an element of the school program, even their flagship program. The inclusive education is a program stated by the three *madrasas*. Table 2 also demonstrates that *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Keji Ungaran*, Semarang Regency, includes the inclusive education in the objective and featured program of the *madrasa*.

The vision, mission, objectives, and school programs are present to realize an inclusive school culture in *madrasas*. Although some of the *madrasas* do not include inclusive education in the vision and mission of *madrasas*, it is stated in the objectives and programs of *madrasas*. Referring to Kottern in Zamroni (2016), school culture must be supported by the presence and dissemination a new vision to the community as well as the provision of workshops and training to support this culture. The vision and mission are an integral part of the school's policy in realizing inclusive *madrasas*. The inclusive school culture has been nurtured in the *madrasas* as indicated by the results of interviews and participant observations. Such culture is supported by the policies, both national and institutional, related to the inclusive education. The school principal becomes the main focus in inclusive policymaking in *madrasas*.

The inclusive policies are stated in the vision, mission, objectives and flagship programs. The vision and mission of the *madrasa* is significant as they are the foundation to be achieved in inclusive education. The strategic policy of implementing inclusive education in *madrasas* is by providing special education teachers who are supported by individual program policies for children with special needs. Wibowo et al., (2019) suggested the three steps in managing inclusive education in *madrasa*, namely planning inclusive human resources, conducting human resource inventory, and implementing inclusive learning strategies.

The implementation of inclusive education in *madrasas* entails the collaboration with various stakeholders and the presence of special education teachers equipped with professional development and training programs. Mukhlis, (2011) argued that the inclusive policies are reflected from the freedom of interaction, equality, and inclusive environment. To maintain the

implementation of inclusive education, *madrasas* provide professional support for inclusive services, including doctors, counselors, occupational therapists, physiotherapy, psychologists, and special education teachers. Nevertheless, inclusive education policies in *madrasas* are less than ideal due to the limited availability of professionals and funds. Hakiman et al., (2021) affirmed that the successful inclusive education is achieved through collaboration and supported by psychologists, counselors, therapists, pedagogues, and school policies.

The involvement of experts is carried out through various external collaborations with institutions or disability service centers in the city or district. The Memorandum of Agreement is written between parties, namely the *madrasa* and professional institutions. Among the institutions are disability center, public health center, and rehabilitation center. DeMatthews et al., (2020) underlined the role of school principals to arrange and support inclusive schools by establishing and delivering a vision, facilitating high-quality learning experiences for students, building professional capacity, creating supportive organizations for learning, and initiating collaboration with external parties.

Officially, *madrasas* also issue policies concerning the establishment of the inclusive teams, assessment teams, curriculum collaboration teams, and learning collaboration teams. Despite these various policies, the implementation of inclusive education in *madrasas* may still encounter shortcomings. Therefore, innovative policies are required to reduce institutional dependence on government policy authorities (Manar, 2019).

Inclusive *madrasas* as a medium to provide the widest possible access to education to all levels of society without exception, in this context inclusive education, is not only an alternative for children with disabilities. Jauhari, (2017) suggested that inclusive *madrasas* are capable to provide the finest services for children with special needs regardless of the existing shortcomings. Faragher et al., (2021) argued that the problems of inclusive education are faced by all countries, including in Asia. The continuity of government policies and education institution policies must be synchronized with the latest needs of *madrasas* and the challenge within the community.

#### **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The implementation of inclusive education policies in *madrasah ibtidaiyah* is manifested in the vision and mission of *madrasas*. The policies are implicitly included in the school mission, namely to implement a child-friendly learning environment by organizing inclusive education. The education access for students with special needs and the realization of inclusive school culture are also written in the objectives of the *madrasas*. The implementation of inclusive education policies is also stated in the *madrasa* program, namely an inclusive education program for children with special needs. The inclusive education policies in *madrasas* are followed by the policies in providing inclusive education services for children with special needs and in improving human resource capacity through various trainings as well as professional and expert collaboration. The policies encourage the realization of an inclusive school culture and the fulfillment of inclusive education services for children with special needs. They include the policies in providing professional staff in *madrasas*, such as doctors, pedagogues, counselors, psychologists, occupational therapists, or related experts. The supports from the government, including the breakthroughs to facilitate professional assistances in *madrasas*, are required. Further research related to the implementation of policies in *madrasas* in relation with inclusive education is recommended.

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