

Inclusion in Quranic Schools: Teacher Perspectives on Special Needs Admissions

Alifia Arif Maulidya¹, Ali Imron¹, Sunarni¹

¹ Educational Management, Faculty of Education, State University of Malang, Malang, Indonesia
Corresponding author, email: alifia.arif.2301328@students.um.ac.id

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Abstract

Inclusive education as the main focus in building a responsive and equitable education system, ensures equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs. Many countries including Al-Quran educational institutions in Malang, implement inclusion policies to integrate children with special needs into schools. However, its implementation is often hampered by limited understanding and readiness of institutions, as well as the perception and involvement of teachers as the main agents of learning. A case study at the Al-Quran Educational Institution (LPQ) Malang, through a survey and quantitative analysis, highlights aspects of accepting students with special needs, teachers' views on the positive impacts or obstacles in dealing with them and the perceptions of teachers and principals regarding accepting students with special needs. These findings are expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the success and challenges of implementing inclusion policies at Al-Quran educational institutions in Malang. The implications can help institutions in evaluating and improve their inclusive strategies, as well as provide guidance for other institutions looking to improve inclusivity in education.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education has become a key focus in developing a more responsive and equitable education system. The concept of inclusion creates an educational environment where all students, including those with special needs, have equal opportunities to learn and grow. Today, many countries have adopted inclusion policies to support the integration of children with special needs into schools (Supriatini, Muhdi, and Yuliejantiningasih 2020). Inclusive education is an educational approach that encourages the participation and success of all students, including those with special needs, within educational institutions. Essentially, inclusion policies aim to create a fair, welcoming, and supportive learning environment for all students, regardless of their abilities or needs (Amir 2022).

However, the implementation of inclusion policies often faces various challenges, including the understanding and readiness of educational institutions, as well as the perceptions and involvement of teachers as the primary agents in the learning process. The application of inclusion policies has been widely analyzed in formal schools, with the goal of improving policies in these institutions. As noted by Danarhadi (2017), the evaluation of inclusive education policies in schools is often hindered by human resources, budget constraints, and facility limitations. In addition to improving school policies, it is also necessary to evaluate inclusion policies within the realm of non-formal education.

Quranic education institutions in Malang, as an integral part of the education system, are not exempt from these challenges. While an inclusive approach can serve as a strong moral and ethical foundation in the context of Quranic education, it is crucial to understand how inclusion policies are interpreted and applied in practice, particularly in the admission of students with special needs. In this context, teachers play a vital role in responding to inclusion policies. Teachers in Quranic education institutions serve not only as educators but also as spiritual guides who shape students' character and morals. Therefore, teachers' understanding and response to inclusion policies significantly influence the learning experiences of students with special needs in Quranic education settings.

Exploring teachers' perspectives on inclusion policies in the context of admitting students with special needs in Quranic education institutions in Malang needs further investigation in this paper. Understanding teachers' views and experiences is expected to help identify obstacles, challenges, and best practices that can serve as a foundation for improving and enhancing inclusion policies in these institutions. Analyzing inclusion policy approaches is expected to provide concrete solutions for increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of inclusive education in Quranic education institutions in Malang.

2. Methods

At the Quranic Education Institution (LPQ) with the fictitious name XYZ, we initiated a case study to evaluate the impact of inclusion policies on the participation of children with special needs. Several of these schools have adopted inclusion policies as part of their efforts to create an inclusive educational environment that supports the holistic development of all students. This study employs a quantitative approach aimed at describing a phenomenon as it exists at the time of research (Unaradjan 2019). The research subjects include principals and teachers/asatidz/instructors serving at LPQ XYZ, with the proportion of respondents shown in Figure 1. The total research population consists of 30 individuals, and data collection was conducted using a closed-ended questionnaire. A closed-ended questionnaire is a survey instrument in which respondents are provided with a set of predetermined answer choices and simply select the option that best represents their response (Abdullah 2015). A good research instrument must be valid and reliable.

The data analysis method used in this research is descriptive analysis, processing data using mean scores and percentages to assess the achievement of policy program objectives (Rochmawati, Ningtias, and Lukitowati 2021). Descriptive statistics is a data analysis method that presents information in a summarized and interpretable manner.

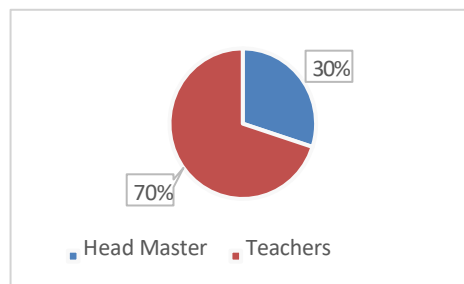


Figure 1. Respondent Reflection Chart

The data analysis model is designed to illustrate and evaluate the program, focusing primarily on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the inclusion policy that has been implemented, particularly in Quranic education institutions in Malang as non-formal educational institutions. This evaluation model is easier to understand and apply, as it is centered on assessing the achievement of the program's policy objectives (Rahmatullah 2023). The evaluation design is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

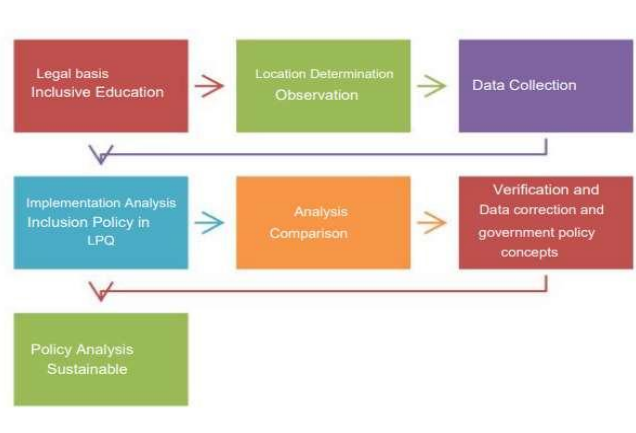


Figure 2. Evaluation Design

3. Result and Discussion

The policy foundations of inclusive education in Indonesia are regulated by several legal frameworks. The first regulation concerning inclusive education is discussed in the National Education System Law (Sisdiknas), namely Law No. 20 of 2003 (Government of Indonesia, 2003), which includes the principles of inclusive education as part of Indonesia's national education system. This principle encompasses the right of every citizen to receive education without discrimination, as well as an emphasis on inclusive education for children with special needs.

The Sisdiknas Law establishes the basic framework and main principles of Indonesia's national education system. It covers various aspects of education, including inclusive education, highlighting the right of every citizen to receive education without discrimination. Key points regarding inclusive education based on the Sisdiknas Law include inclusive education as a fundamental principle, where the law stipulates that education is a basic right of every citizen and must be provided equitably without distinguishing ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup (SARA), as well as regardless of physical or mental conditions. Therefore, the principle of inclusive education is recognized as an integral part of the national education system.

Another key point is that the government affirms every child's right to receive quality education without discrimination. This includes the right of children with special needs to receive inclusive education in various educational institutions, both formal and non-formal. The principles of inclusive education emphasize the importance of developing the skills and potential of every individual, including children with special needs, so they can fully participate in social and economic life. The importance of implementing inclusive education is underscored by ensuring that every child receives adequate educational services according to their needs and potential. Another significant emphasis is the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The second inclusive education policy refers to Circular Letter No. 1 of 2014 from the Directorate General of Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education (Government of Indonesia, 2014). This Circular Letter was issued as a guideline for implementing inclusive education policies at the early childhood, primary, and secondary education levels in Indonesia. It provides a clear definition of inclusive education and outlines its scope. Inclusive education is defined as an educational approach that ensures every child, including children with special needs, has equal learning opportunities (figure 3).

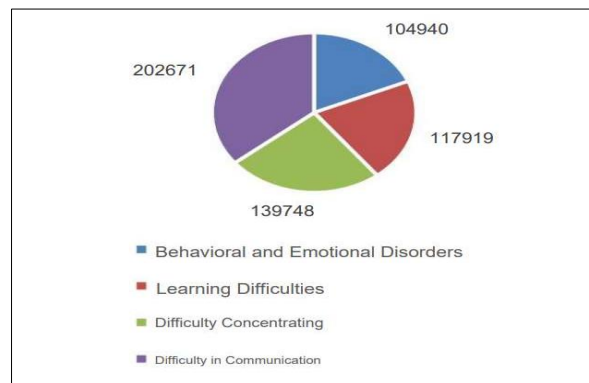


Figure 3. Diagram of Disorder Specifications in children aged 5-9 years

The Circular Letter highlights the need to implement inclusive education by considering the educational needs of children with special needs, including the provision of facilities, teacher support, and the development of a supportive curriculum. The government is making efforts to improve the qualifications and skills of teachers in managing inclusive classrooms, including training in identifying the needs of children with special needs and effective teaching strategies. The letter also emphasizes the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders, including parents, schools, local governments, and relevant institutions, in supporting the implementation of inclusive education.

Government Regulation No. 17 of 2018 (Government of Indonesia, 2018) details the principles, mechanisms, and standards for implementing inclusive education to ensure that every child's right to education is upheld without discrimination. This regulation provides a comprehensive legal framework for inclusive education in Indonesia, emphasizing fundamental principles, strategies to improve access, roles of stakeholders, an inclusive curriculum, and other aspects. It aims to create an inclusive and equitable educational environment.

The principles of inclusive education include equity, equality, diversity, and the right of every student to access and benefit from education. Strategies to enhance students' access to inclusive education include early identification of special needs, provision of support, and improvement of accessibility facilities. The regulation also establishes the roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders, including local governments, educational institutions, and educators, in supporting the implementation of inclusive education. It further outlines the development of an inclusive curriculum and learning materials, including necessary adaptations to meet the needs of students with special needs.

Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities (Government of Indonesia, 2016) forms an essential legal basis for the development of the national education system in Indonesia. By emphasizing rights, obligations, and educational principles, this law aims to create an inclusive, high-quality, and equitable education system across Indonesia. This law provides a legal foundation and framework for the national education system, covering various aspects of education and establishing principles, goals, and implementation mechanisms necessary to enhance the quality and accessibility of education nationwide.

This law establishes educational principles such as justice, equality, democracy, and quality as the foundation for developing the national education system. It affirms every child's right to education without discrimination and protection from various forms of violence or exploitation within the educational context. The principles of inclusive education are recognized in this law, affirming that every child, including those with special needs, has the right to education without discrimination. Additionally, the law emphasizes the importance of character and moral development in education alongside academic aspects while granting educational institutions the freedom to implement inclusive education.

Indonesia has ratified the CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), although it is not a domestic law. The CRPD contains human rights principles for persons with disabilities, including the right to education without discrimination (CRPD, 2007). The CRPD is an international treaty aimed at protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring equal access in various aspects of life. The primary goal of the CRPD is to end discrimination against persons with disabilities and ensure their full participation in social, economic, and political life. The CRPD includes numerous rights and principles, covering civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights for persons with disabilities. It discusses the right to inclusive education, equal access to healthcare services, participation in political life, and protection from exploitation and violence. The CRPD emphasizes that persons with disabilities are not merely objects of aid or policy but have rights as equal legal subjects. This convention specifically highlights the right of persons with disabilities to receive inclusive and equal education without discrimination.

Children with special needs refer to children who have disabilities not commonly experienced by other children. These are children with unique characteristics differing from the general population, without necessarily indicating mental, emotional, or physical disabilities. Children with special needs (CSN) experience physical, mental, or behavioral deviations (Nunes, Schmidt, and Traduções, 2019). According to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017), the number of children with special needs in Indonesia reaches 1.6 million. One initiative by the Ministry of Education and Culture to provide educational access for them is by establishing new special schools (Sekolah Luar Biasa) and promoting the growth of inclusive schools in various regions.

Field research findings indicate the distribution of children with special needs in Quranic Educational Institutions (LPQ), as illustrated in Figure 4. The results show that 33.3% of children in LPQ have special needs, 58.3% are classified as normal, and 8.3% are categorized as "potentially" special needs due to the absence of a thorough diagnosis.

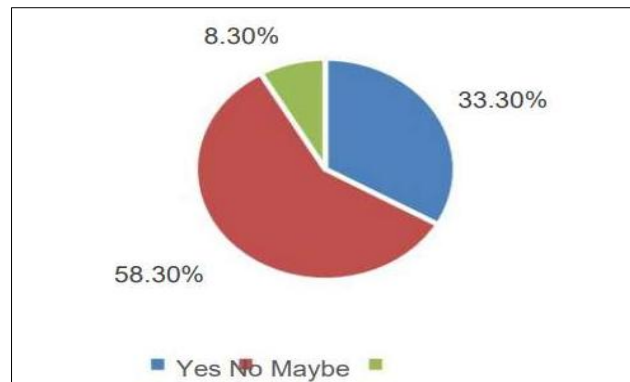


Figure 4. Absorbtion Amount

No government regulation, either national or regional, specifies the maximum number of children with special needs that an institution must accommodate. Some regulations only encourage schools to accept inclusive students and prohibit rejection. This leads to an uneven distribution of children with special needs across LPQs. Some LPQs handle a high number of students with special needs, while others do not accept any. Consequently, LPQs are sometimes unprepared for the surge in students with special needs due to a lack of competent teaching staff. The issue of unequal distribution of children with special needs is also evident in inclusive education in Russia, where disparities result in ineffective implementation of inclusive education (Kolosova, Adamyan, and Adamyan, 2022). The goal of inclusive education in Indonesia is to enhance the children's abilities, enabling them to become independent and accepted in social environments (Waldes Hasugian et al., 2019). If the learning process is not maximized, the objectives of inclusive education will not be achieved.

The European Union unanimously upholds the right to education for children with special educational needs. The findings indicate that seven factors were studied in relation to the inclusive educational environment in the EU from the perspective of children with special needs. These factors include the established definition of special needs children, support for teaching staff, availability of general support services for children with special needs, individual learning outcomes, parental involvement, inclusive education policies, and mixed general classrooms. This suggests that various inputs or components within the education system can serve as key elements in developing inclusive education (van Kessel et al., 2021).

One approach to developing education for children with special needs is through inclusive education. Inclusive education is a system that provides opportunities for students with special needs to develop their abilities and intelligence potential to participate in education. This approach emphasizes social relationships within schools, where everyone has equal value in knowledge and contribution, rather than transferring disadvantaged children to special schools. The values of inclusive education focus on participation, equality, rights, diversity, respect, care, non-violence, attention, compassion, hope, honesty, courage, optimism, and actions that promote kindness (Nurfatah & Arafat, 2017).

Children with special needs should be understood as individuals with unique tendencies that vary from one another. These differences cannot be generalized or treated uniformly. The implementation of inclusive education requires many personalized or individualized approaches. Every child is special and requires different treatments based on their unique challenges. Teachers or educators need to understand these different spectrums to effectively convey theories or materials. If teachers lack competence, it can lead to exhaustion and multiple challenges from various aspects.

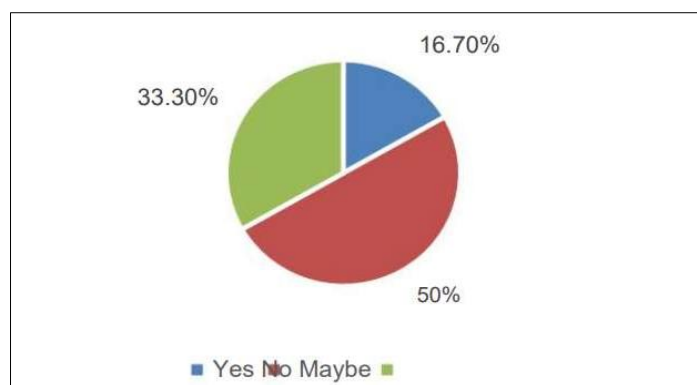


Figure 5. Percentage of Teacher Competence in Handling Special Needs Children

According to research by Bolourian et al. (2022), children with special needs possess higher intellectual and communication abilities compared to other normal children. However, some children exhibit varying responses. A comparison of these responses is shown in Table 1 below. These responses can serve as a focus for teachers in promoting effective communication with professionals such as behavior specialists, paraprofessionals, special education teachers, school psychologists, and parents. The goal is to support students' social functions and behavior.

An Individual Learning Approach (ILA) requires teachers to emphasize the importance of predictable patterns and consistency, such as establishing routines, setting clear expectations, and using consistent language. Classroom routine dependency provides structure for students with special needs, allowing them to become more engaged in learning and less likely to display behavioral issues over time. Strategies related to praise and positive reinforcement, such as involving students in a "praise circle," providing positive feedback, and utilizing students' special talents and abilities, have also been reported as effective ways to promote inclusion, with varying levels of success. Encouraging students to showcase their talents and abilities significantly supports the learning process of children with special needs.

Table 1. Levels of Response from Special Needs Children to TeachersSource: (Bolourian et al., 2022)

Response Category	Score
Social disconnect	1.89
Sensory sensitivities	1.72
Difficulty in social interaction	1.56
Focus	1.33
Routine	1.22
Impulse control	0.89
Loveable	0.67
Eye contact	0.56
Enjoyment	0.44
Difficulty following two-step commands	0.39
Low social intelligence	0.33
Charming and sweet	0.33
Intelligent	0.11

An individual approach program (ILA) can be effectively implemented if teachers specifically address special needs children separately, whereas inclusive learning planning does not differentiate learning systems, as illustrated in Figures 6 and 7. The comparison results indicate a lack of specificity in government policies regarding inclusive school learning methods and how special needs education should be handled. The government focuses more on absorbing inclusive students into all educational institutions but does not adequately prepare competent educators, particularly in LPQ (Islamic Early Childhood Education) and the general community.

Currently, LPQ policies indicate that they cannot accommodate children with special needs beyond their capacity, which is assessed based on the competency levels of the educators. The policy

allows for only two special needs students per class, ensuring school quality, education standards, and optimal classroom learning.

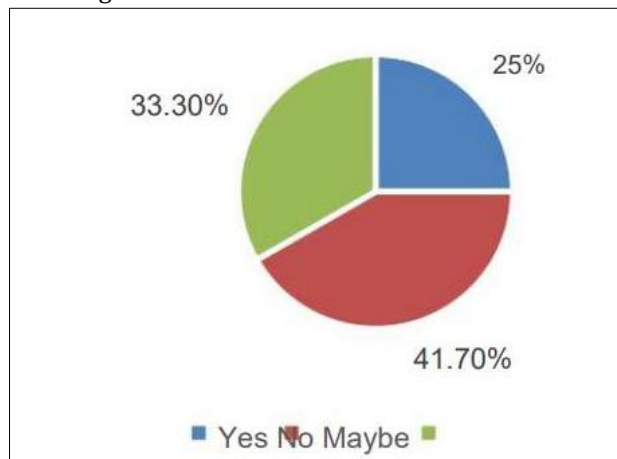


Figure 6. Comparison of Special Needs and Normal Students' Learning

The readiness of teachers in handling special needs children fundamentally depends on their willingness to enhance their competencies and accept special needs students under recommended regulations. Our research findings reveal that 16.7% of teachers are unwilling to accept inclusive students, while the remaining are willing to assist them, with 66.7% responding positively, 16.7% anticipating difficulties, and 16.7% feeling capable of providing support. This indicates that inclusive education policies are generally accepted by LPQ school principals and educators (Figure 7).

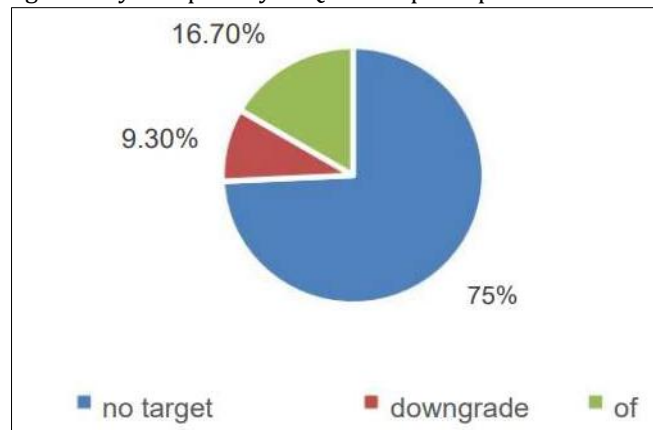


Figure 7. Comparison of ABK and normal learning materials

4. Conclusion

The evaluation of public policy in this context employs a sustainable policy evaluation method, which is an analytical process aimed at investigating and assessing the performance of a policy program, both in terms of process and outcomes. This method involves gathering detailed information on a program's performance to provide feedback for the policymaking process. This type of evaluation focuses on identifying the impacts and results of programs and policy actions while implementation is still ongoing. The information obtained through sustainable evaluation can be used to improve the implementation process or even to direct core policy decisions (Fischer, 2013).

Several foundational policies for inclusive schools have been established in both national and regional regulations. These policies emphasize freedom and equality in education for all individuals without exception. Over the years, this policy emphasis has become increasingly clear, positioning inclusive schools as a flagship program that must be achieved in today's education system. Inclusive education has a positive impact on improving social relationships for children with special needs (ABK) and influences their cooperation skills and sense of responsibility. Additionally, inclusive education enhances self-esteem, meaning that when ABK students and regular students learn together under the same teachers, it fosters greater care, discipline, and behavioral self-

regulation (Satrio Budi Wibowo & Siti Nurlaila, 2017). The positive impact of inclusive education should be maintained and further developed to address existing challenges.

The challenges in implementing inclusive policies, based on observations and discussions, indicate that inclusive school programs lack clear and detailed implementation guidelines. One of the key issues is the maximum standard for teachers handling special needs students, which is influenced by the competency of educators. Many educators struggle both physically and in terms of expertise when faced with a large number of ABK students in addition to regular teaching responsibilities.

Currently, educators lack the competency to identify different types of disabilities, appropriate intervention methods, and effective teaching strategies within an inclusive program. This results in reluctance among teachers, as they find it difficult to manage classroom dynamics effectively. If, prior to new student enrollment, schools planned a structured allocation of ABK students based on the availability of competent teachers, the goals of inclusive education would be more achievable. The second major obstacle involves the curriculum and learning plans for ABK students. Current laws and regulations do not yet provide clear guidelines on curriculum structures, learning targets, and evaluation methods that teachers should follow. ABK students have diverse tendencies in their learning processes—not all are gifted, communicative, or quick learners. Therefore, specialized teaching methods must be mastered by educators to ensure effective learning outcomes.

If school education targets are standardized (homogenized), it would be burdensome and unfair to ABK students. Thus, detailed policy regulations should outline adjusted learning implementations based on ABK students' abilities. For instance, schools could adopt a downgrade system or develop structured, individualized curricula for ABK students, designed in collaboration with experts. Another challenge is the unequal distribution of ABK students across institutions, which needs to be addressed to ensure balance and prevent overcrowding in certain schools. This inequality can hinder the effectiveness of inclusive learning. Establishing minimum and maximum standards for ABK student intake in educational institutions is crucial to ensure that every institution can adequately provide competent teachers and manage inclusive education effectively. Moreover, schools must carefully plan their admissions, financial management, facilities, and infrastructure to support the successful implementation of inclusive education policies. The policy recommendations for inclusive education are summarized in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Policy Recommendation Framework

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