Assessing the Responsiveness of Inclusive Education Implementation in Kendari City, Indonesia: An Application of Potter's Theory

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the responsiveness of inclusive education implementation in Kendari City using Potter's theory of responsiveness, which consists of five principles: access, choice, information, redress, and representation. A qualitative approach with a descriptive research design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the government's responsiveness to inclusive education. Data were collected through direct observations, in-depth interviews with relevant informants, and document studies. The data were then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model. The findings indicate that despite progress at the junior high school level, there are still disparities in accessibility at the elementary school level. The lack of facilities, infrastructure, and trained Special Guidance Teachers (GPK) remains a major challenge. The choice principle is sufficiently fulfilled with policies allowing parents to choose inclusive schools, regular schools with special programs, or Special Schools (SLB). However, improvements are needed to ensure all inclusive schools provide quality services and equal access. Information dissemination about inclusive education has been carried out through various communication strategies, but gaps remain in reaching vulnerable groups. The redress indicator is fulfilled with complaint mechanisms provided by the government and schools, demonstrating responsiveness to the needs and concerns of the community. The representation indicator is not yet fully achieved, despite positive steps through the involvement of NGOs, disability organizations, and inter-agency collaboration. The responsiveness of inclusive education implementation in Kendari City still needs improvement. Continuous efforts are required to enhance accessibility, expand choices, improve information dissemination, strengthen complaint mechanisms, and encourage active participation of students with special needs and their parents in decision-making processes. Close collaboration between the government, schools, NGOs, and disability organizations is crucial for creating a more inclusive and responsive educational environment for all students.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is an approach in the education system that aims to accommodate all students, including those with special needs or disabilities, to learn together in the same environment (Artiles et al., 2020). The concept emphasizes providing fair and equal opportunities for all children to gain access to quality education, without discrimination (Espinoza, 2007; Adelakun & Ajayi, 2020; van Vijfeijken et al, 2023). The implementation of inclusive education has become a global commitment, as stated in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 4, which encourages the creation of inclusive and equitable quality education (United Nations, 2018).

In Indonesia, the implementation of inclusive education is regulated in various policies and regulations, such as the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education for Learners with Disabilities and Potential for Special Intelligence and/or Talent (Sujarwanto, 2023; Rahmi et al, 2024). However, the implementation of inclusive education in the field still faces various challenges, such as the lack of adequate facilities, untrained teaching staff in handling students with special needs, and social stigma in the community (Kalyanpur, 2008; Dombrowski et al, 2020; Ramchand, 2021; Schuster & Kolleck 2021). These barriers indicate the need for evaluation and improvement in the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia (Yusuf & Yeager, 2011; Srivastava & Pijl 2013; Kurniawati, 2021; Mendoza & Heymann, 2022).

Kendari city, as one of the regions that has implemented an inclusive education policy, faces similar challenges. Despite the existence of the Southeast Sulawesi Governor's Regulation No 64/2014 that regulates the management of inclusive education at the local level, as well as the Decree of the Head of the Education and Culture Office No 800/10754/2023 that specifies the schools that provide inclusive education, implementation in the field is still not optimal (Noor, 2021). Inequalities in accessibility, service quality and support for students with special needs between schools are still evident, especially between primary and junior secondary levels (Adindo, 2024; Said et al 2024).

According to Potter's (1994) responsiveness theory, there are five principles that need to be considered in public services, including inclusive education: access, choice, information, complaints and representation. This study aims to evaluate the implementation of inclusive education in Kendari city using Potter's (1994) responsiveness theory to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas that need improvement. The results are expected to provide concrete policy recommendations to improve the quality and effectiveness of inclusive education in Kendari city.

The urgency of this research is even more evident given the limited number of studies that comprehensively evaluate the implementation of inclusive education at the local level, especially in Kendari City (Zulkifli, 2017; Rahayu et al, 2023, Nasaruddin et al, 2024). In fact, an in-depth understanding of the dynamics, challenges and opportunities in implementing inclusive education is essential for designing policies and programs that are more responsive to the needs of students with special needs (Nangia, 2004; Bryant et al, 2019; Molina Roldán et al, 2021). Thus, this study is expected to contribute to enriching the literature on inclusive education in Indonesia, as well as providing an empirical basis for more inclusive and evidence-based decision-making in Kendari City.

2. Methods

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to find out and describe in depth the government's responsiveness to the implementation of inclusive education in Kendari City. The descriptive design was chosen because it allows researchers to stay close to the data, use limited frameworks and interpretations to explain the data, and catalog information into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The selection of informants was carried out using purposive sampling method, where informants were purposively selected based on relevant criteria to answer the main questions in the research. Informants in this study included government officials, school administrators, teachers, parents and civil society representatives involved in the implementation of inclusive education in Kendari city.

This research was conducted at the Education, Youth and Sports Office of Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi Province, in July-August 2024. Primary data was obtained through direct observation in the field and in-depth interviews with informants who are considered to know and understand service responsiveness in the implementation of inclusive education in Kendari City. Secondary data was obtained from literature and documents related to the research topic. The data collection techniques used included observation, in-depth interviews and document studies. Observation was conducted to obtain data by observing phenomena related to inclusion in the management and provision of education services. In-depth interviews were conducted using interview guidelines to maintain the focus of the research. Document studies were conducted by reviewing documents related to inclusive education services.

Data analysis used Saldana's (2014) interactive analysis model consisting of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data collection is the main step to obtain data in accordance with predetermined standards. Data reduction is done to emphasize, shorten, focus, and organize data. Data presentation is done in the form of brief descriptions, relationship charts between categories, and the like to facilitate understanding. Conclusions were drawn by noting causal rules and various proportions. Data validity and reliability were maintained through various strategies. For validity, the researcher used triangulation of data sources, member checking, rich and detailed descriptions, and clarification of researcher bias. For reliability, the researcher conducted transcript checking, maintenance of consistency in coding, and cross-checking of codes.

3. Result and Discussion

Access

Potter (1994) says the principle of access in responsiveness states that citizens have the right to know the criteria for political representation that should be applied in a system, including in the context of inclusive education policies. In inclusive education, this means that the community, especially parents, have the right to understand how the government chooses and implements policies that ensure equal access for all children, including children with special needs.

Accessibility in the provision of inclusive education in Kendari city remains a major issue that requires serious attention, especially at the primary school level. Although there has been significant progress at the junior secondary level, many primary schools do not meet the criteria for inclusive schools. The main shortcomings

include the lack of special assistant teachers (GPK) and adequate infrastructure to support students with special needs.

Schools' commitment to inclusive education in Kendari City is reflected in the various initiatives taken. Some schools have taken concrete steps, such as providing wheelchairs and glasses for students with visual impairments. These concrete examples show the awareness and active efforts on the part of schools to provide the necessary support for students with special needs, even with internal resources without external intervention. Other steps taken by the school include the construction of handrailing to facilitate access for students with special needs as well as the planned construction of special WC facilities. These initiatives show that the school not only focuses on the physical aspects of inclusive education but also on providing a supportive environment for students to learn comfortably and without barriers.

While there has been progress at the junior high school level, greater challenges are seen at the primary school level. Limited facilities and infrastructure in many primary schools in Kendari create inequalities in accessibility for students with special needs. Some schools have started efforts to provide disability-friendly facilities, such as hand railings and inclined planes, but not all schools are able to provide the same accommodations. This inequality indicates significant differences in the implementation of inclusive education between schools in Kendari city.

The procurement of facilities and infrastructure is based on a priority scale, where schools are expected to propose their needs to the education office. The education office has an important role in identifying and bridging schools' needs with the inclusive education program. However, the availability of adequate and formally trained Special Assistance Teachers (GPK) remains a major challenge in implementing inclusive education.

The Kendari City Government has recognized this challenge and started taking strategic steps such as special training for teachers and the establishment of a Disability Service Unit (ULD) in education. The establishment of this unit aims to provide more focused and systematic services in addressing the needs of inclusive education in Kendari City. In addition, Kendari City Government has also conducted a mock study to other cities such as Yogyakarta, which is known as an area with more advanced inclusive education implementation. This mock study was conducted to learn best practices in the implementation of inclusive education, so that they can be applied in the context of education in Kendari. This step demonstrates the government's commitment to learning and improving the quality of inclusive education by adopting experiences that have proven effective elsewhere.

Although positive steps have been taken to improve accessibility in inclusive education in Kendari city, this indicator has not been fully met. Stronger and more targeted efforts are still needed to address the lack of adequate facilities, teaching staff and training so that inclusive education can truly be accessed by all students without barriers. (2021) emphasize the importance of improved facilities, teacher capacity building and ongoing training to create an inclusive learning environment that is responsive to the needs of diverse students.

In the context of theory, Loreman (2017) argues that the success of inclusive education depends on the availability of adequate resources, including accessible facilities, competent educators and relevant training programs. Without strong support in these aspects, the goal of inclusive education to provide equal access for all students will be difficult to achieve (Stubbs, 2008). Therefore, more targeted and comprehensive efforts are needed to address these shortcomings so that inclusive education can truly become a reality for all children, regardless of their backgrounds and conditions (UNESCO, 2019).

Choice

The second principle of responsiveness, according to Potter (1994), is 'choice' which relates to the implementation of a quasi-market system in education services. This system aims to give parents more options in choosing the school or type of education service that best suits the needs of their children, including children with special needs. With more choices, it is expected that the responsiveness of education to the needs of diverse students, including children with disabilities, will increase through improved quality and healthy competition among schools.

In the context of inclusive education in Kendari City, the application of this principle of 'choice' is reflected in the policy that gives parents the freedom to choose the school that best suits their child's needs. The government, through the Kendari City Education Office, has opened opportunities for parents to choose inclusive schools,

regular schools with special programs, or special schools. While the zoning system remains the main reference to minimize the risk of dropping out, this policy allows more alternatives for children with special needs.

Currently, there are 42 inclusive schools in Kendari City at the junior high school level and 127 at the primary school level, as determined by the Education and Culture Office Decree No. 800/10754/2023. These schools are required to accept children with disabilities without discrimination, with the hope that parents can choose the nearest school according to the rayon system.

The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Rumpun Perempuan SULTRA (RPS) is also important in helping the community choose the right inclusive school, based on the readiness of facilities and the location of the school. Thus, the application of the principle of 'choice' in the inclusive education system in Kendari city aims to ensure that an appropriate and inclusive education is available to all children, including those with special needs. The indicators of 'choice' in the provision of inclusive education in Kendari city are sufficiently met but still need to be improved. In particular, more efforts are needed to ensure all inclusive schools can provide quality services and equal access for all students so that parents truly have the freedom to choose the best school for their child without restrictions. This is supported by research conducted by Saloviita (2020), which emphasizes the importance of high quality standards and consistency in the provision of inclusive education services in all schools. Without equitable quality assurance, parents' choices are limited and children's right to an education that suits their needs may be jeopardized.

In addition, Mapp and Kuttner (2013) in their family engagement framework emphasize the importance of equal access and meaningful choice for parents in their children's education. They argue that schools should provide clear and comprehensive information about available services and support parents in making informed decisions according to their child's needs and preferences. Thus, efforts to improve the quality and accessibility of inclusive education services in all schools are essential to ensure that parents have real and meaningful choices in their children's education.

Information

Information in service responsiveness according to Potter (1994) means that service users need a clear understanding of the objectives, quality standards, procedures and decisions in the service. In inclusive education, the principle of information means that learners, parents and related parties need to get a clear explanation of the objectives of inclusive education, the quality standards applied, learning methods and decisions related to adjustments for students with special needs. This clear and transparent information is essential for creating an inclusive learning environment that is responsive to the needs of all students.

Disseminating information about the implementation of inclusive education in Kendari city has been done systematically and continuously through various communication strategies. This involves the use of social media, WhatsApp groups, posters and direct socialization through community activities and seminars. The main objective of these strategies is to ensure that the community, especially parents and educators, have an adequate understanding of the concept and implementation of inclusive education. However, the main challenge faced is the limitation in reaching children with special needs who are not in school or not connected to the education community. They tend not to be members of WhatsApp groups or other communication platforms, so they have less potential to get information about inclusive education.

Although the efforts of schools and the education office are quite massive, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and some parents of children with special needs (ABK) consider that the dissemination of information is still uneven. For example, the NGO Rumpun Perempuan SULTRA (RPS) has conducted socialization on inclusive education in 15 urban villages in Kendari city. However, some parents of children with disabilities said that the information they received about inclusive education was often limited and was more often obtained through informal communication with fellow parents.

Although there is a well-established system for disseminating information about inclusive education in Kendari city, there are still gaps in reaching more vulnerable groups, such as children with special needs who are not connected to formal communication channels. More structured and massive socialization efforts are needed to ensure that all parties, including parents, educators and the wider community, have a deep understanding of the importance of inclusion in education. Thus, every child, including children with special needs, can have equal access to quality education. This statement is supported by research conducted by Sulistyadi (2022), who found that effective socialization involving various stakeholders can increase awareness and support for inclusive

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education. In his study, Sulistyadi emphasized the importance of multifaceted communication strategies, including media campaigns, workshops and direct engagement with communities, to promote a better understanding of inclusion in education.

In addition, Forlin (2010) emphasises the important role of socialisation in overcoming attitudinal barriers and changing negative perceptions about inclusive education. According to Forlin, structured and sustained socialization efforts can help overcome stigma and discrimination and create a more accepting and supportive environment for students with special needs. With a better understanding of the principles of inclusion and its benefits for all students, communities will be better equipped to support and engage in effective implementation of inclusive education.

Redress

The fourth principle in public service responsiveness according to Potter (1994) is redress or complaints. This principle emphasizes the importance of providing clear and accessible channels for the public to complain and ensuring a prompt and appropriate response to any complaints received. In the context of inclusive education, redress is very important so that all parties, especially parents and students, can voice their problems or concerns related to inclusive education services.

The Kendari City Government, through the Education Office, has made efforts to provide a complaint mechanism that can be accessed by the community. One of the efforts made is through the online New Learner Admission (PPDB) website, where parents and the community can submit complaints or complaints related to inclusive education and children with special needs online. This shows that the government is trying to facilitate complaints in a more open and transparent manner so that complaints can be handled more systematically. In addition, at the school level, a complaint mechanism is provided in the form of a complaint box that can be accessed by students, including children with disabilities. However, based on observations, students and parents tend to prefer to complain directly to the counseling guidance teacher or principal. This approach is often considered more effective as it allows for faster and more personalized problem solving, especially in dealing with issues such as bullying or discomfort experienced by children with disabilities.

Responses to these complaints vary. Some complaints submitted directly generally get a quick response and are dealt with immediately, especially when submitted to teachers or principals. However, existing formal complaint mechanisms, such as through online PPDB, have not been fully utilized by all parents or students.

The redress indicator in the implementation of inclusive education in Kendari city has been met due to the government's efforts in providing a clear complaints media, quick response to complaints and the active role of schools in responding to these complaints. Although direct communication is still often relied upon, the presence of formal complaint mechanisms shows that inclusive education services in Kendari city are sufficiently responsive to community needs and concerns.

Representation

Based on Potter's (1994) theory of responsiveness, which describes the "representation" indicator, this principle emphasizes the importance of involving consumers or affected parties in all stages of decision-making that affect their interests. In the context of inclusive education, this means that students, including those with special needs, as well as their parents or guardians, should actively participate in every stage of decision-making regarding their education. This includes program planning, policy determination, assessment of individual needs and evaluation of educational outcomes.

In the implementation of inclusive education in Kendari city, there is an attempt to apply the concept of active participation in inclusive education. The concept of 'child-friendly' is used to provide space for students to be involved in decision-making at the classroom and school organization levels. Efforts to involve parents in the early stages, such as enrollment and diagnostic testing, indicate an awareness of the importance of their participation. However, the full involvement of parents in the entire inclusive education process is still not maximized due to various factors such as education level, understanding of inclusive education and economic conditions.

Collaboration between various parties, such as government agencies, schools, NGOs and disability organizations, is crucial to ensure that the needs of students with special needs are met. Kendari City Government, through collaboration with agencies such as BAPPEDA, NGOs, and disability organizations such

as OPDIS and PERTUNI, demonstrates its commitment to creating a more inclusive education environment. The involvement of disability organizations is crucial in voicing the needs of the disability community, identifying barriers and providing recommendations on how best to provide appropriate accommodation and support services.

Collaboration with NGOs such as Rumpun Perempuan Southeast Sulawesi (RPS) helps strengthen the advocacy of disability organizations, which often face limited pressure. Through this collaboration, pro-disability policy advocacy becomes stronger and more heard. This is demonstrated through various concrete efforts such as meetings to strengthen the work team and socialization of inclusive education involving various related parties.

The representation indicator in inclusive education in Kendari city has not been fully achieved. While there have been positive steps through the involvement of NGOs and disability organizations and inter-agency collaboration, improvements in involving students with special needs and their parents more actively in all stages of decision-making are needed. Further efforts are needed to ensure their voices are recognized and integrated into inclusive education policies. This is in line with research conducted by Kurniawati et al. (2021), who found that active participation of students with special needs and their parents in the decision-making process can increase ownership and commitment to the implementation of inclusive education. Meaningfully involving them in program planning, implementation and evaluation can ensure that the policies and practices implemented are in line with their needs and aspirations.

In addition, Shogren and Wehmeyer (2017) emphasize the importance of self-determination for students with special needs in inclusive education. They argue that giving students the opportunity to advocate for themselves and participate in decisions that affect their education can improve their learning outcomes, independence and overall quality of life. Therefore, efforts to involve students with special needs and their parents more actively in decision-making should be a priority in the development of inclusive education policies and practices.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the responsiveness of inclusive education in Kendari city using Potter's (1994) responsiveness theory, which consists of five principles: access, choice, information, complaints and representation. In terms of access, although there has been progress at the junior secondary level, there are still inequalities in accessibility at the primary level. Lack of facilities, infrastructure and trained special assistant teachers (GPK) are the main challenges. Stronger efforts are needed to address these shortcomings so that inclusive education can be accessed by all students without barriers. The principle of choice is sufficiently fulfilled with policies that allow parents to choose inclusive schools, regular schools with special programs or special schools. However, it still needs to be improved to ensure that all inclusive schools provide quality services and equal access. Information on inclusive education has been disseminated through various communication strategies. However, there are still gaps in reaching vulnerable groups in society. More structured and massive socialization efforts are needed to ensure a deep understanding of inclusion in education. The grievance indicator has been met with the grievance mechanisms provided by the government and schools. Although direct communication is still often relied upon, the presence of a formal grievance mechanism demonstrates the responsiveness of inclusive education services to community needs and concerns. The representation indicator has not been fully achieved despite positive steps through the involvement of NGOs, disability organizations and inter-agency collaboration. Improvements in involving students with special needs and their parents more actively in decision-making are needed.

The responsiveness of inclusive education in Kendari city still needs to be improved. Continued efforts are needed to improve accessibility, expand choice, improve information dissemination, strengthen grievance mechanisms and encourage the active participation of students with special needs and their parents in decision-making processes. Close collaboration between the government, schools, NGOs and disability organizations is essential to create a more inclusive education environment that is responsive to the needs of all students. Future research could consider widening the scope of the study by involving more inclusive schools at different levels of education and evaluating the long-term impact of inclusive education.

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